

Council Meeting

Hybrid meeting to be held on Thursday, 6 June 2024 at 10:00 am in Cambridge - London Room at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole, Pendigo Way, NEC Birmingham B40 1PP

RCVS Council meeting - Agenda	Classification ¹	Rationale ²
1. President's introduction	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2. Apologies for absence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. Declaration of interests	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4. Vetlife update	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
5. Minutes of meeting held on 14 March 2024		
i. Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
ii. Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6. Matters arising		
a. Obituaries	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Council correspondence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. CEO update	Unclassified	n/a
7. Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)		
a. Discretionary Fund	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Review of private prosecutions trial period	Unclassified	n/a
c. Registration Appeals Rules 2024	Unclassified	n/a

d. RCVS Delegation Scheme 2024	Unclassified	n/a
8. Reports of standing committees – to note <u>Please note:</u> all unclassified minutes from standing committee meetings will be found as part of the <i>following</i> meeting's papers for the respective committees, see: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/who-we-are/committees/ and navigate to the specific committee from there.		
a. Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Audit and Risk Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Education Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
d. Finance and Resources Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
e. Registration Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
f. Standards Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
g. Veterinary Nurses Council	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
h. PIC/DC Liaison Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
9. Reports of statutory committees – to note		
a. Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
b. RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
c. Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
10. Notices of motion	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
11. Questions	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
12. Election of Chair, Education Committee (re-run)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a

13. Any other College business (unclassified items)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
14. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
15. Date of next meeting Wednesday, 11 September 2024 at 10:00 am	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
16. Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)		
a. Update on major projects	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
b. 2023 Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements	Confidential	1, 2
c. Registration and retention fees 2025 – 2026	Confidential	1
d. Customer Relationship Manager	Confidential	2, 3, 4
e. Statutory Membership Examination	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
f. RCVS accreditation of veterinary programmes in the European Union	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
g. Strategic Plan	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
17. Any other College business (confidential items)		
a. Comments on classified appendices	Oral report Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
18. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)		
	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
Dawn Wiggins Secretary, RCVS Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk		

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
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Terms of Reference**The vision of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [as agreed in the current strategic plan]**

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

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

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

The purpose of RCVS Council [derived from the Charter]

3. It is laid down in the Charter that the affairs of the College shall be managed by the Council as constituted under the Act. The Council shall have the entire management of and superintendence over the affairs, concerns and property of the College (save those powers of directing removal from, suspension from or restoration to the register of veterinary surgeons and supplementary veterinary register reserved to the disciplinary committee established under the Act) and shall have power to act by committees, subcommittees or boards and to delegate such functions as it thinks fit from time to time to such committees, subcommittees or boards and to any of its own number and to the employees and agents of the College.

4. The Council is also responsible for the appointment of the CEO and Registrar, and the ratification of the Assistant Registrars. Appointment of all other staff members is the responsibility of the CEO and relevant members of the Senior Team.
5. A strategic plan is developed and agreed by Council to facilitate the delivery of these activities and to ensure ongoing development and quality improvement.
6. A delegation scheme that outlines how Council's functions are managed via system of committees and other groups is agreed annually by Council.

How Council members work

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

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	18 January 2024
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 January 2024
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 January 2024
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential) Annex A – Reform of the VSA 1966 – potential governance composition models.
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

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

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Council

Virtual meeting held by Zoom on Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 10:00 am

Members:

Dr S Paterson (President in the Chair)

*Dr L H Allum

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Miss L Belton

*Professor D Bray

Dr A L Calow

Mr J M Castle

Dr D S Chambers

Mrs O D R Cook

Dr M A Donald

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mrs S D Howarth

*Denotes absent

Mr T M Hutchinson

Dr M D Jones

Professor S A May

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

Dr A J McLeish

Professor T D H Parkin

Dr K A Richards

Mr T J Walker

Mr W A S Wilkinson

Professor J L N Wood

Ms J S M Worthington

In attendance:

Miss H Alderton

Committee Liaison Officer (CLO)

Mr L Bishop

Media and Publications Manager (open session only)

Ms E C Ferguson

Registrar

Ms A Hanson

Media and Publications Officer (open session only)

Mr I A Holloway

Director of Communications (DoComms)

Ms L Lockett

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Ms C McCann

Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO)

Mr B Myring

Policy and Public Affairs Manager (P&PAM) (open session only)

Dr L Prescott-Clements

Director of Education (DoE)

Guests:

Mr J Loeb

Veterinary Record

Dr M Morley

Senior Vice-President, British Veterinary Association (BVA) (Open session only)

Mr V Olowe

Vice-Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee

Mr A Webb

Veterinary Times

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:
 - Dr Allum
 - Professor Bray
 - Dr Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer (Observer)
 - Ms Shardlow, Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee (invited guest)

Declarations of interest

3. Mrs Andrews-Jones declared that she was now Head of Veterinary Nursing Operations with Eve Animal Care Ltd, London.
4. There were no other declarations of interest to report.

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023

5. The President reported that the amended September 2023 minutes had been included in the documentation before Council for completeness – they had already been agreed at the last meeting subject to the amendment being subsequently made, so were before Council to note.
6. Regarding the 9 November 2023 minutes, Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendix and were before Council for approval. A vote was taken:

For:	21
Against:	0
Abstain:	1

7. The unclassified minutes and classified appendix were accepted as a true record of the meeting by a majority vote.

Matters arising

Obituaries

8. There had been no written obituaries received. Council stood for a minute's silence for colleagues and all members of the professions that had passed since it last met.

Council correspondence

RCVS Council Election 2024

9. Council was reminded that, subject to eligibility, the deadline for submission of nominations to stand for RCVS Council was 5:00 pm on Wednesday, 31 January 2024. Council members were not permitted to nominate anyone to stand for Council and registered addresses must be used for the Nomination Form.
10. It was noted that whilst the College was seeking to make changes to the Election Scheme, until such a point where it was agreed with the Privy Council, registered addresses were still required. The elections 'pack' had been updated per the recommendations from the Council Culture Working Group and subsequent Council agreement, and thanks given to the Communications Team for their work on it.

Elections for Vice-President (Junior); Treasurer; Chairs of Advancement of the Professions, Education and Standards Committees for the College year July 2024 – July 2025

11. Council was reminded that any current member of Council could apply for the above roles. The deadline for submissions was 5:00 pm on Tuesday, 13 February 2024 and the elections would become agenda items at the forthcoming Council meeting to be held in March.

King's New Year Honours 2024

12. The following people had received Honours:

- Dr Collin Willson MRCVS (a recipient of an RCVS Impact Award in 2023) OBE
- Mr Nick Stace (former CEO of the RCVS) OBE

13. On behalf of the Royal College, the President had written to congratulate them.

Thanks to veterinary teams for response to ban on XL Bullies

14. On behalf of Council, and the College, the President wished to recognise the enormous challenges the veterinary teams were facing in implementing the new legislation around XL Bullies and wanted to publicly thank them all for the hard work that was being undertaken.
15. She also expressed her thanks for the swift response by the College through its various communication channels to defend members of the veterinary team across the home nations that had faced harassment and abuse through their work on this matter.

CEO update

16. The CEO introduced the paper, which included an update against the Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024 plus a summary of activities since Council had last met. A huge amount of work continued around lobbying for new legislation, and continuation of outreach and engagement activities.

There had been many conferences at the latter part of 2023, and 2024 would begin with the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) Congress the following week. Other items highlighted were:

- the latest Survey of the Professions had been launched, data from which would also aid the development of the College's new Strategic Plan;
- development of the new Strategic Plan would be a key activity running across 2024;
- the Public Advisory Group had held its second meeting; focus was on advice to animal owners about interactions with the veterinary team, which would help inform a new section on the RCVS website;
- there had been a record number of nominations for the College's honours and awards; recommendations would be put to March Council (and February VN Council) following checks that needed to be undertaken in the meantime;
- the College was in the final stages of its current Strategic Plan and each item had been 'RAG' (red/amber/green) rated. One or two items required some more effort, the main being around innovation and supporting the professions to rise to the challenges. There had been some ideas pre-pandemic, and there was funding available to launch the bursary scheme. The larger challenge prize still required consideration on how to support veterinary professionals to help problem-solve for the wider profession.

17. Comments and questions included:

- under Compassion, Action 6: unconscious bias training: it was noted that it was to be mandatory for Fellowship Assessors and questioned whether it would be rolled out into other areas, such as Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) Assessors?
 - o the training had been undertaken by members of RCVS and VN Councils, and Disciplinary and Preliminary Investigation Committees, and it could be considered to extend into other areas;
- was there any update regarding the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) inquiry, and could Council be brought up to speed on potential actions in advance of them being made? It was felt that there was a lack of information on the CMA work and potential implications;
 - o no updates had been received from the CMA and Council would be informed as soon as there had been a response; a preliminary report was expected by the end of January. The CMA website provided a lot of useful information on its role and scope;
- re: the innovation point, some of the forthcoming decisions before Council relating to the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) might not be to the professions' 'taste'. An understanding of how the regulation of professional standards mattered to them was an important piece of work and the delivery of outcomes was significant when communicating them;

- it was an interesting perspective as, originally, the item was intended to look at how innovation could be developed; skill sets within the profession, and how the College might work with the profession to tackle issues such as sustainability, or problems that were faced by the whole workforce; to be more externally focussed than around College activities. However, this could be taken into consideration moving forward.

18. The report was noted.

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

Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) – legislative reform

19. The President thanked the Policy and Public Affairs Manager (P&PAM) and his team for their work on this issue.
20. The P&PAM outlined the paper, and it was hoped that the principles established in the meeting would lead the College to a particular model to go out to consultation with. He reiterated the following points:
- the composition of Council sat in the VSA;
 - Council did not currently have a recommendation on what the composition should be in future legislation;
 - the government would ultimately pick up a Bill and take it through Parliament;
 - government had strong principles of its own about what regulatory governance should look like and any divergence would need to be justified;
 - Council had agreed a recommendation that it should become the regulator for the vet-led team i.e. for other allied professions in addition to veterinary nurses, which in turn would impact Council composition;
 - governance of allied professions should be considered e.g. should they have a separate committee that sat alongside Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)? This was a secondary issue compared to their method of appointment to Council, and the composition of Council itself, which would be brought to Council for consideration in due course;
 - regarding the holistic matter of being a Royal College that regulated, it was difficult to distinguish between Royal College work and regulatory work, so there was a strong argument for a single coherent governance structure;
 - VNC had also been considering reform of its own governance; more discussion was required.
21. Decisions within the paper were briefly outlined:

- primary versus secondary legislation: had been considered by Council previously. It was noted that composition of Council was currently in primary legislation, which made it very difficult to reform. The core principles behind the Legislation Working Party (LWP) recommendations were around flexibility and futureproofing, with a strong argument for composition in secondary legislation allowing the College to make further changes as required;
- composition of Council itself: detailed models had been included that reflected how specific composition could look like, dependent on the in-principle decisions made (model options are detailed at **Annex A** to the minutes);
- election of members versus appointments: the key aim of assurance to the public and government was to be a regulator acting in the public interest rather than the interest of the profession. A core reason why the government sought appointments as the basis of selection to boards and governing bodies, was to be independent and ensure that there was an appropriate spread of expertise;
- lay parity: not having a majority of professional members would give public assurance that the profession was not 'marking its own homework' and enabled outside expertise and perspective to be brought in on regulatory matters, etc. Council should focus on governance issues and the matters requiring more expertise should be considered at committee level, as it was with other regulators;
- Veterinary Schools Council (VSC) representatives: other regulators did not have external appointees; whilst educationalist expertise was necessary and important, it could be provided for via general appointment criteria, and also by ensuring appropriate expertise on committees;
- composition options closer to the status quo would still require some change to allow for additional allied professional members, which would otherwise be difficult to do without increasing the size of Council;
- separation of the President and Chair of Council: this could potentially widen the pool of candidates for both roles, for example, being Chair would not necessarily automatically fall to a veterinary surgeon, it could instead be a person with expertise in chairing a meeting and governance; with a ceremonial presidential role for attendance at graduations and being the 'face' of the College.

22. The President then read out a letter from Professor Stuart Reid FRCVS, Chair of VSC, which had been sent to the P&PAM:

"Dear Ben,

I am writing as Chair of the VSC. Thank you for your recent email and for sharing the likely

proposals that will come before Council this week. Having received feedback from most of my VSC colleagues, and keeping things to the point:

1. *We understand the motivation for change in the face of an opportunity for new legislation.*
2. *We endorse the need for RCVS to consider governance issues and be proactive rather than run the risk of an imposed model.*
3. *We support Council's apparent desire to maintain the current size of Council; whilst we recognise this is larger than many, the need to maintain sufficient breadth is important given the fact that other allied professions may be embraced by RCVS's regulatory authority.*
4. *We support a fully appointed model.*
5. *We support parity in numbers of lay members and members of the profession(s).*
6. *We understand, of course, that this would mean current reserved appointments would end.*
7. *We oppose replacing appointed positions with elected positions.*
8. *Our support stated thus far is contingent upon:*
 - a. *An appropriate skills matrix for the fully appointed Council.*
 - b. *Appropriate delegation of operational regulatory activities. By this we mean if the fully appointed Council is an overarching Board focused on governance, then the committee structure and composition would need very careful consideration. In the case of Education Committee, we would propose a model that other academic / professional regulators / accreditors use in North America and Europe, viz 50% of EC being appointed by / from the academic community (as was understood at the last major governance review in 2015).*
9. *We understand that there will be further consultation on the issues.*

I hope this is helpful. As I am sure you appreciate, there has been very little time for us to consider the proposals but I hope this response allows good debate at your upcoming meeting.

With all best wishes,

Stuart"

23. The President noted that the role of VSC representatives on RCVS Council was not usually to be VSC spokespeople, and asked whether, in this instance, they had anything further to add to the comments within the letter from a VSC perspective. Comments included:

Professor Parkin

- the matter had been consulted on quickly by the VSC and the comments contained in the letter were the feeling of everyone;
- greater value was membership of Education Committee (EC) rather than Council and it was important to ensure an aim of 50% parity on EC from appointees, from VSC, or similar;

- it was important to remember that if the College moved to an appointed Council, it did not preclude members of the schools being appointed to Council;

Professor Wood

- parity on EC was critically important;
- the VSC recognised that it might be regarded as being disempowered by removal from the Council's composition, but that was not the case;
- when thinking about overall governance issues and public confidence and public regulation, it was clearly outlined what the changes should represent. It was timely and appropriate that VSC representatives should step away from Council, provided there was clear, appropriate representation on the EC; which should be 'hard wired' into terms of reference;
- there was full confidence in moving to a purely appointed Council and it was believed that great improvements would be enabled and that it would be an exciting change;

Dr Jones

- the phrase 'hard wired' was good. Support from VSC was contingent on reassurances around EC and questioned what the process would be from there to address that and underpin support.

24. The Senior Vice-President from the British Veterinary Association (BVA) was invited to present its draft views to Council.

Presentation by BVA Senior Vice-President, Dr Morley

25. It was noted that the BVA was grateful for the College engagement with it at an early stage and for providing time to consider the topic thoroughly. The reform of the VSA was a pressing and key issue for collaborative work; it was in the BVA's manifesto in the run up to the next general election and extensive work was being undertaken to lobby parliamentarians. RCVS governance did not currently align with regulatory best practice and it was important to note that reform could be forced upon the profession as a condition of legislative reform, with far-reaching implications for generations to come.

26. The BVA had set up a Working Group to consider the topic, comprising:

- BVA Officers;
- members of its Policy Committee;
- representatives from:
 - o the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)
 - o the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA)
 - o the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA)
 - o the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA);
- past Presidents who had been part of the original response to the LWP recommendations; and,
- external input and experience of regulatory reform in the human healthcare sector.

27. Key questions considered by the Working Group were:

- function of VSA and Royal Charter?
- comparative governance – what did regulatory best practice look like?
- election vs appointment?
- regulation of allied professions?
- Royal College functions

28. The BVA broadly supported the following broad principles with the caveat that they were neither conclusive nor final:

RCVS Council

- members, both veterinary and lay, should be appointed rather than elected, following independent assessment against a clear set of competences.

This was on the basis that the usual and accepted purpose of an election process was to enable voters to select leaders to represent their views with elected members standing on a manifesto, and then held accountable for their performance in office. Given that RCVS Council members were not explicitly elected to represent any kind of constituency, a process of election was at odds with the role; independent assessment against a clear set of competences would be more appropriate;

- RCVS governance should be brought in line with governance arrangements seen in regulators in human healthcare.

In human healthcare there was greater parity between lay and registrants; it was difficult to find a strong case for vets being any different. This would likely mean a smaller board type structure, although it was noted that reducing the size of RCVS Council was not part of RCVS proposals. With the additional complexity of new allied professionals, the size of RCVS Council was an area where the Working Group struggled to reconcile views on regulatory best practice and the very reasonable expectation that regulated allied professionals would want to be represented;

- allied professions regulated by RCVS should form their own equivalent of VN Council.

The integration of the regulation of allied professionals was recognised as a significant outstanding challenge. It was agreed that allied professions regulated by the RCVS should form their own equivalence of VNC with a formal means of engaging with RCVS Council built in;

Scrutiny

- RCVS should commit to self-assessment against the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) standards and publish the outcomes of that final assessment in full.

Anticipation of RCVS progression towards the regulation of allied professionals and veterinary practices through mandatory practice standards was supported, a very significant widening of scope of the RCVS. Human healthcare had oversight from the PSA, and it was felt that a commitment to self-assessment against similar standards would be beneficial as progression was made towards legislative reform and its associated risks;

Clarity of functions

- RCVS should strive for greater clarity of organisational identities, purposes, structure, and governance, and communicate it effectively and consistently with the professions and the public.

Whilst it appeared to be out of scope of the paper, it had been impossible for the Working Group to discuss regulatory best practice without discussing the unique position of the RCVS as a Royal College that regulated.

The BVA's response to the LWP's recommendations was broadly supportive that the status quo should remain, and that separation of functions should not be recommended without good reason. However, it was also felt that evolution was certainly needed. Clarity of RCVS functions was an area that was returned to repeatedly during deliberations and had been difficult to move on from;

- RCVS should articulate more clearly the activities that it considered to be Royal College and regulatory functions.

This would allow space for the RCVS function to be championed by the RCVS and embraced by the profession;

- a separate governing Council for the Royal College should be established, with elected members;

Final points

- the Royal College should be for the veterinary professions, with other allied professions establishing their own similar bodies, if needed;
- the question of separating the role of President and Chair had not been considered in detail, and whether the composition of Council should be enshrined in primary legislation or not would require further consideration by the Working Group;
- the BVA looked forward to future discussions and further consideration when it responded to a formal consultation on these challenging and complex questions.

29. Comments and questions directed to Dr Morley and the presentation were:

- picking up on the preservation of the important Royal College function, BVA did seem to be travelling towards more than a Council type structure and the grounding in the profession through an elected element;

- looking at regulatory best practice, it was quite different from what Royal Colleges might undertake. There was a role for election but within the Royal College side rather than the regulatory side, but, as had been indicated, there was difficulty in disentangling those functions;
- was it possible to clarify what was meant about having a separate Council for the Royal College and a different one for the regulatory activities? Did it mean them becoming two separate entities or within the same RCVS organisation having completely different Councils?
 - that was the only place in the presentation where the word 'separation' was used, a lot was about the clear articulation of the functions. To be clear, in response to the LWP recommendations, the BVA was not saying there was a need for separation, but that evolution should certainly be considered; these were only preliminary views and should not be seen as final;
- the word might only have been used once but that could be considered to be the 'thin end of the wedge' that got thicker and separated two elements much like the pharmacists, but it was a helpful presentation.

