Council Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 5 June 2015 at 10:30 am at The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Members:
Professor S W J Reid (President in the Chair)
Mrs E Acaster
Professor D J Argyle
Mr C T Barker
Mr D J Bartram
Professor M Bennett
Ms A K Boag
Dr K Braithwaite
Professor N Burrows
Professor E Cameron
Mr D F Catlow
Dr N T Connell
Professor S M Crispin
Dr J V Davies
Mr R Davis
Professor S Dawson
Mr M F Elliott*
Professor G C W England
Mr N P Gibbens
Dr C J Gray
Ms M O Greene
Professor M E Herrtage*
Mrs L V Hill
Mrs A K Jeffery
Mrs R J Jennings
Mr P C Jinman
Dr J B Johnson
Mr T J King
Professor S A May
Dr R P Moore
Mrs S Paterson
Professor J S Price
Col N C Smith
Dr R S Stephenson
Dr C P Sturgess
Lord Trees
Dr C W Tufnell
Dr B P Viner
Ms J Webb
Dr T H Witte
Professor J L N Wood

*Absent

In attendance:
Mr J Blackwell  President, British Veterinary Association
Ms E Butler  Chair, Audit & Risk Committee
Mr G A Hockey  Director of Legal Services & Registrar
Mrs K E Kissick  Chair, Veterinary Nurses Council
Mr N C Stace  Chief Executive & Secretary
Mrs S Voas  Chief Veterinary Officer, Scotland
President’s introduction

1. The President welcomed members to the first RCVS Council meeting to be held outside of London and outlined the day. He extended a warm welcome to:

- Mr J Blackwell  President, British Veterinary Association
- Ms E Butler  Chair, Audit & Risk Committee
- Mrs K E Kissick  Chair, Veterinary Nurses Council
- Mrs S Voas  Chief Veterinary Officer, Scotland
- Mr D C Hutchison  Incoming RCVS Council
- Dr K A Richards  Incoming RCVS Council
- All other members who have travelled to the meeting

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence had been received from:

- Mr M F Elliott
- Professor M E Herrtage

Declarations of interest

3. There were no declarations of interest. The President reminded Council to check their page on the RCVS website and to forward any amendments to Peris Dean in the Executive Office.

Minutes of the meetings held on 6 November 2014

4. Council accepted these minutes as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

Obituaries

5. The President informed Council of the following obituaries:

- **Dr Ray Butcher** – one of the University visitors to Edinburgh in 2005 and Nottingham in 2009. He won various honorary awards for his outstanding contributions to animal welfare and was very active in the WSAVA, FECAVA, BSAVA and others;

- **Professor George Gettinby** – obituary was in the Veterinary Record dated 23 May 2015;

- **Professor ‘Mac’ Johnston** – HonFRCVS, besides being an RCVS examiner did a great deal for the College with regards to public health advice;
• **Professor Frank Jordan** – Established the RCVS Diploma in Poultry Medicine and Production and trained vets from all over the world in avian medicine;

• **Mr Charles Kennedy** – politician and former University of Glasgow Rector.

6. Council stood and observed a minute’s silence for all members who had passed away since the last Council meeting.

**Council correspondence and matters for report**

7. The President outlined the following:

**RCVS Day 2015**

8. The President reminded Council of arrangements:

   - **Date:** Confirmed as 10 July 2015 at 10:00 am
   - **Venue:** One Great George Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3AA
   - **Guest Speaker:** Professor Will Hueston DVM PhD, University of Minnesota on: ‘Science, Politics and Beliefs: Can Veterinarians Change the World?’

9. Council was reminded to let Emma Lockley in the Communications Department know if they were attending RCVS Day if they had not already done so.

**Col N C Smith**

10. It was reported that, on 17 June 2015, Col Smith will be travelling to Sierra Leone as Commander Medical for the Joint Inter Agency Task Force, to work with the fight against Ebola. Council wished Col Smith good luck and every success in this important humanitarian mission.

**CEO update**

11. Introducing the report, the CEO highlighted that it was the first Council meeting to be held outside London since 1844 and, by doing so, it had allowed Officers and members of the Council to meet with veterinary surgeons and nurses on a large scale. There had been 20+ people in the stakeholders meeting and 50+ people in the veterinary futures group, allowing discussion of what challenges there are in Scotland. At the Council Supper, Council heard from the Scottish CVO, Sheila Voas, about other issues faced across the Borders. It was noted that there were common themes not only in Scotland but across other regional meetings held in the UK and there would be a report of these later in the year.

