

Report to members of the meeting of RCN Council held on Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 December 2015 at RCN HQ, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

RCN elections

1. Michael Brown and Lora Allford have been re-elected unopposed as Chair and Vice Chair of Council respectively. Gill Cort has been elected unopposed as Chair of Governance Support Committee. There will be elections for the other three roles on the Council Executive team and the results announced the week before Christmas.
2. We also discussed the potential impact on our membership categories and our governance arrangements of the changes to the NMC register following the implementation of the new registration process. The Membership and Representation Committee is going to lead work on this and submit a full report to Council at our next meeting in March.

Congress 2016

3. The new Agenda Committee joined us for the two days to observe Council. The Chair of Congress updated us on arrangements for Congress 2016 which is being held in Glasgow for the first time in many years. Can we also take the opportunity to remind everyone that Congress will be starting on **Saturday** 18 June next year.
4. We are also very pleased that Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has accepted an invitation to speak at Congress (subject to the outcome of the Scotland Elections next May) as has Tommy Whitelaw who campaigns to raise awareness of dementia and Rebecca Patton, Past President of the American Nurses Association.

2016 budget and annual operational plan

5. We agreed the RCN budget for 2016. The budget includes an operational surplus target of £1.6m and takes into account that there will be no subscription raise for members in 2016. The continued strong growth in membership figures has contributed to being able to achieve this budget position.

6. We also reviewed and agreed our annual operational plan which sets out the RCN's key activities for the coming year. The plan is based on the seven priorities we agreed in July after consultation with members.

Key performance indicators (KPIs), risk report and management accounts

7. We reviewed organisational performance against our agreed set of KPIs noting that further development is underway on these reports so that we can more clearly identify trends in the reporting.
8. We also reviewed our risk report and the controls which have been put in place to mitigate these.
9. We also received the management accounts for the period up to September 2015 and noted again the better than anticipated membership figures especially in our nurse and student membership categories.

Audit Committee report and Audit Committee annual report

10. Paul Rees was attending his final meeting of Council before he stood down at the end of his term as Independent Chair of the Audit Committee.
11. He reported on the committee's most recent meeting in October and asked Council to note its annual report on issues the Committee felt the Council should be aware of.

Business Committee

12. The Business Committee had met on the 30 October and had reviewed the budget and annual report in advance of our Council meeting.
13. The Committee had reviewed a consultation paper on future branch funding which was also on our agenda for agreement.
14. It had also reviewed the corporate KPIs and had asked for more supporting narrative.
15. The Committee had received an update on investment performance and approved the process and timeline for reviewing the RCN's policy position on public health issues and to incorporate its position on climate change. This policy statement was also on our agenda for agreement.

Branch finance review

16. We agreed a consultation paper on branch funding once the current historic funds are closed at the end of 2016.

17. The consultation, which will be sent to boards and branches in the New Year, will ask members for their views on branch administration funding, whether or not there should be a replacement for historic funds, funding for non-voting members to attend Congress, and whether there are permissible ways a branch can income generate. Members will also be asked about branch engagement in the governance process, and branch finance reports.
18. Do watch out for the consultation paper and feed back your responses by the end of March.

NHS pay

19. We heard a report from our Pay Sub-group which had met on the 26 November to discuss the implications of the Chancellor's comprehensive spending review on our campaign.
20. Our discussions focussed particularly on the decision to withdraw the bursary from nursing students in England which will saddle them with debt and financial pressures for years to come. Students will play a clear role on our campaign going forward.
21. We also received a paper from the Northern Ireland Board which highlighted that our members there have received no pay offer for 2015/2016. This comes on top of pressures faced by members in Northern Ireland due to the longest waiting lists in the UK for elective and emergency care.
22. Consequently, we voted to authorise a ballot for industrial action to members working in the Health and Social Care Service in Northern Ireland.

Communications update

23. Fiona Johnson updated us on significant communications activity since our last meeting.
24. We noted our very important success in achieving the shortage occupation status for nurses which followed an integrated external affairs campaign after members had raised the issue at Congress in Bournemouth.
25. The RCN's media profile continues to be strong with an OTS for the year standing at 1.8 billion. OTS (opportunities to see) is a media industry measurement for assessing the success of content. The RCN had also been represented at the party political conferences in the Autumn and had given oral evidence on the Trade Union Bill, primary care and immigration.
26. We also heard that the new website was on track to be launched on 9 December and we are looking forward the transformation that will bring to the way we engage with our members. Work is also full speed ahead with the

Access to Member Information Project.