30. The President thanked Dr Morley for his presentation and opened the floor to general questions. General comments and questions included but were not limited to:

- it should be noted that whilst this was the first time being discussed in open session, these issues had received a lot of previous consideration; and it was not a quick decision;
- as a member that had been elected to Council, the people who elected members felt it was important to have first-opinion vets in practice on Council in order to feed back day-to-day experiences and how any changes made would affect their work. The majority of the profession was in first-opinion practice and it could be argued that a lot of the work of the RCVS as a regulator was not first opinion, but, instead, for example, in public health or international accreditation. It was questioned how the College could ensure legitimate and relevant first-opinion views in an appointment system, particularly when the nature of people applying for appointments were generally from roles other than in first opinion practice;
 - when setting out an independent process, core criteria had to be established and representation from that part of the sector would need consideration, in the same way that any other 'gaps' were met such as: small animal, equine, farm, sectors; all four nations of the UK; Official Veterinarian expertise, etc., that was not always achieved through elections. If moving towards best practice and a Council that was focussed on governance, then the importance of expertise should be on the committees where those types of decisions were being made;
- Council was not currently representative of the profession, there were first-opinion veterinary surgeons but very little in the way of public health, for instance;

- regarding the principles of governance, effective governance worked. Whilst not being averse to change, it was concerning as it seemed that wherever radical change was brought about by government there was chaos, whether in the commercial or public sector, that included changes to culture and a lack of accountability and knowledge of the business. The total change from an elected system to an appointed system without any detail was concerning; already the VSC had made its support contingent on a 50% representation on EC – unless some of the detail was in place any change to an appointment system was a leap into the unknown. It would be good to see change to improve the College's governance and take it into the next decade productively; Council composition had evolved over a number of years and appointments were part of that process, but there should be caution about changing what was currently a positive culture into a negative one;
- there was a lot of talk about best practice, but did it work? Was it any better than what the College currently had? What work was being done on SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the various options proposed? There was a very real disconnect between the coal-face profession and Council; by maintaining an election process for part of Council, there was an option for engagement with the profession and ability to move forwards with changes such as under care. Comments about the College not being a membership organisation were noted, but it did have members by default, and election was a key process for engagement. Regarding public protection and working in the public interest, there was a degree of that built in with the work vets did with animals and by working with the people that owned those animals, otherwise there would not be any clients;
 - o there was not a great deal of literature that compared success rates of different regulatory models, but the emphasis was on best practice, which had been established by the government; if the College did not propose something closer to best practice, then a best practice model would likely be imposed on it by the government. Regarding the culture point, the College received criticism from the profession, as did all regulators, but there appeared to be some confusion about its role, some of which came from the fact it had elections – there was a sense that the RCVS should be acting in the profession's interest because it had an elected body, whereas it was there to protect the public interest; moving to an appointed system would make that point clearer than it currently was;
- the Law Commission review was a two-year piece of work published in 2014, which brought about the regulatory reforms in human healthcare regulation triggered by a situation that the General Medical Council (GMC) found itself in after the Shipman reports. Evidence of whether it worked or not was another question. All of the healthcare regulators – including the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), which had had the model the RCVS currently had (under the Royal Pharmaceutical Society) – was required to split. The risk was that the RCVS could be forced to separate into a regulator and a Royal College, so now was the time to show government how it would work as a combined organisation;
- change could be forced upon the RCVS given that it was a political issue across all parties, but there was a wealth of evidence across most regulated professions on the impact on public perception of having more independence to the governance structure by having things like appointments and lay / professional parity. For example, research had been published from a

survey of over 2,000 consumers on legal services, what influenced their views, and whether there was trust and confidence in the professionals delivering services. It came across very strongly that, regardless of the profession in question, it was about the governance of the institutions, and the processes that supported them was fundamental;

- regarding professional engagement, it was recognised that there was some disconnect particularly when the College made decisions that did not suit everybody; that already happened within its current elected process. Moving to an appointed system was not a panacea, but it was also known that what the College currently had was not perfect either; the number of people engaging with the election process was relatively small and many more people engaged with consultations, outreach programs, general communications, and surveys. So, there was engagement, and it was important to continue that and with greater clarity about what the individual roles were, the people on Council, and what the roles were of that extension process. To say the public paid vets to work on their animals, and that they therefore worked in public interest was a bit of a non-sequitur – working in the public interest was not the public paying you to do a job, that was market forces. Whilst the relationship between vets, owners, and animals was important, there was another layer of public engagement above it that was slightly different, which was where regulatory bodies sat; good interaction with members of the public remained essential and it was a reason why the College had set up the Public Advisory Group (PAG), but the ‘public interest’ was different;
- the PSA website had a lot of useful information of how healthcare regulation had developed;
- veterinary nurses were currently in an allied profession role, and it was unknown which other professions might want to come under the RCVS ‘umbrella’; how would that structure look? Would veterinary nurse membership be eroded as other allied professions came under RCVS regulation? Would membership numbers be set in stone?
- veterinary nurses were an allied profession and Associates of the College under the Royal Charter, which would continue. Additional allied professionals brought on board would also become associates and would have equal status. How new associates were regulated could be considered at a later date, for example, whether they had a parallel Council with VNC, or whether some could be merged together, as well as the mechanism for how those groups could appoint allied professions to Council. It should be noted that the key principle was that allied professions would expect to have a stake in their own governance in the same way as vets and veterinary nurses currently had, so space would be needed to be made for them. The paper had models laid out in it, one of which was to continue with two veterinary nurses but that over time it could be rebalanced to add additional allied professions using secondary legislation with details considered at that time;
- [I] envisage future representation to be based on percentage – an allied profession of 200 people was different to 23,000 Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs), and it was important to be flexible;

- agree with the concern about moving from elected to purely appointed members of Council because front-line vets were not the sort that would often be appointed. There needed to be a guarantee of how they could be appointed as it was in the public interest to have them represented. [I] do not think it would be a popular decision to get rid of the chance to get into a position on Council and could potentially lead to more accusations of secrecy and the College being an 'ivory tower';
- it was important to have the breadth of expertise on Council and appointments could provide the means for a skills matrix to provide a good crosscut of expertise. Thinking about workforce and having an awarding and fulfilling career, working for the RCVS was a fantastic personal and professional development opportunity; those members that were not quite at the right level could be co-opted onto committees in order to gain experience from that work, to be a potential 'pipeline' towards Council – not as a guaranteed progression, but to develop skills;
 - o the appointment process would be in the College's gift to say what the needs were, and it would be a type of job interview process with a job specification; it would not just be a random selection of people but used to create a culture where people wanted to stand;
- it was a new concept and would take time to bed in, it would also help people that did not have a large social media presence;
- given the Royal College that regulates position, if the College had some differences from the government-defined regulatory best practice, it could justify and explain the rationale behind the decisions and allow its governance to evolve rather than having to make sea changes. The conversation kept returning to the importance of committee roles so the detail of committees should be considered – Council was trying to stay at high level on the principles, but it was struggling as it wanted to know the detail of how it could pan out;
 - o the RCVS Delegation Scheme was reviewed annually by Council at its June meeting. It laid out the role of Council and then the elements of those functions that were delegated to committees and subcommittees. In most cases it outlined the composition of those committees. Returning to the points made by VSC colleagues, it did currently state that between 30% - 50% of Education Committee, for example, would be educationalists, so that was already specified; it also outlined the terms of reference for those committees – that was in the College's gift, it was not in legislation, so Council as a group could review and amend it, and could be flexible and variable with approval over a period of time. It tended to be smaller changes year on year, but it might be appropriate if looking for broader governance changes to be more radical;
- when considering an appointed Council, it was important to avoid the word 'representation' and instead talk about balance; be clear that the role of Council was not to be the repository of expertise for an organisation. There was an opportunity to review the College's advisory and engagement structures across both the regulatory and Royal College functions, and how to bring improved engagement into discussions and policy making. There was also the opportunity to ask questions about areas such as the role of the Fellowship Board, and other

aspects – not that it should become part of the governance function, but rather that there was clearly a great deal of expertise available.

It was concerning to hear the VSC comments about half the places on EC because that had the potential for another form of regulatory capture where the education institutions had the ‘whip hand’ on matters. If it was radical to say 50% on EC should be lay and 50% VSC, that left out any other non-educational veterinary input, and caution would be advised; the VSC might need to reflect on those implications as well in terms of overall public confidence in the regulatory regulation.

Regarding the matter of whether the Chair of Council and the President should be separate, could Council consider whether the President should not actually be a member of Council, and instead have a figurehead leader of the profession that had an important role in the profession but not necessarily have to sit in meetings; that could assist with some of the issues around election representation in the profession and keep engagement in a different way;

- the BVA presentation pointed to what it saw as an evolution or direction of travel towards separation. Could it be clarified that separation was not currently part of the scope, or was it something that Council should be discussing?
 - o one of the Legislation Working Party recommendations already adopted by Council was that the College should continue to be a Royal College that regulated, and the important holistic benefits had been previously discussed. It was strongly argued that the governance structure should reflect that because otherwise there was a potential for conflict.

It should be noted that there could be some reputational risk if there was a President of the RCVS that was not bound by Council’s collective cabinet responsibility, for example, if Council made a decision and the President that did not have a ‘stake’ in it and publicly disagreed;

- in relation to public confidence and constituencies, there was increasing corporatisation of the profession. Public confidence became increasingly important if the College was seen to be in a position where it could not deliver against that; be clear what the role was, and how appointments helped to make sure the College had the requisite skills and lack of conflict of interests;
- as an appointed RVN member of VNC, [I] could confirm that it was a very vigorous process, completely external to the RCVS processes, it was a separate application and interview process, and very fair. An earlier point raised was to ensure everybody was represented, an appointment process could provide an allocation of a place to, say, a new graduate, who might not get onto Council if it was via the election process. The College / Council was there for animal welfare and the public, but an election did not really take that into consideration;

- the disconnect between the profession and its governing body had been discussed at previous meetings and there had been some very good suggestions to bridge the gap. The prospect of appointments from committee was an excellent way of getting people in that might not think about applying for Council but might be prepared to think about applying for committee in an area where they possessed expertise; a hybrid model between appointment and election would allow balance;
 - o the current Delegation Scheme did allow for external appointment to committees and, going forwards, particularly if the number of vets was reduced, it would ultimately make more sense to do that to ensure the correct expertise on committees;
- the RCVS could provide opportunities to develop certain skills and it was understood that if the College went forward with an appointment system that it would come up for decision at Council at a later date as to how those appointments were made. Going through the points: it should be in secondary legislation; 'for' moving to an independent appointment system; gut reaction would be to look at Option 4; by doing so, remove VSC appointees and include them within general appointees; and do not separate the Presidency and Chair of Council role;
- in terms of educational expertise on Education Committee, there was currently a range of between 30% and 50% in the delegation scheme; a 50% representation would bring it in line with European and American colleagues (European had 50% plus one from educationalists) and the support of the VSC was contingent on the understanding there was closer to 50% parity on EC. In terms of not 'marking our own homework', there were a lot of matters that EC considered, not just monitoring what went on at the vet schools and accreditation visits, but, if a member was on Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) they would not be permitted to be a visitor for school accreditations, so there were mechanisms in place and a strict conflicts of interest policy to prevent that;
- regarding conflicts of interest and unconscious bias, the College was aware it was a small profession and that it needed educationalists on EC, but it was about managing interests and ensuring balance;
 - o an educationalist did not necessarily mean someone from VSC. Care should be taken in the language used: there might be someone who was extremely proficient on education matters that was not a head of school, nor on VSC, the point was to get relevant people with relevant educational expertise and the College should ensure that it did not inadvertently get itself into a too narrow a field; there was also the language around appointments, it should be appointed *from* not appointed *by* VSC;
- against a purely ceremonial President, the roles should not be separated. Regarding proposed options, it was worth re-iterating a previous suggestion of six elected vets; six appointed vets; six lay appointments; and six associated professionals, or, failing that, have a fallback position of status quo. When consulting the profession, it needed to be meaningful, with an opportunity to clearly dissent / discuss the options rather than a binary choice of a few limited options where the RCVS had already made up its mind.

As it was an evidence-led profession, the same approach should be used, the RCVS was a College that regulated so it should expect its governance structure to look different to that of other regulators. It should not look to other regulatory sectors for its models, as vets required their qualification to be able to work; there should also be research into professions that had previously taken such steps in terms of consequences they had subsequently faced.

In terms of appointment versus election, vets were not elected to represent a faction of the profession; they were elected from among experts, who considered them in their professional opinion the best able to work for animal health and welfare by maintaining the professional standards – the Council itself was not capable of the breadth and depth of that expertise, so why should criteria be set by a handful of people when there was an election by a vast body of experts? Appointment was not independent as the Council came up with the criteria, that was then used by an external agency to come up with the candidates; whereas the current composition of Council was balanced, and the election model was working. It was felt that the College was already ‘marking its own homework’ with the reappointment of the lay members it had, and further commented that a number of people had raised the concern with [member] that, with an appointments system, people would be re-appointed because they ‘fit with the direction of travel’, and that was how ‘echo chambers’ were formed; that did not happen with elections.

Regarding veterinary majority versus lay parity, the main argument appeared to be that everyone else said it was good practice rather than have data that showed whether it was better or worse; the most appropriate people to set and uphold standards for vets, were those with expert knowledge of the industry and had something to lose should salaries be lowered. The second argument seemed to be that the College should capitulate before change was forced upon it – that was more about losing face than good practice and was not a good motivator for change. In addition, what would be the preferred structure if there was not regulation of allied professionals?

Finally, consideration should be given to the College’s track record. Did Council think the College was failing in its current functions? If yes, why was it not holding itself and the leadership to account; if no, there was no argument for changing the model significantly from the existing pattern, because it was effective. Efficacy must be the motivator of decision-making;

- for clarity around the process of an independent appointment system, such as, for example, the recruitment for Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) and Disciplinary Committee (DC) that was a similar situation, there was much mention in relation to ‘oh, it was not for me’ or, that people would not come forward. To combat that, the College put on a webinar that had the biggest response seen in years at the RCVS, there were people from all ages and stages of their career, and there was an appetite to learn more. The process worked in terms of skill set, where the College decided what it felt was appropriate and there was a much wider pool than had ever been seen in an RCVS election in terms of absolute numbers applying for the roles. There was a separate panel, that included people from the veterinary world, and other regulators, and that worked very well. There were no fears in terms of the breadth of people who would be attracted to

coming forward and it was believed that there would be a much wider range of people than under the current system, including those who for personal reasons hated the visibility of social media. Once the criteria were set and the agency selected, the College then stood back and waited for the outcome, so it was not directly involved in choosing the candidates, there was a wide range of people being selected against a criteria. That had been valuable in the past and could be very helpful in the future;

- returning back to the headline, it was a discussion about governance, and the words representation and experience have been mentioned. If the College moved to a different model, there was the possibility of having people on committees that could feed into Council discussions. It had been decided that Council should remain as 24 – hold onto that because other regulators had been much reduced and some were in single figures; by setting the figure of 24, it would reassure those that would worry. Council would also decide what competences were required and retain control over that under the proposed reform;
- care should be taken in going to a fully appointed system because of the amount of work and complexity of what the College did, and its ability to serve the public and the profession in its Royal College and regulatory role. In trying to preserve both; the democratic effort kept Council grounded; it was not the first round of appointments that was concerning but the subsequent appointments that could start to drift away from being rooted in the original type of approach. When the profession decided the structure, it was the RCVS; when the executive and appointed Council started to redefine the criteria, the direction of travel could mean Council started to ‘drift away’ – the organisational group governing the RCVS should be built into the detail in terms of protection and the balance that would preserve everything good and develop that for the future;
- it should be remembered that this was not all in the College’s gift; the government would make a decision about what happened – had there been any steer from Defra?
 - o Defra had not gone into any detail to provide a useful steer; previous conversations had been around their understanding of what best practice was. It should be noted that it was not just Defra – once a Bill reached Cabinet level and parliament, there would be plenty of other people that would take a view on it that were not interested in the specifics of the veterinary profession but that did know what good practice looked like in terms of regulatory principles. They might not understand why the veterinary professions would want to be different, and the argument that the veterinary profession was unique and thus should be regulated differently was unlikely to be persuasive;
- BVA’s comments about how the other regulatory and allied professions could be regulated on the same structures as VNC was interesting; it was unknown what other professions would potentially wish to join the College. At the moment, vets had a degree from an accredited university, with evidence-based education, the College tried to promote evidence-based practice and a lot of clinical standards were applied – how did the College prevent dilution by non-evidence-based pseudoscientific health providers that wanted to be regulated by it, and then how would Council be structured if there was a homoeopathy chiropractor at the highest level on Council if they had come up through another allied profession? There had been

precedence, and it undermined all of the evidence-based medicine and standards that the College had been promoting for a long time, and, as mentioned, it was somewhat out of the College's control – once it went through parliament there was no guarantee that Members of Parliament (MPs) would care;

- it was an important consideration. Historically, before the Legislation Working Party, there had been the Exemption Orders and Associates Working Party that looked at the types of para-professions that might end up being regulated by the RCVS. Core criteria established were that anyone the College regulated should have a grounding in science, and that they should not be a reputational risk, so the core principle had been established and should continue. In terms of governance, all of the models in the paper preserved a majority of vets relative to other allied professions on Council, which was another check and balance. What the College was asking for was a framework Bill that would have a piece of enabling provision to bring in new allied professions, but the intention would be that it was something the RCVS agreed to and then the government helped to enable it to happen, rather than it being imposed upon it. The government *could* impose something, and so long as parliament agreed, they could do whatever they wanted, so the College needed to be cautious that any new legislation that replaced the current VSA had those checks and balances of allied professions practising in an evidence-based way as part of the vet-led team in ways that would improve animal health and welfare and provide the public that assurance;
- these were only recommendations of what the College wanted, the government would ultimately decide, so that had to be balanced in the recommendations – if the College went against what the government was likely to want, then the risk was in getting nothing like what it wanted. Times had moved on since the current Act was enacted in 1966, when only vets could own a private practice for instance; now there were fertility clinics – that was evidence of change;
- would new allied professional members of Council be considered professional or lay members, in respect of seeking to achieve lay parity? Would there be one register of professionals, or separate ones?
 - the distinction was normally made between registrants i.e. between people who were on a register held by the regulator – vets, vet nurses, future allied professionals that followed relevant codes of conduct – and lay people who might be professionals in their own right, but not of the same professions that were being registered by that body. It was expected that there would continue to be separate registers for each profession;
- there were benefits to an appointment system, not only from inclusion of the specific expertise the College was looking for, but also by having people willing to be on Council putting themselves forward, so it was the best of both worlds. As this was not in the College's gift, it was a discussion; whilst in favour of the appointments system, there could be a further hybrid option of six appointed and six elected;

- one of the key issues related to the engagement of the veterinary profession. With respect to those people that had stood for election, they had been elected by a small proportion of the total profession and that did not mean the profession was engaged; such a low percentage was a real problem – for every model, the RCVS needed to be far better at engagement. In relation to the thinking of ‘if it was not broken, do not fix it’, the College might end up with something worse; far from being perfect, the College should strive to improve and the movement towards appointments did a great deal in that respect – it might help focus the College through all of its activities and directly engage with the profession rather than relying on elected members, despite their hard work, working in a system that did not facilitate sufficient engagement. Drive towards change, taking a modern approach to what was expected of a regulator as well as a Royal College, as they were not inconsistent;
- Council was being asked to make decisions and that these were for future consultation, could it be clarified what happened next?
 - o there would be a consultation on any model that Council recommended, which would be additional opportunity for engagement with the profession and to look at best practice – how it was done elsewhere including on things such as the committee question raised. It would not be a definitive answer but would set a direction of travel. Further consultation in the future would include refinement of details to be decided upon at Council at a later date;
- a question on the more ‘extreme’ models – had there been talks on how Council could contribute to discussions on what was an act of veterinary surgery and what was delegated to the broader range of veterinary and para-veterinary professions, because there was a danger in terms of protecting the public that the focus on animal welfare was lost in Council authorising delegation for acts that should remain with the veterinary surgeon?
 - o the College had asked for a mechanism in any new act that would allow greater flexibility to delegate to allied professions where evidence suggested that it should be so; the decisions would continue to be matters for the RCVS within the appropriate committee; a good governance process would ensure that there had to be appropriate checks and balances.

31. The President drew the discussion to a close and turned to the decisions outlined in the paper.

32. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

- a) Whether the composition of RCVS Council should be underpinned in primary legislation or whether it should be a matter for more flexible secondary legislation?

Primary:	4
Secondary:	18
Abstain:	0

33. The composition of Council should be in secondary legislation was agreed by a majority vote. This would go out to consultation with the public and the profession.

34. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

b) Whether elections to RCVS Council should be replaced with an independent appointment system?

For:	16
Against:	5
Abstain:	1

35. An independent appointment system was agreed by a majority vote. This would go out to consultation with the public and the profession.

36. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

c) Whether Council should adopt a parity of registrants and lay members?

For:	11
Against:	11
Abstain:	0

37. As this was such an important decision, the President chose not to use her casting vote and the decision remained split. This would go out to consultation with the public and the profession.

38. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

d) Whether Council should reform its composition to remove the VSC appointees?

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	2

39. Removal of VSC appointees from the composition of Council was agreed by a majority vote. This would go out to consultation with the public and the profession.

40. Before continuing with the votes as outlined in the paper, the various model options in the paper were noted. As there had been a split decision on parity (question (c) above), option 6 (lay parity without VSC, 12 professionals / 12 lay) would remain part of the consultation to go out to the public and the profession.

41. To assist with a decision on which other model to go out to consultation with, an additional decision was included that was not in the paper to help inform a 'direction of travel' and additional details to include in the consultation.

42. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

Whether Council is content to move from a majority of veterinary surgeons to a majority of veterinary professionals (including veterinary nurse and any other future allied professional members of Council)?

Keep majority of veterinary surgeons:	9
Move to majority of veterinary professionals:	12
Abstain:	1

43. A move to a majority of veterinary professionals was agreed by a majority vote. This would go out to consultation with the public and the profession as part of whichever remaining option was decided upon in the next decision before Council.

44. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

e) Which reform model for the composition of Council should be consulted on as a potential replacement to the status quo in any future legislation to replace the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966? (Specific options voted upon were dependent on the outcome of the preceding votes.)

Option 3 (veterinary professional majority (15) without VSC and increased lay (9)):	7
Option 4 (veterinary professional majority (13) without VSC and near parity lay (11)):	14
Abstain:	1

45. Ms Worthington experienced technical difficulties and submitted an email vote that was included in the figures.

46. Option 4 was agreed by a majority vote. This would be the second option to go out to consultation with the public and the profession along with Option 6 as previously agreed (see above). It was noted that both options were similar and whether it was a slight majority of professionals (option 4) or absolute lay parity (option 6).

47. Council was asked to decide on the following question, with the potential for further details to be agreed at a later meeting:

f) Whether to separate the Presidency and Chair of RCVS Council?

For:	11
Against:	11
Abstain:	0

48. The President chose not to use her casting vote and the decision remained split. This would go out to consultation with the public and the profession.

Discretionary Fund

49. The DoOps explained that the Discretionary Fund was an allocation in the budget for expenditure on items not provided for to allow for new ideas within a budget year, and to enable strategically important changes to be fast-tracked. There were financial controls in place and the provision in the 2023 budget was £150,000. The expenditure was reported through Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) as part of the Management Accounts.

50. Since the last meeting there had been two applications:

- to set up a Mandatory Practice Standards Working Group, as approved by Finance and Resources Committee (FRC); and
- for a Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways Project, as approved by RCVS Council.

51. It was noted that the applications in 2023 had totalled £149,000. It was further noted that the Discretionary Fund provision in the 2024 budget would also be £150,000.

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

Eligibility of veterinary graduates from EAEVE-approved / -accredited schools for RCVS registration

53. The Chair, EC, introduced the paper. She explained that the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) was a member of the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG), of which the RCVS was also a member. This issue had begun in 2019 when the UK exited from the European Union (EU), and there had been concerns about the workforce at that time as, prior to EU-exit, approximately half of new registrants each year had been from the EU. Then Covid-19 also impacted the movement of vets from mainland Europe.

54. The RCVS implemented new accreditation standards last January and it had been noted that there was increasing divergence as the RCVS now had some standards that EAEVE did not. However, it was recognised that EAEVE-accredited schools provided more assurance of educational standards than the previous Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) Directive, which the RCVS had had to abide by when it was part of the EU.

55. The increasing number of registrants was outlined in Appendix 1 to the paper. In addition, the number of applications to sit the Statutory Membership Examination (SME) in 2024 was almost double that of 2023, at just over 200. That was very positive in terms of workforce and vets entering the UK.

56. The decision on eligibility of graduates of EAEVE-accredited degrees for registration came to Council on an annual basis – the policy had been temporary from the outset, and the decision in front of Council was whether to extend it.

