

**THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

89th ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES

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The 89th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom was held on Tuesday 16 May 2017 at the ACC Liverpool, King's Dock, Liverpool, L3 4FP at 2.30pm.

The meeting was chaired by Cecilia Anim, President of the Royal College of Nursing.

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The President welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

1.2 She introduced the platform party: Michael Brown, Chair of Council; Dave Dawes, Honorary Treasurer; Janet Davies, Chief Executive and General Secretary; and Tim Golbourn, Director of Finance and Business Enablement.

1.3 As part of her introduction the President provided a brief outline of the key responsibilities of the RCN President, Chair of Council and Chief Executive & General Secretary and emphasised the importance of the way the three roles worked together.

1.4 The President explained how the business of the meeting would be conducted and confirmed that the meeting was quorate in line with the Standing Orders.

1.5 She advised that a review of voting arrangements at RCN general meetings had been undertaken since the previous AGM. A leaflet on the management of future votes had been developed with the Electoral Reform Service, and copies of these were available at the meeting and online

1.6 There were no resolutions requiring a vote at the meeting. Nevertheless, members were encouraged to raise any questions they had under the items on the agenda on the Annual Report and Financial Statements and on matters of a professional nature.

1.7 The President confirmed that written answers would be provided to any questions that could not be responded to on the day.

2. 2016 Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the 88th Ordinary General Meeting of The Royal College of Nursing, held on Tuesday 21 June, 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Ian Norris, North East London Outer Branch and a Trustee of the RCN Foundation, identified that paragraph 4.18 of the minutes did not reflect the clarification provided during the meeting that the RCN Foundation had no involvement in the payment of the annual RCNi dividend to the RCN.

2.3 The President then invited members to raise any matters arising from the minutes.

2.4 June Clark, Glamorgan Branch, questioned whether a root and branch review of the Standing Orders was planned. The Chair of Council advised that a review had been undertaken in 2010 and that there was a plan for a further review when the implementation of the Council Review was complete.

2.5 In response to a question by Andy McGovern from North East London Inner Branch cycles it was confirmed that the election process for Council members would continue to follow the usual two and four year pattern to ensure continuity of membership.

2.6 It was confirmed in response to a question from Mike Travis, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch, that the election of members to the new Trade Union Committee was following the same pattern.

2.7 Sarah Waters, Birmingham Branch, expressed her thanks for the positive progress that had been made since the previous AGM to facilitate the attendance of members with disabilities at Congress. The application process had been much easier for both her and her branch that year.

3. To receive the 2016 Annual Report of Council

3.1 The President invited Michael Brown, The Chair of Council, to present the 2016 Annual Report of RCN Council.

3.2 The Chair welcomed members and guests to the annual general meeting. He expressed his gratitude to members' for their support during his term of office and extended thanks to the Council members who would be standing down at the end of the year.

3.3 Michael Brown then reflected on the work that had taken place during his two terms as Chair of Council. He highlighted the new member communication centre to support member to member communication and the Council Review which he had led and he hoped would stand the organisation in good stead for the future. He also referenced the work of valuing Reps and Forum members and pledged to continue the work he had started to strengthen the role of retired members in the College.

3.4 The Chair went on to draw attention to the areas of priority work for the organisation. He explained that the new commercial strategy was vital to ensure that the RCN could continue to improve the support it provided to members and at the same time maintain subscription levels at the lowest possible rate when member numbers were continuing to grow and demand for services was increasing. He also talked about the new focus on the RCN Group and how this would benefit members

3.5 Members were encouraged to find out more about plans to amalgamate some of the smaller charitable funds held by the RCN Foundation and how this would enable the charity to improve the support it could provide to members of the nursing workforce. It was noted that Members would be consulted in June on the proposed Charity Commission scheme to set up two main benevolent and education funds.

3.7 The Chair closed by focussing on the key challenges ahead for the profession. He spoke of the impact of the poorly funded sustainability and transformation plans in England, and the ongoing attacks on pay terms and conditions for members across the four countries. The Chair urged members to support the campaign on these issues, and to do everything they could to build member support for action against pay restraint through a summer of protest.

