

THE ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Transcript of the Public session of the Council meeting held on Thursday 4 September 2008

[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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PUBLIC BUSINESS

COUNCIL MEETING

Present

	Treasurer	Mr A Gush (in the chair)
Ms S Agha		Mr G Alexander
Mrs M Allan		Mrs C Brown
Mr David Carter		Mrs D Drury
Mr J Gentle		Mrs S Hikins
Mrs L Jacobs		Mr R Jobling
Mr A Kershaw		Mrs S Kilby
Ms Y Liddell		Professor B Michell
Ms A Moore		Mr D Simpson
Mr D Thomson		

In attendance

Mrs B Taylor, Chairman of the English Pharmacy Board, Mrs S Melville, Chairman of the Scottish Pharmacy Board and Mr M Donovan, Chairman of the Welsh Pharmacy Board.

Mr Jeremy Holmes, Chief Executive & Registrar

1. Welcome

Chief Executive & Registrar, Mr Jeremy Holmes: Good morning, colleagues. I think we are quorate. Could I first ask Council if you are content for the Treasurer to chair today's meeting, as the President and Vice-President are both at FIP? **(Agreed)**

[Council agreed that Mr Andrew Gush should be the chairman of the meeting.]

The Chairman, Mr Andrew Gush: Thank you. Welcome to the Special Council Meeting of 4 September 2008. I welcome you all and hope you have had a good summer holiday. I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff who spent yesterday providing me with a sound briefing to hopefully allow us to transact the business on this agenda both effectively and efficiently today.

2. Apologies for absence.

Moving to item 2, we have apologies for absence from the President the Vice-President, Steven Acres, Brian Curwain, Catherine Duggan, Phillida Entwistle, Jane Ramsey and Marcia Saunders. Have we been notified of any others? **(None)**

I welcome Marc Donovan, Chairman of the Welsh Board to his first meeting as Welsh Chair. When the initial agenda was shown to me a couple of weeks ago there were four or five items on it. This has increased to 17 now, so I ask you to appreciate that we need to keep to time and move promptly through the business, which is scheduled to last for one hour.

3. Declarations of interest

I would like to remind you to declare interests before the particular agenda item which you have an interest in.

PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

4. Policy and Communications Forum

I would like to draw attention to paper 79. The purpose of this paper is to agree the formation of a Policy and Communications Forum to replace the current National Boards Liaison Group and Public Affairs Planning Group. There are two recommendations which we need to work towards. I would like to ask Jeremy to introduce the paper.

Chief Executive & Registrar: Council will remember a previous discussion on this matter. This paper is born from that discussion and has been shared widely across Council. It has two recommendations: To agree the formation of a policy and communications forum to replace National Pharmacy Boards Liaison Group and the Public Affairs Planning Group, and agree the remit for that Policy and Communications Forum.

Could I take Council to the second paragraph of page 2 of the paper, which lists four bullet points which comprise the proposed remit of the forum?

- Agreeing internal approaches to working under the devolution protocol.
- Ensuring good internal communications and processes between Council and National Boards.
- Proposing the strategy for public affairs and external communications across Great Britain and the three home countries, at a European level to Council.
- Monitoring the implementation of the strategy for public affairs and external communication.

The proposal is that the meetings of the forum be split into two halves, separating internal and external communications. The internal section will concentrate on issues of relevance to how well the National Boards and Council work together, and the external communications section will concentrate on public affairs and other external communications issues.

Core membership will be Officers of the Society and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the National Boards, supported by the Chief Executive and the three National Directors and Committee Chairs from Education, Law and Ethics, Science and Governance. A member of Council representing the Society at PGEU and appropriate staff will be invited to attend this section of the meeting regarding communications. I welcome Council's observation on that and propose the recommendations at the end of this paper.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: I have a question, again on page 2, about the fourth paragraph down starting "The Committee Chairs ..." The second sentence says: *"This is because there will be requirements to communicate the outputs of the committees."* Given that it is a two-way process, do the members of the National Boards get minutes of Council Committees, both the Council itself and the various statutory committees in the way that Council members do?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Not routinely.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: I know we are not discussing it here, but I think we ought to think about that, because it is a two-way relationship. Therefore, as well as having some kind of hierarchical pyramid of this Committee, which I am not against, but really distilling with the chairs to comment on outputs we need to look at the flow of information in two ways between the National Boards and the Council and the subcommittees and the availability of minutes and how we might do that.

The Treasurer: Could you take that on board, Jeremy?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Yes. Could I ask what the National Board Chairs feel about that?

Mrs Sandra Melville, Chairman of the Scottish Pharmacy Board: It would be helpful for us to have that information. Speaking on behalf of the three Boards, we are quite happy with the paper and are happy to endorse it, but highlight the importance of keeping a meeting of two halves, as it says in the paper that you have produced – particularly as we do not want to lose the focus of the... **(Inaudible)** Liaison Group where we thought it was important. If you keep it a meeting of two halves, it is more likely to retain the integrity of that. We think that is important. Given that that is agreed, we are happy to endorse the paper.

Mrs Lorna Jacobs: Could I comment? I am not sure how much this is done in other situations. The paragraph about Committee Chairs attending; do others think it suitable to have the Vice-Chairman go, if the Chairs cannot? I am thinking that we are now getting close to putting these dates in, and there could be difficulty for Chairs always to make dates available. Rather than have a vacancy at the meeting, would we be happy to have the Vice-Chair attend?

Chief Executive & Registrar: I would be happy, if others are content with that.

The Treasurer: I think there is general contentment.

Mr Douglas Simpson: I used to be Chairman of Law and Ethics, as people probably know, and I found it very frustrating trying to get to grips with parliamentary affairs as the Chairman. Parliamentary affairs tended to be handled through this Committee, dealing with the progress of bills and that sort of thing. Will that group continue to act in that way? Will parliamentary consultants come along to give reports? Will EU reports go to this committee, as they did to the old Public Affairs Group? How often will it meet? Just practical issues; what kind of work will it do in terms of handling bills and European things and that sort of thing?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Let me reassure you, Doug. It is the intention that it should get reports on public affairs – European as well as public affairs issues – and would meet up to four times a year. So we would preserve the mechanism that there has been up until now.

Mr Ray Jobling: I welcome this. Communications will be essential as we go forward. But I want to ensure I understand the thrust of what is on page 1 in the paragraph under *Background*. It restates the obvious, that Council is the policy making body of the Society, but provides for that eventuality that is the national consultation... **(Inaudible)** and the National Board has an input into that. In that setting, the National Boards can formulate and express obviously interim policy, which is then the interim policy of the Council. Is that right?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Yes.

Mr Ray Jobling: Are we as individual members of Council bound to support that policy in public? Secondly, are the other National Boards bound by that policy? That is to say, for example, if the Scottish Parliament now were to consult the Scottish National Board, are we to express the Council's policy like, for example, the one that has just been issued by the English Board?

Chief Executive & Registrar: An interim policy has interim status until it is adopted, agreed or indeed adapted by Council. So in a technical sense it is an interim policy, as advocated by the Board, rather than something that has been adopted by Council. But at the practical level, if there has been a national consultation at a country level and the Board has responded to it then that, de facto, is the position of the Society through its National Pharmacy Board.

Mr Ray Jobling: Is the answer yes?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Yes.

