

Council Meeting

Remote meeting to be held by Zoom on Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 10:00 am

RCVS Council meeting - Agenda	Classification ¹	Rationale ²
1. President's introduction	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2. Apologies for absence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. Declaration of interests	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4. Minutes of meeting held on 9 November 2024		
i. Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
ii. Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
5. Matters arising		
a. Obituaries	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Council correspondence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. CEO update	Unclassified	n/a
6. Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)		
a. Veterinary Surgeons Act – legislative reform	Unclassified	n/a
b. Discretionary Fund	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Eligibility of veterinary graduates from EAEVE approved / accredited schools for RCVS registration	Unclassified	n/a
d. Proposal for monitoring 'vital signs' of the organisation	Unclassified	n/a

7. Reports of standing committees – to note		
a. Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Audit and Risk Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Education Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
d. Finance and Resources Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
e. Registration Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
f. Standards Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
g. Veterinary Nurses Council	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
h. PIC/DC Liaison Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
8. Reports of statutory committees – to note		
a. Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
b. RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
c. Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
9. Notices of motion	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
10. Questions	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
11. Any other College business (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
12. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
13. Date of next meeting Thursday, 14 March 2024 at 10:00 am (London venue tbc)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a

14. Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)		
a. Annual retention fee payment arrangements for veterinary surgeons 2024-25 – update	Oral report Confidential	1, 3
15. Any other College business (confidential items)		
a. Comments on classified appendices	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
16. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)		
	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
17. Reflective session (confidential item)		
	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
Dawn Wiggins Secretary, RCVS Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk		

¹Classifications 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.

2Classification rationales

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

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.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	7 September 2023
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023 and remote decision made 15 – 20 September 2023
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023 and remote decision made 15 – 20 September 2023
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

¹Classifications 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.

²Classification rationales

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

RCVS Knowledge Annual General Meeting and RCVS Council Meeting

Hybrid meetings held on Thursday, 7 September 2023 at 10:30 am at Harper Adams University, Telford, Shropshire TF10 8NB

Members:

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

*Denotes absent

^Denotes remote attendee

In attendance:

Miss H Alderton	Committee Liaison Officer (CLO)
^Mr L Bishop	Media and Publications Manager (open session only)
Ms A K Boag	Chair, RCVS Knowledge Board of Trustees (open session only)
Ms H Cartlidge	RCVS Knowledge Trustee (open session only)
Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar
^Ms H Haid	Governance Officer
^Ms A Hanson	Media and Publications Officer (open session only)
Mr I A Holloway	Director of Communications (DoComms)
Ms L Lockett	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Ms C McCann	Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO)
Mr B Myring	Policy and Public Affairs Manager (PPAM)
Mr A Quinn-Byrne	Governance Manager
Ms J Shardlow	Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee
^RCVS Knowledge Trustees (remote attendees, open session only)	

Guests:

^Mr J Loeb	Veterinary Record
^Mr M Turner	MRCVS

RCVS Knowledge Annual General Meeting

1. RCVS Knowledge Trustees had received their papers in August 2023; the minutes would be recorded separately to the RCVS Council minutes herewith.

RCVS Council Meeting

President's introduction and welcome to new members

2. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting.
3. Mrs Howarth, Mr Hutchinson, Dr Jones, and Dr McLeish were welcomed to their first Council meeting.

Apologies for absence

4. Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Middlemiss, Chief Veterinary Officers (UK) and RCVS Council Observer.

Declarations of interest

5. There were no new declarations of interest to report.

Minutes of previous Council meetings and remote decisions

6. Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendices for the meetings held on 8 June and 7 July 2023, and the remote decisions made 30 June – 4 July and 8 – 14 August 2023; these were unanimously approved by a show of hands.

Matters arising

Obituaries

7. The President reported the passing of Dr Alastair Porter HonAssocRCVS; he was past Registrar of the College from 1966 – 1991. She also acknowledged the one-year anniversary of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and thoughts were with the Royal Family at this time.

8. Council, staff and guests stood and observed a minute silence for colleagues and all members of the veterinary professions that had passed since it last met.

Council correspondence

9. The President reported the following items:

National honours

10. Two veterinary surgeons had received recognition in King Charles' inaugural Birthday Honours List:
 - Dr Navaratnam Partheeban MRCVS, co-founder of the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society OBE;
 - Major Roly Owers MRCVS, Chief Executive of World Horse Welfare OBE.
11. In addition, John Millward, Head of Inspections and Enforcement Division, Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) was awarded an OBE, and Claire Bessant, formerly Chief Executive of International Cat Care, was made an MBE. They had been written to and congratulated.

Fellowship Day

12. This event would be held on 27 November 2023 at One Great George Street. The keynote speaker would be Dame Sally Davies GCB DBE FRS FMedSci, further details would be sent out from the Events Team in due course.

RCVS Honours and Awards

13. The nomination period for RCVS Honours and Awards to be presented at RCVS Day in 2024 was due to open shortly, the deadline for submissions was mid-December.

Contacts and Calendar Booklet

14. This would be completed and circulated following the meeting, once scheduling and frequency of meetings had been discussed.

Declarations of interest

15. Council members were reminded to check their declarations of interest on their individual web pages and forward any amendments to the Council Secretary on d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk or Committee Liaison Officer on h.alderton@rcvs.org.uk.

RCVS Knowledge update (taken out of order)

16. In the absence of an Executive Director of RCVS Knowledge, the update was provided by the Chair of the RCVS Knowledge Board of Trustees. She thanked the recently departed Executive Director for his hard work and leadership over the past six years to ensure the charity thrived.
17. Council was reminded that the mission of RCVS Knowledge was '*to advance the quality of care for the benefit of animals, the public, and society*'. This was done in a number of different ways with a strong focus on evidence-based, key activities were:

- *Veterinary Evidence*: open-access periodic journal that in 2022 saw a 7% growth in content and c.14,000 page views per month;
- knowledge summaries: an example was a knowledge gap identified in the risk of surgical site infection; the use of reusable or disposable drapes was informing new research in practice to better ask the question and ultimately help reduce the environmental impact of veterinary practice;
- Library and Information Service (LIS), the ‘evidence engine’:
 - o produces materials for its 9,000 journal watch *In Focus* subscribers;
 - o creates resources for in-practice journal clubs;
 - o supports refugees;
 - o supports authors to publish the *Veterinary Evidence* journal;
 - o access for a growing number of library members;
 - o membership had increased by 10%, had 33,000 log ins, and had been used over 100,000 times in the last year – there was a real appetite from practitioners to access evidence who did not have access through veterinary institutions;
 - o online support;
- *In Focus*: a bi-monthly email journal highlighting research articles, systematic reviews, guidelines, etc., that had the potential to positively impact patient care;
- sharing hub: 57 published case examples that focussed on topics with immediate relevance particularly within general practice; these had been accessed over 32,000 times;
- the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) environment *Learn* had been redeveloped; the number of users completing courses had doubled to 2,000 from 44 countries;
- strong focus had been on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Quality Improvement (QI), and working with the Veterinary Medicine Directorate (VMD) on managing veterinary medicines that included a link to the Under Care webinar hosted by the College;
- Canine Cruciate Registry had been launched and had had its first peer review publication with data used from the Registry. Other registries were being explored, for example, spinal surgery;
- regular publication of longer articles that delved into more technical skills alongside the clinical evidence base, the aim was to build cultural readiness as a foundation for better QI outcomes; topics included teamwork and communication frameworks, risk management, distributed leadership and contextualised care, and these had been accessed over 22,000 times.

What was next for the charity?

18. Three things identified for the next strategic plan were:

- support and catalyse improvement in veterinary care;
- bring the veterinary past to life;
- continue to develop the organisation: digital first, ethical and sustainable, vibrant and diverse.

19. With regards to bringing the veterinary past to life, it was questioned whether the Museum of Military Medicine been considered? It was confirmed that the Head of Library and Knowledge Services knew the curator of that museum and collaborated with them where they could.

20. There were no other questions, and the update was noted.

CEO update

21. The paper was introduced by the CEO, who highlighted:

- the College was in the last phase of the current RCVS Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024; work would commence on the production of a new plan shortly;
- 92% of veterinary surgeons were registered with the 1CPD app, 89% of whom were compliant;
- 3,333 Vet Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) Advisers had finished their training and a further 2,000 were enrolled and working through the programme;
- four accreditation events had taken place this year under the new accreditation standards that covered schools in all different stages; initial feedback had been positive;
- 52 members had completed the accreditation panel member training run through RCVS Academy, who now became part of a bigger 'pool' of available visitors;
- a record number of candidates had passed the recent Statutory Membership Examination (SME), including a refugee candidate, so there would be positive communications about that sent to the profession;
- the newly formed Public Advisory Group (PAG) would meet for the first time shortly; there were approximately 30 people in the Group and the first meeting would be a broad induction to the College, thereafter the first workstream would be regarding advice to owners via the website. In light of the recent changes to guidance on remote prescribing, the College would seek their views on what was important for them in that messaging;
- Officers and staff would be attending the forthcoming British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA); British Veterinary Nurses Association (BVNA); and Emergency and Critical Care (ECC) Congresses, and London Vet Show. In order to be more accessible, Officer attendance would be split into areas of interest e.g. Miss Belton would attend the BEVA Congress on behalf of the College;
- the Charter Case Committee had now launched; this committee would look at cases that met the professional misconduct threshold, but at the 'lower end', so that the College could deal

with them in a more compassionate way and, hopefully, more quickly, whilst still being robust and in the public interest.

22. Additionally, it was noted that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) had launched a review into the veterinary services market for household pets. This would include some areas where the College had jurisdiction i.e. out of hours, communication with clients, etc., but that pricing and business structure was not within the RCVS' remit. It was important that as many different voices from across the spectrum of the profession were heard to make the review as relevant as possible.

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

- at first sight, the CMA's review was a fundamental piece of work that resonated with some of the matters that the College had heard from the profession, and it would be interesting to know what had triggered it and what the College's approach would be. Could Council be regularly updated, particularly if it was asked for a view;
 - o the College was trying to fix a meeting date with the CMA in the next 10 days. It was unknown what had triggered the review. It was expected that there would be an information-gathering exercise and then likely a point when the College would be asked for a view on a draft report. Council would not be asked to sign off on the information that the College would be providing as that would be operational. Once a point of view was requested, it would go through the relevant committee(s) dependent on what particular element it was, likely Standards Committee. If there were other elements beyond standards, then a broad update would be brought to Council. There was a limited amount of information available at the moment;
- there were two matters: one re: the update on the Strategic Plan, and two re: the CMA:

re: the update on the Strategic Plan: (in light of the items appearing in the confidential session) it was questioned if the College was living up to the commitments in the Strategic Plan around sharing information and availability of (if necessary) anonymised data for reasons of transparency. It was agreed that specific items could be discussed in the confidential session.

re: the CMA: given the delays in obtaining a new Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA), it was suggested that the College use the powers inherent in the 2015 Royal Charter to formally regulate practices in a mandatory scheme, or, in view of holding the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises (RVPP), make registration of practices conditional to meeting certain requirements;

 - o the reason the College was unable to go as far as it wanted was that it had no powers of entry, and that was not something that it could give itself and would require a change to legislation; that was also why the PSS was a voluntary scheme (of which 70% of practices were members) as the College was unable to make membership compulsory and could not use the Charter to do so. The Charter had been extensively used to 'fill the

gaps' of current legislation e.g. the regulation of veterinary nurses, practice standards, and, more recently, the Charter Case Committee, so the College was very much alive to the opportunities it provided.

With regards to the RVPP, the detail held was per the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMRs), so that would require a legislation change. Again, the College pushed these as far as possible by collecting a lot of voluntary data from the practices, that information populated the Find-A-Vet (FAV) system. However, practices did not have to answer the questions and the College was unable to make registration dependent on something; registration for the purpose of supply of medicines was a legal responsibility under the VMRs, not under the Charter.

How far the PSS could be taken was considered in great detail, including getting external advice; it was clear the College had taken it as far as it could, the requirements under the VMRs were limited to an address, and information could be requested on a voluntary basis e.g. who was in charge, etc., but it could not be used as a 'back door' to do something else. Currently the College could only regulate individuals, not practices, there could, of course, be conversations with the VMD about changes to outdated legislation but ultimately the ball was in their court. The CMA review did provide a real opportunity to put some additional political pressure on legislative changes.

24. The report was noted.

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

RCVS Delegation Scheme 2023 – Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Terms of Reference (ToR) addendum

25. The CEO reported that this paper followed the larger paper as approved by Council at its June meeting as ARC had been slightly out of sync with its meeting schedule.

26. The Chair, ARC, outlined the two main changes to the ARC ToR:

- internal audit had not been specific enough relating to what the committee did, so that had been clarified at paragraph 10; and
- it was further clarified at paragraph 18 that when the committee had confidential meetings with the College's external auditors that College staff should not be present so that matters could be discussed in a very open and confidential manner.

27. There were no questions. Council was asked to approve the proposed changes to the ARC ToR as outlined in Annex A to the paper. A vote was taken:

For:	24
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

28. This was approved by a unanimous vote.

RCVS committee schedule

29. The CEO introduced the paper and highlighted that it was, perhaps, more of an operational issue, but it did affect individual members' diary commitments. Council was asked to consider the paper holistically and the rhythm of the meetings and their interrelationship, rather than look at individual dates. She said that one of the reasons for proposed changes was that having the majority of committees meeting in one week was challenging, with increasing amounts of paperwork to produce, and to be read. It was also noted that there would be more reliance on the meeting paper system, Board Effect, to host the minutes that people would just read between meetings rather than include them in the bundle before Council meetings; this in turn would potentially relieve the pressure on the staff teams when producing the minutes against the current short deadline.

30. It was noted that in-person meetings would be easier when the College moved into its new building, although there might still be an element of being 'on the road', as this had had some benefits. The recommendation in the paper was for hybrid meetings, with a 50 / 50 split for committees in-person and remote. There were benefits from a diversity and inclusion perspective of online meetings and also from a sustainability point of view. Equally, there was a huge benefit to gather as many people as possible together and to encourage members to attend when meetings were to be held in person. Deciding which committee meetings in person and which virtual would be done in consultation with committee chairs and consideration of the likely topics to be discussed.

