



**VETERINARY NURSES COUNCIL**

**TUESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2010 AT 2.00 PM**

**AGENDA**

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2010** Paper attached
- 4. MATTERS ARISING**  
**Any matters arising not listed below**
- 5. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR REGISTERED NURSES** Paper attached
- 6. DRAFT STRATEGY PLAN 2010** Paper attached
- 7. TREASURER FOR VN COUNCIL** Paper attached
- 8. DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2010 (REVISED)** Paper attached
- 9. EDUCATION**
  - a. Report from the meeting of the Awarding Body Board held on 16 September 2010** Paper to follow
  - b. Higher Education report** Paper attached
- 10. AUDIT OF CPD** Paper to follow
- 11. REVISION OF NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS** Oral report
- 12. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**
  - a. Advisory Committee/Guide working party** Oral report
  - b. Communications Board** Paper attached
  - c. Practice Standards Group** Oral report
  - d. Veterinary Legislation Group report** Oral report
  - e. Lantra Veterinary Activities Industry Group** Oral report
- 13. ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION**
- 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
- 15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
Tuesday 8 February 2011 at 2.00pm

**ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS**

**VETERINARY NURSES COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2010**

<b>Members:</b>	Miss Elizabeth Branscombe	- Chairman
	Rev Anthony Birbeck*	
	Mrs Dot Creighton	- Vice-Chairman
	Mrs Louise Glysen*	
	Mrs Catherine Goldie	
	Mr Richard Hooker	
	Mr Christopher House*	
	Mr Alan Hughes*	
	Mrs Andrea Jeffery	
	Mrs Katherine Kissick	
	Mrs Jacqui Molyneux	- Vice-Chairman
	Mrs Jill Nute	
	Miss Hilary Orpet	
	Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst*	
	Ms Jennifer Thompson	
Mrs Helen Torrington		
Mrs Josephine Yates		

\*Absent

<b>In attendance:</b>	Mrs Annette Amato	- Committee Secretary
	Miss Susan Badger	- BVNA Observer
	Mrs Carole Clarke	- BSAVA observer
	Mrs Elizabeth Earle	- Head of Veterinary Nursing
	Mrs Victoria Hedges	- Examinations and Higher Education Quality Manager
	Miss Jane Hern	- Registrar
	Ms Lizzie Lockett	- Head of Communications
	Mr Peter Jinman	- Junior Vice President
	Professor Sandy Trees	- President

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence were received from Rev Tony Birbeck, Mrs Louise Glysen, Mr Christopher House, Mr Alan Hughes and Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2. The Chairman reminded Council members that their declarations of interest should be kept up to date and that this could be done directly through the RCVS intranet. No additional interests were declared.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2010**

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010 were accepted as a correct record, subject to the amendment of a typographical error in Para. 21.

**MATTERS ARISING**

4. A query was raised in relation to the inclusion of an additional reflective section in the NPL for the use of HE students, and whether the minutes were accurate in this respect. It was confirmed that the company developing the progress log had definitely included this optional section, as requested. This would be an option for universities to purchase as an "add on" if they wished. It did not form part of the log used by students working towards the RCVS award, which was paid for by the Awarding Body.
5. The Chairman reported that she had received a comment from Mrs Clarke, the BSAVA observer, regarding the minutes in relation to paragraph 12, which had been noted.
6. The Chairman reported that discussions regarding the possible appointment of a Treasurer for VN Council had not yet taken place, but it was hoped that these would be held in the summer and would be reported back to Council at its next meeting for further consideration. It was also noted that when this matter had been discussed previously, it had been thought that if the Chairman was unable to attend PRC meetings where budget setting arrangements were discussed, one of the Vice-Chairmen should attend as an alternate to put the VN Council position. However, it had since been pointed out that this would not be permitted under the terms of reference of PRC and therefore in such cases comments would need to be submitted in writing or through one of the College Officers.

**VETERINARY NURSING BYE-LAWS**

7. Council received a paper prepared by the Registrar setting out two sets of proposed changes to the VN Bye-Laws, the first being to incorporate changes to Parts I and II, relating to the award of the certificate, which were approved by Council in February 2010 and the second being to establish the disciplinary part of the VN Regulation Scheme set out in Part IV of the Bye-Laws and to determine when these provisions come into force. The paper set out the background to the introduction of the List of VNs maintained under Charter, the introduction of a non-statutory Register as a subset of the List, and the legal advice received on the question of whether it would be possible to remove RVNs from both the Register and the List following disciplinary proceedings, as set out in the notes of the advice by Counsel given in conference in September 2009, followed by an 'open' letter sent to the BVA and the former Registrar of the RCVS who had also raised questions on these issues. Issues raised in a motion put before RCVS Council in March were addressed. The arguments for and against removing VNs from the List and the Register and the case for Regulation were covered. The paper also detailed the proposed arrangements for dealing with appeals from the VN Disciplinary Committee and proposed changes to the provisions of Part IV relating to the composition of the VN PIC and DC.
8. The Chairman reported that she had received detailed comments from Mrs Swindlehurst, who was unable to attend the meeting, expressing strong support for the recommendations set out in the paper. Miss Badger, attending as the BVNA observer, read out a statement which indicated that the BVNA was fully supportive of the efforts of VN Council to recognise the emerging status of the VN profession and to regulate VNs, but urging the RCVS to explore ways in which a statutory register might be achieved due to frustrations at the limitations of a non-statutory register. However, the BVNA also expressed the view that it would appear to be a nonsense if an RVN were to be removed from the Register due to negligence yet would be able to continue to practise as a VN,

from the List or otherwise, and that it was not realistic to expect employers to ascertain if prospective employees had been struck off.

