

THE ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Transcript of the Public session of the Formal Council meeting held on 26 July 2007

NB: Decisions in square brackets and narrow type are taken from the unconfirmed minutes of Council and therefore are subject to amendment.

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Present:

President	Mr H Patel
Vice-President	Mr M Astbury
Treasurer	Mr A Gush [until item 07.71]
Mr S Acres [until item 07.71]	Ms S Agha [until item 07.71]
Mr G Alexander	Mrs C Brown
Mr J Buisson	Mr S Churton
Dr B Curwain	Professor S Denyer
Mrs D Drury	Dr P Entwistle
Mr J Gentle	Mr J Hanlon [until item 07.71]
Mrs S Hikins	Mrs L Jacobs
Mr R Jobling [until item 07.71]	Mr J Jolley [until item 07.71]
Mr A Kershaw [until item 07.71]	Mrs S Kilby
Professor B Michell [until item 07.71]	Mrs L Morgan
Mr G Phillips	Mr D Simpson
Mr D Thomson	

In attendance

Mr P Bennett, Chairman, English Pharmacy Board, Mr P Jones, Chairman Welsh Pharmacy Board and Dr RM Parr, Chairman, Scottish Pharmacy Board

PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Apologies for absence

The President, Hemant Patel: We will note apologies for absence from our previous records.

2. Declaration of interest

We will make declarations of interest at the relevant time.

3. Election of lay member of Council to work with officers.

Can I remind the Council in your papers under 1? You have the actual wording that was agreed for role description? Phillida Entwistle was elected at the last Council member in June, but she indicated soon afterwards that she had a particular view that prevented her from taking on that role. Phillida, do you want to say something to Council.

Dr Phillida Entwistle: Yes, I do. I want to apologise to Council for putting us in a situation where we have to have a re-run of this election. When I accepted the nomination in June, I did not appreciate that there was a conflict of interest with my role on the Audit Committee. Since then, I have been advised by the Society's lawyers that there may be a conflict of interest and I have to accept that.

The President, Hemant Patel, was kind enough to give me the choice between the two roles. Because my original appointment to Council included the role on the Audit Committee, I decided to stick with the Audit Committee and withdraw from the Officers Group. So I apologise for creating this problem. While I am here, I would like to nominate somebody else to

succeed me on that group. I would like to nominate Bob Michell. He has done it before, but I feel at this particularly sensitive time in the Society's affairs, the Officers Group would benefit from as much continuity of membership and experience of the recent past events that it can get. I think Professor Michell is the best person for the job. He would satisfy the role, on both of those criteria, on experience and on past history. He has already demonstrated both commitment and competence in working with the Officers Group and I would be very happy see him take it over.

The President: Is there a seconder? **(Mr Alexander)** Are there any other nominations?

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: On the grounds that new blood is also a good thing, I would like to nominate Lorna Jacobs.

The President: Do you have a seconder? **(Mrs Morgan)** Are there any other nominations for the post of lay member working with the officers? If not, can we please pass the voting papers? **(Vote taken: carried)** Congratulations, Bob, you are elected for the coming year. Commiserations Lorna but thank you for trying.

Professor Alistair Michell: Could I thank the Council for your support and your confidence. Could I also explain why on earth I stood at all, when I explained very carefully why I was not standing and also promised, on the second occasion when I stood, that it would be the last? I did not anticipate that Phillida's candidacy would come to a sticky end. In proposing Phillida, I did feel that at this time of uncertainty, some memory of events of the last five years, rather than the last two or three, was helpful; particularly some of the dealings with Government, that were not all what one would have hoped for. Anybody concerned with this will know I had to be persuaded hard to do this again. I am not going to do a Frank Sinatra on you; I will reiterate what I said at the beginning of my second term: my third term will be the last, and there will be an opportunity for new blood next year, and I think that is absolutely right and proper. Meanwhile, I will do my very best. **(Applause)**

The President: We will go to a confidential item for 15 minutes and then return to public business.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

The President: We are in public business. Apologies for keeping you waiting.

1. Apologies for absence **(None)**

I thank you for remaining. If one person leaves the meeting, we are inquorate.

2. Declarations of interest We will take them after the item.

3. Election of Council member to work with the Officers Group

We have been through this already. The lay member of Council is Bob Michell. Congratulations to Bob.

