

## Council Meeting and RCVS Knowledge Annual General Meeting

Hybrid meeting to be held on Thursday, 8 September 2022 at Mary Stewart Seminar Room, Glasgow University Veterinary School at 10:30 am – Council members are invited to attend the RCVS Knowledge AGM

RCVS Knowledge		
<b>Annual General Meeting</b>	Papers provided to Trustees by RCVSK	
<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationale<sup>2</sup></b>
1. <b>President's introduction and welcome to new members</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2. <b>Apologies for absence</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. <b>Declarations of interests</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4. <b>Minutes of previous Council meetings</b>		
i. Meeting held 9 June 2022 – Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
ii. Meeting held 9 June 2022 – Classified appendix	<b>Private/ Confidential</b>	<b>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</b>
iii. Meeting held 6 July 2022 – Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
iv. Meeting held 8 July 2022 (AGM) – Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
5. <b>Matters arising</b>		
a. Obituaries	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Council correspondence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. CEO update	Unclassified	n/a
6. <b>Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)</b>		
a. RCVS Knowledge – update from Executive Director	Oral report Unclassified	n/a

b. Estates Strategy – update	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Discretionary Fund	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
d. Policy for handling complaints about Council (and committee) members – amendments	Unclassified	n/a
e. Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 - offences	Unclassified	n/a
f. Public Advisory Group	Unclassified	n/a
g. Council Culture project – embedding culture	Unclassified	n/a
<b>7. Notices of motion</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<b>8. Questions</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<b>9. Any other College business (unclassified)</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<b>10. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<b>11. Date of next meeting</b> Extra session: Wednesday, 9 November 2022 (PM only – closed session, details TBC Thursday, 10 November 2022 at 10:00 am (reconvening in the afternoon). To be held in person in London (venue tbc).	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<b>12. Any other College business (confidential items)</b>		
a. Comments on classified appendices from Committees	Oral report <b>Confidential</b>	<b># TBC</b>
<b>13. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)</b>	Oral report <b>Confidential</b>	<b># TBC</b>
<b>14. Tour of vet school (part of Culture work)</b>		
Dawn Wiggins Secretary, RCVS Council 020 7202 0737 / <a href="mailto:d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk">d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk</a>		

**<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

**<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others</li> <li>2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation</li> <li>3. To protect commercially sensitive information</li> <li>4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS</li> </ol>
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## Terms of Reference

### The vision of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [as agreed in the current strategic plan]

1. Our vision is to be recognised as a trusted, compassionate and proactive regulator, and a supportive and ambitious Royal College, underpinning confident veterinary professionals of whom the UK can be proud.

### Role of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [derived from the Charter]

2. The objects of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, as laid down in the Supplemental Charter granted on 17 February 2015 to the Royal Charter of 1844, ie:
  - a. To set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in the interests of the health and welfare of animals and in the wider public interest.
  - b. The Charter also recognises those functions provided for in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, in terms of the regulation of the profession, and also recognises other activities not conferred upon the College by the Veterinary Surgeons Act or any other Act, which may be carried out in order to meet its objects, including but not limited to:
    - i. Accrediting veterinary education, training and qualifications, other than as provided for in the Act in relation to veterinary surgeons;
    - ii. Working with others to develop, update and ensure co-ordination of international standards of veterinary education;
    - iii. Administering examinations for the purpose of registration, awarding qualifications and recognising expertise other than as provided for in the Act;
    - iv. Promulgating guidance on post-registration veterinary education and training for those admitted as members and associates of the College;
    - v. Encouraging the continued development and evaluation of new knowledge and skills;
    - vi. Awarding fellowships, honorary fellowships, honorary associateships or other designations to suitable individuals;
    - vii. Keeping lists or registers of veterinary nurses and other classes of associate;
    - viii. Promulgating guidance on professional conduct;
    - ix. Setting standards for and accrediting veterinary practices and other suppliers of veterinary services;
    - x. Facilitating the resolution of disputes between registered persons and their clients;
    - xi. Providing information services and information about the historical development of the veterinary professions;
    - xii. Monitoring developments in the veterinary professions and in the provision of veterinary services;
    - xiii. Providing information about, and promoting fair access to, careers in the veterinary professions.

### The purpose of RCVS Council [derived from the Charter]

3. It is laid down in the Charter that the affairs of the College shall be managed by the Council as constituted under the Act. The Council shall have the entire management of and superintendence over the affairs, concerns and property of the College (save those powers of directing removal from, suspension from or restoration to the register of veterinary surgeons and supplementary veterinary register reserved to the disciplinary committee established under the Act) and shall have power to act by committees, subcommittees or boards and to delegate such functions as it thinks fit from time to time to such committees, subcommittees or boards and to any of its own number and to the employees and agents of the College.
4. The Council is also responsible for the appointment of the CEO and Registrar, and the ratification of the Assistant Registrars. Appointment of all other staff members is the responsibility of the CEO and relevant members of the Senior Team.
5. A strategic plan is developed and agreed by Council to facilitate the delivery of these activities and to ensure ongoing development and quality improvement.
6. A delegation scheme that outlines how Council's functions are managed via system of committees and other groups is agreed annually by Council.

### How Council members work

7. In order to enable the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to fulfil its vision, and to discharge its functions under its Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, RCVS Council members will:
  - a. Abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life
  - b. Work in the best interests of the public, and of animal health and welfare and public health
  - c. Respectfully listen to the voices of the professions, the public and other stakeholders, and reflect them in discussions where appropriate, ensuring they are put into context
  - d. Neither be answerable to, nor represent, any group of individuals
  - e. Support the College's vision and work towards the success of the College and its functions
  - f. Live the College's values
  - g. Act at all times in a constructive, supportive and compassionate manner
  - h. Exercise a duty of care to the staff employed by the College, working through the CEO and Registrar
  - i. Recognise the importance of a collegiate atmosphere where robust discussion is welcomed in the formation of policy and multiple points of view are listened to and respected
  - j. Respect and support the decisions made by Council when communicating externally
  - k. Communicate College activities and positions to relevant stakeholders
  - l. Abide by the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Council
Date	9 June 2022
Title	June 2022 Council minutes
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 June 2022 and remote decision held 28 – 29 June 2022.
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix
Attachments	Annex A: Retiring Council member contributions  Classified appendix ( <b>Private / Confidential</b> )
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / <a href="mailto:d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk">d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk</a>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	<b>Private / Confidential</b>	<b>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</b>

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## Council

### Minutes of the remote meeting held by Zoom on Thursday, 9 June 2022 at 10:00 am

#### Members:

Dr K A Richards (President in the Chair)

Dr L H Allum

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Miss L Belton

Professor D Bray

Mr J M Castle

Dr D S Chambers

Dr N T Connell

Dr M A Donald

Dr J M Dyer

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

\*Dr M O Greene

\*Denotes absent

Professor S A May

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

\*Professor T D H Parkin

Dr S Paterson

Professor C J Proudman

Mr M E Rendle

Dr N C Smith

Mr T J Walker

Dr C M Whiting

\*Professor J L N Wood

Ms J S M Worthington

#### In attendance:

Ms E C Ferguson

Registrar

Ms L Lockett

CEO

Ms C McCann

Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO)

#### Guests (open session only):

Dr A L Calow

Incoming RCVS Council member

Dr J R Clark

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Veterinary Director / Head of Profession

Dr I G C Dick

Chair, Vetlife Helpline and Health Support

Ms A Findon

Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Governance, British Veterinary Association (BVA)

Ms C Francis

*MRCVS.co.uk*

Mr P Imrie

*Veterinary Times*

Mr R Locker

FSA Head of Field Operations

Mr J Loeb

*Veterinary Record*

Dr N Sampson

FSA Head of Veterinary & Meat Hygiene Policy / Deputy Head of Profession

Dr G Sanchez-Cabezudo Perez CVO Deputy Chief of Staff

^Ms Janice Shardlow

Chair, Audit and Risk Committee

Mr S Tunnicliffe

FSA Outgoing Director of Field Operations

^ denotes present all day



## President's introduction

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting.
2. She thanked all members of Council for their engagement in the discussions held over the last year; there had been challenging and robust debates and all views were welcome. She also thanked members for the respect and courtesy given to colleagues in the RCVS workplace.

## Apologies for absence

3. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Greene and Professors Parkin and Wood. Mr Castle and Mr Rendle were absent from 12:30 – 2:30 pm, and Dr Whiting for the confidential (afternoon) session.

## Declarations of interest

4. Dr Gardiner reported that she now had Official Veterinarian (OV) status.

## Minutes of the meeting held 21 April 2022 (confidential item)

5. This item was taken in the confidential session of Council as questions were raised regarding work to be undertaken after the April meeting had been held and subsequent paperwork to come to Council for discussion. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 31 – 37.
6. Regarding the minutes, Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2022.
7. A vote was taken:

For:	17
Against:	0
Abstain:	0
Did not vote:	3
8. Professor Bray and Dr Connell experienced technical difficulties and submitted email votes that were included in the figures.
9. The classified appendix was accepted as a true record of the meeting by a majority vote.

## Matters arising

### Obituaries

10. There were no written obituaries received. However, the College had been notified of the passing of Dr John Tandy, a long-standing and well-known member of the profession and former President of the British Veterinary Association 1980 – 1981; Dr Paterson read out a short eulogy and confirmed that she would be attending Dr Tandy's funeral.
11. Council stood for a minute silence to acknowledge all past colleagues and members of the professions that had passed since it last met.

### Council correspondence

12. The President reported the following items:

#### Extra RCVS Council meeting

13. The President reported there would be an additional remote Council meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 6 July 2022 from 4:00 – 6:00 pm** and apologised for the short notice. This would be held in open session to discuss the Under Care review, as it had not been possible to receive all of the expected reports prior to the June meeting.

### National Honours

14. The President reported the following people were recipients of awards in Her Majesty The Queen's birthday honours:

Mr J Burns MRCVS	MBE
Mr R G Hewinson	CBE
Mr C J Laurence FRCVS	OBE
Mr A V Martin HonAssocRCVS	CBE
Mrs S Piper	Dame Cmdr RVO

### RCVS Council Election 2022 and retiring members

15. Council had been informed of the outcome of the recent RCVS Council elections. In order of number of votes those members taking up their four-year terms at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held on Friday, 8 July 2022 were: Dr Susan Paterson, Mrs Olivia Cook and Dr Abbie Calow. Congratulations were given to the successful candidates, and Dr Paterson on her re-election.
16. Dr Greene and Col Smith would retire from Council at the AGM, neither of whom stood for re-election.
17. Successful candidates in the VN Council election were Miss Holly Witchell and Miss Jessica Beckett, who would commence their initial terms at the AGM.
18. There were no changes to the Veterinary Schools Council appointees.

19. It was noted that retiring members had made immense contributions to the work of the College; a brief outline would be annexed to the minutes, and a fitting farewell given to each in July.

#### Annual General Meeting 2022

20. The Events Team was working on arrangements to the 2022 AGM on Friday, 8 July 2022 to be held at One Great George Street, Westminster. An invite with a link to register had been sent to all Council members, and the deadline for responding was **Monday, 27 June 2022**. Draft timings for the day were:

11:00 am	AGM
11:45 am	Council meeting
12:00 noon	Lunch
1:00 pm	Honours and Awards Ceremony
Followed by:	President's Address
	Investiture of new President and Vice-Presidents
3:00 pm	Close followed by Afternoon Tea / Reception
4:00 pm	End

21. Minutes from the 2021 AGM had been loaded to the website for information.

#### Committee membership 2022 – 2023

22. The Committee population / membership for the forthcoming College year was in the process of being finalised and would be sent to Council via email once complete.

#### CEO update

23. The CEO introduced the update that outlined the activity undertaken against the strategic objectives since the March Council meeting, and highlighted:
- the forthcoming Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) General Assembly would be jointly hosted by the RCVS and BVA in London. The event had been originally scheduled in 2020 but had been cancelled because of the pandemic and was very important following the UK's EU-Exit;
  - veterinary nurse student ambassadors project: veterinary nursing colleagues were going into schools to try to inspire the next generation of nurses; the target audience was 9 – 16 year-olds;
  - RCVS Academy would be launched before the end of June;
  - Extra-Mural Studies (EMS): a report had been published that outlined the demand for EMS and recognised the need for placements. Conversations continued with the veterinary schools, students, and employers;
  - Legislation Working Party (LWP) reforms: there was a public affairs programme that included a forthcoming meeting at the House of Lords and a workforce plan was nearly complete following the Workforce Summit and focus groups;

- Staff away day: this was scheduled for 30 June 2022 to include consideration of how we worked as an organisation; collaboration in the new hybrid world; and how to shape the new premises at Hardwick Street;
- Investors in the Environment (iIE): she was delighted to report the team had achieved the bronze award, no mean feat when the College was without a permanent office base, and it was now working towards the silver award;
- Diversity and inclusion: the RCVS / Veterinary Schools Council (VSC) Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Student Support Working Group Report would be published shortly, and a second document would offer guidance related to the wearing of religious clothing in a clinical environment;
- Estates: a Hardwick Street Refurbishment Group had been set up;
- Business Continuity Plan: this was considered annually and would be refreshed over the summer. Consideration would be given to the potential of fuel and electricity shortages and how it could impact the profession and the College;
- Refugees: there were currently 25 veterinary surgeons who were candidates for the Statutory Membership Examination and could take up the College's Refugee Support Package; no VNs had as yet applied for the support package.

24. There were no questions, and the report was noted.

## Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)

### Review of Temporary Registration of Official Veterinarians (TROV)

**Declarations of interest were reported by:**

**Dr Gardiner – had OV status;**

**Col Smith – as a member of the Government Veterinary Service (GVS) and confirmed that he worked for neither Defra nor the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and had not been lobbied on this matter;**

**Dr Richards – had OV status but was not currently working in that area; she had also resigned as a Council member of the Association of Government Vets (AGV) but remained a member of the association.**

25. The Registrar introduced the papers and the proposal to extend the Scheme in England and Wales for abattoirs. The Scheme had originally been agreed at Council in March 2021 for a time-limited period of 12 months (triggered in June 2021) for members to apply to be on the RCVS' Temporary Register if they had an employment contract; a skilled worker visa; had graduated from a European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) accredited veterinary school; had undertaken an OV course; and, within the 12 months they were expected to have passed the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to Level 7 (skilled worker visas currently required Level 5 straight away).

26. The Scheme had been reviewed by Standards Committee after six months in December 2021, and the Committee had not raised any specific red flags but had questioned supervision. It had been confirmed that one supervising OV (SOV) was permitted to manage up to three Temporarily Registered OVs (TROVs). It had also agreed to allow SOVs to remotely sign Support Health Attestations (SHAs) based on information supplied by the TROV. However, concern had been raised around the exit strategy as, half-way through the Scheme, there was no indication of a way out of it; the Committee asked for more information that had been received and discussed in March 2022.
27. The Registrar reminded Council that temporary registration was not meant to be a substitute for full registration; it was time-limited, for a defined purpose, and a specific need. In March 2021 there had been a very real concern that this matter would 'drift' into a new 'normal' thus undermining the veterinary school degree and that there were also issues with resourcing.
28. It was noted that there were no other routes for OV status and without the Scheme it would greatly impact the FSA.

#### Food Standards Agency presentation to Council

29. Dr Clark emphasised the vital work undertaken by OVs to protect food safety; animal health and welfare; and the official controls related to the trade of products of animal origin (POAO). It was recognised that the workforce crisis was still ongoing with its subsequent challenges across the veterinary profession. It was considered to be essential for TROVs to work in abattoirs and noted that this was still a temporary position – the maximum time permitted was 18 months (12 months Temporary Registration initially with the possibility to extend for a further six months if it was needed in order to reach IELTS Level 7). Of the number on the Temporary Register:
- 120 had applied for TR status;
  - 90 were employed in abattoirs;
  - five had achieved IELTS Level 7 and subsequently full RCVS registration;
  - two more expected to achieve IELTS Level 7 in the next few weeks;
  - four due to sit the IELTS examination in the next month;
  - there was very structured mentoring and development with a robust assurance system with Defra and the Welsh government;
  - between June 2021 and May 2022 there was an increase in numbers in abattoirs and this was significantly due to the TR Scheme.
30. An overview was given on other areas of the Scheme:
- SHAs were required to be signed by a veterinary surgeon under the principles of certification; a helpline had been set up to support vets if they felt they were being placed under pressure to sign a SHA;
  - recruitment and retention: of the number of OVs, it was expected that 25% would be directly employed by FSA by the end of March 2023;
  - flexible working hours e.g. Bristol veterinary school graduates had the opportunity to work one day per week as an OV and four days within practice;
  - financial incentives;

- ways of raising the profile of the role, its variations, and potential career progression.

31. It was noted that incentives took time and Dr Clark outlined the progressive reduction in reliance on contingency plans. The FSA asked Council for its agreement to continue to register temporary registrants under the Scheme as outlined in the paper and that they would provide regular updates and report on milestones as they developed. Further, that the SOVs could continue to issue SHAs remotely while the TROV worked in the abattoir.