9. In regard to the use of the word “negligence” in the BVNA statement, Mrs Nute clarified the fact that if the situation for VNs were to parallel that for veterinary surgeons, negligence would be considered to be an issue to be addressed through the civil courts and would not be a disciplinary matter. It was then confirmed that the point of concern to the BVNA was that an RVN removed from the Register for disciplinary reasons might still be able to practise, by being on the List.
10. Whilst accepting the fact that the creation of a statutory register would not be possible without a new Veterinary Surgeons Act, the question was asked whether this could be progressed by means of the Regulatory Reform Order, but the Registrar confirmed that the regulatory reform mechanism could not be used to introduce a new regulatory framework for VNs and that she could not envisage this being achieved other than by means of legislation. It was then asked whether it might be possible to introduce a statutory register initially through the devolved parliaments and assemblies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It was noted that although it might be necessary to introduce separate legislation, at least in Westminster and Holyrood, as had been the case for pharmacy technicians, it had been recommended that regulation of all professions should be reserved. At present only those professions then in existence had been reserved at the time of devolution. It was not thought that introducing legislation in Scotland would be a desirable option for VNs. Another suggestion was that by an amendment to Schedule 3, the link between the List and the carrying out of Schedule 3 procedures might be removed. However, this would create an additional problem in identifying the group of people who could carry out these procedures and a list of some sort would be required.
11. In view of the accepted limitations of the current situation and the fact that a VN removed from the Register could still remain on the List, it was suggested that the best course of action would be to publicise, as much and as widely as possible, the names of those removed from the Register. The Registrar confirmed that it would be the clear intention to make public these removals, and added that there is an existing obligation for a veterinary surgeon to check the status of his/her VNs, although this is not always heeded. It was also pointed out that there are other sanctions which can be applied as part of the disciplinary process. It was generally agreed that it was desirable to encourage as many Listed VNs to transfer to the Register as possible, and that this would ultimately lead to a situation where the List only included those who had been removed from the Register. However, VNs who qualified prior to 2003 were not obliged to transfer and could not be forced to do so. It was speculated that one of the reasons why the 1,500 currently Listed VNs have not chosen to transfer is concern surrounding the disciplinary process and what this may involve.
12. Council was in agreement that although the current situation was frustrating, the concerns could be best addressed by clear publicity regarding removals, possibly by the inclusion of a separate page in the List of a different colour for such individuals, with explanatory notes. It was also agreed that there should be an additional column in the online register to show any disciplinary history over the last five years; but that whatever is done would need to be consistently done in relation to veterinary surgeons. It was noted that details of disciplinary proceedings on the website can be very easily accessed and that these can remain for several years.

13. Some members of Council expressed agreement with the BVNA's sentiments and one member wondered whether the opinion provided by Counsel had been over-cautious and if the likelihood of appeal against full removal (from both List and Register) would be very small. However, it was pointed out that although it was accepted that the situation was not ideal, the consequences for the RCVS and VN Council of ignoring the advice of Counsel needed to be considered.
14. In regard to the amendments to bye-law 5(1), covering practical training, it was confirmed that this could be carried out in Training Practices (TPs) and Auxiliary Training Practices (ATPs) and would be managed by the students' centres.
15. At the conclusion of the discussion, VN Council agreed that the proposed changes to the VN Bye-Laws as set out in the paper should be recommended to Council for approval, subject to the understanding that the differences in VNs removed from the register to the list should be clearly and publicly shown as outlined in para 13.

#### **RCVS - ACOVENE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

16. The Head of Veterinary Nursing presented the draft memorandum of understanding between the RCVS and ACOVENE which had been drawn up as agreed following the discussion at the previous Council meeting. It was noted, as had been suggested in earlier discussions, that the annual cost of affiliation would be in the region of €5 – 6,000 and a comment was made that this seemed a large amount to pay for an additional layer of accreditation for the UK schools of veterinary nursing. It was pointed out, however, that there are advantages to including the UK veterinary nursing system within the wider European system and that ACOVENE is actively supported by the Federation of European Small Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA). As the RCVS VN Department currently carries out the secretariat for ACOVENE, the costs would be mostly recovered. It was also noted that one of the conditions and advantages of the affiliation would be a permanent RCVS seat on the Board, as the RCVS would be a strong stakeholder with over 50 affiliated colleges. It was confirmed that there would be no additional fees to cover the annual visit which would be undertaken to one school.
17. A suggestion was made that the fee should be covered by means of a levy on the course providers and it was agreed that the Heads of Finance and Veterinary Nursing would look at this option in terms of the budget for 2011. It was also suggested, as the fee and due date had not yet been agreed, that the memorandum of understanding should incorporate a cap on the fees. Council agreed to approve the memorandum of understanding as set out in the paper, with the proviso that a cap on the fees should be included.

#### **DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2011**

18. The Head of Finance presented the draft budget for 2011. It was noted that there was a proposed increase in the annual retention fee of 2%, from £60 to £61. PRC would be considering increases in the veterinary surgeons fees of 0, 1, 2 or 3%. The proposed changes in the fees for the theory examinations reflected the change in the arrangements under the new award, where candidates would sit one larger theory examination rather than the two covered at present, and there was a range of fees to cover candidates sitting under the new, transitional and old awards. It was also flagged up for 2011 that consideration would be given to a cost neutral rationalisation of the initial registration fee, followed by a pro rata payment of the annual fee for the subsequent year, as is now the case for veterinary surgeons, as well as a review of the timing of payments. Council

agreed to authorise the Chairman to agree to an annual retention fee increase in line with that agreed by PRC for veterinary surgeons, of up to 2%.

#### **REVIEW OF NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS (NOS)**

19. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that Lantra is now in the final consultation stage of the review of the VN NOS, and that two separate sets of standards have been written, one for veterinary nurses and the other for those in veterinary auxiliary occupations. The final draft of the VN NOS had been circulated to all VN Council members for comment, in order that a co-ordinated response could be produced, and a meeting had been held with Lantra earlier in the day to feed back the comments. There had been a limited response from Council members and most had been happy with the document. Thanks were given to those had responded and it was suggested that any further comments should be sent directly to Lantra.

#### **AWARDING BODY BOARD (ABB)**

20. Mrs Molyneux presented the minutes of the Awarding Body Board meeting held on 25 March 2010 and confirmed that the consultations on the revision of the VN award were now complete and the details were being submitted to Ofqual for approval. There had been some 450 responses to the final stage of the consultation, with positive feedback. The College was attending a number of awareness-raising events for employers over the next few weeks and so far over 500 places had been booked. It was also reported that the skills list for the nursing progress log had been circulated to the ABB members for comment and was now being set up by Skillwise, the company contracted by the Awarding Body to carry out the work. The NPL would be piloted by three centres in June and there would also be a web based demonstration available in June to show the different functions.
21. Mrs Molyneux drew attention to concerns discussed by the Board on the issue of large practice groups effectively approving their own training practices, with associated quality assurance issues, which had resulted in the agreement that there should be a requirement for an independent verifier in such cases. A specification for the independent verifier had been drawn up.
22. It was also flagged up for information that the membership of the Board may need to be reviewed under the new accreditation criteria and regulations for awarding bodies to be implemented by Ofqual, following the implementation of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act.

