

Council Meeting

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 12 March 2026 at 10:00 am in Rooms 4a and 4b, 1 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RB

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 previous meeting		
i. 22 January 2026 – unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
ii. 22 January 2026 – 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	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
6. Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)		
a. Council Effectiveness Group – update	Oral report 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. Professional Conduct 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 VN Disciplinary Committee <u>Please note:</u> details of disciplinary cases are found on the website, see: Disciplinary Committee hearings - Professionals and navigate to the individual cases from there.	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
9. Notices of motion	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
10. Questions	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
11. Recommendation for the appointment of Officers – President and Vice-President (Senior) respectively for confirmation at the AGM on 3 July 2026	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
12. Election of Junior Vice-President – recommendation for confirmation at the AGM on 3 July 2026	Oral report Unclassified	n/a

13. Election of Treasurer – recommendation for confirmation at the AGM on 3 July 2026	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
14. Other elections		
a. Chair, Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Chair, Education Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Chair, Standards Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
15. Any other College business (unclassified items)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
16. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
17. Date of next meeting Thursday, 4 June 2026 10:00 am (reconvening in the afternoon) to be held in person at 1-2 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RB.	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
18. Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)		
a. Major projects – update	Oral report Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
b. Competition and Markets Authority – update	Oral report Confidential	1, 3, 4
c. Legislative reform and governance	Confidential	1
d. Vital signs	Confidential	4
e. RCVS Honours and Awards 2026	Private	5
19. Any other College business (confidential items)		
a. Comments on classified appendices	Oral report Confidential	# TBC

b. Other business	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
20. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
21. Training session	Confidential	1, 4
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
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Terms of Reference

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

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

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

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

The purpose of RCVS Council [derived from the Charter]

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

How Council members work

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

Summary

Meeting	Council
Date	22 January 2026
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2026
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2026
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	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

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Council

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday, 22 January 2026 by MS Teams

Professor T D H Parkin (in the Chair)

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Professor D C Barrett

Miss L S Belton

Dr S E Bennett

Dr S R Bescoby

*Mr D Bray

Dr A L Calow

Mr J M Castle

Ms J Clift

Mrs O D R Cook

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mr P J Gordon

Dr D L Greenberg

Mr T M Hutchinson

Professor M D Jones

Dr Z J Kennedy

Professor C M Loughrey

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

*Dr A J McLeish

Dr S Paterson

Mr T J Walker

Mrs K Young

*Denotes absent

In attendance:

Ms G Crossley	Head of Professional Conduct (HoPC) (agenda item 18 only)
Mr I A Holloway	Director of Communications (DoComms)
Ms L Lockett	CEO
Ms C L McCann	Director of Operations (DoOps)
Mr B Myring	Head of Policy, Insight, and Public Affairs (HPIPA)
Ms C L Paget	Registrar
Dr L Prescott-Clements	Director of Operations (DoEd)

Guests:

Mr I Battersby	FRCVS (open session only)
Dr N T Connell	FRCVS (open session only)
Dr V Hoferica	MRCVS (open session only)
Mr J Loeb	<i>Veterinary Record</i> (open session only)
Mr V Olowe	Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)
Mr A Webb	<i>Veterinary Times</i> (open session only)

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed Council and guests and outlined the order of the meeting. Council was reminded not to use unsupported and unauthorised artificial intelligence (AI) software when attending College meetings, nor to summarise Private and Confidential papers.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:
 - Mr Bray;
 - Dr Middlemiss (Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), Observer).
3. Dr McLeish was not in attendance.

Declaration of interest

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

Minutes

5. Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendix of the meeting held on 20 November 2025, and the classified appendix of the remote decision held between 23 December 2025 – 5 January 2026 and they were before Council for approval.
6. There were no comments or questions.
7. There was no dissent and the unclassified minutes and classified appendices for the meeting and remote decision were verbally accepted as true records.

Matters arising

Obituaries

8. The Council noted the passing of Professor Agnes Winter FRCVS, late of the University of Liverpool and ex-RCVS Council member 2007 – 2008.
9. Council and guests stood for a minute silence for all members of the professions who had passed since the last meeting.

Council correspondence

10. The President reported the following:

RCVS Council and VN Council Elections

11. Council was reminded that, subject to eligibility, the deadline for submission of nominations to stand for RCVS Council was **5:00 pm on Saturday, 31 January 2026**. Council members were not permitted to nominate anyone for standing for Council and Registered Addresses must be used for the Nomination Form.
12. Mrs Cook confirmed that she would not stand for a second term on Council at this time and would retire at the Annual General Meeting in the summer. She had notified Council early in order to provide time for members to elect a new Chair of Standards Committee and for an orderly transition.
13. Clarification was sought on whether Council members could promote people standing in the election as the previous year had highlighted what could be considered as 'heavy' promotion. It was confirmed that there was nothing specific preventing Council members from doing so, but that there was a big difference between liking a social media post and 'going all out' on a campaign for another individual. Every elected Council member was elected on their own merit and would work as an individual on Council, however, the perception of 'group think' might arise if there was too much close alliance; it was acknowledged that it was a small profession and many members knew each other. It was suggested that mild support could be shown rather than active campaigning.

Elections for: Vice-President (Junior), Treasurer, Chairs of Advancement of the Professions, Education, and Standards Committees for the College year July 2026 – July 2027

14. Council was reminded that any current member of Council could nominate themselves for the above roles. The deadline for submissions was **4:00 pm on Tuesday, 10 February 2026**; the (internal) elections would be agenda items at the forthcoming March 2026 Council meeting.