31. Comments and questions included:

- this was a welcome change as it had been difficult to attend meetings for four days out of five in one week, and the time taken to read the associated papers;
- forthcoming events should be considered when setting meeting dates particularly when primary congresses such as the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) Congress clashed with in-person Council meetings;
- whilst it was to be reviewed later in the year, the financial implications were highlighted of having fewer meetings on one day in order to facilitate them if they overran but, for those meetings that were remote, members were only reimbursed for the duration of the meeting when they might not be able to work for the entire day. Also, how would the feeding in of papers onto Board Effect affect the reading time as there was a significant amount of time required for reading?
 - o different Council members had different needs and it was difficult to juggle them all. Regarding the papers loaded to Board Effect, this was effectively the minutes from the committee meetings, so that rather than have them all in one massive bundle to read for a Council meeting, there would be the same amount of reading, just available in bite-sized

chunks through the period between meetings. It would be up to individual members how and when they chose to read them;

- when a vet school was facing a visitation, particularly around a Recognition Order, there was angst around meeting scheduling and the stresses placed on students;
 - o noted. In such specific instances, the Director of Education would consider the scheduling of the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee / Education Committee meetings.

32. A vote was taken to approve the proposed changes as outlined in the paper and annex:

For:	24
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

33. This was approved by a unanimous vote. The Contacts and Calendar booklet for this current Council year would be finalised and forwarded to Council as soon as possible following the meeting.

Council Culture Working Group (CCWG) update

34. The Chair, CCWG, introduced the paper and stated that it was effectively the final update from the task and finish group; the summary of work undertaken had been set out at Annex C to the paper.

35. Two items were highlighted:

- whole Council effectiveness: it was pleasing to see that all 24 Council members had completed the questionnaire sent round; the results of which were attached at Annex A to the paper. This was a type of health check on how Council was doing overall, and the results were very positive; a number of areas for development had been identified and activities were either ongoing, planned, or required more thought to take forward, however, the idea would be to return to the questionnaire annually and use it as a 'sense check';
- reflection conversations: the CCWG was really keen that these were not seen as an appraisal process for Council members, but rather an opportunity to reflect on performance as individuals, and how to maximise contributions to the work of Council and identify areas where support might be required. The current, and previous two, Presidents had introduced individual conversations, which had been welcomed; set out at Annex B to the paper was a template that could provide a structure to those conversations. It was felt that both the President and the individual member could note down what was important that needed to be addressed and it was important for every member to engage with the process.

36. Comments and questions included:

- where did individual members get feedback or evaluation? Also, meetings held online dictated the way members contributed both individually and as a group;

- the Group wanted to get away from the term 'evaluation' and being a summative approach to individual performances. This was proposed as a formative, reflective, approach, and the conversation should be confidential between the President and the member. Section 5 of the template addressed feedback – people were encouraged as part of the process to not just talk to the President but also to colleagues for views on how they felt their individual contributions were to Council or committee(s). Naturally, some people were keener to do that than others, but it was not about forcing the point but rather to take people on a journey of improvement and to see it as a positive experience. It was also thought that committee chairs should undertake this process with external committee members;
- looking at the feedback from the questionnaire at Annex A, the red lines showed that members did not review themselves individually or collectively and that was important when communicating to the profession and the public, for example, the discussions about what Council could, and could not, do led to frustrations. The development plan, individual review process, and reflection sessions at the end of each Council meeting addressed some of the concerns; some of the answers to the questions might, however, reflect a lack of knowledge. The improvement to the signposting of information was also seen as a critical step in the review process. It was about being more reflective individuals and how we contributed to the group; if this approach did not work it could be changed at a later date;
- this was a valuable piece of work and good practice; it was an opportunity for professional and personal development and, ultimately, to make sure that Council worked more effectively by having more cohesion respecting different views and opinions, and the unconscious bias training was really useful. Caution was noted in that feedback might need consideration on how to do that effectively if there had been a negative experience;
- re: reflection, some members might find they were super polite over a telephone call but state things differently in a face-to-face conversation;
- could there be an additional box on the template for a type of any other business, to provide the opportunity to raise things that might have been 'niggling' or for random thoughts?
 - the Director of People could include an additional section to the template for a type of 'any other business';
- how did you envisage the conversations taking place, should the form be completed prior to the meeting?
 - the idea was to arrange the meetings for May 2024 and for members to go to the meetings at least having looked at the template, thought about it, and made a few notes to be ready for a conversation on both sides. Instead of making it like a workplace appraisal; the suggestions on the template were for signposting purposes;
- how was this process going to be reviewed?

- it was suggested this item should be brought back to Council in September 2024 to consider how the process went and how it should move forwards.

Professor Wood (temporarily) left the meeting

37. A vote was taken to approve the recommendations of the CCWG regarding the whole Council effectiveness actions and implementation of reflection conversations, and to continue its work to the end of 2023:

For:	23
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

38. This was approved by a unanimous vote.

Notices of motion

39. There had been no notices of motion received**.

[Please see 'Any other business (unclassified items)' for further information.]**

Questions

40. There had been no questions received.

Any other College business (unclassified items)

41. The President apologised for the short notice email that had been sent to Council on the eve of the meeting with the below motion:

Council agrees that the implementation date of the specific part of the UCOOH guidance that concerns the prescription of POM-V anti-parasiticides is delayed until 1 January 2024.

Proposer: Miss L S Belton

Seconder: Dr M A Donald

This is because we are now getting widespread reports of lack of compliance with an element of the Veterinary Medicine Regulations, which has specifically come to light because practices' lack of compliance in this area means they are therefore not able to comply with our new guidance.

We feel that it would be the compassionate and pragmatic approach to allow this delay, in order for practices to get their houses in order.

The relevant section of the guidance is paragraph 4.17: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/settingstandards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinarysurgeons/supporting-guidance/veterinary-medicines/>

42. The Chair, Standards Committee (SC), introduced this item. She stated that the Under Care guidance had gone live on 1 September 2023 after having been announced in March 2023 with a six-month lead-in period.
43. In mid-late August, the College had been contacted for the first time from practices that had realised their prescribing habits were not in line with the VMRs; this meant that the guidance caused a problem because they were not VMR-compliant; the difference to the guidance change meant that they could not bring their prescriptions into the format that constituted a prescription in the clinical notes without seeing the animals, and that they would not be able to do so by 31 August.
44. In order to support those practices that were otherwise doing a good job, and to fundamentally end up with a much-improved position around prescribing, Council was asked to delay the implementation of the guidance around the prescribing of anti-parasitic Prescription-Only Medicines – Veterinarian (POM-V) in all species until 31 December 2023. The rationale for the timing was that most of the issues were in companion animals and the products being used were often prescribed over 12-weekly / three-monthly basis; by picking that date, the majority of the animals under care would come up naturally and thus enable the veterinarians to be able to prescribe without physically seeing the animal where they still felt that it was safe and effective to do so – it was not ‘carte blanche’, it still had to be done properly, but without the need to see the animal. Despite the transitional period, it seemed that practices had not noticed the issue until August and unfortunately the work had not been done in time, therefore the request was not to change the guidance but rather that Council approve a delay to the implementation of this specific point.
45. Comments and questions included but were not limited to:
- it was thought that the vet had to see the animal?
 - o if the guidance was unchanged, and if it was felt appropriate to the situation, prior to 1 September the prescription for anti-parasitics could be written without physically examining the animal;
 - given the panic in the profession about this, should the time be a little longer?
 - o guidance was put in place in March, and it was now September. It was surprising that questions were being received on 31 August and there had been a wasted opportunity for members to get their heads around it. However, people were in that situation, and

Council might feel it was entirely reasonable to provide some support but, it should be 'ring-fenced' as there had already been a substantial period of time to adapt.

The principle that needed to be established was that it was compliance with the VMRs where there were issues, not the College's guidance, and these had been in place for more than 10 years so, although the College wanted to be compassionate and pragmatic, there had to be some push back because veterinary surgeons should be aware that POM-Vs had to have a level of detail to enable a person to supply against it in the future; a potential aspect would be that there was nothing on the records and there could be a lay person supplying against what they thought was a prescription but instead *they* were doing the prescribing, which was a whole different situation.

What was being suggested was to give people the time to resolve the problem in terms of the prescription because most of the products in question had a 12-weekly / three-monthly supply, it would mean an extra bit of work but would not mean that a vet had to go in tomorrow and find out how many animals had to be viewed immediately. It was a reasonable approach that still kept pressure on a fundamental part of practice, which was writing and knowing what should be in the clinical record. It was about being compliant with one of the key parts of the VMR legislation; anti-parasitics were highlighted but it was an opportunity to get better across the board for all POM-Vs;

- a lot of people had not been aware of this guidance coming into force; in future, when sending out detailed emails to the profession, could there be a 'tick box' to show who had logged on and read / understood what was being proposed? Outside of Council it was not as widely known as possible and having a proper prescription on record made so much sense; if that had been explained a bit more it would have given members so much more sight of it and also enable them to better explain to clients why it was important;
 - o the Communications Team had sent out extensive communications but could not force people to read the information. It had been reported on in January when Council agreed the guidance; it had been in press releases; in two *RCVS News* editions; there had been two webinars where members had been encouraged to send in their questions; over the summer it had been put out on social media platforms; and, in the lead up to the deadline, there had been another two *RCVS Connect* emails. The College did not currently have the technical functionality to be able to include checkboxes, particularly with things like the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) involved in collecting data. Similar communications were undertaken during the Covid outbreak when engagement had been very high; in recent communications information was sent to c. 55,000 people that were viewed or opened by over half of that number but other options could be considered;
 - o the communication did not say 'please check you are prescribing properly' because at the time that would have been wrong of the College to say as there was no information to suggest that people were not doing so;
- if Council approved this motion, could it be put to the profession in the form of 'you spoke, we listened'? At the Question Time held the evening before the meeting, it had been concerning

to hear the number of people that were getting incorrect advice handed down from senior teams of the practices that were supposed to be giving the practice staff a way to implement the guidance; the College could not make members read their emails and it was not to do with the changes to the guidance brought in, but this was to do with how to write a prescription that members were taught in veterinary school;

- it was not about under care but rather the VMRs – if people were in breach of the VMRs they needed to be aware that they were in grave difficulty because they were breaking the law; if they were not prescribing properly, it was not about how compassionate the College was but that somebody would catch up to them at some point;
- [I] am happy with the motion except in one aspect, in which it suggested or implied that there was a defective bit in the College guidance; could something be added that *'in order to facilitate compliance with the VMRs, Council agrees that the implementation...'* as it returned focus to where there needed to be a change, it was not in the huge amount of work undertaken by Standards, and the RCVS;
- there was absolutely an issue in practice with vets not being compliant with the VMRs. Unfortunately, it was probably widespread amongst 99% of the profession and there was a massive learning point that when a medicine was sold, it was either being prescribed by yourself or being dispensed on a prescription that already existed within the clinical records;
- it was also to do with how much liaison there was with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), Veterinary Defence Society (VDS), etc., in encouraging them to communicate on the College's behalf as they reached a different audience;
 - o the College certainly had had a great deal of communication with them in terms of the issue at hand;
- there was a deep discomfort that what Council was about to do was to tolerate people breaking the law for another four months. The phrasing was important, it was not potentially delaying implementation, the guidance was there, and they knew what they should be doing; it was about interpreting the legislation and the law that exists in the first place. The College could not put out anything that created or suggested that people should not already be doing this, the position was that Council was making the decision not to essentially take enforcement on the new regulation during that period of time, with compassion, as had been recognised. The wording should be clear that the College neither accepted nor permitted people breaking the law, but that a decision had been made not to deal with any cases for that period of time;
- there had been a few comments seen that undermined the role of veterinary nurses (VNs) and [I] would like it to come across in the College communications that the prescribing laws had not changed, and the College was not trying to undermine anybody. The role of the VN was valued, also, were there any updates or pieces of information like Schedule 3 changes

that could be sent out at the same time to enhance that this was not to undermine anybody and that the laws were unchanged?

- it was not just the VN that dispensed but also reception staff;
- as an ex-clinician there was some sympathy with the hard-working vets but [I] entirely supported the direction of communications; Council had reviewed where changes had been made but some action was still required.

46. The discussion was brought to a close. An amendment to the wording of the motion was proposed and carried by the verbal agreement of Council. Per the Meeting Procedure Rules 2021 (paragraph 28), as the amendment was carried then '*...the motion as amended shall then become the substantive motion before the meeting*':

Proposer: Mr T J Walker

Seconder: Miss L S Belton

In order to facilitate practices' compliance with the Veterinary Medicines Regulations, Council is asked to agree that the implementation date of the specific part of the under care / out of hours guidance that concerns the prescription of POM-V anti-parasitics is delayed until Friday, 12 January 2024.

47. A vote was taken on the substantive motion as amended above:

For:	20
Against:	2
Abstain:	1

48. The motion as amended was agreed by a majority vote.

49. There was no other College business to report.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)

50. Council agreed that the following should be added to the Corporate Risk Register:

- compliance with the VMRs, particularly as the VMD would now be aware of the issue;
- CMA review into the veterinary services market for household pets.

Date of next meeting

51. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 9 November 2023, with scheduled timings of 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. This meeting will be remote.

Professor Wood rejoined the meeting

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

Discretionary Fund

52. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 3.

Major projects – update

53. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 4 – 13.

Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) – legislative reform

54. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 14 – 49.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Classified appendices from Council meetings

55. There were no comments on the classified appendices of the Council meetings before Council.

56. There was no other business to report. (Sentences duplicated in paragraphs 50 – 51 of the classified appendix).

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

57. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 52.

Risk Register assessment – annual consideration (confidential item)

58. Due to the shortage of time remaining in the meeting, it was agreed to hold this item over to the next Council meeting to be held in November 2023. Explanation is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 53 – 55.

Reflective session (confidential item)

59. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 56 – 62.

60. The meeting was drawn to a close.

Remote decision made 15 – 20 September 2023 (confidential item)

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system (confidential)

61. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 63 – 66.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	9 November 2023
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 November 2023
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 November 2023
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

¹Classifications 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.

²Classification rationales

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

Council

Virtual meeting held by Zoom on Thursday, 9 November 2023 at 10:00 am

Members:

Dr S Paterson (President in the Chair)

Dr L H Allum

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Miss L Belton

^Professor D Bray

^Dr A L Calow

^Mr J M Castle

^Dr D S Chambers

Mrs O D R Cook

Dr M A Donald

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mrs S D Howarth

*Denotes absent

Mr T M Hutchinson

Dr M D Jones

Professor S A May

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

Dr A J McLeish

Professor T D H Parkin

Dr K A Richards

Mr T J Walker

Mr W A S Wilkinson

^Professor J L N Wood

Ms J S M Worthington

In attendance:

Miss H Alderton

Mr L Bishop

Ms E C Ferguson

Ms H Haid

Ms A Hanson

Mr I A Holloway

Ms L Lockett

Ms C McCann

Mr B Myring

Mr A Quinn-Byrne

Ms J Shardlow

Ms S Tetsola

Committee Liaison Officer (CLO)

Media and Publications Manager (open session only)

Registrar

Governance Officer

Media and Publications Officer (open session only)

Director of Communications (DoComms)

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO) (Agenda Item 15a only)

Policy and Public Affairs Manager (PPAM) (open session only)

Governance Manager

Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee

Head of Finance (HoF)

Guests:

Mr J Loeb

Mr A Webb

Veterinary Record

Veterinary Times

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting. She gave an update on recent Presidential attendance at Congresses and meetings.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:
 - Mr Hutchinson, who had provided some comments on agenda item 06d Clinical Career Pathways that would be outlined at the relevant time;
 - Dr Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer (Observer);
 - Professor Wood was expected to be slightly late to the meeting;
 - Dr Calow and Mrs McLaughlan had submitted apologies for the afternoon / closed session; and
 - Professor Parkin was to leave the meeting at 3:00 pm to attend another scheduled RCVS meeting.