57. However, it was important to look at this matter in the broader context to ensure that there were no unintended consequences. In June 2023, Council considered a Food Standards Agency (FSA) scheme that was first introduced in 2020 as there was an acute shortage of Official Veterinarians (OVs) supporting the meat industry, meat sector, and inspection certification. The FSA had approached the College with proposals for a scheme whereby they could take veterinary surgeons that had a degree from an EAEVE-accredited veterinary school, and had at least achieved level 6 International English Language Testing System (IELTS) among a number of other criteria, to bring them to the UK and join the Temporary Register for a limited period within which they were expected to achieve full compliance with English language requirements. That had been agreed initially for 12 months and was subsequently given two extensions. In June 2023, they requested a three-year extension, which was decided against, and instead an 18-month extension was agreed. Council needed to be mindful of that when the decision before them was discussed about the eligibility of registration. Should the RCVS not agree with the EAEVE extension for a further year, that would have implications for the FSA initiative.

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

- how much was the College following up on the consideration of the proposal for funding to support direct accreditation of EU schools, currently with Defra? The College needed to continue with this temporary recognition for the time being, but there was concern for the drift in alignment of standards – significant differences were now emerging that caused concern. This was a pragmatic way forward, but could there be a way of expediting the direct route to accreditation?
 - o a proposal for funding had been submitted to Defra and remained with them and the College had received no indication of a response. While the temporary decision to accept graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools remained in place, there was less motivation for EU schools to request direct accreditation;
 - o the proposal had been submitted in January 2023 when Defra had asked for some different funding options that were duly provided. The College was aware it was under consideration, but it was still awaiting a response. It was noted, however, that there was a lot of competing issues for their attention;
- being mindful that Council supported this provision when it first came in because of the workforce issue and pandemic combined with leaving the EU, that was now four years ago and there were now two, or even three, sets of rules. The RCVS put the UK schools under a lot of pressure, as a regulator should, but at the same time it seemed there was a different set of rules for RCVS-accredited schools outside of the UK in terms of what their students had to do, and another set of rules for EAEVE-accredited schools. This was very different to the FSA area where, in some ways if you were to compare standards very crudely, the EAEVE standards had stronger requirements particularly around the food science side of things compare to the RCVS standards. The idea of people working for the FSA, or their contractors, was relatively straightforward. A proposal to move away from eligibility of EAEVE-accredited school graduates had been with Defra for a year and there had not been

an answer, which was not good enough as a regulator to not have had a response; the only way to get a decision was to vote to change this and no longer vote to extend this for 12-months in order to sustain standards;

- from a student perspective it ran counter to some of the other areas UK schools were working exceptionally hard on in terms of wider participation, diversity and inclusion, where more needed to be done to attract students that were potentially more likely to be retained within the profession. Direct accreditation of individual schools was a good approach, and the College should be looking beyond the EU given that it was unlikely to change anytime soon, so it should broaden its horizons and look for more willing participants who could come on the journey with it;
- the conversation needed to be more about just whether to extend the scheme or not, but also what the College could do to get out of it, not just to carry on with the increasing divergence in standards, which was the way it was going;
- the scheme should not be extended indefinitely, and the College should consider what its end point should be, to give the FSA time to adapt as whilst they were starting to make progress on improving resilience for the sector, it might be premature to take this away just yet. Regarding using EAEVE graduates to 'plug the gap' and help with retention, was there any data on whether EAEVE-accredited vets had longer retention relative to UK graduates as that was relevant when considering how useful they were for helping with retention?
 - o this could be looked into; the data was not easy, but the College could look at those leaving the profession and the reasons for doing so and work backwards;
- the College was aware of the FSA position in that it was a continuous recruitment requirement because of the numbers that wanted to transition into private practice, who were supported with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and directed towards the SME. The current numbers were unknown but when the College first looked at requirement post-EU-exit, that was one of the points the FSA made;
- the FSA angle was not in the paper and the Chair, EC, referred to it as being a related decision, but independent. What was being considered was wholesale allowance of EAEVE-accredited graduates to enter practice, not the FSA situation, that was entirely separate. It was not about giving the FSA time, or about FSA retention, the point about an EAEVE-accredited school graduate was rather different; unless there was a follow-up survey demonstrating retention in the profession, many of them might be expected to return to the country they graduated from in the broadest of terms. Retention in the UK was not the same question as retention within UK practice; the College should be very careful about the questions being asked – the paper was clear, but the issue had now got very blurred;
 - o the mention of the FSA scheme was because one of the criteria for vets to come into the UK on it was that they were from an EAEVE-accredited school, as well as other criteria such as their standard of English language, visas, etc. If the decision was to refuse the extension to EAEVE then Council should be mindful that there would be a knock-on effect

to the FSA decision taken in June 2023 – that decision would need revisiting because the scheme would subsequently be invalidated as it stood (which would be the will of Council, but it was just to highlight the potential consequences of the decision);

- could there be a compromise as, over time, the RCVS might diverge more from EAEVE? A line needed to be drawn somewhere, although currently many of the institutions would have students that had applied to that course *because* they were currently recognised by the UK. You could perhaps give them a deadline that, for example, in five, or six, years' time, the RCVS would no longer be accepting EAEVE-accredited graduates, which would also give the FSA time to 'wean themselves off' EAEVE-accredited graduates;
 - o they were intertwined to the extent that the scheme for the temporary registrants stipulated EAEVE accreditation and that was uppermost for the requirement to come into the UK, but it was not the only thing; the other part was that those people would have a specific amount of time to improve their English language skills. The FSA had recently been reminded of Council's views on the whole of that and how they should find an exit strategy; it was felt that the FSA had been trying but the College should also try to avoid a cliff-edge as the workforce shortage had not gone away. In terms of direct accreditation, what was unclear was whether there was an appetite for it, was there just a financial barrier that was stopping schools elsewhere getting direct accreditation? Or was it that in a post-EU-exit world, countries that used to send the UK graduates on a regular basis no longer had the surplus? Were there expressions of interest from, say, 10 schools, and would that solve the problem? Was it a money problem, or did people just not want to do it? There should be caution with a hard line to try and provoke a response when it was unknown what the end result would be;
- with the temporary decision in place, the graduates coming on to the Temporary Register via the FSA scheme meant they just had to improve their English language skills in order to move to the full Register; if the decision was no longer in place, they would have to sit the SME as well as improve their language skills;
- reflecting on the earlier comment, if there was an appetite for Council to change the wording of the decision, was that possible?
 - o in accordance with the Meeting Procedure Rules, minor amendments could be made via a Motion (and seconded) to omit words; omit words and insert or add others in substitution; to insert or add words; or, in the case of a meeting of Council, that the subject matter of the motion be referred to a committee, but not that the entire meaning be changed. The suggestion of five years would limit it to a cohort of students, and they would have the knowledge when applying to join a course of what the future would be;
- five years was good for the sake of the students it affected, and it allowed time for the College to inform everyone of what was going to happen and also potentially get some direct accreditation in place. It would be a sensible amount of time and [I] would be happy to second that with the wording to be agreed;

- there was concern for the students that had gone to an EAEVE school expecting to be able to register with the College because some of the students would be from the UK that could not get into a UK school. The situation could not continue indefinitely;
- whilst that was a logical suggestion, the College could just be asked for an extension again as it had been when it had been giving year extension increments – the College’s hands were tied, each time the Council had to approve this because there was no other choice; giving a five-year extension only provided the opportunity to ignore it for five years before asking for another extension;
- another concern was the impact on the SME, which was already struggling under the weight of candidates. There did need to be a hard stop and five or six years would give the College the opportunity to work with the people it needed to in order to obtain those changes because they were not going to do it on their own;
- there was logic in the discussion and the point about the importance of allowing students to have a set of expectations not being removed half way through a course made complete sense, but it was in human nature to put the decision off for five years and such an extension was unsatisfactory, the College had to take a stronger line on it in order to effect change; it had tried being nice and all that had happened was a shift and compromise to its standards. There was no fairness to the UK schools and no sense of purpose or parity; there should be a different proposal that would address the longer-term problem that a five-year extension would not do;
 - o the College needed to be careful about blaming Defra for the situation, EU-exit was not Defra’s fault; the College had provided a proposal for direct accreditation, which they might fund, but that they had not responded to. If the College felt very strongly that it needed to go down the direct accreditation route, it could spend its own money on it; one of the consequences from EU-exit was that there were trade deals being negotiated with other non-EU countries, so within a five-year period there might be other solutions open to the College from other countries as well. It might be that the College just needed to buy itself a little time to put matters into place, but it would be an issue of whether to use its core funding to subsidise that or not;
- EU-exit was a democratic decision that Defra, and other government departments had to respond to. In terms of the College’s regulatory role, the proposal for a five-year extension was very concerning and what would happen should, in two- or three-years’ time, EAEVE drastically change its standards for instance, or the EU imposed something on EAEVE that the College would not be happy with; the annual renewal allowed the College to anticipate and respond to it, but was the College living up to its responsibilities with a five-year extension?
- wording of the motion should be carefully considered as discussion had shown that Council wanted to see a lot of immediate activity, the problem was with prioritisation – there needed to be a solution laid down within the year, even if it was not implemented for a period after that.

The weight of business with Defra meant that it got pushed back; this was central in the importance in terms of RCVS governance of standards;

- an alternative to the proposal of a five-year extension and a hard stop, could the RCVS fund accreditation visits for a specified period of time, after which time the onus was on the schools?
 - o if Council would like staff to return with a cost proposal for direct accreditation for the College to pay, that could be done;
- whilst not being opposed to the five-year concept, there had been no time to look at alternatives. By jumping from an annual, temporary, agreement, to a five-year hard stop, had there been time to properly consider it? The other point would be the potential funding for direct accreditation – there were stakeholders to consider, and the employers of OVs were ready and willing to through a lot of money at the right solution, which needed to be thought about rather than simply to take money from the RCVS, which might be the best option, but it was not the only one;
- would five years be a hard and fast rule, or would there be allowances for students that had a period of illness and had to pause studies for a year as that had been how other policies had been considered? When implementing them on behalf of students entering and exiting a program there was usually a grace period, so it was concerning that five years might not be five years;
 - o an amended motion would take that into account if it allowed Council to review it annually;
- there was conflict between being an employer in private practice where workforce was an issue and the divergence of standards. This temporary matter was put in place in 2019, which was coming up to five years; anyone registered with one of those universities within the last five years had registered under a temporary provision, knowing that it could come to an end;
 - o that was a good point, but it was unclear whether the message would have been fed through from the schools to their prospective students;
- in understanding the spirit behind the discussion, Council today should not impose a decision on Council in five years' time, it could overturn this decision with a new vote;
- it would be hard to vote 'no' to the original decision without knowing the impact such a vote would have, and there were no details except to say 'proposals would come'.

59. The process for submitting a motion was clarified. The decision as laid out in the paper was:
“Council is asked whether the temporary decision to recognise veterinary graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools should remain for another year, until the next annual review.”

60. A motion was tabled to amend the decision as follows:

Proposer: Mr W A S Wilkinson
 Seconder: Dr M A Donald

“Council is asked whether the temporary decision to recognise veterinary graduates from EAEVE-accredited schools should be allowed to continue for a maximum of five years with no further extension beyond this time. This extension will continue to be reviewed annually by Council until then and may be terminated sooner.”

61. A vote was taken:

For:	10
Against:	8
Abstain:	3
Did not vote:	1

62. The motion was carried by a majority vote and a paper would be brought back to Council with details for direct accreditation.

63. As the motion was carried, this meant the original decision as laid out in the paper was no longer valid and did not require a vote.

64. A paper would come back to Council at a later meeting with different accreditation options.

Proposal for monitoring ‘vital signs’ of the organisation

65. The CEO introduced the paper, highlighting that individual committees considered KPIs relative to the area of work delegated to them by Council. There was already a lot of both internal and external scrutiny, and the paper was to provide Council with confidence in the College as a regulator by questioning whether it had the money it needed; the staff it needed; the ability to discharge its legal duties and key functions; impacts and performance, etc. It would bring it all together and provide Council with oversight; it was not about the health of the profession, but rather the College as an organisation and how it was delivering. It was important not to set KPIs that had unintended consequences; all other metrics would be overseen by Senior Team.

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

- happy with the direction of travel. Reporting should be public, not private and [I] would like to see aspects of this work developed over time by demonstrating public value or a balanced scorecard that could be provided about overall organisational health and effectiveness. Build in some measures of success criteria when developing the next strategic plan;
- o the intention was to make the report public, with minor exceptions such as cybersecurity issues;

- also build it into the Risk Register with a number of mitigations – make sure there was no duplication in its management or resourcing and that the same person controlled the Risk Register and the responsibility for the KPI so that there were no gaps between them;
 - o much of the detail had been derived from the Risk Register in the first instance;
 - Council's was a governance role, and should not become operational; discussions around KPIs had become more involved over the years, and the committees might be the correct place for some of this to remain; there was the option of looking at serious incident reporting and items that were more aligned with the charity sector to ensure Council was kept well informed;
 - why was the impact of accreditation of veterinary school degrees mentioned, but VN qualification accreditation was not?
 - o there was currently no equivalent measure of the impact on new graduates of VN accreditation as there was for veterinary graduates via the Vet Graduate Development Program (VetGDP); items had been listed the College had a direct impact on performance, for example, numbers of practices in the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS). The list was a quite data focussed, and it could be reviewed on an ongoing basis;
 - this was welcomed. There were a number of external performance indicators with which the College was required to comply; would it be valuable to find a benchmark to see how it stacked up against other regulators?
 - o the College was looking at the standards of other healthcare regulators and the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) – the issue was that the College regulated people, not places, so it was not easy to 'map' to a wide range of other bodies. If lay members knew of other Boards they sat on that were looking at impact assessment of regulation, please let the CEO know;
 - the main KPIs that the profession was aware of were for the disciplinary decisions, not of the other matters the College dealt with, and it was those headline figures that received the most interest;
 - o it was important to note why members of the profession were interested in those figures, but that was only a small part of the College's role.
67. The next steps would be for the Senior Team members to start gathering data and to bring the information back to Council, there would be a bit of flux during this year as the new strategic plan was being developed alongside it.
68. Council was asked if the list itemised at paragraph 6 to the paper included all of the 'vital signs' that Council would like to see? A vote was taken:

For:	19
Against:	1
Abstain:	0
Did not vote:	2

69. The list was approved by a majority vote.

70. Council was asked if the policy outlined at paragraph 7 to the paper satisfied the need? A vote was taken:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	0
Did not vote:	2

71. The policy was approved by a majority vote.

Reports of standing committees – to note

72. As agreed in September 2023, reports of committees were not in the bundle of papers for the Council and were instead loaded to the meeting paper system Board Effect to be read at Council's leisure. However, if Council had any items that they felt required attention at the meeting they could raise it. Unclassified minutes remained part of the respective committee papers uploaded to the website in the usual way and publicly available.

73. As time was limited, the President asked with Council's permission, not to take comments from the Chairs of committees, with the exception of Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

74. There were no comments or questions raised.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

75. The Vice-Chair gave Council an update of the main items of the most recent work of ARC:

- the Audit Planning Report from the auditors had been reviewed in preparation for the forthcoming annual audit, they had focussed on risk management, including risks about fraud; the good news was that there was nothing unusual identified and the executive was working hard to strengthen controls;
- the Corporate Risk Register had been reviewed and it was agreed that the College's approach to risk was very dynamic; there was always a debate about whether new risk had been incorporated or whether details should be expanded, to determine the best way of management;

- the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system Risk Register had been reviewed and noted that the committee had liked that it was staged to match the work being undertaken; the discovery phase allowed the organisation to mitigate any emerging risk in a slightly different way, but the Committee was reassured by the approach adopted;
- work was ongoing on a Governance Manual to improve transparency and understanding of how decisions were made in the organisation ; this was important to demonstrate to the public and enhance public confidence in the fact the College managed decisions in a way that was transparent, open, and accessible.

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

Education Committee (EC)

77. There were no comments or questions raised.

Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

78. There were no comments or questions raised.

Registration Committee (RC)

79. There were no comments or questions raised.

Standards Committee (SC)

80. There were no comments or questions raised.

Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)

81. There were no comments or questions raised.

Preliminary Investigation Committee / Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee (PIC DC LC)

82. There were no comments or questions raised.

Reports of statutory committees – to note

Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)

83. The Registrar introduced the reports of the statutory committees and updated Council on the work done since the investigation system had changed:

- at the last meeting of the PIC / DC Liaison Committee, focus had been on the reporting of concern cases at Stage 1 of the new PIC process – it had been just over one year since the system had changed, and one of the reasons was to assist the management of expectations by all parties when a concern was raised and reduce stress on people going through the process. Other changes included an additional member was included in discussions; unlike the previous Case Examiner Group (CEG) process, Stage 1 PIC could now close cases if there was no realistic prospect of an arguable case of Serious Professional Misconduct (SPMC); and an additional step had been added where the respondent had the ‘last say’;

- all stages of the process had been considered. The Committee considered the results that had been monitored on an ongoing basis and it had decided to continue to report the median times taken to conclude cases, and also wanted to introduce the aim of dealing with them within six months;
- there had been the desired outcome of less cases being sent to Stage 2 PIC, with a reduction from 106 cases in 2022 to 59 cases in 2023, which was heartening;
- Liaison Committee would consider Stage 2 PIC and Stage 3 at future meetings, but the KPI would currently remain as it was.

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

- the team was congratulated for its December 2023 performance, however, Liaison Committee had not 'held feet to the fire' and the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 90% had moved from four months to six months; it would have been preferable to have a strong move in the opposite direction – rather than having more time, there should be tougher targets;
 - o the team wanted to meet targets, but it had to be realistic; it was a new system, and it could not be done within the same timeframes as there were additional steps to be taken for the information supplied;
- in understanding what went into KPIs, the College was taking cases further now that it had been with the old system; subsequently more time was taken; the scrutiny PIC put itself under and the questions it asked was impressive and there was no evidence to be concerned in terms of the efforts made to ensure that matters were investigated appropriately from the perspective of the public whilst also being mindful of the impact on professionals;
- there should be caution with a six-month deadline because of the immense stresses to members, the KPI should be reduced;
- the PIC report listed the types of concern received. There were no health concerns listed – was that correct given the current work climate?
 - o the principle point of the concern was categorised as there was a limit to what could be recorded, although it might be possible to make that a more granular list. However, there were no members currently being assessed under the Health Protocol since the changes had been made to the process. There had been a change in the way people approached health concerns, historically there were items such as alcohol, or drug, abuse that lent itself to a particular programme; more recently health issues were being dealt with under various other initiatives, or people were managing it themselves in terms of Vetlife for support and other aspects.

85. The update was noted.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

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

Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee (DC)

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

Notices of motion

88. There were no notices of motions to report.

Questions

89. There were no questions to report.

Any other College business (unclassified)

90. There was no other College business to report.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)

91. The following risks were raised:

- ensure evidence-based medicine was a priority on Council;
 - o it was noted that there were no specific risks identified as being evidence-based was part of everything the College did. There were checks and balances in terms of allied professions, and for the rest of general College Council, it was suggested that this should be encapsulated within risks already part of the Corporate Risk Register;
- accreditation of EAEVE veterinary schools;
 - o this was already on the Education Department Risk Register.

Date of next meeting

92. The next scheduled Council meeting was Thursday, 14 March 2024, commencing at 10:00 am. It would be held in person at the Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London.

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

Annual retention fee payment arrangements for veterinary surgeons 2024 – 2025 – update (confidential)

93. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 4.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Comments on classified appendices (confidential)

94. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 5.

Other matters (confidential)

95. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 6 – 23.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

96. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 24.

97. There were no new items to add to the Corporate Risk Register.

Reflective session (confidential item)

98. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 25 – 27.

99. The meeting was drawn to a close.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	14 March 2024
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 14 March 2024
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 14 March 2024
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Private / Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Council

Hybrid meeting held on Thursday, 14 March 2024 at 10:00 am in the Peggy Nuttall Room, Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

Members:

Dr S Paterson (President in the Chair)

Dr L H Allum

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Miss L Belton

Professor D Bray

Dr A L Calow

Mr J M Castle

Dr D S Chambers

Mrs O D R Cook

Dr M A Donald

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mrs S D Howarth

*Denotes absent

Mr T M Hutchinson

Professor M D Jones

Professor S A May

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

Dr A J McLeish

Professor T D H Parkin

Dr K A Richards

Mr T J Walker

Mr W A S Wilkinson

*Professor J L N Wood

*Ms J S M Worthington

In attendance:

Ms A Alexandre

EA to CEO (open session only)

Mr L Bishop

Media and Publications Manager

Ms E C Ferguson

Registrar / Director of Legal Services

Ms L Hall

Director of People (DoP)

Ms A Hanson

Media and Publications Officer (open session only)

Mr I A Holloway

Director of Communications (DoComms)

Ms L Lockett

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Ms C McCann

Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO)

Mr B Myring

Policy and Public Affairs Manager (P&PAM)

Dr L Prescott-Clements

Director of Education (DoE)

Mr A Quinn-Byrne

Governance Manager (open session only)

Ms D Rowlanes

Events Manager

Mr M Sundhu

Policy and Public Affairs Officer (open session only)

Guests:

Dr D J Bull

MRCVS (open session only)

Dr R Clutterbuck

Head of Veterinary Profession Policy Team, Defra (open session only)

Ms A Findon

Director of Policy and Governance, British Veterinary Association (BVA)
(open session only)

Mr J Loeb

Veterinary Record (open session only)

Dr M Morley	Senior Vice-President, BVA (open session only)
Ms J Shardlow	Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee
Dr F Shuttleworth	Parliamentary Veterinary Intern, Veterinary Policy Research Foundation, MRCVS (open session only)
Professor the Lord Trees	FRCVS, RCVS Past-President, Crossbench Peer in House of Lords (open session only)
Mr A Webb	<i>Veterinary Times</i> (open session only)

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting. She took the opportunity to thank members for taking time out of busy schedules to have the mid-year reflection conversations, which had been very constructive; the information had been collated and would be taken to a post-meeting reflection session.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:
 - Professor Wood
 - Ms Worthington
 - Dr Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer (Observer)
3. It was noted that Ms Ford was listening to the meeting remotely and had submitted notes on various agenda items as she would be unable to contribute verbally due to where she was joining the meeting from. The President would feed them into the discussion as appropriate.

Declarations of interest

4. Professor May declared that he had been re-appointed to the Animals in Science Committee of the Home Office.
5. There were no other general declarations of interest to record.

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024

6. Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendix and these were before Council for approval.