King's New Year Honours 2026

15. The following members had received Honours in the King's New Year Honours List:
- Professor Danielle Gunn-Moore FRCVS: OBE for services to feline veterinary medicine;
 - Major Amanda Hewitt MRCVS from the Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC): MBE in the Military Honours List;
 - Professor David Main MRCVS: BEM for services to animal welfare.
16. Also recognised were:
- Major Mark Gibbs (RAVC): King's Commendations for Valuable Service in the Military Honours List;
 - Gwyn Jones, a farmer: BEM for services to animal health and welfare.
17. The President had written to congratulate them.

Board Effect meeting paper system

18. Council was informed that there were planned changes to the meeting paper system at the end of January 2026, when the system would become known as Diligent One – Diligent was the parent company so it was predominantly a name change. The other main change was how the system would be accessed; details of the transition would be forwarded to members shortly.

[**Afternote:** additional preparation for the system changes were required, so the switch over had been postponed until May 2026, Council members would receive notification of log-in changes in the interim period.]

Expenses

19. Council was reminded that expenses incurred on College business should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than six months post-meeting. Anything older than six months required formal approval from the Treasurer and was considered to be an exception to normal procedures.
20. Any additional costs outwith the Expenses Policy should be agreed with Finance **before** any such costs were incurred; agreement should be in writing so that the auditors had a clearly documented audit trail. The current policy was available in the Council Workroom Library of the meeting paper system under 'useful information'.

CEO update

21. The CEO outline the summary of work since Council last met. Since the paper had been written, there were a couple of additional items from the Veterinary Nursing (VN) Team to bring to Council's attention:
- an updated framework for the delivery of advanced veterinary nursing qualifications had been launched; and
 - the Nursing Progress Log (NPL) had been updated.
22. Both projects had required a huge amount of work from the VN Team, and the IT Development Team.
23. Annexed to the paper was the detailed Operational Plan update, which was more granular than previously provided. Future versions would be RAG (red, amber, green)-rated and comments would be welcomed as work progressed; RAG-rating had not yet been applied as work had only recently commenced and to do so would give a false impression of progress. The Plan was now available as a spreadsheet and could be sorted by department, which made it easier for committees to 'deep dive' into the areas of work that were important to them.
24. In addition to items detailed in the Plan; the College's statutory duties; and myriad of requests from the public, professionals, parliamentarians, etc., the following items were highlighted:
- staff were spending a vast amount of time on Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements;
 - preparations were ongoing for a potential consultation on a new Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA);

- the new Content Management System (CMS) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) projects continued apace;
- a lot of work was going on around the College's policies and how it handled data to ensure compliance with data protection regulation;
- a meeting was scheduled the following day to consider the College's research needs and to set the research agenda for the year ahead to support the work of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan;
- the College continued to prepare for a potential role in monitoring compliance with CMA remedies;
- there had been a lot of interest in, and support from the profession, around Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathways (VCCP), which the College planned to conclude this year as well.

25. There were no comments or questions, and the update was noted.

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

European veterinary school accreditation (taken out of order of the agenda)

26. The President, as Chair of Education Committee, introduced the item. For the benefit for newer members of Council, it was explained that there was a temporary policy in place to recognise veterinary graduates from European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education accredited / -approved schools (EAEVE-accredited). At the January 2024 Council meeting it had been decided that the policy should remain in place until 31 January 2029, reviewed annually. The rationale for the decision at the time was that the accreditation process for EAEVE schools was somewhat different to that of UK-accredited schools. Council had also been keen to see proposals for a longer-term solution to the temporary policy, specifically plans for direct accreditation of European schools by the RCVS, and noted that new registrants from the EU had started to increase again since low numbers post-EU-exit and Covid.
27. In March 2024, it was agreed that the College would look to provide direct accreditation to targeted EU schools, originally with assisted funding from Defra to make the accreditation option more attractive, but that was ultimately not deemed to be possible. Consideration had also been given for the RCVS to assist with funding, which had also not been agreed. Other incentives including the potential for joint visitations with EAEVE were to be explored in the first instance.
28. Within the confidential annexes were historical details of workforce data to date and the number of students that come from individual veterinary schools.
29. During discussions, Council was asked to consider the following:
- if it wished to maintain the original decision to end the temporary recognition of EAEVE-accredited / -approved status on 31 January 2029;
 - given the challenges around gaining interest from EU schools, if it wished to reconsider the decision to not fund accreditation activity related to EU veterinary programmes; and
 - whether there are any additional steps Council wished to explore to try and attract more direct accreditation from either EU schools or from further afield.

30. The Director of Education (DoEd) continued.
31. In terms of the workforce numbers, two slides with graphical data had been added to the information before Council. It appeared that EU numbers had recovered a little bit before stabilising and the number of registrants from the rest of the world (ROW) was increasing. That group included the number of graduates sitting the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination (SME), which had been experiencing rapid increases each year – 2026 had another 30% increase from 2025.
32. It was believed that the dynamics were changing; the overall workforce had recovered significantly since 2019-2020. Furthermore, the number of UK veterinary schools was increasing, and subsequent cohorts would increase UK graduate numbers. It was explained that a new veterinary school would apply for accreditation as its first cohort graduated: Aberystwyth in partnership with the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) had a small cohort of c.25 per year – they were due to be accredited / have their first graduates in 2026. Thereafter, the University of Lancashire's first cohort would graduate in 2028, and Scotland's Rural College in Aberdeen in 2029.
33. The paper was opened for discussion. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:
- at a recent meeting with final year graduates, many of them were discussing how competitive the job market currently was and the number of positions they were applying for before they could get an opportunity. It was unclear if that was the same feeling for those members 'on the ground' – were new positions being advertised, or were there multiple applicants?
 - considering the statistics, was there any further information on what happened to the EU vets after graduating? For instance, Budapest had c. 50 graduates registering in the UK per annum – if they registered and remained in the UK on the practising register for a long time it was effectively like another UK vet school;
 - o as focus had been at the point of registration with the RCVS, there was no data available on movement of EU vets after graduation. It was suspected that, if students had graduated in the EU and registered in the UK, they would work in the UK; there would potentially also be other 'hurdles' to cross such as visa and English language requirements. It was known that some of the schools – Budapest being one of them – taught in English, which attracted UK school leavers who might not have been able to get a place in a UK vet school; they were also cheaper to attend. At Council's request, all EAEVE-accredited schools had been notified in 2024 about the timeline, partly because of the concerns raised about temporary recognition of accreditation potentially running out for those students;
 - the government was progressing at speed with its new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement; once it was in place, it was assumed that the UK's requirements for vets carrying out inspections for import and export would decrease dramatically. On the basis that a lot of