#### **CONTINUING EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE**

23. Council noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Continuing Education Sub-Committee (CESC) held on 24 February 2010. Mrs Jeffrey, the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, drew Council's attention to an anomaly in the reporting of Higher Education issues to Council. At present the HE issues are reported both to CESC, which is a Sub-Committee of VN Council, and also to the Awarding Body Board. Mrs Jeffrey suggested that the ABB did not need to be involved in this area and that the terms of reference for both the CESC and the ABB should be reviewed to resolve this situation.
24. Council's attention was drawn to the discussion in the Minutes on the CPD audit for 2010, and the question of what sanctions should be imposed on those who failed to

comply with the CPD requirements or to produce a CPD card on request. The Sub-Committee had agreed that it would not be appropriate to impose sanctions on non-compliant VNs when there were no similar sanctions for veterinary surgeons and that discussions could not therefore be progressed on this matter until it was clarified with respect to veterinary surgeons. It had been recommended that this be raised again with RCVS Council. The Registrar confirmed that the RCVS is seeking legal advice on this issue.

#### **AUDIT OF CPD**

25. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that 10% of RVNs (approximately 600) had been asked to submit copies of their CPD records for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, following the criteria drawn up for the previous audit in 2009, with a deadline date of the end of April. To date 471 responses had been received. The details were currently being entered into a database, but initial points noted were that some RVNs had suggested that the courses carried out as a student leading to their VN qualification were counted as CPD, some had included more than the maximum of 5 hours of self directed learning without supporting information, and some had submitted their 2010 record cards. A full analysis would be provided at the October meeting.

#### **HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT**

26. Council noted the report which had been presented to the Awarding Body Board, setting out the Higher Education and Diploma provision during 2009 and plans for 2010. A query was raised in connection with the link between the management team for the Warwickshire degree programme with the quality assurance of the Pershore College/University of Worcester FDS program, which is now on terminal approval, but the Examinations and HE manager reassured Council that this was not an issue of concern and that the RCVS was satisfied that there were no issues with Warwickshire's own degree programme which had been granted full approval in October 2009. The Head of Veterinary Nursing added that the concerns of the RCVS regarding the Pershore programme had been reported through the QAA mechanisms in February 2009, and as yet QAA still had not provided a final report.

#### **REPORT FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

27. Mrs Kissick presented a tabled report covering issues of particular interest to VN Council which had been discussed at the meeting of the Advisory Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> April. Council's attention was drawn to the suggestion that there should be a joint Guide to Professional Conduct for VNs and veterinary surgeons, and the views of VN Council were sought on this issue. The list of questions which would be considered by the working party was provided, and it was suggested by a member that the list should include guidance for VN students as well as veterinary students. Andrea Jeffery had been invited to act as a representative of VN Council on the working party.
28. The question of the undertaking of epidural anaesthesia by veterinary nurses had been discussed and after much discussion it had been agreed that RVNs should be allowed to prepare the equipment for epidurals, should be taught how to monitor epidurals and the adverse effects that may be seen, the drugs used and the removal of the catheter, but should not be allowed to place the catheter or to perform the procedure of administering an epidural. It was confirmed that top up anaesthesia through the catheter was permitted at the direction of the veterinary surgeon. It was assumed that this would either be the

subject of an advice note or would be included in the Guide to Professional Conduct.

29. The Head of Veterinary Nursing informed Council that the student handbook for the new diploma award was being prepared, as that as the Code of Conduct would not be ready for students at the start of this award, it was intended to include some guidance in the student handbook regarding code of conduct, which would be checked with the Advisory Committee chairman before publication.

#### **REPORT FROM COMMUNICATIONS BOARD**

30. Council noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Board held on 2010. The Head of Communications drew attention in particular to the suggestions for ways in which the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of VN training might be celebrated in 2011, and asked Council to give particular thought to this topic and to put forward any further ideas. It was noted that 2011 would be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the VN Journal, and it was suggested that some discussions might be held with the editor on potential overlap. The Chairman asked Council members to consider the suggestions made by Comms Board and to feed back with their comments.

#### **REPORT FROM PRACTICE STANDARDS GROUP (PSG)**

31. Ms Thompson reported that the PSG had not met since the last meeting of VN Council. The revised Practice Standards Manual had been produced in April, together with guidance notes and an FAQ section on the website. The documents could also be downloaded. Comments on potential lay input to the PSG were requested within the next two weeks. It was also reported that the Advisory Committee was considering the question of whether PI investigators could also be PSS inspectors, and this was being considered by the representative organisations within the PSG. Council members were asked to submit their views on this point by email to Ms Thompson.

#### **VETERINARY LEGISLATION GROUP**

32. The Registrar said that the Group had not yet met, so there was nothing to report.

#### **REPORT FROM LANTRA VETERINARY ACTIVITIES INDUSTRY GROUP (VAIG)**

33. Mrs Torrington provided a brief report on the first meeting of the Veterinary Activities Industry Group, which she had attended in March. There had been discussion about the representation of employers on the group and it had been agreed that the VPMA should be approached to provide a representative. An article was being produced on the recent recruitment survey. A request had been made to Lantra by this group that any future reviews of the NOS should be arranged to take place before the development of the associated awards due to the difficulties which were encountered with the recent award development. Lantra had also been asked to put together a step by step guidance on funding. The Head of Veterinary Nursing added that guidance on apprenticeships was needed as it was not generally well known in the profession how the funding of a college affects its practices. Mrs Molyneux reported that the same issue had arisen at the English National Council for Lantra and a request had been made for a simple guide to funding for all landbased industries.
34. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that she had requested Lantra to be provided with the names of those on the Qualifications Support Panel, as she had concerns that the



names were not being made freely available, in contravention of the Joint Awarding Body/SSC Working Practices Group guidance on transparency. A satisfactory reply had not yet been received.

35. It was confirmed, in response to a query, that there is no apprenticeship scheme for VN training in Scotland, due to a perceived lack of demand. A meeting had been arranged by Lantra to which all Scottish TPs were invited, but none had attended. In England there is funding but not all colleges draw on this.

#### **VN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS**

36. A paper was tabled showing the proposed membership of VN Council members on the various RCVS and VN Council Sub-Committees and Working Parties for 2010-11, which would be confirmed after the meeting of the Nominations Committee. Council also confirmed that it wished Miss Branscombe to act as Chairman, and Mrs Kissick and Mrs Molyneux as Vice-Chairmen, for the forthcoming year.