12. It was noted that progress had been made on all 12 priorities and that every item should be complete by the end of 2016. The Operational Plan for 2016 will go to November 2015 Council meeting, along with the veterinary futures, and governance, reports, and the College was currently on course for the next 3 – 5 years and beyond. In particular:

   - Secure a new charter: this is in place and work is on-going to protect the title of ‘Veterinary Nurse’ through a Private Member's Bill in the House of Lords, with grateful thanks to Lord Trees. It had been viewed 250,000 times on the RCVS Facebook page, and the video on the website had been viewed 82,000 times, which was amazing support for this work;
- Learn from ADR: it was heartening to read in the veterinary press about a letter from a member who had staff go through the new concerns process and ADR and the difference it had made. A copy would be sent to all Council members for information;

- Staff engagement: at the recent Great Place to Work (GPtrW) award ceremony, the RCVS was placed at number 30 in the top 100 places to work in the UK in the medium category (50 to 499 members of staff); this was a great achievement and the changes had made a massive difference at the RCVS. The challenge now was to keep the engagement levels high;

- IT transformation: IT had been given a ‘clean bill of health’ in the internal audit process; project management of the work on Imis will be complete this year; and the Professional Conduct system would be discussed in the afternoon session of Council.

13. The CEO asked for comments or questions on the report.

14. Council congratulated the CEO on the GPtrW outcome and publically acknowledged the work undertaken with a round of applause.

15. Relating to the international strategy, it was noted that the RCVS was beginning to take the matter seriously and members will look forward to a report coming forward.

**Matters for decision by Council**

**RCVS Governance**

16. The President introduced the paper. He stated that Annex A (c/ref Al 17) was to be held in committee in the afternoon session as the document was not public as the Minister had yet to see it, and Annex B was all of the background documentation to date. Governance reform was imperative for 3 reasons:

- the RCVS has a new Charter – it was now important to include veterinary nurses in the Council structure for the future;

- there was a need to increase formal interaction with the lay public, as well as the operational issues of the veterinary schools, and the ‘ratchet’ effect it may have on Council’s composition;

- recognise that whatever is done, it would not be a perfect solution indefinitely, but was essential to put into place the flexibility for future generations to be able to change the structure of governance; and that it was ideal time to act with Ministerial approval for an LRO process, rather than have the need to change the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

17. Two decisions were required from Council:

- to invite Council to approve the process to date and delegate the fine-tuning of the consultation paper at Annex A to the Panel, whilst recognising that there were significant concerns with the consultation paper as it currently exists – there would be an opportunity to
modify the document in the closed afternoon session and make a recommendation to Defra thereafter;

- to invite Council to confirm and formerly approve the recommendation to Defra that a public consultation is conducted.

18. The President invited the CVO to comment on the detail of the approach as it would be his department that would need to be heavily involved in taking work forward.

19. The CVO indicated that the Minister of State had given support prior to the election and this would need to be re-confirmed before any consultation could commence. By using an LRO process, there was a need to make sure that it was un-contentious and able to pass through all of the steps smoothly; but which met the needs of the RCVS and also the requirements of the government consulting on new law. Council should consider the principles to ensure members of the veterinary profession had the best possible chance of an effective input into what then goes forward as a regulatory LRO.

20. The paper was opened to the floor for comments, which included:

- legislation should be sufficiently flexible to cope with the challenges the College may face in 10/20/30 years time;

- at the moment there was no mention of the RCVS role to improve the quality of veterinary practice by monitoring, accrediting, education at under – and post – graduate level, setting standards of behaviour, setting practice standards, creating lists of specialists or veterinary nurses, fellowships and the advancement of scholarship, the facilitation of study and research, etc. There was the disciplinary process at the end, but no ‘front end’ activities of a Royal College;

- it was questioned whether smaller groups reach decisions more quickly, and whether there was any evidence that the decisions reached were better decisions or just quicker decisions? If Council was driving for better governance it should not be afraid of saying that a slower decision may be made if it is a better decision;

21. A vote was taken to approve the progress made to date and to delegate the fine-tuning of the consultation paper to the Panel, subject to the comments made in the closed afternoon session. This was approved with 2 abstentions.