the EU vets entering the UK workforce went into public health roles, did the College think that the same number of public health roles would be required once the SPS agreement was passed? Would there be the same need to attract European vets?

- o that was unknown. However, the College was still engaged in talks facilitated by Food Standards Agency (FSA) as it had noticed that the schools sending graduates through to the government roles had been changing from typically southern European (e.g. Spain) to newer schools within Turkey that were EAEVE-accredited. It was discovered at a meeting at the end of November 2025 that one of the reasons Turkish schools had not accepted the invitation to start the process of becoming directly accredited by the RCVS was because of the rules in their country in that their equivalent of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) needed to recognise the RCVS as an awarding / accrediting body. Following up from that meeting the College now had details of how to go through those processes, after which time, further discussions would take place.

In addition, the College had been informally notified by four other European (including Ireland) veterinary schools that they would be seeking RCVS accreditation, so there was more interest, but it was at a much earlier stage;

- could more work be undertaken to try to understand the job market and the workforce problems? Consideration of numbers of registrants was important but the other side to the equation was the availability of jobs; it could be speculated that fewer people were being recruited, or that it was a short-term problem until the CMA report was finalised and its implications better understood – could the large employer groups be surveyed to find out what they thought the job market would look like over the next five years?
 - o the College had already published its own report on workforce at the London Vet Show (LVS) in November, which clearly suggested there was less of an issue apart from within public health, as had been highlighted earlier;
- workforce was obviously the very practical issue, but it was about the divergence of standards. The College's role was around assurance of standards and the different ways they could be met – it should be remembered that the rationale behind it was about standard setting, and the upholding of them;
- so that Council could better understand EAEVE inspections, [I] had been approached by Professor Rob Smith at Liverpool, who carried out EAEVE inspections, and had offered to share his knowledge; the alignment of standards and what the issues were that arose. He had also mentioned Professor Philip Duffus (now retired), who had also been an EAEVE inspector.

The point was that a large number of Spanish, Central European and now Turkish vets were going into Official Veterinarian (OV) work – with 95% of OV work being carried out by overseas vets – and the College needed to be mindful of that. College focus appeared to be on clinical roles as that was what most UK graduates would be looking for; the temporary policy created a 'cliff edge' and potential workforce crisis in the public health and OV sector

where, at the end of January 2029, it essentially said there would be no new intake, which [I] think had created some difficulty with getting EU schools to recognise the changing position and agree to RCVS inspections.

The College might be better to adapt the policy to one of saying it would not accept EAEVE-accreditation unless there was an RCVS visit and / or alignment of inspection so that it did not appear to accept a lower standard creating 'tiers' within the profession. When considering human healthcare, there was a current recognition that UK doctors needed preferential treatment and that training posts could not be given to overseas graduates; the veterinary profession could very much be in a similar position within a few years' time;

- Council also had members with 10 years' experience on multiple EAEVE visitations, as did members of Vet Schools Council (VSC); furthermore, the potential crisis in public health and OV were the triggers for bringing about the policy in the beginning;
- to clarify, besides the work to continue with the Turkish authorities as outlined, EAEVE had highlighted the RCVS announcement before 2024 about the temporary nature of the policy and had kindly sent letters to their members. EAEVE had also agreed through their Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that up to two RCVS visitors could join an EAEVE visit as observers, making RCVS accreditation much less onerous on the school through a joint visitation with EAEVE and limited costs. They had agreed that there could be two observer positions available on any visit (the minimum RCVS could accept to properly run its side of things). However, EAEVE were keen for the national regulator of the country to attend as an observer in their strategy to gain recognition from different EU countries, which would take one of the two possible positions – so regrettably, that option had not yet come to fruition. The alternative offered was a full RCVS visit, but that was significantly more cost and effort, and there had not been any uptake; specific reasons had not been provided but interest tailed off when a joint visit was not possible;
- what was the position with respect specifically around the FSA and VetTrack in addressing the potential workforce shortage in veterinary public health (VPH)?
 - VetTrack went through Education Committee. At the most recent meeting (November 2025) with FSA and Eville and Jones (UK's largest provider of Export Health Certificates (EHCs) to the private sector, and import inspection controls for Products of Animal Original (POAO)), they had been very keen to help the College facilitate working with Turkey as there were a number of schools producing graduates that could work in that field;
- what was the cost of sitting the SME?
 - the cost of the full examination (written and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) components) was still £2,500; it had not increased for a number of years. The College aimed to cover the costs of running the examination. The 2025 Statutory Instrument (SI) would now allow the price to increase in line with inflation if it was needed;

