

**Report to members of the meeting of RCN Council held on Tuesday 4  
and Wednesday 5 April 2016 at RCN HQ, Cavendish Sq,  
London, W1G 0RN**

1. This meeting was observed by over 60 members of our country and regional boards. We were very pleased to have them with us and to be able to share information and ideas with them.

**Finance**

2. We began our meeting with the finance section of our meeting which was chaired by the Honorary Treasurer, Dave Dawes.
3. We received reports from the Audit and Business Committees, and then spent time reviewing the RCN's statutory annual report and financial statements for the year January to December 2016 before approving them.
4. The annual report reflects that 2016 continued to be a very testing time for nursing in the current political, economic and social environment but also records some of the key successes for the RCN including continuing strong membership growth. It also updates members on an equally challenging internal agenda and in particular the changes to our governance arrangements approved at the 2016 AGM.
5. The accounts themselves reported the combined results of the RCN UK, its trading subsidiary RCN Publishing Co (RCNi), RCN HoldCo and the RCN Foundation.
6. For the first time this year the RCN was required to submit a Membership Audit Certificate. This is a new legal requirement following changes to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 which now requires trade unions to appoint an assurer to verify their membership figures. The RCN achieved full assurance.
7. The topline financial position was an increase in income for the Group to £91.8m compared to £89.4m the previous year with a total expenditure of £82.1m compared to £80.5m to previous year.
8. The Group defined benefit pension scheme deficit at the end of 2016 was £14.6m compared to £40.4m at the end of 2015. This reduction is partly due to our continued deficit payment plan and incorporation of an allowance for commutation of pension for cash at retirement. The actuarial valuation of the defined benefit scheme based on the position at 30 September 2016 will be finalised in December 2017. It is anticipated that this valuation will report a significant increase from the deficit reported in the last actuarial valuation as at 30 September 2013

due to the adverse economic conditions over the past 5 years. The last valuation reported a deficit of £58.5m.

9. Our investments have continued to grow significantly, they provided income of £1.4m and the value of our investment portfolio stood at £57.5 at the end of the year, up from £50.5m in the previous year.
10. A summary of the annual report and accounts will be published in May's issue of *RCN Bulletin*. Members attending the AGM in Liverpool on Tuesday 16 May will be able to ask questions of the Honorary Treasurer. To find out more about the AGM and to read the full annual report when it is published please go to [www.rcn.org.uk/agm2017](http://www.rcn.org.uk/agm2017).
11. Council also agreed to extend the 2013-17 RCN Strategy by one year to enable the new Council and Council Committees to work with the Executive Team to develop new RCN Group strategy for 2019 to 2023.
12. The remainder of this section of our agenda involved scrutinising the management accounts, the new format risk register and our key performance indicators. Overall the organisational position continues to look strong as we prepare for the risks and challenges ahead.

### **Governance Support Committee report and RCN elections**

13. Gill Cort, Chair of the Governance Support Committee, reported on the committee's February meeting and we noted that a significant portion of time had been spent reviewing the arrangements for the AGM and progressing work on the Council Review.
14. The Council meeting this week was the start of the implementation phase of the Council Review.
15. Three of the key findings of the Council Review were that members were looking for:
  - a Council which looks and acts more like a decision-making Board rather than a representative body and has a real grip on what the organisation is doing and that members subscriptions are being spent to best effect
  - our roles as both a royal college and a trade union to be strengthened
  - a simpler decision making process which allows decisions to be taken more quickly.
16. With these recommendations in mind Council has agreed that:

From January 2018

-Council will have 17 members (rather than the current 31) – one member from each Country and Region, a student, an HP member and the President, Deputy President and the Chair of Congress.

-for the first time we will have two directly elected decision making Committees to lead our professional and trade union functions. The RCN Trade Union and the RCN Professional Nursing Committees will both have one member from each Country and Region, a student and a HP member. The elections for these Committees will open at Congress.

From June this year we will be starting to transition to the new Finance & Investment Committee which is bringing together the current Business and Investment Committees.

17. We also agreed some changes to the group governance documentation to clarify the working arrangements for the RCN Group; agreed the detailed procedures for the RCN elections in 2017, including in particular the arrangements for the new RCN Trade Union and RCN Professional Nursing Committees and appointed the RCN Group Secretary as UK Returning Officer for the 2017 elections.