Mr Ray Jobling: So we must support a policy, unless it is amended by the Council?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Yes.

Mr Ray Jobling: And the other National Boards would be bound to follow in their consultation policy as expressed in the ... **(Inaudible)** National Boards?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Unless there was a country-specific dimension to it, which was different to the interim policy that had been agreed by the other National Boards. All three countries may not have the same demands in terms of their policy response.

Mr Ray Jobling: It is possible, of course, in the expression of policy that things are cast very widely. That is to say the consultation response, normally one has a discussion and an articulation of case. That case is bound to be general. We are seeing one today.

The Treasurer: Ray, can I interject? Later in the strategy day a fair proportion of the day will be on the formulation of policy and process maps with regard to policy. I think that we would probably have more clarity on this.

Mr Ray Jobling: My worry is that we have a horse which is preceded by the cart. It has happened, has it not? Before we can get to that discussion, this has happened. It is through ... **(Inaudible)**, because it was a national English consultation. I have made my comment about the fact that we have blundered it through in the middle of summer, which has made it difficult for people, but that is not of our making. But I think there are structural problems relating to this which go beyond communication and they need addressing. But we are being told that we are bound by this, and we have had no input to it as yet. I state that that is the case for those who are -- it has a sort of West Lothian element to it.

The Treasurer: Ray, I think we are straying a bit into co-payments, etcetera. I will have to stop you there, as we are constrained by time.

Mr Ray Jobling: I rest my point that there is a difficulty which desperately needs addressing.

The Treasurer: I wish we could go into more depth, but we are not able to do that today.

Mr John Gentle: On page 2 it talks of proposed core membership and comments that the Immediate Past-President would be part of the group. Would I be right to assume, as we do not have a Past-President, that therefore a fourth officer Council member would stand instead?

Chief Executive & Registrar: Yes.

Mr John Gentle: In the following paragraph it talks about the Committee Chairs will be invited to attend the section of the meeting about external communications. I wondered why the Committee Chairs would not be invited to the section devoted to internal communications as well.

Chief Executive & Registrar: Principally for the reason that Sandra expressed, which is that the National Boards are focused on the internal issues affecting the Boards and their relationship with Council, and are very keen to preserve the way in which the previous Liaison Group worked, which was quite successful. That is why it has been divided into two halves, which I think are complimentary halves.

Mr John Gentle: I have no objection to two halves, for the reasons Sandra mentioned. But it seemed to me that the Committee chairs would have the responsibility for internal communications taken away. They would have no say in that, only external communications. It seems a little bit of an anomaly to me.

The Treasurer: Does it not say somewhere in the paper that where it is appropriate for a Committee Chair to come to the first part of the meeting, that is fine.

Mr John Gentle: Yes.

The Treasurer: It would make eminent sense. So there is flexibility in the proposition to allow that. Are you happy with that?

Mr Gerald Alexander: I am a little disturbed about the cutting of the discussion on this one. That is the first point.

The Treasurer: It is called 17 items in an hour, Gerald.

Mr Gerald Alexander: I tend agree with Ray and John Gentle. It is quite clear that internal and external communications are inexorably linked. Therefore, asking somebody like the Chair of Law and Ethics not to attend the first half of a meeting seems rather half-baked. Nevertheless, they should be there to understand what is going on. There is a linkage between the two. I do not think necessarily comment is required, but some form of observation might be very useful. As far as the issues that Ray has drawn up, I think we need to get to that pretty soon. I do not agree that Council should be bound to interim policy created by another forum at this stage. So I am not entirely in agreement with Jeremy on that. From the governance point of view, Council members are only accountable for what actually takes place within the Council and the Council policy, not for other people's policy. I think individuals would have to use their discretion if they were going to talk against a particular issue, but we are not bound by any code of conduct that would actually stop us from talking against issues that were raised by any of the National Boards. Sorry. I am quite happy to accept the interim policy, but I think until Council has an opportunity to rubber stamp that interim policy, Council cannot be bound by it.

The Treasurer: I think Gerald has made a good point, because he would not have had the opportunity to dissent when that interim policy was made. So it would be fair for him to say, until it became adopted policy, "The interim policy is such, but my personal view is this".

Mr Gerald Alexander: The interim policy is nothing other than interim. That is how we designed the protocols for devolution. I think quite frankly there is not going to be great dissent, but you never know. I do not think Council individuals have to be bound by any interim arrangement.

The Treasurer: I think Gerald has made his point well. Obviously there needs to be a degree of flexibility, in terms of attendance at both parts of that meeting, and I think sense will prevail. I cannot see any circumstances when anybody would be told that they could not attend a meeting. I think the momentum would come from the individual asking to attend. Are we content? We are short of time, so I can only call on Bob to talk. Then we will make a decision.

Mrs Lorna Jacobs: Can I make a comment to hopefully be helpful, just on what you suggest. If the minutes and the agenda for the whole meeting went to the whole group, if the Chairman then felt it was appropriate they would know what was going on in the first half of the meeting.

The Treasurer: Are we content with that suggestion? **(Agreed)**

Professor Bob Michell: Thank you, Chairman. We are really talking about interim policy on communications at this point. The point I would like to make is that the only reason for the existence of an interim policy – the only one that I can think of – is a consultation that has a short deadline that pre-empts a proper Council Meeting.

Chief Executive & Registrar: That is correct.

Professor Bob Michell: It seems to me therefore that that response should make it quite clear to whatever body, rather than using the term interim policy, which in many ways is misleading, it should say quite clearly: "This is the response of *Borsetshire* Board," or whichever board it happens to be.

Now with regard to communications, there is a more important issue. There should be an absolute embargo on press releases on interim policy, because they are incredibly unhelpful, unnecessary and obstructive to the proper formulation of policy. We are going to have an example further on this morning where the ability to consider the policy properly is going to be distorted by the fact that there already is a press release; a press release which is quite unnecessary. It means that if the chips are down and the discussion is evenly balanced, the view will prevail "We cannot afford to modify policy because it has already been released to the press". That is unnecessary and it should not happen. Press releases should concern definitive policy, because the interim response has been formulated to whatever body is doing the consulting. *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* can wait until Council has come up with a definitive policy.

The Treasurer: I think Bob makes a very good point there. It could prejudice the development of that policy or the changing of it. Unless it is absolutely necessary, I suggest that when we have an interim policy we take a passive view, in terms of communication.

Chief Executive & Registrar: I think the issue here is where there is an important view that needs to be expressed by a National Board on a country-specific issue. Where that is the case, I think it is right and proper that that Board should have the opportunity to express its view publicly. If that then becomes an issue that needs to be escalated to Council, then so be it. But I would be grateful for more Chairs' views on this.

Professor Bob Michell: I must come back on that, because it is completely going off on a side track. My comments did not relate to nationally-specific issues. They are related to the interim policy of this Council. I reiterate: The interim policy of this Council should not be disclosed to the press until the Council ----

The Treasurer: I understand your position. It is the interim policy of Council, and you respect that if the Boards have a view which is country-specific that they can make an announcement with confidence.

Professor Bob Michell: Precisely.