- it was understood that RCVS-accreditation could benefit students (increasing work options following graduation) and potentially the school (if their strategy was to attract international students). That might also be cost effective per student comparative to those having to sit the SME, although it was acknowledged that there would be some universities where such cost effectiveness would not be as optimal as it was dependent on student numbers;
 - o when considering decision-making for schools and going through another accreditation process, it was not necessarily about cost, but rather about the amount of work that went into preparing for that visit; it was a big decision to make because of the number of people that would have to be involved – it was unlikely to make much difference to the intake numbers as schools were less concerned about where their graduates went after graduating;
- if the College wanted a route for European graduates beyond 2029 to come and work in the UK, it was time to think of another way of addressing the issue from a different angle than accrediting the schools;
- regarding the increase in SME candidates, where were they coming from? Were they consistently from particular areas, if so, should the College be using that information to target the schools – there must be African, and potentially Indian, schools where English was their first language;
 - o there was no available data for 2026 as applications has closed the week before the Council meeting, but it could be provided at a later date. Data from 2024 and 2025 had not identified any one particular place; there had always been some from South America and Asia, although not that many from Africa until a few years' ago. African candidates had increased since there had been acknowledged workforce shortages, when a significant number of the corporates had approached graduates in certain African countries and offered to fund them through the SME, mentored them, and paid the exam entry fee; Nigeria being one of those countries;
- if the team went back through the minutes of previous discussions, there were a number of questions posed that would be valuable to 'close off' because, clearly, they were repeatedly raised, for example, what was the scale of the OV issue; what enhancements or support could be provided for domestic vets to fill those roles; it would be helpful to bring the answers back to a future discussion;
 - o noted;
- what was the impact on the Education Department from resourcing issues if candidate numbers for the SME had increased by 30% again in 2026; and what would happen once temporary recognition ceased and more candidates applied to sit the SME? Had it been quantified and would it be reflected in the fee?
 - o it was putting a lot of pressure on the department, which was being managed, but it was a really fast-moving picture. The new Statutory Instrument (SI) for the SME had been a real

advantage for candidates inasmuch that they now only paid for the part of the exam they were taking. So, if they if they paid for the written exams first and did not pass, they did not have to pay for the OSCE. It also offered a re-sit opportunity, which had doubled the amount of exam preparation for the team but provided the candidate with a second chance at the written component in order to go forward to the OSCE. Last year had been the first year that re-sits had been offered and it was more popular than expected. It did, however, increase the pass rate of the written exams – almost double – which in turn placed a lot of pressure on the OSCE, the expensive and more difficult part of the examinations to administer. Through the new SI, candidates who did not pass the 2025 OSCE could go straight to the 2026 OSCE this year. Harper Adams University did a fantastic job as the venue for the OSCE, but they were at capacity; the RCVS had now approved a second venue where it was hoped to run a second OSCE sitting. The examination was building and was being managed, but it was difficult. A member from the equivalent body for Australia had come to observe the RCVS examinations last year because they were under the same pressures and were already in the situation of having a backlog where candidates had passed the written component but were waiting a year or more to be able to sit the practical side because it was logistically very difficult;

- not having seen all of the Education Committee papers, it was not clear whether the problem was that the standards from EAEVE-accredited schools were diverging or whether it was more a concern about how those schools were being assessed. If Council stated publicly that it thought standards were diverging, there was the significant risk that someone required to take the SME could challenge the College on the basis that they were at a school that was accredited – but not through EAEVE – and the two tracks to registration had different parameters. If that occurred, the system would fail because the College would be unable to cope with the numbers for the SME or process enough people in another way;
 - o it was a little bit of both. The standards were diverging – Australian, American, and other standards had been mapped out; there was still a lot of harmony on paper, but there were now also some clear differences. It was not the full picture though – what was written on paper was just the scope, essentially of what needed to be met; the processes i.e. how the evidence was collected and reported on the visitation was quite significantly different. Members of the College team had joined EAEVE visits on several occasions over recent years, which had highlighted that – a confidential report had been put to Council with very detailed differences; a further visit carried out a few years later and the same things were found again – the initial report came to Council through Education Committee minutes; the RCVS was an observer once in 2025 – so it was consistent;
- reflecting on an alternative approach, should the College look at something akin to what was provided for in EU law for periods of adaptation, where there are graduates who did not meet a country's standards but by which they could be brought up to the standard relatively quickly – it was not a ‘SME light’ but an alternative approach;
- the standards across the European schools were variable, some graduates of which were not perceived by some as meeting RCVS standards. If the College was to have something like a SME light it had to think very carefully about how it chose which schools’ graduates got to sit

the full SME, opposed to the SME light, and have a very clear set of criteria around them; indeed, by doing so was there a potential discrimination piece that could be a risk to the College. It would need a lot of consideration and thorough detail included;

- thinking about graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools, SME light was not meant in a classic format; the school accreditation was robust in its own right, it was different to the RCVS version, but it was still there, and the schools had to go through rigorous assessment to achieve it. Perhaps graduates from those schools could have a different way of being assessed in the UK: there was the Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP); many undergraduate programmes had moved towards work-based assessments; there was a Temporary Register under the VSA where [I] believe people could be registered under supervision. Consideration should be given to something completely different whereby some of these individuals from the appropriate schools could register in the UK and be sponsored and undertake work-based assessments rather than add numbers applying to sit the SME; to assess that the individual was up to the required standards, not the institution where they had been educated;

