

**Report to members of the meeting of RCN Council
held on 28 November 2018.**

RCN Group plan and budget

1. First on our agenda at our November meeting was the RCN Group plan and the budget for 2019 to 2021.
2. We agreed the Group plan which, for the first time, sets out the outputs of the RCN's work for the next three years mapped against our new Group strategy.
3. A key focus in the plan is continuing work on the transformation programme to ensure resources are in the right place to provide the services members and stakeholders need and want, when they want them and in a form that meets their needs.
4. We also agreed the three year budget required to deliver this plan.

Members' expenses policy

5. Some small changes to the members' expenses policy were agreed. This includes a small rise in the subsistence rate from £18 to £20 from 1 January 2019.
6. We also heard that HMRC had recently changed its approach to how it deals with some categories of expense claims. As a result the RCN needs to approach HMRC to get their agreement to retaining the inclusion in the policy of the passenger rate and the staying with friends' allowances. These are now considered by HMRC to be taxable benefits.
7. Agreement will not be obtained by the beginning of January which means that when the updated policy is published it will not include those two provisions.

RCNi

8. The Chair of RCNi presented their latest trading position and updated Council on why the company is behind where it thought they would be with transitioning their business from a print-based journal publisher to being more serviced based, with digital offerings to a broader institutional customer base.

9. He assured Council that it remained the right vision and strategy and talked about the steps the Board was taking to address the reasons company performance was behind target.
10. Council also had a demonstration of the new RCNi decision making tool to support nurses to make decisions in practice.
11. On the day of our meeting RCNi opened entries for the 2019 RCNi Nurse Awards which are open to nurses, midwives, nursing students, health care assistants, health practitioners and healthcare teams in the UK.
12. Following scrutiny of a business case we also agreed in principle that RCNi offices should be relocated to the RCN headquarters building at 20 Cavendish Sq in 2020. Further work will be required to scope out the implications of the move but, given that the RCNi building in Harrow is coming to the end of its lease, it looks like the most advantageous option for the Group and will improve ways of working between the two parts of the Group.

Safe Staffing

13. Under this item we discussed our concerns over the lack of accountability for workforce strategy in England and the lack of consultation by NHS England on its approach to the ten-year plan and how it was going to spend the additional £20bn annually.
14. We have made it clear to both the Secretary of State for Health and the Head of NHS England that it was their responsibility to resolve the problem of nursing supply and have continued to argue that a sustainable higher education funding model was the safest and most effective route to growing the nursing workforce at scale.
15. Council gave its full support to a press statement outlining our concerns and that nursing and workforce planning were being side-lined by the NHS in England against the assurances we had received from the Secretary of State to the contrary.
16. At the same time work has started to build momentum for our UK wide safe staffing campaign which is our key priority for 2019. Our aim is to enshrine nurse staffing levels for safe and effective care in law in each country of the UK.
17. A UK wide project plan has been developed and a new model for collaborative working set up across the UK with a UK programme board which will report to a member oversight and scrutiny group with representatives from the Professional Nursing and Trade Union Committees and Country and Regional Boards. The oversight and scrutiny group will be accountable to Council
18. Staff will be working in partnership and collaboration with members and we will be using this priority project to test our new organising/engagement

model. We hope that working together in this way will help us to connect with members in a more meaningful way.

Member Engagement

19. Council also discussed and agreed a research proposal to inform the development of a new member engagement strategy.

Pay

20. NHS Pay and in particular the pay position in Northern Ireland remains a key priority. This remains a priority for Council and an update on negotiations will be presented to the Trade Union Committee on 12 December as discussions are still in progress.
21. An additional meeting of the Trade Union Committee is taking place on 12 December to look in more detail at:
 - the Northern Ireland position
 - the 2018 RCN labour market review which will inform our submission to
 - the pay review body in 2019
 - the current valuation of the NHS pension scheme for England and Wales, and discussions taking place about the resultant changes that may be made to the benefit and contribution structure; and
 - the RCN's role in continuing discussions relating to the implementation of the NHS Pay Deal in England; The new arrangement for pay progression for the NHS in England.
22. The incoming Council will receive an update from the Committee on all these issues at the handover session on 14 December as well as a report from the Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee.
23. A new Code of Practice on Industrial Action was approved by Council. It had been updated to reflect the new governance arrangements resulting from the Council Review.

Finance, Audit, Compliance and Performance

24. Council reviewed the management accounts for the period to October 2018.
25. As part of this item we looked in some detail at the membership figures which showed a typical pattern for this time of year and reflected student recruitment and the transition of students into the newly qualified payment plan.
26. The Finance & Investment Committee had met since the previous meeting of Council and in addition to looking in detail at the Group Plan and Plan and the proposals for the RCNi relocation the Committee put two specific proposals to Council:

- to change the provider of the RCN staff defined contribution pension scheme to Aegon; and
- that following an independent performance review Sarasin & Partners should continue to act as the RCN's investment managers.