22. A further vote was taken to approve the recommendation to Defra that a public consultation is conducted. This was approved with 2 abstentions.

**Funding proposal for RCVS Knowledge EBVM Portal**

23. The paper was introduced by the Chair of the RCVS Knowledge Board of Trustees, Dr Molyneux. She highlighted that the proposal was not a business plan, but rather to explore and develop content for a Portal over the next 2 years that worked for the practitioner, and that time and resources were required to be able to produce one. It was stated that Page 11 of the document
showed the projected resources required but that the Portal could become self-funding and profit making over time. She opened the paper for comment:

- it was commented that there was a strong welcome for the proposal as it fitted neatly with the role of the College and got to the heart of what it wanted to do. There was a need for delivery of an e-based approach and this was an ideal way of doing so, but it was queried that there was no long-term finance beyond the 2 years proposed and that it should continue for life if there was a need;

  o Dr Molyneux responded that this had been discussed at the recent Trustee meeting and self-funding or profit making avenues considered. However, the current concept of the Portal would need to be explored fully, and the foundation in place, before the longer-term financial implications were considered.

- it was further commented that 2 years would soon pass and that the Portal – or a version of it – would need to be delivered in that time;

- it was queried and confirmed that the honorary posts would be unpaid, and that it was a big commitment to put into an unpaid role.

24. A vote was taken for support of the proposal for a Portal and the 2-year budget of £328,160 requested within the paper. This was approved with 7 abstentions (it was agreed that Trustees would abstain from voting as that would be appropriate).

25. Council took the opportunity to congratulate RCVS Knowledge on the recent funding from the Alborada Trust for the 5-year project to catalogue and digitalise priority pieces from the historical collections and to make them free online.

Fellowship

26. Dr Tufnell, Chair of Education Committee, introduced the proposals for a new-style RCVS Fellowship. The recommendations of the Fellowship working party, chaired by Professor England, had been supported by Education Committee at its meeting in October 2014. The proposals entailed the closing, to new applicants, of the current route to Fellowship by thesis, which was judged to be unsustainable on quality assurance grounds. Those who wish to achieve a high-level qualification would be directed to a range of doctoral programmes that are available through universities. The proposals also included the discontinuation of the Honorary Fellowship route.

27. There would be three new routes to Fellowship: Meritorious Contribution to the Veterinary Profession; Meritorious Contribution to Knowledge; and Meritorious Contribution to Clinical Practice. The overall aim was to open up the Fellowship to a greater part of the profession, including those in clinical practice.

28. Finally, the paper put forward a mechanism to introduce the new Fellowship, including the setting up of an interim Fellowship Board and credentials panel and suggests a review and report to Council in 2018.
29. In response to questions, Professor England confirmed that applications would be candidate-led, as it was felt to be important that they are involved in the process, but that most of the information on which a decision would be based would come from referees. Also, when asked whether 5% of the profession would be able to meet the criteria for Fellowship, Professor England confirmed that this was not intended to be seen as a target figure.

30. It was also confirmed that new Fellows would be approved under the new arrangements over the next 3 years and would have an input into the way the Fellowship developed over time and that the alternative doctoral routes would be publicised widely to the profession.

31. A vote was taken and Council agreed the proposals for the new RCVS Fellowship. There were 2 abstentions.

Practice Standards Scheme

32. The paper was introduced by the Chair of the Practice Standards Group (PSG), Dr Molyneux. She highlighted that it was the culmination of the work undertaken over the last 2 years that needed final approval from Council as the paper had already been agreed at Standards Committee and PSG. An advert for new Assessors had been placed in the veterinary press, and 18 Assessors were needed, although c.27 people were due to attend the Open Day on Friday, 12 June, which was an encouraging sign. The paper was put forward for discussion and comment:

- the equine general practitioner ambulatory service was welcomed;

- Dr Molyneux and her team were thanked for the work that had gone into this Scheme and were commended for getting to this point;

- concern was expressed that there was a gap in communication and understanding of the scheme for the user/clients of veterinary practices;