4. Implementation of new recognition of professional qualification Directive

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk, Head of Overseas Registration: As I alluded to last time I was speaking to you in June, this is now the other half of the legislation that is going to implement the new Directive 2005/36. This is the DH consultation. It is the piece of legislation that is going to change our Pharmacy and Pharmacy Technicians Order. The most contentious area, as I alluded to earlier, was the temporary service provision, and that is going to be implemented by creating a three-part register. There will be three parts to the technicians register and three parts to the pharmacists register. These individuals will be registered as three registers.

By definition they will be practising, because they will be providing services in GB on a temporary and occasional basis. The document highlights the areas we referred to last time: the lack of CPD requirements, the sort of limit to the information that can be exchanged. We highlighted also the sorts of roles that we think Part 3 registrants should be restricted to.

That, in a nutshell, is the response. I will take any questions.

Mr Jonathan Buisson: How are discussions going on AURE and the other regulators?

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk: Deborah, JP and myself met with AURE. It was at an early stage, because the GMC had not looked at the DH consultation. They have had temporary service provision in their legislation from the very beginning. They do have concerns and a letter is being drafted to the current minister, Ben Bradshaw, which will go off this week. What is going to be emphasised is the concerns regarding CPD, concerns regarding professional indemnity insurance, because it is still unclear in the legislation. There is a requirement that temporary services providers have to make a declaration in advance of temporary service provision, and exhibiting evidence of their professional indemnity insurance, but it is still unclear whether they can be prevented from providing services in the absence of no indemnity insurance. So we are asking for clarification on that, and also the fitness to practise issues, especially in relation to whether these people will be covered by the vulnerable -- I have forgotten the legislation; the vetting and barring legislation. Also whether we can require conditional registration, if applicants are subject to conditions on their practice in the host Member State. So those are the sort of issues that are being highlighted in that letter. Really, just making the general concern that regulators need to ensure that they can regulate effectively and efficiently all registrants.

Professor Stephen Denyer: I have a number points on this document I would like Council either to agree or deny. It is an excellent paper. If I could draw attention to page 8/42, it is actually right at the bottom of page. It is about the possibility of repeating years that someone comes back every year for re-affirmation. Is it possible for us to be quite explicit that we do not like that?

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk: The declaration needs to be repeated each year. We can see if we can require it for each provision of services, but the legislation that we are implementing is that information only needs to be updated if there is a material change. So if there is no material change, the declaration or documents do not need to be renewed or supplemented, until the next calendar year in which the service is to be provided?

Professor Stephen Denyer: This document you prepared actually makes comments about our concerns in various points. I did not feel it came out strongly enough about this possible continuous element of re-declaration. It is frankly very worrying. I wondered if we could make a very explicit statement about that. If colleagues agree with me...

Mr Graham Phillips: That is a very sensible suggestion, Stephen.

Professor Stephen Denyer: If I could move to 11/42, the penultimate paragraph. It says: "Such a view might be sustainable where someone is genuinely here for only a few days." I think that might be a hostage to fortune, because even one day can cause a risk.

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk: Shall we delete the sentence?

Professor Stephen Denyer: I am tempted to, I have to say. On page 14/42 -- it is the second paragraph, where you have tried to illustrate the reality of the costs associated with carrying out some of these aptitude tests. I think 110 looks like it could be dismissed as being pulled out of the air. It would be good to have another sentence saying, "this is based on the experience of setting pre-registration exams," or whatever. So it is a really understood cost.

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk: I emphasise that is only held twice a year. There is a potential of ----

Professor Stephen Denyer: Absolutely. I think it is a very good paper, very comprehensive. I want to make sure we are not criticised about having been uncertain about our view, which is that this is very bad legislation.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: It is a good paper, and obviously I think there are real concerns here about public safety. I am wondering, it is a big paper (42 pages). Would it benefit by some kind of executive summary sheet on the front? I would leave that with you for considerations.

The President: With that, can I get Council agreement?

Mr Graham Phillips: What is the timescale here?

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk: This response has to be with DH by 17 August. I am on leave from the end of next week.

Mr Graham Phillips: Have we got an implementation date for this legislation, at this stage.

Mrs Martha Pawluczyk: Whether we have the legislation in place or not, my understanding is that Directive takes effect on 20 October of this year.