3.8 The President thanked the Chair of Council for his speech and leadership during his term of office.

4. Financial Statements and the Auditor's Report for the financial period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016

4.1 The President invited the Honorary Treasurer, Dave Dawes, to present the Financial Statements and the Auditor's Report for the financial period 1 January to 31 December 2016.

4.2 The Honorary Treasurer introduced his report by recounting his personal experience of joining the RCN and his first time attending Congress. He then reflected on the financial and member growth of the College since the 1990's and a number of the successful campaigns the RCN had led.

4.3 The Honorary Treasurer highlighted the key figures from the accounts. The RCN Group turnover was £91.8million, with expenditure of £82.1million and a surplus of £9.7million.

4.4 He talked about the importance of the RCN's reserves which had grown to £71.8million as a result of the RCN's investment policy. It was noted that the consultation exercise with members in 2017 would inform a review to be undertaken in 2018 to ensure that the organisation continued to balance its values and financial interests when setting its investment strategy.

4.5 The Honorary Treasurer then spoke about the role of the new commercial strategy in building the financial strength of the organisation by diversifying its income sources. This would enable the RCN to continue to improve its services to members whilst maintaining its subscription rates at the lowest possible level at a time of growing membership numbers and increasing demand.

4.6 The annual report also reported on the key areas of risk facing the organisation, and the Honorary Treasurer highlighted in particular the ongoing risk of the RCN staff pension scheme. He assured members that Council was already planning for the expected increase in the deficit from the previous reported deficit of £58 million as a result of the current actuarial valuation.

4.7. The President thanked the Honorary Treasurer and opened the floor to questions from members on the annual report and the detail in the financial statements.

4.8 In response to a questions from Philip McCaffrey, Cardiff and the Vale branch, the Honorary Treasurer reminded members that the Pension Trust not the RCN was the Trustee of the RCN staff pension scheme. Tim Golbourn, Director of Finance and Business Enablement, went on to clarify that the Trustee did take into account the overall financial health of the RCN and its ability to meet its obligations to the scheme when agreeing any action plan required as a result of the actuarial valuation. It was also confirmed that the value of the pound did impact on the value of some of the investments but that the fund was diversified to manage that risk.

4.9 Linda Bailey, Public Health Forum, registered concern about the significant increase in the numbers of staff receiving salaries exceeding £60,000 and £110,000. In response the Honorary Treasurer confirmed that the numbers were for the RCN Group and that any changes reflected normal career progression through the pay scales.

4.10 Tom Murray, Devon Branch, congratulated the Honorary Treasurer on a clear exposition of the financial statements. He also asked how the commercial strategy would benefit the professional part of the organisation and the Honorary Treasurer responded by confirming that the professional work of the organisation was at the heart of the commercial strategy and any increased income would benefit all parts of the RCN.

4.11 Lee Ranyard-Lant, Northumberland Tyne and Wear branch, asked if the RCN's strong financial position would allow for a cut in the student subscription rate. The Honorary Treasurer advised that one of Council's financial priorities was to avoid increases to subscription rates but there were no plans to reduce them.

4.12 Helen Oatham, Norfolk branch was encouraged to contact Theresa Fyffe, Director, RCN Scotland about the difficulties she was having accessing the member communication system.

4.13 Andrea Spyropoulos, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley branch asked Council to consider whether there were ways to make it compulsory for members to return their vote in a trade union ballot.

4.14 In response to a question from Mary Shaw, Manchester Central Branch, the Honorary Treasurer advised that the RCN was in a strong position as its reserve level was significantly above the minimum of three months of trading income which was the amount generally regarded as good practice.

4.15 Sue Woodward asked that RCN Council review having public and patient representation on its governance structures. The Chair of Council responded that the RCN already had strong involvement of the public and patients in its policy, campaigning and project work and that Council planned to do more in this respect. However the RCN was first and foremost a membership organisation and that currently it's Royal Charter and Trade Union legislation did not provide for public and patient representation.