- whilst it was agreed that at the new proposed fee level the scheme represented amazing value for money, the level of the fee increase was questioned: a 43% increase for the principle practice and a 60% increase for a branch practice – was this wise to be in one increment as it could become a contentious, off-putting, issue for prospective scheme members? It was suggested that it could be done gradually over 3 years instead;

  o some members declared a financial interest in this because they had both principle and branch practices in the Scheme that would be affected by the price increase;

  o the CEO reminded Council that they had agreed 18 months previously that the Scheme could be set up under the general RCVS budget, but then those set up fees should be taken out and repaid from the Scheme, so that at the end of the 3 years, costs and running of the Scheme were to be funded by the Scheme itself;

- the marketing budget was queried, in that the figures of £30K/£25K/£20K were not large amounts and the message would not reach the profession on that budget and there was the
danger that the work to date could be lost – the ‘Red Tractor’ campaigns were suggested as an example of marketing;

- it was suggested that the marketing costs be removed from the Scheme and come back under the main RCVS budget, although it was noted that if this was to happen care would need to be taken so as not to cause strain within the profession;

- it was further suggested that the set up costs be subsumed into the RCVS budget becoming an RCVS cost, not a PSS cost, before returning to Council at its next meeting with further PR costs because of the difference this would make, along with a budget for on-going costs.

33. The President summed up the discussion and split the decisions required by Council to the following votes:

- approve the framework of the Scheme with any minor amendments to the modules delegated to the PSG. A vote was taken and this was approved;

- set up costs to be removed from the PSS budget to be underwritten by the RCVS, a subsequent paper to return to Council for PR and processing on-going costs subject to PR and marketing analysis, and that on-going costs will be met by the Scheme. This was approved, with 1 against, the vote was carried.

**Amendment to Code of Professional Conduct**

34. The Registrar introduced the paper, stating that the aim of the proposed Code changes were to protect the titles of veterinary nurse, advance practitioner and specialist. He said that legal advice had been sought to confirm that the RCVS was able to do what was proposed (confidential Annex A to the paper). If you want to call yourself a specialist whilst practising in the UK you must be on the RCVS specialist list.

35. Members were pleased with this historic paper, welcoming the RCVS taking the lead of 2 advanced tiers of education and recognition of members who had achieved that within the Code and lists, as well as the veterinary nurse title, and asked that all the changes be publicised.

36. In response to a question, the Chair of Education Committee confirmed that there was currently no plan to assess the professional skills of specialists and that this had been discussed several times at Committee. It had been decided that peer review and reference was suitable at the moment but that Education Committee would continue to keep this under review.

37. It was commented that in homeopathy, game bird and conservancy work, as well as many other areas, that there was not yet any provision for a specialist structure so by not being able to profess yourself as a specialist it disadvantaged those members working in such areas. The Registrar stated that there were other words that people could use to indicate that they have expertise in an area.

38. He stated that making the profession aware of the change is very important and in relation to the Code change for the specialists, it would be unreasonable to enforce the provision before January
2016 to allow time for all specialists practising in the UK to apply and to be listed on the RCVS specialist list.

39. It was commented that January 2016 was not a long time and it was suggested that it could be done at the same time as the Annual Retention Fee and would allow for applications and processing times. After discussion and a suggestion from Professor May, it was agreed that the Code change relating to specialists would not be enforced until after 1 April 2016.

40. The Registrar added that after 1 July the PIC and DC will not include Council members and how they chose to enforce the Code was a matter for them.

41. A vote was taken on amending part 3.5 to the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons. This was agreed, with no abstentions.

Language testing
42. The Registrar introduced the paper, which he said was seeking agreement with the direction of travel for Defra to consultation language testing, this consultation to run alongside the consultation on governance. There were two aspects: those applying to the Register, and those on the Register now or in the future: for those applying to the Register, the paper ‘plugged a gap’; the RCVS approves veterinary schools that teach in English in the UK and Commonwealth, or asks those from overseas universities (non-EU) to undertake an English language examination. There was no language check for EU applicants.