Mr Graham Phillips: My point is that we were sufficiently unhappy when we looked at this last time to consider refusing to implement this piece of legislation. We may perhaps bring this back to our October meeting at which point we may make a decision not to implement it and make the appropriate press releases and communication around it. My suggestion is that we bring it back to October, at which time we will know a little more, but it will not be too late to take action.

Professor Stephen Denyer: The paper can be submitted.

Mr Graham Phillips: Of course.

The President: Thank you, Stephen. Can we agree the paper, with the suggestions, will be submitted? If there are any issues arising out of that, we will take it up with Martha when she returns from her holiday.

[Council agreed (i) the response to the Department of Health consultation on the implementation of Directive 2005/36/EC, with a few minor drafting amendments as agreed, and (ii) that the Council should consider the matter again at its October 2007 meeting.]

5. Referrals from the Governance Committee

a) Council Governance Handbook: Role of Chairmen

Secretary & Registrar, Miss Ann Lewis: These are fairly straightforward. The first one is to agree the recommendation on the proposed amendment, which is the bullet point. Is that agreed? **(Agreed)**

[Council agreed that the following additional item be added to the sections in the Council Governance Handbook relating to the responsibilities/role of chairmen of committees and working group: "To present and support the committee's/group's recommendations".]

(b) Composition of RPS Publishing Board

Secretary & Registrar The second one is to the composition of the Publishing Board. At the moment, there is one Council member on the Board. The proposal is that it should be increased to two, with a profile indicated. This is pending any other changes there may be to limited liability and so on. I would ask the Council to agree this, as it will enhance input to the Board. **(Agreed)**

The President: Can I check, this recommendation ----

Secretary & Registrar: Can we take all those points as one President, on the Board? There are four points.

The President: Yes. I think when I was speaking to somebody, they said these decisions are interim because there is something else. I am not part of the Governance Group. Can you clarify?

Secretary & Registrar: I think the point was they can be superseded if there is a change in the governance at some future time as we consider limited liability any further action following the working Party.

[Council **agreed** (i) that a second Council member place be included in the composition of the Board of RPS Publishing with effect from July 2007; (ii) that the following criteria for appointment be adopted: a Council member with some experience of publishing; a Council member with practice and possibly business experience which would be relevant to the Board; (iii) that the Council's Appointments Panel appoint two Council members to the RPS Publishing Board (one to fill the existing vacancy and the new, second place) following a request for expressions of interest from Council members; and (iv) that, in addition to the annual report to Council by the Chairman, there should be a half yearly update at a formal Council Meeting and presentations at strategy days as appropriate.]

Professor Stephen Denyer: I do recall from this meeting that we had with Colin and colleagues that under item 4, in addition to the annual report there would be half-yearly updates, it was felt there should also be interim presentations during strategy days. Perhaps we do not want it under governance, but I feel that was important, as it was trying to make people aware of the reasons for business plans.

Secretary & Registrar: It was in fact intended that Colin would have been at the dinner this time, but it was deferred.

Mr Bernard Kelly, Director of Finance and Resources: Initially we scheduled at our last strategy meeting. Pressure on time on the agenda meant that we were not able to do that

Secretary & Registrar: The White Paper has got a lot to answer for.

6. BPSA Constitution

Similarly, the next item on BPSA. There is a very a minor amendment on paper 76. Can I suggest that you seek the Council's agreement?

The President: Is that agreed? **(Agreed)**

[Council **agreed** the following amendment to the constitution of the BPSA. "3.2 The Executive shall be constituted of the following members: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary General, Public Relations Officer, Membership Secretary, Information technology Officer, Student Exchange Officer, Graduate Officer, *Future Pharmacist* Editor, Sports Officer, ~~four~~ *five* Area Co-ordinators and two conference organisers."]

7. Fees 2008

The President: The next item is fees in 2008. We are required to set the fee at this time. I think nobody in the profession would be unaware of the big changes which are discussed in terms of the formation of a Royal College and a General Pharmaceutical Council. There are a large number of issues that we are having to contend with. Some of them relate to a big hole in the pension fund and also the implementation of section 60 rules. The Council earlier agreed that we would set new fees for 2008.

