

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 26 November 2008

PRESENT: L E Frostick (*Chair*), P Allen, I D Bartholomew, A M Carbray, M G Culshaw, M Daly, A J Fleet (*Treasurer*), R Herrington, R E Holdsworth, A Law, A Lord, J Ludden, D A C Manning (*Secretary, Professional Matters*), J D Marshall, M O Rivett, N W Rogers (*Secretary, Publications*), G W Tuckwell, J Turner, A B Watts (*Secretary, Science*) and R S White

APOLOGIES: E Derbyshire (*Secretary, External and Foreign Affairs*), C M R Fowler, and R A W Wood

In attendance: E F P Nickless (*Executive Secretary*), N Bilham (*Data Manager*), M Kyriakides (*Finance Director*) and S L Culver (*PA to Executive Secretary*).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies as above were noted.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD 17 SEPTEMBER 2008

These were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 It was noted that, because of pressure of business, discussion of two matters - Honorary Fellowship and reports from outside bodies - had been deferred to January.

3.2 Sponsorship Policy (*CM/76/08*)

Council approved the Sponsorship Policy which will be placed on the Society's website.

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ESSENTIAL BUSINESS

4. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

4.1 Report of the Management & Finance Committee (*CM/77/08*)

Council noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2008. The substantive business of that meeting had been to consider the Budget for 2009 and the salary settlement for 2009.

The Treasurer updated Council on the latest Investment Panel meeting and the presentation that Andrew Wauchope of UBS gave to the Management & Finance Committee on 20 November during which he gave his estimate that the investment income in 2009 would be £130k ± £10k and £120k ± £10k in 2010. This is against an income target of £200k and reflects the current and predicted economic climate.

The Treasurer also drew Council's attention to the requests that had been received for

external sponsorship and the decisions that had been made. A policy is required on such requests and will be drawn up for discussion at the next meeting of the Management & Finance Committee before being agreed by Council.

Council also noted that, with immediate effect, each staff vacancy that arises will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Treasurer and the Executive Secretary to ascertain whether a replacement is necessary and, if it is decided not, what effect that might have on the services offered by the Society.

4.2 September Management Accounts (CM/78/08)

The September management accounts were noted. Council were pleased to see that book sales income had recovered slightly and that the year-end projection is currently showing a modest surplus. The Treasurer reported that the October management accounts, which were completed yesterday, are showing a slightly increased surplus.

4.3 Report of the Remuneration Panel (CM/79/08)

This item is minuted in a confidential annex.

4.4 Salary Review 2009 (CM/80/08)

This item is minuted in a confidential annex.

4.5 Serious Incident Report (CM/81/08)

Council noted that there have been no serious incidents to report since the last meeting.

5. BUDGET 2009 (CM/82/08)

The budget for 2009 has been developed in consultation with the Budget and Programme Committee and scrutinised by the Management and Finance Committee at its meeting on 20 November.

The budget has been through a number of iterations in the course of which expenditure has been cut, for example, scaling down of further development of the website and postponing some elements of cyclical replacement of IT kit. The effect on IT delivery been carefully considered and it is not envisaged that there will be a reduction in service although it would not be wise to make similar reductions in expenditure beyond 2010. With regard to the website, development will continue throughout 2009 albeit on a reduced basis and the introduction of on-line Fellowship payment is a priority. There is no further scope for cuts unless Council wishes to review staffing levels with consequential reduction of activity and provision of services to Fellows. The phasing of agreed business plan activity has been re-examined and in general the period of implementation (hence expenditure) has been extended. Refurbishment of the Council Room and Upper Library has been postponed indefinitely. No other agreed business plan activity has been stopped.

Since work on the budget was begun the global financial climate has deteriorated. While expenditure is known with some precision, the Society's five income streams are less secure and what are now termed *most likely* and *worst case scenarios* have been identified with a total reduction of income as in the most likely case of -£131k and in the worst case -£231k.

At the moment there is no indication that Fellowship renewals are decreasing but this will be clearer in January. Conference activity will also be closely monitored to ensure that any potentially loss making events are, as appropriate, cancelled. There is also

concern that there will be a significant decrease in income from corporate affiliates as a result of mergers and acquisitions.