- it was unclear what the problem was that Council was trying to solve? Was it related to the requirement to maintain a level of workforce in the UK, in which case what it was trying to do was to ensure as gatekeepers that the standard was met, and was a supply issue; or was it alternatively trying to create an avenue for those who might have been trained externally to come to the UK because they want to do that. The workforce issue was understood and, as gatekeepers, the College must maintain the standard. Why was the College going out to various other overseas establishments to persuade them to do something that was not what they were set up to do, when they were there to provide their own domestic requirements. Unless the College made a bold decision to stop doing what it was doing, the problem would never be addressed;
 - o it was a bit confusing because it was a bit of both and over the period of time Council had been discussing the matter, it had changed a little. When the matter was first discussed it was in relation to EU-exit and the need for some sort of transition at that point – there were as many EU graduates registering with the College every year as there were UK graduates. The number of EU graduates dropped off for various reasons, EU-exit and Covid being two primary ones. There had also been an increase in the number of UK graduates. So, it was partly about standards, partly about avenues to registration, and making sure that the UK continued to stay part of a global profession. It was to acknowledge that non-UK graduates added a huge amount to the profession and [I would like to] say on record that even though there might be issues with standards, the UK profession was very grateful for the contribution of EU graduates and would not want them to feel in any way second class citizens. Latterly, even though the RCVS workforce model indicated that the immediate workforce crisis was lessening in most clinical areas, it would continue in public health roles, which was a main concern for government. It was felt that the College was trying to future-proof the profession; however, it should make its decisions based on standards, not just on workforce issues, because any decisions made were hard to ‘turn off’ and there was the statutory duty to prioritise animal health and welfare.

Some of the suggestions that were coming up about alternative approaches could be very helpful but the bottom line was that people would not come to the UK if there were no jobs; there were also other hurdles such as visas and salaries. The evaluation of overseas qualified individuals seeking to join the veterinary nursing profession already enabled different options where everybody did not go through the same one-size-fits-all exam, there was a gap analysis type approach. It was something that could be considered and comments around the staff required to support it were really valid, but the College needed to make sure it had a future-proofed system in place.

As mentioned earlier, cost effectiveness was a valid point, but if you followed the money, it was different people who were paying for the SME and vet school accreditation; it made more sense on paper to accredit a school, because it was cheaper per student, but at the moment it was the graduates who were paying for the SME, whereas the College wanted to put the onus on the vet school to do something that required payment, which became trickier.

The answer to the question of what the College was trying to solve was all of the above and every time Council met, it changed slightly depending on what was happening around it. The lodestone to navigate by had to be educational standards;

- there was a view that the public health training on the continent was more in depth than that of UK schools and, as indicated, many vets chose to come to the UK to carry out OV and public health work, some of whom then used that as a gateway to move across to clinical work. One option would be limited licensure to allow continued access to OV work, and then those that chose to further their careers in the UK and move into clinical roles would need to carry out further study and qualification;
 - o it would depend upon whether a new VSA could be enacted in time to allow the College to do that before the temporary recognition policy ceased;
- there was potential of having a talent acquisition problem as well; some of the best vets [!] have ever worked with were non-UK graduates and it was important that there was a route to come into the UK, that was not overly onerous because the UK would be a poorer country for its own vets if there were not any from other countries coming to it;
- going a step further than limited licensure, and understanding that vets were the only people allowed to diagnose, could there be a three-year public health degree where it was not only vets undertaking public health work?
 - o it was a good suggestion and linked to the idea of a limited licensure; one of the stumbling blocks might be around legislation regarding export and import of food products, which often required veterinarians to do the certification work. Some roles could be looked at under an Exemption Order (EO) but a lot of times it was specified in legislation that it needed to be a veterinarian;

- with regards the end-date of the temporary recognition policy, consideration should be given to all of the suggestions put forward, but also to keep in mind the risk of discrimination that might arise when allowing certain individuals from certain universities to do a 'light' version where others have to do the whole SME – it was the individual seeking registration not the school;
- some things were in the College's gift, others were dependent on legislation, whether it was in the UK or within the other countries with which it was working; the College should focus on the things where it could make a difference. Discussion had been about keeping RCVS standards and work had been undertaken for a long time about broadening intake into the UK schools to increase the number of UK-educated graduates that were interested in looking at public health work; to say there was a cliff edge in 2029 when the decision was made for a whole cohort of students was unfair. The College had most control over the capacity for SME and there was still three years to think about that; but there was also the external factor outwith the College's control, which was if / or when there was a new VSA;
 - o alongside which was also the timing of any SPS agreement and implications for Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ).

34. The discussion was drawn to a close. In summary, the President stated that, originally, there had been two clear issues to be addressed, the first of which was the workforce crisis, particularly in VPH, following EU-exit when the decision was made for the temporary recognition policy to accept graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools to address that crisis; fundamentally accepting at that point a slight divergent of standards. During discussions it was noted that, perhaps, that crisis was slightly dissipating *because* the College had accepted graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools, so that could be cyclical. Council had to consider whether there was justification to extend the temporary recognition policy or whether it should keep to the 31 January 2029 end date. A vote was taken:

35. Council was asked if it wished to maintain the original decision to end the temporary recognition of EAEVE-accredited / - approved status on 31 January 2029:

Yes = end temporary recognition on 31/1/29

No = keep temporary recognition

Yes	17
No	2
Abstain:	3

36. Ms Cliff experienced technical difficulties and provided her vote by email, which was included in the figures.

37. The ending of temporary recognition of EAEVE-accredited / -approved status on 31 January 2029 was agreed by a majority vote.

38. Turning to the second issue of whether to fund accreditation activity, it was noted that during discussion there did not appear to be any appetite to revisit that decision. Whether the College

paid, or not, would not be the deciding factor as there were more issues such as the divergence of standards; the difficulties in undertaking joint visits because the RCVS needed a minimum of two people attending; and the reluctance of the schools – for good reason – to have a separate RCVS visit. Different solutions had to be found, including that of the RCVS gaining recognition in Turkey as an accrediting body as there were a number of schools in the country producing graduates.

39. Council was asked if it wished to reconsider the decision NOT to fund accreditation activity related to EU veterinary programmes:

Yes = explore funding

No = retain previous decision (no funding)

Yes:	0
No:	22
Abstain:	0

40. Ms Clift experienced technical difficulties and provided her vote by email, which was included in the figures.

41. Council agreed to retain its previous decision (no funding) by a unanimous vote.

42. Taking the earlier discussion into account, it was questioned whether there were any further additional steps Council wished to see taken to attract accreditation, either with EU schools or wider afield; or any other 'blue sky' ideas that should also be investigated, and would include aspects of discrimination?

43. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:

- when Surrey vet school was going through its final exams, a SME was part of it because it was unknown if it would achieve its accreditation – was that something the College could do for overseas vet schools?
 - o no, it was slightly different. The VSA allowed the College to do that when the school was accredited when the first cohort went through; RCVS external examiners were in place to inspect the final assessments so that, if the school failed to achieve accreditation, the College had inspected the finals assessment and, subject to the standards being approved, could still register the graduates. If standards had not been approved, the students would have to take the SME – the exam was there, and there was an inspection of the assessments, the final exams, and processes, to see if that was sufficient to assure the standards of the graduates – it was essentially a 'back-stop' for the very first accreditation.

Under the VSA, that was permitted for UK schools only. Overseas schools still had to be inspected by the College with the same hurdles around logistics and costs;

- it was noted that the College was restricted by the legislation in terms of import and export, but it should keep an open mind about potential delegations in the public health sphere;
- it was not just about workforce absolute numbers, and it would be very sad if it got to a point where the College was seen as being very protectionist; it was very much about creating and allowing opportunities for talent from around the world to come to the UK and enrich the profession.

44. The discussion was brought to a close. A number of potential avenues of exploration and decisions had been proposed and it was suggested that Council should task Education Department and Education Committee to undertake that work, taking short- and longer-term risks and mitigations, including conditional licensure, equality impact assessments / discriminatory aspects, that the College could put forward when the external landscape permitted it to do so with respect to reform of the VSA. Given that the temporary recognition policy was reviewed on an annual basis, and the amount of work required to explore the proposals, it was further suggested that the work be undertaken over the next 12 months, to be part of the annual discussion when it was next before Council in January 2027. This was agreed.
45. The President thanked Council for a really useful discussion.

Reports of standing committees – to note

Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

46. The Chair, APC highlighted that, following the discussion on the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC) paper at the last Council meeting, members of the Committee and the Advancement of the Professions (AP) Team would be taking part in a collaborative workshop on climate change put on by an external provider, Climate Fresk. They would report back following the workshop to confirm whether it would be beneficial to extend the workshop to a wider audience.
47. It was noted that following the November 2025 Council meeting and Council's discussion about food at meetings, that there had been broad reporting in the veterinary press and the need for vets to show leadership in reducing their meat consumption. It was questioned if that would be discussed further at APC, along with general policies surrounding it, and whether it would come back to Council for a further discussion. It was confirmed that it was on the APC agenda for a later meeting and also formed part of the larger sustainability plan for the College. Another part of the workshop would be to show how the College could lead the profession in sustainability, not just how it was done as an organisation, and would come back to Council in due course.
48. There were no further comments or questions raised.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

49. The Chair, ARC reported that the Committee had not met since the last Council meeting so there was nothing further to report. There were no comments or questions raised.

Education Committee (EC)

50. The President, as Chair, EC reported that there continued to be correspondence in the press about Cambridge Veterinary School. As far as the College was aware, the decision regarding its future had been pushed back to the middle of February.
51. It was commented that the College had been engaged with a large careers event held with approximately 300 teachers the previous week, where questions had been raised about advice for students who wished to apply to Cambridge Veterinary School next year and there had not been an answer that attending RCVS representatives could provide; it was questioned what an appropriate response would be.
52. It was noted that it was for the Cambridge University Admissions Team to be relaying that information as they had the best information about what those students would experience and what would be in place for them; similar questions about Cambridge had been raised elsewhere but the College was not in a position to comment. Last year had been different in that it was potentially an RCVS decision to remove accreditation, but that had been resolved by the granting of an extension of the conditional accreditation for a year to allow for further improvements. It was now a decision that Cambridge University had to make, and it would be quite difficult for the College to advise in any way as to what the likely outcome will be for any students applying this year. One of the requirements in the accreditation report was that Cambridge ensured that all current and prospective students were fully aware of the circumstances, so it was unclear what the College could add.
53. In response, it was commented that there were 300 careers teachers who had no information so there appeared to be a hole in information provision somewhere that needed to be filled. It was agreed that the President would feed back through VSC and would ask Cambridge to ensure that appropriate statements were being given to students most affected, as well as those currently going through the process.
54. It was good to hear the event had been successful, at least with careers advisors, and it was questioned what the feeling in the room was; were the advisors aware of how to get students into veterinary education? It was confirmed that they had been able to do a lot of myth-busting; outline veterinary nursing careers – along with other allied professions such as physiotherapy; as well as things like gateway courses; contextualised offers; whether an individual needed to see practice before applying to vet school; and generally made them aware it was very accessible and a diverse intake was welcomed. The event was part of schools' careers week arranged by the Outreach and Engagement Manager in the Events Team and it had been very well received with a lot of positive interaction.
55. It was further commented that the deadline for applications to university had now closed; it was believed that Cambridge was going to take students in 2026 and that the applications would not open again until October so there was a window of opportunity to find out information if the College wished to produce a statement. In addition, it was noted, from within VSC, that a lot of questions were being received directly from students who were currently in the mix around whether they should or should not continue at Cambridge, or whether they should essentially substitute / be able to substitute Cambridge out and finish their studies in a different school if they

felt the need to do so. However, it remained a matter for Cambridge University to deal with the questions on an individual basis.

56. The comments were noted.

Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

57. The Treasurer, as Chair, FRC reminded Council to submit their expenses as soon as possible following attendance at meetings.

58. There were no comments or questions raised.

Registration Committee (RC)

59. The President as Chair, RC reported that the Committee continued to clarify what was required from individual registrants from different routes to registration and that it had ad-hoc meetings to make decisions on individual applications.