Council discussed these, were assured of the scrutiny that had taken place in the Finance & Investment Committee and approved both recommendations.

27. The quarterly report of the Group Audit Committee was presented by Simon Lowe, its independent chair.
28. Under this report Council spent some time discussing the latest version of the risk register which had been updated significantly to reflect the current context and challenges the organisation is facing. Although the organisation is in a stable position and is continuing to deliver business as usual there is a short term risk for the organisation because of the governance and the staffing changes taking place and in particular the number of interim positions on the Executive Team.
29. In addition the Audit Committee had questioned the decision taken to delay the recruitment to the Chief Information Officer role until the new Chief Executive & General Secretary was in place. The Council agreed to update the risk register to take account of their concerns and were pleased to hear the Committee had asked to receive a summary of the findings from all the internal audits that had looked at technology over the past year.
30. We noted work was underway to review the corporate performance reporting dashboard to reflect the new Group Strategy and the agreed three year plan of work.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Review carried out by ERS.

31. Council reviewed the latest version of the management action plan arising from the ERS review into the governance and processes around the NHS pay deal in England. This will be updated again in December in preparation for the handover to the new Council
32. Two draft papers were discussed on meeting arrangements and decision making which had been prepared as part of the action plan. A number of changes were requested and the revised policy and processes will be formally approved by the Council prior to the handover meeting.

Governance Support

33. When the Governance Support Committee met in November it had focussed on two key areas: the EGM and the governance issues that had arisen and progress to date with implementing the recommendations of the Council Review.
34. Council supported changes being proposed by the Committee to the arrangements for requisitioning and voting at EGM's. It asked for draft changes to the Standing Orders to be presented to its December meeting for approval in order that they would be ready to put to the 2019 AGM in May.
35. In November Council discussed a number of changes to the Council Review Implementation Plan which had been highlighted by the Governance Support Committee. It will be making a number of recommendations to the incoming Council at the handover session.
36. The Committee also agreed timelines and procedures for re-opening elections for remaining vacancies on Boards and Committees, recommended further updates to the Congress policy and process document at the request of the Agenda Committee which Council approved.
37. Council also approved a new Regulation on a Fit and Proper Persons test for Council Members.

Council Task and Finish Groups

38. Council received two reports from Task and Finish Groups it had set up to lead on priority work to review the current membership categories and to rewrite the current complaints and member disciplinary policies.

Review of the Complaints and Members Disciplinary Policies

39. Council noted that drafts of a new regulation, code of conduct for members, complaints and resolution process and a social media policy would be submitted to Council at the pre-handover meeting for discussion.

Review of the Current Membership Categories

40. The task and finish group reviewing the current membership categories was proposing that going forward that everyone would be a member of the RCN and that the current membership categories would become subscription categories. These would be renamed: Regulated (by the NMC), Non-Regulated (by the NMC) and Students. The current payment plans would not need any immediate changes and the current governance arrangements would be maintained through the organisation's governance policies and procedures.

41. The result would be to retain a simple structure which was flexible and could adapt to further changes in the routes into membership and at the same time setting a different tone.
42. It also takes on board the request from the Health Practitioner Membership to change their name.
43. There will be a member consultation in the New Year about the proposed changes ahead of a vote on the necessary changes to the Standing Orders at the 2019 AGM.
44. The consultation will also ask for members views on a request from the HP Committee to review the definition of healthcare support workers eligible to join the RCN.

Health Practitioner Committee

45. Another priority for this Council has been our Health Care support worker members.
46. Council re-iterated its support for a new lobby during 2019 for regulation of the whole healthcare workforce. Work and resource has been allocated to develop draft national standards for education and proficiency standards for health practitioners to underpin the campaign.
47. We were also pleased to have confirmed that work was now in hand to develop a member resource to support career development for healthcare support workers.

RCN Foundation

48. Concluding our meeting we had a presentation from Deepa Korea, Head of the Foundation, about the growth in support they had experienced over the past twelve months and the numbers of grants they had been able to make as a result. This has been a significant year of growth for the Foundation and is as a result of a lot of hard work from the team and the whole of the RCN - staff and members - supporting this work.
49. Council expressed its thanks and appreciation to Robert Sowney, Chair of the RCN Foundation, who was standing down at the end of January. Council recognised that Robert has been an outstanding leader taking the Foundation to its current successful position from its initial set up.

Maria Trewern, Chair of RCN Council, November 2018