7. Regarding the section of the minutes on the Veterinary Surgeons Act – legislative reform, it was noted that a comment stated had been missed (at page 19 of the unclassified minutes / page 26 of the overall meeting pack); that a number of people had raised the concern with [member] that with an appointments system people would be re-appointed because they ‘fit with the direction of travel’.
8. With the proviso that the above comment would be added to the unclassified minutes, a vote was taken to approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix of the meeting held on 18 January 2024:

For:	21
Against:	0
Abstain:	1
9. Ms Ford submitted an email vote that was included in the figures. The unclassified minutes and classified appendix were accepted as a true record of the meeting by a majority vote.

Veterinary Policy Research Foundation (VPRF)

10. Lord Trees thanked the President for the opportunity to present the work of the VPRF to Council and gave an insight to being a peer in the House of Lords (HoL).
11. The HoL comprised incredible people with great experience and knowledge, and his route to his position as peer had been by application to the Appointments Commission, which had been set up in the year 2000 to bring expertise to the second Chamber, to the Crossbenches – the politically neutral benches – and, since then, approximately 70 people from all walks of life had been appointed. Once in the HoL, no staff, or staff allowance, was provided, unlike in the House of Commons (HoC); you only received a laptop and a smart phone.
12. To get help, a not-for-profit company was set up: the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation (VPRF). An appeal to the veterinary community provided funding, including regular donations from the RCVS over the years. The primary function was to employ a young veterinary surgeon as a Parliamentary Veterinary Intern, to provide research and administrative support, and also create a development opportunity for young vets to expose them to ‘big picture’ items – when speaking in the HoL it was very important to have facts and figures, so a huge amount of preparation would go into short contributions. The VPRF also ran Extra-Mural Study (EMS) options for a week in conjunction with the RCVS, and approximately six students per annum joined the Foundation.
13. If Council wished to look at more detailed work of the VPRF, it had a website where all briefings were loaded and annual reports.
14. The Foundation was currently on its sixth intern. Previous interns were now working in various professional areas:

- a Strategic Advisor to the Secretary of State and Defra;
- trade with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA);
- a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) on One Health;
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) on Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR).

15. Subsequent work undertaken by previous interns reflected to some extent the work undertaken in Parliament.

16. Current activities included:

- welfare at slaughter – the lack of legislation protecting fish at slaughter; how improvements could be made;
- one health – AMR – high on the political agenda;
- biosecurity and infectious diseases – there had been a recent successful back-bench debate supported by different speakers;
- trade and food safety / security – items going through relating to trade might threaten UK standards and undermine its own industries, particularly agriculture, livestock production, etc., that operated to high standards that were not necessarily reflected in international standards;
- sustainability – ruminants, methane, pollution – Lord Trees had been appointed to the Committee on Environmental Climate Change and an inquiry had just begun on methane; it was strongly recommended that the College take an interest in that. The first public evidence session had been held the day prior to the Council meeting with discussion on ruminants and their role in methane production. It was a very complex matter, and it was important to ensure that UK livestock production was not undermined by importing substitute meat and dairy produce from countries with much poorer standards;
- veterinary workforce and regulation – the concern about attrition rates and the need for legislation; the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) review would be positive in a variety of ways not least that it had drawn the attention of the political establishment to the need to update legislation;
- animal welfare – a lot of legislation had changed in the last five to 10 years.

17. It was noted that there was not a lot of control about what issues were raised.

18. Direct contributions to Parliamentary business included but were not limited to:

- rejoining Horizon Europe – a very important source of funding for British universities, particularly in biomedical sciences;
- hunting and trophies – the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill;

- the risk of Dengue Fever and other diseases to humans – informal meetings with Ministers were hugely valuable;
- livestock exports – there was a Bill going through, currently at Committee stage, to ban exports from the UK;
- Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMRs) – work would be undertaken with Defra Minister, Lord Douglas-Miller.

19. In addition, Lord Trees sat on two types of committees:

- Standing Select Committee on Environmental Climate Change – as mentioned it had commenced work around methane; and
- Parliamentary Groups that were not statutes with Parliamentary Committees, but whose stakeholders were actively involved with animal welfare; notifiable diseases; science and technology; and agriculture.

20. Further information could be found on the following websites:

- Veterinary Policy Research Foundation website: <https://vetpolicy.uk>
- Hansard (Lord Trees' speeches): <https://members.parliament.uk/member/4260/contributions>
- Parliament TV: <https://www.parliamentlive.tv>

21. Comments and questions included:

- what were the benefits of the internship and what had been learnt?
 - o it was what a veterinary degree could offer in terms of a career, it was not just clinical practice where a lot of people effectively 'fenced' themselves into; there was a variety of matters being undertaken, for example, in trade and animal welfare;
- the College sat on the UK Health Alliance against Climate Change (UKHACC) and it was the only veterinary representation on it; could some of the information on methane and ruminants be shared as a 'rearguard' action was being fought against the medics and more of an evidence base to support that would be very useful;
 - o it was a bit analogous with AMR as that had had a similar reaction. There had been a very good session the day previous – Professor Myles Allen from Oxford University had developed a different metric for measuring global warming; potential methane was a very transient gas in the atmosphere that completely disappeared after 30 years so, after the initial pulse, in 30 years warming would not be affected, whereas Carbon Dioxide (CO²) constantly accumulated in the atmosphere and there was a huge misunderstanding around that. Added to that was the number of people who knew exactly what was included in net zero – anything imported was not included in net zero so the danger was in trade – if more was imported then more emissions would be exported;

- crossbench peers did not receive funding for staff and relied on donations; was there a potential risk for members of the HoL to rely on donations from those that had conflicts of interest?
 - o no peers had staff, not just crossbench peers, except for appointed Ministers that might get some support. In terms of conflicts of interest, the VPRF currently had 14 donors – and it was keen to have a variety of donors – each of whom contributed a relatively modest amount of money. It was always made clear that donations would be altruistic, to support a vet and a vet assistant in Parliament, it was not cash for questions, which was accepted, and it was not felt to be constrained. Before the CMA review, the VPRF had looked at the proportion of funding from corporates (approximately 35%); that was mainly because it was very difficult to go to small veterinary practices to raise money. The Foundation was very aware of declarations of interest, and it would preface any contribution to business in the HoL by declaring its conflicts of interest, they were also publicly available in its Register of Interest on the Parliamentary website;
- the question was meant across the peers rather than Lord Trees personally, and whether it was a risk to Lords. If matters are being declared by everyone that was fair;
 - o all peers were aware of the need to declare interests and, in particular, the All-Party Parliamentary Groups had had a revision of how they could be funded because there could technically be groups of certain financial bodies or governments influencing Parliament indirectly by funding a secretariat to a group. Generally, peers were much more independent, even the political peers that served as Members of Parliament (MPs), or in local government under a political ‘umbrella’. It was much less partisan in the HoL and peers were quite prepared to speak, or even vote, against their own party;
- when considering medics and lawyers, there was one vet in the HoL, and then there was more medics and scientists in the HoC, but it was not a question of numbers but that of influence and respect on particular topics; there was a subtlety of how influence was achieved, and it was not always to do with fine speaking in debates;
- was the internship a full-time role?
 - o it was part-time, and the rest of the working hours were spent as a locum.

22. Lord Trees and Dr Shuttleworth were thanked for their presentation and for attending Council.

Lord Trees and Dr Shuttleworth left the meeting

Matters arising

Obituaries

23. There had been no written obituaries received. Council stood for a minute's silence for colleagues and all members of the professions who had passed since it last met.

Council correspondence

Annual General Meeting 2024

24. The 2024 AGM would be held on Friday, 5 July 2024 at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 66 Portland Place, London. Full details would be sent out by the Events Team in due course.

RCVS Council Election 2024

25. Information about candidates standing for election was on the RCVS website; this year there were 14 candidates standing: eight men and six women, including one existing Council member.
26. Voting opened this week when Civica Election Services (CES), who ran the election on the College's behalf, would send emails to eligible voters with details how to vote. All votes must be cast by 5:00 pm on Friday, 26 April 2024. The small number of veterinary surgeons for whom an email address was not held would receive a letter with instructions on how to vote, in addition to their security code to allow them access to the unique voting website; there would also be the opportunity to call CES, who would be able to assist members with casting their votes.
27. Ahead of the start of the voting period, the College had invited members of the profession to submit one question to the candidates, who were then asked to respond in writing to two questions of their choice. Their answers would be published on the RCVS website.
28. The President encouraged everyone voting to look at the website and the answers to the questions before casting their votes and wished all candidates standing good luck.

Mid-year reflections

29. The President reiterated her thanks for the support and collaboration for the mid-year reflections. There would be opportunities for further discussions at the end of the College year.

CEO update

30. The CEO updated Council on the following College activities:
- the Mandatory Practice Regulation (MPR) Working Group had been set up to consider how the College could take forward a mandatory scheme; it would be a broad group that included external members from the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPharmC) and Health Improve Scotland. The first meeting would take place in April;
 - the Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways (VCCP) Working Group had been set up under the Chair of Professor Nick Cooper, a medical educationalist and a retired General Practitioner (GP); it was hoped that a lot of external ideas and expertise would be brought to that Group;

- under the Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) umbrella, the videos and report from the 2023 autumn Symposium had been released and were on the MMI website. New training had been launched and MMI would be on the agenda at the forthcoming British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress in Manchester, with sessions on moral injury; Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD); and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Mental wellbeing remained important, but these were tough mental health issues, and it was important for the College to continue to focus on the topics that other organisations were not perhaps willing to approach;
- a consultation on new standards in veterinary nursing training had been launched, and the College was looking forward to good input from the veterinary nursing and veterinary educational community;
- the RCVS Fellowship Chair, Dr Christopher Tufnell, had resigned and the College was grateful that the Vice-Chair, Dr Niall Connell, had stepped up into the role in the short-term whilst an election process was being organised. The College was grateful for the work that Dr Tufnell had carried out while in post;
- Professor Nicola Menzies-Gow was the new Chair of the RCVS Ethics Review Panel that considered applications from veterinary practitioners that wanted to continue to be research-led;
- the annual renewal process had commenced the day previous and there had already been a substantial amount of money received;
- the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Subcommittee had seen an increase in compliance in CPD hours from 73% in 2022 to 85% in 2023, which was a good improvement and thanks given to the team for the ongoing work in that area.

31. The CEO then moved on to updates on external matters:

- the CMA's report had been published on Tuesday. It was not a surprise to read that they were not closing their review and were consulting on taking matters forwards to the next stage. There were three potential stages:
 - o a review (done);
 - o a study;
 - o an inquiry.

Sometimes the stages happened in order, sometimes the CMA went straight to an inquiry – which was what they were proposing this time. The explanation given was that the third stage was the one that gave the CMA legal power to do things. It generally had a time limit of 18 months but that it could be extended by a further six months, so it could take up to two years to conclude.

The College welcomed the findings, the process, and the opportunity to look at what might come next, and a statement had been sent out to that effect on Tuesday. Sadly, later the same day, a further statement had to be sent out to support the vets and vet nurses on the frontline because during the day it was understood that had been an awful lot of negativity from members of the public towards vets, particularly those who possibly had no impact on pricing or business policies within their practice and who were at the 'sharp end' of unfortunate communication. It was felt to be important to support the College's members.

It was believed that there could be good things coming out of the review / inquiry:

- new legislation, particularly around mandatory practice regulation, which appeared to be coming through quite strongly in the report and from other associations;
- updating information on the College's website, which was already being considered by the College's Public Advisory Group (PAG) before the CMA report was received, to ensure it was easier for the public to have a really well-informed, constructive, interaction with their veterinary practitioners;
- via Standards Committee, consideration would be given to the Code of Professional Conduct (CoPC) – it had moved to a principles-led Code in 2007 with Supporting Guidance. Over the years more and more Supporting Guidance had been added – there were currently 30 detailed chapters – and it could potentially be difficult for busy practitioners to 'fillet' out the pertinent items for them. It would be investigated if summaries of topics could be produced. It was understood, however, that this would be a difficult piece of work because the College still wanted veterinary professionals to be aware of the entire Guidance.

It was noted that the College also needed to be clear what it could *not* do, such as consider business structures or fee setting. In the past 48 hours there had been numerous opportunities to speak to media outlets but, as they had wanted to focus specifically on fees, the College had been content to allow the British Veterinary Association's (BVA) to be the main voice on that;

- on the same day as the CMA report, there had been an Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee (EFRACom) inquiry, not part of a formal inquiry that had various meetings, but a one-off hearing into the veterinary workforce issue. It was Chaired by Neil Hudson, a veterinary surgeon MP in the HoC, with speakers from the BVA, Food Standards Agency (FSA), Veterinary Schools Council (VSC), and the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) (UK). The College had submitted written evidence and had had briefing meetings with some of the participants, so they were fully aware of its issues.

A wide range of topics was covered, broadly aligned to workforce:

- public health workforce;
- clinical practice;
- vet schools;

- mental health and wellbeing;
- the impact of the XL Bully ban;
- impacts of disease from imported animals.

A full report was expected on the government's website in due course.

A strong call that came out of the meeting was the need for a new Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA), not just around practice regulation, but also for a Statutory Instrument (SI) to improve the College's Statutory Membership Examination (SME). There were also calls for more funding for UK vet schools, and the consideration of an Exemption Order (EO) for veterinary technicians – the College had been in conversation with the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) about that for some time;

- there had been a small protest outside the College's temporary offices by people who had lost their animals due to what they had perceived was veterinary negligence and who were passionate about animal health and welfare. The College had become aware via a Facebook group, but it had not been contacted directly, nor did the Group wish to have a meeting. The Group wanted the College to look at negligence, which it could not do (cumulative negligence that could potentially become a pattern of conduct was different). It was understood that there was one journalist in attendance, but no statement had been sought from the College thus far; the police were also in attendance, which might appear 'heavy handed' but the reason was that the College was in a shared building and it had a duty of care to alert the building owners that there might be a protest, particularly as it was unknown how many people were expected to turn up;
- the College had completed its move into a new building in Waterhouse Square (still within the WeWork portfolio), it was very similar to the old workspace in the Cursitor, but that was not to belie the huge amount of work it took the teams to move premises. It was seamless from a staff perspective and a huge thank you given to all staff for the work undertaken. The office space was slightly cheaper because it was slightly smaller although staff seemed to like it better;
- there had been a stakeholder meeting held the previous day, with approximately 25 people from a mix of associations, charities, animal owner groups, and bodies that represent organisations, such as the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH) and VSC; Defra representatives were also online. It was an opportunity to share things that the College was working on such as governance reform; RCVS Academy; Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways and also a piece around its strategy.

32. Comments and questions included:

- Officers had met early on Tuesday morning to discuss the CMA report and the College was ready to respond to the media, however, disappointingly it was felt that the reporting was unbalanced throughout the day. One of the major recommendations was around legislative reform and the College was really happy to talk to any of the media outlets about it, but there was not a single one interested and they were more concerned about pricing and perceived

profiteering. Thanks were given to the BVA for the amazing amount of work responding to comments from the media around those matters;

- the CMA report referenced the work of the Legislation Working Party (LWP) in 2017, but there was no mention of any of the work undertaken since that time or the recommendations in 2021. It was great that there was an appetite for reform, but the College should show that it had not been 'sitting on its laurels' and had been working really hard and lobbying really hard for the last two to three years;
 - o that would be followed up as the CMA had had the information about the process and recommendations, and also the microsite information, but it was recognised that they had received 55,000 responses from the public and the professions so some contributions might be missed. It had also been very useful to have recent input into the EFRACom inquiry, as well as conversations with stakeholders;
- the PAG would be really important going forwards. The March meeting had been delayed in order to have meaningful conversations and to hear the views of members about the report;
- it was quite clear in the report that it was not all about corporate versus non-corporate, and that there were some concerns that applied across the market in the section that stated that it was not likely to end up with voluntary arrangements from the corporates to solve the problem. It was wondered how the College approached this, through Standards Committee, with the CMA, and whether there was any area where it was thought changes could be made to RCVS standards that would actually help to meet some of the concerns within the market prior to the College having the opportunity to get legislative reform and practice-based legislation;
 - o whilst it was not all about corporates, there was a section about local competition, which was pertinent. The College had been looking at what it could include, but it came back to the fact it did not regulate practices and the matter raised were not necessarily matters that could be addressed within the CoPC. Some could, potentially, be put into the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), but this remained voluntary. Key was the transparency of ownership of businesses, not just practices, and also associated businesses, for example, pharmacies, crematoria, specialist businesses; that they were clearly sign-posted (which did go against the business model of some, not all, corporates) and that it was clearly flagged when recommendations were being made in order for clients to better understand. That could be included within the PSS.

The other thing that could be improved was around incentives – vets should be clear to make their own clinical judgement and should not be incentivised to work in other ways. A lot of the things raised were already in the CoPC or PSS, and it was about where to apply leverage and to really understand within practices who was responsible for certain areas and where conversations could be had – that was something to be looked at throughout the team elements of PSS;

- a lot was in the Supporting Guidance and that had been provided to the CMA, but it was back to the earlier point that when looking at the guidance there were little bits in various places, so it needed to be clarified more thematically, and easier for people to access – without repeating everything endlessly and creating a huge summary of everything. Pulling it together would make it easier.

The other point was that it was about the transparency of ownership – did people know when they went to a particular business who owned it? Was it obvious? It was legally required to state where a business was part of a larger group, but sometimes it ended up in tiny letters at the bottom of the website and people did not know who they were dealing with;

- transparency was about consumer choice, clients would want to know what they were getting, some of whom would always choose to go to certain brands that they trusted; this would link up with the PAG to be a resource for owners to find out information, it would, however, take time;
- the CMA Report was a fairly damning picture of the profession, and whilst there was the opportunity to get a new VSA out of it, what was the College's concern about the level of threat that it might have an imposed regulator akin to the General Medical Council (GMC), with practice premises regulated by a third party such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC)?
- that was a worst-case scenario that had been discussed in the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). The College was trying to alleviate that by stressing to the CMA that it was a small profession, that there were a lot of links between practitioners and businesses in a different way than there were in the healthcare market – there were corporate businesses but there was also vet-owned businesses and there was some benefit to keeping close links between the two.

There was no indication from the Report that the CMA was not looking at the College to do this job, but there was no guarantee either. The College was aware of the risk, and the best it could do at this stage was highlight the work it was doing proactively, which had started before the report was published, such as plans mandatory practice regulation, and to continue the positive and constructive relationship with the CMA. There were some negatives in the report, and the College should not just look for the positive things, ultimately the CMA did say it had received one of the largest responses they had had to a consultation of this kind, with 46,000 animal owners and 11,000 veterinary professionals – the College had on its Register (vets / nurses / all categories) about 52,000 members, so it was approximately one fifth of all members that had had something to say, which led to it being quite a seismic report that would have ripples for a considerable time, not just the 18 months or so the Inquiry took;

- the 11,000 also included practice managers so in terms of proportional membership it was unknown if it was significant;

- could the College end up in that position without any changes to the VSA? The view was that it could take 10 years to change and in order to have any rapid influence on the market, the CMA could just propose that;
 - o yes, but the delay on the College getting what it wanted was on Parliamentary time, and the CMA still had to go through the same process as everyone else. So, there was that argument; there was also the possibility of a separate piece of legislation not part of the VSA around mandatory practice regulation for which there were pros and cons – in some ways it might fast-forward the process, but it also might mean that some of the other things the College wanted that were really still important might get delayed further.

33. The President thanked Council for a really useful discussion and drew it to a close.

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

Discretionary Fund

34. The Director of Operations (DoO) reported that the Discretionary Fund was a provision in the annual budget of £150,000 that could be used for projects that could not be budgeted for when it was put together, and to expedite activities during the year that were identified in the period. There were processes in place to ensure the expenditure was in accordance with the College's financial controls and, where relevant, followed the Project Protocol.

35. Approved applications to date had amounted to £113, 793, leaving a balance of c.£36,000 for the rest of the year. The projects that had been approved were important pieces of work:

- Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways, as agreed by Council last year;
- Survey of Organisations;
- trademarking items;
- a neurodiversity event;
- an Artificial Intelligence (AI event);
- a small application for travelling and subsistence for Extra-Mural Studies (EMS) students working with the Policy and Public Affairs team.

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

Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) – legislative reform

37. The Policy and Public Affairs Manager (P&PAM) introduced the draft consultation paper following the decisions at Council and the recommendations made at the last meeting. It was set out in the same format as the LWP consultation carried out a few years ago, setting out the background as to why the College was looking at reform, the arguments for each of the recommendations, and seeking qualitative submissions from individuals, organisations, professionals, and the public, to be analysed by the in-house researcher – who was currently in the process of being replaced – with the intention of bringing back key themes to Council in June 2024.

