



**DRAFT Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 December 2023, at  
Burlington House and via Zoom**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Audie Muller was introduced as the new Head of Operations. The Council thanked and acknowledged Siobhan Adeusi, who is leaving her role as Executive Assistant and Office Manager. It was also recognised that Professor Belinda Wilkes has been awarded the Richard Glazebrook Medal and Prize for Leadership in Physics.

**1.2 Attendance**

**PRESENT:**

Prof Mike Edmunds (ME); President and Chair  
Prof Mike Lockwood (MLO); President Elect online  
Prof Mike Cruise (MC); Interim Treasurer  
Prof Mark Lester (MLE); Senior Secretary online  
Dr Matt Middleton (MM); Vice President, (A)  
Prof Stephen Eales (SE); Vice President (A) online  
Prof Andrew Curtis (ACU) Vice president G online  
Dr Sheona Urquhart (SU); A Secretary  
Dr Jasmine Kaur Sandhu (JKS) (G) online  
Mrs Patricia Tomkins (PT;) (A)  
Dr Olivia Keenan (OK); (A)  
Prof Belinda Wilkes (BW) online  
Dr Joanna Barstow (JB)  
Prof Steve Miller (SM)  
Dr Alan Cayless (ACA) A online  
Prof Caroline Smith (CLS)  
Dr Imogen Gingell (IG) G online  
Dr Ashley Spindler (AS) A  
Prof Silvia Zane (SZ)  
Prof Derek Ward Thompson (DWT) A

**APOLOGIES:**

Prof James Hammond (JH) G Secretary  
Prof Clare Watt (CW); Vice President (G)  
Ms Siobhan Adeusi (SA) Executive Assistant and Office Manager

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Philip Diamond (PD), Executive Director  
Dr Robert Massey, (RM) Deputy Executive Director and Policy  
Mr Audie Muller (AM), Head of Operations

## **2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 13 October 2023 were approved.

Matters Arising:

2.1b JKS listed in both apologies and in attendance.

**ACTION:** JKS to be removed from apologies.

2.1c ACA requested salutation changed from Prof to Dr.

**ACTION:** Change salutation from Prof to Dr.

2.2 Action Status Report

PD updated Council on the following matters from the report:

- OUP matter
- IAU's naming conventions

## **3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

3.1 Update on monthly Direct Debits was received by Council. Council members were thanked for their contribution to the testing.

The paper on CiviCRM Migration was received by the Council.

**ACTION:** RM will work with our IT contractor (Veda) and the DD provider to address link issues.

3.2 Update on the BH lease for information – CONFIDENTIAL redacted

3.3 Visa Application Process

RM mentioned that on 4 December 2023 the Home Secretary, James Cleverly, announced future changes to visa rules. These changes will have an impact on the workforce. It is important that we collaborate with other societies. Many other societies currently use the Global Talent visa system.

**ACTION:** RM will draft response to Home Office. ME to sign off.

## **4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS**

4.1 The Treasurer's Report, including Risk Register and Statement of Accounts was received by Council.

MC updated the Council and confirmed that everything is going as expected. MC confirmed the small grants scheme has reached its completion with some grants not being fully used. MC said that they would be prepared to accept additional 'exceptional' bids so that the scheme is fully utilised.

MC advised with respect to the early estimates of 2023 outturn, that the society should go cautiously next year.

MC commented on the Risk Register that there could be a drop in membership subscriptions due to the changes that have been made to the collection of subscriptions.

Other additions to the Risk Register

Presidential malfeasance and a process for addressing it, should that occur. Potential lack of candidates for Council positions. MC put forward one idea to provide management training to support younger members who may feel they lack the appropriate management experience to serve on Council.

## **5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### **5.1 Report by Executive Director**

#### **5.1a Update on strategy**

The Council discussed the strategy and the five main goals, which now includes publishing. The Council were happy with the main outline of the strategy. It was also mentioned that the mission statement should reference inspiration and widening access for young people.

**ACTION:** If the Council has any specific comments, these are to be sent to PD with ME copied in by the end of the year.

ACU questioned the balance of Geophysics and questioned whether the RAS were the actual mechanism to re-address this rather than the BGA. Geophysics is currently in crisis with reducing students applying. ACU put forward that the BGA is part of the RAS.

PD highlighted a potential conflict of interest regarding how to take this forward.

MC is open to proposals to support meetings if ACU organises, with a preferred location outside of London.

ME summarised and asked that the Council provide a list of priorities.

**ACTION:** A list of priorities to be sent to PD with timescales by the end of the year.

**ACTION:** ACU to write to the RAS to question where the BGA and RAS fit and whether it would be appropriate for stronger partnership working.

## 5.1b Governance Review

PD updated the Council and proposed that the Governance review should be undertaken by an external party. The external party put forward to conduct the review is Lucy Devine, Director of Wellspring Consulting Ltd.