We must take into account financial resource allocated for practice, education and communication activities. We very much want to continue to support our branches, regions and the British Pharmaceutical Students Association. We must also take into account the fact that we now have three boards operating at national levels in Scotland, England and Wales. So we are trying to meet the demands imposed on us by external events, but at the same time we are ourselves taking steps to ensure that the profession is developed and continues to develop. So the fees which the Treasurer has asked me to announce -- I apologise he had to leave early -- are that for 2008 the pharmacist registration fee would be £206, the pharmacist retention fee for practising pharmacists would be £425, the pharmacist retention fee for non-practising pharmacists would be £96 pharmacist fee overseas would be £168. The pharmacist penalty would be £810 and pharmacists restoration application fee would be £206. The technician practising standard fee will be £189 and non-practising standard fee would be £156. Those who are practising, the grandparent practising fee would be £345 and non-practising would be £312. Those practising outside GB will be £375 and non-practising would be £342. Council, can I have your agreement on those fees? **(Agreed)**

[The Council **agreed** the schedule of fees for 2008 for consultation/gazetting (attached at Appendix 1).]

8. P&PTO – Administrative determination of forms: retention

The President: This is on the administrative determinations. Andrew Gardner, Head of Registration, will introduce item C/78.

Mr Andrew Gardner, Head of Registration: In the same way that Council was asked to determine the application forms for registration, voluntary removal and restoration, this paper outlines that Council is asked to determine the form used for applying for retention in the register. The determination needs to be made now, as there is no other Council meeting between now and October and we will be printing the forms before October. The form is designed and based on those used in 2006/2007, but with amendments made to the legislation. There is an error on the direct debit form which says "Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists", and it should say "Register of Pharmacists." The declaration on the reverse of the form is aligned to the one used on the other forms to which you have already agreed, but with additional statements to cover in the case where someone is removing themselves from the register, the declaration that you have agreed for voluntary removal.

Paragraph 6 of the declaration is included because of rule 5 of the Fitness to Practise and Disqualification Rules. Paragraph 9 is included and extended, because of advice from our legal adviser that we may have to share information with regulators in Europe and beyond. Paragraph 10 clarifies the Society may serve documents on a member by email as provided for in rules 3 of the Registration and Fitness to Practise Rules. Paragraph 11 is a requirement of the Registration Rules, rule 5 and paragraph 12 is included on the advice of our legal adviser.

The Council is asked to determine the application form as it is in the appendix to the paper.

Mr Graham Phillips: I realise I will not make myself popular by raising this at this stage, but I did contact the acting director to raise a couple of concerns. On page 3/5 in appendix 2: "The Council noted that clear communication with members to explain the requirements would be necessary." That is a remark I have made continually about any changes to these documents. My question is: In terms of the declaration, in terms of the mechanics of payment, what changes are being made? I gather some changes are operable sooner for members from abroad than for members from GB.

Mr Andrew Gardner: The major change is that for overseas members, we are going to ask them to pay not using a cheque. The reason for this is that the vast majority of overseas members (80 percent) pay by using the online service. Of those who pay by cheque, about a third end up being rejected because there was some sort of error (it was a foreign cheque or was made out incorrectly). The other change is that we will be withdrawing paper receipts and they will be available electronically.

Mr Graham Phillips: I am in favour of this change. It will save the Society and therefore the members a tremendous amount of money. My concern is that there has been no prior communication with members about this, at a time when we are trying to do our best to take members with us. Bearing in mind the change of overseas members, who are probably the ones with the greatest amount of choice as to whether they retain their membership or not, they are less tied to the Society than we are. To bring about this change, which has not been previously communicated, may be more unhelpful than the cost saving. My proposal therefore is to allow us some flexibility for one more year to continue to accept payment by cheque, and to communicate with members that this is the last year that will be possible, rather than risk the ill will of the members at such a sensitive time.

The President: I understand the point you are making, but how big a problem is it?

Mr Graham Phillips: If it is a small problem it does not really matter, because they will pay online. If it is a larger problem, those who want to take advantage of it will do. Many, many times, it is not what we say, but the way we say it. I have said it time and time again here. It is the kind of thing that does us no favours. It is probably a small of number people, but the ill feeling it can create by not proactively communicating it.

Mr Andrew Gardner: To give you an idea of the numbers, there were 670 people who paid by cheque from overseas last year.

I have worked with the PR team on a communications plan to do with the changes in the retention fee process about the operational aspects, so there is a plan in existence.