32. Dr Clark and her team were thanked for their work and presentation, and the paper and its proposals were opened to the floor for discussion. Comments and questions included but were not limited to:

- these were difficult circumstances. Regarding Quality Assurance (QA), could the FSA give more reassurance around the metrics / Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as the paper just covered quality of service by TROVs;
  - o every month the vet and management team worked through the metrics and the levels of performance and addressed any issues. From a governance perspective, consideration was given to language; complexity of product; person skills; TB testing; and there was an action plan to keep in touch. Regarding KPIs, there were penalties for service providers that did not deliver on time;
  - o Dr Clark suggested that FSA could be explicit re: KPIs when it submitted the reviews, which was agreed would be useful;
- the Scheme had been intended to play a transitional role but had something been created that we would be unable to stop – would people still come to the UK if the TROV role was not there? Also, as the ratio changed, would the QA remain for OVVs that were not employed by the FSA?
  - o the transitional role had been successful to bring veterinary surgeons into the OV service when capacity was down; the FSA was looking to bring them in different ways in the future – overseas and UK, not just through veterinary schools, but also those wanting to change direction in their careers, those who had changes in circumstances, etc.; the temporary scheme would be ‘switched off’ and would be replaced by a permanent solution. Re: QA, more and more veterinary surgeons would become full members of the profession and, over time, they in turn would supervise more OVVs;
  - o for those not directly employed by the FSA, the future for service delivery partners was expected to be a blended model; work was ongoing and there was a lot of investment of time and resources. It was noted that there was currently only one service delivery partner and that a tendering exercise would take place once its contract came to an end – this would follow a rigid government formula and any subsequent contract would be developed for the future;

- what was in place to keep people that moved to full membership of the Register in these roles? There did not appear to be any incentive so it would require a never-ending supply;
  - o once a veterinary surgeon reached IELTS Level 7 within 12 months, they would come off the Temporary Register and would no longer be able to work as a TROV; the pathway to full registration should be celebrated – it was always a balance of recruitment and retention, and it would help both;
- reflect upon the current situation: c.50 members per annum came onto the Register as temporary members, who had to be sponsored and supervised and there was a requirement to explain why they were needed, but there was no formal language requirement – the FSA Scheme offered close supervision; it was time-limited; and had a higher language requirement than others who were temporary registrants; it was concerning if this came to an end because it was a good system;
  - o numbers were lower than 50. A lot of temporary registrants were related to residencies / internships; some of whom would go into universities so there was a language and visa level requirement. The number of employed vets on the temporary register was very small because they related to very niche categories. The requirements regarding temporary registration were time-limited and the College looked at the required criteria before a member was allowed to be temporary registrants;
- the graduate programme where one or two days were spent in slaughterhouses, combined with general practice – were there financial incentives for the practices, or could that be scaled up?
  - o it was hoped that would become a direction of travel – it was not an FSA graduate programme but rather a small animal graduate programme; the FSA was trying to develop a graduate programme where work was, for instance, undertaken with the FSA, or on farms, and they would also look to work with large employers;
- it was concerning that FSA seemed to want the College to agree to an open-ended scheme and [I] could not see when the final temporary registrant would exit the system;
  - o there was no clear date yet as FSA was trying to avoid a ‘cliff edge’; they would like to see things come into effect before providing an end date; progress was being made but there was an ongoing need; it was hoped that an end date could be provided in the near future;
- if Council agreed to extend the Scheme as proposed, was that sufficient, or did it wish for this item to come back in one year’s time?
  - o that would be preferable as Council needed to consider that this was a temporary solution not that it “might finish one day”;

- were the temporary registrants 'locked in' to their contracts once the English language requirements had been received?
  - o there were standard terms and conditions within the contracts, but they were not locked in as that might put people off applying; they also had visa requirement and responsibilities to the employer;
- Standards Committee had looked at this, was the Committee happy that Council reviewed it?
  - o the Committee looked at it with the view that it would come back to Council; a number of people on the Committee had raised issues; in particular the details about the exit strategy, so the discussion at Council had helped that.

33. The President drew the discussion to a close and thanked the FSA team for their responses. It was noted that there was some concern about the end date and requested that the proposal be amended to include six-monthly reviews and to return to Council in 12 months.

34. It was noted that such an amendment to include the six-monthly reviews would require a vote from Council prior to the vote on the Scheme as detailed in the paper. The Chair, Standards Committee, asked if there was another solution whereby there could be a graduate cap on numbers over a period of years so at least there would be an end point. Dr Clark confirmed that option had not been considered but that if Council agreed to the proposal in the paper, the FSA could work through and set those milestones and communicate them with Standards Committee if that was what the College required. This was agreed.

35. A vote was taken to decide whether it was appropriate to agree to the FSA request to extend the application of the TROV Scheme, in its current format, to include continuation of the proposal agreed to by Standards Committee in December 2021 to allow SOVs to issue SHAs remotely, based on checks conducted by TRNOVs under their direction. Further that this would return to Council in one year's time:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

36. This was agreed by a unanimous vote.

37. Dr Clark thanked Council for its decision.

**Dr Clark, Mr Locker, Dr Sampson, Dr Sanchez-Cabezudo Perez, and Mr Tunnicliffe left the meeting.**

#### **Vetlife – presentation**

38. The CEO introduced the item by explaining that the College donated £100,000 annually to Vetlife for its Veterinary Surgeons Health Support Programme (VSHSP), as well as funding for the Helpline training and answering service; the donation aligned with the Mind Matters Initiative



(MMI) three strategic workstreams of 'prevent, protect, and support'; as the College was unable to offer direct support to individuals, it did this via financial support of third-party organisations.

39. Dr Dick gave an update to Council on the work of Vetlife and outlined how support from the College was used:

- Vetlife Helpline:
  - o provided by trained volunteers
  - o open 24 / 7
  - o by telephone and confidential email
  - o support for practices that had suffered a bereavement
  - o outreach work to inform people how to contact them
  - o 94 volunteers at the end of 2021
  
- Vetlife Health Support:
  - o provided by March on Stress (MOS) since April 2017
  - o multidisciplinary team with one main point of contact
  - o referrals via Helpline
  - o psychiatric assessments completed within five working days for all new referrals
  - o MOS deliver specific treatment or, where appropriate, treatment is facilitated via the National Health Service (NHS) or, rarely, other private services
  - o training and supervision of volunteers
  - o 187 referrals in 2021
  
- Vetlife Financial Support:
  - o emergency assistance
  - o regular monthly grants
  - o one-off gifts
  - o professional advice on state benefits and debts
  - o access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
  - o bungalow accommodation (two sets of semi-detached alms houses)
  - o 24 beneficiaries received assistance in 2021 to the value of £96,300
  
- organisation structure:
  - o Executive Board of Trustees
  - o Board of Trustees
  - o Vetlife staff (4.3 full-time equivalent (FTE))
  
- review of funds and documents:

Current:

  - o Memorandum of Association / Articles of Association: last updated 2008

Future:

- a single governance document created to be known as 'The Articles of Association of 'Vetlife' (2022)
- changes approved for adoption by the membership at the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) May 2022
- resolution submitted and awaiting registration by the Charity Commission and Companies House.

40. It was noted that the constitutional arrangements were to be reviewed and questioned if any thought had been given to charitable contribution function. It was confirmed that legal and financial advice had been sought on the matter and it had been concluded that it was best to go the route taken.

41. Dr Dick was thanked for the update.

**Dr Dick left the meeting.**

### **Discretionary Fund**

42. The Director of Operations (DoOps) explained that the Discretionary Fund was an allocation in the budget for expenditure on items not provided for to allow for new ideas within a budget year, and to enable strategically important changes to be fast-tracked. There were financial controls in place and the provision in the 2022 budget was £150,000.

43. Since the last meeting there had been no applications to the Fund. It was noted that expenditure was reported through Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) as part of the Management Accounts.

44. The report was noted.

### **Council Culture project**

45. The CEO introduced the paper, which had been updated following discussions at the April 2022 meeting of Council. This paper represented the end of phase one of the project, and that it was recognised that more work was to be undertaken, to commence in the autumn. Items to come in the future included Chair training and development; review of new induction process; the election process; the complaints part of the Code of Conduct for Council and committee members; and the appraisal process.

46. Going through the annexes to the paper in turn:

#### **Annex 1: How we work statement**

46. The role of Council was in the Charter or the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966, this statement was about values.

47. There were no comments, and the statement was noted.

### Annex 2: Role specification for Committee Chairs

48. This was to assist anyone undertaking the role in meetings for the College.
49. There were no comments, and the specification was noted.

### Annex 3: Policy for handling complaints about Council or committee members

50. It was noted that there were two questions within the annex:
- if it related to an elected member, should the complaint be referred to Professional Conduct in the first instance? (see paragraph 14 (d) of the annex);
  - whether a report of it and Council's decision be given in public session? (see paragraph 15 of the annex).
51. There was also an additional question of if a Council or committee member resign while a complaint was ongoing that it would be re-opened should they come back on within two years?
52. The Registrar expanded on how the Legal Assessor's report could potentially be made public subject to certain parameters being reached, for example, it could mirror the Professional Conduct concerns process in that should a complaint be closed at an early stage, then no information would be put it into the public domain, but should it get to the higher level of resolution and the member be removed from office then the documentation could be put into the public domain; this would be a matter of consideration by Council.
53. Comments and questions included:
- so long as there were no bigger issues it could affect, then transparency and putting it into the public domain was the right thing to do;
  - if a member was suspended, did they had the right of appeal?
    - o there was no right of appeal at the moment, but this could be added to the draft and brought back to Council at a later date, however, clarification was required of whether that related to everyone regardless of level of sanction or whether it would be similar to the Professional Conduct process when it related to the higher level of resolution?
  - if a complaint turned out to be spurious [I] would be against making it public as there are assumptions that there was 'no smoke without fire';
  - would it be when decisions were made by Council, rather than at point of receipt?
    - o yes, when it reached a more serious point;
  - make it public if action was taken; it was key to have parity with the Professional Conduct process; look at the wording in three areas: publicity; right of appeal; and, if a member

resigned from Council during the process but then came back on within two years; then bring the draft back to a future meeting;

- if something was resolved informally then do not make it public, but at the point of suspension it should become 'open'; not sure what right of appeal there would be from a decision made by RCVS Council;
  - o a right of appeal would need to be formulated and the College would need to use an independent source.

54. It was noted that a further draft would come back to Council for decision at a later date.

#### [Annex 4: Draft committee update template](#)

55. It was noted that this was for the Chair of the committee with members of staff in support to identify the main themes from the meeting. It was commented that it would be helpful in making it explicit particularly when topics related to big projects and what the next steps were; it would be a good communication tool.

56. It was questioned where the template would 'sit'. This was to be confirmed but the intention was to put it on the website not only for Council's benefit, but so that it could be shared with journalists.

57. The template was noted.

#### [Annex 5: Outline plan for Regional / Virtual Question Time Meetings \(RQTs\)](#)

58. Comments and questions included:

- were these going to be at veterinary schools to have the opportunity to meet students? Would it be worth holding them alongside other external meetings throughout the year?
  - o at the scheduled Council meeting at Glasgow University Veterinary School in September 2022 there would be an opportunity to meet the students and staff at the vet school; however, there was not a room suitable for the RQT so that would be held at a nearby Hilton Hotel;
  - o there was an event list included for information; the College alternates its attendance at some of them, although hybrid events do extend the options available;
- particularly like the idea of whole of Council attending as all members contribute to the decisions and it was important for the profession to see that;
  - o when an RQT was attached to a Council meeting everyone could be included but consideration would be required to look at members who were nearby for those not attached to a Council meeting.

59. The outline plan was noted.

60. With the exception of Annex 3: *Policy for handling complaints about Council or committee members* Council, Council was asked to approve Annexes 1 – 5:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	3

61. Professor May and Mr Rendle experienced technical difficulties and submitted email votes that were included in the figures.

62. The decisions contained in annexes 1, 2, 4, 5 were approved by a majority vote. Annex 3 would return to Council for decision at a later date.

63. The CEO asked for feedback relating to the different groups prior to commencing Phase 2 of the Culture Project.

#### **Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) – Environmental Sustainability Project**

64. The Registrar introduced the paper and highlighted that there were two sets of decisions: one referred to environmental sustainability, the other social sustainability; and that a large amount of work had been done across multiple teams.

65. The environmental aspect was set out in full in the proposed module; its Annex C clearly set out the core standards; general practice level; and an awards level. Core applied to everyone in the PSS; GP level was a choice; and there was a number of new awards that could be achieved.

66. It was noted that new standards had been proposed now rather than at the regular five-yearly review point. PSS Assessors had found that veterinary practices were having some difficulty in meeting existing requirements given the pressures on practices at this time and suggested caution in adding new / additional requirements. It was therefore proposed to publish the standards now to allow practices to familiarise themselves with them, with awards being open for accreditation in six months with core / GP levels being inspected as part of the overall standards after 12 months

67. The social sustainability aspect held the same principle and Council was directed to Annex D of the paper; this was a complex document that set out current and future changes. There was also a protocol in place to manage conflict and bullying in the workplace across the board.

68. Comments and questions included but were not limited to:

- tribute should be paid to the speed this had been pushed through; resourcing to support these new standards would follow shortly;
- this was a really good development. Re: Annex D to the paper, the modification around inclusivity was originally from the Equality Act; this was now much longer and the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was referred to but not the legislation – could it be

clarified what was from legislation and what was 'above and beyond' as there was an ambiguity around what was intended;

- the intention had been to have compliance with the legislation and to assist practices reach standards, it was not meant to be more difficult or onerous;
- was the wording around endo- and ecto-parasiticides good enough? It appeared to be a bit vague, what did a veterinary practice owner need to do?
- there was a lot of work ongoing and more could be put out once the results of the consultation had been received.

69. A vote was taken on parts A and B of the paper combined, namely that:

For **part A** Council was asked:

- a. to approve the environmental sustainability framework;
- b. to agree and approve with a 6-month lead time between publication and assessment for the Award module and a 12-month lead in time between publication and assessment for the Standards;
- c. to agree and approve that the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct should be updated within the same time frame to reflect the Core Standards additions for:
  - i. a written environmental sustainability policy
  - ii. responsible use of endoparasiticides
  - iii. responsible use of ectoparasiticides

For **part B** Council was asked to:

- a. to approve the proposed changes to the social sustainability requirements in the PSS standards;
- b. to approve and agree for publication immediately (for guidance notes) and a three-month lead in time (for new Core Standards requirements) to be assessed;
- c. to approve and agree that the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct be updated within the same three-month timeframe to reflect the Core Standards requirement for a harassment and bullying policy.

For:	19
Against:	0
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	4

70. Professor May and Dr Paterson experienced technical difficulties and submitted oral votes; Mr Rendle experienced technical difficulties and submitted an email vote. All votes were included in the figures.

71. Parts A and B were approved by a majority vote.

### RCVS Delegation Scheme 2022

72. The CEO introduced the paper and highlighted that it focused on committees, as the Terms of Reference (ToR) for subcommittees and working groups were set by the parent committee and available on the website.

73. Updates reflected things that had changed during the year plus some suggestions to streamline processes. In particular:

- who could become a Vice-Chair;
- paragraph 12: business undertaken by email linked back to the role of committee Chair;
- paragraph 13: quorum of joint meetings of two or more committees – *all* committees had to be quorate;
- Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC): new committee as the old one was obsolete because of EU-exit;
- Education Committee (EC): some language changes to match the accreditation process;
- Finance and Resources Committee (FRC): recommendation that those members representing other committees remain on FRC for three years – instead of being amended on an annual basis – so long as the member stayed on the parent committee;
- Registration Appeals Committee (RAC): rules had been updated following EU-exit.

74. Comments and questions included but were not limited to:

- why was the decision on TROVs made by Standards Committee (SC) instead of Registration Committee as it was more within the SC ToR? Items should be moved to more appropriate homes or mention cross-delegation;
  - o the issue essentially straddled two committees but historically SC had looked at post-EU exit arrangements in relation to Official Veterinarians (OVs). OVs had a certifying role – certification comes under SC and is safe-guarded as a function only a full registered members could undertake. TROVs had a specific, limited, role within the Meat Hygiene Service and, as such, were not able to certify, thus would not come under SC; and they were Temporarily Registered, therefore they could fall under RC – this would be reconsidered;
  - o extra detail could be added when delegation touched on multiple areas / roles;
- re: Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and FRC: ARC should be independent and have no common members between the committees; the annual joint meeting should be formal and not give the impression it was an informal meeting; on page 3 if the RAC was 'defunct' it should be deleted;

- there was no cross-over between ARC and FRC – the Treasurer was an Observer only on ARC and did not have voting rights; wording could be improved regarding the annual joint meeting; noted re: RAC;
- why was the same argument not applied for SC for Vice-Chair as for FRC? Like finance, SC was core to the College;
- FRC had a tight remit and vested interests might become more of an issue when considering finances.

75. The CEO confirmed she would:

- add wording to match the committees when items touched on more than one;
- make the wording more formal around ARC and FRC, particularly regarding the annual joint meeting; and,
- remove the Registration Appeals Committee from the list of committees in the document.

76. Taking those changes on board, Council approved the Delegation Scheme as written by a verbal agreement (no electronic vote undertaken).

## Reports of standing committees – to note

### Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

77. In the absence of the Chair, APC, the report was introduced by the Treasurer, who highlighted:

- the great work undertaken for the Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG);
- the fantastic news that the College had achieved the Bronze Aware from the Investors in the Environment (iiE);
- took the opportunity to record a vote of thanks for the retiring members of the Committee, Dr Greene (Chair), and Dr Tufnell;
- to date there had been 32 Fellowship applications and the Fellowship Board was also to discuss its Terms of Reference;
- innovation seminar forthcoming;
- survey to go out to those coming off the practising and non-practising registers.

78. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

### Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

79. The Chair, ARC, introduced the reports and highlighted:

- the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) had been reviewed;
- there had been a 'deep dive' of the Digital Team Risk Register with the College's new Chief Digital Officer – the key point was the risk to data regarding cyber-security; it had been agreed this should be placed in the Top 10 risks of the CRR;



- re: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA): the next review was confirmed to take place in Spring 2023.

80. There were no comments or questions, and the reports were noted.

#### **Joint ARC and Finance Resources Committee (FRC)**

81. The Chair, ARC, introduced the report and reminded Council that this was the annual meeting to consider the College's draft Annual Report and Financial Statements with the College's Auditors, Crowe LLP. The Committee had asked Crowe a number of questions, after which it was content to move forward with both documents.

82. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

#### **Education Committee (EC)**

83. The Chair, EC, introduced the reports and provided an update on two major workstreams:

- Extra-Mural Studies (EMS): the report from the stakeholder meeting in November 2021 had been published on the website mid-May 2022. The information within it was being used to propose viable future changes;
- new accreditation standards: panel members' training was moving forward at a very fast rate; with enormous support from vet schools and the profession generally;
- thanks were also given to the support of the Education Team and the invaluable work undertaken.

84. Paragraph 5 of the report was questioned, in that members of EC and Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) should have been told that the Conflict of Interest Policy applied when they joined the committees. It was confirmed that this was specific to the appointment of visitors to take part in university visitations; and that originally a member could not visit if they had attended / passed from that university. It had been suggested that this be amended to include a specific time period, for example, if they had worked at the vet school within the last five years, should they take part in the assessment of that school? This would be discussed at the next EC meeting in September. The Chair would discuss amending the minute with the EC Secretary.