4.16 Mark Doris, Mental Health Forum, had asked in writing what the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Gynaecology were doing differently to be able to generate a higher trading income. The Honorary Treasurer described some of the differences between the RCN and other professional organisations and confirmed that the Council was actively looking to draw lessons from other similar organisations.

4.17 Ayodele Abibu, Hertfordshire branch, had asked in writing why RCN staff had been awarded a two percent pay rise while RCN members were experiencing a pay cut. Janet Davies, Chief Executive and General Secretary responded by emphasising how important it was for the RCN to be recognised as a good employer to give it the strength and integrity to negotiate with employers on behalf of members.

4.18 The President thanked members for their questions and the Chair, Honorary Treasurer, and Executive team for their answers. She confirmed that she would be responding directly to any further questions submitted.

5. To discuss any matters of a professional nature which are of importance to members

5.1 The President welcomed to the stage Janet Marsden and Sue Warner, Joint Chairs of the Nursing Practice & Policy Committee (NPPC), Gordon Lees, Chair of the Membership & Representation Committee (MRC), Donna Kinnair DBE, Director of Nursing Policy and Practice and Chris Cox, Director of Member Relations.

5.2 The President invited members to come forward with any questions relating to the professional role of the College.

5.3. Linda Bailey, Glamorgan Branch, voiced her concern that there had been so little time allowed on the agenda to receive questions on the annual report and financial statements and auditor's report to 31 December 2016.

5.4 June Clark, Glamorgan Branch, agreed that longer should have been allocated for questions from members on the annual report and financial statements. June also raised concern that the RCN did not have a policy on social care and the role of the nurse in social care and that in the absence of a professional definition of 'nursing' being used in court proceedings. Her fear is that in the future nursing practice will be defined by the courts.

5.5 Sue Warner, Joint Chair of the Nursing Practice and Policy Committee, confirmed that the RCN Nursing Department was working on a consolidated definition of 'nursing'. Members would be consulted on this definition later in the year. A response would be provided to June after the meeting on the RCN's work to date on nursing care in residential care homes

5.6 Greg Usrey, Greater Glasgow Branch, emphasised his belief that the Discussion Zone for members on the RCN website was a hugely valuable resource and one that should be more actively promoted by the College. Greg also requested that the online message warning members that the resource was closing on 31 May 2017 be updated to make it clear that new tools were being rolled out to succeed the discussion zone and that the Learning Zone was not simply disappearing.

5.7 The Chair of Council thanked Greg for his comments regarding the website and confirmed that the online warning message would be amended. He also advised that he was about to write to all members who had used the Discussion Zone to inform them of the upcoming changes.

5.8 Mike Travis, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch, asked whether Council would consider using some of the £9.7m surplus to re-invigorate the forum structure and invest in training for stewards given the high number of industrial relations cases that were expected as a result of the summer of planned protest activity. Mike also asked for an update on the debate about whether the RCN should join the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and what Council was doing in relation to improving the participation in RCN elections. Finally, he raised a query around legal services and ways to put the government under pressure to abolish Industrial Tribunal fees.

5.9 Michael Brown confirmed that work was ongoing on all of the important issues Mike raised.

5.10 In response to a query from John Hill, Yorkshire and the Humber Branch, on the RCN's work to encourage more collaborative working between forums, Boards and branches, Sue Warner informed the meeting that this continued to be a high priority for the Forums Governance Group and that progress was being made, albeit slowly.

5.11 In advance of Congress all Board Chairs had been informed of the forum members attending from their country/ region in order that they could make contact with them. As Chair of the Forums Governance Group, Sue had also been making a concerted effort to approach the Forum Chairs who were at Congress to discuss what more needed to be done to encourage collaborative working. She had identified a real willingness to do this better and would be continuing to champion this work.

5.12 Peggy Pryer, East Kent Branch, questioned why no reference was made to health visitors in any descriptions of the RCN. She also asked why Congress now opened on a Saturday given that hotel rates were often much higher on Saturday nights which precluded many from attending. Finally, Peggy expressed her thanks to the Chair of Council for all that he had done during his time in office to establish the retired members networks and asked RCN Council to consider implementing a system whereby nurses who retired would have to opt out of becoming a retired member in order to maintain membership numbers within the College.