60. There were no comments or questions raised.

Standards Committee (SC)

61. The Chair, SC reported that there were no specific matters to bring to Council's attention and a lot of recent work was tied to the afternoon's agenda in confidential session.

62. There were no comments or questions raised.

Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)

63. The Chair, VNC reported that there were no specific matters to bring to Council's attention.

64. There were no comments or questions raised.

Professional Conduct Liaison Committee (PCLC)

65. The Chair, PCLC reported that there were no specific matters to bring to Council's attention.

66. There were no comments or questions raised.

Public Advisory Group – report (taken out of order)

67. The report was introduced by the Chair, Public Advisory Group (PAG). The Group was established in September 2023, initially a pilot group that had now been made permanent. Its remit was being used very effectively to provide an opportunity to discuss points with a public-facing group, to understand their viewpoints, their issues and challenges, and to consult on RCVS projects. The Group was engaged, experienced and knowledgeable.

68. Topics the Group had discussed since September 2024 included:

- the animal owners' area of the website; the structure and content;

- RCVS Knowledge resources;
- CMA (repeatedly);
- VCCP;
- veterinary role definitions;
- 2025-2029 Strategic Plan;
- the role of the veterinary nurse;
- Practice Standards Scheme (PSS).

69. Future topics proposed were:

- evolution of Find-a-Vet (FaV) (part of the CMA recommendations);
- VSA reform;
- under care review;
- revisit VCCP.

70. The report provided the basis for Council to consider the activity of the Group, ask questions, and to offer suggestions for future topics of discussion.

71. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:

- it was not possible to find a list of members of the Group, also the webpage was out of date as it did not acknowledge it was now a permanent;
 - o noted;
- what was the overall feeling within the Group, was it generally positive engagement and was there genuine criticism as well? A positive 'echo chamber' would not be effective;
 - o members were very honest about their viewpoints and there had not been anything directly confrontational – they were very engaged at giving their opinion and being able to speak from the public viewpoint, providing a constructive discussion without becoming a 'soap box';
 - o people were quite forthright, very respectful and polite - forthright on their views based on the College and on the on the profession. Recruitment was ongoing for new members to make sure voices remained fresh and so that people did not get too comfortable with the way that the College worked.

In terms of the names of the members, there had been a discussion at the outset, and a decision made not to list them as some were uncomfortable with that – a list of names and their background could be provided for Council. Members that were keen to say they were on the group had been supplied them with a form of words to use on their social media. From a transparency perspective, as they were members of the public volunteering to support the College and it was not a decision-making group, it was not critical that they were all listed out; that could be reviewed if Council felt that more

transparency would be helpful – it was also to avoid them getting lobbied as they were not standing for public office in the same way as a member of Council;

- the weblink referred to in paragraph 21 of the paper 'who's who in your veterinary practice' – there was a sentence that said RCVS specialist status represented the highest standard in clinical veterinary practice. That gave the impression that if [I] was not a specialist, [I] could not possibly achieve the highest standard and, if the College was trying to help members of the public understand who they were seeing, they also would think that they were not seeing someone with the highest standard *unless* they were a specialist. It was also confusing where it stated that seeing a specialist was expensive; effort had been made to differentiate between a specialist and non-specialist but, in that paragraph, they were 'lumped' together and it still required work – was there somebody on PAG who was a first opinion vet that could help clarify it?
 - o there were no vets on the group as veterinary expertise could be gained from members of Council and elsewhere. The wording had been through the Chair, Standards Committee; the Standards and Advice Team; and it had been taken from elsewhere on the website; it could be adjusted and made consistent across the piece;
- there had been a similar type of conversation in the VCCP group as well, so it might be worth joining those two definitions up;
 - o noted;

72. It was noted that the Group was very useful and had been an excellent initiative and valuable to everything that the College did.

73. The report was noted.

Reports of statutory committees – to note

Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)

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

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

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

Disciplinary Committee and VN Disciplinary Committee (DC)

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

Notices of motion

77. There had been no notices of motion received.

Questions

78. There had been no questions received.

Any other College business (unclassified items)

79. There was no other College business to report.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)

80. The following item was raised to add to the College's Risk Register from the open session of the meeting:

- the reputational and financial risks regarding challenges, possible discrimination or unintended consequences, when exploring proposals put forward as solutions following the cessation of the temporary recognition policy for EAEVE-accredited / -approved schools;
- the resource and pressures on the Examinations Team with the increase in SME applications.

Date of next meeting

81. The next scheduled meeting of Council was Thursday, 12 March 2026 commencing at 10:00 am with a scheduled end time of 4:00 pm. The meeting would be held in person at the Hardwick Street offices.

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

Major projects – update

82. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 5.

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)

83. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 6 – 7.

Legislative reform and governance

84. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 8 – 39.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Comments on classified appendices from Council or committee meetings

85. There were no comments or questions raised.

Other business

86. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 40 – 41.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

87. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 42 – 43.

Training session (confidential item)

88. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 44.

89. The meeting was drawn to a close.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	12 March 2026
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee 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 March 2026

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) since the last report and covers the period 10 January to 27 February 2026.
2. Since the last Report to Council there have been three Stage two Preliminary Investigation Committee (S2PIC) meetings (21 January, 4 and 18 February).

New cases considered by the S2PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the S2PIC at the three meetings referred to above is nine. Of the nine new cases considered:
 - two were concluded at first consideration by the Committee;
 - seven were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports;
 - no new cases were referred to the Disciplinary Committee (DC).
4. No cases have been referred to the RCVS Performance or Health Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The S2PIC is currently investigating 44 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 is one veterinary surgeon 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 (VCMS).
9. In the period 10 January to 27 February 2026:
 - the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 449; and,
 - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 119.