#### **ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION**

37. The Head of Communications had noted the various items identified during the course of the meeting which included guidance on funding. It was agreed that an item on the CPD audit should wait until the full details were available later in the year.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

38. The Chairman reminded Council that this was Mrs Jo Yates' last meeting as a member of Council, and thanked her for her contribution to its work over the past four years.
39. Mrs Creighton reported that Vetlife is putting together a focus group to try to ensure that the Vetlife website (<http://www.vetlife.org.uk/>) meets the needs of VNs in practice. Volunteers were needed to attend the group and a meeting would be held at BVA headquarters on 26 May at 7pm. Refreshments would be provided and travel expenses would be reimbursed. Council members were urged to encourage any colleagues in the London area to consider attending. Feedback and ideas would also be welcome, via Mrs Creighton, from those unable to attend.
40. The issue of staffing an RCVS stand at BVNA Congress in October was raised by Mrs Creighton and this would be discussed with the Head of Veterinary Nursing after the meeting, as regards attendance of RCVS staff.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

41. Tuesday 12 October 2010 at 2.00pm.



<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Veterinary Nurses Council Public Affairs Committee Planning &amp; Resources Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>12 October 2010 13 October 2010 14 October 2010</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Disciplinary Procedures for Registered Veterinary Nurses</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>The purpose of this paper is to share with Committees and Council the legal advice recently received about the proposed disciplinary procedures for veterinary nurses and to suggest a way forward.</b>
<b>DECISIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>By Committees – to decide what recommendation to put to Council for consideration in November 2010</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	<b>Annex A: Legal Opinion relating to the Veterinary Surgeons Act [Confidential and Legally Privileged] Annex B: Legal Opinion relating to the Royal Charter [Confidential and Legally Privileged] Annex C: Proposed disciplinary provisions</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Jane C. Hern Registrar 020 7202 0716 <a href="mailto:registrar@rcvs.org.uk">registrar@rcvs.org.uk</a></b>

## **Background**

1. Committees last discussed this matter, and asked for further legal advice, in May 2010. The paper considered by Committees then, which sets out the background and issues in some detail, is accessible on the intranet and the RCVS website, along with the minutes of those discussions. Council Members have seen the subsequent instructions that were sent to Queen's Counsel and they are available on request for other Committee Members. Much of the background is however set out in the attached two legal opinions, one relating to provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and the other dealing with the Charter powers.

## **Issues**

2. In short the questions covered by the legal advice are:-
  - i. Does the College have power to remove veterinary nurses from the List as well as the new Register in the event of them being found guilty of disgraceful professional conduct ?
  - ii. If not, could the College publish the names of those veterinary nurses in such a way that it is clear to all (potential employers, clients, etc) that they have fallen short of the standards required to remain on the Register ?
  - iii. Could the College advise veterinary surgeons who have veterinary nurses working under their direction that they could themselves face disciplinary action if they allow a veterinary nurse removed from the Register to undertake procedures which would be inappropriate in the light of their disciplinary record ?
3. Counsel was also asked to suggest any other reasonable and workable means of enabling the College to put effective disciplinary procedures in place for veterinary nurses pending the opportunity to put a proper statutory framework in place.

## Removal from the List and/or Register

4. In brief Counsel advises that the College does not have power to remove from the List in the event of an adverse disciplinary finding. Essentially this is because the List exists for the purpose of recording those who have qualified as veterinary nurses, initially by virtue of passing a College examination and subsequently by obtaining an vocational qualifications or a degree. The reference to the List in the 1991 amendment to Schedule 3 of the Act (which allows Listed veterinary nurses to undertake certain procedures otherwise reserved to veterinary surgeons) does not include any express or implied power to treat this list as if it were a register from which those no longer fit to practice could be removed. Had it been Parliament's intention that the List should be used in this way the legislation would say so. Instead it appears to have been envisaged that veterinary surgeons would exercise the necessary control by deciding which Listed nurses should undertake the permitted procedures.
5. Removal from the Register is possible, because the Register is an extra-statutory creation of the College for the purpose of putting in place a voluntary system of regulating veterinary nurses, pending legislation. This view is re-enforced by the fact that the voluntary regulation of nurses rests on contract and those veterinary nurses who are on the Register have agreed to be bound by the Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses and to be accountable through disciplinary proceedings.

## Publication of the names

6. Counsel advises that the College may publish as part of the List/Register the names of veterinary nurses who have been removed from the Register following disciplinary proceedings, indeed that it would be sensible to do so, to minimise the risks to the public or

the College of such veterinary nurses remaining on the List, and thus on the face of it qualified to undertake 'Schedule 3' procedures.

#### Giving advice to veterinary surgeons

7. Again Counsel advises that the College could, and indeed should, advise veterinary surgeons that they should, prior to permitting veterinary nurses to undertake 'Schedule 3' procedures under their direction, consult the List/Register to check the nurses' disciplinary record and to warn those veterinary surgeons that they might themselves face disciplinary proceedings if they direct a veterinary nurse to undertake procedures for which they are unsuited. The basis of this view is that the terms of Schedule 3 make it clear that Listed veterinary nurses are only permitted to undertake medical treatment or minor surgery at the direction of a veterinary surgeon.

#### Counsel's further advice

8. Counsel makes the comment that "it is in the public interest (that interest being the maintenance of the reputation of the professional and the safety and health of animals) for those who are guilty of misconduct to be removed not only from the register which has been created on a voluntary and contractual basis but also to have their names removed from the list." He therefore further advises that for the College to be confident of having sufficient powers to regulate and discipline veterinary nurses it should seek an amendment to Schedule 3 to provide powers to both include and remove names from the List and/or to seek additional Charter powers to specifically permit the College to regulate the professional conduct of those to whom they have awarded qualifications.