85. The reports were noted.

#### **Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)**

86. The Treasurer introduced the FRC reports and highlighted:

- there had been seven new starters at the College, and seven leavers;
- 93% of veterinary surgeon fees had been paid;
- the move into temporary office space was complete and work going well;
- a project group for the refurbishment of Hardwick Street had been set up;
- a digital strategy had been put forward.

87. There were no comments or questions, and the reports were noted.

#### **Registration Committee (RC)**

88. The Chair, RC, introduced the report. It was noted that the Committee was developing well as a 'full' committee (previously was the Register and Registration Subcommittee) and that work was ongoing around the consistency of decisions.

89. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

#### **Standards Committee (SC)**

90. The Chair, SC, introduced the March reports and apologised for the delay in producing the May reports as additional meetings had generated a lot more work. She thanked the staff and committee members for their hard work.

91. There were no comments or questions, and the reports were noted.

#### **Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)**

92. The Chair, VNC, introduced the reports. It was noted that the Council had held its May meeting at Harper-Adams University, and it was a fantastic venue and useful to see everyone in person.

93. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

#### **Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee (PIC / DC LC)**

94. The Chair, PIC / DC LC, introduced the reports and highlighted:

- a number of staff had been recruited and she had visited the team in April;
- at the last meeting concern had been expressed about the levels of abuse College staff were exposed to, particularly when they were working in isolation at home – this had been discussed and ways forward were being explored in how to support the team;
- thanks were given to Col Smith for his work on this committee.

95. Regarding the abusive calls, it was noted that the College had a Service Charter, but that there was no reciprocal requirement for people contacting the College. It was suggested that a form of words could be produced that stated that if callers were abusive then staff would only respond to email enquiries and not by telephone. The Registrar agreed it would be useful to have something for staff members to point to but that a balance was required as the College had a duty to investigate concerns raised and emotions often ran high. It could, however, be added to proposals put forward.

96. The Registrar was also pleased to report that the team's compliance with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Stage 1 of the concerns process had reached 97%; they had worked incredibly hard to reach that level. The President stated that the team were a credit to the College.

97. The reports were noted.

## Reports of statutory committees – to note

### Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)

98. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

### Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

99. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

### Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee

100. There were no comments or questions, and the report was noted.

## Notices of motion

101. There were no notices of motion received.

## Questions

102. There were no questions received.

## Dates of future Council meetings – to note

103. The President reported the dates of future Council meetings as follows:

Wednesday, 6 July 2022 – remote

Friday, 8 July 2022 – AGM, in person, One Great George Street, Westminster

Thursday, 8 September 2022 – in person, Glasgow University Veterinary School

Thursday, 10 November 2022 – remote\*

Thursday, 19 January 2023 – in person, venue to be confirmed\*

Thursday, 16 March 2023 – in person, venue to be confirmed

Thursday, 8 June 2023 – remote

Friday, 7 July 2023 – AGM, venue to be confirmed

Thursday, 7 September 2023 – in person, venue to be confirmed

Thursday, 9 November 2023 – remote

**[\*Afternotes: 10 November 2022 meeting will now be in person (in London, venue TBC), 19 January 2023 meeting venue has been confirmed as Nottingham University Veterinary School]**

### Any other College business (unclassified)

104. Dr Paterson stated that the general feeling was that face-to-face and virtual meetings of Council and committees should be kept in sync.
105. There was no other College business to report.

### Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)

106. It was questioned if the proposed quality assurance on TROVs, and the FSA's commitment to produce a report to SC, was big enough to have its own line on the risk register? It was confirmed this would feed in through SC.
107. There were no other items to add.

### Date of next meeting

108. The President reported that the date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, 6 July 2022 commencing at 4:00 pm. This meeting will be held in open session to discuss the Under Care Review only. Thereafter the next meeting will be held on Thursday, 8 September 2022 at Glasgow University Veterinary School at 10:00 am, reconvening in the afternoon.

### Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)

#### Estates strategy – update

109. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 2.

#### Registration and retention fees 2023 - 2024

110. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 3 – 14.

#### Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2021 and associated matters

111. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 15 – 23.

#### RCVS statutory committees – ratification of new members

112. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 24 – 30.

### Any other College business (confidential items)

#### Classified appendices from Council or committee meetings

113. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 31 – 42.

**Other items**

114. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 43 – 46.

**Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)**

115. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 47.

116. The President drew the meeting to a close.

**Remote decision held 28 – 29 June 2022 re: Late revision to Annual Report 2021 (confidential item)**

117. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 48 – 51.

## Annex A

**Retiring members at RCVS Day – main contributions** (membership is not exhaustive as some Boards/Working Groups were not added to the main committee lists.)

### **Dr Mandisa Greene: elected 2014– 2022 (eight years)**

- President 2020 – 2021
- Chair, Advancement of the Professions Committee
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Registration Committee
- Specialist Recognition and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee
- Standards Committee
- Primary Qualifications Subcommittee
- Register and Registration Subcommittee (now Registration Committee)
- Chair, Brexit Taskforce
- Chair, Covid-19 Taskforce
- Chair, Extra-Mural Studies Co-ordination Liaison Group
- Chair, Practice Standards Group
- Chair, Veterinary Graduate Development Programme
- Vice-Chair, Fellowship Board
- Diversity and Inclusion Group
- Estates Strategy Group
- Legislation Working Party
- Officer Team
- RCVS Knowledge Board of Trustees
- Vet Futures Project Board

### **Col Neil Smith: elected 2004 – 2008, 2020 - 2022 (16 years)**

- President 2013 – 2014
- Chair, Specialist Recognition Appeals Committee
- Vice-Chair, Planning and Resources Committee
- Vice-Chair, Veterinary Nurses Council
- Advisory Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Preliminary Investigation Committee
- Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee
- Registration Committee
- Specialisation and Further Education Committee (now Education Committee)
- Observer, Education Committee

- Observer, Education Policy and Specialisation Committee (now Education Committee)
- Observer, Standards Committee
- Chair, Riding Establishments Subcommittee
- Certification Subcommittee
- Chair, Veterinary Cardiology Board
- Legislation Working Party
- Operational Board

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Council
Date	6 July 2022
Title	6 July 2022 Council minutes
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 6 July 2022
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes
Attachments	None
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / <a href="mailto:d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk">d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk</a>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a



**<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

**<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others</li> <li>2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation</li> <li>3. To protect commercially sensitive information</li> <li>4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS</li> </ol>
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation</li> </ol>

## Council

Minutes of the remote meeting held by Zoom on Wednesday, 6 July 2022 at 4:00 pm

### Members:

Dr K A Richards (President in the Chair)	
Dr L H Allum	Professor S A May
Mrs B S Andrews-Jones	Mrs C-L McLaughlan
Miss L Belton	Professor T D H Parkin
Professor D Bray	Dr S Paterson
*Mr J M Castle	Professor C J Proudman
Dr D S Chambers	Mr M E Rendle
Dr N T Connell	Dr N C Smith
Dr M A Donald	Mr T J Walker
Dr J M Dyer	Mr W A S Wilkinson
Ms L Ford	*Professor J L N Wood
Dr M M S Gardiner	Ms J S M Worthington
Dr M O Greene	

\*Denotes absent

### In attendance:

Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar
Ms L Lockett	CEO
Ms C McCann	Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO)
Dr C H Middlemiss	Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) (UK), Observer

### Guests:

Ms C Ashcroft	<i>MRCVS.co.uk</i>
Mrs K Cavill	RVN
Mrs O D R Cook	Incoming RCVS Council member
Mr A Guthrie	<i>Vetsurgeon.org</i>
Mr J Loeb	<i>Veterinary Record</i>
Mr D MacIntyre	MRCVS
Dr Huw Stacey	MRCVS
Mr A Webb	<i>Veterinary Times</i>
Dr A Williams	MRCVS/Vet-ai.com

## President's introduction and welcome to new member

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting.
2. Mr Wilkinson was welcomed to his first Council meeting.

## Apologies for absence

3. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Castle and Professor Wood.

## Declarations of interest

4. The following declarations of interest were reported:
  - Dr Paterson: had a telemedicine company;
  - Mr Wilkinson: had five shares in Amerisource Bergen – part of the company offered telemedicine services.

## Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)

### Under Care / Out of Hours review (UCOOH)

5. The President introduced the item by stating that the journey of reviewing under care and the provision of 24-hour emergency first aid commenced in 2016 with the Vet Futures initiative and it had created a considerable amount of debate across the profession. She thanked the members of the Standards Committee (SC) throughout the last five years as well as Council and all members who had contributed to the discussion. As with all guidance, the aim was to protect animal health and welfare, maintain and uphold standards, and ensure public confidence in the profession. It had been frustrating that the pandemic had added approximately two years to the anticipated timeframe, but it had been important to follow due process and have challenging and rigorous in-depth discussion.
6. The introduction of temporary guidance during the pandemic had allowed vets to establish under care remotely in certain situations and that had offered a unique opportunity to carry out research and gather evidence, based on real-time experience. Legal advice had been sought to ensure the basis of the guidance that governed the profession was correct and reliable and underpinned the recommendations tabled. Council was not meeting to discuss past decisions of Council, but to look forward and decide whether there should be separate public and professional consultations; to confirm the terms of the public consultation; approve the draft consultation to the professions; and agree the timeline proposed. The President handed over to the Registrar.
7. The Registrar introduced the paper and highlighted that Council had agreed the consultation should go ahead; the purpose of the meeting was to agree the terms of the consultation and the

detail around it; as well as the questions to go out to the profession. Ordinarily, there would just be a single public / general consultation but, given the technical nature of the questions being asked of the professions, SC felt that it would not be very meaningful for the general public and animal owners, and that a separate exercise should take place for this audience. Specific questions for the public consultation had not been put forward at that time. SC had taken into account all of the comments about the guidance from the 21 April 2022 meeting of Council and, as agreed at that time, had put forward a package of information to go out with the consultation, which included an interim Rand Report – the College was expecting the finalised copy shortly (in time for the consultation to go out). Also included was the summary of the research from VetCompass, SAVSNET, and the legal advice obtained that was focused on the particular issues and questions arising from the interpretation of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMRs) about clinical assessment and under care. The purpose was to ensure the basis of the guidance that went out to the professions was correct, reliable, and up to date, and also to give context to the proposed guidance in terms of the consultation going out.

8. Turning to the consultation for the professions, it would comprise the consultation document that set out a lot of the background detail, the context and the recommendations, and there would be an online survey asking questions about the proposals with signposts to the various documents referred to. Questions in the consultation had been set out covering all areas of the proposed guidance and the broader terms. What the College particularly wanted to achieve from the consultation was whether the list of factors was correct, appropriate and relevant, and, perhaps more importantly, whether there was anything missed in the safeguards.
9. The public consultation should have adequate reach to get good levels of engagement and make sure it heard the views from a wide cross-section of the public, such as those in remote areas or with disabilities. In that instance it would be appropriate to use the services of an external provider for delivery and costings were being sought. The questions themselves would be worked up further and put back to SC; however, in general terms the questions would try to understand how the proposal might affect animal owners' access to vets, in terms of any benefits and risks, and would seek specific views on topics such as Limited-Service Providers (LSPs). The public consultation would likely run for a shorter period than that for the professions c. four weeks, but it would be out at the same time.
10. The last point was the timescale. Paragraph 10 of the paper set the tone and the proposal was that this should commence as soon as possible and, given that it was over the summer, the period of consultation should be longer than normal to give people the opportunity to respond, so that results could be brought back to Council before the end of the year, and guidance finalised at that point.
11. Comments and questions included but were not limited to:
  - the Registrar had asked if any safeguards had been missed. Under care was an important animal welfare safeguard that underpinned responsible prescribing of Prescription-Only Medicines – Veterinarian (POM-Vs) and controlled drugs (CDs) in the current guidance. There was a two-stage process – the first being under care, the second being the clinical assessment. In the first stage the animal would have had a physical examination that meant

the geographical proximity was sufficient between vet and animal, so that there could be physical contact when necessary; the second provided a lot of background information about the health status of the animal, so, the management system, the owner, the clinic, etc., knew the clinical findings. When going to the second stage (clinical assessment), this meant that when the owner contacted the practice, usually by telephone but sometimes by email, instant messaging, etc., the vet might, on some occasions, have enough background information, together with what the owner was telling them, to be able to prescribe POM-Vs for them; with the understanding that the same vet or clinic would provide follow up when a physical examination or further tests became necessary.

The changes to under care in the consultation effectively made the under care clause meaningless, and that the animal was under care if the vet said it was, enabling prescribing from hundreds, or thousands, of miles away from the animal, without ever having had physical contact with the animal. If it needed follow up at some stage in the future, there would be no background information apart from what the animal owner imparted over the video/email, etc., and those doing the prescribing would not be the ones doing the follow up.

The change in the guidance in the consultation would make that non-negotiable, the introduction stated nothing major would be changed as a result of the consultation, but there were no questions referring to the under care part of it, only questions about the clinical assessment part of it. So far there had been no opportunity to vote against the guidance changes, and it was not in line with the mission statement to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards. It was not an action of a responsible regulator nor the right thing for animal welfare;

- generally very supportive of this and the College had asked for legal advice from a Queen's Counsel (QC), so believe the College should follow that legal advice. The part of the document that was not comfortable was regarding antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The College had a huge responsibility, not just as veterinary surgeons but also mindful of one health, to be very cognisant of the fact that AMR was a massive problem, and one that would continue, and the guidance on it should be strengthened – the national action plan published by the government included an ambition that the prescription of antimicrobials should be reinforced by a diagnostic test or a decision support tool. The data from SAVSNET suggested that antimicrobials had been prescribed more frequently during the lockdown and the guidance needed something about physical examination supported by an appropriate diagnostic/decision-making tool to provide more assurance, particularly for some of the critically-important antibiotics and companion animals;

- broadly supportive, but with the issue of looking at it in isolation: someone may look and think they could take care of the animal – and it is good that there were references to other parts of the Code of Professional Conduct – but it appeared that Chapter 5.6 of the Supporting Guidance was missing that stated: *'When an animal is initially presented, a veterinary surgeon should ask whether the animal is already receiving veterinary attention or treatment and, if so, when it was last seen; then, contact the original veterinary surgeon for a case history. It should be made clear to the client that this is necessary in the interests of the*

*patient. If the client refuses to provide information, the case should be declined.*' The vet-client relationship was very important particularly when the animal was under care of someone else, and Chapter 5.6 should be referenced in the document;

- it was important to consider that the role of the RCVS was to work for animal health and welfare in the broader public interest; any decisions made had to be justified on the basis of this and [I] believe that was what the legal advice was saying. The College had to ensure anything it did was lawful, but there was nothing stopping its standards being set at a level higher than what the law required particularly when consulting, or considering, changes that would affect animal health and welfare. It needed to seek advice from the experts, but the consequences were in clinical practice 'on the front line'.

The question was then the justification and appropriateness of the proposals. The existing guidance worked to protect health and a broader public interest, but it was concerning that more uncertainty was being introduced. Specifically, point 9 of the consultation document suggested part of it could be overlooked because it was inconvenient when comparing the requirements of a vet researching animals under their care when it related to herds and flocks and appeared to disregard the law.

In the consultation questions there was a point for every sub-point – the profession could respond to the sub-points but not respond to the broad text of the point itself; did there need to be an extra question for the profession to respond to for the sake of consistency? The definition of an LSP was defined as offering a single service – for example, vaccinations, there are multiple types of vaccinations and there are different species requiring different vaccinations; neutering was arguably for procedures. Was the College considering an out-of-hours service provider was an LSP and could that be justified as most would offer the full complement of services a normal regular practice could offer?

There were also concerns about the SAVSNET data that appeared to suggest that there were changes to prescribing practices and that a number of conditions were not necessarily picked up at the same level when done via telemedicine, or without a physical examination. It was not in the public interest to allow a situation where conditions were going to be missed and there was more resolution of cases where physical examination occurred. A firm line should be taken to say that a physical examination was a necessary part of the under care relationship;

- legal advice was sought for a reason and on the basis of that advice the College needed to proceed as planned, to not do so would put the RCVS in a precarious position;
- the suggested guidance had strong links to AMR guidance. The College should go ahead with the consultation, gather all comments and 'tweak' it; this would be taken on board and brought back to SC but there could not be too much emphasis on AMR;
- well done for getting to this stage. The knowledge, experience and background of those in charge of the animals was not mentioned; this might be, by implication, duplication of what had gone before. The relationship with the carer and nature of the care and knowledge was

not included, could that be amended? Regarding antimicrobials, when they were prescribed there must be a physical examination or exploration arranged beforehand; why had SC not applied that equally to all forms of remote prescribing because it was the most comprehensive way of assessing a patient?

- the paragraph might have got slightly disjointed from the section where it was to do with antimicrobials and agricultural animals, which stated that there were some instances when the precise requirements of the VMRs were not practicable prior to prescribing, but that veterinary surgeons should ensure a 24/7 full service involving physical examination and any other necessary investigation if required was immediately available in the event that the animal did not improve; this arrangement should also be made before veterinary services were offered and confirmed in writing as part of the conditions of service agreed by the client. On the other points:

The legal advice was to decide what was legal and correct, in essence the way it was being done currently was incorrect, and in order for it to be legal and correct, it should follow the legal advice, which was different to how things were done in the past. As a responsible regulator the College had taken legal advice, and it would be irresponsible not to follow up on it; the consultation document and proposals within it were informed by that advice.

There had been some suggestions, particularly in relation to antimicrobials, which could be added – it might slow down the timescale, but it could certainly go back to SC for some extra wording.