Professor Jones briefly left the meeting (fire alarm at venue dialling in from).

Declarations of interest

3. There were no new declarations of interest to report.

Minutes of meeting held on 7 September 2023 and remote decision 15 – 20 September 2023

4. Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendix for the meeting held on 7 September 2023 and remote decision 15 – 20 September 2023.
5. The wording of the decisions taken for confidential Agenda Item 12c Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) – legislative reform was questioned. The classified appendix would be amended.
6. It was further questioned that a comment about openness, accountability and transparency had not been captured in agenda item 05c CEO report. The CEO confirmed that the minutes were not a verbatim record therefore not every comment was noted, however, the unclassified minutes could be amended.
7. With the provision that the amendments would be made, Council was asked to approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix of the meeting held on 7 September 2023 and the remote decision made 15 – 20 September 2023. A vote was taken:

Yes:	20
No:	0
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	1

8. Professor Bray experienced technical difficulties and submitted an email vote that was included in the figures. The amended unclassified minutes and classified appendix were accepted as a true record of the meeting by a majority vote.

Professor Jones returned to the meeting.

Professor Wood joined the meeting.

Matters arising

Obituaries

9. There had been no written obituaries received. Council stood for a minute's silence for colleagues and all members of the professions that had passed since it last met and for the forthcoming Armistice Day to commemorate all those who had lost their lives fighting for and serving their country. Thoughts went to everybody in war zones around the world.

Council correspondence

RCVS Council Elections 2024

10. A notice would shortly go into *RCVS e-News* and to the retiring members at the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) with details of how to submit nominations for standing. The deadline for submissions was **5:00 pm on Wednesday, 31 January 2024**.
11. Members were reminded that they were not permitted to nominate anyone for standing for Council and that, subject to eligibility, if a member intended to re-stand, then Registered Addresses were still to be used for the Nomination Form whilst the College was seeking to make changes to the Election Scheme with the Privy Council Office.
12. Work was also ongoing to update the elections 'pack' per the recommendations from the Council Culture Working Group and subsequent Council agreement.

Fellowship Day

13. Council was reminded that the forthcoming Fellowship Day would be held on Monday, 27 November 2023 at One Great George Street. There was incredible engagement from the Fellowship, and it was noted that the event was fully booked, with a waiting list. The Keynote Speaker was Dame Sally Davies, and there were to be discussions on behaviour and net zero surgery.

RCVS Honours and Awards

14. The nomination period for RCVS Honours and Awards to be presented at RCVS Day in 2024 opened at the end of September; details were on the website and the deadline for submissions was **Friday, 15 December 2023**.

CEO update

15. The CEO reported that there had been a lot of work undertaken since the last update to Council:

- a record-breaking number of Statutory Membership Examination (SME) candidates were welcomed to the profession at a recent ceremony, including the first refugee that was supported through the process; 27 people had passed the examination this year, 13 of whom attended the ceremony;
- the 1CPD platform had been updated to better support vets and vet nurses to reflect upon their Continuing Professional Development (CPD); it showed progress against their professional requirements that would hopefully assist them in meeting their targets;
- the fourth biennial Mind Matters Research Symposium had been held in Manchester towards the beginning of October. At the meeting, the last of the Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grants was presented; named after the former RCVS Council member, Sarah Brown, who sadly passed away six years ago; each grant was for £20,000 to mental health researchers;
- a new RCVS Academy course had been launched to support veterinary nurses returning to clinical practice; this was part of the 'Return' stream in the Workforce Plan. The Academy platform was free to any vet or veterinary nurse (VN) to use and there was a lot of useful CPD on it;
- the annual renewal process for Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) was underway and going well;
- the first veterinary degree in Asia from the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) was accredited; this was a real milestone;
- since September there had been attendance at numerous congresses and other events, with more planned:
 - o British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) Congress (14 – 16 September 2023, Birmingham);
 - o American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) Annual Meeting and Conference – the organisation for all veterinary regulators in the United States (US) – the CEO had attended meetings where an update on RCVS activities was provided; they were particularly interested in the Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP), under care decisions, and the College's compassionate regulation approach (26 – 30 September 2023, Kansas, US);
 - o British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress (6 – 8 October 2023, Telford);

- British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) Congress (19 – 21 October 2023, Telford);
 - Emergency and Critical Care (ECC) Congress (9 – 10 November 2023, Leeds);
 - London Vet Show (LVS) (16-17 November 2023);
 - Federation of Veterinarians of Europe General Assembly (FVE GA) (17 November 2023, Brussels);
- the College had recently passed its European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) reaccreditation for a further five years. This was the umbrella body that accredited higher education and it was helpful to ensure that the College was meeting best practice; it provided access to leadership courses for team members; and gave an insight into the visitation process much like the vet schools had. The teams involved were thanked;
 - the Public Advisory Group (PAG) had met for the first time. There were approximately 30 members of the public who were a mix of animal owners or keepers, and the time spent was getting to understand their motivation for joining the group, their interests, and outlining the role of the College. The first workstream would be around improving advice for animal owners on the College's website – so not clinical advice; it would be led by the Communications Team, and it was anticipated it would take a year to complete. There would also be cross-committee work, in particular Standards Committee, and Council would be kept updated;
 - since the last meeting the College had met with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to supply them with information relating to its review into veterinary services within the household sector; further additional information had been requested and it was understood that three surveys they had launched for veterinary professionals, animal owners, and others related to the profession had now closed. A report was expected in early 2024;
 - re: major projects:
 - Estates: the tenants had now vacated Hardwick Street and the refurbishment process was underway, albeit at a planning stage. Four sets of planning permission had been applied for: a more accessible front entrance, including flagpole; an additional fire escape; an additional lift, and to move plant (air-conditioning, etc.) to the roof. All had been granted but with some stipulations around the flag, which would be challenged. It was hard to know the actual timeframe for moving into the building but that any additional delays would mean additional costs for rent on the current office accommodation; storage archives; meeting room and venue hire, etc., and that would need to come out of the money set aside for the whole refurbishment project.

A company had been contracted to provide project management for the next phase and specifications were being developed, overseen by the Hardwick Street Refurbishment Group (HSRG). A technical group of staff had also been set up to provide particular focus in areas such as audio visual (AV) / IT requirements; branding; flow of people around the building; disciplinary hearings; etc. The technical group reported through the HSRG.

Regarding the current rented office space, Council had already been informed about some of the global financial difficulties faced by WeWork. Media had reported that it had filed for bankruptcy in the US and Canada; the College had not received any personal communications as tenant, but the public messaging stated that there should be no impact in Europe. However, it was also known that the tenants in the Blackfriars building (close to the Chancery Lane offices) were being relocated and had been given 30 days' notice. As Council was aware, as soon as the College became aware of the issues in late summer, it had moved items out that were not required on an urgent basis to be kept safe and all that was left were items that were needed on a day-to-day basis. It currently made financial sense to remain in the building as the College paid in advance – if it was asked to leave it might lose one month's rent but to move when it was not needed was expensive and there was also the question relating to the deposit; staff had been warned that there might be a need to work remotely at short notice. The idea of using the new building had been explored; however, it was noted that as soon as the proposed building work had been approved it would become a building site and thus be inappropriate and potentially dangerous for staff.

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System: this was the backbone of the organisation where all of the Register data was held and without which the College could not function. The current system no longer supported the level of complexity of the relationships between people and places, and levels of service the College wished to provide its members and the public.

A comprehensive tender exercise took place over the summer, and a new supplier – Smart Impact, who specialised in the regulatory sector – was approved by Council in September. This project had been broken into phases, the first of which was 'discovery'. A Project Manager would start in the New Year, and there was an internal group of 'CRM Champions' to ensure that matters ran smoothly. Part of the project would be to review processes to ensure best practice.

The Chief Digital Officer oversaw the project alongside the Project Board that included some Council members, staff, and external expertise; the Board reported to Finance and Resources Committee (FRC);

- the College was on its last year of its current Strategic Plan, work would commence on a new Plan shortly. This was also broken down into phases: information gathering; shaping of priorities; and refinement / sense check / sign off. There would be Council engagement across all phases as well as opportunities for external stakeholder involvement. It might continue with current ambitions such as being a compassionate regulator but work underneath that 'umbrella' would change;
- on behalf of the People Director, thanks were given to all those who had attended the recent Chair training sessions; feedback had been positive and there would be some masterclasses with more in-depth focus on detail. If there were any areas of particular focus, please contact the People Director on: l.hall@rcvs.org.uk.

16. The President reported that attendance at congresses had been split between the Officer Team for the most appropriate person, for example, Miss Belton went to the BEVA congress. As President, Dr Paterson had attended some of the smaller congresses such as the joint Veterinary Public Health Association (VPHA) / Association of Government Vets (AGV) Conference in September, and a sustainability event held in Ireland – it was to use the Officer Team to support as many different people as possible.
17. Dr Allum, Chair PAG, reflected that that was a very diverse group of people on the group, including a shepherd and owners of exotic animals; they had been excited to be part of the Group and, whilst they had been started on their first workstream, some were very keen to work on 'meatier' topics; it was pleasing to see such engagement. The CEO confirmed that the reporting line for the PAG was through the Officer Team as it was largely communications based, but that different committees would also be involved dependent on the topic it was working on; the Group would not work on policy decisions so did not need to be overseen in that respect. Whilst there would be overview updates to Council, it was an initial one-year pilot, which would subsequently be reviewed at Council at the end of that time.
18. The Junior Vice-President was thanked for attending the Association of Greyhound Track Vets annual conference and for getting the work of the College, and Council, across to members, not least the matter of under care.
19. It was noted that the work of the PAG was important to understand the views of animal owners, and it was suggested that the Group could help inform Council's decisions; it would be useful to know key messages throughout the year rather than wait until the review. It was clarified that the terms of reference for the Group were for the College to ask for its views on what it was doing in a structured way, rather than the Group telling the College what its issues were, as it was not there to represent. However, updates could be provided.
20. The CEO was commended for how the WeWork situation had been handled, it was prudent and mitigated risk.
21. There were no further comments or questions, and the report was noted.

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

Discretionary Fund

22. It was noted that there had been one new application for the discovery phase of the CRM project, and that c.£45,000 remained in the Fund; some smaller applications were anticipated before the end of the College year so it was expected that the majority of the Fund would be used.
23. The update was noted.

RCVS Council Election Scheme – amendment

24. The Registrar introduced the paper. At its meeting in June 2023, Council had approved amendments to the Scheme that had been submitted to Defra. Defra had raised two points prior to forwarding the documentation on to the Privy Council Office (PCO) to go through its processes:

- clarification re: the language used specific to the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988 (paragraph 5 (1)(b) of the Scheme) and eligibility to vote, as some of the phrasing could be misinterpreted; and
- the language used for the declaration by candidates (paragraph 10 (4) (f) of the Scheme) “...that there was nothing in their private or professional life which, if it became known, would embarrass the College...” was considered too ‘wide’.

25. Both paragraphs had been further amended and were before Council for approval; the declaration now mirrored the language in the Code(s) of Professional Conduct.

26. It was hoped that once the further amendments had been submitted to Defra that the documentation would be processed promptly so that some of the changes could be in place by the time ballot papers for the 2024 RCVS Council election were distributed.

27. The amendment to the wording of the declaration was questioned and whether it would prevent a member that had been through the disciplinary process from standing. It was confirmed that the Scheme clearly stated that anyone on the RCVS Register was eligible, whether they had been through a disciplinary process, removed and subsequently restored, etc., so long as they were on the Register they could stand for election. If they had been to a disciplinary hearing it was a matter of public record; the intent for the change to wording was to capture anything not already in the public domain.

28. The wording on the amendment clarifying the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988 was questioned – the rest of the Scheme had been amended to ‘they / their’ whereas the sentence referred to in the further amendment stated ‘...retained ‘his’ right to vote...’. It was confirmed that would be amended prior to re-submitting the document to Defra.

29. With the inclusion of the word change from ‘his’ to ‘their’ in paragraph 5(1)(b), Council was asked to approve by formal resolution of Council, the (further) amended RCVS Council Election Scheme as set out in Annexes A and B of the paper. A vote was taken:

For:	23
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

30. The amendments were approved by a unanimous vote.

Handling potential Conflicts of Interest

31. The Chair, Council Culture Working Group, introduced the item and stated that it was one of the last aspects of the work of the Group and it was an important aspect of governance. As an

organisation, focus appeared more on the declarations at the start of the College year, or start of a meeting, and not enough thought was given to behaviours during meetings.

32. There were two parts to the paper: some amendments to the Conflict of Interests Policy, and the introduction of a new Decision Tree for making decisions about Conflicts of Interest (Col). It was noted that the Decision Tree was high level in nature and would not capture every circumstance; that the critical point was that there was a basis for decision making – it was the responsibility of individuals to identify whether they had what might be considered a real, or perceived, Col, and it was important for Chairs to consider that and make an appropriate decision. Equally important was that if there was any doubt, advice from the most senior executive (President / CEO / Registrar) should be sought – it was important that the decisions made were defensible.