#### **Proposed way forward**

9. Option A: introduce the disciplinary procedures as set out in Annex C as a voluntary non-statutory scheme simply on the basis of contract. Veterinary nurses on the Register have already signed an agreement to abide by the Guide to Professional Conduct and accept possible removal from the Register if they are found guilty of disgraceful conduct.  
Option B: defer introduction of the disciplinary procedures until changes to the Act and/or Charter can be achieved.
10. Option A would mean that the final part of the VN regulation scheme can be introduced in 2011 and provide the basis of a statutory framework in due course. In this way the College would be doing as much as it can to protect animals and their owners by putting the majority of veterinary nurses on a proper professional footing, accountable for their professional conduct. This would be reinforced by a published List and Register which would explicitly record the names of nurses removed from the Register for misconduct and by advice to veterinary surgeons that they should check the register status of any veterinary nurse they direct to undertake 'Schedule 3' procedures.
11. Given the hiatus in implementation of the final part of the VN regulation scheme it is suggested that the disciplinary procedures should be brought into force on 1 April 2011. This would give time to raise awareness of the procedures in Annex C, which are not quite the same as those in the original VN Bye-Laws. Part IV of the Bye-Laws, which contains the disciplinary procedures, has never been brought into force and would be repealed. The provisions in Annex C include committee structures revised in the light of legal advice, along with appeal procedures (which were not in the original provisions). In addition the date would allow the VDS to put in place the necessary indemnity cover for Registered veterinary nurses. [Understandably the VDS wishes to know what the RCVS Council decides before it puts its arrangements in place.]

12. Option B could be taken forward in two ways – as minor and specific amendments to Schedule 3 and the Charter just to address the VN regulation issues or as part of comprehensive modernisation of the Act and Charter. At this stage it is not known what the response of Defra might be to a request to make such minor amendments to the Act and Charter. It is highly unlikely that these changes to the Act could be progressed at the same time as the Legislative Reform Order (LRO) currently being sought to revise the composition of the statutory committees. A different statutory instrument is required and further work would have to be undertaken to secure Ministerial approval for an additional change.
13. In the recent meeting with the Minister he gave Officers a clear indication that he would be happy to support a new Act within the life of the current Parliament (i.e. the next 5 years) and it might be sensible to proceed with this rather than divert resources to another limited measure. The question of what the priorities should be following the LRO is precisely what the new Legislation Working Party has been charged to consider. Its report is expected next summer.

### **Conclusion**

14. Committees are asked to consider the following recommendations to Council:
  - Option A: adopt the disciplinary procedures set out in Annex C as part of the scheme for regulating registered veterinary nurses, to come into effect on 1 April 2011, and repeal Part IV of the Veterinary Nurse Bye-Laws [and to make other consequential drafting amendments as necessary].
  - Option B: disciplinary procedures for registered veterinary nurses should await changes to the Act/Charter.

## THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

### VETERINARY NURSING RULES

#### PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION AND DISCIPLINARY AND RESTORATION PROCEEDINGS

##### **Preliminary Investigation**

1. (1) There shall be a VN Preliminary Investigation Committee, appointed by the Veterinary Nurses Council, which shall consist of:
  - (a) one veterinary surgeon,
  - (b) three registered veterinary nurses,
  - (c) one lay person (not being nor having been a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse);

But, shall not include members of the VN Disciplinary Committee, members of the Disciplinary Committee set up under section 15 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (the Act), or members and Lay Observers of the Preliminary Investigation Committee set up under section 15 of the Act.

The quorum of the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee shall be three, of whom at least one shall fall within paragraph (1) (a) or (c).

- (2) The VN Preliminary Investigation Committee shall carry out a preliminary investigation into every disciplinary case (that is to say, a case in which it is alleged that a registered veterinary nurse is liable to have his or her name removed from the Register or to have his or her entry in the Register suspended) and decide whether the case should be referred to the VN Disciplinary Committee.
- (3) Subject to paragraphs (1) and (2) of this rule, and where otherwise not inconsistent with these Rules, the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee shall adopt, with any modifications agreed by the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee, or necessary interpretations, the practices and procedures of the Preliminary Investigation Committee appointed under section 15 of the Act.

##### **Removal from the Register**

2. (1) There shall be a VN Disciplinary Committee whose membership shall be taken from among the following:
  - (a) veterinary surgeons,
  - (b) registered veterinary nurses,
  - (c) lay persons (not being nor having been veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses);

And may include the members of the Disciplinary Committee set up under section 15 of the Act;

But, shall not include members of the VN Council, members of the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee or members and Lay Observers of the Preliminary Investigation Committee set up under section 15 of the Act.

Save always that each member of a VN Disciplinary Committee has been duly appointed by the Veterinary Nurses Council, each VN Disciplinary Committee shall consist of not more than five and not less than three members of whom not less than one shall fall within each of paragraphs (1) (a) - (c) of this rule and the Chairman and any Vice-Chairmen shall be persons falling within paragraph (1) (c) of this rule, who have respectively been appointed to such positions by the Veterinary Nurses Council.

- (2) The VN Disciplinary Committee shall determine any disciplinary case referred to them by the VN Preliminary Investigation Committee and any application under rule 4.
- (3) If –
  - (a) a registered veterinary nurse whose name is included in the Register has been convicted of a criminal offence which in the opinion of the VN Disciplinary Committee renders him or her unfit to practise as a veterinary nurse; or
  - (b) any registered veterinary nurse is judged by the VN Disciplinary Committee to have been guilty of disgraceful conduct in any professional respect; or
  - (c) the VN Disciplinary Committee is satisfied that the name of a registered veterinary nurse has been fraudulently entered in the Register

the VN Disciplinary Committee may, if it thinks fit, direct the removal of that name from the Register, or that the veterinary nurse's entry in the Register shall be suspended, that is to say, it shall not have effect during such a period specified in the direction.

- (4) The Veterinary Nurses Council shall appoint such legal assessors as it considers necessary for the VN Disciplinary Committee.
- (5) Subject to paragraphs (1), (2) (3) and (4) of this rule, and where otherwise not inconsistent with these Rules, the VN Disciplinary Committee shall adopt, with any modifications agreed by the VN Disciplinary Committee, or necessary interpretations, the rules and procedures of the Disciplinary Committee appointed under section 15 of the Act, including the Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Practitioners (Disciplinary Committee) (Procedure and Evidence) Rules Order of Council 2004 and the Veterinary Surgeons (Disciplinary Proceedings) Legal Assessor Rules 1967.

- 3 (1) A person in respect of whom the VN Disciplinary Committee has made a direction under rule 2 (3), may, at any time within 28 days from the notice of direction, lodge an appeal.
- (2) The appeal shall be heard by a barrister or solicitor with at least 10 years' standing.
- (3) The procedures of the appeal shall be as determined by the appointed barrister or solicitor and may include an oral hearing. The appointed barrister or solicitor may quash or vary the direction, or may remit the case back to the VN Disciplinary Committee.
- (4) The appeal shall be by way of a rehearing, including consideration of a transcript of the disciplinary hearing (to be provided by the College) and submissions by both parties.
- (5) The fee for an appeal shall be £500, to be refunded if the appeal is successful.