It was important when consulting to consult the experts – in this instance the profession who dealt with clinical practice; views of everyone in the profession are incredibly important, as was the research, which would be publicly available. Ultimately, however, the College had to be compliant with the law. The point of the guidance about remote prescribing was that it would be up to the individual veterinary surgeon's judgement after the various matters had been taken into account before that decision was made;

- coming back on those points: by saying that vets were not currently doing it correctly – meaning that under care was not the right thing to do – on this occasion it was the right thing to have the animal under care and it should continue. First opinion practitioners were the people that instinctively understood how the two-stage process worked, and if the Barristers did not entirely understand how it worked, if for instance, they thought there always had to be a physical examination in order to prescribe POM-Vs and CDs, that would be wrong as remote prescribing had always been possible, but with the safeguard of an under care relationship. If the College was keen to see more remote prescribing that was possible under the current guidance after a few 'tweaks'. Under care was the equivalent of the vet-client-patient relationship so presumably that would also need amendment;
- agree Barristers were not vets, however, Barristers interpreted the law. If the College was challenged then it would have to speak to a lawyer, not a vet, therefore the legal advice was in terms of legislation and was entirely appropriate; those giving the advice

*did* fully understand the nature of it. Given the issues in terms of the interpretation of under care assessment provisions, it was not a case of doing a few tweaks; the College was being told there were issues in the way it was being done and had been guided in terms of how it should be interpreted. This exercise was to comply with the legal provisions at the same time as protecting animal health and welfare by building in safeguards, which was the point of the consultation – to ask the profession if there were any additional safeguards it wished to include;

- the only way a public body such as the RCVS could be realistically legally challenged was via a Judicial Review (JR) and that considered the process by which the decisions were made; it was difficult to believe that it would lose a JR regarding the under care relationship, which had been in place for a long time;
- coming back on paragraph 5.6 of the supporting guidance, it was important to include details and would be remiss not to have it in the document; and would enforce the matter of the client/patient relationship;
  - o the Code of Professional Conduct (CoPC) and Supporting Guidance still applied, so whilst links had not been put into every section, it was entirely possible to add that one to the document. The responses from the consultation would be brought back to Council, to decide at that time what was to be done;
- returning to antimicrobials and whether the wording was robust enough especially when a physical examination prevent inappropriate usage;
  - o it was certainly the intention of SC to put antimicrobials in a specific box because of their importance;
  - o it was a valid point and more encouragement for consideration was definitely required before a vet reached for any drug;
  - o it should be remembered that one person's special circumstances, was different to another's and it should be fed into the consultation;
- there was the danger of having the consultation at this meeting; antimicrobials and CDs had been raised by the collective Chief Veterinary Officers earlier on in the process and they would also come back if they felt the controls being put in place were deemed inadequate – to try and tweak the document today would not improve it;
- a number of people had said it was taking too long to do this work, but it was substantial and was worth taking the time to get it right. In the same way as now, the proposal did not have any way to 'police' it, so it was not an actual requirement to undertake a physical examination but rather suggestions to consider certain things; people make mistakes, there was a potential for inappropriate medication being prescribed, and it was not in the best interests of animal welfare because it weakened the College's capacity as a regulator;



- the College did not 'police' anything that was in the CoPC, it was a professional code. There was the concerns process where concerns were raised and they were then considered against the Code and, ultimately, in terms of whether something was serious professional misconduct (SPMC). The legislative reform proposals included a right of access to practices, which could be a 'back up plan' if people failed to comply with an investigation on the back of a concern, but only in certain situations;
- there was a lot of discussion about the wording of the clinical assessment in the current guidance and AMR, but none of this was clarification or clinical assessment was necessary if there was the under care relationship – it is only once that was removed that clinical assessment required tightening up.

Regarding a vet-client-patient relationship, a sensible and pragmatic solution would be to create our own, and it should be considered now rather than putting it in the consultation to see what responses were received.

Additionally, there was no opportunity to make any responses regarding under care – in the consultation in 2018, the experts in animal welfare, the vets, stated that they did not think changing the under care relationship was a good thing for animal welfare, so what made them think that the College was going to listen this time when there were not any questions on the relevant part?

- reassure Council this had not been rushed and every avenue had gone down. Comments were appreciated and there was a divergence of opinion, but the consultation needed to progress. If Council agreed to going ahead with the consultation, that was the place to put all of these thoughts in because SC could look at the wording for a long time and the consultation could provide the extra things that the Committee did not feel it had done;
- whilst this had been a huge amount of work and virtually every word had been scrutinised in the paper, this was not the final time this would be before Council. It was a consultation to gather opinions; it was fantastic that feedback was being provided that could be fed into it but it was important to get on with it in order to make the ultimate final decision at a later date;
- it was slightly confusing why the same matters were being discussed again. The reality of practice at the moment was that people were really struggling to get veterinary care because they could not be seen;
- people were unlikely to complain if they got what they wanted i.e. antimicrobials; there was a risk of improper practices developing over time as there would be a shifting baseline as it became more commonplace with the current wording; there was a principle that previous decisions made by Council could not be changed, but after a certain amount of time there should be the ability to reconsider matters, and the consultation proposal needed to be amended before it was released to the profession;

- the College was an organisation that was pro ongoing quality improvement and it was constantly reviewing and updating, that was the entire purpose of SC: to refresh, review, and evaluate guidance to the professions in the context of the changing world in which the professions were operating, so obviously Council did review previous decisions; however, it tended not to review a decision within weeks of it being made;
- responding to the point made that Council was discussing the same things again, it was not – Council voted for a consultation, it had not voted to change the guidance and it was [my] belief that it absolutely should not be changed in the way it would be as soon as the consultation was launched. If no questions were included about under care there would be no comments for inclusion so the guidance would change; the profession should have the ability to feed back;
- the guidance would remain as it currently was until such a time that Council agreed to change the wording, it would not be changed as soon as the consultation launched – the consultation included a draft and was asking the profession for its views on the draft;
- thank you to everyone for the hard work done on this. If the College had paid for a Barrister’s opinion, it should follow it, as it would not be wise to go against that opinion. There would never be complete agreement on this document, and there was the danger in trying to perfect it that would be to hold it up; the views of the profession were required;
- there would be some checks regarding responsible use of antimicrobials through those that were members of the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), as they would be assessed on their usage, the appropriateness, and whether that was being done remotely as it had been incorporated into the new sustainability guidance of core standards;
- with regards taking advice from experts, it was important in one sense that the College had experts that were our veterinary surgeons, but it also had to take into account the experts that had provided the legal opinion; the consultation was trying to ‘marry’ both together and ensure the veterinary professionals had the opportunity to make comments around the safeguards to be included. Regarding not having an opportunity to input into what was happening with under care, Council had been updated at almost every Council meeting as to what was happening with the process and have the opportunity to comment.

12. The President drew the discussion to a close.

13. Council was asked to confirm that there should be separate consultations for the public and the profession:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	1

14. Professor Bray and Mrs McLaughlan experienced technical difficulties and submitted email votes that were included in the figures.

15. This was agreed by a majority vote.

16. Council was asked to confirm that the terms of the public consultation be circulated to Standards Committee for its approval prior to launch:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	1

17. Professor Bray and Mrs McLaughlan experienced technical difficulties and submitted email votes.

18. This was agreed by a majority vote.

19. Council was asked to approve the draft consultation attached at Annex A to the paper:

For:	18
Against:	2
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	1

20. Professor Bray and Mrs McLaughlan experienced technical difficulties and submitted email votes.

21. This was agreed by a majority vote.

22. Council was asked to agree the timeline as set out in the paper:

For:	19
Against:	2
Abstain:	0
Did not vote:	1

23. Professor Bray and Mrs McLaughlan experienced technical difficulties and submitted email votes.

24. This was agreed by a majority vote.

25. The President thanked Council for their opinions and for the decisions made at the meeting. It was important to have the debate and she hoped it had provided Council with ample time to discuss matters at the meeting and previously in the closed sessions. There was now a clear direction of travel.

## Notices of motion

26. There were no notices of motion received.

### Questions

27. There were no questions received.

### Any other College business (unclassified)

28. The President reported that she had received a letter from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) thanking Council for approving the Temporary Registration of Official Veterinarians (TROV) policy at its meeting in June. This would come back to Council next year but it was helpful to acknowledge FSA's appreciation.

29. There was no other College business to report.

### Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)

30. It was requested that the consultation be entered onto the Risk Register as it had a huge risk to Council's reputation and to animal welfare.

31. There were no other items to add.

### Date of next meeting

32. The President reported that there would be a brief meeting of Council immediately after the Annual General Meeting on Friday, 8 July 2022. Thereafter, the date of the next meeting would be Thursday, 8 September 2022 at Glasgow University Veterinary School at 10:00 am, reconvening in the afternoon.

**[Afternote: start time for September meeting now 10:30 am to allow time for a series of meetings whilst in Glasgow.]**

33. The President drew the meeting to a close.

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Council
Date	8 July 2022
Title	8 July 2022 Council minutes
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 8 July 2022 (AGM).
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes.
Attachments	None
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 0207 202 0737 / <a href="mailto:d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk">d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk</a>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

**<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

**<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others</li> <li>2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation</li> <li>3. To protect commercially sensitive information</li> <li>4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS</li> </ol>
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation</li> </ol>

## Council Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 8 July 2022 at One Great George Street,  
Westminster, London SW1P 3AA

### Members:

Dr M A Donald (President in the Chair)	
Dr L H Allum	Professor S A May
Mrs B S Andrews-Jones	Mrs C-L McLaughlan
Miss L Belton	*Professor T D H Parkin
*Professor D Bray	Dr S Paterson
Dr A L Calow	Professor C J Proudman
Mr J M Castle	Mr M E Rendle
*Dr D S Chambers	Dr K A Richards
Dr N T Connell	Mr T J Walker
Mrs O D R Cook	Mr W A S Wilkinson
Dr J M Dyer	Professor J L N Wood
Ms L Ford	Ms J S M Worthington
Dr M M S Gardiner	

\*Denotes absent

### In attendance:

Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar
Ms L Lockett	CEO
Ms N May	Auditor, Crowe LLP
Ms C L McCann	Director of Operations (DoO)
Ms J Shardlow	Chair, Audit and Risk Committee

### Apologies for absence

1. Apologies of absence were received from:

- Professor Bray
- Dr D S Chambers
- Professor Parkin

### Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest received.

## Matter for decision by Council

### Appointment of the Presidential Team and Treasurer 2022 / 2023

3. Council was asked to approve the appointment of the new Presidential Team and Treasurer for 2022 / 2023 as follows:

President:	Dr M A Donald
Vice-President (Senior):	Dr K A Richards
Vice-President (Junior):	Dr S Paterson
Treasurer:	Dr N T Connell

4. The Presidential Team and Treasurer appointments for 2022 / 2023 were approved.

### Correspondence and matters for note

5. There was no correspondence nor matters for note to report.

### Date of next meeting

6. The date of the next Council meeting was confirmed as Thursday, 8 September 2022 commencing at 10:00 am to be held at Glasgow University Veterinary School.

**[Afternote: start time for September meeting now 10:30 am to allow time for a series of meetings whilst in Glasgow.]**



<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	8 September 2022
Title	CEO update, including progress against Strategic Plan
Summary	This paper offers a summary of activity against the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan
Decisions required	To note
Attachments	None
Author	Lizzie Lockett CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Rationales</b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

## Background

1. The RCVS Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was approved at the RCVS Council meeting in January 2020 and came into immediate effect. The full report, including all of the narrative, together with case studies from the previous plan's successes, can be found here: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-strategic-plan-2020-2024/>
2. For each action, progress to date, responsibilities and next steps have been identified in the following table. At its meeting in July 2020, the Officer Team felt it appropriate that an update be given to Council three times a year – in September, January and June – and information about a specific action can be made available to any Council member on request in between times.
3. Outside of those changes noted in the Strategic Plan table to follow, since the June 2022 Council meeting we have also:
  - a. Launched the RCVS Academy, the College's online learning platform to help vets and nurses meet their professional standards
  - b. Welcomed vets from across the EU and beyond at the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) General Assembly in London, jointly hosted with the British Veterinary Association
  - c. Published recommendations on improving support for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) veterinary students
  - d. Published guidance on religious clothing and beliefs to support those in clinical practice
  - e. Launched new guidance for routine veterinary practice, including, for the first time, guidance on clinical veterinary research
  - f. Hosted an event at the House of Lords to discuss veterinary legislative reform with key stakeholders
  - g. Published our Annual Report and Accounts
  - h. Opened the nomination round for the Chair of the Fellowship Board and roles on the Board and the Science Advisory Panel
  - i. Published our new sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion standards within the Practice Standards Scheme, together with a new Environmental Sustainability Award
  - j. Held an in-person RCVS Day, which included our AGM, Honours and Awards Ceremony and the investiture of the new Officer team, at One Great George Street
  - k. Held VN Days in Manchester and Oxford, and a reception to celebrate the VN Diamond Jubilee (delayed from 2021)
  - l. Launched the Under Care/ Out of Hours review
  - m. Invited members of the professions to our first in-person Regional Question Time for over two years (to be held in Glasgow, 7 September)
  - n. Announced that 31 veterinary surgeons will join the Fellowship this year

## A: Clarity

**Ambition:** to ensure that we have clarity of purpose and that our internal and external stakeholders and service-users understand our role in the world. We will endeavour to become a proactive regulator that remains a step ahead, even in the face of constant change and uncertainty. We will listen widely, consult meaningfully, make confident decisions, then communicate with clarity, appreciating that the final outcome may not suit everyone.