### **AGM 2017**

18. We agreed the agenda for the 2017 AGM. Arrangements for the AGM and the agenda itself will be posted onto the website in the next few days – go to [www.rcn.org.uk/AGM2017](http://www.rcn.org.uk/AGM2017) for the latest information.

### **HR reports**

19. David Cooper, Director of Organisational Capability and Change, presented the RCN's health and safety annual report and the HR annual workforce report for 2016.
20. The first of these reports demonstrates health and safety performance improvements year on year and we noted that, overall, the RCN is a very low risk organisation with a small number of accidents/incidents reported. We noted the action plan for 2017 which focusses on lone working, driving at work and excessive driving, verbal abuse to RCN staff and promoting health and well-being.
21. The second report was the RCN's annual workforce report and we noted that there were no significant concerns relating to RCN staff. However we spent some time talking about the wellbeing of our staff, the relatively high levels of stress and anxiety in member-facing roles and any further action we should be taking to support these staff.
22. We were reminded that the RCN was number 15 in the Sunday Times 100 Best not for profit organisations to work for. We noted that we had

been provided with feedback and recommendations from the survey results which are being taken on board this year as we continue to develop our reputation as a model employer.

### **Respect Charter**

23. We approved an updated Respect Charter and new guidelines for staff about managing unacceptable behaviour from members and non-members.
24. Over the coming months we will be working up similar guidelines for our accredited representatives.

### **Awards Committee**

25. We agreed a number of recommendations from the Awards Committee for Fellowships and Awards of Merit. These awards will be announced at RCN Congress and will be bestowed at the opening ceremony on Saturday 13 May.

### **Member Research**

26. Council and Board members took part in a workshop session about the findings from the Member Research the RCN carried out at the end of last year and what members had told us should influence how we work and engage with members in the future.

### **Website Development**

27. A presentation followed on the future plans to continue to develop the RCN website including in particular personalisation, web chats, website blocks and in-page commenting.

### **Congress**

28. Stuart McKenzie Chair of Congress updated Council on the arrangements for Congress this year.
29. The agenda is now published and on the website (<https://www.rcn.org.uk/congress/agenda/debates>).
30. When selecting agenda items the Agenda Committee felt that a number of important themes would be better addressed through emergency items. These included Brexit, Overseas Nurses and Pay. Council and Board members were asked to encourage submitting entities to put in emergency items around these and other issues. (<https://www.rcn.org.uk/congress/agenda/submit-an-emergency-agenda-item>).

31. Council and Board Members noted that the new Regulation and policy and process document approved in 2015 will be applied for the first time at Congress this year.
32. Our Chief Executive & General Secretary will be speaking as usual on Monday. On Tuesday Jonny Benjamin and Neil Layburn will be talking about their experiences of mental health and on Wednesday we will hear from Jane McAlevey, US union leader and academic.
33. With six weeks to go registrations are higher than in the past few years six weeks before the event.
34. The Chair of Congress also briefed Council and Board Members about the new approach we will be taking to evaluating Congress this year. For the first time we will be collecting anonymous delegate data on patterns of movement to help inform our future decision-making and ensure Congress continues to address what members want and is value for money.

### **2016 Congress Items**

35. Council discussed follow-up to two of the 2016 Congress Items. It supported plans to develop a new approach to political engagement to strengthen our membership and organisational ability to influence political decision-making and to position ourselves effectively as the voice of leaders within the nursing community on behalf of our members and the wider public.
36. It also agreed to hold a member survey at Congress and on the website to inform and help build a robust evidence based case for change for safe and effective staffing across the UK and across all settings.

### **Pay Campaign – Next Steps**

37. Council and Boards members were updated on the background to the decisions taken by the governments in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on NHS pay award, the political reality and where we are; what is happening in health and the other wider contextual issues.
38. The meeting then discussed the lessons we have learned from previous activity and how we take forward our fight for the pay award our members are entitled to.
39. Council and Board members agreed to go out to our members across all four countries to test their appetite for industrial action.