Mrs Sue Kilby: Apologies for being late. I am not sure whether we have covered this, but one of the very important things we keep on falling down over is that on lots of occasion, although we make agreements as to what we are doing, we do not actually have clear statements we want to get across when we are trying to communicate things. We do not have the line, as far as Council is concerned and the rest of the organisation is concerned on all sorts of things. We worked together on the fees issue last year, where we tried to get three key points across to people. Things like this need to be agreed on things like policy and communications forums, so when we have made agreements on various things we know the key points we want to get across and we can make sure it goes out to everybody, because we are all presenting in different forums, either officially or unofficially. It would be very useful to know exactly where we were for some of these statements, rather than each of us taking our own personal view, and we have a very clear briefing under that. I think that is absolutely crucial as far as communications is concerned.

The Treasurer: Your point is very well accepted, Sue. Could we go to the recommendations? Recommendation (i), which is to agree the formulation of a Policy and Communications Forum to replace the National Pharmacy Board Liaison Group and the Public Affairs Planning Group. Do I have agreement from colleagues? **(Agreed)**

Going to recommendations (ii), do we agree the remit of the Policy and Communication Forum as set out, but allowing for the comments which have been made today where consent has been sounded? Do we have agreement? **(Agreed)**

[Council agreed (i) the formation of a Policy and Communications Forum to replace the National Pharmacy Boards Liaison Group and the Public Affairs Planning Group, (ii) the remit for the Policy and Communications Forum as set out in the paper, and (iii) that deputy chairmen of Education, Law & Ethics, Governance and Science Committees should be able to attend the Forum meetings if the Chairmen were not available.]

5. Membership survey: "Have Your Say".

Could I first point out one error in the sentence? It should not say 'selected'. It should say: "To agree in principle that following the presentation results to the strategy meeting how the results will be released." Could you note that amendment? Could I ask Jeremy to give a brief oral report, please?

Chief Executive & Registrar: I am sure Council will be familiar with the survey that was run in the *PJ*. I have to tell you it has been a very successful exercise. We have had over four thousand responses, which was at the high end of expectations. The interim results were provided to the Membership Working Group of TransCom [the Transitional Committee], to help inform their initial recommendations on membership of the new professional body. The full results are being worked on now and will be made available to TransCom shortly. Council will have an opportunity to see those later today. Once they have been finalised, the plan and intention is that they will be published in the *PJ* of 13 September, but Council will have a full opportunity to see those later on.

The Treasurer: Any comments colleagues? **(None) (Agreed)**

[Council agreed in principle that following the presentation of the results to the Council the results would be released.]

6. Policy on co-payments

Paper C80 has been withdrawn due to lack of time for discussion and its contents are not time-critical. Council will have the opportunity to discuss the issue of top-up payments after the Scottish Government launches its review on this topic, which is expected shortly.

Mr Gerald Alexander: I notice that the response of the English Board is not attached and I would like it attached, also the risk implications. The Society needs to have a policy on this area. We are in a situation of interim policy and we have just discussed interim policy. So Chief Executive and Registrar, will you take note of that and perhaps by the next Council meeting this will be put in place.

The Treasurer: Thank you, Gerald. The paper will be updated because of the development in Scotland as well.

Mrs Beth Taylor, Chairman of the English Pharmacy Board: I feel it is important to make the points from the English Board perspective to make it clear. We were providing a submission to a consultation. In our response we do not say specifically say this is Society interim policy. We are responding to that and we recognise fully that this is a very emotive issue on which there are deeply held views on every part of the spectrum, both within the Boards and with other discussions. That was immediately obvious. So this policy development is work in progress. This was exactly the position, as Jeremy described where a submission needed to be made on a country-specific consultation within a deadline. I think that was done in a very thorough way. There is a lot more than can be done and there will be opportunities for people to provide input into that.

The Treasurer: In the period between now and when the paper is discussed again, if anybody wants to feed in comments to the office, they would be accepted.

Mr Gerald Alexander: Before we feed comments in, Chair, could we see the policy or document?

Ms Averil Ridgway, Head of Secretariat: They have been circulated.

Mr Gerald Alexander: It should have been attached.

The Treasurer: Bob, do you need to say anything?

Professor Bob Michell: Very definitely, and I have made that quite clear in a series of emails which have not had proper responses. If we look at the background paper, the review was announced in mid-June. The responses were due by August 13th. This Council met on July 23 and 24 and, among other things, played merry party games, which were enjoyable and instructive. In the meantime, we failed to discuss co-payments; we failed to discuss polyclinics; we failed to discuss the new geographical rules on dispensing doctors. You could say *So what?* These are merely public interest issues and we are no longer going to be a public interest body much longer. But two of these issues have clear implications for this profession -- your profession; they are not just public interest.

Council is parked in a lay-by while RPS policy is speeding past Council on the bypass. It is certainly a trend which is new, which is intensifying at high speed and which is unhelpful. The proper business of Council is failing to reach its agenda in a timely fashion and this has to stop; otherwise it becomes a governance issue plain and simple.

The Treasurer: I accept your comments. Jeremy, could I ask you write to Bob and address those comments, rather than do it now? I am afraid I cannot accept any more comments on 6 because it has been withdrawn. It is eleven o'clock and we still have 10 items to go through. I apologise, colleagues, but there is not a decision to be made on this, but we take your comments on board. I would like to go to regulatory matters.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: Can I make one more comment? This is a comment about this meeting. We started off with a one hour meeting and originally five items. It has grown to 17.

The Treasurer: I am well aware of that, Sylvia.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: There is another way of looking at it, which is that we properly debate the items as we go down and draw a line under the other and put those to another meeting. I am very unhappy with the way we are rushing through these items. I think at the end of the day, we are not going to feel very satisfied about the procedures.

The Treasurer: I am not content to have to do 17 items in an hour, but that is what I have in front of me. Some of them are pressing. Some of them have been put on the agenda by colleagues. So you please people in one way, then you disappoint people in another way. I think that we will go through the agenda. If we have time to come back to 6 and you want to talk about process, I am quite happy to do that. If we could make progress now with some items that are quick. If time allows we will go back to that. I will suggest to the Chief Executive that he takes notes of your comments and gets back to people individually and, if necessary, we have an item on this at the October meeting.

Chief Executive & Registrar: Could I suggest that this issue of policy development and the process used for that is a very important issue and we might want to give more time to that from 11.30 at the beginning of the strategy session.

The Treasurer: As I interjected earlier, a large proportion of the strategy day is given to policy development and policy flow from the Society. I think we use that as a useful time to overcome some of these problems. We need to come back to 7. I will come back to people if time allows.

[Council noted (i) that the Chief Executive & Registrar would write to Professor Michell, and (ii) that the policy on co-payments and the issues raised by Professor Michell would come back to the Council in October 2008 if necessary.]

REGULATORY MATTERS

7. Fees 2009

If I can draw your attention to paper 81: To consider the results of the 2009 fees consultation and agree the fees level for 2009. If I could ask Bernard Kelly, our Finance Director, to introduce this paper.

Mr Bernard Kelly, Director of Finance & Resources: Council, this paper needs your decision to set fees for 2009, following the consultation exercise with members, the results of which are detailed in the paper. In essence, there was a very low response from membership. Although there was a slight majority, 54 percent, in favour of a low income fee. There was no enthusiasm for these lower fees to be subsidised by other members. In fact, there was no enthusiasm for any level of fee increase at all. Introducing a low income fee could, depending on the level of take-up, be quite expensive for the Society. I will now hand over to Andrew to take you through the decisions needed.