5.13 Donna Kinnair, Director of Nursing, explained that reference was only made to nursing and midwifery as the qualifications enshrined in statute. If the RCN were to include health visiting, it would also need to reference a number of other qualifications such as district nursing and school nursing which would not be practical.

5.14 In relation to the Congress timetable, Michael Brown explained that this had been changed based on feedback from a large number of members who had stated that they were finding it increasingly difficult to get time away from work Monday – Friday. He advised, however, that Congress arrangements were kept under constant review and if feedback was received to the contrary that decision would be revisited.

5.15 In relation to the retired member networks, Michael reaffirmed his commitment to do what he could for the RCN's retired members and explained that work was already underway to look at how they were encouraged to stay within the RCN once they left the profession.

5.16 Roseline Henry-Nweye, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch, asked what the RCN was doing to support members working in care homes who were not receiving support from their employers with re-validation.

5.17 Donna Kinnair confirmed that the RCN did offer support with revalidation to all nurse members. She also emphasised that all employers had a duty to provide references for their staff and that the RCN would support any nurse who was having difficulty obtaining one.

5.18 Andy McGovern, North East London Inner Branch, raised concerns about the guidance on branch funding and in particular the new Board Branch fund that had replaced the historic funds. He suggested that the guidance had been interpreted in different ways across the UK and that while some branches were working well with their regions to decide how the money would be spent others had completely disempowered. He requested that further work be undertaken with Branches and Boards to clarify the guidance.

5.19 Michael Brown agreed to raise this issue at the next meeting he chaired of Board chairs and Board Directors to confirm the arrangements and ensure they were communicated to their branch officers.

5.20 Sarah Waters, South Birmingham Branch questioned why she had received a number of reminder emails to complete the recent pay poll after doing so.

5.21 Gordon Lees, Chair of the Membership and Representation Committee, acknowledged that there had been some issues with the recent pay poll and apologised to members for that on behalf of Council.

5.22 Leslie Green, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch, asked whether the RCN had any plans to work with other unions to show a united front in the fight for fair pay, Gordon advised that initial discussions had already taken place with other unions on working collaboratively. The Chair of Council stated that the RCN intended to sit down with the other unions shortly after Congress to discuss next steps.

5.23 Grant Byrne, Lothian Branch, and Lana Cook, Belfast Branch, requested information on what the RCN was doing to support and retain students once they qualified and to encourage them to be active in the College.

5.24 Gordon Lees agreed that the transition from student nurse to newly qualified nurse was an important one and discussions were already taken place with the student committee to determine how the RCN could better support members during this period. With regards to encouraging newly qualified members to become active in the College, Michael Brown explained that it was felt to be beneficial for members to take some time to settle into their new roles prior to taking on any RCN representative duties. Whilst the RCN would always try to retain its members and keep them active, during that first year as a newly qualified nurse, it was felt much more important for members to concentrate on becoming the safest and most competent nurses they could be.

5.25 Ellie Mulreany, Lothian Branch, responded saying that when the Student Committee had discussed this issue it had asked for consideration to be given to enabling students to shadow current RCN reps in order to give them a greater understanding of the role prior to qualification.

5.26 Roger Hancock, South Lincolnshire Branch, congratulated the President on being awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year's honours list 2017. He asked how many RCN members in total had been nominated to receive an Honour and suggested that the RCN should be putting forward more nominations given how many of its members were deserving of such an accolade.

5.27 In response to a query from Samantha Spence, North West London Outer Branch, on when the RCN would be making nursing associate and trainee nursing associate membership options available on the RCN website, Janet Davies, Chief Executive and General Secretary, confirmed that both were already available as part of the health practitioner category.

5.28 Ian Norris, North East London Outer Branch, reflected on Michael Brown's professional and outstanding leadership of the RCN and expressed his thanks to Michael for helping the RCN become the organisation it is today. He then asked that consideration be given to how the RCN's professional activity could be better showcased in future Council reports given that much of the representation work done by stewards, safety reps, learning reps and student information officers equated to giving professional advice. It was felt that the 2016 report of Council presented earlier in the meeting did not give an accurate reflection of the extent of the professional work undertaken by the College.