33. Comments and questions included:

- the default position should be to declare and not make assumptions that others knew;
- was it correct to have a time limit such as the seven years regarding employment or practice as a time limit was not attached to anything else?
 - o it was confirmed that there were time periods specified for things like accreditation panels, but it would be checked to ensure consistency between policies;
- re: membership: there were examples of Freemasons or livery companies being declared and such relevance was questioned;
 - o being a member of an organisation did not necessarily lead to a conflict, it was important to declare so that it could be explored. It was whether the policy, the discussion, and decision before the meeting would have an impact – positive or negative – on the person as an individual or the organisations a person was involved with. There were decisions in the veterinary world that would have an impact in lots of ways, and that was where the discussion regarding whether it would be significant should occur;
 - o there was also a legal test and case law aiming at being fair-minded and an informed observer having considered the facts, and concluding there was a real possibility of bias, therefore not just one person;
 - o it was clarified that the website declarations should be kept up to date and checked at least annually; new items should be raised at the start of meetings; specific items at the relevant agenda item. Equally, if a fellow Council member, who may be aware of your full declaration, should also be comfortable to raise where an issue might be a conflict – to have the opportunity to have a discussion;
- in terms of efficient working of Council and deliverance against RCVS objectives, the recommendations of the Group were of fundamental importance, and should be embraced;

- should there be more definition, or description, of the perception of bias and the feeling that, should a single individual take offence or declare bias, if it was the best judgement? It had to be more balanced between expertise and being compromised in a specific area;
- the decision tree would be particularly useful to new Chairs of committees;
- the decision tree helped to determine where there was an interest, which was different than having a conflict;
- have the conversations and err on the side of caution, then, if there was a challenge, there was a ready response that it was discussed and the reasoning behind it; this would back up the transparency element;
- as veterinary professionals it was part of the job to manage Col, examples were TB testing of farm clients; potentially vetting horses that belong to clients; it was not ideal, but it was done, and the signature had to be trusted. To have other interests was not necessarily a bad thing but it could be how it had been communicated to the profession as some perceptions seem to be that by having a Col it was somehow underhand or dishonest.

34. Council was asked to approve the proposed amendments to the existing Policy for Managing Potential Conflicts of Interest. A vote was taken:

For:	23
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

35. The amendments were approved by a unanimous vote.

36. Council was asked to approve the proposed new Declaration of Interests Decision Tree. A vote was taken:

For:	22
Against:	0
Abstain:	1

37. The Decision Tree was approved by a majority vote.

Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways (VCCP)

38. The Chair, Education Committee introduced the paper and provided a strategic overview. The VCCP project was exciting and had progressive proposals for the careers of veterinary clinicians, especially for those working in primary care. Approximately 75 – 80% of the veterinary surgeons on the Register were clinicians, thus the project has the potential for substantial positive impact; it offered flexible career pathways, with hopefully improved retention that related to the objectives of the RCVS' Workforce Action Plan.

39. A huge amount of work had been conducted and the project was at a point where next steps were to be decided; these included further research to gather evidence, and stakeholder focus groups as outlined in the paper. It was emphasised that it was not to 'unpick' what had already been achieved because if Council agreed to go forward, there would be many, and varied, opportunities to input into the project as it naturally progressed through stakeholder consultation. There was a number of neutral titles within the paper that were 'placeholders' and subject to stakeholder focus groups.

40. The Director of Education gave a brief presentation:

Background

- work commenced approximately one year ago;
- there had been a review of the Advanced Practitioner (AP) status; in parallel with multiple discussions around the workforce situation – the project tied in significantly with retention;
- the 'Clinical Career Pathways for the Future' stakeholder event highlighted:
 - o the confusion between AP status and a Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) amongst the profession and animal owners;
 - o inequalities associated with the impact of being an AP;
 - o inequalities around the accessibility of specialist training and the need for new specialist routes to specialisation;
 - o the need for a flexible and rewarding career pathway for general practitioners (GPs) / vets working in primary care;

Timeline

- commenced with big surveys of APs that fed into the VCCP stakeholder event;
- December 2022: VCCP stakeholder event;
- February 2023: Draft report reviewed by Education Committee;
- May 2023: VCCP proposal discussed by Education Committee; after which the detail of how to achieve that resulted in the three workstreams before Council;
- September 2023: VCCP Project Plan approved by Education Committee;
- three substantial workstreams impact upon each other and would need to be taken forward in parallel;
- VCCP Working Group would feed into Education Committee, and then Council, on progress;

Workstream 1

- curriculum development for Veterinary GP specialty training comprising all the necessary elements required for consultation with Council and the profession;
- expected outputs:

- a full curriculum statement;
 - a comprehensive list of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and supporting syllabus;
 - an organisational plan for the training programme;
 - an assessment strategy for the training programme;
 - an implementation plan for the training programme;
 - a proposal for the quality assurance of the training and ongoing evaluation of the curriculum;
- this would be achieved by:
- evidence review;
 - stakeholder focus groups;
 - targeted stakeholder feedback;

Workstream 2

- definition of veterinary clinical roles: develop clear guidance for the profession and wider public on the scope and focus of different clinical roles within the veterinary profession;
- expected outputs:
 - a clear name (or options) for each clinical career 'status' and role, suitable for wider consultation with the profession;
 - a clear definition and guidance for each clinical career 'status', including a description of how each was achieved and maintained;
 - clear guidance for members of the veterinary professions and animal owners on the scope, focus, and responsibilities of roles typically carried out by vets obtaining each status in clinical practice;
- this would be achieved by:
 - focus groups representing clinical roles, employers, etc.;
 - targeted stakeholder feedback;

Workstream 3

- developing flexible routes for clinical specialty training: identify mechanisms by which vets were able to access the teaching and learning opportunities, clinical experience / cases, supervision and support required for them to be able to successfully complete clinical specialist training across a range of disciplines;
- expected outputs:
 - a report summarising the current delivery models for specialty training programmes, including flexible options where available;

- a review of different learning environments;
 - a report describing the existing requirements of training providers;
 - a report of the potential barriers faced by vets when deciding whether to enrol onto an internship / residence route to specialist training;
 - a report of the perspective of European Colleges with regard to implementing more flexible routes to specialisation;
- this would be achieved by:
- evidence review;
 - desktop research;
 - stakeholder focus groups, surveys, targeted feedback.

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

- this was a tremendous proposal and piece of work that had been discussed for five or more years and it was great to see it come to fruition. The RCVS would be the pioneer for the world with the definition of primary care, expert, or specialist, and the training that led up to it; there was nothing like it anywhere else and it was felt that the College would become a role model.

Returning to Workstream 1 and the first table: there remained confusion between the qualification that made you eligible, and the status, whether it was a Vet GP having a licence to practise as an MRCVS or whether it was an advance practitioner; whether it was the specialist who got the diploma who was then eligible to go on to the specialist register – could there be an extra step of ‘eligible now to register’ for each part (AP or specialist, etc.); it was important to educate the profession in the first instance so that there was greater understanding generally, and that important distinction;

- the College was joining up the approach and saying to university students that it wanted them to have at least 70% of the clinical education within their degree in a primary care context and what could be done with it; to get excited about general practice and then highlighting that there were some specialty routes;
- it was great to see so much enthusiasm for the project;
- as a member with an original background of first opinion practice, thank you for developing this; it was important for first opinion vets to be recognised and there were clear options. A note of caution should be expressed that there was a risk of some unintended negative outcomes associated with the project – there should be some sort of career pathway but, if the College started to introduce a specialism in GP, there was a risk that anyone who did not have the specialism or the advanced qualification could potentially be seen as ‘lesser’ and that could disempower and disenfranchise some colleagues; it could also lead to de-skilling

and a potential negative impact in terms of salaries and fees – the risk that there could be a lot of people who were seen as ‘just GPs’, that ended up referring patients to more specialist GPs, that meant that the patients might need to travel further to see a standard of care they could potentially already get; coupled with a difference in the value of a GP versus an AP or specialist that reflected in salaries / inflated the costs associated of seeing someone more qualified;

- this had been raised and the Committee / College was aware of the potential negative outcomes and some of the risks; it was a big piece of work with potential big impacts, however, the outcomes would be continually monitored through the working groups and the risks mitigated;
- part of the role of the specialist GP would be to encourage the junior members of staff and give them opportunities to make sure that de-skilling did not happen. The flexibility options were welcomed as not everyone lived close to specialists or special cases, or had the footfall turnover; someone in the Highlands and Islands would still be able to achieve further qualifications, which was very inclusive for the whole profession around the country;
- there were real concerns about feeling ‘inadequate’ if a member did not have a certificate or did not develop as quickly as someone else; this would be solved by ensuring the wording and naming of the qualifications were correct, its importance could not be over-estimated, and it might require the involvement of focus groups or polling;
- the timeline was queried for completion of the VetGDP – it stated one to two years for completion of CPD, however, at the last VetGDP Subcommittee meeting it was agreed to set the time limit at 18 months – could the diagram be amended to reflect the current recommendation?
- in the project risk section, there was a lot of red in the status column and there was also a column for risk mitigations; was there anything more the College could do to mitigate the risks in order to press through with the timelines that it hoped to achieve?
 - a lot of the red was around resourcing as it was a big area of work, those issues had been included in the confidential annexes;
- as a GP it was exciting to have something that was more progressive and flexible; at the moment having a certificate did not have much effect in terms of getting more cases; it was hoped that this would not become problematic;
- in the current circumstances, the College would be remiss to not undertake the project and it was questioned if the preference would be for two, or three, years?
 - the costings were in the confidential annexes to ensure the College got the best deal it could around a competitive tender process for certain aspects of the proposals; it was ambitious but doable in two years whereas the risk with three years was that by the time it

finished things could have changed from when it started. It was also recognised that there were a lot of costs attached so three years might be more appropriate;

- in terms of primary care, many young people in particular did not recognise the skills they were developing and that they were valuable as they had not been taught them at vet school; this was an issue for going forward in terms of learning outcomes. One of the skills that clinical specialists did not always have was knowing when to stop, when to confidently proceed, and when to refer; sometimes it was not that you could not do something, but that it was not justified in terms of income from the case and thus referred for that reason; it was a highly skilled decision-making process that would have to be one of the learning outcomes in the primary care syllabus. A lot of concerns related to a lack of recognition of the role of a primary care practitioner and, if it was developed, especially to do more in GP, it would be better recognised what they could do;
- this project would make the profession a lot more inclusive but that the communications around it needed to be clear; there was a concern that it could lead to public confusion.

42. In his absence, Mr Hutchinson had provided some written comments on this item that the Chair had agreed to incorporate in the minutes, but that, per the Meeting Procedure Rules 2021, the secretariat could not record his vote as members had to be '*...present at the time*':

- there was concern that the pursuit of GP Specialists was overcomplicating an issue;
- whilst he appreciated that some market research had been carried out, he felt that feedback he had received from other vets (in general terms) had been:
 - o there was a desire for general practice to be seen as a specialism in its own right – i.e. a worthwhile and rewarding career pathway, the value / recognition of which was perceived to have been eroded by the lauding of RCVS Specialist status elsewhere, and GP being seen as inferior to referral practice;
 - o however, GPs did not feel the need to be recognised as 'RCVS Specialists' with all that it entailed;
 - o specialist status in many ways defined what was not done as much as what was done, so was not appropriate for General Practice;
- the Advanced Practitioner designation was fine – it just needed explaining better:
 - o a certificate was a milestone of learning where someone had, at that time, demonstrated competence;
 - o AP status demonstrated that the competence was ongoing;
 - o this was reflected in a diploma being awarded at a certain stage, which enabled recognition subsequently on a specialist register if ongoing etc;

- perhaps a better way forward was to remove all postnominals except:
 - o MRCVS / FRCVS
 - o Advanced Practitioner (subject) / Specialist (subject) i.e. the things that described what someone did and the level at which they were working; certificates and diplomas were just development / learning achievements that were more appropriate for CVs;
 - o there should be an Advanced Practitioner in General Practice as well as specific subjects;
- there was concern that the proposals would:
 - o be expensive;
 - o potentially cause more confusion and complexity, not less;
 - o bring inevitable conflict with the European Board of Veterinary Specialists.

43. The conversation was brought to a close. Council was reminded that it was the principles that were under consideration and the vote would be for the pathways to proceed with more work coming back in due course.

44. Council was asked to approve the three workstreams of the Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways as outlined in the paper. A vote was taken:

Yes:	22
No:	0
Abstain:	0
Did not vote:	1

45. Dr Paterson experienced technical difficulties and submitted an email vote that was included in the figures. The VCCP workstreams were approved by a majority vote.

46. Council was asked to approve the timeline and associated costs for the project, noting that associated costs for two years were per confidential Annex B to the paper, and associated costs for three years were per confidential Annex C to the paper. A vote was taken:

Two years:	14
Three years:	6
Abstain:	1
Did not vote:	2

47. The timeline of two years with associated costs per confidential Annex B to the paper was approved by a majority vote.

Reports of standing committees – to note

48. The President reminded Council that the reports from the standing committees were now loaded in the library section of the Council workroom on the College's meeting paper system, Board Effect, and were no longer part of the Council mailing. The unclassified minutes of the reports would, however, be part of the individual committee's mailings and uploaded to the website in the usual way and would be publicly available. Furthermore, Chairs of committees still had the opportunity to provide an oral report at Council meetings if there was anything that required specific mention.

Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

49. The Chair, APC, highlighted:

- RCVS Knowledge's Canine Cruciate Register was starting to produce some really rich sources of data, that would allow for some positive quality improvements around surgery;
- the CEO had already provided an update on the Mind Matters Research Symposium that had been a fantastic event in October; work was due to recommence shortly on 'Lunch and Learns'; and, a further workstream was to be developed for the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress 2024;
- there had been a fantastic VN Futures presentation on the development of the outreach scheme for veterinary nurses;
- an update had been received on the Chronic Illness Survey, which had received over 4,000 responses and the data was now being compiled;
- an update had been received on the active work of the Fellowship and, in particular, around the Science Advisory Panel relating to sustainability work – a working title was Net Zero, and there were two sub-groups, one of which would be surgically orientated and the other medicine orientated.

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

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

51. The Chair, ARC, highlighted:

- new members of the Committee had been welcomed;
- updates had been received relating to Hardwick Street and ENQA;
- Risk Registers:
 - o the Corporate Risk Register had been reviewed;

- there had also been a 'deep-dive' into the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) Risk Register, where there had been a lively discussion. In conclusion, the Committee was very satisfied with the work that was being done.

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

Education Committee (EC)

53. The Chair, EC, highlighted:

- there had been an in-depth discussion at the last meeting on the Clinical Career Pathways, that had also just been discussed at this meeting; there was agreement that the work should proceed;
- reports were received from the subcommittees that fed into EC;
- there had been a lengthy discussion about the 2024 Extra Mural Studies (EMS) Policy; there had been a number of amendments, so much so that the Policy was to return to EC for approval at the next meeting;
- there had been an update on the Statutory Membership Examination (SME), further information would be provided in the confidential session later in the meeting;
- consideration had been given to various accreditation recommendations from the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC), and a number had been agreed upon;
- an update had been received about the ENQA reaccreditation, which the CEO had reported upon earlier in the meeting.