Secretary & Registrar: My feeling is that most overseas members were relatively happy as we reduced their fee. Of those 670, it looks like 230 or so are problems, because they have been rejected. So proportionately, it is a fairly high proportion of problems.

The President: One or two points.

Mrs Sue Kilby: It is not a comment on the form, but a comment raised on numerous occasions, which is information on sector groups and whether it can be linked without sending out registration forms or registration online. We are desperately in need of getting this into sector groups.

The President: That was a point which was made by the sector group chairman at the meeting.

Mr Andrew Gardner: The collection of information about sector groups has been passed to My RPSGB and that is meeting again in August.

Mrs Sue Kilby: The fact is that the request for a registration form goes out to each person and is to use that as an opportunity to raise that as well. If we are sending something out at that point in time, sending it through email, let us raise this as an issue at the same time.

The President: This information would be a lot more reliable than any other information and it would reach every pharmacist. I see some sense in your suggestion. Andrew, is there a possibility to have a look at that?

Mr Andrew Gardner: Can I suggest that the propose of retention is separate from information collection, but perhaps we can use that as an avenue to collecting information, but I think today you need to sign off the form.

Mrs Sue Kilby: I am not against signing off the form -- that is not it -- but we have been trying for at least four, if not five years, to get this sector information through. It is something that is constantly raised by the chairs of the groups that we do not have the information. We have had to go out for elections to a number groups this year and we did not have adequate information **(Inaudible)** We need to flag it up at every opportunity, so it should not be thought of in isolation.

Dr Sue Ambler, Acting Director of Education & Registration: It is something the RPSGB development group is looking at when people go online to pay. They will have the option to click and say whether or not they want to confirm that they belong to special interest groups. Whether we get the technology in the back office in place for this retention fee, but we will give it a good go as it is important to have the information for the professional bodies and we collect it and get it separate to the retention fee... **(Inaudible)**

The President: 'My RPSGB' is only a partial solution to a real problem, because those people who talk to sector committees will know that they are desperate to communicate with members within their sector and we are talking about supporting our members in each sector. Whether it is done by this method or another method, I want to see very soon a very clear way of getting full information on the membership, so we are able to share that data with the Sector Committee chairmen, and the work that can begin in developing communications, very much targeted at a particular sector. I can hear the technical problems and I understand why the forms are designed the way they are designed, but it does not solve the problem that Sue has raised.

Professor Stephen Denyer: I may have confused myself by re-reading the form. At the beginning it says: "Removal from the register for non-payment of fees will incur a penalty." Is that right? Do we charge people when they have been removed from the register, or do you mean it is reinstatement following removal?

Mr Andrew Gardner: You are quite right.

Mr David Thomson: President, wearing another hat, where it refers to the potential to donate to the Benevolent Fund. Is there an option to include credit card donations in that area?

Mr Andrew Gardner: There is a payment mechanism for collecting that.

Mr David Thomson: Could that be referenced in the box?

Mr Andrew Gardner: I do not see why not.

Mrs Dorothy Drury: "Are you registered with any other professional regulatory body?" Why could we not just have a tick box there, and then underneath you can write which one in, instead of having all that space which could be used for sector groups?

Mr Andrew Gardner: The reason it has been there is that we were asked to collect the information by CHRE. It is useful to see when someone has dropped out of membership and obtained membership with another regulator.

Mrs Dorothy Drury: We can still do it, but not as laboriously as that.

Secretary & Registrar: I think there was also a confusion early on as to which bodies were included, which makes it very clear. We should remember the Ledwood was in this category. He was a pharmacist and a doctor and we did not know about it. There are quite a few pharmacists who are on other bodies.

Mr Graham Phillips: We had not completed my point. For your information, I did raise it with the director in advance of the meeting. The only way to resolve it was to bring it to Council for a decision. So my suggestion is that for one further year, we allow ourselves the flexibility to accept cheques and give ourselves a bit more time to communicate with people and implement exactly what we are talking about in one year's time.

The President: You are highlighting a perceived timing issue. Council, do you want this implemented this year or next year. That is the choice. All those in favour of this year, please show? **(Vote taken: tie)**

The President: I vote next year. The reason is that I think we need to take overseas pharmacists with us, because with the increasing fee, they have a very simple choice not to send in a cheque.

[Council approved the form set out at Appendix 1 of the paper. Council further agreed that the facility for overseas pharmacists to pay by cheque be retained for 2008, pending communication of the withdrawal of that facility from 2009.]