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
1. Continue, via the work of the Veterinary Legislation Working Party (LWP) and other groups, to review the regulatory landscape to ensure we develop world-leading, robust standards and approaches that are grounded in evidence and risk-based, in order to safeguard animal health and welfare, and public health, and maintain trust in the veterinary professions.	LWP/ Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LWP reported to Council June 2020; Council agreed to consult on proposals, consultation opened 5 November 2020 and closed on 23 April 2021. Responses to consultation were considered by Council in June 2021 and recommendations to Defra in August 2021.</li> <li>A new set of veterinary education accreditation standards has been agreed, which accommodate different models of curricula and delivery and enable flexibility whilst driving quality improvement.</li> <li>A new education accreditation methodology has been agreed, which is more outcomes-focused and adopts a risk-based approach.</li> <li>Following introduction of new VN accreditation standards in January 2020, we carried out a small-scale review to ensure they were outcomes-focused and to remove any duplication. Completed and approved by VNC 10 February 2021. Updated Standards Framework available on the website.</li> <li>Day-One Competences and skills for VNs (to include the professional behaviours) reviewed and updated. Approved by VNC in Feb 2022.</li> <li>Implementation of the new veterinary education accreditation standards and methodology in 2023 is on track: 1:1 support sessions with all directly-accredited veterinary schools have taken place, to ensure they understand the changes and have an opportunity to ask us any questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive responses to the legislation proposals have been forthcoming from Defra / the Minister (albeit short of a formal commitment to go ahead). The Public Affairs and Communications teams are progressing a programme of engagement with MPs and others and liaison continues with the BVA and BVNA in respect of narrowing areas of disagreement. Lunch reception took place at House of Lords on 28 June and further event planned for 25 October. Communications campaign has been developed to illustrate the importance of new legislation.</li> <li>The accreditation evidence repository for the new educational standards has been agreed as SecureDocs, and the development of the training for panel members is underway.</li> <li>Implementation of a pre-accreditation support package is underway. This aims to help veterinary nursing providers to better understand the Framework and how it relates to their individual programmes, and what evidence submission might look like.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
<p>2. Ensure that we are addressing what matters to our stakeholders and that we horizon-scan for issues that are beyond the scope of our immediate view. For example, regulation of new technologies, regulation of practices, review of our concerns and disciplinary process, and regulation of the wider veterinary team and the environment in which they work.</p>	<p>APC/ LWP/ PICDCL /EC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with ViVet, including events around creativity and reflecting on the impact of Covid-19 and the professions' response to it, was carried out.</li> <li>• Regulation of practices falls part of A1 above.</li> <li>• Review of concerns/disciplinary processes consultation alongside LWP – see A1 above.</li> <li>• A lot of focus on 'what matters to our stakeholders' was carried out during pandemic work.</li> <li>• Stakeholder event took place online on 23 October 2020 to discuss current consultations and impact of Brexit; second stakeholder event on 8 December 2021.</li> <li>• Updates to PSS published May 2021.</li> <li>• Review of mental health impact of concerns process has been published, alongside updated action plan, with launch of ProfCon Investigation Support – June 2021.</li> <li>• Increasing challenges with the availability and implementation of EMS requirements in future recognised. We hosted a stakeholder event to look at the longer-term solutions, which was successful. A report of the proceedings and supporting press release was published 11/5/22. A proposal for future EMS policy has been developed and is being considered by EC in September 22.</li> <li>• A Workforce Summit with key stakeholders was hosted by ViVet on 30 November 2021. Engagement with the wider professions was completed in advance using an independent consultant (virtually). A report of the proceedings was published on 28 February 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow-up action plan from the Workforce Summit is with APC for consideration.</li> <li>• Consideration of the regulation of wider vet team ongoing. The Vet Techs Working Group reporting to Registration Committee has met and while issues have arisen over the nature of the work being undertaken and whether there are sufficient numbers to allow financing, discussions will continue. Likewise there have been discussions with behaviourist groups and issues over the nature of the work and whether it crosses over into acts of veterinary surgery are being referred to the Fellowship Science Advisory Panel. With the progress of the LWP proposals pending (A1 above) Council has agreed to put a hold on the accreditation model at this time. This was the preferred route for members of the Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI) and while the door remains open for discussions these are on hold pending progress of the LWP proposals.</li> <li>• Following an external recruitment process, Mini-PICs are scheduled to be launched in late September. A further recruitment process is scheduled for the autumn with a view to launching the Charter Case Committee in early 2023. Committee training is also scheduled before launch, along with work to ensure the new concerns framework is built into the website.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for the longer term future implementation of EMS have been agreed in principle by Education Committee, and a report was published on 11 May 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Horizon-scanning process to take place for Vet Futures #2 and VN Futures #2– inc impact of Covid-19 – we continue to liaise with BVA on this, alongside an evaluation report.</li> <li>Under care review ongoing. Consultation to the professions is under way and is due to run until 12 September. Engagement has been excellent, with around 1,200 responses at the halfway stage. A separate survey for the public is being considered by Standards Committee to be run independently by YouGov within the same time frame as that for the professions. It is anticipated that the results will come back to November Council. Coms will continue to promote the consultation to both the profession and the public.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Review whether we can take a more proactive role around breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act involving unqualified individuals, or courses that purport to lead to registration but do not, both through education to end-users of veterinary services, and working more actively to support those wishing to raise concerns with the relevant authorities.</p>	<p>Registrar</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some work on this had started pre-Covid This has been progressing and a paper around action in relation to breaches of the VSA is currently being finalised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A paper on breaches of the VSA will be submitted for consideration by Council in September 2022 along with consideration of courses that purport to lead to registration but do not.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
<p>4. Work with our partners overseas to ensure that the UK remains relevant in the veterinary world post-EU exit, including sharing knowledge, marketing our standards and services, and building an engaged diaspora of members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MsRCVS) and registered veterinary nurses (RVNs). Ensure there is a global element to all that we do, and that our international members feel engaged and included.</p>	<p>APC/ FVE/ Brexit T/F EC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing work via Advancement of the Professions Cttee to consider global offering.</li> <li>• Signed up to World Veterinary Association in observer capacity.</li> <li>• Building relationships via MMI International, with two events in 2021 and one in 2022.</li> <li>• Continuing to play a role in the International Veterinary Regulators Network (IVRN): hosted a session on mental health as part of the June 2021 series of educational events.</li> <li>• Continuing to play a role in the Global Veterinary Innovation Network.</li> <li>• Presented on Mind Matters at World Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress (March 2021).</li> <li>• Continuing to work with International Accreditation Working Group (IAWG) to facilitate joint accreditations. RCVS chaired a virtual meeting of IAWG autumn 2021, and attended the virtual meetings in June 2022.</li> <li>• Signed up to World Veterinary Association statement on global climate crisis.</li> <li>• Protocols for joint accreditation visits using the new RCVS Standards and methodology agreed with IAWG members.</li> <li>• Hosted a workshop on wellbeing on 7 December 2021 for FVE; took part in working group on pan-European Survey of the Professions.</li> <li>• Overseas member blog series launched to highlight the work of MsRCVS outside the UK.</li> <li>• Hosted an event with IVRN on workforce on 10 January 2022.</li> <li>• Hosted Federation of Veterinarians of Europe General Assembly, with BVA, in June 2022, including presentation on workforce issues.</li> <li>• Contributed to IVRN 2022 CPD events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop actions from overseas member research.</li> <li>• Work ongoing to develop more permanent solution to loss of mutual recognition of professional qualifications – proposal under development for CVO for funding to support direct accreditation of a selection of EU schools.</li> <li>• Have run third EU graduates survey ref impact of Brexit and will publish shortly.</li> <li>• Pick up work with OIE - to be restarted.</li> <li>• We have been approached by a number of third-party organisations wanting to use either 1CPD or our model of VetGDP (and Adviser training), discussions ongoing. Presenting to CLEAR international regulator conference on mental health and attending the American Association of Veterinary State Boards Congress to raise profile of UK activity</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
<p>5. Build a closer relationship between the College, the professions and the public by continuing our outreach programme. Review how we gain input from stakeholders at all levels, including the development of an improved process for seeking input from members of the public.</p>	<p>APC/ Comms/ Exec</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder research published January 2020.</li> <li>• Feedback from practices sought as part of regular Covid-19 surveys.</li> <li>• Much of our face-to-face public outreach was on hold in 2021 and 2022 due to Covid; plan to return to these events in 2023.</li> <li>• Stakeholder events held in October 2020 and December 2021.</li> <li>• New role established in Communications team to support student and new graduate engagement and planning work underway with Education and VN teams. Planning and production of content for new student-focused area of the website underway, along with review/update of <i>RCVS Guide for New Members</i>. Series of in-person talks from Officers planned for 2022 freshers to explain role of College and help establish positive early relationships.</li> <li>• Developing iMIS to allow vet/VN students to sign up for 'MyAccount' on the RCVS website, which will enable direct email communications with students and give them access to the RCSV Academy.</li> <li>• Role of Head of Insight and Engagement established in January 2021 to support this work and also A6 below.</li> <li>• VN Education publication re-instated March 2022</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposals to Council on public engagement were discussed at the January 2022 meeting and the setting up of a Public Advisory Group was approved in principle. Details and further detail to come to September 2022 meeting of Council.</li> <li>• ViVet continuing to run a free series of workshops on 'Customer Experience' to try to better understand some of the frustrations and potential solutions in relation to workforce challenges.</li> <li>• Survey planned to evaluate effectiveness of RCVS coms activities and member engagement, and review vet/VN coms preferences.</li> <li>• Comms with stakeholders for CPD, VetGDP</li> <li>• Academy courses to include Overseas, Clinical Supervisor Training, Delegation etc</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
6. Establish clarity around a data-sharing commitment, and ensure that our views, our data & our insights are shared regularly in an easy-to-search way, for example, easy-to-find FAQ on key issues, insights gained from concerns & complaints data, and self-service facts and figures about the professions. Make available accessible & anonymised versions of the data we hold to all stakeholders to enable them to generate value and insights for the sector.	FRC/ Digital/ Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FAQ on Covid have been well received (now archived), along with those for CPD, LWP, Practice Standards and VetGDP.</li> <li>Role of Head of Insight and Engagement established January 2021 to support this work.</li> <li>New Research Officer hired January 2021 to support this work and a broad range of other research across the organisation.</li> <li>FAQ on medicines published spring 2021.</li> <li>Data sharing policy reviewed by Audit and Risk and Finance and Resources Committees end of 2021.</li> <li>Survey on impact of Covid on vets and nurses published in January 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop dashboard on key metrics – process of identifying key areas underway.</li> <li>Data management system review under consideration by Finance and Resources Committee.</li> </ul>
7. Plan and implement a cycle of review and improvement for our educational standards and processes, to ensure we continue to take a leadership role with our international partners.	Ed Cttee/ VN Ed Cttee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Day-One Competences launched 2/7/20.</li> <li>VN Standards reviewed and published and CertAVN developed with four Higher Education Institutions now delivering in a range of areas.</li> <li>WP, Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) and Education Committee agreed new accreditation standards &amp; methodology. Council approved post consultation in Nov 2021.</li> <li>Advanced Practitioner (AP) &amp; CertAVP surveys completed. The AP Focus groups held in June and results discussed by EC in Sept 2021.</li> <li>Hosted virtual International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG) in 2020 &amp; 2021, due to participate in 2022 meeting (June).</li> <li>Presented new standards and methodology to IAWG in July 2021, and established future proposals for joint visitations.</li> <li>The VN Qualifications Team is in regular contact with HEIs and Colleges to provide support and understand Covid-related challenges and changes to provision.</li> <li>Education Team in regular contact with Veterinary Schools Council to mitigate impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See A1 for VN DOC/DOS details.</li> <li>New vet school accreditation standards and methodology approved for implementation in 2023 – work now focuses on developing guidance and new training for accreditation panel members, as well as liaising with schools on the new standards.</li> <li>Working groups established to explore future proposals for AP status. Stakeholder event planned for Oct 22.</li> <li>Support scheme for programmes going through the VN Accreditation process launched March 2022, to be reviewed December 2022. Feedback so far has been very positive.</li> <li>ENQA re-accreditation due 2023, Self-Evaluation Report currently being compiled.</li> <li>Accreditation panel member training expected October 2022.</li> </ul>



		<p>of Covid on veterinary undergraduate education – many temporary amends made to policy to support schools and students during this time, being kept under review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to implement new veterinary accreditation standards and methodology in 2023 continues – hosted 1:1 sessions with staff from all directly accredited vet schools, evidence repository now developed and accreditation panel training being developed. Recruitment of new visitors has been successful – approx. 50 new members have put their name forward for training.</li> </ul>	
Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
8. Ensure clarity of appeal across all the areas where we make decisions, modernising where appropriate; where appeal is unavailable, clearly justify.	Legal services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fellowship Board has reviewed appeals process and some changes have been made</li> <li>• New Accreditation Appeal Panel proposed as part of Delegation Scheme, June 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit current processes; review best practice – process underway.</li> <li>• New registration appeals process required now MRPQ no longer exists.</li> </ul>

## B: Compassion

**Ambition:** to be a compassionate upstream regulator and a supportive Royal College by ensuring that high standards continue to be met while working in an empathetic way that respects all of our stakeholders and service-users as individuals. We will recognise that a compassionate approach involves helping members of the veterinary team build the skills and knowledge they need to meet our standards, which is ultimately in the interests of animal health and welfare.

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
1. Endeavour to ensure that the College is seen as approachable, helpful, fair and accessible to all.	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of communications around registration renewal and renewal of AP, Specialist and Fellowship statuses has taken place.</li> <li>Good positioning of all external vacancies, providing insights into our role and key values.</li> <li>Data on KPIs (ProfCon) regularly published.</li> <li>Full web content review is underway on the current website, with consideration being given to information accuracy, content design, language style, accessibility, diversity and inclusion and search engine optimisation (SEO).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review public- and profession-facing documentation for 'Plain English'.</li> <li>In-person Regional Question Time meeting organised for September with a virtual meeting planned for November and a further in-person meeting planned for January.</li> <li>Tie-in with stakeholder mapping (A5, above)</li> <li>Taking forward work of DIG to review all our process to ensure they are fair and do not discriminate, eg work underway with Fellowship regarding application process.</li> <li>Improving the way we communicate Council and committee activities as part of the Council Culture project.</li> </ul>
2. Enable our teams to deliver compassionate regulation by providing structures, training and support to ensure they can help vets and nurses meet the standards required in a compassionate way, and take ownership and communicate clearly when things don't go to plan. Recognising that, in order to achieve this, our team members must also feel well supported and that they are compassionately treated.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peakon staff engagement tool gives 'real time' view on how staff are feeling.</li> <li>Launched e-cards to celebrate staff members who meet our values.</li> <li>Have rolled out Diversity &amp; Inclusion training for all staff, including on pronouns and allyship.</li> <li>MH for Managers training taken place.</li> <li>Support sessions ref virtual working for staff have taken place.</li> <li>Training for staff dealing with people in difficult situations completed.</li> <li>Update for staff taken place on resources available via our Employee Assistance Programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review data and identify priorities for staff training and review of materials – ongoing process.</li> <li>Reviewing options for online learning system for staff – some delays with this project.</li> <li>Review discussions data from Peakon and other staff meetings for training gaps.</li> <li>Encourage and support managers in acting on findings/comments from Peakon tool.</li> <li>Supervision / support for those taking stressful calls – process under development.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ProfCon Investigation Support service launched in June 2021.</li> <li>• Staff invited to attend all appropriate Mind Matters sessions, for example, campfire chats, resilience training.</li> <li>• Stress management workshops completed to support staff back into BH.</li> <li>• Away Day for staff took place on 30 June 2020 – first in person for three years – and considered how we continue to live our values in the new ways of working.</li> </ul>	
3. Review our concerns process through the eyes of each of our stakeholder and service-user groups to ensure that it is fair, forward-thinking and compassionate, and set out a programme of quality improvement.	ProfCon MMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ProfCon Investigation Support Service launched June 2021 – keep under review.</li> <li>• Audit of impact of concerns process on MH published summer 2021.</li> <li>• Ongoing engagement with new graduates to support their transition into practice, including myth-busting seminars.</li> <li>• Proposals for engagement with public were before Council in January 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce Public Advisory Group (PAG) – details to Council in September.</li> <li>• Review how we gather data, moving to a 'live' feedback model – consult with consumer organisations.</li> <li>• Further training for the ProfCon Investigation Support Service due in September following a review meeting in June 2022.</li> </ul>
4. Help our regulated professionals to meet the standards expected of them by their peers, the public and society at large by launching the RCVS Academy, which will house a range of online educational tools to help veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other potential associates of the College understand what is expected of them in terms of meeting standards, and to support them acquiring relevant knowledge and staying up to date in a creative, accessible and inspiring way.	Exec ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas for content have been listed. Focus groups have been carried out. Testing of concept also at London Vet Show 2021.</li> <li>• Academy Plan approved by FRC Nov 2021.</li> <li>• VetGDP Adviser Training now transferred from RCVS Knowledge Moodle platform to Academy.</li> <li>• VetGDP Adviser e-learning modules actively being used. Evaluation of Adviser e-learning has been extremely positive. A number of international organisations have approached us interested in this.</li> <li>• Content for a 'Dealing with difficult situations' module being planned for launch in 2023.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New content being developed for the Academy.</li> <li>• Develop a support package for newly registered veterinary nurses and supervisors/mentors supporting them in clinical practice.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCVS Academy team recruited educational designer and administrative support. Moodle development contract in place.</li> <li>• Vet/VN advisory panel set up, alongside staff champions.</li> <li>• RCVS Academy launched in June 2022.</li> <li>• New course for new graduates launched in August to help them get the best out of VetGDP.</li> </ul>	
Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
5. Continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of members of the veterinary team, and our College staff, through the Mind Matters Initiative under its workstreams of 'prevent, protect and support' (see <a href="http://www.vetmindmatters.org">www.vetmindmatters.org</a> ), and also help veterinary professionals to take account of the mental health of those with whom they come into contact.	APC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MMI has been adapting to the Covid world with online tools and Covid-specific advice and guidance.</li> <li>• Successful research project and roundtable held on student VN working culture.</li> <li>• Third MMI Symposium on Mental Health Research held Nov 2021, with international speakers.</li> <li>• MMI Kite App launched September 2021. Kite for Students launched in collaboration with University of Nottingham in May 2022, this is being run as a trial to provide evidence and benchmarks of user experience.</li> <li>• Collaboration with various organisations to include MMI content, such as #safetospeakupweek with VetLed, mental health for managers in VMG training. See <a href="http://vetmindmatters.org">vetmindmatters.org</a> for other specific activities under Mind Matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborations have taken place with various organisations to include MMI content, such as #safetospeakupweek with VetLed, mental health for managers in VMG training with over 250 managers trained already, more planned for the autumn.</li> <li>• Training pilots have now completed; new programme will be announced for courses that will start autumn / winter. New strategic plan for MMI under development.</li> <li>• Kite for students pilot has taken place, the student response has concluded that we will not be launching a student version of Kite at this time.</li> <li>• Rural and student Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) certificated courses have been running with the aim of creating a network, supported by MMI, of MHFA who meet quarterly.</li> <li>• Fourth MMI Int event planned autumn 2022.</li> </ul>
6. Continue to foster a reflective learning culture amongst members of the veterinary team, so that they can continue to grow and develop in a supportive, no-blame environment.	APC Ed Cttee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of 1CPD app January 2020 (with further updates) to enable reflective learning. Ongoing communications activities to support members of the profession in completing 1CPD. Use of 1CPD became compulsory from Jan 2022.</li> <li>• Support of RCVSK QI work ongoing.</li> <li>• Addressed via Edward Jenner Leadership MOOC modules.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further promotional activities planned for BVNA Congress and London Vet Show, in Q4 2022. Evaluation data collection for VetGDP to explore impact – to be considered by EC and Council later in 2022.</li> <li>• Evaluation of VetGDP Adviser e-learning highly positive.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech to World Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress (March 2021) on learning culture and the role of the regulator.</li> <li>• VetGDP will help promote and develop a learning culture for new graduates.</li> <li>• VetGDP Adviser e-learning specifically covers how to develop a positive learning culture, guide reflection and coaching techniques and support for new graduates.</li> <li>• New VetGDP Subcommittee has been established to oversee programme delivery and monitor quality. First meeting took place October 2021.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Leadership Library launched January 2022 has been growing and having excellent feedback, notably for QI and Inclusive Leadership topics. Free for whole vet team.</li> <li>• Edward Jenner Leadership MOOC has been upgraded by the NHS, and will be launching later this year with new content.</li> <li>• New Leadership role model content under development.</li> </ul>
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## C: Courage

**Ambition:** we will have the courage to take a leadership role within the professions, to ensure that the pervading culture is healthy, sustainable, inclusive, innovative and respectful; through this, will develop confident veterinary professionals.