The Treasurer: Colleagues, let us get on to some safer ground for me. At the time we considered this matter in April, we had assumed that the take-up of low income fees would be at the lower end of the range and therefore felt that the financial impact of a low impact fee would be manageable within our finance assumptions. My instincts would be to try and recognise the possible savings that could be realised by not introducing a low income fee and recommend something lower than 3.9 percent, especially as the consultation has shown no enthusiasm whatsoever for any level of fee increase. However, since then inflation has increased to 5 percent, and we have had imposed upon us by the trustees of the pension fund a substantial increase in pension contributions. Therefore this reduction appears not to be possible.

In April Council resolved on the recommendation of RMC that, in the absence of a low income fee being introduced, an inflation-only increase be introduced. That would imply that the Council should be considering an increase of 5 percent in 2009. However, mindful of the sentiments expressed by members during the consultation, in all conscience I cannot recommend that considering any option other than the one that we consulted on would be morally acceptable. I recommend therefore that Council agrees that all fees are increased by a below inflation figure of 3.9 percent for 2009 and that a low income fee is not introduced. Colleagues, I will accept comments.

Mrs Sue Kilby: First of all, I noted that you were looking at a low income fee of £16,500. Last year I argued quite strongly that we needed to look at something around early registrants within the hospital sector, because they have a particularly low wage. Now they earn more than £16,500 working full-time. £16,500 could actually be relevant to people who are working part-time, and the needs of a person working part-time may be different to someone who is working full-time. The issue I have, particularly with people who are first registering in the hospital sector and also primary care, is that these people have only recently qualified, are students and may well be carrying large student debts. I know that student debt it is not our responsibility, but we need to be aware that this is a fact of life. Student debts may increase, partly due to credit crunch and partly due to the fact that our students have a full-time course and therefore it is difficult for them to do additional work while they are studying, except in the holidays. It is not like courses where they have a reasonable amount of free time in the day to do additional work. I am saying for those taking low paid jobs – and it is also relevant to those going into industry – I wanted something to be done to help them in their first years of coming on to the register. £16,500 is not going to help them at all, as they come in at the low twenties.

The Treasurer: Sue, I have every sympathy with what you are saying. I was certainly very keen to help members on low income. But we must listen to members, and our members do not want to pay towards low income fees. We consulted and there is absolutely no enthusiasm whatsoever to pay for them. They liked the idea but will not pay for it, which is why I made a recommendation with disappointment.

Mrs Sue Kilby: But Andrew, I do not think our members have actually any interest in even completing your questionnaire, let alone considering whether they are willing to pay a slightly increased fee to cover those people first coming on to the register. We cannot actually assume anything from the results that we have got from these figures.

Mr Douglas Simpson: When we modelled this, did we model it on the basis that there would be the same number of members paying slightly different fees, or did we model it on the basis that we would maybe attract more members as a result of having a lower fee?

That is the first question. The second question is we are going into a future where we want to look friendly and welcoming to as many pharmacists as possible. This proposal you put, Treasurer – which has not yet been seconded as a matter of interest – looks a bit hard-nosed and hard-faced. I am a bit concerned at that. The third point I want to make is that the survey you are talking about would not expect people paying the full fee to vote to pay even more to subsidise other people. It is not human nature. The results of the survey are possibly spurious. We should not be too hard-faced.

The Treasurer: It is hard-faced with disappointment, I would say. Could I ask you to address those questions, Bernard?

Mr Bernard Kelly: On the question of modelling, we made no assumptions about increasing or attracting additional members, because the question was: Where would those additional members come from? If you were talking of those people who have gone off the register and decided therefore to come back, we made no assumption on that, as we had no data on which we could analyse it. The issue which was addressed was the question *Is this about part-time working, or is it about the ability to afford to pay?* which is why we addressed the issue of low income rather than hours worked or salary earned. One of the things which has been touched upon in previous surveys, in terms of response from members, is that some people can afford to choose to work part-time; others do not have the luxury of choosing to work part-time. If I could address the issue raised by Sue, we had in last year's fee increases tried to address the issue of those first coming on to the register. If you remember, the initial registration fee for those completing their pre-reg was held at about inflation instead of the 39 percent increase that was applied to practising fees. So the Council has tried to address many of those issues. As Andrew said, there is a sympathy for those starting work and those in low incomes, but there is a difficulty in trying to be equitable about how that cost is distributed. I agree with you. The lack of enthusiasm and the low level of response to the questionnaire consultation does not give an awful lot of grounds on which to make a very firm decision one way or the other. However I think that, taking into account that we cannot predict what the level of take-up would be, there is potential financial exposure to the Society if we were to do it.

If you are talking about the attractiveness of a professional body to members, all those issues can be addressed when we seek to set the fees for 2010, which is probably more relevant to the issue about the professional body and what it wants to say to its potential members, student membership etcetera, rather than the situation at the time where we are trying to act both as regulator and a professional leadership body, with a finite horizon in front of us.

As I said in one of my papers, this is possibly the last time in which we will be setting a fee purely for a joint regulatory and professional body. There are lots of challenges in making such decisions, but not much information on which to make a hard and firm decision, which could have substantial financial consequences.

Mrs Sue Kilby: Bernard, can I suggest that we look at having some sort of link between perhaps having a reduced fee when they first come on to the register, so there is a link encouraging students to be part of the professional body and then getting some sort of financial relief, when they require it. It is this particular sector of the population who potentially have high debts, low income and actually need to find financial viability that I am particularly interested in.

The Treasurer: I agree with you again on that point. I am going to ask you to do something for me. Can you feed that point into TransCom?

Mrs Sue Kilby: I have done on several occasions.

The Treasurer: I am sure it has been dealt with, as they welcome all comment. In a similar vein, if anybody else has views on this for the professional body going onwards can they feed them into Trans Com as well?

Mrs Cathryn Brown: I am thinking about the reduced fee. I know a lot of people in their comments said they were not prepared to subsidise it, but this is the one thing out of the three questions on this questionnaire to which people said *Yes, it's a good idea*. It would be a shame if we could not go ahead with it. Especially in that the difference between 3.9 and 4.5 percent is £3.00. That is one latte on your way to the hospital. I think even the skinniest 22-year old could probably do without one latte. There is also nothing in this paper about instalments. Have they gone by-the-by?

The Treasurer: No. It is a separate issue and will be reported to Council separately.

Mr Alan Kershaw: I want to support your proposal. I think you cannot have it both ways. If you ask people things and they give you one answer, you cannot say, *Thank you* and then do something else. **(Inaudible)** ... the consultation is going to mean something or other; why do it otherwise? We are talking about a profession which is a largely into business and which knows that if you make a cut on one side of the balance sheet you will have an increase on the other. We have to balance the books. You have heard me say before, the costs of running a reduced fee scheme are considerably higher than lost income and somehow administration has to be paid for. Quite simply I see no alternative but to go ahead with the increase. If we are only talking about £3.00, then I appreciate it is not a great amount, and we are hardly looking hard-faced. But it is hardly hard-faced if you support what the majority are saying, and the majority will be paying the full fee.

Mr Gerald Alexander: Just an issue of process, Chair. We are only considering the results of this 2009 fees consultation. Then we are being asked to agree to set a fee. The process is a bit strange. I know we have seen the accounts before, but I could ask you this question. How much extra revenue is the 3.9% going to raise and how much extra revenue is the 4.5% going to raise? That is the first question. If you can answer that, then I will continue with my issue of process.