#### **Restoration to the Register**

4. (1) The name of a registered veterinary nurse who has been removed from the Register shall not be restored to the Register unless the VN Disciplinary Committee makes a direction to this effect, following an application for restoration to be considered in accordance with the Procedure and Evidence Rules.
- (2) Any application for restoration to the Register shall not be made within ten months of the date of removal or within ten months of a previous application.





<b>MEETING</b>	<b>All Committees</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>October 2010</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>RCVS Strategy Plan</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>Committees are invited to consider a new strategy plan and to recommend a version for Council to approve in November 2010</b>
<b>DECISIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>By Committees – to comment and suggest amendments By Council – to approve</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	<b>Annex A: Draft Strategy Plan 2010</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Jane C. Hern</b> Registrar 020 7202 0716 <a href="mailto:registrar@rcvs.org.uk">registrar@rcvs.org.uk</a>



1. Attached is a draft plan for the next 3 – 5 years.
2. The current Plan was first drafted in 2004 and after six years it is appropriate to undertake a fundamental review, even though the main aims and objectives are in many ways still relevant. Council reviewed the Plan in 2007, when a number of achievements were noted, along with ways in which the aims might still be met. Further annotations have now been made to record activity from 2007 to date. A copy of this plan is accessible on the intranet, for reference.
3. The attached draft is a very much shorter document than previous plans. The main reason for this is that something shorter, supported by longer internal documents, would be easier to present to the outside world. The old Plan contained a level of detail that made it difficult to communicate anything meaningful to the profession or the public; it was more useful as an internal source of reference and action checklist. This may explain why there is little awareness of it.
4. If the attached Plan, or something like it, is approved the intention would be to use it as a means of communicating some sense of direction for the organisation, to act as a focus for managing change, whether proactive or re-active. To implement the Plan a series of supporting documents would be put in place to translate the main aims down to the work of committees and departments. Where appropriate, the Plan would also be reflected in objectives set for individual members of staff as part of the annual appraisal process.
5. As with previous plans, Officers will keep the new Plan under regular review and Council and Committees will be invited to review it every three years, and to note annual achievements (posted on the intranet) at the end of each Council year.
6. Officers and the management team have had an opportunity to comment on a draft and Committees are now invited to make their input so that a further draft can be submitted to Council for approval in November.



## ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

### DRAFT STRATEGY PLAN 2010 > 2013/15

#### OVERALL AIM /STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

#### **“ Promoting and sustaining public confidence in veterinary medicine“**

To develop the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as an effective regulator and an influential scientific body – trusted equally by the public and the profession to be impartial and authoritative – and to ensure that the veterinary profession makes a positive contribution to society.

#### FRAMEWORK

- To put in place modern regulation for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, along with the means to extend this to other members of the veterinary team or providers of veterinary services in due course
- To achieve revision of the Veterinary Surgeons Act to bring it into line with current expectations and other equivalent legislation, taking into account the priorities set by Council and the availability of Parliamentary time
- Pending new legislation, to take advice on the way in which the current legislation should be interpreted in the light of changes to professional regulation in other sectors
- To continue to develop extra-statutory initiatives such as the Lay Observers on Preliminary Investigation Committee, Practice Standards Scheme, Registration of Veterinary Nurses, Health Protocols, etc
- To develop protocols and procedures to meet the current expectations of the public and the profession in relation to transparency of process
- To update the Royal Charter to establish a clear ‘Royal College’ role as a scientific body complementary to, but distinct from, the regulatory role, to provide a research and evidence base for veterinary medicine and surgery and to provide more positive support for members
- To keep the governance of the College under review – with the assistance of the Governance Review Group –to ensure that the decision making structures are clearly set out and followed

#### RELATIONSHIPS

- To work with the public and groups representing both animal owners and animal welfare to ensure that the veterinary profession takes appropriate care of its patients and clients and that the expectations of all parties are understood and managed
- To work with the profession directly through the membership and through professional bodies such as BVA, BVNA, FVE to harness the input of the profession into its regulation and development
- To work with government in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the European Commission and Parliament to ensure that new legislation and policy is ‘fit for purpose’ and informed by good science
- To work with accreditation bodies in other countries, such as North America (AVMA), Australasia (AVBC), Europe (EAEVE and Acovene) and others to ensure that veterinary and

veterinary nursing qualifications in the UK are recognised as meeting international benchmarks

- To work with other professional networks, such as UKIPG, to enable the College and the profession to learn from the experience of others and contribute to collective effort
- To work with RCVS Trust, particularly in developing the College's role as a scientific body

#### **DELIVERY**

- To ensure that the College is well resourced, in terms of finance and staff, to be able to discharge its statutory and other obligations
- To invest in IT and internet support to enable the College to manage data, processing and communications reliably and cost effectively
- To develop a corporate identity for the College so that those it works with are clear about its role and function and the nature of the relationship they have
- To exercise leadership to enable the College to be pro-active and influential as well as responsive

#### **OUTCOMES**

- To maintain a register of veterinary surgeons and nurses that are 'fit for purpose' now and into the future
- To safeguard the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care through the regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, thereby protecting the interests of those dependent on animals, and assuring public health
- To act as an impartial source of informed opinion on relevant veterinary matters
- To be seen to be fair, impartial, trustworthy, open and forward thinking



<b>MEETING</b>	<b>VETERINARY NURSES COUNCIL</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>9 OCTOBER 2010</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>VN COUNCIL FINANCE LIAISON OFFICER</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>To report a discussion with the VN Council Executive regarding the role of treasurer.</b>
<b>DECISIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>By VN Council – agree the role of Financial Liaison Officer</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Elizabeth Earle 020 7202 0732 vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

1. At its meeting of 9 February 2010 the Veterinary Nurses Council considered the appointment of a Treasurer to enable the Council to maintain an oversight of VN finances. The relevant papers and minute can be found at:  
VNC Feb 10 AI 12b  
VNC May 10 AI 03 Minutes of the meeting of VN Council Feb 10