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
1. Continue to seek culture change within the wider professions around help-seeking behaviour to support both mental and physical health, learning culture, leadership, innovation, sustainability and diversity.	DIG MMI APC Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG published strategic plan February 2021.</li> <li>• See B5 for MMI progress.</li> <li>• See B6 for learning culture.</li> <li>• Leadership – Inclusion &amp; Leadership Manager now in post, Leadership Library launched.</li> <li>• Sustainability WG wrapped up, working with Fellowship Science Advisory Panel (FSAP) and Practice Standards Group taking on external actions, and RCVS Green Team for internal.</li> <li>• Staff-level EDI plan underway.</li> <li>• VetGDP Adviser e-learning modules specifically focus on learning culture and the need to support graduates' help-seeking behaviour and see this as a positive thing to be actively welcomed when supporting new graduates. Modules also cover wellbeing of new grads. – evaluations were highly positive.</li> <li>• New accreditation standard around sustainability added to the 2023 standards for veterinary programmes.</li> <li>• Skills for Veterinary Nurses approved by VNC February 2022.</li> <li>• PSS sustainability and EDI standards launched summer 2022. Resources currently being created to support assessors and practices.</li> <li>• New video content launched to help to continue to explain and promote VetGDP for new grads and those returning to the profession.</li> <li>• DIG presentations at BSAVA Congress 2022.</li> <li>• BAME Student WG report and religious clothing guidance published June 2022 – has been positively received.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FSAP is working with UKHACC on Net Zero Surgery – a project steering board has set up.</li> <li>• FSAP has run a series on 'Quality of Life' which were oversubscribed, there is more planned for this autumn.</li> <li>• Edward Jenner Leadership MOOC has been upgraded by the NHS, and will be launching later this year with new content.</li> <li>• Leadership Stories will be relaunched to coincide with Black History Month.</li> <li>• Leadership Library is continuing to grow, and Leadership content is also going into the Academy.</li> <li>• College has been awarded iie Investors in the Environment Bronze award and is working towards Silver in 2023.</li> <li>• VetGDP graduate e-learning to ensure new graduates know what to expect from the programme around asking for help, support and a learning culture launched August 2022 as part of the Academy.</li> <li>• We are evaluating the VetGDP through a questionnaire for graduates once they've completed the programme, this will provide data on workplace culture and learning culture.</li> <li>• VetGDP for returners is being launched to help people to return to veterinary work following a career break.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
2. Celebrate the art as well as the science of veterinary medicine and ensure that wider professional skills are properly and credibly supported.	APC RCVSK Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-clinical skills have been highlighted as part of the Graduate Outcomes review and now reflected in Day One Competences.</li> <li>• Professional skills focus within the VetGDP, including training for VetGDP Advisers.</li> <li>• MMI developed new webinar programme, celebrated Neurodiversity Week, and delivered other materials to support the impact of Covid.</li> <li>• VN Diamond Jubilee celebrations included webinars/podcasts already published, social media engagement underway and other activities being planned. VN Diamond Jubilee e-book published at end of 2021, and in-person Reception held in Oxford on 19 August 2022.</li> <li>• Two in-person VN Days held in July (Manchester) and August (Oxford).</li> <li>• All nominees for 2022 Honours and Awards accepted their awards and were invited to attend in-person Royal College Day in July to celebrate their success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop materials for Academy.</li> <li>• Wider cultural project to celebrate history and development of modern veterinary practice – tie in with new building?</li> <li>• Work ongoing to encourage a wider diversity within Fellowship applications – such as increasing the number of women applying and receiving the status.</li> <li>• ViVet Innovation series to encourage the veterinary team to consider innovation within their organisation.</li> <li>• In-person Fellowship Day 11 November 2022 with interactive sessions to showcase the breadth of knowledge and skills within the Fellowship.</li> </ul>
3. Work with other stakeholders to retain skills and talent within the professions, by developing return-to-work options that build confidence in those who have had a career break, for whatever reason.	Education MMI ViVet Academy Exec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VetGDP is available for those returning to the profession. Compulsory for those away from the profession for more than five years, optional for those away for a shorter period. Now covered in VetGDP coms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following 30 November 2021 Workforce Summit, and publication of meeting report, action plan under development that will address recruitment, retention and return.</li> <li>• Materials for the Academy.</li> <li>• Review our policies to ensure return to work is as accessible as possible.</li> <li>• Will be reviewing Period of Supervised Practice for RVNs during 2022.</li> <li>• Research underway to understand recruitment, retention and return activities within the government / public health veterinary sector. Workshop will be held with stakeholders to identify gaps before collaborative action plan produced.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
4. Ensure a pathway for career progression for vets and nurses via postgraduate/post-qualification accreditations and qualifications – to meet the needs of vets and nurses at all stages of their careers.	Education VN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review has started ref AP and CertAVP for vets – surveys completed and findings reported to Education Committee. The AP focus groups took place in June 2021 and results and next steps were discussed by Education Committee in September 2021.</li> <li>Advanced qualifications framework for VNs published and we now have four HEIs accredited with a further two accreditations booked. A range of focused qualifications are now available (for example, anaesthesia, oncology, emergency and critical care, dentistry, coaching and mentoring and evidence-based nursing).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish recommendations on vet quals/status.</li> <li>VN career progression linked to LWP proposals.</li> <li>Review development routes for general practitioners.</li> <li>Working groups established to explore future changes to AP status. These will report in September 2022 and a stakeholder event is planned to discuss a way forward in October. This work is also looking at career pathways.</li> <li>Research the Advanced Practitioner role for veterinary nurses.</li> </ul>
5. Develop extra-mural studies (EMS) and work experience opportunities at the College, together with more opportunities for veterinary professionals and members of the public to become engaged with the work of the regulator at first hand and gain an understanding of its complexities.	Comms APC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New online EMS programme developed and piloted, jointly with the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation.</li> <li>EMS student attended placement with RCVS w/c 19 July 2021, spending time with Ed/PSS; further round of placements early 2022.</li> <li>Podcasts recorded with Webinar Vet and British Cattle Veterinary Association to better explain role of the College to their members.</li> <li>Round of President/Registrar talks to final-year vet students organised again for 2022/23 academic year.</li> <li>Round of President talks for first-year vet students organised for Freshers' Weeks in September/October 2022.</li> <li>CEO talking to new graduate groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop modules for Academy to better explain our key functions.</li> <li>Recruitment for next round of EMS placements is live.</li> </ul>
6. Create an innovation funding pot to enable the professions to help solve regulation and professional standards issues that matter to them.	Exec FRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have approval of the small bursaries pot – for individuals' personal development aligning to strategic plan – not yet launched due to Covid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch bursary scheme – title?</li> <li>Consideration of challenge prize on hold due to pandemic and other priorities. It will also be important to ensure the professions have the right skills and approach to innovation in order to maximise the opportunity.</li> </ul>



Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
7. Continue to develop the Fellowship into a learned society that reflects the varied achievements of the veterinary profession; encourages the advancement of standards; and, develops public awareness of veterinary medicine and science, for example, via the development of a Fellow on the Public Understanding of Veterinary Science.	Fellows APC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconscious bias training of Fellowship Board and Credential Panellists to continue (March).</li> <li>Fellowship Week took place in September 2021, online, with good attendance and engagement.</li> <li>Restoration and fee payment policies completed.</li> <li>Fellowship discussion forum ('Discourse') launched.</li> <li>Fellowship newsletter launched.</li> <li>31 new Fellows to be admitted in 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Next 'Fellows on Tour' to start autumn.</li> <li>Quality of Life to be developed further following summer's webinar and panels.</li> <li>Next Fellowship Day to take place in person in November 2022 at the Royal Institution in London. Guest speaker invited and programme being planned.</li> <li>Elections for new Chair underway, plus new Chair of the Science Advisory Panel.</li> <li>Student 'Fellows of the Future' competition due to be launched.</li> </ul>
8. Review new ways of reaching consensus and driving change within our leadership and governance structure.	Exec Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconscious bias training now routine for new members of Council/VNC.</li> <li>One-to-one interviews taken place with Council members and independent facilitator – discussion took place at meeting in June 2021.</li> <li>Paper on in-person/virtual meetings approved by Council June 2021.</li> <li>Council Culture plan approved November 2021 and groups reported to Council April 2022.</li> <li>Paper concluding first phase approved by Council in June 2022, inc 'How we work' statement, Chair spec, induction, comms etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part two will include ongoing skills/training requirements, additional communications, strategy sessions, refined complaints process and updated elections paperwork etc. Paper to Council September 2022.</li> <li>Review impact of 2018 LRO on Governance (see also D1).</li> </ul>
9. Work with the BVA and the BVNA to evaluate the success of the first action plans for Vet Futures and VN Futures respectively, assess whether the ambitions remain relevant, and develop new action plans accordingly. Work with the FVE to support the delivery of Vet Futures Europe.	Exec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan agreed with BVA that we review research and ambitions, then develop second plan.</li> <li>Evaluation of first action plans started but to be completed – interrupted by Covid.</li> <li>Interim VNF Report published Sept 2021.</li> <li>Review of pandemic response took place at Council in September 2021.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case studies on VF successes need to be refreshed, to form part of VF evaluation document (joint with BVA).</li> </ul>

## D: Confidence

**Ambition:** in order to deliver our Strategic Plan we must not only have the mandate that is secured by the Veterinary Surgeons Act and our Royal Charter, but also the confidence to succeed that will be brought by the right underpinning – the governance, people, finance, communications and IT structures that are crucial to our success.

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
1. Review the bedding-in of the 2018 Legislative Reform Order to ensure that our Council and committee structure is efficient, effective, and transparent, and provides the right level of strategic oversight coupled with skills-based input to allow the College to function to the best of its abilities.	Officers Exec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are not mandated by govt to do a review (unlike for the 2013 LRO) but it is good practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping in 2022 for review in 2023 (previous plan for informal review in 2021 not completed due to Covid).</li> <li>Informal review of arrangements was discussed at Officer planning day in July; paper to November 2022 Council.</li> <li>Governance Manual in progress – likely to come to November 2022 Council.</li> <li>Action plan to resolve gaps vs Charity Code being worked through by Senior Team.</li> </ul>
2. Review the structure of all of our groups operating below committee level, to ensure the right mix of skills are available to tackle the tasks at hand and that each group has clear membership, purpose, principles, time-frame and sense of what success will look like.	FRC Ops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process has started, with more transparency over ToFR, membership and composition – all now online.</li> <li>Delegation scheme (to committee level) updated annually.</li> <li>CPD working groups consolidated.</li> <li>Skills matrix updated with new Council members.</li> <li>More recently set up groups – eg Environment and Sustainability Working Group – had much tighter terms of reference and end dates.</li> <li>All groups summarised in one document, with ToR, membership, quorum, etc – bit unwieldy and needs some additional work.</li> <li>Parent committees reviewed groups reporting to them during autumn 2021.</li> <li>New lay member appointment process approved by Council in January 2022.</li> <li>Updated delegation scheme approved by Council in June 2022 and now live.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills being considered as part of Council Culture project.</li> <li>New software for the management of Council and committee papers introduced summer 2022.</li> <li>New templates for papers under development, along with training for secretariats.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
<p>3. Develop and embed a meaningful dashboard to help ensure that appetite for risk is clear, risk is managed and any early warning signs are addressed.</p>	<p>ARC FRC Ops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Magique risk management tool now in place for all areas, clear ownership, regularly updated.</li> <li>Process introduced to ensure risks identified by RCVS Council are considered at next ARC and reported back to the next meeting of RCVS Council.</li> <li>Departmental risk registers reviewed on a cycle by Senior Team and Audit and Risk Committee</li> <li>Better signposting to committees of where risk registers can be found on BoardPacks.</li> <li>Business continuity planning meeting held August 2021 to reflect on Covid experience.</li> <li>Risk workshop held with VN Council in September 2021 and with RCVS Council in March 2022.</li> <li>Comprehensive risk policy agreed by RCVS Council in March 2022.</li> <li>Senior Team reviewed Corporate Risks in May 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business continuity plan annual meeting/refresh due late October 2022.</li> <li>Work ongoing on risk dashboard and assurance map.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Collate and review our member and service-user feedback on an ongoing basis, against key performance indicators, and work with RCVS Knowledge to employ a quality improvement and innovation methodology to ensure we are providing services that meet the needs of our audiences and society at large.</p>	<p>Ops Head of I&amp;E</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have gathered a list of sources of current feedback.</li> <li>Data tile on RCVS.me (RCVS intranet) for internal use showing current and historical information on membership, which provides a useful reference tool for trends.</li> <li>Customer journey exercise carried out.</li> <li>Updated survey to capture data about why vets leave the Register or move to non-practising category now in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of data held and future data requirements underway.</li> <li>Develop QI process – Education team developing via Education QI manager and also to link to Head of Insight and Engagement.</li> <li>Process for reviewing / analysing all complaints about RCVS, regardless of area of work, under development.</li> <li>Consideration underway for dedicated query-handling process.</li> <li>VN ‘leaver survey’ under development.</li> <li>Zero tolerance for abuse of our staff statement to go on the website.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
<p>5. Put in place a People Strategy that develops our talent, diversity, leadership and culture, across the staff team, Council and committee members, examiners, assessors and all others who work on behalf of the College.</p>	<p>Exec People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Diversity and Inclusion Strategy in place: D&amp;I training for all staff carried out; agreement with BAME recruitment experts in place; pronoun policy in place and training completed; allyship training completed.</li> <li>• External Diversity and Inclusion Group strategy published February 2021 and interfaces with internal strategy.</li> <li>• Talent &amp; Leadership (T&amp;L) framework conversations taken place ref competencies.</li> <li>• New recruitment policy developed and in place.</li> <li>• New 'Where we work' policy designed to support remote working.</li> <li>• People systems developed to support new employees into the organisation.</li> <li>• Pay policy developed and communicated.</li> <li>• Stress Management sessions completed to support staff returning to BH in place.</li> <li>• Competencies agreed for all College roles – wider framework in progress.</li> <li>• Salary benchmarking completed.</li> <li>• People Plan approved, launched and communicated to all staff.</li> <li>• New policies regarding menopause and transitioning in the workplace written – to be shared with all staff.</li> <li>• Crucial conversations training material developed to support pay and performance discussions, was rolled out Q1 2022.</li> <li>• Collaboration conversation with ST about staff engagement actions.</li> <li>• Introduction of Guide your Progress programme for managers completed, with remaining sessions due during the year.</li> <li>• Redesign of onboarding and leavers documentation for better communication and reduction of questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide data ref current position on gender and other diversity strands by end of Q3 2022.</li> <li>• Pilot mentoring scheme.</li> <li>• Recruitment training for legal, best practice and systems underway.</li> <li>• Learning management system review remains ongoing.</li> <li>• Review of benefits e.g. income protection and medical insurance.</li> <li>• Data dashboard under construction to highlight people data to include diversity and gender information.</li> <li>• Competency alignment with Evaluate levels, recruitment and talent development.</li> <li>• Wellbeing and employee networks relaunch.</li> <li>• Pension review in conjunction with Wingates to ensure staff offering is fair and appropriate in a modern day workplace. FRC agreed change in May 2022, next step staff communication for autumn implementation.</li> <li>• Update of induction and probation processes in progress.</li> <li>• Improved communication with staff on issues such as parental leave and flexible working.</li> <li>• Leadership course - 'Guide your progress' - at midway point.</li> <li>• Trans and menopause policies drafted – engagement sessions with staff shortly.</li> <li>• Team enhancements underway using RASCI model to plan an approach.</li> <li>• Review of payroll and people systems underway.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
6. Ensure our financial systems are customer-focused, fraud-resistant and efficient, and improve communication and clarity over where money is spent and its impact.	FRC Ops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have gathered data ref fraud prevention activities across the organisation.</li> <li>We are reviewing the systems and reporting processes of our accounting systems so deliver more transparency over how money is spent and on a timely basis.</li> <li>No issues raised by 2020 or 2021 audits.</li> <li>Regular cyber-security training for staff.</li> <li>Review of Finance Team roles taken place to improve division of duties and a new Head of Finance appointed.</li> <li>Positive outcome of recent external audit of financial digital systems, small number of actions to be followed up.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review data/prioritise areas for improvement.</li> <li>Ensure database upgrade includes a flexible customer interface.</li> </ul>
7. Develop and implement a technology strategy that puts digital first, is collaborative, and focuses on simplification and convergence.	Exec Digital FRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New CTO recruited in January 2022.</li> <li>Two software developers recruited in April 2022 and one further developer promoted internally. Recruitment to support data management support, Business Analyst and Project Manager posts underway. Hold on further recruitment to enable new postholders to settle into their roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roadmap and action plan being developed by CTO in conjunction with Digital Team and senior colleagues</li> <li>New CTO working with approved Digital Strategy for remainder of 2022 and will refresh Strategy by November FRC.</li> <li>New governance structure for digital work under development.</li> <li>Discussions about new data management system underway with FRC.</li> </ul>
8. Purchase a new property that aims to serve the needs of the College for the next twenty years, while not putting an undue future financial commitment on our members.	Estates Ops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sale of BH completed March 2021.</li> <li>RCVS moved out of Belgravia House March 2022, and all furniture, fittings, records, historical collection and artefacts have been moved to suitable storage locations.</li> <li>Staff moved into temp offices 14 Feb 2022.</li> <li>A new building has been purchased, which is currently fully tenanted.</li> <li>A project group – Hardwick Street Refurbishment Group (HSRG) - set up to oversee the refurbishment of the new premises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tender process for project management of HS refurbishment underway.</li> <li>Consider future of RCVS flat.</li> </ul>

Action (numbering as per full plan)	Who?	Status/history	Next step/due date
<p>9. Put in place a communications strategy that will focus on clarifying what we are, and what we are not, and be stronger about calling out those who seek to undermine the College; own our shortcomings and be clear about where and how we will change; and be bolder about celebrating our successes and our unique contribution to animal health and welfare, and public health. Empower our wider team to become communications ambassadors for the College.</p>	Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marcoms Officer and Media &amp; Publications Officer recruited to support expanding workload of coms team. Further recruitment under review.</li> <li>• New system built to consolidate and guide the use of RCVS brand assets, visual identities and web/print accessibility.</li> <li>• Trial period for additional social media monitoring/commenting role for Committee Chairs and Officers.</li> <li>• Planning meetings held with all teams to identify departmental long-term aims and activities early 2022.</li> <li>• Full web content review is underway on the current website, with consideration being given to information accuracy, content design, language style, accessibility, diversity and inclusion and search engine optimisation (SEO).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCVS comms survey of key stakeholders (including professions, public etc) to establish preferences and gain feedback.</li> <li>• Use feedback to devise coms strategy to support strategic ambitions, departmental activities and stakeholder requirements.</li> <li>• Produce social media guidance.</li> <li>• Social media strategy under development as part of broader planning work.</li> <li>• Communications activities to flow from Culture project.</li> <li>• Development of Language/Content Style Guide underway as part of web content review.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Develop and implement a corporate social responsibility strategy that befits an organisation that works in the public interest.</p>	FRC Ops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Team developed internal sustainability policy and achieved Investors in the Environment Bronze Award.</li> <li>• Council agreed investment policy and to divest from fossil fuels in November 2021.</li> <li>• Covid has been positive in reducing impact of travel, both overseas and domestic.</li> <li>• Divestment from Russian business interests in March 2022.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental impact of any new building under consideration.</li> <li>• Work ongoing with UKHACC.</li> <li>• Push to encourage staff to make more use of volunteering days to support social responsibility of the organisation.</li> <li>• Working towards iiE Silver.</li> <li>• Consideration of carbon off-setting line in 2023 budget.</li> </ul>

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Council
Date	8 September 2022
Title	Policy for handling complaints about Council (and committee) members – amendments
Summary	This paper sets out the further amendments Council wished to consider following its consideration of the Draft Policy in June 2022.
Decisions required	Council is asked to consider and approve the amended Policy for handling complaints
Attachments	Annex A: DRAFT Policy for handling complaints about Council (and committee) members.
Author	Eleanor Ferguson Registrar / Director of Legal Services 020 7202 0718 / <a href="mailto:e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk">e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk</a>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a

**<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

**<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

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Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation</li> </ol>



## Policy for handling complaints about Council (and committee) members – amendments

### Background / introduction

1. Council will recall that, at its meeting on 9 June 2022, it considered the Policy for handling complaints about Council (and committee) members. A number of amendments were agreed at that time, but Council wished to consider further the following points raised at the meeting: potential appeal / review of any decisions by Council; when and if the outcome of complaints should be reported publicly; potential referral of matters to Professional Conduct Department (Profcon); and, reactivation of a complaint in the event of a member resigning after a complaint has been submitted, but before it has been concluded.

### Policy changes

2. See **Annex A** for amended draft Policy to cover these areas. Looking at each area in turn:

### Appeal / Review

3. Following the 2018 Legislative Reform Order, a clause was added to the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966 as follows:

*“3A(1) A member of Council may be removed from Office if the member fails to satisfy any conditions about fitness to be a member that are determined by Council,  
(2) the procedure for removal from office is to be determined by Council.”*

4. While leaving the decision on removal from office to Council, the door is left open for a further appeal / review process. By the time any such decision is made, the complaint will have been considered at both Stage 1 and Stage 2, and Council could decide that such an independent process would be sufficient. However, for completeness a further review process from Stage 2 is proposed, see paragraph 17. This would not involve a full “rehearing” but, as drafted, would allow for independent scrutiny if a member was “sanctioned” in any way by Council and had concerns.