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

Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

55. The Chair, FRC, highlighted:

- the new Head of Finance (HoF), Sandra Tetsola, was welcomed;
- an update had been received from the Director of Operations (DoO);
- committee reports had been noted;
- it was interesting listening to the investment portfolio (see classified minutes); the management accounts had been scrutinised; and the 2024 budget would be discussed later in the meeting;
- RCVS Academy had been reviewed including the rationale, content, responses, risks, and future plans; it was agreed that it was an excellent resource for the profession.

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

Registration Committee (RC)

57. The Chair, RC, highlighted that most of the work of the Committee was confidential as it dealt with personal information from applicants wishing to join the Register. However, it was noted that the UK-practising category of the Register had recently passed 30,000 members and, as of the day prior, membership was at 30,047; this was a 4% increase since the beginning of January. Veterinary nurse members had also increased to 23,442 members, up by 5.7% from the beginning of the year. It was felt that both numbers should be celebrated. The number of registered veterinary practice premises had also increased. The College was now starting to see trends that could feed into the ongoing workforce review.

58. It was commented that the increase in those members in clinical practice was fantastic news.

59. The report was noted.

Standards Committee (SC)

60. The Chair, SC, highlighted:

- the number of practices in the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) as a percentage remained stable with approximately 250 assessments were carried out per quarter; deficiencies also remained stable. There had been a slight change to how assessments were undertaken and there had been good feedback received about the value of the assessments and the assessors;
- the work of the Riding Establishments Subcommittee (RESC) had contributed to the Scottish consultation around the licensing of activities involving animals, and was working well.

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

Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)

62. The Chair, VNC, highlighted:

- a lot of the last meeting had been dominated by the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee reports and the confidential decisions around accreditation of education establishments;
- the 2024 budget for VN areas had been approved and would be before FRC at its next meeting;
- lots of Council members had been involved in the recent BVNA Congress, which had been very successful.

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

PIC / DC Liaison Committee (PIC/DC LC)

64. The Chair, PIC/DC LC highlighted that changes to the concerns process were embedding and details of the current statistics were in the minutes. The team was currently well resourced with new members having joined recently.
65. It was noted that data was being reported differently and questioned if there were any comparable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) between the new, and old, concerns processes with how well cases were being resolved, because one of the concerns was that the new process could potentially take longer to resolution. It was confirmed that comparisons were difficult as the team was still working through the transitional period, and that the process was indeed different. How the data was reported was similar to other regulators and was noted in the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) report to Council in terms of median figures. It was argued that the median figures did not show the number of cases being resolved in a longer timescale, but the clarification was noted.
66. The President thanked staff and Council for the work undertaken.

Reports of statutory committees – to note

67. The Registrar offered to take questions on behalf of the Chairs of the statutory committees.

Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)

68. It was noted that there was reference to the trial protocol for launching private prosecutions against individuals breaching the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966; with 42 reports since the trial commenced in April, a number of which had been closed already. In terms of governance and oversight, it was questioned where the information fed into.
69. It was confirmed that the information fed into PIC / DC Liaison Committee for onward reporting to Council. Whilst a number had been closed, some were still ongoing, and others had been referred to other agencies, which was in line with what was expected at the outset. As the one-year trial was still ongoing, it was noted that a full report would return to Council in due course.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

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

Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary (DC)

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

Notices of motion

72. There were no notices of motion to report.

Questions

73. There were no questions to report

Any other College business (unclassified)

74. There was no other College business to report.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)

75. It was noted that the Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways project would be captured on the Education Department's Risk Register. There were no other items to raise.

Date of next meeting

76. The date of the next meeting was Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 10:00 am; this would be a remote meeting.

Risk Register assessment – annual consideration (confidential item)

77. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 26.

Dr Calow and Mrs McLaughlan left the meeting.

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

Budget 2024

78. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 27 – 36.

Statutory Instrument for Statutory Membership Examination

79. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 37 – 41.

Mrs Cook and Professor Parkin left the meeting.

Honorary Associateship: nominations from Council

80. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 42 – 49.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Comments on classified appendices

81. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 50 – 51.

Other business

82. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 52 – 53.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

83. There were no new items to add to the Corporate Risk Register (as noted in paragraph 54 of the classified appendix).

Reflective session (confidential item)

84. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 55 – 56.

85. The meeting was drawn to a close.

Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	18 January 2024
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; questions welcomed
Attachments	None
Author	Lizzie Lockett CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification	Rationales
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

CEO update, including progress against Strategic Plan

Background

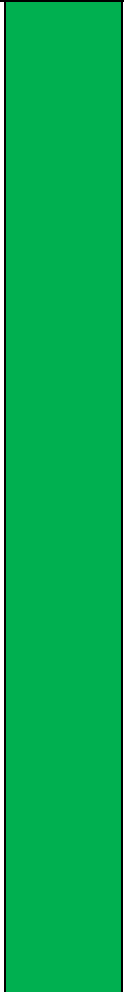
1. The RCVS Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was approved at the RCVS Council meeting in January 2020 and came into immediate effect. The full report, including all of the narrative, together with case studies from the previous plan's successes, can be found here: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-strategic-plan-2020-2024/>
2. 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. For each action, responsibilities, recent activities and next steps have been identified in the following table, alongside a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating, to show progress compared to what was anticipated at this point in the Strategic Plan's implementation.
3. Work to develop a new strategic plan will start in January 2024.
4. Outside of those changes noted in the Strategic Plan table to follow, since the 9 November 2023 Council meeting, we have also:
 - a. Hosted a session on sustainability with the UK Healthcare Alliance on Climate Change at the London Vet Show
 - b. Issued various statements and pieces of guidance on the XL Bully legislation
 - c. Held a successful Fellowship Day at One Great George Street, including a 'Fellows of the Future' student research competition, workshops on sustainability and behaviourism, welcoming 34 new Fellows, hearing from guest speaker Dame Sally Davies and also electing a new Vice-Chair, Dr Niall Connell
 - d. Launched our new Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway (VCCP) project
 - e. Started a new series of Mind Matters campfire chats, with discussion on 'Self-care through winter', and a new series of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training courses
 - f. Opened the RCVS and VN Councils election nomination period
 - g. Donated the £4,000 President's Christmas Box to the Villiers Park Education Trust, in support of its widening participation work
 - h. Welcomed a new CEO of RCVS Knowledge, Katie Mantell
 - i. Held a drop-in session for MPs at the Houses of Parliament, supported by the British Veterinary Nursing Association, to promote the need for a new Veterinary Surgeons Act
 - j. Joined forces with the British Veterinary Chronic Illness Society to support UK Disability History Month
 - k. Kicked off our new customer relationship management project
 - l. Approved the setting up of a Working Group on Mandatory Practice Regulation
 - m. Approved an expansion of the pre-registration exam for VNs trained overseas, to include a knowledge-based component as well as a practical exam
 - n. Launched a new Academy course on client confidentiality
 - o. Held the second meeting of our Public Advisory Group, with a focus on developing advice for clients on how to get the best out of their interactions with veterinary professionals
 - p. Received a record number of nominations for the RCVS Honours and Awards

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	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>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.</p>	<p>Exec Office/ Ed/VN</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful event to promote the need for new legislation at the House of Lords in October 2022 and parliamentary drop-in sessions in April 2023 and November 2023. New microsites built to support the argument, which were highly commended in the 2023 MemCom awards. Two educational webinars took place during May 2023 with RCVS and VN Council members, and representatives of BVA and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA). Defra supportive, progress now depends on available time. CVO has gone on record with support and BVA has included in their 2024 'manifesto'. Discussion around governance to take place at January 2024 Council meeting. • Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) agreed the formation of a new Working Group on Mandatory Practice Regulation in November 2023; will meet early 2024. • First accreditations using the new educational standards and methodology were completed in Liverpool (March 2023), and Aberystwyth / RVC (May 2023). • Launched a comprehensive new online training programme for accreditation panel members via RCVS Academy, with positive initial feedback. Panel member feedback following new accreditation processes also positive. A 'lessons learnt' document is being developed to share with Education and Audit and Risk Committees to ensure we continue on a journey of quality improvement. • The evidence base informing the new accreditation standards for vet degrees has been published in the <i>Journal of Veterinary Medical Education</i>. • Following VN support meetings, there have been three successful accreditations.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<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"> • Regulation of the wider vet team is linked to new legislation. We continue to investigate the most appropriate groups to bring under any future regulatory umbrella, for example, the first behavioural medicine roundtable was hosted by the Fellowship Science Advisory Panel (FSAP) in May 2023 and there was a popular and lively workshop at the recent (November 2023) Fellowship Day. An FSAP working party is investigating whether and how animal behavioural medicine should be regulated, the next meeting will take place in January 2024. • The new concerns process has been launched and the website has been updated. • The new Charter Case Committee (CCC) members have been trained, and also Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) members. The CCC was launched on 25 August 2023. • New plans for Extra Mural Studies (EMS) have been published and communicated. New policy now approved by Education Committee (EC) for implementation in autumn 2024. We are hosting a Q&A session with the Veterinary Schools Council Education Cttee and EMS co-ordinators on 9 January to answer any questions they may have. • VCCP project agreed by Council in November 2023 and three workstreams will commence early 2024. They are 1) Development of Specialty training for GPs; 2) Definition of roles; and, 3) Development of flexible routes to specialisation. • New Under Care/Out-of-Hours guidance came into force on 1 September 2023. Webinars have been held and case studies and FAQs produced. Final piece of guidance, on prescription of endo- and ectoparasiticides, will come into force mid-January 2024. • New guidance on canine artificial insemination published. • Plans under way for a roundtable on artificial intelligence.
<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"> • Following approval at the March 2023 meeting of Council, the 12-month trial of a protocol for the private prosecution of breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act was launched on 1 April. This work is now reported via the PIC/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<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/ EC</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue improving engagement with overseas members and run a regular blog in RCVS News from overseas-practising members. • Work ongoing to develop more permanent solution to loss of mutual recognition of professional qualifications – paper with Defra but no response has been received. • First consultative accreditation visit to an EU school under our 2023 accreditation standards took place in May 2023. • Continuing strong relations with International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG), Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, Mind Matters International, American Association of Veterinary State Boards, American Veterinary Medical Association and International Veterinary Regulators Network (IVRN), with attendance/presentation at in-person meetings during the year. • Next meeting of Mind Matters International on 30 January to see if there is potential for a collaborative event later in the year and to showcase recent initiatives. The Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia is the latest organisation to sign up to our joint statement on veterinary mental health. • Attended a useful meeting of IAWG in Melbourne in July 2024, where RCVS presented a proposal for adopting a more environmentally sustainable approach to joint international accreditations involving visitors trained in the standards and processes of more than one agency. Previously there has been resistance, but this proposal was received positively and all IAWG members agreed to take it to their decision-making committees. Since then, the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council’s Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (AVBC VSAAC) has approved the proposals and would like to pilot with us in 2024/5. • Involved in ESNO (for European specialist nurses) discussions on workforce shortages and retention, culminating in a report to the European Commission. • Involved in the review and revision of the Accreditation Committee of Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) Standards. • Academy course developed for overseas vets / VNs applying to register launched. • There are opportunities to promote and ‘sell’ some of our initiatives overseas, but UK work takes priority during this busy time. Trademarking is being considered. • CEO joined FVE taskforce on development of European Veterinary Foundation, which met in person in December 2023.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<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"> Recruitment for Public Advisory Group completed and first meeting held on 22 September, with second scheduled for 10 January. Survey of PAG members completed to gain initial input into first workstream on animal owner advice, plus suggestions for new workstreams. Programme of attendance at events and congresses for 2023 completed with planning underway for 2024, to include a return to public outreach events and careers/science festivals. Survey planned to evaluate effectiveness of RCVS coms and engagement activities, and review vet/VN preferences, to inform new comms strategy. Chronic Illness and Disability Survey for vets, nurses, student vets and SVNs gained over 3,000 responses. It will be used to inform our own EDI activities and as an opportunity to provide landmark statistics and insight to the veterinary professions. The outcomes of this research have taken longer than planned but will be published early in 2024. We are thankful to the over 1,000 respondents who have said they would like to be involved with follow up work, and we will be looking to continue this engagement. Fellowship activities continue, and will include in 2024 a new set of Fellows on Tour events at UK veterinary schools. We took part in a Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Survey Working Group and that data is now available, to provide a useful comparator for some areas of the veterinary profession across Europe. Meanwhile the 2024 Surveys of the Veterinary Professions will be going out into the field in January 2024. Stakeholder perception research will take place as part of the development of the new strategic plan and a stakeholder engagement session is planned for March 2024. A meeting will take place with the BVA in Q1 to discuss whether a second 'Vet Futures' type project would be appropriate.
<p>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.</p>	<p>FRC/ Digital/ Policy</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop dashboard on key metrics - part of KPI project (see later) – paper going to Council January 2024. Data management system (CRM) review project has commenced, with Smart Impact chosen as supplier. Additional data being gathered about reasons for leaving the RCVS Registers – reported to Registration Committee. Project to support Defra ref farm attestations and links to RCVS Register completed and launched December 2023. See A5 above ref Surveys of the Professions.

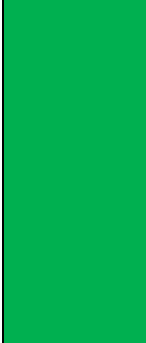
Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
7. Plan and implement a cycle of review and improvement for our educational standards and processes, to ensure we continue to take a leadership role with our international partners.	Ed Cttee/ VN Ed Cttee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCVS Academy for accreditation panellists launched, initial feedback positive. • First accreditation events under new standards have been completed successfully in March 2023 (Liverpool) and April (Aber/RVC). Evaluation being analysed to inform quality improvement to our processes. A report from the first year of accreditations under the new system will be published in early spring. • As outlined above, Veterinary Clinical Career Pathway workstreams to begin early 2024. • Following VN support meetings, eight successful accreditation events. • Successful reaccreditation by ENQA received. • VN Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training review commenced autumn 2023. • A review of the veterinary Day One Competences is planned for 2024.
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"> • Registration appeals process to be considered now MRPQ no longer exists. • Appeal process for Statutory Membership Examination to be considered. • Review and revise VN accreditation appeals process.