38. Timing was tight, but the intention was to bring back to Council in June, at which point a final decision could be made. The document as set out might sometimes be distributed in its final form as it was but, fundamentally, the purpose would be to break sections down into, for example, Survey Monkey, or another tool that the College could use to break the survey down into different pages with key text.
39. Approval was now sought for how the document was set out, with the recommendations and reasons behind them as clear as possible, aimed at people looking at this for the first time.
40. Comments and questions included:
- it was a great summary of a long debate. However, there was some concern about the references to the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) – not that they should not be there, but rather not to ‘set the hares running’ that it was definitely a model the College wanted to pursue, [I] would not want the College to ever be under the PSA – they have some good principles around appointments and processes, but would not want it to become a common currency – could it be one step removed?
 - generally supportive of the draft but there was concern of ‘leading elements’ in places, for example, why was there mention of veterinary nurses and no other categories of special inclusion; why were VSC-appointed representatives only mentioned as bad practice, what other appointees might also be not appropriate? Should some of the specifics in the draft be reconsidered?
 - o the P&PAM would pick up some of those items with the member after the meeting;
 - paragraph 8: the phrasing that Council members were ‘...currently elected to bring expertise to decisions made in the public interest, not to represent a constituency, but seems that there was a widespread misunderstanding about that at present...’, could that be edited slightly so as not to come across poorly, and was there an evidence base behind it?
 - o there was evidence that was the case, and it was suggested to amend the sentence from ‘...but it seems...’ to ‘...there was evidence / research to suggest that...’ to ensure that it was not perceived as only an opinion;
 - also in paragraph 8: ‘...it was evident that only a small percentage of the veterinary professions participate in elections...’ – this could be the year where there was an amazing turnout simply because members were not convinced of the argument for change, so that wording might also need some reconsideration;
 - o as the timing of the release of the consultation and the deadline for voting was unknown, it was suggested that the word ‘historically’ should be added;
 - the described purpose of the consultation was to look at the potential impact of implementation. Given that a recommendation of what reform would look like had been made, people should have the opportunity to answer the question, and it should be stressed

that the College was looking for thoughts on the *impact* of the recommendations, to actively look for that information;

- the intention was to set out the purpose of the consultation in the introduction, and then each section thereafter was not so much a question as it was to explain what the recommendation was and then seek comments on it;
- how it was currently set out almost closed it down, it was not as open as it could be – the earlier comment about leading into things and not really being an open consultation already fed into the mindset of some of the profession that this had already been decided, when in fact it was a consultation process, and it could be made clearer;
- vets on social media had been strong in their opinions if they were not in favour and those opinions should be acknowledged, suggested wording was '*...we understand you may not be in favour of an appointed Council, but if this was insisted on by government, please indicate what your preference(s)...*', as it could be imposed on the College. Additionally, where comments state that the College was '*different*', to please state how or why it was different – it should be reasoned;
- paragraph 10: it was concerning that the wording stated '*...would allow the College's governing body to ensure that its focus was on questions of strategy and governance...*' when it was only if the elected members did not appreciate that they were there to focus on strategy and governance, so it should be '*may allow*' and not necessarily '*would allow*';
- paragraph 5: the planned timing of the consultation was for it to be carried out in quarter two and be analysed by a member of staff who was yet to be appointed and presented back to Council in June; how realistic was that?
 - the period would be busy, but possible. It was hoped to have the staff member in post by the end of April, the consultation would run through May with the intention to bring back to Council in June, but it was quite tight and would be reviewed as the recruitment process unfolded;
- the consultation needed to be done well, and the College needed to bring the professions with it, so if resources would be pushed because of the amount of work, particularly in view of the CMA report and legislative reform, it was questioned if that was a realistic time period?
 - noted. It was a strong indication, but not a promise;
- had it been pointed out that people were self-nominating themselves for those roles (for election) and that although the College had an election process, there was a fairly limited selection of people that put themselves forward, rather than actually being nominated by the profession;
- agree with the points made about keeping the consultation more open – although this was a lot more open than, for example, the under care / out of hours consultation – and justification

of responses would be really helpful. [I] would be more cautious about the wording of '*if it was insisted or forced upon us, what would the impacts be?*' for a main part, it could instead be a secondary question in each section because the College was not talking about it being forced upon it at the moment but rather what it thought would be the best option. For paragraph 23 it was fine to include that the regulator was not there for the sake of the profession but what it needed to reflect was that, in the Royal Charter, it stated that the RCVS was acting for the sake of animal health and welfare primarily and broader public interest was second to that – the wording of that paragraph should be amended to reflect the Charter;

- care should be taken because the VSA was all about being a regulator, and that was clearly in the public interest. Clearly animal health and welfare was very important but, in regulatory terms, that was what the College was there for and what the VSA was all about. There could be a melding of the wording but when talking about legislative reform of the VSA, that was the College's duty in the public interest and care should be taken not to stray into other areas;
- it was argued that the Royal Charter defined the objectives as well, and both points should be put forward as the Charter was very clear; it was a legislative document, and its purposes should be reflected; the VSA made no mention of public interest and it was only mentioned in the Charter;
 - the role of the Royal College was under the Charter, but the VSA was about the regulatory function, which was what the College was seeking to amend with new legislation;
 - re: public interest: that was answered in the 'who we are' section of the website, it was drawn up when looking at the last Charter – '*the College aimed to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare, and it did this by setting, upholding and advancing the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses*' – that captured animal welfare at the centre of the public interest and bridged the gap and there was no contradiction;
- the College should say what it did not as well as there was so much misconception, for example, it did not actually represent the profession;
- paragraph 7: '*...the regulator sets the criteria for appointment, the selection is made by an independent panel...*' the concern from the profession was that it was not being made clear what the plan was for those appointments; there needed to be documentation to show the protocols in place to show how it was going to make sure that the appointments were still going to genuinely represent the profession to allay the concerns about appointments rather than elections, that it was not just one group that decided criteria and then appointed on the basis of that criteria;
 - the P&PAM did mention the process and suggested that some of the it could be cut into the document. However, the College was moving away from representing the profession, so care should be taken with the language used. The criteria would be the decision of

Council as being in the best position of knowing what was needed, and the applications would then be dealt with at arms' length, in the same manner as it currently was with the statutory committee application process, as that had shown that the process worked;

- in any communications it had to be explained how the RCVS worked and how elections worked – as it was noted from manifestos that some members standing for election did not understand it either – address it by stating what the College really wanted to achieve i.e. vets still in charge of regulating the veterinary profession and the regulation of paraprofessionals, and to have some first opinion vets involved; get the aim across and the rest was just details. So much was out of the College's control but so long as it was clear in its communication it should calm most concerns;
- paragraph 13: be clearer about the benefits of the current system and that the College was not looking to get rid of them; it was an opportunity to be more positive;
- [I] am supportive of moving to consultation on the basis of the questions / options proposed. Moving as close as possible to good practice governance arrangements as per PSA guidance was imperative for both public trust and confidence but also to protect RCVS against risk that it becomes subject to imposed reforms that could be more radical and could compromise our ability to maintain dual role as Royal College and regulator. The only additional suggestion was whether the College should include impact assessment questions as part of the consultation - which was both good practice and would help inform Council's decision-making as it would capture where views were driven by registrant / professional interest versus public interest;
- there was a real need to make sure the consultation was communicated appropriately to the professions and suggested that, in view of comments raised by Council, there should be a webinar or other online event where members were allowed to put questions forward, as there was a lot of misconceptions about the whole process. There was a strong argument to do more communications around it;
 - o the Policy and Public Affairs, Communications, and Events Teams would look into the suggestion.

41. The President drew the conversation to a close. It was noted that there was a number of amendments to the draft, and thus it was not in a state in which Council could take a vote on it at the meeting. It was suggested that the amendments be made, and queries answered before the draft returned to Council electronically for approval and final comment. To accompany that, there would be a communications plan on how this would be presented to the professions. This was agreed.

Amendments to non-practising status

42. The Registrar introduced the paper that had been the subject of discussion at joint meetings of the Registration and Education Committees. The paper set out the current situation where the VSA set out that acts of veterinary surgery were the sole preserve of a veterinary surgeon (with a few Exemptions), as well as the definition of what was considered to be an act of veterinary

surgery – a list of clinical situations was included; however, the legislation clearly also foresaw acts of veterinary surgery going beyond those; this was via the phrase “...*without prejudice to the foregoing generality*...” (i.e. purely clinical situations), which provides scope for other activities to be included

43. The paper also set out the different categories of the Register, the most notable being non-practising, and practising outside the UK, both of which were not ‘creatures of statute’ but instead were something the College had created – the difference when considering what was practising and non-practising was that the people in the non-practising and practising outside the UK categories would not be committing a criminal offence in breach of Section 19 of the VSA if they were ‘practising’, but it would potentially be a disciplinary matter in terms of conduct.
44. The question was not whether the College knew what was in the statutes, but how it was it interpreted? How should it be applied going forwards? The wording on the College’s website had been there for a long time and was very broad – it made it clear that it was not limited to those in clinical practice but included members using their professional qualification in any way. That meant if someone was in a non-clinical role and they were using their professional qualification in any way, they could not, by definition, be on the non-practising part of the Register, or practising outside the UK part of the Register, they should be on the UK-practising part of the Register. If they had a veterinary qualification from elsewhere that was not recognised by the College for registration, they had to sit the Statutory Membership Examination (SME).
45. The matter had been recently raised in terms of the new vet school accreditation standards and discussions about teaching students and how those teaching kept up to date. The initial reaction was that it was thought to be fine as everyone did CPD, but upon investigation it was realised that some teachers were on the non-practising part of the Register, and some were on the practising outside the UK part of the Register; there was an inconsistency and no clarity in terms of who should do what. There was clarity in people’s minds in terms of anything that involved live animals, and at the opposite end there was a certain number of things acceptable for lay people to be doing in terms of, for example, setting curriculum, the issue was more the middle ground – there was a lot of discussion regarding skills labs in particular, where, for example, a task was being undertaken on a mannequin, which in itself was not an act of veterinary surgery, but what happened around it? Was there a clear division between doing a particular skill or was there no divide between using veterinary knowledge and qualification? Did veterinary skills and qualifications have to be there in the first place? What happened if there were ancillary questions being asked during the process i.e. ‘I know you do that, but what happened if...?’ type questions. It was very complex, and the Committees had gone back to the basics in terms of what the guidance said and what they thought it could mean.
46. The issue was the broad wording of the guidance that suggested that absolutely anything that was veterinary-related would come under UK-practising, and that was not how people were interpreting it currently. It was a question of, if Parliament was asked to look at it, then how would it interpret it? At the moment it was felt it was being taken further than what was in everyone’s minds when the actual legislation was written – non-clinical activities should also be included as practising, when they were considered to be the sole preserve of a veterinary surgeon.

47. When that was applied to a teaching situation (see paragraphs 21 – 23 of the paper) the very rough 'rule of thumb' would be to advertise only to people with veterinary qualifications as it would likely involve practice of veterinary surgery; roles that were open to a wider 'pool' would not fall into the practising category. That led to discussions in terms of guest lecturers and those providing CPD – in the absolutely strictest sense, a person coming over to the UK to do a guest lecture, or two, per year, was clearly doing something only a veterinary surgeon could do because the content of the lecture could not be delivered by anyone else and they would have to be on the practising part of the Register. But given the low risk involved, this was unlikely to happen. What was discussed, and proposed, by the Committees was that one-off, or occasional, lectures would not be considered as 'practising'. Then the question of 'what did 'occasional' mean?' was raised – it meant infrequent and at irregular intervals and an example was given in the paper of what that might mean in a practical sense. It was also questioned whether anyone that guest-lectured could just register with their home regulator? It was noted that the jurisdiction of the RCVS stopped at the UK borders.
48. Another circumstance was raised that also required consideration – veterinary students' involvement in teaching and whether that amounted to practising. Various instances had been itemised in the paper (not representative of every veterinary school doing everything listed), some were more complex than others. Difficulties arose with the issue of clinical skills labs where students were assisting students completely unsupervised, where no primary teaching individual was available to ask questions; the likelihood of questions arising made it almost inevitable that the assistance would stray into clinical judgement, and it was not very easy to make a clear divide in these situations.
49. If there was the ability to make a clear divide and isolation, then that would be something that could be done by a lay person and raise no problem. If it was not something that could be dealt with in isolation, but required application of clinical judgement and contextualisation, then those were activities that were the sole preserve of a veterinary surgeon and therefore should be undertaken by a person on the UK-practising part of the Register, so it came full circle. There had been some discussion in terms of clinical judgement and context in the Committee meetings, but it remained unresolved, and it had been decided to pass this up to Council for a fuller debate.
50. The amended wording of what practising meant as detailed in Annex A to the paper, was considered acceptable by the Committees around what was the sole preserve of a veterinary surgeon, it was just the matter of how it was going to be applied. If Council was minded to go forward with the changes, it would also require a lot of changes to the website; it was not just changing the wording to practising, but also to give people time to have the opportunity to ask questions for the College to answer, hence the proposed six-month transition period towards implementation; it would also allow changes under the fee structure.
51. The Chair, Education Committee, agreed that there had been tension and misinterpretation around the practising and practical element; it was not just in relation to skills, but also knowledge and expertise and the application of them. If people were on the non-practising part of the Register, there was no compulsion to keep up with CPD so, even if they were using knowledge and expertise, if they were not on the UK-practising part of the Register then might not have Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) and there was no guarantee they were up to date or

current. A role being the sole preserve of a veterinary surgeon was a good framework but there was some uncertainty about having a job on the face of it open to vets and non-vets, the vet is non-practising but then gets asked to advise on purely veterinary matters.

52. The Chair, Registration Committee, thanked everyone involved in the joint meetings. She stated that it would be the sole preserve of a vet if the job specification said a veterinary degree was required, and that the person should be on the UK-practising part of the Register.

Mr Wilkinson declared an interest and stated that he would not vote on this item as he worked part-time at the University of Surrey, and it had the potential to affect how the university worked.

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

- agree with many of the points raised, and standards should apply across the board. It was questioned if for visiting lecturers whether there was a way round it because in the VSA it was possible for a doctor or dentist to do a procedure on an animal under the supervision of a vet. If there was a visiting lecturer, could you have an MRCVS take responsibility for them and have them under their supervision?

Express caution of counting the use of models and the judgement in practising on models as an act of veterinary surgery as many universities had open days when visitors that were not even veterinary students had the opportunity to use the models; if that became an act of veterinary surgery, then it would restrict what the university could offer.

Regarding students teaching other students, it was suggested that it be looked at from the opposite end. Was a student was allowed to practise skills on a model without supervision from a vet, and they bought a suture kit from a supplier and had been able to practise at home, there was a strong argument for 'yes'. Further, if they were allowed to do that, then were they allowed to do it with another student at the same time? It would be a struggle to see a good reason why it should not be allowed. Thereafter, if there was a third student who knew more about it than the first two, would they be allowed to ask for advice, for example, if it was out of hours? Common sense suggested that should be allowed.

Regarding injections: there was context where a vet would not need to be present for injections, such as on a farm, as there were provisions in the VSA for people who had responsibility for the care of animals to be able to do it that were not vets, so it was nuanced. There should be some 'grey' areas rather than taking a purely legalistic mindset of very black and white, to give students the freedom to practise;

- o responding to the above comments:
 - it was not suggested that someone doing something on a model was by itself an act of veterinary surgery;

- regarding visiting lecturers: it was not just for 'human' practitioners that had a special provision under the VSA, but it was more about veterinary guest lecturers from around the globe that spoke in a lot of venues;
 - regarding farmers: they had a specific Exemption under the VSA;
 - regarding students: it was not to say the students by themselves could not practise, but it was about whether they were teaching somebody else – they should be quite good at a task so as not to perpetuate bad habits; that was why it was discussed whether it was primary teaching or whether they had been assessed and deemed competent. It was one thing to be competent at a particular skill, but what should happen if there were questions about it and whether it was possible to isolate the skill. The student exemption under the VSA also allowed students under certain circumstances whether under direction, supervision, or direct and continuous supervision, to carry out acts of veterinary surgery in their own right; the particular scenario of a fifth-year student using that exemption to teach a junior student that was also using the exemption because they were in their clinical year, was that they should be under supervision, that meant somebody within speaking distance;
- it was confirmed that students would never be in isolation teaching other students, they would be part of a demonstrating team. For example, there might be five teaching ponies in an indoor school, with a senior experienced student controlling three or four other students around an individual horse, but there would always be a supervisor there to answer questions. Around a live animal the supervising vet would be on the UK-practising part of the Register; around models the supervising vet might not be on the UK-practising part of the Register, or it might be a lay person.

The distinction between practising and non-practising and models versus live animals was not as clear cut. For example, dealing with a live animal you could imagine a lay person teaching with their own dog to bandage a leg and would not necessarily require that person to be UK-practising. Furthermore, under the accreditation standards anyone teaching had to be appropriately trained; a lot in the paper was 'belt and braces' but it was welcomed.

It was cautioned that there should not be an indirect consequence where it was suggested that people were not able to teach some clinical skills as teaching was pedagogically sound. There was another element about what the senior student in the relationship got out of it that was critically important – the transformational use of clinical skills, models and scenarios. It was key to provide multiple opportunities to practise and fail and learn, and gain motor skills, etc.

Having direct, continuous supervision or only using live animals was incredibly restrictive, and provided few opportunities; the concept of model simulators was about providing students with multiple attempts to develop skills that were not done in isolation as the primary teaching and, as a more senior student, to sign off a student as competent in a particular area was part of a typically spirally integrated clinical skills strand across five years where any assessment that was a high stakes assessment (pass / fail) would be overseen by primary teaching staff with multiple layers of quality assurance and it was important to see that in context.

It should also be noted that a lot of students out on EMS placements would be working with non-veterinary, professional owners of animals who would stray into complications with lambing or calving and giving medications, so thought should be given as to what students would be allowed to do in this context;

- if there was confusion within the profession as to what being on the UK-practising part of the Register meant, then that would follow through to the public – if there was a job that clearly required a veterinary degree, then they should be UK-practising; make it like being a veterinary nurse, you were either on, or off, the Register;
 - o at one of the previous joint committee discussions, history was provided about vets of long-standing that had a degree who were not practising but were incredibly proud of the MRCVS status and wanted to retain the post-nominals as a 'badge of status', so the College found a mechanism to keep them on the Register, to be able to say they were an MRCVS even if they were not practising.

The scenario where people were on the non-practising part of the Register for other reasons was part of the wider discussion that should be pushed to another day, but it should be noted that the ramifications had not been properly considered in terms of what would happen if the College was to simply 'do away with' the category, not least financially because realistically how many would move to the UK-practising part of the Register? How many would come off entirely? What were the implications? How did the College keep in touch with all those affected and how would they feel about it? The College was not yet at that point.

The biggest debate was around the ability to isolate, or not, a particular skill from a wider context, there was a lack of consistency;

- it was the act of doing something versus the teaching of something. For example, a client with a diabetic animal would be taught to inject their animal, but they in turn would not be expected to teach another client the same thing;
- care should be taken to not reach into the responsibilities of the veterinary schools to ensure that their staff were appropriately qualified and up to date / registered, because it was a role that the College should expect the university to carry out. It would be preferable to have consistency across the veterinary schools in their approach to the matter, and perhaps the VSC could help with that;
 - o the vet schools had to adhere to RCVS standards and ensure that those teaching were adequately trained. For the College to dictate the model to be used would be inappropriate as each school had a different model, and a different set up;
 - o what was ultimately agreed upon it was then up to the veterinary schools to interpret it – that was what currently happened and that was where the problem arose; the point was not to tell the vet schools what to do but to try and get the baseline of what was practising. At the moment, if the supplied guidance was applied as it should be everyone

would be on the UK-practising part of the Register if they were using their veterinary qualification in any way. It was known that was not currently happening and, if it was not clear, it was for Council to decide what it meant to be practising, thereafter it was up to the veterinary schools and the accreditation standards to be implement it;

- with the additional guidance coupled with the accreditation standards the schools would be in a good position to implement it;
 - this matter had arisen from the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) when considering the accreditation standards; it had been clear that there were people who were not MRCVS, in teaching positions, not fulfilling CPD requirements;
- final-year students revising learnt a huge amount from each other and it felt like there was too much impetus being given to students teaching students in a vet school environment;
 - supportive of the amendment proposed, and the additional guidance and clarifications around CPD and students. Not to amend would expose RCVS to legal risk and therefore suggest the change be implemented as soon as possible – the grace period up to 30 Sept 2024 would be more than sufficient and, given the legal advice, [I] would not support a longer period.

Mr Castle left the meeting.

54. The President drew the discussion to a close.

55. Council was asked to approve (as a whole):

- a. the amended wording to existing guidance for requirements for UK-practising as per Annex A to the paper;
- b. the additional guidance to be issued with reference to one-off and occasional guest lectures / CPD;
- c. the clarification in relation to student activities at paragraphs 29 – 30 of the paper;
- d. that there should be a grace or transition period in implementation until 30 September 2024.

56. A vote was taken:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	0
Did not vote:	1

57. Ms Ford submitted an email vote that was included in the figures. Mr Wilkinson clarified that he would not take part in the vote as a member that worked out of a veterinary school and because the item had the potential to affect school operations.

58. The amended wording to existing guidance; additional guidance re: CPD / guest lecturers; clarification in relation to student activities; and proposed grace period to implementation were agreed by a majority vote.

Reports of standing committees – to note

Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

59. There were no comments or questions raised.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

60. There were no comments or questions raised.

Education Committee (EC)

61. There were no comments or questions raised.

Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

62. There were no comments or questions raised.

Registration Committee

63. There were no comments or questions raised.

Standards Committee

64. There were no comments or questions raised.

Veterinary Nurses Council

65. There were no comments or questions raised.

Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee

66. There were no comments or questions raised.

Reports of statutory committees – to note

Preliminary Investigation Committee

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

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

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

Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee

69. It was noted that details of individual cases were on the website.

70. It was commented that it was good to note that there were no concerns regarding communications as, historically, it was a topic that caused concerns. It was noted that only the

main issue was recorded in the statistics and that communication might also be a part, albeit not the main issue, of the concern, so it should not be taken as there were no communications issues at all.

71. The report was noted.

Notices of motion

72. There were no notices of motion to report.

Questions

73. There were no questions to report.

Recommendation for the appoint of Officers – President and Vice-President (Senior) respectively for confirmation at the Annual General Meeting on 5 July 2024

74. The Vice-President (Senior) took the Chair for this item whilst the President and Vice-President (Junior) left the meeting to ensure procedures and oversight were followed. As the item was a recommendation rather than an election, and related to internal roles within Council, no electronic decision had been loaded, nor had it been included on the pro-forma voting form.

75. Council was asked if it wished to have a private discussion, which was declined.

76. It was reported that Officer Team had recommended, in accordance with convention, that from the AGM in July, the incoming President to be Miss L S Belton, and that Dr S Paterson move to become Vice-President (Senior).

77. Council agreed the recommendations by a verbal 'aye'.

78. The President and Vice-President (Junior) returned to the room and were congratulated.

79. The President re-took the Chair.

Election of Vice-President (Junior) – recommendation for confirmation at the Annual General Meeting on 5 July 2024

80. The President reported that there had been three nominations received. She commented that it was refreshing to have three nominations so that there was a competition and thanked the members for putting their names forward:

Candidate:	Dr L H Allum	Mrs O D R Cook	Professor T D H Parkin
Supporters:	Mrs B S Andrews-Jones Miss L S Belton Dr M M S Gardiner Dr K A Richards	Mr T M Hutchinson Professor S A May Dr A J McLeish Dr W A S Wilkinson	Dr M A Donald Mrs S D Howarth Mrs C-L McLaughlan Professor J L N Wood
Date of first joining Council:	July 2021 (Elected)	July 2022 (Elected)	July 2021 (VSC appointment)
Current term due to end:	July 2025	July 2026	July 2025

81. All three candidates had circulated a letter to Council.
82. It was confirmed that members physically present would use ballot papers that had been tabled, and members joining the meeting remotely would email the Registrar with their vote to maintain confidentiality.
83. It was noted that in order to succeed a single nomination must receive more than 50% of the vote; where this did not happen, the position would be reported; the last placed candidate eliminated; and a further ballot carried out until an outright winner identified.
84. Council was asked if it wished to have a confidential discussion, which was declined. The candidates voted and left the room.
85. The Registrar and Director of Operations (DoO) briefly left the room to count the ballot papers and note email responses from remote attendees. The candidates returned to the room.
86. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and reported that the vote for this role had not resulted in a single candidate receiving more than 50% of the vote. This meant that, in accordance with the rules, Mrs Cook as the third-place candidate would be eliminated from the election, and a second vote taken for an election between the remaining two candidates, Dr Allum and Professor Parkin.
87. A second ballot paper was circulated. The Registrar and DoO left the room to count the ballot papers and note the email responses from remote attendees.
88. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and Professor Parkin was congratulated on his successful election as Vice-President (Junior) subject to confirmation at the AGM.
89. As the following elections of Treasurer, Chair APC, Chair EC, and Chair SC, only had one candidate for each role, it was suggested that these items would be taken as a block using the individual ballot papers. This was agreed. Council was asked if it wished to have a confidential discussion on any of the candidates, which was declined.