### Public disclosure of outcome of complaints

5. At June’s meeting there was discussion around when and if complaints should be made public, with various views expressed including that only the most serious breaches leading to suspension or removal should be made public / that disclosure should more ‘mirror what is disclosed via the concerns / disciplinary process. See paragraph 16 which reflects the latter i.e. that any outcome, irrespective of the outcome, that goes to Stage 2, should be reported in the interests of transparency as being in the public interest (outcomes at Stage 1 – the informal resolution stage would not be disclosed, nor would any complaints made that were rejected in the initial stages as not falling within the scope of the Policy). It might be suggested that if a complaint is not upheld and is dismissed then it might not be reported publicly though it would seem that the same arguments around transparency and public interest would apply.

6. Council will see that additional wording has been added to give discretion to the President to direct that matters should not be disclosed publicly if they involve health-related matters or where other proceedings are pending.

#### Referral to Profcon / other agencies

7. See new paragraph 14e. This allows for the Legal Assessor in submitting their report at Stage 2 to make a recommendation that matters are referred to Profcon / other agencies. In practice it is likely that this would be a preliminary recommendation / report before a full investigation takes place, but could also occur in the course of an investigation.

#### Reactivation of complaint

8. See new paragraph 18. As agreed at the June meeting, a further clause has been added stating that where a complaint has been received and before a decision is reached on that complaint (whether at Stage 1 or Stage 2) the member resigns from Council, in the event that the member complained about is re-elected / re-appointed to Council within two years of the date of resignation the complaint will be re-activated and considered as set out in the Policy.

#### Decision required

9. Council is asked to consider and approve the amended *Policy for handling complaints about Council (and committee) members*.

## Annex A

### Policy for dealing with complaints about Council (and committee) members

#### Purpose

1. This Policy sets out the procedures to be followed in dealing with a complaint about a Council member, where it is alleged or appears that the conduct of the Council member has fallen below the standards expected.

#### Scope

2. The standards expected of Council members are as set out in the Code of Conduct for Council Members. Any alleged breach of the Code or other conduct unbecoming of a Council member should be considered in accordance with this Policy.
3. Poor performance on the part of a Council member would normally fall outwith the scope of this policy and be dealt with by means of advice issued to the Council member by the President / Registrar. However, consistent poor performance that goes unremedied, or exceptionally poor performance, may be matters when a Council member could be declared unfit to be a member of Council and, therefore, becomes an appropriate matter to be dealt with under this policy.
4. Complaints about a Council member should be raised in writing with the President and Registrar. In the event that the complaint relates to the President then it should be raised with the Senior Vice President and the Registrar.
5. In the event that the complaint relates to actions of Council as a whole, these should be raised with the Privy Council: <https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/work-of-the-privy-council-office/complaints>.

#### Who can bring a complaint?

6. Complaints may be brought by anyone including Council members, MRCVS', RVNs and employees of the RCVS and should be raised as soon as practicable, and in any event no later than [6] calendar months after the date of the alleged misconduct (or the date on which the complainant became aware of it). The President (or as the case may be Senior Vice President) may dispense with the time limit, if they consider that there were exceptional circumstances and that it is reasonable to do so.
7. Should the complaint be brought by a third party, then the complainant must ensure the individual concerned is aware of the complaint and happy for it to proceed.

#### Procedure re: Complaint

8. Upon receipt of a complaint the President / Registrar (or as the case may be Senior Vice-President may:

- a. Conclude that the complaint does not fall within the scope of this policy, and will notify both the Complainant and Council member accordingly; or
- b. Direct that the matter should be referred to Stage 1

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

9. The complaint will be investigated by the President (or Senior Vice-President). The President (or Senior Vice-President) will notify the Council member complained about and invite them to comment on the complaint and make representations. The President (or Senior Vice-President) may also seek such other information as they consider necessary to carry out an investigation. If the President (or Senior Vice-President) considers that the complaint is capable of Informal Resolution, they will notify the parties of the results of the investigation and the proposed resolution. Resolution could involve mediation between the parties or a written warning or such other resolution as is considered appropriate including to dismiss the complaint or to uphold the complaint but with no further action taken.
10. If the President (or Senior Vice-President) considers that the complaint is not capable of informal resolution and / or if it is considered that, if upheld, it is such that it could lead to the suspension or removal of the Council member, they will write to all parties to advise that the matter will be referred to Stage 2 for Formal Resolution by a Panel (see below).
11. A referral to Stage 2 may also be made if the Complainant is unhappy with the outcome proposed resolution at Stage 1. The President (or Senior Vice-President) will write to the parties giving reasons for their decision to refer or not to Stage 2.
12. The President (or Senior Vice-President) may delegate responsibility for contacting parties and other administrative functions to an appropriate member of RCVS staff.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

13. Where Formal Resolution is directed, the President (or Senior Vice-President) will direct this to be carried out by one of the Legal Assessors appointed to the RCVS under paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966, who shall according to the nature and extent of the complaint decide the appropriate procedures to be followed to determine the complaint; to include, for example, written submissions / formal hearings. The procedures to be followed shall be at the discretion of the Legal Assessor but would ordinarily include the establishment of a Panel of three persons (the Conduct Committee), to include: the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, a lay person, and a professional person; to consider the complaint (the lay person and professional person ought not to be members of Council). The Legal Assessor may also delegate responsibility for contacting participants and other administrative functions to an appropriate member of RCVS staff.
14. Upon conclusion of the investigation the Legal Assessor will submit a written report and recommendations to the President / Registrar to include one of the following:
  - a. To dismiss the complaint;
  - b. To uphold the complaint, but with no further action;

- c. That the Council member should be issued with a written warning;
  - d. That the Council member should be suspended for a period of up to 12 months, or removed from Council.
  - e. That the police or a regulatory, law enforcement or prosecuting body be informed of the matter;
15. The President / Registrar will arrange for the Report and recommendation of the Legal Assessor / Conduct Committee to be considered by RCVS Council, in private session which will decide on the appropriate action to be taken.
  16. Any decision by Council as set out in paragraph 14 above should be reported in open session of Council. Where the complaint involves or refers to the health of any person the President may however at their discretion direct that the matter should be kept private and not reported publicly. Similarly, the President may at their discretion determine that no information should be disclosed publicly until the conclusion of any action by the police / other enforcement or regulatory body.
  17. Where Council upholds a complaint about a member (irrespective of the sanction imposed), then if such a member has concerns about the process by which the investigation was handled and within 21 days makes a request in writing for an independent review, setting out in full the reasons for their concerns, the Registrar will appoint an independent barrister or solicitor of at least 10 years' standing to review the way in which the investigation was dealt with and provide a written report. If the report supports the concerns raised by the member, Council will be asked to reconsider its decision.
  18. Where a complaint has been received and before a decision is reached on that complaint (whether at Stage 1 or Stage 2) the member resigns from Council, in the event that the member complained about is re-elected / re-appointed to Council within 2 years of the date of resignation the complaint will be re-activated and considered as set out above.
  19. This Policy may be implemented, if considered appropriate to do so by the President / Registrar, in relation to a complaint against a member of one of the College's Committees (other than Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC), Disciplinary Committee (DC), Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC), or Registered Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee (RVN DC)) who is not also a Council Member.

Agreed by Council [date tbc]

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Council
Date	8 September 2022
Title	Veterinary Surgeon Act 1966 offences – illegal practice, and misleading courses, etc.
Summary	This paper sets out information regarding private prosecutions and alternative resolutions.
Decisions required	To consider the options of private prosecutions or the alternative route of clarity of information on the RCVS website
Attachments	None
Author	<p>Eleanor Ferguson Solicitor/Registrar/Director of Legal Services <a href="mailto:e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk">e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk</a> / 020 7202 0718</p> <p>Michael Hepper Barrister/Chief Investigator <a href="mailto:m.hepper@rcvs.org.uk">m.hepper@rcvs.org.uk</a> / 020 7202 0755</p>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

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Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulations</li> </ol>

## Background

1. A key ambition of the RCVS Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024 is to review whether the RCVS can take a more active role around breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 ('the Act'), involving unqualified individuals, or courses that purport to lead to registration but do not.
2. The purpose of this paper is to explore whether the RCVS can do more whether through education to users of veterinary services, and working more actively to support those wishing to raise concerns with the relevant authorities, or by actively taking forward private prosecutions. The paper also considers separately the position of courses that purport to lead to registration.

## Introduction

3. Under Section 19 of the Act (subject to a number of exceptions) no-one may "practise veterinary surgery or hold themselves out as practising or being prepared to practise veterinary surgery" unless they are registered with the RCVS. A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction (Magistrates' Court) to a fine not exceeding £100, or on conviction on indictment (Crown Court) to a fine.
4. Similarly, under Section 20 "if a person not registered in the register takes or uses the title of veterinary surgeon or any name, title addition or description implying that they are so registered, he shall be guilty of an offence" and liable on summary conviction (Magistrates' Court) to a fine not exceeding £100, or on conviction on indictment (Crown Court) to a fine.
5. As alleged criminal offences, any suspected breach would ordinarily be the responsibility of the police to investigate and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to take forwards. The reality however is that the police and CPS may decide not to pursue investigations and prosecutions due to budgetary restraints or limited resources. Policing and prosecution efforts have understandably focused towards tackling violent crime and coupled with limited resources purely Veterinary Surgeon Act offences are unlikely to be prioritised over serious crime. However, whilst the police are unlikely to investigate what are perceived by them as low-level offences, that are also costly in terms of investigation, they (and other agencies such as the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) / Defra) do investigate allegations where the alleged breach of the Veterinary Surgeons Act is incidental to allegations of theft, fraud or medicine related offences, which are rightly, not for the RCVS and will be reported to the appropriate enforcement agency.

## The current position

6. In the last 12 months, there have been 331 matters registered under the category of Treatment of animals by unqualified persons. The overwhelming majority are run of the mill enquiries where people seek advice on what a lay person can / cannot do; what is / is not covered by Schedule 3; blood sampling; lay darting; dentistry; owners administering medicines; etc. Other matters include:
  - 32 enquiries logged related to artificial insemination clinics and these cases were all referred to the VMD, Defra Investigation Services (DIS) and Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) / Police. The RCVS assisted with 7 multiple agency enforcement visits to fertility clinics, and it is understood that there are 4 ongoing investigations via those agencies.



- 10 enquiries related to registered members and practice staff allegedly undertaking or being inappropriately delegated acts of veterinary surgery.
  - 2 enquiries related to other agencies requesting information / advice about blood sampling and cherry eye surgery.
7. In connection with other agency activity, the RCVS has provided witness statements in 11 cases. The RCVS has also assisted Trading Standards in Wales in the execution of a search warrant regarding a dog breeding establishment, and issued 9 “cease-and-desist” letters. The protocol here is that where matters of concern result in cease-and-desist letters, the recipient is given time to respond, the matter is followed up if there is no response and, if that fails to provide assurance of compliance, the matter is passed to the Chief Investigator to follow up by way of further investigations / calls / visits, etc.
  8. The RCVS seeks assurances that the enquirer is willing to raise their concerns with the appropriate enforcement agency. If the enquirer is unwilling to do this, the RCVS will seek to obtain the enquirer’s contact / personal details and permission to forward these to the appropriate local investigative authority. It is then a matter for them to decide how to take forwards though if there is no direct evidence available it is questionable how far it will go. Of the 9 letters referred to, 2 relating to fertility clinics were passed on to DIS.
  9. If requested, when a matter is referred on, the RCVS will always assist enforcement authorities with their investigation of alleged breaches of the Act e.g., provide advice on the Veterinary Surgeons Act and treatment of animals by unqualified persons, assistance during the execution of search warrants, RCVS registration checks, identification of veterinary equipment / medicines, providing witness statements, and if required, attendance at court.

#### **Consumer issues / courses – the current position**

10. The RCVS has no authority / jurisdiction at all to investigate / prosecute alleged breaches of consumer legislation, or fraudulent or misleading advertisements.
11. If a person has concerns about an individual or a company providing, selling or supplying a course that purports to lead to RCVS registration but does not, or concerns about illegal breeding establishments, kennels or illegal imports etc., the person should report their concerns to their local Trading Standards Office as it is Trading Standards that is empowered to handle concerns of this nature. They may on information being provided investigate unfair trading and illegal business activity, like scams, and can take businesses to court or stop them operating.
12. Matters relating to misleading advertisements would be for the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA).
13. As above, the RCVS will always on request assist.

#### **Private prosecution as an option**

14. There is established case law that confirms regulators can use members’ registration fees to cover the cost of enforcement activities and some regulatory bodies e.g., General Dental Council

(GDC), and Farriers Registration Council (FRC) bring private prosecutions because their respective legislation, in general terms, and similar to the RCVS, provides that it is an offence for an individual (or business) not registered with the regulator to practise or carry out that profession.

15. Unfortunately, the GDC does not include details of the number of convictions resulting from private prosecutions in its annual reports or on its website, but the FRC does include some information about private prosecutions it has brought for illegal practice, and these are discussed later in this paper in regard to costs (see below).
16. Unless legislation states otherwise, it is open for anyone including the regulator itself to pursue a private prosecution.
17. A private prosecution in England and Wales is a criminal prosecution started by a private individual or body, who is not acting on behalf of the police or any other prosecuting authority or body that conducts prosecutions.
18. A private prosecution is commenced in the same way as a public prosecution, by laying a charge sheet referred to as 'laying information' in a Magistrates' Court.
19. It is important to note that private prosecution in Scotland is extremely rare. The ability to bring a private prosecution is heavily restricted making it almost an impossible task to obtain the necessary authorisation from the High Court of Justiciary (via a Bill of Criminal Letters). The circumstances in which such permission may be granted have repeatedly been described as 'exceptional' and will only be granted in 'very special circumstances'. A wrong of a general and public nature is not sufficient.
20. Similarly, although research suggests that private prosecution is possible in Northern Ireland, no reported / published cases can be found, and this is indicative of private prosecution rarely being used, if at all, in Northern Ireland.
21. It is extremely unlikely, therefore, that an RCVS application to bring a private prosecution in Scotland or Northern Ireland will be successful. Also, as the Act covers all four nations, this jurisdictional dichotomy might cause confusion, and Council would need to consider if it would be appropriate to take action in one jurisdiction while effectively not being able to do so in others.
22. A criminal investigation, other than the fact the prosecution is brought by the RCVS, for all other purposes would proceed in exactly the same way as if the prosecution had been brought by the Crown. For any private prosecution to result in a conviction it requires a case (in the form of admissible evidence) to be presented to the relevant criminal court.

### Investigation

23. The onus would be on the RCVS to obtain evidence that is able to satisfy the criminal standard of proof 'beyond all reasonable doubt'.
24. The Act does not give the RCVS any powers at all to assist its investigations into illegal practice, such as, we cannot compel witness co-operation, we have no power to enter, search or seize, or

interview under caution. Attempting to achieve the same result using the courts to obtain documents etc., is a lengthy and very expensive task and might not in the end give the results required to meet the requisite standard of proof.

25. Put simply, the RCVS will not enjoy the same powers as the police and as a result, if the evidence is not voluntarily provided, might be limited in the action that can be taken to properly secure the necessary evidence to support a prosecution.
26. The nature and complexity of each case will determine the time it takes to gather evidence and complete an evidential case file. Larger and / or more complex cases will inevitably increase investigation, and ultimately, prosecution costs. Private prosecution is therefore generally an expensive process.

### How private prosecutions work

27. Generally, the RCVS receives concerns about information shown on websites where it is unclear whether or not there is any veterinary involvement or someone receiving information from a third party. The best evidence is direct proof of the fact such as the testimony by a witness about what that witness personally saw or heard or did. Consequently, it would likely be necessary to instruct private investigators or external solicitors to obtain evidence prior to commencing proceedings e.g. see: <https://www.another-day.com/consulting/private-prosecutions>; <https://www.crimeprosecutors.co.uk/private-prosecutions/regulatory-prosecutions>. If witnesses can be identified and traced this may involve meeting with and taking statements from a potential witness (but there is no legal requirement to give a witness statement), obtaining available documents or to carry out surveillance. It is therefore important to instruct reputable investigators that are well aware of their legal obligations and strict limits on their powers to investigate in relation to the obtaining of evidence. The RCVS is not permitted to undertake covert surveillance, property interference or covert human intelligence activities controlled by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Illegally obtained evidence could have serious consequences for the success of a private prosecution as such evidence is likely to be inadmissible. If corners are cut with an investigation there is a very real chance the case will fail before a trial even starts, so it is a false economy to not investigate properly.
28. Once the evidential material is gathered, it would be reviewed by the RCVS prosecutor e.g. by solicitors tasked with taking on the prosecution (effectively acting as if the CPS) to establish if it is a matter for private prosecution and to ensure there is sufficient evidence to satisfy the two-stage test as set out in the Code for Crown Prosecutors – i.e. that there is suitable evidence and that it meets the public interest test.
29. Private prosecutions must comply with the Criminal Procedure Rules 2020, in particular part 7, which sets out the relevant rules for bringing a prosecution, see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rules-and-practice-directions-2020>.
30. They must complete the official application for summons or warrant form and send it to a court office.

31. A judge, magistrate, or the justices' legal adviser at the court will make a decision based on the information ('laying an information') in the application form, not in a hearing. This means that the form must be completed in full and must disclose all relevant information: if all relevant information is not disclosed, or if inaccurate information is disclosed, the application for private prosecution could be refused or the case could be dismissed later in the proceedings.
32. Once a prosecution reaches court, it is treated exactly the same whether brought by a public body, a private organisation, or a regulator.
33. If the court decides a private prosecution can be brought:
- It will issue a summons to notify the defendant of the proceedings, informing them when and where the case will be heard, the charge and the name of the prosecutor.
  - It may arrange the hearing in a court different from the one the prosecutor has chosen, considering factors such as the location of the alleged offence, where the defendant lives, and the availability of courtrooms.
  - It will prepare the summons and send it to the private prosecutor, who is required to send or deliver the summons to the defendant (in one of the ways set out in Part 4 of the Criminal Procedure Rules): then prepare a certificate confirming when and how the summons was sent or delivered.
  - The prosecutor is required to attend on the date in the summons to present its case.
  - Evidence will not be heard on the first hearing date, but if the defendant appears and pleads not guilty, the magistrates' court will either postpone the case for trial or send it to the Crown Court.
34. It is important to note that whilst private prosecutors are not under a duty to inform the CPS that a prosecution has commenced, they may do so and the CPS can, at any time, intervene and take over a private prosecution to pursue or stop it. While the CPS has indicated that it does not maintain an authoritative record of the number of private prosecutions taken over, and so information is hard to come by, information available suggests that in 2019 of 49 cases referred to it, the CPS took over 32 cases and discontinued 29 of these 32 cases. It cannot therefore be assumed that after an investigation a matter could or would simply be taken over by the CPS.