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	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
1. Endeavour to ensure that the College is seen as approachable, helpful, fair and accessible to all.	All		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of web content review now received, and work underway to update key areas of website with consideration being given to information accuracy, content design, language style, accessibility, diversity and inclusion and search engine optimisation (SEO). See also A5 above ref engagement. • Review of appeals processes ongoing, see A8 above. • Improving the way we communicate Council and committee activities as part of the Council Culture project. • Continue with VN support package, see A7 above. • Have supported refugees through the Statutory Membership Examination process and the first one has now passed and will register with us. • Questions around vet and nurse perceptions of the College will be included in the Surveys of the Professions.
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.	People		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peakon (staff engagement survey) data regularly reviewed to benchmark how well supported staff feel. • New Staff Network Group – Alliance for Inclusion - set up to help build an inclusive working community at the College. • New staff training priorities fall out of 'My Progress' annual reviews; this now has greater focus on values. What it takes to become a 'learning organisation' was discussed at the 2023 staff away day and initiatives being planned. • New online learning hub for staff under development (aligned with RCVS Academy), and new intranet, due to be launched in Q1 2024. • Thematic review of data from exit interviews now going to Senior Team. • Dedicated Talent resource appointed, full review of career website and assessment material ongoing. • Growth mindset group in place to encourage different ways of thinking, was commended by those engaged with it as part of our end of year review. • Training support policy near completion to provide greater clarity on learning outcomes where financial support is provided. • Manager charter developed to support new and existing managers. • Additional mental health and wellbeing support introduced via MyMynd, with positive initial feedback.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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"> Promotion of ProfCon Investigation Support Service; article May 2023 RCVS News and flagging to VetLife for appropriate signposting. Registrar took part in 'myth-busting' panel ref complaints at BVA Live 2023. Public Advisory Group will support us developing more compassionate approach for animal owners. Academy courses on resolving complaints in practice, and Complaints: communication, confidence and compassion now available. Asked to join the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority Working Group on minimising distress for practitioners involved in a regulatory process, which will help us to share / understand good practice.
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"> New Academy courses being launched regularly, most recent on client confidentiality; over 12,000 learners have accessed the Academy since launch (June 2022); regular contact with advisory panel of vets and nurses ensures content is relevant. Presentation on successes so far made at FRC in November 2023. Development of the EMS information 'hub' ongoing, to provide an engaging online area accessible for the three main stakeholder groups, students, providers and school staff. Will focus on 'what good looks like' and include the 'difficult' challenges such as how to empower students to deal with inappropriate behaviours on placement, and support for schools with those difficult conversations when exploring concerns raised and students and addressing issues with providers.
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 www.vetmindmatters.org), 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"> MMI Strategy and Evaluation documents published. Collaboration with BSAVA for 2024 Congress content underway Successful MMI Symposium hosted, with good feedback from delegates. Next event will be in 2025. First MHFA events of 2024 sold out within two weeks, more planned inc one specifically for the Association of Veterinary Students. MMI attended a number of smaller CPD events for the professions, and will continue to undertake this style of outreach in 2024. Part of the Worshipful Company of Farmers Rural Health and Wellbeing Forum, contributing a veterinary voice and continuing to build and collaborate in the rural community. New training course looking at key 'transitions' being designed for pilot. New MMI Lead appointed and starting at the end of the month. See A4 for MMI International work.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>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.</p>	<p>APC Ed Cttee</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective CPD and use of 1CPD app now mandatory – communications and promotion have taken place and will continue. • Evaluation of VetGDP Adviser e-learning highly positive. • Discussions remain ongoing with NHS regarding relaunch of Edward Jenner Leadership MOOC. • New courses such as unconscious bias will be launched, via the Academy, this will be mandatory for Fellowship assessors as part of the drive to widen the diversity and inclusion to Fellowship. Other new materials on Leadership being created, especially profiling VN leaders. Existing courses will be up for review later this year.

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	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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"> • See B5 for MMI and B6 for learning culture. • VN version of religious clothing document under development. • Joint APC / EC / VN Council project has started to produce guidance for EMS, intra-mural rotations (IMR) providers and wider workplaces on supporting those with neurodiversity. • Fellowship Science Advisory Panel project on Net Zero practice moving forward with Chairs appointed to the Medicine WG and the Surgery WG. • Sustainability is a key aspect of Hardwick Street refurbishment project. • Supported the UKHACC Green Surgery launch, including the Chair speaking at the London Vet Show. • ViVet strategy under review at present. • Paper on learning culture in VetGDP published in <i>Journal of Veterinary Medical Education</i>. • Poster presentation on BAME Recommendations and Religious Clothing Guidance at July Association for the Study of Medical Education EDI event, re-organised in-person conference happening in spring 2024 where we will present in person. • VetGDP for returners now launched to help people to return to veterinary work following a career break, planning promotional push. • Chronic illness survey has now been completed and is currently being analysed by our research partners (more detail above). • 'RVN – Starting Out' course, designed to support the transition from student to registered nurse, launched May 2023. • Course under development to support those returning after a career break. • Menopause tool kit launched as part of VN Futures (VNF). • Flexible working toolkit being developed as part of VNF. • Work has started on a new Academy course, open to all, on Unconscious Bias, and also one specifically for Fellowship Assessors. • President's Christmas donation given to WP charity and awareness raised as part of communication of this. • Joint work with VSC and BVA continues to better support students on EMS.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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"> Improvements to honours and awards process agreed at June Council and record number of nominations received for 2024 round. New building will focus on history and future of veterinary practice – thought to be given to commissioning new items for historic collection. Education space for school-age children planned for new building to encourage better understanding of veterinary profession from a younger age and potentially encourage applications to vet school from a wider pool. The introduction of the new Fellowship categories has brought in a wider diversity of Fellows, whose expertise on the art and science of veterinary medicine needs to be harnessed. Wider skills continue to be championed through the CertAVP and the new vet school standards, and will be a key consideration for the Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway project, including speciality training for GPs.
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.	<i>Education</i> <i>MMI</i> <i>ViVet</i> <i>Academy</i> <i>Exec</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Action Plan outlines range of actions to be taken under this heading. Blog on progress so far part of December 2023 RCVS News. A series of webinars with the wider profession have now taken place – see A2. The Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) is due to focus next on an inclusive recruitment toolkit to support organisations to consider their recruitment process from job description thorough to induction, which should impact on recruitment and retention. 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. Work ongoing to understand recruitment, retention and return activities within the government / public health veterinary sector and develop an action plan based on gap analysis. Nurse Return course available for all nurses returning to the Register. Compulsory for those who have been off the Register for five years or more.
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.	<i>Education</i> <i>VN</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fifth provider of CertAVN approved. As outlined at A2 above, the VCCP workstreams will start shortly. VN career progression linked to LWP proposals (see A1). Proposals under development for the Advanced Practitioner role for VNs Pilot for second stage of VN Prescriber research complete, and changes agreed for full survey, along with selection of sample. Next step sign off final questionnaire and related documents/coms. Survey will be open for approx three weeks; expected launch February. Analysis likely completed summer. Actions within Workforce Action Plan also consider fulfilling careers.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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.	<i>Comms APC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop modules for Academy to better explain our key functions. • Successful EMS placement programme, jointly with Veterinary Policy Research Foundation, ongoing. • Officers attended a range of freshers' weeks and careers fairs at the vet schools in autumn 2023. VN school induction weeks also attended. • CEO undertaking talks with practices - including those on new grad schemes – to demystify the work of the College. • Talks given to new graduates on training schemes. • RVNs working at the College were recently profiled as part of VN Awareness Month; an RVN group has been set up to support the professional identity of RVNs working at the College and part of this will be showcasing the work of the College and the opportunities to be had.
6. Create an innovation funding pot to enable the professions to help solve regulation and professional standards issues that matter to them.	<i>Exec FRC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch bursary scheme – needs name! • Consideration of challenge prize on hold due to 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.
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.	<i>Fellows APC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Fellowship Day hosted in November, sold out early on, repeated management of this to ensure all tickets utilised. High levels of engagement on the day, new interactive format working well. Locations and venues for this year's event are being reviewed. • New Academy course on unconscious bias and training for Fellowship assessors will be launched this quarter in time for this year's applications to be assessed. • Fellows spokesperson list to be created, to identify individuals who can be media trained and give views on relevant topics (NB care to be taken not to conflict with regulatory role). • Next steps on sustainability will be worked upon following feedback from Fellowship Day session and others such as LVS. This will be in collaboration with RCVS Knowledge as the evidence gap is a significant element that needs resolution to enable people to make confident decisions.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
8. Review new ways of reaching consensus and driving change within our leadership and governance structure.	Exec Officers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New induction process was rolled out with new Council members. • Reflection sessions at Council meetings to discuss how effectively business was conducted continue. • Workshop sessions to be planned with external speakers on board effectiveness. • Chairs training took place in September; other training sessions in the pipeline.
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"> • Case studies on VF successes need to be refreshed, to form part of VF evaluation document (joint with BVA). Some delays due to resourcing. • VF part two under consideration – meeting in the pipeline. • VN Futures evaluation report published in September 2022; animation outlining achievements and future activities launched at BVA Live May 2023. • VNF sessions held at BVNA Congress Oct 2023.

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	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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"> Scoping for informal review - although this may be superseded by work considering new governance structure as part of legislative changes (meanwhile, second five-year review for the LRO that separated PIC and DC from Council underway with Defra). Governance Manual in progress. Action plan to resolve gaps vs Charity Code being worked through by Senior Team and reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee.
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"> Skills being considered as part of Council Culture project. Annual review of delegation scheme now routine and all groups now have ToR and greater clarity. New paper templates under development, along with training for secretariats. Each Committee considers its 'child' groups (subcommittees, working groups etc) as part of the review at the end of each presidential year.
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.	ARC FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk process well embedded and regularly praised by Audit and Risk Committee for its effectiveness. Annual Business Continuity Planning meeting takes place and changes are made to the plan in response. Work ongoing on risk dashboard and assurance map, reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee. Greater visibility of Corporate Risk Register now available to Council. Workshop took place in November 2023.
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.	Ops Head of I&E		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper on 'vital signs' to be discussed at January 2024 meeting of Council. Process for reviewing / analysing all complaints about RCVS, regardless of area of work, still ongoing. Customer Services team now well established and looking to extend its remit. Vet and VN exit survey data now being gathered. Zero tolerance for abuse of our staff statement now on the website. Members' views will be gathered as part of the 2024 Surveys of the Professions.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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.	Exec People		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning management system platform under development. • Change of pension provider has been implemented for staff who were members of the current scheme. Review of remaining scheme to take place. • Data dashboard under construction to highlight People data to include diversity and gender information. • Succession planning conversations have helped feed into a leadership framework document. • Career progression framework under review to provide clarity of movement across the organisation. • Update of staff induction, probation and notice processes in progress, majority of the policies are complete with some minor adjustments based on feedback being updated. Induction is now managed monthly, with less requirement of colleagues to support; more enhancements in progress. • Regular training sessions for managers – in the form of clinics – now being rolled out. Rotation arrangements for new managers and emerging managers underway. • Review of payroll and people systems underway, to reduce repetition and administration, provide a better service to managers and improve the experience for new recruits. Likely to be completed by end of year. • Greater support for all colleagues impacted by parental leave rules - by means of detailed guidance, simple language and advice - being developed. • Large volume of external recruitment for committee appointments completed. • Lieu time policy under construction for staff. • Neurodiversity training took place for Senior Team and People Teams in December 2023. Different approach may be required for Council training so new supplier being sought. • Career web page review underway to better promote career opportunities. • Apprentice recruitment underway – first apprentice recruited. • Internal 'engagement hub' (internet) agreed, implementation prior to year-end. • Our first Skills Share Week delivered as a direct result of June away day discussion, feedback very positive with plans to repeat.
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"> • Ensure database upgrade includes a flexible customer interface. • Fraud policy to be refreshed.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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"> • Platforms for NPL, PDR and Stanley (PSS) purchased late spring 2023. • CRM review project with Smart Impact now underway.
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"> • HS now free of tenants. • Levy Real Estate have been appointed to draw up refurbishment requirements and employer's requirements document under development. • All planning applications approved except for flying RCVS flag on RCVS Day. • Technical Group set up and responsible for ensuring building infrastructure, kit and layout meet the current and future needs, within agreed budgets
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.	Comms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCVS comms survey of key stakeholders (including professions, public etc) to establish preferences and gain feedback. • Produce coms plan for next 12 months to support remaining ambitions of current Strategic Plan, departmental activities and stakeholder requirements. • Social media strategy under development as part of broader planning work. • Web content review report received and work underway across key sections of website to update content in line with report's recommendations. • Language/Content Style Guide near completion, to be followed by familiarisation training for staff. • Brand development review ongoing, to be aligned with new building presentation and next Strategic Plan. • Website review ongoing.
10. Develop and implement a corporate social responsibility strategy that befits an organisation that works in the public interest.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental impact of new building under consideration, plus how it can help us integrate into, and support, community, eg, working with local schools. • Work ongoing with UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC). • Regular reviews of investment portfolio to ensure it aligns with our values. • Push to encourage staff to make more use of volunteering days to support social responsibility of the organisation. • Working towards Investors in the Environment (iE) Silver once in new building (we secured Bronze for another year in 2023). • Consideration of carbon off-setting line in 2025 budget. • Sustainability considered for VN Pre-Registration Examinations. Reduction of single-use items, reuse, repurpose or recycle where possible. • Events strategy – eg around merchandise and give-aways – reflects environmental policy.

Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	18 January 2024
Title	Reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 – Governance
Summary	This paper outlines a number of options for the reform of RCVS governance.
Decisions required	<p>Council is asked to decide on a number of questions related to governance reform, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Whether the composition of RCVS Council should be underpinned in primary legislation, or whether it should be a matter for more flexible secondary legislation. b. Whether elections to RCVS Council should be replaced with an independent appointment system. c. Whether Council should adopt a parity of registrants and lay members. d. Whether Council should reform its composition to remove the Vet Schools Council appointees. e. Which reform model for the composition of Council should be consulted on as a potential replacement to the status quo in any future legislation to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 f. Whether to separate the presidency and chair of RCVS Council.
Attachments	None
Author	<p>Ben Myring Policy & Public Affairs Manager b.myring@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

Reform of Veterinary Nurse Council governance

Background

- 1) In June 2021, RCVS Council agreed a package of recommendations for new legislation to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA), based on the work of the Legislation Working Party (LWP) and following extensive consultation. One outstanding question relates to the governance of the RCVS, specifically how it should be underpinned in legislation and whether there should be any changes to the composition of RCVS Council. At present the composition of RCVS governance is strongly at variance with regulatory best practice, and this will be highlighted as and when new legislation is considered by government; it is possible that governance reform will be insisted upon as a condition of securing legislative reform. RCVS Council may anyway conclude that reform is now appropriate. Any recommendations adopted by Council on governance composition will be a starting point for discussions with government, but the final outcome will be a matter for the latter and Parliament.
- 2) RCVS Council considered these questions at its March and September meetings in 2023, alongside two online sessions delivered by the RCVS Policy & Public Affairs Manager comparing current RCVS governance arrangements with those of other regulators and Royal Colleges. At the September 2023 meeting Council agreed that there should be further exploration of a number of reform options, with more detailed alternative models of governance brought back to Council at a later meeting.
- 3) Options identified for further consideration were: 1) underpinning governance arrangements with primary or secondary legislation, 2) replacing elections with an independent appointment system, 3) creating parity between lay and professional members of Council, 4) increasing the proportion of allied professionals on Council, 5) removing the number of Vet Schools Council appointees on RCVS Council, 6) separating the presidency and chair of RCVS Council.
- 4) While small governing bodies of 10-12 members (and as low as six) is the norm, it was agreed that reducing the size of Council was not an option that should be further explored.
- 5) During these discussions Council noted the existing recommendation to retain a Royal College that regulates, and highlighted that there is rarely a clear dividing line between regulatory and Royal College functions. For example, the holistic approach available to the RCVS has allowed it to develop upstream regulation projects like the Mind Matters Initiative, which has become a model adopted by other regulators at home and abroad, expanding the scope of what a compassionate regulator can do. There is a regulatory dimension to other areas that are often the purview of Royal Colleges in human healthcare, such as postgraduate education. It was therefore suggested that trying to separate the Royal College and regulatory functions of the RCVS in governance arrangements – for instance by having a separate board and council – would be impractical and counterproductive, as well as risking conflict between the two bodies which might precipitate a future separation into two different bodies.

