Guidance notes for candidates

Election Scheme

1. The election of members to RCVS Council is conducted in accordance with the Election Scheme made by the Privy Council under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (however, please see details below of new governance arrangements in paragraphs 4-7). A copy of the Scheme may be downloaded from https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/rcvs-council-election-scheme/.

2. Every candidate for election to the Council must be a member of the RCVS, and must not be resident in the Republic of Ireland, unless he/she has retained his/her right to vote in Council elections, pursuant to the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988.

3. The role of the RCVS and of Council Members is set out briefly in a separate document: ‘The roles of the RCVS and RCVS Council members’.

New governance arrangements

4. Following extensive debate, stakeholder engagement and a formal consultation with the professions, in March 2016 RCVS Council agreed to a package of reforms to College’s governance arrangements, including the size and structure of Council. These reforms are designed to improve the efficiency and accountability of RCVS Council and its associated Committees.

5. The changes require legislation to amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This is a complex process and, unfortunately, due to unavoidable delays associated with the 2017 General Election and the impact of preparing for the UK’s departure from the European Union, the legislation has not yet completed its passage through Parliament.

6. Given that the legislation has not yet been through the Parliamentary process, the RCVS must begin the 2018 election process under the existing system and rules (as described in paragraph
1). It is, however, expected that the legislation will be enacted in advance of the 2018 Annual General Meeting and therefore successful candidates will join Council under the new system. This means that whilst we will be running the elections on the basis that there will be six elected places available (as per the old size and structure), it should be expected that only three places will ultimately be available (as per the new size and structure).

7. Further details are available in the separate document 'Frequently-asked questions for potential candidates', which presents the current governance arrangements alongside the new arrangements.

Timetable

8. The election is run for the RCVS by Electoral Reform Services (ERS) who undertake the ballot administration for a number of professional bodies and trade unions.

9. In 2018, there is no ‘Meet the RCVS Day’ during the nomination period for those wishing to stand for Council, however, you are welcome to contact the Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson (e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk), the CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) or the President, Professor Stephen May (smay@rvc.ac.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or RCVS Council members.

10. The timetable for the 2018 election is:

   a. Closing date for submission of nominations 5pm, Wednesday, 31 January 2018
   b. Posting of voting papers (approx) Week commencing Monday, 12 March 2018
   c. Closing date for receiving votes 5pm, Friday, 27 April 2018
   d. Candidates informed of results Monday, 30 April 2018
   e. New Council Members join Council Friday, 13 July 2018 (RCVS AGM)

11. On the date when Electoral Reform Services sends the results to the RCVS, the Executive Office will contact all candidates individually to pass on the results; candidates are therefore asked to let the office know where and how they can best be contacted on that day. Once all the candidates have been told the results they will be published.
12. Those wishing to stand for election should return the separate Nomination Form in hard copy, duly completed and signed, ensuring that it reaches the RCVS by the date stated above. NB forms received after the closing date will not be accepted. Faxed and emailed forms will only be accepted if the signed hard copy original is received by the closing date.

13. This form must be signed by two proposers (and include their registered address), each of whom shall be a member of the RCVS, but neither a member of the Council of the College nor resident in the Republic of Ireland, unless he/she has retained his/her right to vote in Council elections, pursuant to the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988.

14. No proposer may nominate more than one candidate.

15. The nomination form may be accompanied by:

   a. the Candidate Information Form containing:

      i. full name, title and qualifications;

      ii. contact details, including any or all of: postal address, telephone number(s), email address, campaign website (for example, Facebook or Twitter account). NB Only the address listed in the RCVS Register will be printed on the actual ballot paper; an alternative contact address may be included on the Candidate Information Form; and,

      iii. Candidate biography and statement for publication (see paragraphs 15 – 20).

   b. a recent colour photograph in digital format (at highest resolution possible, ie minimum of 300dpi at 100%) or hard copy (larger than passport-sized).

16. All forms and photographs should also be submitted in electronic format wherever possible.

17. All statements and photographs supplied will be published by the RCVS in RCVS News – Council Election Special, which is circulated to all members with the ballot papers, and on the RCVS website. The photographs and statements will also be made available for publication in the veterinary press.
18. All nominations will be acknowledged and the RCVS will confirm that the names and addresses of the candidates and proposers conform to those in the RCVS Register.

Candidate biography and statement

19. The biography should be no more than 200 words and the statement no more than 300 words (excluding name, qualifications and contact details). These will be published with the ballot papers.

20. The biography should contain information about a candidate’s education and training, previous and current employment, relevant achievements, membership of other organisations, interests and hobbies etc. Candidates should also declare any relevant conflicts of interest in this section.

21. The statement is an opportunity for candidates to promote their suitability to serve on RCVS Council and set out what they could bring to the Council and the activities of the RCVS. Candidates may wish to address current issues facing the RCVS and the veterinary profession generally, and/or those that might arise in the future. Candidates who are previous or existing Council Members may also, or instead, wish to highlight their RCVS-related activities and contributions to the work of the Council and its committees.

22. It is strongly recommended that candidates familiarise themselves with the role and function of the RCVS and that of Council Members so their manifestos can be as relevant as possible. Please read the separate document: ‘The roles of the RCVS and RCVS Council members’.

23. Candidates should ensure that their Election Statements do not contain claims that are inconsistent with the legal position of the RCVS and should be aware that the Election Scheme gives the Registrar power to delete any material that s/he considers to be defamatory or the publication of which would be unlawful.

24. Hyperlinks or web addresses are not permitted in either the candidate biography or candidate statement. Any such details included in either section will be removed. A single web address or hyperlink to a campaign website, such as a Facebook or Twitter account, is permitted in the contact details.

25. Candidates who are currently involved in the investigation of a complaint against them which has been, or might be, referred to the Disciplinary Committee are particularly asked to consider whether standing for election might be inappropriate and represent a conflict of interest until the matter is resolved.
26. **NB** Candidates wishing to submit statements should ensure they are received by the RCVS by **5pm on 31 January 2018. No late submissions will be accepted and those exceeding the word count will not be included, unless adjustments can be made before the closing date.**

**Canvassing**

27. Candidates may canvass members either orally or in writing. The RCVS will supply a single set of names and postal addresses of all members in electronic format to any candidate upon request. Any candidate wanting sub-sets of data, eg all members in Scotland, or in a particular age or demographic category, will be charged £60+VAT for the cost of producing such an extract from the database. It is expected that any communications to members will be legal, decent, honest and truthful, and that election expenses will be kept to a reasonable level.

28. In recent years we have organised ‘Quiz the candidates’, which gives members of the profession the opportunity to pose a question to the candidates directly. We have then asked all candidates to produce a video recording of themselves answering two of these questions, which we publish on our website and social media channels. Depending on candidate numbers, this may be repeated again in 2018. Whilst it is not compulsory to participate in Quiz the Candidates, we consider that it enables candidates to make their points in a way that will engage a broader range of voters than the paper manifestos alone.