## **Communications**

40. We noted a report on all the communications activity since our last meeting which has focussed on highlighting key issues including nursing pay, pressures in the health service and violence against healthcare staff. We were very pleased at the level of member engagement we have had in our pay campaign “#scrapthecap” and to see the focus on using member voices and stories wherever possible.
41. Council was also very pleased to see the positive response from members to the new Facebook groups to support branch and forum activity.
42. The materials available for members to use to celebrate Nurses Day were also highlighted

## **Chief Executive & General Secretary’s Report**

43. The Chief Executive & General Secretary introduced her report by highlighting a number of internal issues. She celebrated the RCN’s achievement of being placed at number 15 in the Sunday Times 100 Best not for profit organisations to work for.
44. Janet also talked to Council about how much staff had appreciated Graham Revie, Chair of the Stewards Committee, speaking at the recent staff link-up about the role of the RCN rep; what made it worthwhile for him and the teamwork he enjoyed with different staff teams.
45. Council noted the successful go-live of the new CRM system on 20 March and that Advanced Practice Credentialing opened this week
46. On the external agenda the Chief Executive & General Secretary drew attention to the decision by NHS Improvement to withdraw the ban on trusts employing agency staff whose main employment is with the NHS as a result of the strong response from members. She took the opportunity to emphasise that this was an example of what we can do if we all work together.
47. The Chief Executive & General Secretary also reported that the General Secretary of EPSU had confirmed at the meeting the previous week that the RCN would be party to the discussions with trade unions in Europe about the impact of Brexit. It is key we continue to keep a close eye on nursing across Europe.

## **RCN Retired Members**

48. Council supported a paper by the Chair of Council about ways to ensure retired members who want to engage in RCN work have a vehicle through which to do so.

49. This will happen through encouraging branches to develop roles for retired members that make best use of their experience; the building of local retired member networks; ensuring retired members are engaged with the work to deliver the equality and inclusion strategy; and an annual UK conference for retired members.
50. Work will also be undertaken to identify retired members within our membership so we are able to communicate them on relevant issues.

### **National Pensioners Convention**

37. It was good to see the RCN represented at a roundtable event at the House of Commons hosted by the NPC and the NHS Support Federation to consider what was the best model for funding our health and social care system in the future and how to promote the solution politically.
38. The RCN was also represented by three voting delegates at the Biennial Delegate Conference of the National Pensioner's Convention which is their vehicle for determining policy. Motions included the effects of Brexit on pensioners, pensions, sustainability and transformation plans, social care, elder abuse, dementia, housing issues and confirmation of the commitment to a unified health and social care service funded from general taxation and free at the point of use.
39. Looking forward the Pensioners Parliament will be held in Blackpool from 6-8 June and the RCN will be represented by two of its elected representatives.

### **Nursing Practice and Policy Committee**

40. The Committee has changed the format of its meetings. In the morning it discusses the 'business as usual' items and concentrates on priority areas of work in the afternoon.
41. It received for the first time a written update on activity under the Future Nurse, Future Workforce programme. These reports will be incredibly useful to the Committee.
42. The afternoon session of the meeting was dedicated to discussing the proposal for a project on the value of nursing and also the RCN's work in relation to the integration of health and social care across the UK.
43. The Committee agreed that the first step of the value of nursing project was to pull together all the work that had already been done in

countries and regions to describe the value of nursing in a way that is understood by the wider public.

44. In relation to integration, NPPC identified other areas where the RCN could add value and discussed the mechanism that needs to be put in place to collate intelligence relating to Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). NPPC recognised that the RCN could be doing more to publicise the introduction and purpose of STPs and Council accepted the recommendation that there should be a more interactive platform for updating members on STPs on the website.

### **Membership and Representation Committee**

45. At its Development Day in January the Committee agreed to focus its work over the coming year on the ongoing pay campaign, work on the new organising model to strengthen the RCN visibility locally and the valuing reps work
46. It did further work on each of these areas at its March meeting and discussed progress with implementing the Equality and Inclusion Strategy.
47. The Committee spent much of its meeting thinking about the approach going forward with regards to NHS pay within the context of challenging economic conditions including uncertainties around the impact of Brexit, inflation risk and the Government's economic strategy.
48. The Committee agreed to focus on ensuring enforcement of the provisions of NHS Agenda for Change contracts including on time owing, the payment of overtime etc.; job evaluation audits and work to address down-banding and the potential introduction of overtime guardians in workplaces. MRC also agreed to continue to focus on anti-social hours and recruitment and retention issues.
49. The Committee also expressed concern over the apparent reality gap between the predominantly positive results reported in the England 2016 NHS Staff Survey and the messages conveyed by RCN members about the reality on the frontline. We asked the RCN to explore as a matter of urgency ways to feed into the development of future NHS staff surveys in England as already happens in Scotland.
50. It also asked that the process for deciding whether the RCN should be involved in future marches be improved.
51. There was also an important discussion about the priority work the UK Safety Reps Committee was leading on violence against healthcare staff. Council praised the role the Committee had played in the

Parliamentary debate on 27 February and asked to be kept up-to-date with progress with the work.