It was agreed that the review should cover:

- The bye-laws with reference to the use of virtual meetings necessitated by the pandemic i.e. Hybrid working
- The size, structure, and membership of the Council – our governing body. MLE commented this should also include the number of meetings held by Council and Election process advise on sub-committees
- The terms of reference of our advisory committees
- Board behaviour, accountabilities, and disciplinary processes
- Election process - review skill sets required and have a mechanism for identifying suitable members

The Council approved that a Governance review should take place in 2024, and in support that a Steering Group be appointed in February to oversee this. SE suggested an extraordinary meeting in the interim to put these measures in place.

The Council approved the engagement of Lucy Devine to support the review with support from the Steering Group.

MC said with the help of the Steering Group, we should help Wellspring Consulting to understand the current landscape. OK volunteered to join the Group.

**ACTION:** Steering Group to be set up.

## 5.1c Website development plan

The Council received the paper from RM. RM provided an update on the website development plan and the Council discussed what was in the initial proposal.

AS commented that there should be paid for content, paid articles, and different language models, with no AI generated content.

CLS suggested to Council that we should use the MoSCoW prioritisation tool to develop the website development plan.

ME proposed that in taking this forward we should establish a Working Group. The following Council members volunteered for the Working Group- AS, PT, JB, JSK, ACA, CLS. The Working Group was named the Agile (MoSCoW) Working Group.

Council acknowledged that the long-term maintenance of the website will have an impact on personal resource. In addition, it was recognised that staff, where appropriate, would also need training.

**ACTION:** The Agile (MoSCoW) Working Group to report back in February. In addition, an Advisory Group is to be set up, with an outline and proposed names put forward for the meeting in February.

#### 5.1d Honorary Audit 2022 recommendations

The Council discussed and reviewed recommendations.

The Council mentioned digitising Heritage assets and that this should be included in the website document.

MLE asked about the Disability Access Audit. PD said this has been completed for the building. We need to review how we take this forward.

#### 5.2 RAS Council Elections 2024 review of nominations received

Council acknowledged the nominations that had been received. PD noted a gender balance issue with the nominations.

MLE recommended that the Bye Laws give an opportunity to delay until February Council.

Redacted

#### 5.3 Awards Committee Reports

The Jackson-Gwilt Medal was awarded to Dr Keith Bannister and Professor Ryan Shannon for joint work on the CSIRO's ASKAP radio telescope in Australia.

The Council approved the Awards Committee Reports.

#### 5.3b Lifetime Achievement Award

The Council discussed a proposal from Professor Ian Robson of a Lifetime Achievement Award in both A and G categories. This would be for those nearing, or at the end of their professional careers and who, over the years, had made significant contributions to astronomy for example, in terms of research, teaching and course development but are unlikely to receive a Gold medal.

There would be a monetary award attached to each; £1000 for each award.

Redacted

It was suggested that such an award could replace the Service Award.

**ACTION:** The Council accepted the proposal but suggested a delay for one year. Redacted

The exact terms of the award should be drafted by the awards review group in November for final approval by Council.

5.4 CDAG Minutes were received by Council.

5.5 The RAS200 Committee minutes were received by Council.

5.6 The RAS Fellowship Report was received by Council.

## **6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

6.1 The Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee: RAS written evidence was received by Council.

The Council thanked RM for his contribution and submission.

6.2 The Consultation on Orbital Liabilities, Insurance, Charging and Space Sustainability: RAS written evidence was received by Council.

**ACTION:** ESA - Zero Debris Charter - RM proposed that the RAS should add its signature as a supporter. RM to send links to Council for any further comments. ME is happy to approve this.

6.3 The Cabinet reshuffle: new science minister was received by Council.

6.4 The Autumn statement was received by the Council.

6.5a The EU Space Law consultation: RAS response was received by Council.

6.5b The EU Space Law response to questions was received by Council.

## **7. OTHER**

7.1 The Membership Officers Reports was received by Council. All proposed fellows were APPROVED.

7.2 Grants awarded in 2023.

CLS commented that evidence should be provided by those in receipt of a grant for the work that they have completed with the grant. Council agreed that those with grants awarded both current and future should provide a paragraph

on what was achieved with the grant. This could be showcased via case studies and on the website.

**ACTION:** Officers to amend grant guidelines

7.3 The Minutes of the A&G Highlights Meeting 13 October was received by Council and approved.

7.4 The Minutes of the A&G Highlights Meeting 10 November was received by Council and approved.

## **8. AOB**

AS commented in reference to her election manifesto that the RAS should offer more support for those living with neurodivergent conditions.

**ACTION:** Office to arrange a call with AS, the Diversity Officer, and Chair of CDAG Ben Fernando to see how RAS might contribute. It is proposed that Dr Fernando is invited to the Council meeting in March 2024.

Council Rose at 15:17 8 December 2023