10. In order to demonstrate the trend in case numbers, the number of concerns registered per calendar year for the last six years is below:

- 12 months to end of December 2025 759
- 12 months to end of December 2024 667
- 12 months to end of December 2023 614
- 12 months to end of December 2022 544
- 12 months to end of December 2021 683
- 12 months to end of December 2020 509

11. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 10 January and 27 February 2026.

Concerns registered between 10 January and 27 February 2026

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	0
- Certification	2
- Client confidentiality	3
- Clinical and client records	7
- Clinical governance	0
- Communication and consent	6
- Communication between professional colleagues	1
- Conviction	0
- CPD compliance	0
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	0
- Euthanasia of animals	4
- Euthanasia of animals – ‘Tuk’s law’	1
- Fair trading requirements	0
- Giving evidence for court	0
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	1
- Illegal practice (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Microchipping	2
- Miscellaneous	0
- Named veterinary surgeons	0
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	1
- 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	1
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	0
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	0
- Veterinary care - general	49
- Veterinary care – surgical errors/complications	4
- Veterinary care – unnecessary treatment/diagnostic work	1
- Veterinary care – unfit discharge/post-op complications	3
- Veterinary care – missed or misdiagnosis	13
- Veterinary medicines	6
- Veterinary medicines – application of factors without physical examination	0
- Veterinary medicines – prescribing CDs/antimicrobials without physical examination	0
- Veterinary medicines – ‘under care’ query, other	2
- Veterinary teams and leaders	0
- Whistle-blowing	2
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	2
- Unassigned	8
Total	119

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

12. In the period 10 January to 27 February 2026, the Committee has referred two cases involving two veterinary surgeons to the DC.

Referral to Charter Case Committee

13. In the period 10 January to 27 February 2026, no cases have been referred to the Charter Case Committee (CCC).

Veterinary Investigators

14. The Chief Investigator and Veterinary Investigators have undertaken two visits since the last report.

Concerns procedure

15. 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
January 2024	16
February 2024	15
March 2024	17.6
April 2024	15
May 2024	12.9
June 2024	19.9
July 2024	11.9
August 2024	15.2

September 2024	13.9
October 2024	12
November 2024	14.4
December 2024	15.9
January 2025	17.4
February 2025	13.4
March 2025	14.3
April 2025	10.1
May 2025	14.7
June 2025	15
July 2025	18.9
August 2025	17.1
September 2025	18
October 2025	14
November 2025	16.2
December 2025	19.1
January 2026	19.1

16. The KPI for cases at Stage one is six months. As well as reporting those that meet/don't meet that KPI, we provide median times taken, as this is a good indicator of the most likely duration of matters for those involved in the process.

17. The percentage of cases that met the six-month KPI is below.

Month case started	Cases that met KPI
January 2024	86%
February 2024	93%
March 2024	87%
April 2024	90%
May 2024	85%
June 2024	75%
July 2024	97%
August 2024	91%
September 2024	91%
October 2024	91%
November 2024	94%
December 2024	86%
January 2025	94%
February 2025	79%
March 2025	90%
April 2025	85%
May 2025	89%
June 2025	84%
July 2025	88%

18. The Stage 2 KPI is currently for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within seven months. A case is deemed to be complex where the PIC requests that witness statements

and/or expert evidence be obtained. At its meeting in May 2024, Professional Conduct Liaison Committee (PCLC), having undertaken a full review of the Stage 2 KPI, concluded that it was not appropriate to have a KPI for complex cases, in view of the specific complexities of each case. Cases are reported in detail to that Committee, which is able to discuss and monitor performance accordingly.

19. In the period 10 January to 27 February 2026, the S2PIC reached a decision (to close, refer to the CCC, or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI in two out of two simple cases.
20. Three complex cases were decided. In accordance with the above, these cases (and the work of the department in general) are reported and discussed in detail at the Professional Conduct Liaison Committee meeting.

Illegal practice

21. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 10 November 2025), four new reports of suspected illegal practice have been received. Of these, one has been closed after issuing an advice letter and three are subject to ongoing enquiries. There is a total of 11 ongoing enquiries.

Operational matters

22. An in-person training day for members of the Professional Conduct Department and Committee members took place on 10 February 2026. The topics included contextualised care, Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) and delegation to RVNs, a case law update and Referrals to the CCC.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	12 March 2026
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 no meetings of the Stage 2 VN PIC. The meeting scheduled to take place on 20 January 2026 was cancelled as there were no agenda items.

RVN Concerns received / registered

2. In the period 13 January and 27 February 2026, there were seven new Concerns registered relating to RVNs. Of these seven new Concerns:
 - All cases are currently under investigation by a Case Manager, Veterinary Nurse, Veterinary surgeon, and a lay member (Stage 1 VNPIC)

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. No new cases have been considered by the Stage 2 VNPIC between 13 January and 27 February 2026.

Ongoing Investigations

4. Five concerns are currently under investigation by the Stage 2 VN PIC, and these will be returned to the Committee 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, no cases have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Referral to Charter Case Committee

8. Since the last report, no cases have been referred to the Charter Case Committee.

Disciplinary Hearings

9. Since the last report, no disciplinary hearings have taken place in relation to Veterinary nurses.

Operational matters

10. An in-person training day for members of the Professional Conduct Department and Committee members took place on 10 February 2026. The topics included Contextualised care, Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and delegation to RVNs, a case law update and Referrals to the Charter Case Committee.

Annex A – Current breakdown of registered veterinary surgeons by category

(Figures correct as of 2 March 2026)

Category	Registrants
UK practising	32179
Practising outside the UK	3888
Non-practising	2372
Non-practising 70+	1388
Republic of Ireland	267