43. The Registrar stated that for those on the Register now or in the future, it was more complicated; that there were weaker arguments for any statutory check on the English language abilities of veterinary surgeons. He stated that Defra has indicated that the provision cannot apply to EU vets alone, so if it were to be introduced it would need to be for all vets i.e. all 26,000 vets on the Register. In addition, the College could enforce communication, including communication in written and spoken English through the Code. It was suggested that Council should keep the first aspect – applying to EU qualified applicants, but to drop the second aspect – for those already on the Register. It was questioned if the need to be able to communicate should be brought from the supporting guidance into the main part of the Code to Professional Conduct, thereby becoming enforceable. The Registrar stated that this change could be considered at the November Council meeting.

44. It was confirmed that the UK was under the same Directive as Europe, which has been amended recently to bring in the language provisions, but that individual countries had different interpretations. Defra were clear in stating that language testing has to be introduced only if there are serious questions or concrete doubts about a person’s competence in the English language.

45. Under paragraph 17 of the paper, it was questioned why the RCVS should only expect an IELTS Level 6 (competent), when the General Medical Council required a Level 7? The Registrar indicated that he would pursue Level 7 with Defra.

46. It was further commented that a very clear message should go back to Defra that the profession’s remit was not only animal health and welfare but also public health and, therefore, the standard
should be the same as the medical profession for the language testing provisions. This was supported by Council.

47. Council endorsed the direction of travel, and the Registrar took on board the comments from Council.

Council delegations and meeting procedures

48. The Registrar introduced the paper, highlighting paragraph 7 relating to whether the Education Committee should decide whether to grant or withdraw recognition of recognised veterinary degrees. In paragraph 10, there were changes to the Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed by Veterinary Nurses Council which were largely to recognise the amendments made in the new Charter. He opened the paper for discussion and comment.

49. There were conflicting views on whether Education Committee or Council should have the final say on who approves/withholds/grants/withdraws recognition of the veterinary schools.

50. It was requested that Audit and Risk Committee should also be considered as there had been some disquiet relating to the balance of Council members to independent members and to look at increasing the Council members, or addressing the balance of the committee. It was suggested that this would be increasingly important now that Disciplinary and Preliminary Investigation Committees were to be independent from 1 July.

51. A vote was taken to accept all amendments to the paper apart from paragraph 7. This was agreed, with 2 abstentions.

52. Regarding paragraph 7, it was stated that more clarity was needed as it was hard to understand why new degrees were any different to existing degrees as the same considerations were applied equally, and what would happen if decisions were challenged. The Registrar responded that legally Council could delegate to committees, but the perception was that if Council had made a decision then it had been more thoroughly considered.

53. A vote was taken on whether Council should delegate authority to Education Committee on the approval/withholding/granting or withdrawal of recognised veterinary degrees. This was agreed.

LRO separation of PIC and DC

54. The Registrar introduced the paper asking that the arrangements proposed within the paper following separation of the committee be agreed. The committees would continue to provide a report to each Council meeting and the Chairs of the committees to be in attendance at the June meetings in order to present an annual report to Council; suggestions of what may be included in the reports were set out at paragraph 9 to the paper. The RCVS would also report back to the committees any decisions or discussions that would affect them.

55. A vote was taken and the arrangements were agreed.
Reports of Committees

Audit and Risk Committee
56. The Chair of the Committee, Ms Butler, introduced the ARC papers:

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2015
57. The accounts and audit report were highlighted and constructive suggestions welcomed. The external auditors, Deloitte, had provided a detailed substantive audit (attached to the annual accounts paper for consideration later in the meeting) and the College had received a ‘clean’ report from them. On this basis the Audit and Risk Committee recommended to Council the report of accounts.

58. She also reported on the continuous rolling programme relating to the Risk Register and the risks that the College faced. In this area, it was noted that the IT Consultant, Mr Peter Florey, consulting on the potential IT risks, had presented to the committee. One other particular area for consideration in due course was the on-going need of re-appointments to the committee: lay members to this committee had all been appointed together, so there will be a need to stagger appointments in the future, but this was a matter for Council.

Annual Report of the Committee
59. Briefly outlining the report, it was noted that work undertaken on the Risk Register was welcomed; it was a useful tool when looking at procedures/processes, etc., and needed to be appropriate and considered so that the committee had a guide of where to put their attention. An example of this was the concerns work that had been outsourced to Pennington Manches and, whilst the committee was satisfied that the firm was sufficiently independent to provide assurances on the investigations against veterinary surgeons and nurses, this work should be kept under review.