## **CURRENT POSITION**

2. A meeting was held between the VN Executive, the Registrar, Treasurer and JVP on 22 September in order to further discuss how VN Council might develop and maintain an oversight of financial matters relating to veterinary nursing.
3. It was recognised that the appointment of a full “officer” team, including a treasurer, to the VN Council was a long term aim, as was the aspiration that the VN Council should be a stand-alone body with equivalent status to that of Council. However the latter is not possible under the current Act or Charter.
4. The appointment of a treasurer, and the level of committee and other work that appointment entails, was not seen to be necessary at present and could also be a difficult position to fill, given the current difficulties in attracting VNs to stand for election.
5. However it was agreed that a greater insight into, and involvement in, financial matters is important for the VN Council. It was therefore suggested that one of the VN Council Vice Chairmen should assume the role of Financial Liaison Officer. This would entail participation in budget-setting meetings and periodic liaison with the Heads of Veterinary Nursing and Finance in relation to implementation of the budget.
6. The Finance Liaison Officer should, with assistance from the Heads of Finance and VN, present the prepared budget to the VN Council and be in a position to address members’ questions in relation to expenditure and the setting of fees.
7. She or he should normally be the Veterinary Nurse Vice-Chairman i.e. the “Vice with a view”. In this way the Chairman of the Veterinary Nurses Council will, by the time s/he takes office, have a reasonable grasp of financial matters and will be in a better position to participate fully in the Planning and Resources Committee and to engage with the Officer team in P&R issues.
8. In the immediate future, the relevant heads of department and the Registrar will liaise with both the Financial Liaison Officer and Chairman to ensure that both are fully informed of all relevant finance issues until the new role has bedded in.
9. In recommending the FLO role for the Vice Chairman, it was recognised that the role and remit of the VN Council Executive should be reviewed and more clearly defined, both as individuals and collectively in the same way that College Officers are defined.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / PR IMPLICATIONS**

6. The FLO would need to attend at least one of the annual budget setting meetings that are held between the Heads of Veterinary Nursing and Finance, and may need to attend P&RC



in order to gain an insight into the overall College resource planning. However the Vice Chairman could be relieved of other VNC committee responsibilities, which would minimise increased claims for expenses and loss of earnings.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

7. VN Council is asked to decide whether to appoint a Financial Liaison Officer as outlined above.



<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Veterinary Nurses Council</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>12 October 2010</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Audit of CPD</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>Attached is a summary of the audit of CPD records from a sample of 10% of RVNs, carried out in April 2010.</b>
<b>DECISIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>To note</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Jennifer Orme VN Membership Secretary 020 7202 0713 j.orme@rcvs.org.uk</b>



## 2010 AUDIT OF REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSES CPD

### PROCEDURE

1. A sample of 10% of nurses currently registered was drawn in March 2010. This sample included both RVNs and REVNs and covered all UK postal areas. Additionally, the sample included overseas resident nurses. Only one RVN from any practice was selected.
2. The sample included nurses who had qualified in 2008 and in 2009, as well as those who qualified in 2007 and earlier. It has therefore only been possible to show the cumulative total CPD over more than one year for some of the sample.
3. Nurses were required to send attested photocopies of their CPD record card for the previous three years (2007 (partial year), 2008 and 2009), or since qualification, as appropriate.
4. Cards were audited and the amount and nature (categories A, B or C) of activity recorded on a database. Clearly inadequate or absent cards were also recorded.
5. Nurses whose cards had been requested in 2009 and who had not responded after 3 reminders (8 in total) were also included in the audit.

### SUMMARY OF AUDIT

Total number of records requested: **599**

Total number of records received: **492**

Total number of nurses who did not respond: **107 (includes 7 non-responders from 2009 audit).**

Number of cards with anomalies in recording hours (unable to include in statistics): **34**

	Qualified 2007 or earlier 3yr total CPD	Qualified 2008 2yr total CPD	Qualified 2009 1yr CPD
<b>0 hours</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 – 14.5 hours</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>15 – 30 hours</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>30 - 45 hours</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>45 + hours</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>79</b>

**Limitations and problems encountered:**

- Some nurses have attempted to count more than 5 hours of self directed undocumented learning per year. Where this has been picked up, only 5 hours per year have been recorded.
- It has not always been possible to record the number of hours accurately as nurses have put days or months rather than the number of hours. CPD hours have therefore been estimated where possible. The 34 cards where it was not possible to resolve the anomalies in recording were not included in the statistics.
- Not all nurses supplied RCVS CPD cards.

The most common reasons for having undertaken little or no CPD seem to be pregnancy/maternity leave, and the cost of CPD courses.



<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Veterinary Nurses Council</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>12 October 2010</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Communications Board</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>The minutes of the Board's meeting of 8 September 2010 are attached</b>
<b>DECISIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Lizzie Lockett Head of Communications 020 7202 0725 l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk</b>



## ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

### COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

MINUTES FROM MEETING ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 2PM.

#### ATTENDANCE

- The meeting was attended by:

Cherry Bushell	Director, RCVS Trust
Jane Hern	Registrar
Lynne Hill	Chairman of Public Affairs Committee
Richard Holford	Head of Corporate Services (for agenda items 7 and 8)
Ian Holloway	Communications Manager
Rachel Jennings	Council Member
Peter Jinman	President
Lizzie Lockett	Head of Communications (Chairman)
Diane Mark	
Claire Millington	Communications Officer
Richard Stephenson	Council member (by phone)
Sandy Trees	Senior Vice-President (for agenda items 1-7)
Danielle van den Bergh	Senior Graphic and Web Designer
Bradley Viner	Treasurer (by phone)

#### APOLOGIES

- Apologies were received from Louise Glysen, Rita Dingwall, Alison Lambert and Jerry Davies.

#### WELCOME

- Rachel Jennings, new Privy-Council appointee to the RCVS Council, was welcomed to her first meeting of the Communications Board.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Board members were asked to update their declarations of interest as relevant to matters arising on the agenda – there were no such updates.

#### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2010

- The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record. Matters arising included:
  - Ref par 10h, it was reported that a consultation on the proposed new Health Protocol was underway and would be discussed by Council in November.
  - Ref par 10i, it was reported that a meeting was due to take place with the animators of 'Simon's Cat' to see if they would be willing to work together to promote the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS). 'Simon's Cat' videos have been viewed 81.6 million times, and the YouTube channel is the second most viewed in the 'pets and animals' category on a world-wide basis. The audience reach would be fantastic for PSS. The challenge would be making any relationship mutually beneficial.

**Action: Coms Team**
  - Ref the Coms Plan, section 4.1.3 (Events), the suggestion was made that staff and vets at Defra be invited to a bespoke Meet the RCVS Day.