- 6) This paper builds on earlier discussions, and presents a number of potential governance composition models for consideration. Council is asked to indicate which reform model they prefer, and whether that reform should be adopted as a formal recommendation alongside the College's other legislative reform recommendations.
- 7) Any recommendation decided upon would be subject to consultation, after which the matter will be returned to Council for a final decision.

Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)

- 8) Veterinary Nurses Council has also been exploring governance reform. VNC's governance composition already better reflects best practice in some respects. It has only 14 members (plus one observer from the RCVS Officer Team), which is closer to the usual practice of having 10-12 members. In addition to the six elected veterinary nurses (VNs) there are two independently-appointed VN members, including the current chair, and two veterinary surgeon representatives appointed by RCVS Council. However, the ratio of lay members to professional members is, as with RCVS Council, low, with four members.
- 9) At its meeting in November 2023, VNC decided to develop recommendations for approval by RCVS Council for reducing the size of VNC, and moving towards lay parity and an increased proportion of appointed members.

Primary vs secondary legislation

- 10) At present, the composition of RCVS Council is set out in primary legislation. Following a Legislative Reform Order (LRO) in 2018 that reduced the size of Council, the VSA provides for a Council of 13 elected veterinary surgeons, three individuals nominated by the Veterinary Schools Council, two veterinary nurses appointed by Veterinary Nurses Council, and six appointed lay people, making a total of 24 members (plus the Chief Veterinary Officer as an observer). During the discussions leading to the 2018 LRO, the College sought an amendment that would make future reform easier in future by moving the details of Council composition into secondary legislation. However, Parliamentary Counsel concluded that this was too substantial a change to achieve via an LRO.
- 11) Council is asked to decide whether the recommendation to move the composition of Council to secondary legislation should be preserved, in line with the Legislation Working Party recommendation to increase flexibility to ensure that new legislation is future-proofed.
- 12) Retaining the composition of Council in primary legislation, or a key principle determining the composition such as maintaining a majority of veterinary professionals, would reduce the risk of a future government easily changing that composition in a way that was contrary to Council's preferences. Conversely, separating out an unusual aspect of governance and trying to keep it in primary legislation would draw adverse attention to it during parliamentary debate. 'Hard coding' aspects of governance would also reduce flexibility in an Act that could last many decades.

- 13) Greater flexibility than at present is also desirable and arguably necessary, as Council's composition is likely to need to incrementally change as new allied professions come to be regulated by the RCVS.

Election Vs appointment

- 14) In its previous discussions, Council explored whether elections were the best way of selecting registrant members of Council with appropriate expertise and geographical/sectoral background, and whether elections best assure the public that Council will act in their interest. The alternative would be for Council to move to an independent appointments system in line with other regulators, and as practised for some VNC members.
- 15) If Council decides to move towards an appointment system, then this could be introduced via a transition period over a set period of time, for example, when the terms of individual Council members are complete, or over a longer period.
- 16) The governance reform models outlined in the next section are not dependent on whether the veterinary surgeon component is elected or appointed. However, there is an argument that the case for a larger number of veterinary surgeons is undermined if election is retained, as this would be straying from normal regulatory practice in multiple ways. On the other hand, an appointment system would help to ensure a range of expertise and diverse sectoral backgrounds in governance models with a smaller number of veterinary surgeons on Council.

Potential governance composition models

- 17) The table on page 8 below sets out a number of specific models for the future composition of Council. While no model proposed reducing the size of Council, It has been assumed that the number of Council Members should remain at 24 in order not to reverse previous reforms or stray further from best practice.
- 18) Each model could be introduced using a transition period, in which the composition was gradually changed over a set period.
- 19) Other aspects of allied professional governance, such as their council and committee structures, and the vehicle for appointing allied professions to RCVS Council, will be examined in a future paper.
- 20) When considering the different governance models, Council should have in mind the key governance issues and principles that have been discussed at previous meetings:

Parity of lay and professional members

- 21) In line with the Law Commission's recommendations it is now the norm for regulators to have parity of laypeople and registrants on their governing bodies. This key principle ensures outside expertise and

perspective, and gives the public assurance that regulators are acting in their interest as opposed to the interest of the profession(s).

- 22) Council may instead prefer to recommend model that falls short of full parity but still increases the proportion of lay members in order to approach best practice.

Veterinary School Council appointees

- 23) It is extremely unusual for a governing body of a regulator to contain members appointed by universities. RCVS Council could consider removing this provision, perhaps coupled with strengthening their representation elsewhere, such as on the Education Committee.
- 24) Removing this provision would also create space for increasing the number of lay members to bring the RCVS closer to best regulatory practice.

Veterinary surgeon majority/parity Vs veterinary professional majority/parity

- 25) It would be possible to account for future new allied professionals of Council while still maintaining a majority of veterinary surgeons, but this would require the removal of the three Vet School Council appointee members (see below), and it would not also be possible to increase the proportion of lay members in line with best practice. Most proposed models therefore assume either a majority or parity of veterinary *professionals* (veterinary surgeons and allied professionals) *while preserving veterinary surgeons as a sub-majority*.
- 26) Ranges (e.g. 5-7) are used to show how the composition of Council within a particular model could be designed to anticipate further reform over time to account for the growth in the number of allied professions (in addition to veterinary nurses) regulated by the RCVS, while preserving veterinary surgeons as the majority of veterinary professional members. Note that these ranges could be 'capped' if Council decided that a particular number or proportion of veterinary surgeons should be retained.
- 27) Note that Officers could in future not be restricted to veterinary surgeons; they could in principle be lay or allied profession members (and see below for discussion on separating the presidency from the chair of Council).

Models preserving a majority of veterinary surgeons

- 28) **Option 1 - Veterinary surgeon majority** – This model removes the VSC members from Council to allow greater flexibility for adding additional allied professionals (note that if this was accompanied by a switch to an appointment system then members with educational expertise could be selected via the recruitment process). It has the disadvantage of not approaching the best regulatory practice of lay parity. *This is arguably the minimum reform required to meet the College's aspiration to regulate the wider vet-led team.*

Models preserving a majority of veterinary professionals

- 29) These models preserve a majority of veterinary professionals (veterinary surgeons and allied professionals), while preserving a sub-majority of veterinary surgeons.
- 30) **Option 2 - Veterinary professional majority with VSC** – This model has the advantage of retaining a large proportion of veterinary surgeons on day one, while creating maximum flexibility for additional allied professionals. However, it does not bring Council closer to lay parity.
- 31) **Option 3 - Veterinary professional majority without VSC and increased lay** - This model has the advantage of retaining a large proportion of veterinary surgeons on day one (in fact a majority), while creating maximum flexibility for additional allied professionals. It also increases the proportion of lay-members by redistributing the VSC appointees – however it does not achieve or approach lay parity.
- 32) **Option 4 - Veterinary professional majority without VSC and near-parity lay** - This model removes the VSC appointees and further rebalances the lay and professional members. It has the advantage of retaining a significant proportion of veterinary surgeons on day one, while creating significant flexibility for additional allied professionals. It also increases the proportion of lay-members thereby coming close to achieving lay parity. *This model is arguably second-closest to best regulatory practice.*

Lay parity models

- 33) These models assume the adoption of a parity of veterinary professionals (veterinary surgeons and allied professionals, including VSC appointees), with veterinary surgeons retaining a sub-majority of veterinary professionals.
- 34) **Option 5 - Lay parity with VSC** – This model has the advantages of lay parity and substantial flexibility for the future addition of additional allied professionals. However, it could eventually result in a number of veterinary surgeons on Council that could be considered to be too small – through these would be supplemented by VSC appointments.
- 35) **Option 6 - Lay parity without VSC** – This model removes the three VSC appointee places. It has the advantages of lay parity and substantial flexibility for the future addition of additional allied

professionals, while allowing for a larger number of veterinary surgeons. *This model is arguably closest to best regulatory practice.*

Table 1 - Potential governance composition models						
Option	Model name	Professional members			Lay members	Total
		Veterinary surgeons	Allied professionals	VSC appointees	Lay members	
	Status quo	13 (majority of 1)	2 VN APs	3	6	24
Option 1	Veterinary surgeon majority	16 - 13	2 - 5		6	24
Option 2	Veterinary professional majority with VSC	13 - 8	2 - 7	3	6	24
Option 3	Veterinary professional majority without VSC and increased lay	13 - 8	2 - 7		9	24
Option 4	Veterinary professional majority without VSC and near-parity lay	11 - 7	2 - 6		11	24
Option 5	Lay parity with VSC	7 - 5	2 - 4	3	12	24
Option 6	Lay parity without VSC	10 - 7	2 - 5		12	24

Summary

36) Council is asked to decide which reform model would be most fitting, should one be chosen to replace the status quo. Option 6 is arguably is closest to regulatory best practice. Option 4 may be a good compromise approach, as it retains a professional majority while adding flexibility for new allied professional members and coming close to lay parity. Option 1 is close to the status quo, and arguably the minimum reform required to meet the College's aspiration to regulate the wider vet-led team, but diverges significant from best practice. The other options have a mix of advantages and disadvantages, but could be illustrative of transitional stages in governance reform.

Separating the chair and presidency

37) Another reform that Council could consider, independently of other reform proposals, is separating the role of RCVS President from that of chair of RCVS Council. The RCVS President, a Council member, would retain their ceremonial functions, such as presiding at graduations, attending functions and being the 'face' of the College, while a separate chair – who could be a registrant or lay member – could be appointed for a longer period (say three years) and would be responsible for chairing sessions of Council and overseeing governance. This would potentially widen the pool of likely candidates for both roles, and offer some continuity in terms of governance over a longer period of time.

Decisions

38) Council members are asked to decide on the following questions, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting.

- a) Whether the composition of RCVS Council should be underpinned in primary legislation, or whether it should be a matter for more flexible secondary legislation.
- b) Whether elections to RCVS Council should be replaced with an independent appointment system.
- c) Whether Council should adopt a parity of registrants and lay members.
- d) Whether Council should reform its composition to remove the Vet Schools Council appointees.
- e) Which reform model for the composition of Council should be consulted on as a potential replacement to the status quo in any future legislation to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966
- f) Whether to separate the presidency and chair of RCVS Council.

Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	18 January 2024
Title	Eligibility of veterinary graduates from European Association for Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) approved / accredited Schools for RCVS registration
Summary	<p>In June 2019, RCVS Council agreed the recommendation from Education Committee to implement a temporary policy to recognise vet graduates from EAEVE approved / accredited schools as eligible for RCVS registration, when the transition period post-Brexit came to an end and the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) no longer applied.</p> <p>The rationale for this temporary decision was to mitigate the expected reduction in registrants coming from the European Union as a result of the UK's departure from the EU, and the negative impact this would have on the veterinary workforce in the UK.</p> <p>This was a temporary policy decision that was to be kept under annual review.</p> <p>This paper outlines the current situation and invites Council to consider whether the temporary decision to recognise graduates from EAEVE approved / accredited schools should remain in place for another year.</p>
Decisions required	To consider whether the temporary policy to recognise graduates from EAEVE approved / accredited schools as eligible for RCVS registration should remain in place for another year, until the next annual review.
Attachments	Appendix 1: EU registration numbers 2017 – Dec 2023.
Author	L Prescott-Clements Director of Education L.Prescott-Clements@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
¹Classifications 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.	

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

Eligibility of veterinary graduates from European Association for Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE) approved / accredited schools for RCVS registration

Background

1. In June 2019, RCVS Council agreed the recommendation from Education Committee to implement a temporary policy to recognise veterinary graduates from EAEVE approved / accredited schools as eligible for RCVS registration, when the transition period following the departure of the UK from the European Union (EU) came to an end and the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) directive no longer applied.
2. The rationale for this temporary decision was to mitigate the expected reduction in registrants coming from the EU, and the negative impact this would have on the veterinary workforce in the UK. Prior to the UK leaving the EU, approximately half of new RCVS registrants each year were from the EU, and there were concerns that a reduction in EU registrants due to ineligibility as a result of MRPQ no longer being in effect, could have an immediate and significant negative impact on the veterinary workforce in the UK, which was already under pressure.
3. Although EAEVE is a member of the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG) and members have worked to harmonise accreditation standards, the updated Standard Operating Procedures and accreditation standards used by EAEVE in 2021 (updated again in 2023) were noted and it was recognised that there were some differences between EAEVE processes and accreditation standards and our own.
4. Furthermore, the RCVS recently completed a comprehensive review of the standards and methodology for accrediting veterinary programmes, with new standards being implemented in 2023. This also involves a new approach that prioritises 'outcomes' related evidence (such as employer feedback on graduate's capabilities, or the action plans in place to improve curricula following stakeholder feedback), over the more traditional approach of considering only 'inputs' (such as having a particular policy in place). In addition, the RCVS has a number of new standards that EAEVE does not have, such as the need for the majority of clinical education to be delivered in a general practice context.
5. Consequently, RCVS and EAEVE accreditation standards are becoming increasingly divergent in how they are implemented, although both organisations remain members of the IAWG. However, there remains confidence that veterinary graduates have the requisite skills and knowledge, and the recognition of EAEVE-accredited schools provides more assurance of educational standards than the previous MRPQ legislation (which meant that veterinary graduates from any school within the EU were eligible for RCVS registration).
6. It was agreed that this policy decision should be a temporary measure, to be kept under annual review by Council, until a more permanent solution could be identified.
7. The Covid-19 pandemic led to additional challenges around the veterinary workforce, and delays to progress exploring a more permanent solution. Consequently, when reviewing the decision in 2022 RCVS Council agreed that the temporary decision to accept graduates from EAEVE approved / accredited schools should remain for the following year. Although registration numbers

had started to recover when the decision was reviewed in January 2023, Council agreed that the temporary arrangements should remain in place while numbers in the workforce remained a problem, and this should be reconsidered again in January 2024.