60. Ms Butler took the opportunity to thank support staff for their invaluable work, as well as the rest of committee in being assiduous in their duties. She invited comments or questions on both papers.

61. Relating to the College’s computer systems, it was queried whether the risk had been considered of company providers being taken over and thereafter not supporting the platform that we use. It was confirmed that the systems were being very well documented and could be transferred to another provider – the systems were fairly generic in order for this to be able to be done, but it would always be kept under review.

62. A new risk from the floor: if, or when, an EU referendum was to take place it could have serious implications within all areas of the work that the College does and should be looked at within committee [discussed briefly under Risk Register paper later in the meeting].

63. Ms Butler agreed this would be a good topic to consider and encouraged Council to take an active part when thinking about risks and if there were any other ones that could go to committee to let the Registrar know and they would be added to the Risk Register.

64. The papers were noted.
Education Committee

65. The report of the meeting held on 6 May 2015 was presented by the Chair, Dr Tufnell.

66. He thanked the Education Department staff for their ongoing hard work and updated Council on progress and developments since the meeting.

67. The 2015 application window for Advanced Practitioner status would open very shortly and successful applications received in June and July would be brought to Education Committee for ratification in October, enabling those who applied earlier to be listed sooner. It was hoped that, in 2016, the College could move to an open application system, such that applications could be submitted whenever the applicant was ready. He welcomed the decision by Council to agree the change to the Code of Conduct to protect the ‘specialist’ title and said that it was now incumbent upon the College to promote both Specialist and Advanced Practitioner statuses to the profession and to the general public. A toolkit for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists could be one way of facilitating this.

68. Dr Tufnell reported that a working group had been established in order to update the Year-One competences in line with the recently revised Day-One competences, which would meet for the first time in mid-June. The veterinary degree from the University of Bristol had received continued accreditation for a period of seven years, subject to satisfactory annual monitoring reports.

69. Education Committee also reviewed the 10-hour allowance for ad-hoc undocumented private study, in light of the outcomes of the CPD audit, and decided that this should be discontinued. The Committee emphasised that self-study, including reading can be a very useful part of a veterinary surgeon’s CPD, but that it should be documented. A mechanism had also been agreed for the referral of the small number of vets who are either serially non-compliant with CPD requirements or who do not respond to repeated requests to submit records.

70. Dr Molyneux and Dr Stephenson both welcomed the move towards fully-documented CPD records. Dr Molyneux suggested that it might be useful to consider a requirement for a proportion of verifiable CPD, but Dr Tufnell felt that it should remain a professional responsibility for veterinary surgeons to decide on the CPD that best met their own learning needs. Professor May said that a move towards an outcomes-based approach to CPD would shift the debate away from a discussion of the relative merits of different types of CPD inputs and suggested that the College should be leading the way by considering the introduction of this type of approach to CPD. Professor Price, who will chair Education Committee from July 2015, said that this was very much in line with current thinking and that there would be further discussion at Education Committee on this issue.

71. The report was noted.

Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee

72. The minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2015 was introduced by the Chair, Professor Reid.

73. In particular, he highlighted that there would be independent members on this committee following the separation process of the Disciplinary and Preliminary Investigation Committees.
under the LRO process after 1 July 2015, and the discussion that had taken place regarding the governance of the committee, reporting procedures to and from Council, and how the two committees should be promoted following this.

74. Commenting on PIC and DC, Professor Reid said that the promotion of these two committees would be reviewed to ensure they were perceived as independent in their decision-making.

75. The minutes were noted.

**Standards Committee**

76. The Standards Committee report was introduced by the Chair, Mr Catlow, who highlighted some of the major items discussed in the report:

- the committee had reviewed and updated the guidance for veterinary surgeons and nurses working in leadership roles; the key was to strengthen guidance on accountability and responsibility (those in management roles);

- guidance on client confidentiality had also been updated;

- there had been discussions on the changes of procurement of veterinary services – most notably TB testing and the recent awarding of contracts to delivery partners – where it was quite feasible, and likely, that different veterinary businesses could treat the same individual, or group, of animals: it was considered that the current supporting guidance was adequate and stood the test of time, but the committee would take any feedback that Council had on this and it would be timely to remind the profession of this important guidance, as it was applicable to all vets and OVs whether employed in private, corporate or government roles.