52. MRC took some time to consider the three annual reports from the three UK Committees and acknowledged the huge amount of work they had led over the past 12 months.

### **International Committee**

53. The majority of the meeting was spent discussing the future role of the Committee in the new governance structure and how the Committee could work in a more integrated way with the new Professional Nursing and Trade Union Committees to support the new approach to delivering policy change.
54. The Committee also spent some time discussing the achievements and learning from phase 1 of the RCN-ZUNO partnership project and agreed to support phase 2 of the project to ensure phase 1 will be properly embedded.
55. The President briefed the Committee on the international development project being funded by the RCN Foundation to support two student nurses in Bangladesh to undertake a 3 year diploma in nursing science and midwifery.
56. The Committee raised concerns about the plans of the Department for International Development's (DfID) to reduce the commonwealth secretariat budget and learned that the RCN was looking at how it can support some of the work that was underway on nursing.
57. Membership of the Cavendish coalition was also discussed and the Committee was worried about its very limited representation from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### **Health Practitioner Committee**

58. The Health Practitioner Committee has changed the format of its meetings so that in the morning we could deal with the 'business as usual' items and then dedicate the afternoon session to discussing key Committee work streams.
59. The introduction of the Nursing Associate role and nursing degree apprenticeships dominated its discussions. The Committee will be continuing to push for the NMC to regulate the Assistant Practitioner role as well as the NA role.
60. The Committee discussed the current HP recruitment target and has agreed that it is happy with it. The Committee will be giving consideration to a retention target for HP members and will be

discussing what needs to be done to retain more HP members at the next meeting.

61. It was felt that there was more to do to better promote the RCN's offer to HCAs and ensure as many HCAs as possible are aware that they can become members.
62. The Committee then spent the afternoon discussing content ideas for the Health+Care magazine, how to improve the RCN's professional offer to HCAs, and Committee priorities for 2017 and will be bringing back suggestions in all of these areas.

### **Student Committee**

63. The Students Committee has met twice this year.
64. The arrangements for the Student Programme at Congress were a priority for the new Committee.
65. The other focus over the past three months has been the changing nursing workforce, the new routes into nursing and the impact of the fall in university nursing applications across the UK. The Committee members have been involved in various NMC/HEE and parliamentary meetings and events and will be feeding into the NMC consultation on the new pre-registration standards.
66. The Committee is also keen to develop its working relationship with the NUS and will be prioritising this in the coming months as well as making sure it has strong channels of communication with the European Nursing Student Association to ensure the voice of UK nursing students continues to be heard in Europe in the future.

### **RCN Foundation**

67. Robert Sowney, Chair of the RCN Foundation updated us on the two exciting projects the Foundation is funding to support nursing in care home settings.
68. Council also noted that the RCN Foundation had established a Wales Committee and that Denise Llewellyn FRCN, a former Executive Nurse Director in Wales had been appointed a Trustee and that she would also be the first chair of the new Committee.

### **President and Deputy President's Reports to Council**

69. RCN President, Cecilia Anim CBE highlighted some of her activities in recent weeks and talked in particular about her visit to the University of Bradford on International Women's Day to highlight steps to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in research and innovation with particular focus on universities.

70. She also encouraged members to attend the Memorial Service for Dame Sheila Quinn in the OBE Chapel in the Crypt of St Paul's Cathedral at 11.00 am on 5 June. If you would like to attend please contact [Jane.Clarke@rcn.org.uk](mailto:Jane.Clarke@rcn.org.uk) for details.
71. The Deputy President, Professor Rod Thomson FRCN reported to Council on his main activities in support of the President, in particular his focus on the future funding of health and social care. He also highlighted the RCN Wales' Leadership Summit which brought together nurse leaders from across Wales who were addressed by the Chief Executive of the NHS in Wales