9. Annual fitness to practise declaration

The next item on the agenda is item 9. The annual fitness to practise declaration.

Mr Andrew Gardner: Members were first of all asked to make a fitness to practise declaration in 2005. Members were again asked to make a declaration in 2006 and Council agreed that declaration. In October 2006, it was reported to you that we had 350 or so members who had not made a declaration at that point. You decided to write to those people to say we would make a note on their file. We also agreed at that time to remove people as part of the 2007 process who had not made a declaration. Due to the delay to the Pharmacy and Pharmacy Technicians Order, in 2007 the retention fee process was conducted using the byelaws rather than the new rules, and there is no explicit power in the byelaws to approve remove members and registrants. The Society sent two letters to those people who have not made a declaration, and the text of those letters is in the appendices to the paper. There are 106 members who have not yet made a declaration. The options are outlined in the paper. I am recommending to you that you print the names and registration numbers of those pharmacists who have not yet made declarations.

The President: Council, can we agree the plan?

Mr John Gentle: On point 1 background on page 1 of the paper, the last paragraph talks of listing the names in appendix 1, but I do not have appendix 1.

[Council agreed to publish the following statement and the names and registration numbers of those pharmacists for whom the Society had no record of receiving an annual fitness to practise declaration as listed in Appendix 1 (subsequently tabled). "The Council of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain notes that the persons listed below had, at 25 July 2007, failed to submit an annual fitness to practise declaration. The Society is not, therefore, able to issue certificates of current professional status/letters of good standing, or complete fitness to practise checks for inclusion in NHS pharmaceutical provider lists for those listed.]

Secretary & Registrar: Quite so. We could not distribute the form until the meeting, in case people sent in the form.

10. Schedule of Council and Committee meetings.

The Vice-President, Mr Martin Astbury: I will go straight to the proposal I have. There was an Officers meeting this morning which I was not at, so I will be talking against the motion they will be putting. I would like us to take the standard format, the reason being that today has demonstrated, as was admitted in the paper, that we certainly need a meeting in July, which turns the 4x4 into 4x5. I certainly think the only meeting which is then missing is the February meeting, between December. In the 4x4, either March or April, there is a very large gap with no meeting. With the 4x4 you have a meeting in March, when you are preparing for the AGM. We will have things coming from the independent reports, plus the work from December. I think this Council, especially going forward needs to be met every two months. The good things that have come from the 4x4 are the group days. Those can be transposed over; there is no problem with that. That has been confirmed between myself and Averil.

The other thing I would take from the 4x4 is the starting times for Council on the 4x4 days, again to be transposed on to the standard one, so we are using the two days properly. That was all reported to Averil six days ago.

Secretary & Registrar: Can I make a point, because the Officers thought about this morning very carefully. We have not really had an opportunity this year to really test out the 4x4, and the fact that we are having a meeting today is the fact that we have a 4x4. It was impossible to put a Council meeting in for that purpose. Because of the White Paper, it totally derailed us for the first quarter. I think perhaps the President will report the view of Officers this morning.

The President: The officers felt that last year we had no opportunity to test the 4x4 timetable, because from January onwards Carter dominated the way we worked. We felt that perhaps it is worth pursuing the 4x4. It makes no difference to me, but I say that there are good points on both sides meeting bimonthly. There is a regular cycle, and Council members might feel a little more certain. But I feel we are entering a very critical phase.

What we are asking the staff to do is to carry on with business as usual and in addition to that, very soon we will be asking them to take the work on, regarding internal separation and external representation, so there is going to be an increase in the workload. Writing papers for the Council and all that will be done by the staff, I am sure, if asked to, but I am talking about the workload that is imposed on staff. It is a question of judgement and preference. There is no right or wrong answer, whether it is 4x4 by 6x2.

Mr Jonathan Buisson: Can we not call it 8x2, which I think is what we will end up with, because we seem to be at the mercy of events. I would go for the standard.

Professor Stephen Denyer: I was going to go for 4x4, but hang it all;...

The President: All those in favour of Jonathan's proposal, which is 6x2? **(Vote taken)** Who has disappeared?

Mrs Sue Kilby: I do not have a strong reference either way

Secretary & Registrar: You have not come to a decision to change what we are at the moment, which is 4x4. Can I point out that the advantage is that you do get more strategy days, and was not yesterday quite useful? I would suggest we try this and give it a full year's test.