The Treasurer: The difference between 3.9% and 4.5% will be about £120,000.

Mr Gerald Alexander: Not the difference. I want to know the revenue for each particular percentage.

The Treasurer: Graham, looking at the number of registrants across the different categories, could you give an answer?

Mr Gerald Alexander: A total for the whole Society.

Mr Graham Duncan, Financial Controller: I will pull the spreadsheet off.

The Treasurer: We will pull the spreadsheet off and give you a different answer to that.

Mr Gerald Alexander: That is the process. Had we had all this information along with the survey, we would have been able to reach a decision. I am somewhat dismayed by the fact that we are only considering the result of this fees consultation from 207 people.

The Treasurer: I can give you a rough idea. If it is £120,000 between 4.5 and 3.9. We multiply that by 7.2.

Mr Bernard Kelly: £12 million.

Mr Gerald Alexander: What is four and a half percent? I want to know the quantity of money.

Mr Bernard Kelly: Can I address the issue of process that you referred to, Gerald. This matter was discussed in April and Council agreed, having been given the information that you had actually asked for, that it should go for an inflation-only increase, which at the time was 3.9 percent. Council asked that a consultation be undertaken with members about the issue of low income fee. Therefore what has been brought back to you is exactly that which is what

Council asked for: a consultation.

Mr Gerald Alexander: I understand that, Bernard. But the supporting paperwork from April could have been attached to this as an appendix, so we could have been reminded of those circumstances. I am concerned and I find that a concern that we are asked as a Council to make decisions based on a consultations with 207 people who have responded, which I think is particularly poor.

The Treasurer: Thank you very much. Could I ask in future -- we have not done it before, because people have been content -- that we attach numbers to help Gerald and other colleagues, if they wish?

Mr Gerald Alexander: That really does not answer my question about process. We are still being asked to make a determination ----

The Treasurer: What I am saying is that the determination in the past has been made at this stage without those figures. We have take on board what you have said, and if that is deemed to be an improvement in the process, which has been in the past, I fully support it and will make sure those figures are available in future.

Mr Gerald Alexander: What Council needs to be reminded of are the decisions it has taken already, and really it is not being reminded.

The Treasurer: And also Council members have a responsibility to be familiar with the decisions they have made when they are making these decisions, Gerald. Can we move on to Ray, please?

Mr Gerald Alexander: I disagree.

Mr Ray Jobling: I support what Alan has said. There is serious guidance here and I believe that we, as a Council, and the Society has addressed it in a serious fashion. I think the consultation, despite what is being said about the small numbers, was an important component of that and we should not ignore it.

A word of context. On the screen you have an income of £16,500 or less mentioned. The Joseph Rowntree Trust estimates that someone needs £13,500 to meet basic needs, excluding rent or mortgage. If you add rent or mortgage to £13,500 you are not far off £16,500. These are poverty wages. Some of them are pharmacists, it seems. So as many as a third of all female employees in the English regions outside London and the South-East earn less than £13,500; 20 percent of them, and some of them are pharmacists. So this is the dilemma you are facing. Even if you take 60 percent of the median income, anyone earning less than that is falling below the European Union and UK Government official poverty data line. There are 13 million people earning less than that and some of them are pharmacists. So it is a serious issue, and I think the way you are approaching it is important. But there will be people on a very low income having to meet these sorts of costs -- necessarily, because it is their profession. I think it is right it be considered. I think you are doing your best. Someone on this income incidentally could not afford top-up fees.

The Treasurer: Thank you. We note your final comment as well.

Mr John Gentle: I think it is probably disappointing that the survey had a very small response, but it is the only survey we have got and the only response we have, so there is not a lot we can do about it. I think the majority of people who responded said they wanted a reduced fee. In terms of the moral authority about what we do, which the Chairman mentioned earlier, we are on dodgy grounds if we ignore that comment. There are no figures there to say the question about subsidy of the low fee from the full-time practising fee is not there. It just comments that 4 percent of people commented on specifically page 2/5. That is very small. I do not drink latte, but I was going to say it is less than a single tube fare. It is less than a penny a day.

If you talk to a practising pharmacist and explain to them cost could be less than a penny a day, I think the hardcore opposition to this that subsidy would disappear. I think seeing as we have the majority of people who responded in favour of the reduced fee, that is what we should go for. It is fairly straightforward.

The Treasurer: I would like to interpret that, but I am very aware as well that we were told that there was no desire by the membership for any increase in fees at all.

Mr John Gentle: Of course. It is human nature.

The Treasurer: And there was no support to subsidise this.

Mr John Gentle: There was no in support to increase Council's expenses at the last meeting, but we did that.

Mrs Sue Kilby: Along with the Chairman's income.

The Treasurer: Sue, I am definitely an advocate of helping people on a low income. But I am also aware that we need to be listening to the membership, and we need to get in a regular dialogue with them as well.

Mrs Sue Kilby: Andrew, what I was saying is that this will not help the group I was looking at helping, as they are on over £16,500; they are in the low twenties. So they will be subsidising people earning less than them. In many cases, in hospital it will be somebody who is working full-time on an A grade, or a low grade, 6 grade, who is actually subsidising somebody who is actually working part-time.

The Treasurer: Sue, you have made this point very well previously, and I thank you for that.

Professor Bob Michell: The Chancellor of the Exchequer believes that these are the worst economic conditions for 60 years. The OECD believes that of all the industrialised countries, we are the worst placed with regard to going into a recession. The view of your membership is that they could not care less. The huge majority are silent. Food inflation -- and food perhaps, apart from heating, are the inescapables of survival -- is far worse than general inflation. Sales of baked beans are up as people cannot afford other foods. Frankly, if this Council is deterred from doing what it thinks is right by 0.25 percent of its membership, we are all wasting the train fares.

Mrs Lorna Jacobs: I am sitting here listening and I want to make it clear, I am finding my view changing by the opinions other people are putting. So thank you very much for your comments. The one point I was going to put is still valid, which is that whichever way we decide; I think the communication of it is very important. I think it is very important that we convey to our members and reflect back to them the response that they have given us on this issue, and if we choose to go for the reduced fee, that we make it clear that we think this is the morally right thing to do, even if a minority of our membership have expressed their view and said otherwise. If we choose to go with the view that says people do not want to it, then I think we should be fairly firm in saying something to the effect: *We are disappointed that pharmacists do not wish to support their colleagues who are finding it so difficult.*

The Treasurer: I agree. I am certainly disappointed.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: Regarding the question, *Would you like to accept an increased subsidy if you are earning over £16,500?* I am not surprised at the result. It is the way you frame the question. I absolutely agree with what John Gentle said that in our response we have to show leadership here. We have got a majority who feel that there is a greater fairness in each according to his or her need, if you like. I think we have to show real leadership and implement that. I think also we have to think of the longer term, and we particularly want to engage part-timers in the Society and the new professional body that we are going to become. I agree with Sue that we are talking of students, but we are also talking about part-time workers, and the majority of part-time pharmacy workers are women.

A lot will be mums with kids and so on. I think we need to show real leadership and vote for the reduction.