Council approved the *most likely* scenario of the budget for 2009 which shows a deficit of £247k. They also agreed with the recommendation of the Management & Finance Committee that use is made of free reserves alone with the consequential effect of reducing free reserves at the end of 2009 to just over £1m.

6. AWARD WINNERS FOR 2009 (CM/83/08)

Council had expressed concerns about the potential unfairness in considering nominations for awards if no-one at the Council meeting was able to speak to one of the short listed candidates. There was also the situation where only members of Council who were present were able to vote. To address those concerns it had been agreed that:

- i. The Awards Committee would be asked to continue to put forward two names for awards, where possible, but to indicate their preferred candidate. Council requested that in future a brief explanation is provided of why a candidate was preferred. A full list of all nominations considered would continue to be put to Council.
- ii. The awards papers and ballot forms would be sent out in advance of the November Council meeting to allow members of Council to research the candidates. Ballot papers would be returned in advance of the Council meeting so that all members of Council could participate. The results of the ballot would be reported to Council and there would only be discussion at the meeting of those awards where there was no clear preference.

The awards for 2009 were agreed. It was agreed to award both Coke Medals in 2009 and three of the four Funds. The names of the award winners would not be publicly released until the awards had been accepted, and members of Council were reminded that this information must be kept confidential for the time being. The list is attached as an annex to the confidential minutes.

7. ELECTIONS

7.1 Fellowship (CM/84/08)

Council agreed to recommend to the Fellowship that those candidates listed in CM/84/08 should be elected as Fellows at the OGM on 26 November 2008.

7.2 Chartered Geologists (CM/85/08)

The applications from Fellows to become Chartered Geologists listed in CM/85/08 had been approved by the Fellowship and Validation Committee and were agreed by Council.

7.3 Candidate Fellowship (CM/86/08)

Council agreed to elect those applicants listed in CM/86/08 as Candidate Fellows.

7.4 Chartered Scientist (CM/87/08)

The application from a Fellow to become a Chartered Scientist listed in CM/87/08 had been approved by the Fellowship and Validation Committee and was agreed by Council.

8. VALIDATION APPEAL (CM/88/08)

This item is minuted in a confidential annex.

9. HEALTH AND SAFETY (CM/89/08)

There have been no accidents or near misses reported since the last meeting of Council. BBi Alternative Solutions, the Health & Safety consultants, are currently compiling a new Health & Safety manual. They carried out a risk assessment on 31 October 2008 and the report is awaited. The recommendations by Powerplus on the five-year test on fixed wiring have now been completed. Three new fuse boards have been installed making it easier to identify and isolate individual circuits. The counter terrorism session organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry will be taking place on 22 January 2009 and various members of Society staff will be attending. Two members of staff at the Publishing House have completed one day First Aid courses at Appointed Person level and a member of staff from Burlington House is attending a four day First Aid at Work course in December.

STRATEGIC MATTERS

10. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING NEW CHARTERSHIP (CM/90/08)

The Secretary, Professional Matters reported on the issues discussed at the meeting of the Professional Committee on 13 November.

New arrangements for Chartership

- i. The Chair of the Chartership Panel is George Tuckwell.
- ii. The Chair of the Chartership Audit Panel is Ruth Allington.
- iii. The call for Scrutineers from existing ranks has yielded about 80 applicants from a cohort of almost 400 previously.
- iv. A call for new Scrutineers has gone out to all CGeols and CScis.
- v. It was agreed that the Society formally thanks those who have acted as Scrutineer for many years, but who are unable to continue.
- vi. It was agreed that all certificates confirming success in applying for Chartered status should be signed by the President of the Society.
- vii. The Scrutineer recruitment exercise has identified areas where the design and requirements of our CPD scheme needs to be improved.
- viii. The post of Chartership Officer has been advertised and 3 applications have been received.
- ix. Detailed criteria that help applicants and Scrutineers define 'competence' have been drawn up by the Engineering Group and the Education Committee with the Hydrogeology Group and the Petroleum Group are working on criteria.
- x. Council has committed funds for the employment of the Chartership Officer, but we do not have reliable understanding of the cost of rental of rooms, travel and accommodation for the interview process. This largely depends on demand, and so is difficult to predict. It may be as much as £20000 - 25000 per year. It was confirmed that this amount has been included in the budget for 2009 and the costs will be closely monitored.
- xi. The possibility of increasing the existing Chartership application fee, or subscriptions, to cover the additional cost of the new process will be considered after one year of operation of the new system.