27. The corporate publishing team reported that they had worked on over 300 publications this year and the team's work with the joint RCN/NHS Supply Chain Small Changes procurement project has been independently nominated for a healthcare marketing award.
28. Finally we heard that RCN Bulletin is about to have a design make-over in the new year and that Activate (the newsletter for activists) is now available via a smartphone App. In addition, support is continuing for forum members to help them blog.

Governance Support Committee

29. The Governance Support Committee had met in September and considered a number of issues which were reported on separately on our agenda as follows in paragraphs 30 to 41.

Branch documentation

30. Governance Support Committee had considered the feedback from members on the new branch documentation and presented the amended versions to us for approval.
31. We agreed the amendments to the documentation which includes the new regulation which sets out the purpose of branches, the terms of reference for branch committees, role descriptors for branch committee members, the election policy and process for branch committee members, and guidance on branch meetings.
32. It will now be published on the website. Branches will be informed as soon as that happens. There will be a second consultation on the outstanding sections of the resource in the New Year.

Accreditation and disaccreditation

33. We approved a new regulation which sets out a definition of RCN accredited representatives and the process for accreditation and dis-accreditation. The process itself is currently being amended to clarify the role of branches.

Regulation for RCN forums

34. We also agreed a definition for RCN forums to include in the Standing Orders and a draft regulation which sets out the purpose of forums in more detail.

35. We felt it important to ensure that forums are properly incorporated into our constitutional documentation. The amendment to the Standing Orders will now come to the AGM in June for approval by members.

Whistleblowing and members policies

36. We agreed a policy and process for whistleblowing for Council, committee and board members which included feedback from a member consultation. This will complement the one already in place for staff members
37. We also approved a policy and process for developing member policies.

Congress

38. We approved the new regulation and policy and process document for RCN Congress following the member consultation earlier in the year.
39. This documentation will replace the Congress constitution and rules and will ensure all our paperwork follows a consistent format within our overall constitutional framework.
40. Members will recall that in previous consultations there had been no great desire to change Congress and so there have been no significant amendments to the content.
41. However, during the consultation a number of issues were raised around the allocation of voting places and the associated funding arrangements. We discussed a new process for this and there will be a further consultation with members on this next year.

Chief Executive & General Executive's report to Council

42. Janet Davies gave her first update as Chief Executive & General Secretary and thanked Council for their support as she settled into the role. Further to her weekly updates to Council she highlighted some key areas of work for the RCN.
43. The new guidance for Revalidation is due to come into effect in 2016 and this is a significant achievement for the RCN which has rigorously supported and fed into the NMC consultations and pilots.
44. Council were pleased to note that the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill was progressing to the next stage of plenary consideration of amendments.
45. Janet commended the Student Committee on their response to the loss of bursaries announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Student Committee had led a petition which had secured a parliamentary debate in January.

46. It was noted that the RCN's position statement on Registered Nurses and Health Care Support Workers was available on the website. This would be developed in consultation with the HP Committee. Council supported progression for Health Care Practitioners but did not support a substitution model or second level Registered Nurses.

Nursing Practice and Policy Committee

47. The committee had received a presentation entitled 'Moving Nursing Forward' which outlined plans for the year ahead and a timeline for development. The main themes were revalidation, credentialing, clinical fellowships and development of the clinical and political leadership programmes.
48. There had been an update on NMC revalidation and the committee had noted that, at the previous meeting of the NMC Council, the final model for revalidation had been agreed and had included some of the changes that the RCN had lobbied for. Changes to the final model included preparation hours being reduced from 40 hours to 35 hours. More clarification has also been provided on feedback and the NMC will be providing templates. The revalidation guidance has also now been published. The next NMC Council has been due to meet on 25 November 2015 when it will discuss implementation.
49. The committee had discussed items from Congress 2015 and noted the progress reports on the items that related to the work of NPPC.
50. The committee had been updated on the Council of Dean's recommendation that student bursaries be replaced with loans and had agreed the RCN position paper on this issue.
51. The committee had also reviewed the position statement on public health and on the committee's recommendation, we approved an amended version which clarified that the purpose of the document was to set out our values as an organisation on public health issues.

Membership and Representation Committee

52. The committee had received detailed briefings on the pay review process across the four countries including an update on the situation in Northern Ireland.
53. The committee had agreed that an integral part of the pay campaign would be to get the public on board with the realities of working in the NHS at the present time. The campaign would also highlight the increased responsibilities of nurses and HCAs.
54. The Trade Union Bill was discussed and the committee had anticipated more opportunities for lobbying as it passes through the House of Lords where it is likely to meet with more resistance.