### Costs involved

35. There are various costs involved with any private prosecution, although these vary from case to case. Without investigation costs, and following enquiries of those carrying out such work, it is estimated that a straightforward private prosecution in the Magistrates' Court is likely to cost in the region of £20,000 plus VAT.
36. Criminal investigation and subsequent prosecution proceedings can take unexpected turns, especially with complex cases – it is difficult to predict how a case may develop, and such unpredictability can have an effect on costs.

37. It is worthy of note that breaches of Section 19 or 20 are 'either way offences' and this means that the defendant can elect that their case is tried in the Crown Court. This would significantly increase the costs involved in bringing a private prosecution.
38. Additionally, a defendant who is convicted in the Magistrates' Court has the right to appeal the conviction / sentence to the Crown Court and the appeal constitutes a complete re-hearing. Inevitably, this would increase costs that may not be recoverable.
39. It is difficult to obtain accurate information of the costs involved in bringing a private prosecution, but evidence from the FRC supports that they are variable and the case of FRC and Hubbard is a published example of when an apparently simple private prosecution that started in the Magistrates' Court became more complex and expensive because Mr Hubbard appealed the conviction and sentence – Mr Hubbard's appeal was refused but the sentence (a fine of £100) remained the same.
40. It is understood that from the FRC that the number of prosecutions it undertakes annually is low – 1 or 2 maximum. The FRC Annual Reports for 2018 to 2021 show the total costs for the investigation and prosecution of illegal farriery as follows:

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Legal & Professional Prosecutions	£21,372	£40,291	£16,605	£14,890
Investigation of illegal farriery	£40,506	£22,731	£16,165	£15,160
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£61,878</b>	<b>£63,022</b>	<b>£32,770</b>	<b>£30,050.</b>

41. Costs here are divided between investigation costs and legal / prosecution costs. Costs relating to prosecution are self-explanatory. In respect of investigation costs, it is understood that these are not just costs relating to cases that either went to a prosecution (or fell by the wayside following an investigation) though it does include those, but also include a range of activities around cease-and-desist letters / employment on an ad hoc basis of an investigator to visit those who have been less than co-operative / telephone calls and general follow up activity around providing information to endeavour to persuade anyone thinking of employing an unregistered farrier not to do so.

#### Advantages and disadvantages of pursuing private prosecutions

42. There are some advantages i.e. private prosecutions could be a useful alternative to relying on public prosecuting bodies to advance cases (when we know this does not happen in practice unless allied to other offences). Furthermore, the RCVS would have more control over the proceedings, it can choose its own prosecutor, it would be a means of enforcement against those registrants who continue to practise when removed from the Register and successful prosecutions of illegal activity may be positive for the RCVS in respect of its role in protecting the integrity of the profession and animal welfare.
43. On the other hand, significant costs are likely to be involved, and even with a successful prosecution, a likely fine of £100 might be unlikely to act as a deterrent to others. While an award

of costs could be made, these would not reflect the actual costs incurred and there would then be the difficulty of enforcement (in the FRC case of Hubbard referred to on appeal the original fine of £100 stood, a victim surcharge of £30 was imposed. Costs were awarded in the first instance of just over £5,000 and on further appeal to just over £7500 – which as can be seen is a long way away from actual costs incurred).

44. A further potential issue is that of raising expectations that cannot ultimately be met. As indicated above, the RCVS has no powers to secure / compel evidence and if a prosecution is unsuccessful (or if cases are brought to the RCVS attention that cannot go ahead due to insufficient evidence), there is potential for dissatisfaction.

### What can be done otherwise?

45. As indicated above, the majority of reported treatment of animals by unqualified persons received by the RCVS are minor infringements and are generally only committed through a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Act. In many situations these can be resolved through follow up via advice / warning and cease-and-desist letters, etc. Where a fraud, medicines related issue or similar serious offence is the substantive issue, matters will be passed to other agencies as the appropriate route for investigation and enforcement with the RCVS assisting and supporting as requested.
46. An issue here may be lack of information and knowledge both to the professions and the public of what can be done and what is already being done and it is therefore proposed that an additional area be created on the RCVS website to provide more information and guidance on what should be done about both consumer issues and around breaches of the Act.

### Summary

47. The RCVS can bring private prosecutions but there are significant investigation and prosecution costs involved. Also, the RCVS has no statutory powers to carry out an effective criminal investigation and gathering evidence for a successful prosecution may prove difficult.
48. A prosecution that only has the potential for a low-level fine might be considered to be unlikely to provide a sufficient deterrent to those who seek significant financial gains from alleged illegal activities
49. Current RCVS website information about the RCVS jurisdiction regarding Veterinary Surgeon Act offences might be ambiguous. Clear / concise relevant information for the veterinary profession, members of the public and organisations may be an alternative to private prosecution. So, giving specific information and guidance on enforcement of consumer protection offences / and guidance and information on what the RCVS can and cannot do and sign-posting more clearly to other agencies.

### Decision required

50. Council is asked to consider the content of this paper and whether it wishes:
- a. To further consider the option of private prosecutions; or
  - b. An alternative route for clarity of information on the RCVS website.

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	8 September 2022
Title	Public involvement with RCVS activities
Summary	Following agreement at the January 2022 meeting of Council for the setting up of a Public Advisory Group, this paper outlines next steps.
Decisions required	Are the proposals appropriate? Discussion is invited and modifications can be made.
Attachments	Annex A – draft Terms of Reference Annex B – draft invitation to application
Author	Lizzie Lockett CEO <a href="mailto:l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk">l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk</a> 0207 202 0725

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a
Annex B	Unclassified	n/a

## Setting up an RCVS Public Advisory Group

### Background

1. At the January 2022 meeting of RCVS Council, it was agreed that a Public Advisory Group (PAG) be set up, to improve the ways in which the College engages with the public. This relates to the action under the 'Clarity' stream in the Strategic Plan, whereby we aim to: "Build a closer relationship between the College, the professions and the public by continuing our outreach programme. *Review how we gain input from stakeholders at all levels, including the development of an improved process for seeking input from members of the public.*" (Italics added for emphasis.)
2. Other ways in which we engage with the public were also noted at that meeting, for example, consultations, market research, stakeholder open days (for organisations representing animal owners/keepers), public affairs activities (reaching members of the public via their MPs) and outreach events such as country shows, careers fairs and school talks.
3. The purpose of the PAG is to add to these tools, and to enable the College to carry out the following functions:
  - a. Better understand issues affecting the public, including, but not restricted to, animal owners/keepers, so that this can inform future strategy, policy and consultation
  - b. Consult on policy whilst under development
  - c. Develop and improve services for the public, for example, Find-a-Vet, Check the Registers, careers information and the concerns process
  - d. Test messages and communications to ensure they are clear and understandable
4. At its January 2022 meeting, Council was supportive of the direction of travel and points were raised about ensuring that the right structure was in place, with the right people, at the right time. It was also stressed how important it would be that those involved felt heard and that any action taken in response to their input was fed back to them.
5. It was agreed that a paper would come to a future meeting of Council to outline the next steps.

### Proposed next steps

6. Based on consideration of the points raised by Council, discussion with international veterinary regulators and other UK non-veterinary regulators, the following is proposed:
  - a. The draft Terms of Reference - to be found in Annex A
  - b. The PAG is chaired by a member of Council – volunteers to submit a short statement outlining their suitability for the role and the appropriate person to be decided by the Officer team
  - c. An invitation to application – see Annex B for a draft – is circulated to animal-owner groups and charities, so they can forward to their members. It will be stressed that we want individuals, not organisational representatives. The role description will also be put on the RCVS website, sent to practices and publicised via social media. Individuals will be invited to submit a short written application. Care will be taken to ensure that members have a genuinely collaborative approach to improvement and are not wanting to focus on



a single personal issue. The lack of detailed criteria is purposeful, to ensure that we get applications from a wide range of individuals and do not just attract 'professional consumers'.

- d. The aim will be for a pool of a minimum of 30 members, to include a mix of companion animal, equine and production animal owners/keepers. The members will be selected based on applications (not interviews) by the Chair of the PAG, the CEO, the Director of Communications and the Head of Insight and Engagement. If there is a huge number of applications, the staff team will perform an initial sift before the Chair becomes involved. More people may need to be added to the pool at a later date, if we find that availability hinders moving projects forward.
- e. The Chair of the PAG, the CEO, the Director of Communications and the Head of Insight and Engagement will develop a plan for the first year of the group, in consultation with Committee Chairs and Senior Team members. It is likely to include the following activities:
  - i. Strategic plan – horizon scanning for next iteration
  - ii. Complaints process – ie complaints about the College, not about veterinary professionals
  - iii. Guidance for animal owners/keepers on what to (and what not to) expect from their vet team
  - iv. Animal owners/keepers' perspectives on the concerns process in terms of accessibility and communication
- f. Once selected, an introductory online meeting will be set up with all members to explain the purpose of the PAG in more detail, how we will engage with them, and that they may not all be required for all projects. This meeting will also include an overview of the College, our role, purpose and current strategic priorities.
- g. The programme of work for the first year to be followed and a second to be planned, groups would be selected as appropriate to the task in hand. NB this approach would be speedier than just recruiting different groups for each task without a 'pool'.
- h. A regular email update to be sent to all members of the PAG, regardless of the projects with which have been individually involved, to keep them informed and maintain a sense of engagement.
- i. Initial progress and success of the group to be reviewed at the end of the first year, to include feedback from PAG members, and changes made as appropriate. Effectiveness measures will include attendance, engagement and outcomes.
- j. It is unlikely that members will be retained beyond three to four years, although care will need to be taken to ensure that there is not a 'cliff edge' in losing all members at once.

### Financial impact

7. To ensure diversity of membership, it is proposed that members of the PAG are paid an allowance in line with other individuals working on College business. Based on approximately 30 members each participating in two half-day meetings across the year – all online – approximate cost will be £325 X 30 = £9,750 - in reality there may be some members who do more and some who are not required at all. Payment will not be given for responding to emails or surveys etc.

### **Governance**

8. It is to be stressed that the PAG would not be in a position to decide policy or strategy – that would always be reserved to Council and any groups to which it delegates such responsibility. The PAG would report to Officers, as they are responsible for ‘external meetings... communications and stakeholder relationships’, plus whichever department or committee to which a particular project relates.

### **Reputational risk**

9. It is to be hoped that the development of the PAG will be seen as positive. There is a risk that its members may communicate about College business more widely than is appropriate given that some of the projects may be at very early stages. Confidentiality will be stressed as part of the job role. There is also a risk that the group could be hijacked by someone on a personal mission. Care will be taken to stress the role of the group in the invitation to application. People who misuse their role would not be contacted to participate in further projects. A slimmed down version of the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members will be provided – focusing on behaviours and values.

### **Decision required**

10. Council is asked to discuss and approve the proposed way forward for the PAG, and specifically:
  - a. The draft Terms of Reference at Annex A
  - b. The draft invitation to application at Annex B

## Annex A – draft Terms of Reference for the Public Advisory Group

The Public Advisory Group (PAG) exists to support the activities of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, that is to set, uphold and advance the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health. The RCVS works in the public interest and the PAG will help to ensure that this objective is met.

Its members will comprise users of veterinary services and will include, but not be limited to, owners/keepers of companion animals, and equine and production animals. A pool of members will be selected, from whom smaller groups will be drawn to focus on specific tasks.

The PAG will be chaired by a member of RCVS Council, decided by the Officer team based on applications.

Terms of reference are as follows:

- a. To enable the RCVS to better understand issues affecting the public, so that this can inform future strategy, policy and consultation
- b. To act as a sounding board with whom the RCVS can confidentially consult on draft policy whilst under development
- c. To support the development and improvement of RCVS services for the public, for example, Find a Vet, Check the Registers and the concerns process
- d. To help to pilot and test messages and communications to ensure they are clear and understandable

The PAG will report to the Officer Team. Members will be regularly rotated and are likely to serve for between two and four years.

The PAG will not decide on College policy or strategy.

Members of the PAG will be compensated for attending meetings at the same rate as RCVS Council members. Where possible, meetings will be held online, to improve access, diversity and inclusion, and reduce the environmental impact.

## Annex B – draft invitation to application

### Opportunity to support animal health and welfare

Are you interested in supporting veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to deliver the UK's high standards of animal health and welfare?

An exciting opportunity exists to join a panel of animal owners/keepers (companion animal, equine and farm) to help inform and guide the policies and activities of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the UK regulatory body for veterinary professionals.

The new Public Advisory Group (PAG) will support the activities of the RCVS, that is to set, uphold and advance the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health.

We would like to have greater insight into animal owner/keeper opinion and experience, and how we can ensure that the veterinary professions continue to meet the needs of clients and animals alike, both now and in the future. We also want to improve how we work with and communicate to those who use veterinary services.

We are looking for people who are prepared to join a pool of approximately 30 individuals, from whom smaller groups will be drawn to support particular tasks. These tasks might include helping us to understand evolving issues, piloting surveys and consultations, user-testing online services, and being a sounding board for campaigns and messaging.

You need to be able to attend two or three online meetings across the year, be prepared to read paperwork ahead of time and contribute clearly, courteously and confidently. You will be comfortable with maintaining confidentiality, as some of the issues discussed will be early in their development. Terms will be between two and four years, subject to annual review at the discretion of the RCVS.

You will need to commit to the College's values of compassion, diversity and inclusion, straight-talking and forward-thinking.

Attendance at meetings will be compensated at a rate of £325 per day (pro rata, as meetings will usually be shorter than a full day). We are keen to receive a wide range of applications and are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Please note that this group will work in a collaborative way with the College. It is not the appropriate forum for individuals to promote a particular personal or organisational agenda.

If you are interested in applying to join the RCVS Public Advisory Group, please email [XXX@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:XXX@rcvs.org.uk) by XXXX including a short summary of why you feel you would be appropriate for the role. This summary should include:

- Any relevant experience of similar roles
- Your connection to animals
- What skills you would bring to the role and why you feel you should be selected

- Any relevant declarations of interest (for example, working with a veterinary team, family relationships with professionals regulated by the RCVS, working within the veterinary industry more widely, journalist/researcher, campaigner or lobbyist etc)

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Council
Date	8 September 2022
Title	Embedding culture - the next phase of activity
Summary	This paper provides a brief update on progress so far and includes details of proposed next steps along with an updated complaints process
Decisions required	To agree the next phase of the project
Attachments	Annex A - Update on phase one and next steps
Author	Lisa Hall People Director <a href="mailto:l.hall@rcvs.org.uk">l.hall@rcvs.org.uk</a>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a

**<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

**<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others</li> <li>2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation</li> <li>3. To protect commercially sensitive information</li> <li>4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS</li> </ol>
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation</li> </ol>

## Embedding culture (formally Council culture project)

### Background

1. In 2021, five working groups were formed to address issues raised by the research carried out by Mike Farrar into the culture of RCVS Council and how it could be improved.
2. The groups worked on the following issues:
  - a. Review and update of Code of Conduct for Council and committee members
  - b. How we can better understand and utilise the skills of all Council, committee and senior staff members and encourage greater understanding and respect
  - c. How we can improve the election process to ensure greater clarity on the role and function of Council and encourage appropriate individuals to stand
  - d. How we can improve the induction and ongoing training for Council and committee members
  - e. How can we improve the visibility of Council and committee activity to the professions and the public
3. In addition, each group considered the purpose of Council.
4. The Council leads from each of the five groups came together to discuss progress each area as part of a Steering Group, and an update was provided at the April 2022 meeting of Council. At the June 2022 meeting of Council, a series of items were approved, ie:
  - a. How we work statement for Council
  - b. Role description for a Committee Chair
  - c. Templates for committee updates
  - d. Question Time meeting plan
5. An overview of outstanding actions from this first phase of activity are listed in Annex A, together with suggestions for new topics to be tackled under the broad headings, which will form part of phase two.

### Next steps

6. It is proposed that the remaining actions are completed, and then we move on to start phase two of this work with a meeting before the end of October. The suggested topics to be tackled in phase two can be found in Annex A.
7. Based on discussion amongst the Officer team, it is proposed that one main group (a task and finish group) is formed rather than a group for each specific area and Council members are invited to express their interest in joining this group by contacting Lisa Hall by Friday 16 September.
8. The group will report to Council as appropriate.



9. In addition to moving forward with phase two, it is suggested that the group discuss a post-implementation review period to understand if the changes are fit for purpose and have achieved the original objective.

**Decisions required**

10. Council is invited to discuss and agree:
  - a. The process for taking forward phase two of activity
  - b. The proposed topics for phase two (Annex A)

## Annex A –actions remaining and next steps (phase two)

Group	Phase two
Review of Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See separate paper for proposed new complaints process</li> <li>• Review of remainder of Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members to be carried out</li> </ul>
Better understand and utilise skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore alternative to the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) process to better understand skills development</li> <li>• Explore the skills required that Council members think are the most important to be an effective member so that a development plan can be designed to fill gaps</li> <li>• Set up training for Committee Chairs</li> <li>• Develop reflection sessions for Committee chairs and President</li> <li>• Explore a model for reflection on performance for all Council members</li> </ul>
Improve the election process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve updating of statutory instrument to allow electronic nominations and voting (temporary measure during Covid)</li> <li>• Develop updated nominations form to be more inclusive</li> <li>• Update Council member 'job spec'</li> <li>• Increase communications around nomination period</li> </ul>
Improve Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish appropriate learning activities to support Council development</li> <li>• Review updated Induction and make any necessary adjustments post implementation of changes</li> </ul>
Improve visibility of Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities already approved to be implemented eg committee updates, Regional Question Times etc.</li> <li>• Review new activities and refresh as appropriate</li> </ul>