Mr Martin Astbury: Can I point out if, by the standard system, we would have had two strategy days in July, then two Council days in August, by the standard system, you would actually have had more strategy days in this period under the standard system than compared with the 4x4. So that point is not correct.

Secretary & Registrar: It is up to you.

The President: Actually, Ann is right. We have achieved a status quo.

Mr Jonathan Buisson: Can I plead with Averil that the English Pharmacy Board meeting under the 4x4 is moved from 17th to 23rd April, St George's Day, which I previously requested?

The President: Item 11, honorary membership.

Mr John Gentle: Can we make a decision on the group days? On the Last paragraph at page 1 it does comment that, "the Governance Committee considered the use of such days and it was suggested that should the Council wish to continue to have them," it goes on about cut-off time. Can we have a decision on that?

Ms Averil Ridgway, Head of Corporate Secretariat: Having agreed the 4x4, I will make sure that everyone on the staff and ----

Mr John Gentle: It says the Council should make a decision on that.

Mrs Lorna Jacobs: Could I make one comment on the actual dates? I was a little thrown in looking at these, in that some of the festival dates listed differ from the 4x4 to the 2, which is odd. But actually, on 8th October there is a Council meeting. There is a Jewish festival starting early that evening. I want to give notice. Ten percent of Council members are Jewish. If we are going into this type of situation, you will find a real problem on that date.

The President: Can I say that between mid-September and the end of December there are a lot of religious holidays: Jewish holidays, Hindu New Year, Muslim Eide, all those kinds of things. On top of that, there are clashes with other organisations. There have been occasions when Council meeting has coincided with Diwali Day. At that time I made a choice. Either I stayed home with my family and enjoyed the Diwali Day or contribute at the Council meeting, because I think everyone should be allowed to practise their religion freely. But at the same time, it imposes an incredible amount of pressure on staff. We want papers a fortnight before the Council meeting. Trying to adjust all those things is very difficult.

I would say that when looking at these dates, let us look at the calendar and plan the dates and take into account that there will be some people absent for some reason. It might be a religious reason; it might be that they have to attend another meeting as they sit on another organisation; or it might be because they are ill. I am as religious as anybody else, but I think it is very important that we do not impose conditions where people have four weeks to prepare for the next meeting, then they have got ten days to prepare. So I think I want adequate time intervals between meetings so staff are able to prepare papers to the quality we want. Can we agree that? **(Agreed)**

Mr John Gentle: Can we have Christmas Day added to the list of religious festivals?

Mrs Lorna Jacobs: I do not mind coming in on 25th December.

[Council **agreed** the schedule of meetings for 2008 as circulated in the "4X4" version and **noted** that following amendment to align a few minor inconsistencies, the schedule would be circulated to all Council members and staff for entry in diaries.]

11. Honorary Membership 2007: affixing the Common Seal of the Society

The President: On membership, can we fix the common seal of the Society? **(Agreed)**

[The Council resolved that the Common Seal of the Society be affixed to the certificates of Honorary Membership for those Honorary Members elected by the Council in June 2007.]

12. Retirement of Miss Ann Lewis, Secretary & Registrar

Colleagues, there are no other items. There is something being circulated for your information only. If you have comments on that, please let me have them. I think we are in public business and I would like take this opportunity to recognise the sterling work Ann has done over many years, certainly as Secretary and Registrar in the last nine. We have acknowledged the work that Ann has done, but would you join me in public thanking you, you Ann, for her work with the Society. **(Applause)**

Secretary & Registrar: Thank you, President. Perhaps I can briefly acknowledge that and say that it has been a pleasure to be -- well, I was on the Council for some time, as you know, across the floor, and I have had a lot of fun on the way. I would like to appreciate the many people I have worked with, particularly the staff, because they are great. As Rob said, please cherish them and do not forget your love spoons to be calm and friendly towards each other! I hope we all meet again. Thank you.

The President: I wish you an enjoyable summer. See you at the BPC. Colleagues, I should have mentioned this before. The oversight group meet on 8th August. I am unable to attend the meeting, so I have checked with these colleagues who were on the Carter Working Party and from the group I am asking Graham Phillips to deputise for me for that one meeting.

The President closed the public business of the meeting.