90. The Registrar and Director of Operations (DoO) briefly left the room to count the ballot papers and note email responses from remote attendees for each election.

Election of Treasurer – recommendation for confirmation at the Annual General Meeting on 5 July 2024

91. The President reported that there had been one nomination received:

Candidate:	Dr M M S Gardiner
Supporters	Dr L H Allum Mrs B S Andrews-Jones Miss L S Belton Dr K A Richards
Date of first joining Council:	July 2021 (Elected)
Current term due to end:	July 2025

92. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and Dr Gardiner was congratulated on her successful re-election as Treasurer subject to confirmation at the AGM.

Other elections

Chair, Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

93. Normally this item would be chaired by the Vice-President (Senior) as the candidate standing for re-election as Chair APC was the President but, as the elections for Chair were being done as a block, the President read out the details of the candidacy:

Candidate:	Dr S Paterson
Supporters:	Dr M A Donald Dr M M S Gardiner Mrs C-L McLaughlan Dr K A Richards
Date of first joining Council:	July 2014 (Elected)
Current term due to end:	July 2026

94. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and Dr Paterson was congratulated on her successful re-election as Chair, APC for the forthcoming College year, July 2024 – July 2025.

Chair, Education Committee (EC)

95. The President reported that there had been one nomination received:

Candidate:	Dr K A Richards
Supporters:	Mrs B S Andrews-Jones Dr M M S Gardiner Dr S Paterson Professor J L N Wood
Date of first joining Council:	July 2020 (Elected) (Previously 2015 – 2019, elected)
Current term due to end:	July 2024

96. The candidate had circulated a letter to Council.

97. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and Dr Richards was congratulated on her successful re-election as Chair, EC for the forthcoming College year, July 2024 – July 2025, subject to her re-election in the RCVS Council Elections 2024.

Chair, Standards Committee (SC)

98. The President reported that there had been one nomination received:

Candidate:	Miss L S Belton
Supporters:	Dr L H Allum Dr M M S Gardiner Mrs C-L McLaughlan Dr A J McLeish
Date of first joining Council:	July 2019 (Elected)
Current term due to end:	July 2027

99. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and Miss Belton was congratulated on her successful re-election as Chair, SC for the forthcoming College year, July 2024 – July 2025.

100. It was commented that in future meetings candidates should leave the room prior to the question of whether a private discussion was required. This was noted.

Any other College business (unclassified items)

101. There was no other College business to report.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)

102. It was confirmed that the CMA Report was already on the Corporate Risk Register. There were no other risks raised.

Date of next meeting

103. The next scheduled Council meeting was Thursday, 6 June 2024, commencing at 10:00 am. It was proposed to hold a Regional Question Time the eve prior to the meeting; both events would be held in person in Birmingham (venue to be confirmed).

Mr Castle re-joined the meeting.

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

Update on major projects (confidential)

104. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 9.

Annual retention fee payment arrangements for veterinary surgeons 2024 – 2025 – update (confidential)

105. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 10 – 12.

RCVS accreditation of veterinary programmes in the European Union (EU) (confidential)

106. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 13 – 24.

RCVS Honours and Awards (private / confidential)

107. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 25 – 32.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Comments on classified appendices (confidential)

108. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 33.

Other matters (confidential)

109. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 34 – 39.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

110. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 40.

Strategic Plan – workshop (confidential item)

111. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 41 – 66.

112. The meeting was drawn to a close.

Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	6 June 2024
Title	CEO update, including progress against Strategic Plan
Summary	This paper offers a summary of activity against the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan
Decisions required	To note; questions welcomed
Attachments	None
Author	Lizzie Lockett CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification	Rationales
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

CEO update, including progress against Strategic Plan



Background

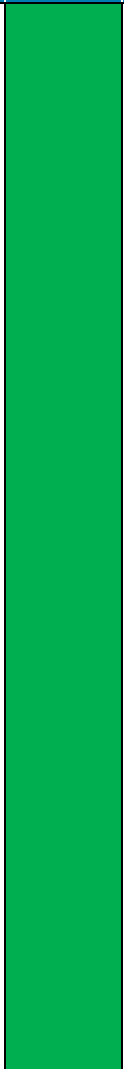
1. The RCVS Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was approved at the RCVS Council meeting in January 2020 and came into immediate effect. The full report, including all of the narrative, together with case studies from the previous plan's successes, can be found here:
<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-strategic-plan-2020-2024/>
2. At its meeting in July 2020, the Officer Team felt it appropriate that an update be given to Council three times a year – in September, January and June – and information about a specific action can be made available to any Council member on request in between times. For each action, responsibilities, recent activities and next steps have been identified in the following table, alongside a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating, to show progress compared to what was anticipated at this point in the Strategic Plan's implementation.
3. Work to develop a new strategic plan is under way although the likely work required in responding to the Competition and Markets Authority's market investigation may delay this process.
4. Alongside those changes noted in the Strategic Plan table to follow, since the March 2024 Council meeting, we have also:
 - a. Launched a new RCVS Academy course on addressing unconscious bias
 - b. Held the first of a series of Vet Nursing Vision events as part of VN Futures, jointly with the British Veterinary Nursing Association
 - c. Supported Mental Health Awareness Week with activity to promote the mental health benefits of movement
 - d. Held the first meeting of our Mandatory Practice Standards Working Group
 - e. Sought nominations for two vacant positions on the RCVS Fellowship Board
 - f. Invited students to participate in the Fellows of the Futures research competition
 - g. Announced the winners of our 2024 Honours and Awards
 - h. Announced the results of our RCVS and VN Councils elections
 - i. Supported Veterinary Nursing Awareness Month with leadership stories
 - j. Been proud to announce that His Majesty King Charles III will be our new patron
 - k. Held our first stakeholder group meeting to discuss the development of clinical careers
 - l. Supplied written evidence to and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee hearing on veterinary workforce
 - m. Hosted a roundtable on the regulation of the use of AI in the veterinary space
 - n. Responded to the Competition and Markets Authority consultation on whether to proceed to a market investigation and responded when it announced that it would proceed
 - o. Gave oral evidence at a Welsh Senedd hearing on corporatisation of veterinary practice

A: Clarity

Ambition: to ensure that we have clarity of purpose and that our internal and external stakeholders and service-users understand our role in the world. We will endeavour to become a proactive regulator that remains a step ahead, even in the face of constant change and uncertainty. We will listen widely, consult meaningfully, make confident decisions, then communicate with clarity, appreciating that the final outcome may not suit everyone.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>1. Continue, via the work of the Veterinary Legislation Working Party (LWP) and other groups, to review the regulatory landscape to ensure we develop world-leading, robust standards and approaches that are grounded in evidence and risk-based, in order to safeguard animal health and welfare, and public health, and maintain trust in the veterinary professions.</p>	<p>Exec Office/ Ed/VN</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events at Houses of Parliament on a regular basis. New microsites built to support the argument, which were highly commended in the 2023 MemCom awards. Two educational webinars took place during May 2023 with RCVS and VN Council members, and representatives of BVA and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA). Defra supportive and CVO has gone on record with support. BVA has included in their 2024 'manifesto'. Discussion around governance to took place at January 2024 Council meeting. Consultation due to go live early June, with launch at BVA Live. Efra Committee hearing included focus on new legislation. CMA inquiry mentions out of date regulatory framework. Defra activity on new legislation now on hold due to General Election. Work continues to raise awareness with aim to get into manifestos. • Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) agreed the formation of a new Working Group on Mandatory Practice Regulation in November 2023; its first meeting was held on 15 April with the second scheduled for 9 July. • First accreditations using the new educational standards and methodology were completed in Liverpool (March 2023), and Aberystwyth / RVC (May 2023). • Launched a comprehensive new online training programme for accreditation panel members via RCVS Academy, with positive initial feedback. Panel member feedback following new accreditation processes also positive. A 'lessons learnt' document is being developed to share with Education and Audit and Risk Committees to ensure we continue on a journey of quality improvement. • The evidence base informing the new accreditation standards for vet degrees has been published in the <i>Journal of Veterinary Medical Education</i>. • Following VN support meetings, there have been eight successful accreditations. • Large volume of work anticipated in support of CMA's market investigation work.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>2. Ensure that we are addressing what matters to our stakeholders and that we horizon-scan for issues that are beyond the scope of our immediate view. For example, regulation of new technologies, regulation of practices, review of our concerns and disciplinary process, and regulation of the wider veterinary team and the environment in which they work.</p>	<p>APC/ LWP/ PICDCL /EC</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continue to investigate the most appropriate groups of paraprofessionals to bring under any future regulatory umbrella, for example, the first behavioural medicine roundtable was hosted by the Fellowship Science Advisory Panel (FSAP) in May 2023 and there was a popular and lively workshop at the recent (November 2023) Fellowship Day. An FSAP working party is investigating whether and how animal behavioural medicine should be regulated. • The new concerns process has been launched and the website has been updated. • The new Charter Case Committee (CCC) was launched on 25 August 2023. • New plans for Extra Mural Studies (EMS) have been published and communicated. New policy now approved by Education Committee (EC) for implementation in autumn 2024. We held a Q&A session with the Veterinary Schools Council Education Cttee and EMS co-ordinators on 9 January to answer any questions they may have. The new policy has been the subject of widespread communication and engagement. • Work on Reasonable Adjustments continues with the veterinary schools, with the aim of developing co-created principles. Research to inform the process ongoing. • Disability and Chronic Illness survey due to be published, with a student specific version coming later in the summer. • Neurodiversity and clinical placements stakeholder day being hosted in June to look at developing an understanding and creating guidance to support students. • VCCP project agreed by Council in November 2023 and now underway. The three workstreams are 1) Development of Specialty training for GPs; 2) Definition of roles; and, 3) Development of flexible routes to specialisation. First stakeholder meeting took place in May, and second will take place in Edinburgh in June. • Under Care/Out-of-Hours guidance launched 1 September 2023, with guidance on prescription of endo- and ectoparasiticides in mid-January 2024. • New guidance on canine artificial insemination published. • Roundtable on regulation of use of AI on 20 May; outputs will inform guidance as part of Code of Conduct, Practice Standards and accreditation standards.
<p>3. Review whether we can take a more proactive role around breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act involving unqualified individuals, or courses that purport to lead to registration but do not, both through education to end-users of veterinary services, and working more actively to support those wishing to raise concerns with the relevant authorities.</p>	<p>Registrar</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following approval at the March 2023 meeting of Council, the 12-month trial of a protocol for the private prosecution of breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act was launched on 1 April. This work is now reported via the PIC/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee. This will be reviewed at the June 2024 meeting of Council.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>4. Work with our partners overseas to ensure that the UK remains relevant in the veterinary world post-EU exit, including sharing knowledge, marketing our standards and services, and building an engaged diaspora of members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MsRCVS) and registered veterinary nurses (RVNs). Ensure there is a global element to all that we do, and that our international members feel engaged and included.</p>	<p>APC/ FVE/ EC</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue improving engagement with overseas members and run a regular blog in RCVS News from overseas-practising members. • Work ongoing to develop more permanent solution to loss of mutual recognition of professional qualifications – paper with Defra but no response has been received. Council has approved direct approaches to some schools. Ongoing conversations with EAEVE about effective ways to achieve this. • First consultative accreditation visit to an EU school under our 2023 accreditation standards took place in May 2023. • Continuing strong relations with International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG), Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, Mind Matters International, American Association of Veterinary State Boards, American Veterinary Medical Association and International Veterinary Regulators Network (IVRN), with attendance/presentation at in-person meetings during the year. • Interest shown in a Mind Matters International research event – timing and resourcing TBC. • Work ongoing regarding environmentally sustainable approach to joint international accreditations involving visitors trained in the standards and processes of more than one agency – pilot under discussion. • Initial conversation held with the Veterinary Council of Zambia to see how we could support their regulatory development – contact via Veterinary Medicines Directorate. • Involved in ESNO (for European specialist nurses) discussions on workforce shortages and retention, culminating in a report to the European Commission. • Revised Accreditation Committee of Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) Standards published March 2024 • Involved with AAVMC development of ‘Team-based Veterinary Healthcare competences. • Promotion of VN initiatives at the first International Congress ATAV for Veterinary Technicians in Rimini, Italy. • Academy course developed for overseas vets / VNs applying to register launched. • There are opportunities to promote and ‘sell’ some of our initiatives overseas, but UK work takes priority during this busy time. Trademarking is being considered. • CEO joined FVE taskforce on development of European Veterinary Foundation, which met in person in December 2023, work ongoing.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
5. Build a closer relationship between the College, the professions and the public by continuing our outreach programme. Review how we gain input from stakeholders at all levels, including the development of an improved process for seeking input from members of the public.	APC/ Comms/ Exec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing work with Public Advisory Group members on development of animal owner advice. Next meeting to discuss issues raised by CMA. Chronic Illness and Disability Survey for vets, nurses, student vets and SVNs gained over 3,000 responses, report will be published shortly. With a campaign on reasonable adjustments in the workplace to follow soon after. New set of Fellows on Tour events at UK veterinary schools being planned. We took part in a Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Survey Working Group and that data is now available, to provide a useful comparator for some areas of the veterinary profession across Europe. Stakeholder meeting took place on 13 March to bring groups up to date on current College priorities and seek input to the strategic plan. Series of one-to-one interviews with representatives from around 20 stakeholder organisations have taken place and output will help inform the new strategic plan. Joint meeting with RCVA and BVA Officers took place in March to discuss whether we move to Vet Futures 2 – positive discussions although likely workload for both organisations regarding CMA may put this on hold in the short term. MMI talks at Titanic Vet Show, ECVIM and Vetnet, CAW Head Nurse Congress and Charity Vet Association conference.
6. Establish clarity around a data-sharing commitment, and ensure that our views, our data & our insights are shared regularly in an easy-to-search way, for example, easy-to-find FAQ on key issues, insights gained from concerns & complaints data, and self-service facts and figures about the professions. Make available accessible & anonymised versions of the data we hold to all stakeholders to enable them to generate value and insights for the sector.	FRC/ Digital/ Policy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop dashboard on key metrics – parameters agreed at January meeting of Council, was due for first report in June 2024 but other work pressures mean this is slightly delayed. Data management system (CRM) review project ongoing – Discovery phase now complete. Additional data being gathered about reasons for leaving the RCVS Registers – reported to Registration Committee. Project to support Defra ref farm attestations and links to RCVS Register completed and launched December 2023; additional projects now in pipeline. Paper on access to Register for third-party software approved by FRC at May 2024 meeting.


Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
7. Plan and implement a cycle of review and improvement for our educational standards and processes, to ensure we continue to take a leadership role with our international partners.	Ed Cttee/ VN Ed Cttee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCVS Academy for accreditation panellists launched, initial feedback positive. • First accreditation events under new standards have been completed successfully in March 2023 (Liverpool) and April (Aber/RVC). Evaluation being analysed to inform quality improvement to our processes. A report from the first year of accreditations under the new system will be published shortly. • Veterinary Clinical Career Pathway workstreams underway. • Following VN support meetings, eight successful accreditation events. • Successful reaccreditation by ENQA received. • Following consultation the updated VN Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training was approved by VNC at its May 2024 meeting. • A review of the accreditation standards for the post registration Cert AVN will commence in autumn 2024. • A review of the veterinary Day One Competences is underway.
8. Ensure clarity of appeal across all the areas where we make decisions, modernising where appropriate; where appeal is unavailable, clearly justify.	Legal services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration appeals process has been considered by Registration committee and is now for Council's consideration / approval at its June meeting. • Appeal process for Statutory Membership Examination to be considered. • Review and revise VN accreditation appeals process.

B: Compassion

Ambition: to be a compassionate upstream regulator and a supportive Royal College by ensuring that high standards continue to be met while working in an empathetic way that respects all of our stakeholders and service-users as individuals. We will recognise that a compassionate approach involves helping members of the veterinary team build the skills and knowledge they need to meet our standards, which is ultimately in the interests of animal health and welfare.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
1. Endeavour to ensure that the College is seen as approachable, helpful, fair and accessible to all.	All		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of web content review now received, and work underway to update key areas of website with consideration being given to information accuracy, content design, language style, accessibility, diversity and inclusion and search engine optimisation (SEO). See also A5 above ref engagement. • Review of appeals processes ongoing, see A8 above. • Continue with VN support package, see A7 above. • Have supported refugees through the Statutory Membership Examination process and the first one has now passed and will register with us. • Report from Survey of the Professions to be published over summer.
2. Enable our teams to deliver compassionate regulation by providing structures, training and support to ensure they can help vets and nurses meet the standards required in a compassionate way, and take ownership and communicate clearly when things don't go to plan. Recognising that, in order to achieve this, our team members must also feel well supported and that they are compassionately treated.	People		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement discussions underway with employees to explore new methods of feedback to understand levels of employee engagement. • New Staff Network Group – Alliance for Inclusion - set up to help build an inclusive working community. ToR under review and communication to all employees about the groups purpose to be actioned shortly. • Online staff learning hub due to launch soon this will provide employees with an enormous range of learning options plus additional learning material. prepared in conjunction with Academy colleagues and external providers. • Updated L&D policy with more rigorous assessment of monies agreed and better understating of learning outcomes for performance improvement. • Thematic review of data from exit interviews presented to Senior Team on a quarterly basis with managers able to take responsibility for improvements. • Growth mindset group in place to encourage different ways of thinking, was commended by those engaged with it as part of our end of year review. • Manager charter developed to support new and existing managers, next steps of this work to be discussed with wider manager group. • Additional mental health and wellbeing support introduced via MyMynd, with positive initial feedback, Masterclasses to take place in June. • In depth recruitment training in June for managers to aid decision making and strengthen competence on inclusive recruitment / competency questioning. • Wellbeing calendar under construction to focus employees' minds on specific events or activity through the year to support health and mindset.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
3. Review our concerns process through the eyes of each of our stakeholder and service-user groups to ensure that it is fair, forward-thinking and compassionate, and set out a programme of quality improvement.	ProfCon MMI		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of ProfCon Investigation Support Service; article May 2023 RCVS News and flagging to VetLife for appropriate signposting. Registrar took part in 'myth-busting' ref complaints at BVA Live & SPVS. Public Advisory Group will support us developing more compassionate approach for animal owners. Academy courses on resolving complaints in practice, and Complaints: communication, confidence and compassion now available. Reviewing work of the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority Working Group on minimising distress for practitioners involved in a regulatory process, to see where we can learn from best practice.
4. Help our regulated professionals to meet the standards expected of them by their peers, the public and society at large by launching the RCVS Academy, which will house a range of online educational tools to help veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other potential associates of the College understand what is expected of them in terms of meeting standards, and to support them acquiring relevant knowledge and staying up to date in a creative, accessible and inspiring way.	Exec ALL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Academy courses being launched regularly; over 14,100 learners have accessed the Academy since launch (June 2022); regular contact with advisory panel of vets and nurses ensures content is relevant. Development of the EMS information 'hub' ongoing, to provide an engaging online area accessible for the three main stakeholder groups, students, providers and school staff. Will focus on 'what good looks like' and include the 'difficult' challenges such as how to empower students to deal with inappropriate behaviours on placement, and support for schools with those difficult conversations when exploring concerns raised and students and addressing issues with providers. VN Educator forum meetings have been reinstated beginning June 2024 and will focus on providing regulatory updates to VN educators.
5. Continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of members of the veterinary team, and our College staff, through the Mind Matters Initiative under its workstreams of 'prevent, protect and support' (see www.vetmindmatters.org), and also help veterinary professionals to take account of the mental health of those with whom they come into contact.	APC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMI Strategy and Evaluation documents published. Successful MMI Symposium hosted in autumn 2023, with good feedback from delegates. Next event will be in 2025. Well attended streams at BSAVA Congress 2024. First MHFA events of 2024 sold out within two weeks, more planned inc one specifically for the Association of Veterinary Students. President and Chair of MMI spoke at May Titanic Veterinary Conference. Part of the Worshipful Company of Farmers Rural Health and Wellbeing Forum, contributing a veterinary voice. New training course looking at key 'transitions' being designed for pilot. New MMI Lead now in post. Work to support Mental Health Awareness Week included Campfire Chats. Joint work with Education Team on supporting neurodiverse individuals in practice, with event on 14 June.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>6. Continue to foster a reflective learning culture amongst members of the veterinary team, so that they can continue to grow and develop in a supportive, no-blame environment.</p>	<p>APC Ed Cttee</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective CPD and use of 1CPD app now mandatory – communications and promotion have taken place and will continue. • Evaluation of VetGDP Adviser e-learning highly positive. • Discussions remain ongoing with NHS regarding relaunch of Edward Jenner Leadership MOOC. • New unconscious bias course launched via the Academy, this is now mandatory for Fellowship assessors as part of the drive to widen the diversity and inclusion to Fellowship, and open to all vets and nurses. Other new materials on Leadership being created, especially profiling VN leaders. Existing courses will be up for review later this year. • Parallel work on growth mindset within the staff team.