- there was further discussion on the clarification of guidance of 24/7 limited service providers: TB testing, vaccination clinics, and others, that will evolve. Again it was felt that existing guidance was adequate, and prescribing how long for each provider should be avoided as the matrix ‘principle’ applied to all providers – professional judgements still had to be made in the rapidly changing world.

77. Opening the paper to the floor, it was commented that (referring to paragraphs 19 – 21 of the paper re: VAAE [Vaccine-associated adverse effects]) guidance should be written in a way to be understandable; it should be specific and spell out what is required, and inform people when they are likely to get into trouble. The Registrar confirmed that there would be a fuller report in RCVS News and the Chair concurred that this was a good point but that there were concerns that the College would begin to get prescriptive in the guidance when professional judgements still needed to be made.

78. One other comment was that if the 12 principles were to be re-considered, FVE had reduced its 12 points to 10 that referred to hygienist and health veterinary bodies of Europe so could be helpful in this endeavour.

79. The report was noted.
NOTE: Following the Council meeting, it was noted that the report before Council was not the final version, and that Point 3 should read as follows:

The Committee considered the available evidence in relation to the typical timings for a VAAE and the four major periods when VAAEs are likely to happen, as identified in the evidence, and whether a minimum period of time for which cover must be provided should be added to the existing guidance. The Committee’s view was that, generally, there should be a minimum period of 24 hours (24 hour emergency cover) to cover the period in which moderate and serious events are likely to occur, with a caveat relating to species and vaccine. On balance, however, the Committee felt that the wording of the existing guidance was sufficient, but that it would be beneficial to signpost limited service providers to the key provisions of the general guidance on 24-hour cover (i.e. providing information on the service and travel distances). The Committee also suggested that it could be clarified in the guidance that ‘24-hour cover’ means continuous cover.

Veterinary Nurses Council

80. The report of Veterinary Nurses Council was introduced by the Chair, Mrs Kissick, who highlighted:

- Day 1 skills: the working party had met in April and this was almost ready to go to consultation;

- Fitness to practice: a new group has been formed and will be producing a guidance booklet tailored to veterinary nurses, similar to that which had be adopted recently by the veterinary schools;

- Anaesthesia: was still under consultation. There will be a meeting on 23 June 2015, when they will try to move forward as briskly as possible;

- BVNA Joint Officers: a meeting had been held on the afternoon of VN Council and it had been decided to continue annually as it worked very well;

- CPD focus group: will meet in October to discuss matters and make recommendations relating to the non-compliant veterinary nurses;

- New Chair of VNC: Elizabeth (Liz) Cox will take on the mantle of Chair of VNC at Royal College Day in July;

- Special thanks were given to Council, in particular, Lord Trees, for the work and continued support on the Private Member’s Bill (PMB) to protect the title of ‘veterinary nurse’.

81. Lord Trees was invited to update Council on the process of the PMB which was:

- Members of the House of Lords put their proposed Bill’s into a ballot;
- there were 44 Bills drawn on the night of State Opening, of which the RCVS bill came 36th, which is not the best position to be in;

- 1st reading is on 10 June, a formal and very brief process, the challenge thereafter is for parliamentary time for a 2nd reading, then committee report a 3rd reading at which point it would move to the House of Commons;

- the place in the ballot has considerable impact on getting the parliamentary time, but there are other factors: getting support of the government is critical, he is meeting with the government Chief Whip on 17 June to try to persuade him to give some preferential treatment in order to jump the queue a little to get some parliamentary time;

- things that will help: it is a very uncontroversial bill, it is very brief (one page of A4), it is unlikely that anyone will want to amend it, it is un-contentious, and a ‘quick-win’ in the important area of animal welfare;

- we needed to manage expectations but remained cautiously optimistic we might make progress, we will see it develop over the next few weeks, the e-petition system will open soon and the more public support there is the better it will be;

82. The President thanked Lord Trees for the update and Mrs Kissick for her leadership of Veterinary Nurses.

83. The report was noted.

Reports of Statutory Committees

Preliminary Investigation Committee

84. The report was introduced by the Chair, Dr Davies, who outlined the following:

- the table on page 4 of the report that categorises the concerns should read 250, which is only 7 more than the previous comparable period;