Mr David Thomson: I have a concern acting on something which is a fairly non-representative sample. Certainly if the reduced fee is aiming at students or newly qualified, it is not helping those it is aimed at helping. It will be attractive to some of these part-timers whose income is not the main household income, and will limit the contribution to the workforce to come under the £16,500.

The Treasurer: We have consulted on these issues. If you disagree -- when it went to consultation it went on this basis. So where the decision is going to be based on what is there, if you are satisfied with the level of £16,500 you are going to have to dissent.

Mrs Sue Kilby: What I am suggesting is as it will not help those I am looking at, is it possible to reduce the registration fee, which would actually help when they initially come on the register and whether that can be looked at?

Mr Bernard Kelly: It is something we could look at and feed into TransCom.

Mrs Sue Kilby: I have not been in discussion on this, looking at the other options. I am not suggesting that we vote on this, but we look at whether there are other ways of helping the group that I am particularly interested in helping, and what the differences are. So if you reduce the registration fee down to £50, what difference would that make?

Mr Bernard Kelly: That will be next year, Sue. The best way to approach that is to feed into TransCom.

Mrs Sue Kilby: Why can't we do it this year?

The Treasurer: Because we did this on the basis of the membership.

Mr Bernard Kelly: I want to address the issue of the pre-registration fee, which Sue has referred to on the registration fee. We have done our best, as I said, in the previous years' increases, in looking at the registration training fee, the registration examination fee and the initial registration numbers. We put the figures up for 2007 by about 39 percent for practising.

Mrs Sue Kilby: I am not looking at going up. I am looking at reducing.

Mr Bernard Kelly: We held the number at a very low level, as far as the pre-registration fee is concerned.

Mrs Sue Kilby: I am not even looking at keeping it the same. I am looking at reducing it to help this group, if we cannot help by giving them reduced fees. That is what I am looking at, as another way of helping, which would be particularly focused at the group which are coming on to the register.

Mr Bernard Kelly: There is a process and a timing problem with the discussion that Council is now engaged in. Do not take that as being an attempt from dissuading you from having the discussion, but we did establish the principles under which we would be recommending fee increases for 2009 in April.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: But that was just going on the straight ... (Inaudible) It was not looking at any of the other options which could be considered at that point time. We did not debate or discuss that at the time.

Mr Bernard Kelly: Those issues could have been raised at the time of the discussion, but I agree with you; that it was not put forward as a proposal at that stage, as we felt we had addressed most of those issues in the 2008 increases.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: I think last year we asked whether there were other ways of looking at the figures, and whether other elements could be considered.

Mr Bernard Kelly: Which is why we raised the issue of the low income fee for consultation this year in response to that. What had not been put forward as an alternative to that was not looking at low income fee, but looking at a fee for those first on the register. That would have taken the same amount of time and effort to have implemented as low income fee. But there was also a body of opinion which was not focused purely on those immediately going into the register. There was a body of opinion focused on those undertaking help overseas in developing countries; pharmacists practising in undeveloped countries etcetera who were on the register. There is a whole range of potential beneficiaries of such a change which I am sure is very well worth considering, but what I am trying to point out to Council at this stage is that we started this debate in April; we did annotate the consultation on low income fees; we are now at September. We have to introduce the retention fee for 2009 which is operative from 1 January 2009. We have to go through the process of sending out retention fee forms allowing people to sign their declarations etcetera. If we go back now and suggest another set of fee structures, then we have to start the consultation period all over again. If we do that then, frankly, we would not have a fee increase for 2009.

Chief Executive & Registrar: Can I suggest we have a forward-looking issue, an medium to longer term and an immediate issue. The forward-looking issue I think is an overhaul of the fee structures that can take into account the comments that have been made and would form the basis of a targeted proposition to different groups for the new professional body. That is why I think the Treasurer's comment that these suggestions go to TransCom is crucially important. I think it needs an overhaul. The immediate issue is that we have to agree fees for 2009, and we have a statutory obligation to consult on fees, which we have done. But I for one do not think we should place huge emphasis on the results of the consultation, because the response rate was so low.

I am also aware of the views around the room on the economic climate. I think we have to be sympathetic to that. Pharmacists are going to be under economic pressure. Council said that it was looking for an inflationary increase. If we went for an inflationary increase now, it would be 5 percent. We are actually proposing to hold it as 3.9 percent. That recognises principally that we are cautious of the pressure that all pharmacists are under, and we have not discriminated between different groups. I think the outward message is that we are not open for an inflationary increase, as we recognise times are rough. We are going for the lowest possible increase that budgetary responsibility will allow, which is 3.9 percent. We are also intent on overhauling the fee structure for the new professional body. That would be my proposal.

The Treasurer: I would ask if we could go to a decision. The Council is asked (i) if it wishes to introduce a reduced retention fee for those practising pharmacists of low annual personal income to be funded by an increase in the retention fee for practising pharmacists of 4.5, as agreed by Council in April 2008. Do we have any support for (i)? **(Voted taken: carried)** Council's decision is (i), to introduce a reduced retention fee for practising pharmacists with a low personal annual income.

If the low income fee is agreed, Council is asked (ii) to agree that the reduction of one-third of the practising pharmacist fee be established for practising pharmacists with a total personal income of less than £16,500. This would equate to an annual retention fee of £275 for 2009. Is there agreement on that? **(Agreed)** So we accept (ii). Finally (iii): to increase all other fees by a below inflation figure of 3.9 percent. **(Agreed)**

[Council agreed (i) to introduce a reduced retention fee for those practising pharmacists with low annual personal incomes, to be funded by an increase to the retention fee for practising pharmacists of 4.5%; (ii) that a reduction of one third of the practising pharmacist fee be established for practising pharmacists with a total annual personal income of less than £16,500. This would equate to an annual retention fee of £275 for 2009 and (iii) to increase all other fees by 3.9%.]

ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

8. Recommendations from the Officers regarding appointments to committees and groups

The Council is asked to agree the selection of BPC panel members for 2009. It was agreed to recommend Professor Norman Lanigan, who practises in secondary care, and Ms Hilary Edmondson, who practises in community care for the panel for a period of two years. Do I have agreement of the officers' recommendation? **(Agreed)** The second recommendation is for a Council representative to attend the Europharm Forum, 17th Annual Meeting and General Assembly. Officers have agreed to recommend Gerald Alexander to be appointed to represent the Society in 2009, as he has been appointed to the PGEU this year which has a European brief. Could I ask for your agreement to Gerald's appointment? **(Agreed)** Can I thank Gerald for putting his name forward? I am sure he will do a fantastic job for the Society.

There are two items to note. Gerald Alexander has been appointed as the Society's representative on the PGEU for this Council year. Secondly, to note Alison Moore has been appointed Council champion for the review of the council committees and working groups. Could I congratulate both Gerald Alexander and Alison Moore on their appointments?

Mrs Lorna Jacobs: As Chair of Governance, I made comments previously about lack of transparency in decisions coming forward for ratification from the Officers meetings. I would like to commend the way this paper has been put together. It is very helpful.

The Treasurer: Thank you Lorna.

[Council agreed (i) that Professor Norman Lannigan and Ms Hilary Edmondson be appointed to the BPC Panel (2009) for a period of 2 years; (ii) that Mr Gerald Alexander be appointed to represent the Society at the Europharm Forum 17th Annual meeting and General Assembly, and noted (iii) that Mr Gerald Alexander had been appointed as the Society's representative on PGEU and (iv) that Ms Alison Moore had been appointed the Council Champion for the review of Council Committees and Working Groups.]