C: Courage

Ambition: we will have the courage to take a leadership role within the professions, to ensure that the pervading culture is healthy, sustainable, inclusive, innovative and respectful; through this, will develop confident veterinary professionals.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
1. Continue to seek culture change within the wider professions around help-seeking behaviour to support both mental and physical health, learning culture, leadership, innovation, sustainability and diversity.	DIG MMI APC Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See B5 for MMI and B6 for learning culture. • VN version of religious clothing document launched. • Joint APC / EC / VN Council project has started to produce guidance for EMS, intra-mural rotations (IMR) providers and wider workplaces on supporting those with neurodiversity. • Fellowship Science Advisory Panel project on Net Zero practice moving forward with Chairs appointed to the Medicine WG and the Surgery WG. • Sustainability is a key aspect of Hardwick Street refurbishment project. • Supported the UKHACC Green Surgery launch, including the Chair speaking at the London Vet Show. • ViVet strategy under review at present. • AI roundtable took place on 20 May – see information above. • Paper on learning culture in VetGDP published in <i>Journal of Veterinary Medical Education</i>. • Poster presentation on BAME Recommendations and Religious Clothing Guidance at July Association for the Study of Medical Education EDI event, re-organised in-person conference took place in spring 2024. • VetGDP for returners now launched to help people to return to veterinary work following a career break, planning promotional push. • Chronic illness survey has now been completed and is currently being analysed by our research partners (more detail above). • 'RVN – Starting Out' course, designed to support the transition from student to registered nurse, launched May 2023. • Nurse Returner course developed and launched Sept 2023. • 'RCVS & Me' course in development for student vet nurses and tutors with an introduction to the RCVS, its purpose and how it can support students. • Menopause tool kit launched as part of VN Futures (VNF). • Flexible working toolkit being developed as part of VNF. • President's Christmas donation given to WP charity and awareness raised as part of communication of this. • Joint work with VSC and BVA continues to better support students on EMS, discussions underway with National Farmers Union.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
2. Celebrate the art as well as the science of veterinary medicine and ensure that wider professional skills are properly and credibly supported.	APC RCVSK Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to honours process made and record number of nominations received for 2024 round – award winners now announced. New building will focus on history and future of veterinary practice – thought to be given to commissioning new items for historic collection. Education space for school-age children planned for new building to encourage better understanding of veterinary profession from a younger age and potentially encourage applications to vet school from a wider pool. New Fellowship categories have brought in a wider diversity of Fellows, whose expertise on the art and science of veterinary medicine needs to be harnessed. Wider skills continue to be championed through the CertAVP and the new vet school standards, and is a key consideration for the Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway project, including speciality training for GPs.
3. Work with other stakeholders to retain skills and talent within the professions, by developing return-to-work options that build confidence in those who have had a career break, for whatever reason.	<i>Education</i> <i>MMI</i> <i>ViVet</i> <i>Academy</i> <i>Exec</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Action Plan outlines range of actions ref retention Webinars with the wider profession have now taken place – see A2. The Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) is developing an inclusive recruitment toolkit to support organisations to consider their recruitment process from job description thorough to induction, which should impact on recruitment and retention. VetGDP is available for those returning to the profession. Compulsory for those away from the profession for more than five years, optional for those away for a shorter period. Now covered in VetGDP coms. Work ongoing to understand 3Rs activities within the government / public health veterinary sector and develop an action plan based on gap analysis. Nurse Return course available on Academy for all nurses returning to the Register. Compulsory for those off the Register for five years or more.
4. Ensure a pathway for career progression for vets and nurses via postgraduate/post-qualification accreditations and qualifications – to meet the needs of vets and nurses at all stages of their careers.	<i>Education</i> <i>VN</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fifth provider of CertAVN approved. There are now 24 Cert AVN programmes available covering both clinical and non-clinical areas of focus. As outlined at A2 above, the VCCP workstreams will start shortly. VN career progression linked to LWP proposals (see A1). Proposals under development for the Advanced Practitioner role for VNs Pilot for second stage of VN Prescriber research complete, and changes agreed for full survey, and selection of sample. Next step sign off final questionnaire and related documents/coms. Survey will be open for approx three weeks; expected launch summer with analysis completed in autumn. Actions within Workforce Action Plan also consider fulfilling careers.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
5. Develop extra-mural studies (EMS) and work experience opportunities at the College, together with more opportunities for veterinary professionals and members of the public to become engaged with the work of the regulator at first hand and gain an understanding of its complexities.	<i>Comms APC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop modules for Academy to better explain our key functions. • Successful EMS placement programme, jointly with Veterinary Policy Research Foundation, ongoing. • Officers attended a range of freshers' weeks and careers fairs at the vet schools in autumn 2023. VN school induction weeks also attended. • CEO undertaking talks with practices - including those on new grad schemes – to demystify the work of the College. • RVNs working at the College profiled as part of VN Awareness Month 2023; an RVN group has been set up to support the professional identity of RVNs working at the College and part of this will be showcasing the work of the College and the opportunities to be had.
6. Create an innovation funding pot to enable the professions to help solve regulation and professional standards issues that matter to them.	<i>Exec FRC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bursary scheme needs reconsideration. • Consideration of challenge prize on hold due to other priorities. It will also be important to ensure the professions have the right skills and approach to innovation in order to maximise the opportunity. Something in relation to AI a likely possibility.
7. Continue to develop the Fellowship into a learned society that reflects the varied achievements of the veterinary profession; encourages the advancement of standards; and, develops public awareness of veterinary medicine and science, for example, via the development of a Fellow on the Public Understanding of Veterinary Science.	<i>Fellows APC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for Fellowship Day 2024 under development and Fellows of the Future competition launched. • Nominations round open for two board places, with elections due over summer. • New Academy course on unconscious bias and training for Fellowship assessors now launched. • Fellows spokesperson list to be created, to identify individuals who can be media trained and give views on relevant topics (NB care to be taken not to conflict with regulatory role). • Next steps on sustainability will be worked upon following feedback from Fellowship Day session and others such as LVS. This will be in collaboration with RCVS Knowledge as the evidence gap is a significant element that needs resolution to enable people to make confident decisions.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>8. Review new ways of reaching consensus and driving change within our leadership and governance structure.</p>	<p>Exec Officers</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New induction process was rolled out with new Council members. • Reflection sessions at Council meetings to discuss how effectively business was conducted continue. • Workshop sessions to be planned with external speakers on board effectiveness. • Chairs training took place in September 2023; other training sessions in the pipeline including on finance and media training.
<p>9. Work with the BVA and the BVNA to evaluate the success of the first action plans for Vet Futures and VN Futures respectively, assess whether the ambitions remain relevant, and develop new action plans accordingly. Work with the FVE to support the delivery of Vet Futures Europe.</p>	<p>Exec</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion took place with BVA in March regarding 'Vet Futures 2' – appetite for collaboration but resourcing may be limiting factor. • VN Futures 'VN Vision' events planned for 2024 to reengage with the profession, horizon scan and consider current challenges and future opportunities, The first full event was held on 8 May in Belfast with excellent attendance and engagement. A pared down version was delivered at VMG and received excellent feedback. • VNF sessions on 'impact change' and having difficult conversations at BVNA Congress 2024.

D: Confidence

Ambition: in order to deliver our Strategic Plan, we must not only have the mandate that is secured by the Veterinary Surgeons Act and our Royal Charter, but also the confidence to succeed that will be brought by the right underpinning – the governance, people, finance, communications and IT structures that are crucial to our success.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
1. Review the bedding-in of the 2018 Legislative Reform Order to ensure that our Council and committee structure is efficient, effective, and transparent, and provides the right level of strategic oversight coupled with skills-based input to allow the College to function to the best of its abilities.	Officers Exec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping for informal review - although this may be superseded by work considering new governance structure as part of legislative changes (meanwhile, second five-year review for the LRO that separated PIC and DC from Council underway with Defra). Governance Manual in progress. Action plan to resolve gaps vs Charity Code being worked through by Senior Team and reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee. Consultation on governance to be launched in June 2024.
2. Review the structure of all of our groups operating below committee level, to ensure the right mix of skills are available to tackle the tasks at hand and that each group has clear membership, purpose, principles, time-frame and sense of what success will look like.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills were considered as part of Council Culture project. Annual review of delegation scheme now routine and all groups now have ToR and greater clarity. New paper templates under development, along with training for secretariats. Each Committee considers its 'child' groups (subcommittees, working groups etc) as part of the review at the end of each presidential year.
3. Develop and embed a meaningful dashboard to help ensure that appetite for risk is clear, risk is managed and any early warning signs are addressed.	ARC FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk process well embedded and regularly praised by Audit and Risk Committee for its effectiveness. Annual Business Continuity Planning meeting takes place and changes are made to the plan in response. Work ongoing on risk dashboard and assurance map, reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee. Greater visibility of Corporate Risk Register now available to Council. Workshop took place in November 2023.
4. Collate and review our member and service-user feedback on an ongoing basis, against key performance indicators, and work with RCVS Knowledge to employ a quality improvement and innovation methodology to ensure we are providing services that meet the needs of our audiences and society at large.	Ops Head of I&E		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper on 'vital signs' agreed at January 2024 meeting of Council. Was due for first report June 2024 but delayed due to other commitments. Process for reviewing / analysing all complaints about RCVS, regardless of area of work, still ongoing. Customer Services team now well established and looking to extend its remit. Vet and VN exit survey data now being gathered. Zero tolerance for abuse of our staff statement now on the website. Members' views gathered as part of the 2024 Surveys of the Professions, report under development.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
5. Put in place a People Strategy that develops our talent, diversity, leadership and culture, across the staff team, Council and committee members, examiners, assessors and all others who work on behalf of the College.	Exec People		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data dashboard completed to highlight People data to include diversity and gender information, shortly to be shared with ST. Career progression framework under review to provide clarity of movement across the organisation. Update of staff induction, probation and notice processes in progress, majority of the policies are complete with some minor adjustments based on feedback being updated. Induction is now managed monthly, with less requirement of colleagues to support; more enhancements in progress. Review of payroll and people systems underway, to reduce repetition and administration, provide a better service to managers and improve the experience for new recruits. Learning sessions rolled out for all managers on major changes to employment legislation, plans underway for further work regarding sexual harassment in the workplace – legal changes due in Oct 24. New career web page review under construction to better promote career opportunities externally. Internal 'engagement hub' (internet) agreed, implementation due to start. Skills Share Week delivered as a direct result of June away day discussion, feedback very positive; 2024 plans underway.
6. Ensure our financial systems are customer-focused, fraud-resistant and efficient, and improve communication and clarity over where money is spent and its impact.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure database upgrade includes a flexible customer interface. Fraud policy to be refreshed.
7. Develop and implement a technology strategy that puts digital first, is collaborative, and focuses on simplification and convergence.	Exec Digital FRC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platforms for NPL, PDR and Stanley (PSS) purchased late spring 2023. CRM review project with Smart Impact now underway. New website project just at outset, project board being instigated.
8. Purchase a new property that aims to serve the needs of the College for the next twenty years, while not putting an undue future financial commitment on our members.	Estates Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HS now free of tenants; work ongoing ref dilapidations. Levy Real Estate have been appointed to draw up refurbishment requirements and employer's requirements document under development. All planning applications approved except for flying RCVS flag on RCVS Day. Technical Group set up and responsible for ensuring building infrastructure, kit and layout meet the current and future needs, within agreed budgets Tender process well underway to select Design and Build contractors to carry out the refurbishment work.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
9. Put in place a communications strategy that will focus on clarifying what we are, and what we are not, and be stronger about calling out those who seek to undermine the College; own our shortcomings and be clear about where and how we will change; and be bolder about celebrating our successes and our unique contribution to animal health and welfare, and public health. Empower our wider team to become communications ambassadors for the College.	Comms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCVS comms survey of key stakeholders (including professions, public etc) to establish preferences and gain feedback. • Short term comms plan submitted to Officers, alongside evaluation parameters. New plan to be developed alongside new strategy plan. • Social media strategy under development as part of broader planning work. • Web content review report received and work underway across key sections of website to update content in line with report's recommendations. • Language/Content Style Guide near completion, to be followed by familiarisation training for staff. • Brand development review ongoing, to be aligned with new building presentation and next Strategic Plan. • Website review ongoing.
10. Develop and implement a corporate social responsibility strategy that befits an organisation that works in the public interest.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental impact of new building under consideration, plus how it can help us integrate into, and support, community, eg, working with local schools. • Work ongoing with UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC). • APC reviewing environmental position statement. • Regular reviews of investment portfolio to ensure it aligns with our values. • Push to encourage staff to make more use of volunteering days to support social responsibility of the organisation. • Working towards Investors in the Environment (iE) Silver once in new building (we secured Bronze for another year in 2023). • Consideration of carbon off-setting line in future budgets. • Sustainability considered for VN Pre-Registration Examinations. Reduction of single-use items, reuse, repurpose or recycle where possible. • Events strategy – eg around merchandise and give-aways – reflects environmental policy.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	6 June 2024
Title	Veterinary Surgeon Act 1966 offences – illegal practice, and misuse of title, etc.
Summary	The paper outlines the activity during the 12-month trial of the Protocol for the Investigation and Private Prosecution of illegal practice (The Protocol).
Decisions required	<p>Council is asked to evaluate if how the Protocol should be taken forwards and consider the following options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Permanent approval of the RCVS Private Prosecution Policy (with or without an allocated budget). b. Closure of the RCVS Private Prosecution Policy but continuation of the ongoing actions short of private prosecution. c. Extend the 12-month trial period and budget for a further specified period.
Attachments	Annex A – The Protocol
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Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulations

Introduction

1. Council will recall that in the RCVS' Strategic Plan for 2020 – 2024, an item to be reviewed was to discuss / consider what role the RCVS could undertake where acts of veterinary surgery are carried out by unregistered / unqualified persons, and whether the RCVS should consider, in any circumstances, carrying out private prosecutions for Section 19 and / or 20 offences.
2. In March 2023, Council confirmed that the draft Protocol for the Investigation and Private Prosecution of illegal practice ('The Protocol') as set out in **Annex A** should be implemented by way of a 12-month trial period, effective from 1 April 2023; with a maximum budget of £50,000 (excluding staff time).
3. At its same meeting (March 2023) Council also confirmed that the Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee (PIC / DC) Liaison Committee was to monitor the 12-month trial of the protocol for private prosecutions. During the trial period (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024) two updates were reported to the PIC / DC Liaison Committee.
4. The Protocol provides guidance on when the RCVS will consider investigating a report of illegal practice, and if necessary, when we may consider bringing a private prosecution for alleged breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (the Act).
5. Upon receipt of a report of illegal practice the information provided is assessed to identify the alleged offender and any direct evidence of illegal practice – the assessment focuses on illegal practice which presents a serious risk of harm to animal health and welfare, or the reputation of the veterinary profession, or the protection of public health.
6. The trial period is concluded, and this paper outlines the activities during the twelve-month trial of The Protocol.
7. There have been no private prosecutions commenced or undertaken during the trial period. Consequently, except for staff time / costs, no other costs were incurred during the 12-month trial period.

The table below shows numbers of illegal practice reports registered monthly during the trial period (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024).

April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2	1	2	6	13	8	9	8	4	3	6	3

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data

Alleged illegal practice reports received

8. During the trial period, 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the total number of email reports / allegations received into the Illegal practice inbox is 65. Of the 65 reports assessed:
 - 53 reports were closed. Of these:
 - 31 reports were closed following initial assessment and investigation, because the information provided was not direct evidence nor did it identify any offender.

Consequently, these reports did not meet the 'realistic prospect of conviction' threshold. In these circumstances, for clarity, an RCVS advisory letter, setting out Section 19 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, was sent to the business owner (if identified) regarding the treatment of animals by unqualified persons.

- Five reports were closed in line with the Protocol with RCVS cease & desist letters sent regarding the unauthorised use of the RCVS logo (a breach of copyright law) and MRCVS on business websites. A deadline for the removal of the use of the RCVS logo and MRCVS was offered, and follow-up investigation of the websites confirmed compliance – the RCVS logo had been removed.
- Three reports were closed following investigation regarding unregistered veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse's use of title on websites and a document. One case involved a non-UK veterinary surgeon misunderstanding the RCVS registration process. This matter was immediately resolved with the veterinary surgeon completing their RCVS registration. The other cases involved qualified but unregistered persons including of a website that they had previously been veterinary nurses. As veterinary nurse is not a protected title under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, there was no misuse of title or evidence of misrepresentation and therefore, in these circumstances, the RCVS did not require to take any further action.
- One report was closed following a police investigation regarding an unregistered person claiming to be a veterinary surgeon. This person received a police caution. (A formal warning that is given to a person who has admitted an offence).
- Two reports were transferred to the RCVS concerns process because they related to the professional conduct of properly registered veterinary surgeons and did not involve illegal practice.
- One report was closed with advice regarding the euthanasia of wild birds because there was no evidence of illegal practice.
- One report was closed regarding the unauthorised use of a veterinary surgeon's name in an online article. This report involved a UK-based veterinary surgeon who writes articles about specific animal species which are published on a non-UK website. The veterinary surgeon noticed that their name had been attributed to an article published on the website which they had not written, and considered this was identity theft. The RCVS had no jurisdiction nor powers to investigate non-UK websites, and the veterinary surgeon was advised to contact the website publisher or seek their own legal advice regarding the alleged unauthorised use of their name – the matter was closed with no further action by the RCVS.
- Two reports received from other agencies for assistance were closed with the RCVS providing witness statements & assistance. Of these, one case resulted with two lay persons convicted for animal welfare related offences. The offenders received fines and a banning order.

- Two reports were closed regarding members of the public seeking advice on a specific veterinary procedure (canine cytology). No evidence of illegal practice was reported.
- Five reports were closed following assessment because there was no evidence of illegal practice or the person reporting the alleged illegal practice did not identify the alleged offender, and there was insufficient information despite our efforts to enable us to identify any offence or offender.

The table below shows the descriptions of illegal practice allegations received / registered during the Protocol for the Investigation and Private Prosecution of illegal practice (1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024)

Description of alleged illegal practice	Number of Cases
Procedures advertised on fertility clinic / breeder websites and social media	39
Other services advertised on websites and social media e.g., dental, and grooming businesses	4
Misuse of title	5
Use of RCVS logo on website	3
Unregistered veterinary surgeons / nurses	4
Prescribing/Possess medicines	2
Conduct of veterinary surgeon	2
Euthanasia - wild bird sanctuary	1
Unauthorised publishing of article on website	1
RCVS assistance requested from other agencies	4

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data

9. There are 12 ongoing cases, including those that are the subject of ongoing liaison with or referral to other agencies. Of the 12 ongoing cases:
- Two cases are active investigations involving the police.
 - One case is an active investigation involving trading standards.
 - Three cases are being considered by the VMD to undertake visits.
 - Six cases are ongoing RCVS investigations.
 - The RCVS has requested further information (direct evidence) from persons who allege illegal practice, and information from the alleged offender regarding the identity of the business's veterinary surgeon.
10. There have been no private prosecutions commenced or undertaken during the trial period. Consequently, except for staff time / costs, no other costs were incurred during the 12-month trial period.

11. The number of reports initially increased during the second and third quarter (total of 48 reports) of the trial period following the RCVS changed position (June 2023) on canine intravaginal artificial insemination, which meant from that time lay persons were unable to carry out all canine artificial insemination procedures. The number of reports reduced during the last quarter of the trial to twelve.

Category of persons reporting alleged illegal practice

12. The total number of email reports / allegations received by category of person into the Illegal practice inbox is:

- Members of Public: 47
- Veterinary Profession: 11
- Other: 7

Type and levels of alleged illegal practice reported

13. The trial period shows that approximately 39 of all email reports received relate to activities published on canine fertility clinic / breeder websites and social media.

14. The reports regarding unregulated canine fertility clinics focus on two types of procedure:

- Canine artificial insemination; and
- Canine progesterone testing.

15. The information provided, in the majority of all reports, consisted of downloaded or screenshot images or information regarding the services advertised on social media and / or websites. Upon receipt of these reports a check of the RCVS registers is carried out to establish if an MRCVS is associated with the business, and if the business premise's is a Registered Veterinary Practice Premises (RVPP). These checks showed that only one canine fertility business reported is a registered veterinary practice premises for the supply of veterinary medicines and had direct involvement with a properly registered veterinary surgeon (MRCVS). Also, a written enquiry is sent to the complainant to confirm if they can provide any direct evidence of illegal practice. In regard to this type of alleged illegal practice, the RCVS received no direct or conclusive evidence during the trial period (what the complainant personally saw and / or heard).

16. The use of website images and / or social media information in criminal proceedings depends on authenticity and admissibility. In order to use such evidence, the RCVS is required to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the account holder the post or made the image(s) or made the video recording and was involved in illegal practice. Consequently, website and social media images / advertisements require to be supported by other sources of evidence e.g. direct eye-witness evidence of the offence. Therefore, this type of website / social media information, itself, is not sufficient to satisfy the realistic prospect threshold for a conviction but if appropriate, information is shared with other agencies e.g. information about unregistered premises supplying

veterinary medicines is shared with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) to consider if enforcement action is required.

Summary and effectiveness of Private Prosecution Protocol

17. In line with the RCVS Private Prosecution Protocol, many situations reported to the illegal practice email inbox are resolved through sending advice / warning and cease & desist letters to a named person(s) or business. This is because there is no direct evidence (evidence that was observed, directly, by the complainant presenting it) of illegal practice to satisfy the 'realistic prospect of conviction' threshold.
18. For evidential purposes these types of letters are sent by Recorded Delivery and are a matter of record at the College. To date, there have been no reports received of repeat alleged offending. Consequently, these types of reports may be considered as a successful outcome.
19. In cases where potential fraud or medicine related issues were identified, information was shared with the appropriate agency, and when requested, the RCVS is assisting in these investigations, which are ongoing.
20. While there have been no private prosecutions, the Protocol has been successful in so far as action taken by way of cease & desist letters, co-operation with other agencies has been positive in curtailing illegal activity. It might be argued that these actions were always carried out by the RCVS and that a formal protocol declaring the intention and willingness to take prosecutions is not necessary. However, the Protocol does signal a clear intent to do so in suitable cases where evidence is forthcoming, and it also highlights the steps that can be taken short of prosecution. In those circumstances, Council might consider that continuing the current set up under the Protocol albeit potentially without a formal budget allocated may be appropriate. This would mean that in the event of a suitable case arising funding would need to be allocated on a case-by-case basis, potentially through the Discretionary Fund.