5.29 Michael Brown thanked Ian for his comments and agreed to give more thought to how the work of our RCN representatives could be better reported.

5.30 Ellie Mulreany, Lothian Branch suggested it might be helpful at future AGMs to have the student member of Council on the panel to answer any questions from students.

5.31 Michael Brown thanked Ellie for her suggestion and assured her that the student voice was very strong in Council meetings.

5.32 Anna Lynch, North East London Inner Branch, asked about the support available to members dealing with the media given the increased attention the profession was currently receiving. In particular, Anna asked about the protection from vilification given to those who were interviewed on television or by newspapers and requested that Council gave consideration to re-publishing guidance for members on professional accountability when dealing with the media which also included member responsibilities as employers.

5.33 The Chair of Council acknowledged a recent incident in the London region where members had been trolled after having done some media for the RCN. He recognised that there was a need to remind people of the guidance already in place to protect them and agreed to ensure members involved in any further campaigning or political work were made aware of this.

5.34 The President then read out a suggestion received on email from Sagila Thiruthanikasalan, North West London Inner Branch, based on an initiative launched at Gatwick Airport whereby passengers with hidden disabilities who may require additional support were provided with a lanyard. Sagila suggested that this approach might also be beneficial for members at Congress with hidden disabilities to act as a discreet sign to staff that additional support may be required.

5.35 The President thanked Sagila for the idea which would be looked at for future Congresses.

5.36 Sagila then took to the floor to ask how to change her membership from health practitioner to trainee nursing associate.

5.37 Chris Cox, Director of Member Relations, explained that trainee nursing associates fell within the health practitioner membership category which had been broadened to include them so there was no need for Sagila to amend her membership. He agreed to look into whether it was possible to put a flag on the system to ensure any tailored communications for trainees reached her and other members in the same position.

5.38 Andy Roy, North Central London Outer Branch, stated that neither he, as branch secretary, nor his branch chair were aware of the introduction of the Member Communications Centre. He emphasised the importance of ensuring member's details were correct on the RCN's database.

5.39 Vasileios Grigoriou, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch, asked what more the RCN could do to support and protect members who were unfairly reported to the NMC for raising concerns within their workplaces.

5.40 Chris Cox, agreed that it would be improper to refer registrants to the NMC as a punishment for raising concerns. He stated that the RCN would provide support to any member subjected to this via their country or regional office and the RCN's expert in-house legal team. With the support of the RCN, it was highly likely that those employers' claims would be thrown out by the NMC.

5.41 The RCN had limited powers in relation to the poor practice in organisations but if it felt that poor practice was resulting in poor healthcare for patients and client groups then it would refer those organisations to the relevant inspectorate. It was noted that the RCN now had a range of guidance available for representatives, members and others on raising concerns around poor employment practice and poor health practice within any healthcare organisation.

5.42 Roger Cowell, West Yorkshire Branch, paid tribute to the late Dame Sheila Quinn and asked those present to applaud her contribution to the College.

5.43 Further to the comments made by Vasileios Grigoriou, Mike Travis, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch, enquired whether the RCN could get trade union equity to be able to go in and inspect possible unscrupulous employers and provide support to members in those workplaces.

5.44 Farshid Azar, Essex Branch, requested that consideration be given in future to making Congress fringe events more accessible to students who had not yet specialised and may be interested in multiple sessions. Having so many events running parallel to each other meant that students often had to choose between them. Michael Brown thanked Farshid for his comments and asked him to feed them into his representative on the RCN Students Committee who would ensure they were taken into account in discussions on student arrangements for future Congresses.

5.45 Patricia Yiggon, South West London Inner Branch, advised that many internationally recruited nurses working in the UK were not aware that they needed to join a UK union in case they ever needed representation in this country. Many were just members of the unions in their home countries so she felt it important to continue to encourage colleagues to join the RCN.

6. Close

6.1. The President thanked members for attending the meeting and confirmed the 2018 Ordinary General Meeting would take place during Congress week (12 - 16 May) in Belfast.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 16 May 2018

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