9. Professional standards and guidance for the Responsible Pharmacist Steering Group

I would like to draw your attention to paper 83. Council is asked to note the request for expressions of interest from Council members to fill in Council member places on the steering group and agree that Officers decide the appointments. The regulations will be laid down in 2008 for this and will come into force in 2009. Standards and guidance are needed to support the introduction of the Responsible Pharmacist. These standards will support the current Code of Ethics for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. The standards will be published a minimum of three months in advance of the regulations coming into force. Originally expressions of interest were asked for by 2 September. This has been extended to 5 September. We have Priya with us today.

Ms Priya Sejpal, Head of Professional Ethics: We are looking for two members of Council to sit on the steering group. There is a need for one technician to be present and one other Council member. It is important to recognise that the Responsible Pharmacist regulations are going to lay the quality framework on which the supervision amendments will be made in the future. So there is a need to ensure that we do have both a Council member representative and a technician member representative on the group. We do also have representatives from each of the National Boards, so there will be another three members present on the steering group from each of the Boards.

Professor Bob Michell: I am a little puzzled as to why the steering group will comprise one member of Council, when I can see quite clearly there should be one practising pharmacist, and even more clearly that it is a public interest issue and there has to be a lay member.

The Treasurer: Priya, do you want to deal with that?

Ms Priya Sejpal: We looked at the steering group and composition of it. We do have patient and public involvement representative on the steering group, so there will be public interest representation on the steering group. There will be a Council member that will be put forward to sit on the group, whoever registers interest and it will be for the Officers to decide. We have three pharmacists coming through from the three National Boards. It is important to remember that this steering group will report through to Law and Ethics and that will still come to Council through the usual Society procedures. So it is not the case that there will not be representation. We have a wide range of representation on the steering group, and we feel at the moment that steering group is comprised appropriately.

Professor Bob Michell: I hear what you say, but it does not alter my view that this steering group has to involve a lay member of this Council.

The Treasurer: Any support for that? **(Agreed)** How many people do we have on the steering group at the moment? Obviously it has to be a manageable number.

Ms Priya Sejpal: Currently I have 20 or 21 representatives on the steering group.

The Treasurer: Which is an awful lot. I think it is going to get into the realms of unmanageability, if we have many more. I take Council's guidance here

Mr David Thomson: I hear what Bob says. I can probably give some reassurance that there are further steps beyond the steering group, either through Law and Ethics and back to Council, so it will have lay member scrutiny of the process. It is trying to manage the numbers of the actual group as well.

The Treasurer: Am I right, Priya, to suggest that it asks for a Council member, not a pharmacist Council member. So if a lay person wants to express an interest and become part of this steering group, they are very welcome.

Mrs Sue Kilby: I actually take an objection to that. You have stated that you want a technician. The other person could either be a lay member or pharmacist. Now I am not against having a lay member -- don't get me wrong about that -- but I see this as being the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. It is our professional body and we should at least have the right to have a pharmacist on there. It is stated that there has to be a technician from Council. Why can't there be a pharmacist, because we are the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and it is our professional body. It is not at the moment the technicians' professional body. It is from the regulatory side, but it is not from the professional side.

The Treasurer: What I would say to pharmacists is put your names forward. We have not been inundated by pharmacists' names. Put the reasons down why you are passionate and apply for the position. That would be very welcome.

Mrs Sue Kilby: There is little point, because we know probably (a) who the technician is going to be and are probably fairly certain who the lay member will be.

Mr Gerald Alexander: If there are 23 or 21 people there to represent on the steering group, is there a technician there from a technician organisation? We do not know that. What do you have in mind?

Ms Priya Sejpal: We have not invited, for example, a representative from the Association of Pharmacy Technicians.

Mr Gerald Alexander: Would it have been easier to have done that, then to have appointed pharmacist Council members and lay Council members from the Society. I am sorry, but you are out-punching your weight. In every steering group on every policy group, because there are only two technicians on the Council. It is completely outside of the way that this organisation should be run. If you are going to look for representation from technicians, and there are to be 21 people sitting around the table, then you should be sourcing that opinion from outside the Council.

The Treasurer: Can I make a suggestion which I hope would help. Can I suggest, Priya, that you maybe contact the APTUK to ask if they would like to nominate a representative to go on, and change the nomination here to Council member and pharmacist Council member? Would that be a way forward to colleagues? I am not saying I am adamant about that. Would that cause practical difficulties?

Ms Priya Sejpal: I am happy to contact the APTUK. Then Council are requesting a Council pharmacist member.

The Treasurer: So it could be a layperson and a pharmacist or two pharmacists.

Mrs Margaret Allan: Or a technician.

Ms Seema Agha: I think we can remind ourselves that we are still a regulator and the composition of the Committee must be clearly set out. It feels a bit hit-or-miss. We might have this and we may have a bit of this. The leadership and the standing point must be that we must be very clear at the beginning. As lay members we have external expertise. We bring that in. Occasionally we feel undermined. We have got a PPI person, but they are not accountable to Council. We need to start the debate early on. They can then be filtered through, but we need to do the interventions at an appropriate time in the early part of the debate.

Ms Priya Sejpal: Can I clarify that the composition of the steering group was taken from a wide range of people. We do have academics on the group. We have invited, as we have said, representatives from the Boards and colleagues from Northern Ireland, Council members, technicians. We feel at the moment that the steering group has been appropriately convened. Obviously I will take on board your comments around the invite to the APTUK. The steering group are going to meet on three occasions before the Committee draft standards go to Law and Ethics at the beginning of January. At that point, the Law and Ethics Committee will need to consider the standards, amend them as they feel necessary and for those standards to go out to a public consultation, at which point over eight weeks, any pharmacist, any technician, any lay member, any member of the public can respond to our consultation. At that point, we will take back the consultation responses, feed them into the steering group, for them to go to Law and Ethics and back to Council. So there will be numerous opportunities for Council members via Law and Ethics, and through Council and through the public consultation to have influence over the contents of the standards documents.

Mr Ray Jobling: I come back to what Sue was saying. We are told part of the strategic objective is to ensure consistent performance as a regulator, as well as a professional body. And the purpose of the thing is to draft standards. It is a regulatory issue. I would urge that we support Bob and make specific provision for a lay member of Council.

The Treasurer: Am I picking up that Council would like to appoint a layperson? **(Agreed)** It would like to appoint a pharmacist. **(Agreed)** And another Council member who could be a pharmacist, a lay person or a technician or just those two?

Mr Douglas Simpson: Just to follow on from what Ray said, this is a regulatory matter. Technicians are on Council for regulatory reasons. So really we should have three: a lay Council member, a pharmacist Council member and a technician Council member. That is the only sensible solution, it would seem.

The Treasurer: That does seem eminently sensible.

Mrs Sue Kilby: I think we have a problem with the number of technicians we have on Council. Perhaps it may be more appropriate to look at widening the pool of technicians.

Ms Yvonne Liddell: Regarding how many technicians on Council, no offence, but whose fault is that? There are only two of us. We both work in conjunction with each other to ensure technicians are represented.