- already highlighted by the CEO, the letter from Mr Dinsdale was outlined regarding his positive experience of the Professional Conduct Department, the concerns process and the ADR system being trialled – this was in the Veterinary Record dated 30 May 2015;

- his (long) time on PIC that was about to come to an end, and stated that he had enjoyed his time; thanking the people he has worked with, Council, and the staff who were outstanding in looking after the public and the profession and always had been, recognising there is always room for improvement, and that he was totally confident that the appointed members about to take over on PIC will continue to do the same standard of work.

85. The President thanked the Chair for his report and the work undertaken on the behalf of Council and PIC over the years.
86. The report was noted.

**Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee**

87. The report was introduced by the Chair, Mrs Hill. She highlighted that whilst the committee was not one of the busiest, whilst a good thing, the work was still taken very seriously and that the committee was also one of the least expensive as they often met over Skype thereby saving the costs of the journey into London. She further highlighted the number of cases referring to convictions within the report.

88. The Chair was delighted that the committee was going forward as it was and that people were realising what a great profession that veterinary nursing is.

89. The report was noted.

**Disciplinary Committee**

90. The Chair of DC had left the meeting, so the report of the committee was introduced by the Vice Chair, Ms Webb.

91. She stated that there had not been many hearings since the last Council meeting so there was a brief report before Council.

92. Professor Burrows was thanked for her chairing of the committee and that, in quite a difficult transition period owing to the lack of cases, had encouraged the new members to DC and had been patient and extremely professional in her work. She also thanked the Clerk to the committee and the staff within the College for their support.

93. The report was noted.

**Notices of Motion**

94. There were no notices of motion.

**Questions**

95. No questions had been received.

**Any other business**

96. There was no other business. The President thanked staff for arranging the various meetings held over the two days in Scotland.

**Dates of future Council meetings**

97. The dates for future Council meetings were noted. These were:
Friday, 10 July 2015 (RCVS Day/AGM)

**Tuesday, 29 September 2015** (extra meeting to be held in Committee)

Thursday, 5 November 2015

Thursday, 3 March 2016

Thursday, 2 June 2016

Friday, 15 July 2016 (RCVS Day/AGM – one week later than normal)

Thursday, 10 November 2016 (one week later to avoid the EBVM Conference)

**Retirements from Council**

98. The following people retire from Council at Royal College Day on Friday, 10 July 2015, when there will be a formal goodbye:

**Elected Members:**
- Professor S M Crispin (18 years)
- Mr M F Elliott (12 years)
- Dr R P Moore (16 years)
- Lord Trees (15 years)

99. The following appointed members will be retiring from Council and, as they did not intend to attend RCVS Day, the President said a formal thank you and goodbye:

**Appointed Members:**
**University:**
- Professor N Burrows (4 years)
- Professor M Bennett (6 years)

**Privy Council:**
- Ms J Webb (5 years)

100. Following the earlier ratification of the members to be appointed to the independent Disciplinary Committee, Ms Webb will leave Council by 30 June, before RCVS Day, in order to take up her appointment on the Committee on 1 July 2015.

**Veterinary Nurses Council:**
- Mrs K E Kissick

101. Whilst not formally on RCVS Council, the President thanked Mrs Kissick for her work and stated that she would be greatly missed as Chair of VNC as she was stepping down from that role (but not from VNC entirely).

102. On behalf of Council, the President thanked those members for their hard work and contributions to both College and Council, listing their achievements while members of Council.
103. He congratulated the two members who had been re-elected to Council: Dr Connell and Mrs Hill, and looked forward to welcoming the new incoming members at Royal College Day.

Date of next meeting

104. The date for the next meeting of Council is Tuesday, 29 September 2015 at 10:00 am, to be in a workshop format and held in Committee.

105. The next scheduled meeting thereafter is: Thursday, 5 November 2015 (reconvening in the afternoon 2:00 – 4:00 pm)

106. A ‘straw poll’ vote was taken whether to remove gowns for the next meeting. As there was no definitive agreement, the President decided to leave that decision to the new incoming President.

107. The open session was brought to a close.

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