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The Environment Group

This is the subject of a separate item but the Secretary Professional Committee reported that the committee wish to contribute to discussions concerning this group and favour a model that allows the Environment Group to evolve into a highly visible (internally and externally) organisation that facilitates networking and activity across Specialist Group boundaries.

Young Geoscientists Group

The Data Manager reported that this issue was discussed by the Information Management Committee. A group of geoscientists at the beginning of their careers is being brought together to consider what the Society should be doing with regard to engaging with young geoscientists through, for example, social networking sites such as Facebook and to facilitate links with more established geoscientists. Council welcomed this development but urged caution with the use of social networking sites and it was suggested that a member of staff should be tasked with monitoring what is posted on these sites.

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11. ENVIRONMENT GROUP (CM/91/08)

Council had previously agreed to establish a working group comprising Michael Rivett (chair), Eva Valsami-Jones, Lynne Frostick, Martin Culshaw and Peter Thorn (Environment Group Chair) to evaluate the present status of the Environment Group and to present a way forward that will raise the profile, vibrancy and relevance of the group within and beyond the Society. The group received input from Tony Watts (Science Committee Chair), David Manning (Professional Committee chair), David Shilston (former Professional Committee chair) and Edmund Nickless.

Their report was presented to Council and it identified four broad options:-

- i. Disband the Environment Group and raise the environmental flag over the existing specialist groups with environmental interests;
- ii. Amalgamate the Environment Group with other specialist groups;
- iii. Reinvigorate the Environment Group; or
- iv. Disband the present Environment Group replacing it with an 'Environmental Geology Coordinating Committee' (EGCC) that reports to the Science Committee.

Council noted that within the Fellowship "environment" ranked very highly as an area of professed interest. They also recognised that the vertical structure of the specialist groups has made it difficult for the Environment Group, whose interest overlaps with many discipline groups, to operate effectively.

Council agreed that the best way forward would be option iv if it were not possible to reinvigorate the Environment Group.

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12. BUSINESS PLAN 2008 - 2010 (CM/92/08)

The latest version of the business plan grid and commentary were noted. The key changes in the business plan were:

- A new column showing initial thinking about the likely post-2010 status of each

item.

- Completed reviews removed from the business plan if no action is to be taken. Where action is to be taken, the items moved to the 'A' section – the progress comments indicate which 'R' item they result from. The remaining incomplete reviews are not expected to result in any core expenditure (either no direct costs will be incurred, or they would be expected to be covered by sponsorship).
- The line showing the expected effect on free reserves of 'A' items removed, since it is now expected that some of these costs will be met from restricted funds.
- Budget figures for 2009 and 2010 changed in line with the current version of the 2009 budget and 2010 forecast, taking account of savings which have been identified. (Note that 2008 figures have not been changed, even if no activity has happened, so that the business plan remains in agreement with the 2008 budget. This is why some costs appear to 'dip' in 2009, e.g. A-12 (Grow Fellowship).)

Council requested a paper to their next meeting on item R6 Regional Groups Governance.

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13. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President reported that an open briefing meeting held at the Society on 24 October with the aim of raising public understanding of matters to do with the disposal of high level radioactive wastes had attracted a diverse audience including representatives for local and central government. She also reported on a meeting with CoRWM working group A to discuss the process for the characterisation of potential disposal sites. A recording of the 24 October meeting is viewable on the Society's website; a draft note of the meeting with CoRWM has been circulated for comment and will be published on the CoRWM website shortly.

Council were also asked to comment on the NDA draft strategy which had been circulated by the Data Manager.

Programme for January Residential (CM/93/08)

The Executive Secretary and Data Manager were thanked for their work on the draft programme for the January residential which was discussed and the suggestions for changes/additions were noted. Council were asked to advise the Executive Secretary or Data Manager with suggestions for after dinner speakers.

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ROUTINE ITEMS

Council noted the following items, which were taken as read:-

14. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES (CM/94/08)

External Relations Committee
Information Management Committee
Science Committee

15. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT (CM/95/08)

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The President advised Council that she wishes a register to be kept of attendance at meetings of Council.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is 28/ 29 January 2008