Our foremost thought is of patients and the profession at the end of the day, no matter -- technicians, pharmacists, whatever. We want to do what is right for the profession of pharmacy. This is a big thing, the Responsible Pharmacist. Technicians are out there, going to run the branches with good locums, with bad locums. They need supervision and they need standards. That is what we want to bring to it.

The Treasurer: Thank you for that elaboration. Doug has suggested that we have a technician. Are you making a proposal?

Mr Douglas Simpson: I propose we have a pharmacist Council member, a lay Council member and a technician Council member;

The Treasurer: Do we have a seconder? Ray. Are we content? **(Agreed)** On that understanding, can we go to (i)? Can we agree that Council members be asked to indicate their interest in joining the steering group to Priya before close of business 5 September 2008, clearly stating whether you are a technician, a lay person or a pharmacist? Is there contentment on that, colleagues? **(Agreed)** (ii) That the Society's Officers should agree the Council members to join the steering group. Are we content with that? **(Agreed)**

Mr Gerald Alexander: And a (iii) possibly, Chair? Normally, a steering group reports back somewhere. Is this reporting back to Law and Ethics or back to Council?

The Treasurer: It says clearly in the paper it is reporting back to Law and Ethics, and Law and Ethics will feed in its response.

Mr Gerald Alexander: Can we put (iii): Steering Group Chair to report back to Law and Ethics?

The Treasurer: No. I think the accountability has been stated. There is no need to do that.

Mr Gerald Alexander: As long as it is understood.

The Treasurer: I think it is understood. Priya, is the line of accountability understood?

Ms Priya Sejpal: Yes.

[Council agreed that expressions of interest from a pharmacist Council member, a pharmacy technician Council member and a lay Council member be sought for the steering group, to be received by close of business on Friday 5 September.]

10. Venue for October 2008 Council Meeting

The Treasurer: Colleagues, I would like to draw attention to 10, Venue for October 2008 Council Meeting. I would like to declare an interest in this. It would be my first opportunity to get home within half an hour after a Council meeting rather than travelling four hours here and four hours back. So I have an interest to declare.

Chief Executive & Registrar: Council met in Edinburgh in 2006. I think that was a very positive signal, as has been reported back to me of engagement with members outside England. I think a meeting in Cardiff would be another very positive signal. We have an opportunity to engage more closely with pharmacists in Wales. I would strongly recommend that Council considers having its next meeting in Cardiff and maybe considering have been having a further meeting in Scotland early in 2009.

Mr Alan Kershaw: I declare a non-interest. When I leave London and get to Cardiff, I am only halfway home. It is not desperately convenient. However, I think to reiterate the messages this was an attempt to do the right thing the wrong way. It should have come to Council in the first place. Let us get that out of our system and get on with the meeting. I think with Trans Com on and everything else, it is a good time to be seen elsewhere other than here.

Mrs Sylvia Hikins: Just to remind ourselves that we are the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Our personal feelings about travelling should not come into this. We should be prepared to take Council around different components of our constituency.

The Treasurer: I think it is important for members to travel around the country and talk to our members about the new professional body.

Mr Gerald Alexander: I am happy to support the idea of the venue being different at different times of the year. For instance, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham. I am happy about that, but we have a timetable. We do agree issues. I think it is in the Governance Handbook -- and it is pretty obvious -- that Council has to make those decisions, and we are now trying to deal with this retrospectively. I think that is unfortunate. However, I would like to support the general thrust, but in future I think it needs to be minuted that any future arrangements have to be put into the timetable in order that Council members are not inconvenienced by such changes. This change was brought on by a suggestion and the suggestion had not been agreed by Council.

The Treasurer: Could you note Gerald's point, which was very well made. Do I pick up a general support for going to Cardiff?

Mrs Sue Kilby: It is an important point. I am quite happy to travel round, but there is actually no point going anyway unless we are going to be seen to be there. So Patrick, can you do some marketing if we go up there? We need to have dinners and meetings. There is no point in us having a meeting in Cardiff unless we are going to mix with people in Wales and have a dinner there when we have an opportunity to talk.

The Treasurer: You have picked up on a very important point there, Sue. You are absolutely right. I am pleased to say that the Executive have picked up on that point previously as well.

Professor Bob Michell: I have no interest to declare, as I have already made it clear that I cannot go to Council. But I would like to ask the question that many of your members are bound to ask. What is the comparative cost of holding this meeting in Cardiff compared with Lambeth?

The Treasurer: I would say that the financial exposure of meeting our members in Wales and holding a meeting there would be less than £4,000. When you consider the dialogue which we need to have with our members over the forthcoming year, I think it is a small price to pay. The exposure is very small. In terms of value for money, I think our members would be getting value for money.

Mr Douglas Simpson: When we went to Scotland, David and I memorably addressed the haggis. He gave the Scottish and I translated it into English. Unfortunately we had too small an audience to that. We need to engage more with the local members.

Mr David Thomson: I declare an interest as well. It is on the Celtic fringe -- part of a pincer movement. **(Laughter)** What I would like to propose, if we are serious about a meeting in Scotland, is work needs to start now, largely because next year from 25 January to 30 November it is the Scottish homecoming. Those across the world who claim Scottish ancestry will come back to Scotland. There are something like 25 million people expected to come back. **(Laughter)** We are marketing this world-wide, so any venue and accommodation will be in short supply. I think that work needs to be started now.

The Treasurer: Could I ask is there general contentment for going to Cardiff? **(Agreed)** Could I remind Council members that they will need to give accommodation requirements either to Martyn or Angela?

[Council agreed (i) that the Council meeting in October 2008 be held in Cardiff, and (ii) that in future Council meetings to be held outside London would be indicated in the schedule of Council and Committee meetings when agreed by the Council.]

11. Any other business: Fitness to Practise annual report

I have only been notified of one piece of business.

Chief Executive & Registrar: I want to commend the Fitness to Practise Report to Council members, which should in be in your files. It is a very comprehensive report. My thanks to the FTP team and to Wendy for producing it. I think it reflects very well on us. It is the first time we have been obliged to produce this report. Obviously any comments or suggestions for improvement would be gratefully received. I think it is a very good report.

Ms Seema Agha: A couple of points came out from the discussion this morning that Bob raised about governance. I would certainly like to see the response, because I think Bob raised some very serious and fundamental points around governance.

The Treasurer: I asked Jeremy at the time if he could write to Bob to cover the issues, because he said he did not have an answer to his email. First of all, it is addressing his personal concerns on correspondence. I then said if necessary to come back to Council in October with a general response or a paper that would help.

Professor Bob Michell: It is necessary to come back to Council.

Ms Seema Agha: I would like it to come back to Council.

The Treasurer: Okay. We have agreed that, Seema. Thank you for your contribution.

FOR NOTING**12. Premises fee 2009**

This paper is for noting. Council has no locus to make decisions on this matter. The power to set such fees lies in the hands of the Minister. However, I hope that we note and support the desire on the part of the Society that these real and substantial increases in fuel and pension fund costs directly incurred by maintaining the Inspectorate should be reflected in the fees paid for premises. If this is not done, then we fear that the new regulator, when it is operational, will not be founded on a sound financial base, and therefore the burden of cost will be disproportionately borne by the individual pharmacist.

[Council noted the report regarding the application to the Department of Health for an increase in the premises fees proposed for 2009, which had been circulated at 08.09/C/84.]

That is the end of public business.