55. The committee had also reflected on the fact that nursing agency costs have increased exponentially over the last few years as a result of the recruitment and retention issue in nursing. The agreed cap on agency nursing will affect staffing levels especially during the critical winter period. The committee had agreed that the RCN should respond to the TDA/Monitor proposal regarding a cap on agency and bank staff.
56. The committee was pleased to note that nursing had been placed on the skills shortage list until February 2016 pending a review of further evidence. The committee had asked for members to be informed that overseas nurses currently working on a visa can apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK and will not be subject to the requirement to earn £35,000 if nursing were to come off the shortage list next year.
57. As part of the committee's report we considered an update on the latest statistics and evidence relating to immigration and overseas nurses.
58. The committee also noted that revalidation will be going ahead from 16 April 2016. To prepare for this the Trade Union Governance Group had been helping to produce guidance materials for RCN representatives.
59. The committee had also approved the first reports on Congress 2015 items which have now been published on the website and had received regular reports on the work of the Member Representation and Support Programme Board, Case Management, Membership statistics, the Trade Union Governance Group and the work of the UK Representative Committees.
60. Following the MRC report we received a detailed update on the work of the Member Representation and Support Programme Board and noted that close to 400 Stewards had now received equipment to support their use of the Case Management System (CMS). Work to develop a new Stewards Supervision and Support Service was underway and the Programme Board would also be looking at how to include the activities of Learning and Safety Reps into CMS.

International Committee

61. The International Committee had met on the 23 September and had been updated on the plans for the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation business meeting and conference which will be held in London in 2016. Three abstracts submitted by the RCN have been accepted for the conference.
62. The immigration and migration debates at Congress and the unfolding refugee crisis had also been discussed by the committee. It had been noted that the RCN would be submitting evidence to the Migration Advisory Committee on its review of the visa system and skills shortages.
63. The committee had also had a first discussion on preparing a draft strategy for the RCN's preparations for the EU referendum.

64. Our work in relation to TTIP was noted. In particular, we noted that the RCN is not specifically against the trade deal but are against the inclusion of health services within TTIP.

Ethics Committee

65. The committee had reviewed its successful seminar on 11 September about the deprivation of liberty standards. Forty five people had attended and there had been good feedback.
66. The committee will be holding its next seminar on covert filming which was the subject of a debate at Congress 2015.

Health Practitioner Committee

67. The committee had discussed ideas and possibilities for promoting the role of HCAs to young people in particular.
68. This had been followed by a session on marketing and recruitment to increase recruitment of new HCA members to the RCN. The committee had heard about some early successes with a pilot awareness campaign which utilised digital and social media channels.
69. The committee had also discussed the presence of HPs at Congress and ideas for how to attract more of them to attend.

Students Committee

70. We were updated on a special meeting of the committee convened earlier in the day to discuss the RCN strategy on the government announcement about the abolition of the student bursary.
71. The committee had discussed its key messages in advance of the parliamentary debates on Monday 14 December 2015 and in January 2016. Further information about this work will be disseminated to RCN students via a variety of channels including social media and the website.
72. The committee also reported on its meeting held on the 17 September where they had received an update from the most recent meeting of the National Union of Students' National Executive Council which had been attended by Sylvia Duval, student member of Council.
73. The committee had also discussed its plans for Congress in 2016 as well as proposed changes to mentorship and standards in supporting learning and assessment.

Fellows Co-ordinating Committee

74. Jane Denton CBE FRCN took us through a report from the Fellows Co-ordinating Committee which had met on 30 September 2015.
75. The committee had agreed plans for a public lecture as part of the Centenary programme to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Fellows. The lecture, which will be held on 14 July 2016, will focus on the Fellows over the past 40 years and their contribution to health and social care.
76. Jane also reported on the full Fellows meeting which had taken place on 11 November. The meeting had focused on the RCN's education priorities and in particular the proposals for credentialing and a clinical fellowship. Several of the Fellows agreed to work with the College to help shape this proposal over the next few months.

National Pensioners' Convention

77. Trevor Peel summarised the report from the elected representatives to the NPC. In particular, he highlighted the links that had been developed with the RCN Diversity Officer and the RCN Professional Lead for Older People.
78. Key issues for the NPC included plans to raise the affiliation fees, Pensions, TUC issues, Transport and responding to policy developments. The RCN was represented on a number of the NPC's working parties which focussed on key issues in more depth.
79. There had been ongoing work to support activity to improve the RCN membership offer for retired members and this would be addressed in further detail by the Membership and Representation Committee at their next meeting.
80. It was noted that elections for the current representatives to the NPC were currently underway. Trevor would be standing down from his role as he had now been elected to RCN Council.

President and Deputy President's reports

81. President Cecilia Amin highlighted some of the activities she had carried out in recent weeks.
82. Council noted the written report from the Deputy President Rod Thomson FRCN who was unable to attend the meeting.