**Action: Coms Team**



- d) As a general point, it was discussed that the RCVS needs to be careful about its use of the term 'veterinary nurse' and ensure it is only used in the context of listed or registered nurses.

**Action: Coms Team**

#### **COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING**

6. A calendar of activities for the quarter July-September was circulated for reference.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

7. A report covering communications activities since June was circulated for reference.
8. Regarding the proposed Find a Vet 'app' (par 4,) it was reported that a survey about Find a Vet usage had identified that of those users of Find a Vet who have an app-enabled phone (around 50%), 85% would use an app version of the search tool. A series of credentials meetings with potential agencies to create such an app are underway, prior to a brief being issued to two or three of them. The aim would be to launch the app in January or February 2011.
9. Feedback from RCVS Day (par 26) was considered: in the main, it had been very positive, with the only substantial negative comments being regarding over-crowding, which should be a one-off issue as CertAVP holders would not be invited in future years. Discussion took place regarding the structure of the day – in particular, the placement of the coffee break after the AGM. It was discussed that while this was useful for award holders and guests arriving only for the second part of the event, it was less convenient for Council members and those attending the AGM, as that section of the meeting could be very short. This will be reconsidered for 2011. New venues will also be considered (post-meeting note – new venues have been considered but from a cost/suitability point of view, One Great George Street continues to be the most suitable and has been booked for 2011).

**Action: Coms Team/Officers**

10. Regarding communication with MPs (par 35), it was agreed that Council members would be encouraged to meet their local MPs in London.

**Action: Coms Team/Council members**

11. As an update on the London Vet Show (par 30), the organisers were keen for offers of chairmen for sessions, in exchange for a breakfast meeting slot for the RCVS to discuss VN legal issues. It was agreed that this could be a more positive benefit for the RCVS Trust than the College, as it would be helpful from a brand-building point of view. Trust to suggest potential chairmen.

**Action: Coms Team/Trust**

#### **PANORAMA**

12. A verbal update was given on reaction to the Panorama programme 'It shouldn't happen at a vets', which was broadcast in July. It was reported that around 130 emails and calls relating to the programme had been received from the public, veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses/VN colleges. Meanwhile, the RCVS ePolitix microsite had 1,652 visitors in July, compared to around 200 in previous months. The BBC had commented that the viewing figures were not as high as expected.
13. It was agreed that since the Preliminary Investigation Committee had instigated an investigation, there will be no communication on the specific incidents portrayed in the

programme. However, communications are planned on the general issues, such as the legal scope of VN activities.

#### **CORPORATE IDENTITY**

- 14.** The Communications team made a presentation which outlined activities to date on the corporate identity project, including the results of market research with vets, VNs and animal owners, and focus groups with RCVS staff and some Council members. This was supported by a paper that had been circulated ahead of the meeting.
- 15.** A draft new strapline, set of principles and tone of voice were discussed and approved. The principles in particular were welcomed by the Board. These will be presented as part of a 'Brand Handbook' which will also include the visual brand and guidelines on its use. The language and design elements will be best seen as a whole so will not be detailed in these minutes.
- 16.** A range of design concepts were considered. The general direction - simple, clear, fresh and authoritative - met with approval. Selected ideas will be developed further and tested amongst key audiences. The aim is to launch the new identity with the website in January 2011.

**Action: Coms Team**

#### **NEW WEBSITE**

- 17.** The look and feel of the new website will be determined by the outcome of the corporate identity project. However, much work has been done on the structure of the new site, with the key objectives being to make it easier to find information and to be more task-oriented. To facilitate this, the new site will actually be a grouping of four sites: main College site, VN Awarding Body, Trust and Find a Vet (the latter to also incorporate information for animal owners). Visitors to the sites will not see the joins, but the four-way structure allows different site menus to be used, which will be much more flexible than the existing structure.
- 18.** Other suggested improvements and changes include:
  - a) Log-in facility so that users can carry out certain tasks in a secure area (paying for things, changing details etc). This will be critical for the implementation of the new Registration Regulations – the process is not straightforward and requires integration with the new database.
  - b) Large graphical banner on the home-page which will rotate through a series of messages, which can change at different times of the year to flag up key issues (eg deadlines, events...).
  - c) Ticker-tape to highlight news headlines, updates to the site etc.
  - d) 'Quick links' by audience (eg vets, VNs, animal owners) – short cuts to frequently-used pages (can be changed depending on time of year).
  - e) Regardless of which of the four sites one is in, there will be links to the other three sites on all pages.

- 19.** As mentioned above, the new site is due to be launched in January 2011.

**Action: Coms Team**

#### **TWITTER**

- 20.** A paper was presented which outlined the pros and cons of the College setting up a Twitter account. Twitter is a free-to-use micro-blogging service, which allows users to send short messages (140 characters) to anyone who has chosen to follow them. It is increasingly used

by businesses and organisations as a quick way of keeping in touch with stakeholders, and receiving feedback from them.

21. It was agreed that a Twitter feed would be a useful addition to the communications toolbox, although it would be unlikely to replace any more traditional methods of communication, at least in the short-term. It would, however, be likely to appeal to the younger demographic.
22. It was agreed that 'tweets' would, in the first phase, be limited to factual information (such as event announcements, news headlines, reminders to pay fees, updates to the website etc), rather than comment, although it was accepted that some followers might expect comment and discussion.

**Action: Coms Team**

#### **RCVS NEWS NOVEMBER ISSUE**

23. A paper had been circulated with suggested contents for the November issue of *RCVS News*. In addition, a story about the Trust's Muybridge book would be included, to coincide with the Tate Britain's exhibition. There were no comments or further suggestions from the Board.

#### **POSITION STATEMENTS (STANDING ITEM)**

24. There were no issues to discuss.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS POLICY ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)**

25. There were no issues to discuss.

#### **AOB**

26. The issue of whether or not the College should attend meetings of the All Party Group for Animal Welfare was raised, and it was agreed that this would more properly be a decision for Public Affairs Committee.

**Action: Coms Team/Public Affairs Committee**

27. The Bella Moss Foundation has invited the RCVS to attend an event to launch a new MRSA advice website. It has also requested that the RCVS logo be used on its list of supporters. The Board agreed that it would be useful for the RCVS to attend the meeting, and flag up the website where appropriate (eg to PSS members), but that the use of the College logo would imply endorsement of the specific advice, which was inappropriate.

**Action: Coms Team**

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

28. The next meeting will be held at 2pm on 27 January 2011.

Lizzie Lockett  
Head of Communications  
September 2010