Registration data

8. The transition period for the UK withdrawal from the EU ended on 31 December 2020, at which point the temporary decision approved by Council came into effect. In addition to this however, the Covid-19 pandemic was also having an impact on applications for registrations from overseas graduates.
9. Although EU registrations were reduced at the beginning of 2020 compared to previous years (which may have been due in part to Covid-19 lockdowns), the number of EU registrants appeared to recover somewhat in the later half of 2020. The lowest number of EU registrants was seen in 2021 (only 365 registered), which increased to 480 registrants in 2022. RCVS registered 527 individuals in 2023. (Appendix 1)
10. In addition to increasing registration numbers from the EU, the number of overseas vets applying to take the Statutory Membership Exam continues to increase rapidly, with a record intake seen each year. For reference, the candidate numbers over the last seven years are shown below. The pass rate remains fairly constant, at approximately 20-30%.

2019	12 candidates
2020	26 candidates
2021	65 candidates
2022	90 candidates
2023	124 candidates
2024	~200 candidates (estimated – closing date for applications is 14 January).

Alternative measures under consideration

11. As previously agreed by Council, a number of approaches to a more permanent solution for the RCVS continue to be explored. The negotiation of individual Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with individual EU countries lacks feasibility due to the wide-ranging legislative frameworks and jurisdictions. Furthermore, the need for reciprocity would most likely mean that accreditation panels in the UK would become too large and unwieldy.
12. An alternative approach of offering individual EU vet schools direct accreditation is currently being explored. While the temporary decision to accept graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools remains in place, there is less motivation for EU schools to request direct RCVS accreditation due to the costs involved (accreditation fee of £17,000 + expenses). Therefore, a proposal has been made to Defra to secure funding to kick-start this process for a targeted number of EU schools, by waiving the accreditation fee. Schools have been targeted on the basis that their graduates are most likely to want to register and work in the UK, through consideration of previous registration data, being taught in English and current EAEVE accreditation status.
13. The proposal was submitted in February 2023, and currently still rests with Defra for decision.

Decision

14. Council is asked to consider whether the temporary decision to recognise veterinary graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools should remain for another year, until the next annual review.

Appendix 1: EU veterinary surgeon registration data

Registration year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Month								
January	65	75	97	79	69	33	40	418
February	67	86	117	68	20	27	33	385
March	60	62	127	46	35	12	14	342
April	69	72	124	41	17	72	67	395
May	70	78	69	33	15	43	44	308
June	96	120	69	32	22	26	32	365
July	88	115	78	60	42	57	53	440
August	90	122	77	55	31	62	55	437
September	99	127	102	59	18	43	64	448
October	111	132	118	100	43	47	76	551
November	78	123	85	72	32	29	38	419
December	66	84	71	95	21	29	11	366
Total	959	1,196	1,134	740	365	480	527	4,874

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	18 January 2024
Title	Proposal for monitoring 'vital signs' of the organisation
Summary	This paper includes a suggested approach for the review of impact and performance indicators that affect the health of the organisation ('vital signs')
Decisions required	Is Council content with the proposed 'vital signs' and related policy?
Attachments	None
Author	Lizzie Lockett CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification	Rationales
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

Proposal for monitoring 'vital signs' of the organisation

Background

1. While individual committees consider key impact and performance indicators that relate to the area of work that has been delegated to them by RCVS Council (for example, time to close complaints, CPD compliance, numbers of new registrations), and Council considers specific governance areas such as risk, financial performance and progress against the strategic plan, Council does not regularly consider a unified dashboard of indicators that relate to our impact and performance.
2. Unlike charities, we are not required to produce an impact assessment on a routine basis. And unlike a private company, our financial performance alone would not tell a useful picture of our 'success'. Meanwhile, given the type of organisation we are, 'success' may be multifactorial and/or mean something did *not* happen, which is difficult to measure. Published accounts of 'what makes a good regulator' are available but tend to be values-driven and thus hard to translate into measurable outcomes – these will be taken account of when planning our new strategy, however.
3. Reviewing performance remains important to us. We already do the following:
 - a. Use KPIs at operational level to assess the performance of individuals and teams – particularly important given people work more flexibly these days (our KPI framework currently runs to around 150 different measures across the organisation)
 - b. The Professional Conduct Department reviews its activities against the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) 'Standards of Good Regulation' framework (standards of which human healthcare regulators need to demonstrate they meet)
 - c. Meet the standards of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
 - d. Are subject to Annual financial audit
 - e. Meet the standards of CyberSecurity Plus
 - f. Review our governance against the Charity Commission framework
 - g. Produce our monthly management accounts, and Annual Report and Accounts
 - h. Produce *RCVS Facts*, which includes data about the professions and our activities
4. However, there remain some 'vital signs' of the health of the organisation (NB not the profession – that's a different exercise) more generally that it would be helpful to share with Council more frequently, rather than just at Senior Team or committee level, as happens now. It is proposed that a dashboard is developed to achieve this, which is shared with Council twice-yearly (June and January). This will be a mix of performance and impact data, although the latter is less likely to change frequently.
5. The purpose would be:
 - a. To ensure any early warning signs are spotted and acted upon (in this way it would serve as part of the assurance mapping process that sits alongside our risk register)
 - b. To provide stimulus for continual quality improvement
 - c. To ensure we can be confident we are discharging our duties to the best of our abilities
 - d. To provide positive data for the professions, who tend to view our work through a negative lens because they are (largely) not subject to regulation by any other body

Proposed 'Vital signs'

6. The following are suggested as the indicators that will be escalated to Council (a larger table, with source of data, data owner, person responsible etc exists at operational level). They are split into performance indicators and impact indicators, although there is inevitably some overlap.

Performance indicators	Measure	Target/tolerance
Availability of digital services to members	Percentage uptime for digital systems	95%
Maintain CyberSecurity Plus standards	External standards	Pass
Meet PSA standards for complaints handling	External review every two years, internal audit more frequently	< 5 points for change
Maintain ENQA standards	External standards	Pass
Delivery of strategic plan	RAG-rated progress per item	90% of actions are on course
Premises accredited under Practice Standards	Maintain or increase number under ambit of scheme	+/- 5% of 70%
Value and age of debtors	Monthly after due date for fees	95%
Meet budget	Management accounts	+/- 5%
Annual audit	Process fit for purpose	< 5 points for change
Reserves against policy	Management accounts	+/- 5%
Investment performance	Investment advisors	+/- 10%
Voluntary staff turnover	Cascade (HR system) data	< 12%
Impact indicators	Measure	Target/tolerance
Increasing numbers of vets and nurses within the profession (recruitment, retention, return)	Membership figures	Net gain increase
Staff satisfaction levels	Staff engagement survey	+/- 5% external benchmark
Effectiveness of new guidance	Reduction in complaints on topics where there has been new guidance (and/or Academy course)	Reduce number of complaints
Undergraduate veterinary degree accreditation system producing vets equipped for work	Feedback from within VetGDP system (no nurse equivalent – survey?)	TBC
Vets and VNs keeping their skills and knowledge up to date	CPD compliance data	90% + compliance
Disciplinary cases managed appropriately	Judicial reviews	As close to zero as possible
Stakeholders' positive feedback	Will depend on research at the time	TBC
Professions' positive feedback	Will depend on research at the time	TBC
Data on EDI within the professions	As part of evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	Various
Confidence / trust of the public in the professions	Surveys every three to five years	90% of public trust profession

Proposed policy and approach

7. As outlined above, indicators are already being monitored at a range of different levels within the organisation. In order to help embed KPIs within our management and governance frameworks, the following is suggested:
 - a. Senior Team to review the detailed KPI framework annually to ensure consistency across departments where appropriate (or clarity on rationale where not)
 - b. Person responsible for achieving KPI and/or Director to flag to CEO if consistently not achieved, and appropriate action agreed
 - c. Those relating to an individual's performance to be discussed in My Progress (annual appraisal) meetings, or sooner
 - d. Important departmental KPIs to be reported to relevant committees/working parties at a frequency consistent with data-gathering
 - e. Corporate impact and performance indicators ('vital signs') to be reported to Council twice per year, and flagged more frequently if there are emerging issues. This will be reported in public session where possible, according to the usual classification scheme.

8. Impact assessment for our more 'Royal College' activities – such as Mind Matters – will be carried out separately.

9. Council is invited to discuss and agree:
 - a. Does the list itemised at par 6 include all of the 'vital signs' that it would like to see?
 - b. Does the policy outlined at par 7 satisfy the need?

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	18 January 2024
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) since RCVS Council's last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the RCVS.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Chris Murdoch Senior Case Manager c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications 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.

²Classification rationales

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

Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council January 2024

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since the last report (5 January 2024 being the date of writing the report).
2. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 27 October 2023), there have been four Stage two Preliminary Investigation Committee (S2PIC) meetings (8 November, 22 November, 13 December and 3 January).

New cases considered by the PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the S2PIC at the four meetings referred to above is 11. Of the 11 new cases considered:
 - 6 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these:
 - 5 cases were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon.
 - 1 case was referred to the Disciplinary Committee.
 - 5 cases were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports.
4. No cases have been referred to the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The Stage two PI Committee is currently investigating 32 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports (for example).

Health Protocol

6. There are no veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol

7. There are no veterinary surgeons currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department - Enquiries and concerns

8. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
9. In the period 28 October 2023 to 5 January 2024:

- the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 580, and
- the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 123.

10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 28 October 2023 and 5 January 2024:

Concerns registered between 28 October 2023 and 5 January 2024

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	0
- Appeal against DC decision	0
- Certification	1
- Client confidentiality	2
- Clinical and client records	2
- Clinical governance	0
- Communication and consent	0
- Communication between professional colleagues	1
- Conviction	4
- CPD compliance	0
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	1
- Euthanasia of animals	1
- Fair trading requirements	0
- Giving evidence for court	0
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Illegal practice	0
- Microchipping	0
- Miscellaneous	4
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	0
- Performance case (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Recognised veterinary practice	0
- Referrals and second opinions	0
- Registration investigation	0
- Restoration application	0
- Social media and networking forums	5
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	0
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	1
- Veterinary care	93
- Veterinary medicines	4
- Veterinary teams and leaders	0

- Whistle-blowing	0
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	4
- Unassigned	0
Total	123

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 28 October 2023 to 5 January 2024, the Committee has referred 8 cases involving 3 veterinary surgeons to the Disciplinary Committee.

Veterinary Investigators

12. The Chief Investigator and Veterinary Investigators have undertaken two visits in the reporting period. The first was assisting the Police, SSPCA, DIS and VMD in executing search warrants in relation to Fraud, Forgery, VSA, VMRs and AWA offences. The second was an unannounced visit to a veterinary surgeon to hand-deliver correspondence relating to a concern.

Concerns procedure

13. As Council is aware, the process for the consideration of concerns at Stage one changed at the beginning of October 2022. The median number of weeks in which cases concluded at Stage one can be seen below:

Month in which case concluded	Median number of weeks taken
February 2023	13
March 2023	13.3
April 2023	14.9
May 2023	14.3
June 2023	14.4
July 2023	15
August 2023	15.9
September 2023	13.4
October 2023	12.6
November 2023	18.3
December 2023	11.5

14. PIC/DC Liaison Committee considered detailed information on the time taken by cases at Stage one at its meeting in November and discussed a new KPI timeframe in light of the data provided and the steps involved in the process. The Liaison Committee concluded that six months was an appropriate timeframe. It also concluded that it would still be helpful to provide median times taken, as this is a good indicator of the most likely duration of matters for those involved in the process. We will report on the number of cases that meet the new KPI in future reports.

15. The Stage 2 KPI is now for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within seven months, and on complex cases within 12 months. A case is deemed to be complex where the PIC requests that witness statements and/or expert evidence be obtained.

16. In the period 28 October 2023 to 5 January 2024, the PIC reached a decision (to close, refer to the Charter Case Committee, or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI in 5 out of 6 simple cases.

17. 11 complex cases were decided, of which 1 met the 12-month KPI. In accordance with normal practice, these cases (and the work of the department in general) are reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

Illegal practice

18. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 27 October 2023), 12 new reports of suspected illegal practice have been received. Of these, 8 have been closed after issuing advice or cease and desist letters (inappropriate use of MRCVS on advertising website) or referring matters to other relevant agencies; 2 have been closed due to lack of information or evidence; and 2 are subject to ongoing enquiries. (There is a total of 10 ongoing enquiries).

Operational matters

19. A training day for PIC members is due to take place in the early part of 2024 with the date to be confirmed shortly.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	18 January 2024
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Sandra Neary Secretary to the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee s.neary@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0730</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0740</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications 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.

²Classification rationales

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

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council

Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Council, there have been two meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee, which took place on 31 October and 12 December 2023.

RVN Concerns received / registered

2. In the period 28 October to 5 January, there were 10 new Concerns relating to RVNs. Of these 10 new Concerns:
 - 2 cases closed at Stage 1 PIC
 - 7 cases are currently under investigation by a Case Manager, Veterinary Nurse, Veterinary surgeon, and a lay member (Stage 1 Preliminary Investigation Committee)
 - 1 case has been referred to Stage 2 PIC

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. Three new cases have been considered by the RVN PIC between 28 October and 5 January. Two cases were referred to external solicitors for formal statements to be taken. One case was referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee. During the reporting period, the RVN PIC has decided on one ongoing case which was referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Ongoing Investigations

4. Five concerns are currently under investigation and will be returned to the RVN PIC for a decision in due course.

Health Concerns

5. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Concerns

6. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

7. Since the last report, two cases have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee for a formal hearing. The first hearing has been listed to take place between 12 and 16 February 2024 (excluding 21 February) and the second case will be listed in due course.

Disciplinary Hearings

8. A disciplinary hearing took place on 6 and 7 November 2023. The Disciplinary Committee directed that the RVN's name should be removed from the Register.

Operational matters

9. A training day for PIC members is due to take place in the early part of 2024 with the date to be confirmed shortly.