Decision

21. The matter was considered by PIC / DC Liaison Committee at its recent meeting. The Committee considered that even though the work short of private prosecution would continue with or without the formal Protocol, a framework was important. The Committee also felt that it would be useful to keep open the possibility of the RCVS undertaking such prosecutions in the future if and when a suitable case arose. It felt that instead of a formal ring-fenced budget, application via the Discretionary Fund would be more appropriate on a case-by-case basis.
22. Council is therefore invited to consider the following options / suggestions and to decide if it wishes to:
 - a. Permanent approval of the RCVS Private Prosecution Policy (with or without an allocated budget).
 - b. Close the RCVS Private Prosecution Policy but continue the ongoing actions short of private prosecution.

- c. Extend the 12-month trial period and budget for a further specified period.

RCVS Protocol for the Investigation & Private Prosecution of illegal practice

Introduction

1. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons ('RCVS') is the statutory regulator for veterinary surgeons in the UK. Veterinary surgeons must be registered with the RCVS to practise in the UK.
2. As a regulator, the RCVS works with the public, veterinary profession and when required, other organisations to promote and maintain public confidence in the veterinary profession through the setting of professional standards and regulating the conduct of members of the RCVS. We investigate allegations of serious professional misconduct that call into question a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse's fitness to practise. To learn more about our concerns process, [click here](#)
3. The primary function of RCVS regulatory work is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals through regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of registered veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, thereby protecting the public interest, and safeguarding animal health and welfare. While the RCVS does not have a specific statutory responsibility to investigate, we may act on reports about alleged illegal practice in order to protect animal welfare and public health.

Purpose of this document

4. This document provides guidance on when the RCVS will consider investigating a report of illegal practice, and if necessary, when we may consider bringing a private prosecution for alleged breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (the Act).
5. The Act creates criminal offences in relation to:
 - [Section 19](#): Restriction of practice of veterinary surgery (as defined in s. 27 of the Act) by unqualified persons. No individual shall practice or hold themselves out as practising or being prepared to practice, veterinary surgery unless they are registered in the register of veterinary surgeons or the supplementary veterinary register.
 - It is important to note that in regard to the treatment of animals by unqualified persons a number of exceptions apply which can be found in the Act itself (Schedule 3), as well as in the form of specific exemption orders. For more information see [section 19 of the RCVS supporting guidance on the treatment of animals by unqualified persons](#).
 - [Section 20](#): Prohibition of use of practitioners' titles by unqualified persons. If a person not registered in the [register](#) of veterinary surgeons takes or uses the title veterinary surgeon or any name, title, addition or description implying that they are so registered, they shall be guilty of an offence.

- The title veterinary surgeon is protected by law and the post nominal MRCVS provides assurance to the public that the veterinary practitioner is competent, fit to practise and holds adequate professional indemnity insurance.
6. It is important to note that this protocol applies to the RCVS only. It does not apply to or affect the decisions of any law enforcement agencies or prosecuting authorities - It sets out the proportionate measures the RCVS may take when considering reported allegations of offences by unqualified persons under sections 19 and / or 20 of the Act.

What to do if you have concerns about the activities of an unqualified person

7. The RCVS do not have a dedicated team who consider breaches of the Act, nor do we have powers under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations, but we are here to help. If you have direct evidence¹ of illegal practice, or illegal use of the veterinary surgeon title or illegal possession and / or supply of veterinary medicines, in the first instance, you should:

- **If you have concerns about the threat of injury / harm to an animal:**
 - Call your local police – [view a list of all UK police forces](#)
or
 - In England & Wales call the RSPCA on **0300 1234 999**
 - In Scotland call the SSPCA on **03000 999 999**
 - In Northern Ireland the USPCA on **028 3025 1000**

- **If you have concerns about illegal practice and / or illegal use of the veterinary surgeon title:**
 - Call your local police – [view a list of all UK police forces](#)

- **If you have concerns about illegal possession and / or supply of veterinary medicines:**
 - Email the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) enforcement – enforcement@vmd.gov.uk
or
 - England & Wales - call your local Association of Police Controlled Drugs Liaison Officer – [view a list of CDLOs](#)
 - In Scotland call your local police – [view a list of police stations](#)
 - In Northern Ireland call your local police or Department of Health (DoH) – [visit a list of PSNI police stations](#) and [DoH website](#).

8. It is important to note that unlike other agencies, the RCVS do not have powers to investigate criminal allegations. However, if an appropriate agency refuses or for any reason, is unable to investigate your allegation of illegal practice, or illegal use of the veterinary surgeon title, you may in these circumstances:

¹ Direct evidence is evidence that was learned, directly, by the witness presenting it. It can be defined as evidence which has been acquired by the witness through their senses and can therefore include knowledge of an offence which was garnered through seeing, hearing, or touching. It should not be evidence that was overheard or learned through hearsay (testimony based on what a witness has heard from another person rather than on direct personal knowledge or experience)

- report your concerns online to the RCVS using our dedicated email address (**it might be helpful to set up a dedicated email address?**);
- only report what you know, and the more detail you give us the better.

Assessment

9. The RCVS will consider reports of alleged illegal practice / misuse of protected title on a case-to-case basis. Our approach is to focus on illegal practice which presents a serious risk of harm to animal health and welfare, the reputation of the veterinary profession, and the protection of public health. We will investigate allegations of illegal practice in accordance with the principles of good regulation to be proportionate, consistent, transparent and targeted.
10. Upon receipt of a report of illegal practice, the RCVS will assess the information we receive to establish:
 - the identity of the alleged offender;
 - the jurisdiction *in which the offence takes place*; and
 - whether the alleged conduct amounts to an offence under sections 19 and / or 20 of the Act.
11. The different actions the RCVS may take when considering alleged illegal practice are:
 - close with no further action – e.g., insufficient evidence;
 - serve a cease & desist letter and if compliant, close;
 - close and refer to another agency;
 - open an RCVS investigation (dependant on the circumstances).
12. Legal action is not always proportionate or practical and where there is evidence to suggest that there was / is unlawful practice or use of title, the RCVS, if appropriate, will consider closing the case, for example, inadvertent misuse of title or a misunderstanding of the restrictions set out under the Act. In these circumstances, the RCVS's first approach is to serve² the identified offender with a cease & desist letter,³ informing the person they have committed or are committing an offence under the Act and should they continue to offend or reoffend, the cease & desist letter can be taken into account in determining future action taken against them by the RCVS and the courts.
13. All cease & desist letters are a matter of record, and to raise awareness of illegal practice, the number of letters issued to alleged offender(s) in the reporting period are included in the relevant RCVS Report to Council and will be published in the RCVS Annual Report.
14. It is important to note that the RCVS has no powers to investigate reports involving illegal online business activity or breeding kennels. Trading Standards and / or your Local Authority have

² For evidential purposes cease & desist letters must be sent by Recorded Delivery.

³ In Scotland it may be possible for the RCVS to apply to the court for an interdict (an interdict is an order made by a Sheriff Court to prevent an individual from conducting particular acts or actions), but for consistency, the RCVS will first send a cease & desist letter to the alleged offender.

jurisdiction / powers to investigate, and if necessary, prosecute these types of allegations, for example:

- misleading courses that purport to lead to registration with the RCVS but do not;
- concerns about dog grooming businesses;
- concerns about dog breeding establishments.

15. If you have concerns about a misleading course and / or business, you should report these to Trading Standards:

- To find a local Trading Standards office, [click here](#)

16. If you have concerns about boarding and / or breeding kennels, you should report these to your Local Authority.

- To find a Local Authority office in England and Wales, [click here](#)
- To find a Local Authority in Scotland, [click here](#)
- To find a Local Authority in Northern Ireland, [click here](#)

17. Although the RCVS do not have the power to investigate these types of allegations, if a concern of this nature is reported to us, we will only close our case once a referral to Trading Standards and / or Local Authority has been made.

18. The RCVS will assist other (enforcement) authorities with their investigations of alleged breaches of the Act, and we will ask to be notified of the outcome.

19. Please note that anonymous reports may not be accepted / investigated by the RCVS and / or other agencies. In these circumstances the RCVS will record details of the report for intelligence purposes only.

20. If the concerns reported to the RCVS are against a non-UK individual or business outside the UK and cannot be referred to another agency within the UK, we will close the report as being outside the jurisdiction of the UK courts. However, if appropriate, the RCVS shall refer such reports to a non-UK agency / regulator for its information and consideration.

21. In order for the RCVS to make a third-party report of illegal practice to another agency, we require to disclose the identity and personal contact details to the other agency of the person who reported the matter to us.

22. Please note that the RCVS is unable to compel an investigation, which is ultimately a matter for the other agency / regulator.

23. If the RCVS considers a report justifies further investigation, we will consider opening an investigation if the alleged offender(s) activity amounts to:

- The alleged offence took place in the UK, Wales or Northern Ireland;

- the alleged offender can be positively identified;
 - there is an identifiable alleged offence under sections 19 and / or 20 of the Act;
 - a cease & desist letter has previously been served on the alleged offender and they have failed to engage with the RCVS; and
 - the RCVS Chief Investigator & Veterinary Investigator have carried out a cease & desist visit on the alleged offender.
24. If our assessment of the information provided leads the RCVS to suspect an offence under the Act, we will consider whether there are significant and serious identifiable risks to animal welfare, public health and / maintaining public confidence in the veterinary profession.
25. The RCVS Chief Investigator will assess the information received, and complete a case plan, which will include:
- the assessment decision;
 - set out the alleged offence(s);
 - identity of the alleged offender (if known);
 - identity of potential witnesses;
 - seek advice from an RCVS veterinary surgeon about:
 - risk assessment of potential serious harm to animals;
 - actual harm caused because of the alleged illegal practice;
 - recommended action.
26. The case plan will be reviewed by the RCVS Registrar or Head of Professional Conduct / Assistant Registrar who will decide if an RCVS investigation is warranted.

Investigation

27. The RCVS Chief Investigator and Veterinary Investigator will investigate allegations by gathering evidence and when necessary, by instructing external investigators / solicitors. The RCVS Investigators will gather evidence of alleged high-risk offence(s) following the steps below:
- initial contact with the reporter to confirm the details of the alleged offence;
 - enquiries as necessary;
 - confirm the identity of alleged offender;
 - confirm if alleged offender is previously known to RCVS;
 - confirm if alleged offender has previously been served an RCVS cease & desist letter;
 - carrying out voluntary interviews to obtain witness statements;
 - ensure confidentiality.
28. Please note that the onus is on the RCVS to obtain evidence that is able to satisfy the criminal standard of proof 'beyond reasonable doubt.' The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 does not give the RCVS any powers at all to assist its investigations into illegal practice, such as the power to enter or search or to seize. Also, the RCVS cannot compel a witness to provide a witness statement. Although undertaking a criminal investigation, the RCVS investigators will not enjoy the same powers as the police, and as a result, we are limited in the action that can be taken in regard to investigation and prosecution of the alleged offence.

29. As these investigations are of criminal offending, it is vital that the RCVS keep its investigations confidential in order to ensure that it can effectively discharge its function in this area. We will therefore only contact you should we require further information and we do not routinely provide updates as to the progress of our investigations as doing so can put them at risk.
30. Following the investigation, the Chief Investigator will update the case plan to include, findings, witness statements and any recommendation for the case papers / evidence to be reviewed by the College's external solicitors.

Decision to prosecute

31. The RCVS having regard to the evidence and our overriding objective to protect public interest and to safeguard animal health and welfare, will decide whether to:
- take no further action (for example, if following the investigation there is insufficient evidence to establish a criminal offence under sections 19 and / or 20 of the Act);
 - refer the matter to another agency (for example, another regulator, Trading Standards, Local Authority, Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) or the police);
 - recommend a private prosecution (in England and Wales) or refer the matter to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (in Scotland) or Northern Ireland Public Prosecution Service.
32. In deciding whether to prosecute, the RCVS will:
- act in the public interest and not solely for the purpose of obtaining a conviction;
 - be fair, independent and objective; and
 - follow the relevant guidance set out in the:
 - [Code for Crown Prosecutors issued by the Crown Prosecution Service for England and Wales](#)
33. The RCVS will generally only consider bringing a private prosecution in cases where the following factors are identified:
- the person has been informed of the law as it relates to sections 19 and / or 20 of the Act;
 - the person has been given the opportunity to stop treating animals or using the protected title;
 - repeat offending - having been sent a cease & desist letter;
 - the offence caused or causes serious harm to animal welfare and / or public health;
 - significant reputational damage to the veterinary profession;
 - there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction;
 - it is in the public interest to prosecute.
34. Please note that any RCVS prosecution action is separate from any civil claim for compensation. It is important that the RCVS remains fair, independent and objective and as such, **we are unable to offer any legal advice or assist in civil claims.**

35. The RCVS Registrar / Director of Legal Services will decide whether to bring a private prosecution following recommendation from the College's external reviewing solicitors.
36. The Registrar must have regard to the RCVS overriding objective to protect public interest and to safeguard animal health and welfare. This might result in the Registrar deciding that the RCVS should not commence a prosecution even where the alleged offending is serious.
37. The Registrar must apply two tests when deciding whether to bring a private prosecution: The evidential test and the public interest test.

Evidential test

38. The Registrar may decide to issue criminal proceedings only where there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction against the person for each charge.
39. When deciding whether there is sufficient evidence to prosecute, the RCVS Registrar must consider whether the evidence can be used in court, and it is reliable and credible. The RCVS Registrar must be satisfied there is enough evidence to provide a "realistic prospect of conviction" against the alleged offender(s).
40. If at any time during the investigation it appears that sufficient evidence is unlikely to be obtained for a prosecution, the RCVS Registrar / Director of Legal Services may decide to close the case.

Public interest test

41. Where there is enough evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction, the Registrar may not issue proceedings unless the public interest requires a prosecution – the question for the Registrar is whether a prosecution is necessary to serve the interests of the public, not whether a prosecution would serve the interests of the veterinary profession. In considering this issue the Registrar must have regard to all the circumstances of the case, including details of the alleged offence, the circumstances of the defendant and the impact of the offending behaviour on animal health and welfare and public confidence in the veterinary profession.
42. The following is a non-exhaustive list of factors that might be relevant to the public interest:
 - whether the activity caused serious harm to animal welfare or public resulting from the offence(s);
 - whether the offending is ongoing, has ceased or likely to be repeated;
 - the time period of the offending;
 - whether the offending is intentional or as a result of a mistake or misunderstanding;
 - whether the RCVS has previously warned or advised the offender regarding offences under the Act;
 - whether the offender has been previously prosecuted of offences under the Act;
 - whether there are any aggravating features;
 - whether there are any mitigating factors;
 - the number of concerns received regarding the offending;
 - whether the offender has admitted the offence(s);
 - whether the information could be better investigated by another organisation / agency;

- whether the RCVS could work in partnership with another organisation / agency's investigation;
- whether the prosecution is likely to have an effect on maintaining public confidence in the veterinary profession or deterring others from committing offences under the Act;
- whether a prosecution is a proportionate response to the conduct leading to the offence;
- the likely sanction under the Act to be imposed by the court on conviction.

43. The above factors are not of equal importance, and the relative importance of a factor will be determined by the circumstances of each case.
44. In deciding whether the public interest test has been met, the Registrar must make an overall assessment in light of all the circumstances.
45. After reviewing all the evidence and making an assessment regarding public interest the Registrar may take:
- no further action;
 - engage with the subject of the investigation by any other appropriate means for example, a visit (see paragraph 22 above);
 - refer the matter to another agency, another regulator body or the Police;
 - instigate a prosecution by laying information in the Magistrates' Court.

Delegation and consultation

46. The Registrar may delegate any or all of the above functions to the Head of Professional Conduct/Assistant Registrar or such other person (including the RCVS external solicitors) as the Registrar considers appropriate.
47. The Registrar or delegate, if not legally qualified, must obtain in-house or external legal advice before deciding to issue prosecution proceedings.
48. The Registrar or delegate, whether legally qualified or not may consult or seek advice from additional sources, including obtaining legal and / or advice from the College's external solicitors or independent registered veterinary surgeon or nurse.
49. A decision that might have a significant implication for the RCVS, must be endorsed by the Registrar and must be notified RCVS Officers as soon as possible.

Prosecutions costs

50. The RCVS is funded by its members' fees, which it has a duty to use responsibly and when we have successfully prosecuted an offender under section 19 and / or 20 of the Act, the RCVS will seek to recover our full costs.

Working with other enforcement organisation

51. The RCVS actively work with other agencies / organisations to advise and assist with compliance of the Act. The RCVS shall liaise and co-operate with other organisations and prosecuting authorities to ensure that offenders of sections 19 and 20 are prosecuted, where appropriate.

Publicity

52. The RCVS will always consider whether it is appropriate to issue a press release to the media drawing attention to factual information about charges which have been laid before the courts prior to any hearing taking place. The RCVS will also publicise any conviction which could help to ensure animal welfare and public protection, and which could draw attention to the need to comply with the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

Codes referred to in this policy document:

- England and Wales Crown Prosecution Service Code for Crown Prosecutors
http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/code_for_crown_prosecutors/index.html
- Scotland Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service Prosecution Code
<http://www.procuratorfiscal.gov.uk/publications/prosecution-policy-and-guidance>
- Northern Ireland Public Prosecution Service Code for Prosecutors
<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Code-for-Prosecutors-5017.htm>

End

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	6 June 2024
Title	Registration Appeals Committee
Summary	The paper sets out the history and current position regarding registration appeals and the rationale for establishing a Registration Appeals Committee.
Decisions required	<p>Council is asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. to decide If it wishes to establish a Registration Appeals Committee; and if so b. to consider and approve the terms of the proposed draft Registration Appeals Rules as set out in Annex A to the paper.
Attachments	Annex A: Draft Registration Appeals Rules
Author	<p>Eleanor Ferguson Registrar 020 7202 0718 / e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Registration Appeals Committee

Background

1. Part of the commitment under the current RCVS Strategic Plan (A. Clarity, ambition 8) was to: *“ensure clarity of appeal across all the areas where we make decisions, modernising where appropriate, where appeal is not available, clearly justifying why not”*.
2. Over the last few years there have been reviews of processes around some existing examination appeals (work re: others is ongoing). However, one area that is outstanding and where there is currently no appeal structure relates to refusal of registration.
3. In terms of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA), for those graduating from UK Schools, registration is to all intents and purposes ‘automatic’ post-conferment of the degree, and there was perhaps no perceived need for an appeals process for these applicants. Similarly, there has historically been no appeals process for those applying to register based on the RCVS accreditation of an overseas school. Scope for such appeals would have been minimal though theoretically possible if an individual was not in ‘good standing’ – usually around declarations of convictions or adverse finding from another regulator. In these rare situations decisions on whether to register or not are via Registrar’s discretion and if the applicant was dissatisfied it would be open to them to apply to the court for judicial review.
4. Pre-EU-Exit, when Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) was in force, scope for appeals was also very limited, but the VSA did contain provisions for appeal that was open only to those coming on via the EU / MRPQ route. This fell away on EU-exit. For those coming on via the Statutory Membership Examination (SME), the issue has been less about registration as such and more around failing the exam (for which there is a separate appeals process). The other route for registration is of course temporary registration; this, as you are aware, is dealt with by this committee under discretionary powers. There is currently no right of appeal against refusal. Until fairly recently, numbers on the temporary register have been few and, again, in the past, there may not have been a perceived need to have a formal appeals process.

Current position

5. Post-EU-Exit, the government has sought to enter into trade agreements with individual countries / zones, and in December 2023 enacted the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Implementation of International Recognition Agreements (amendment) Regulations (the 2023 Regulations) that apply to those covered by the European Economic Area (EEA) / European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade Agreement – namely Norway, Lichtenstein and Iceland. The regulations, while advocating acceptance of qualifications from individuals in those countries, does not affect the ability of regulators to prevent individuals who are unfit to practice from doing so and allows for refusal to accept overseas qualifications where they are not comparable to the equivalent for the UK / failure to meet language requirements. However, it does require there to be a right of appeal against a decision to recognise an applicant’s qualifications (and to give decisions within set time limits). A UK Switzerland Agreement on the Recognition of Professional

Qualifications is entering its implementation stage and is currently out for consultation. If accepted (and it is anticipated that it will be), this will effectively add Switzerland into the 2023 Regulations.

6. There are no vet schools in Iceland or Liechtenstein. Applications from Norway are minimal (at this time there are 12 listed as graduating from Norway on the register all bar one coming on prior to EU-Exit and the end of MRPQ). There are currently 46 on the Register listed as graduating from Swiss schools. Nine post-date EU-Exit / MRPQ and came on via European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) accreditation. Exposure around potential appeals in the future may therefore be considered low, however, given the potential for applicants from those countries (and there may be scope for more countries to be added in the future under future trade deals), to comply with the 2023 Regulations there should be an appeals process in place. Arguably, it would also be prudent to have some form of appeal in relation to decisions currently made on a discretionary basis – i.e. those of the Registrar as referred to above in paragraph 3 or those made around temporary registration.
7. As regards the position of Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs), the routes to registration are different but there are parallels around acceptance of Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) accreditation (and the potential for discretionary refusal by the Registrar. Again, very rare but possible around convictions / lack of good standing, etc. Furthermore, the Veterinary Nursing (VN) Department has confirmed that it does accept candidates from Norway (based on ACOVENE accreditation).

Proposal

8. The proposal therefore is to establish a formal process for appeals against refusal of registration for all categories of applicants, see draft at **Annex A**. The format of this broadly follows what was in place previously for EU applicants under the VSA. Hopefully this is largely self-explanatory. Paragraphs 3 and 4 set out the constitution of the Committee / individual panels to hear individual appeals. This envisages a mix of lay / RVN and veterinary surgeon members, with individual panels having a quorum of three of which one should be lay, one non-Council and one other.
9. The proposal was considered by Registration Committee at its meeting on 23 April 2024. The Committee was of the view that establishment of a Registration Appeals Committee in the format as set out in Annex A would be useful. The Committee considered that this would apply to both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses (with amendment to existing rules that requires VN appeals to go to Veterinary Nurses Council) and wished to recommend this for Council's consideration.

Decisions required

10. Council is asked:
 - a. to decide If it wishes to establish a Registration Appeals Committee; and if so
 - b. to consider and approve the terms of the proposed Registration Appeals Rules as set out in Annex A to the paper.

Registration Appeals Rules 2024

Interpretation

1. In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires –

“the Act” means the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966;

“appeal form” means the form set out at the end of these Rules;

“appeals panel” means a panel of the Committee constituted to hear an appeal;

“College” means the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons;

“Committee” means the Registration Appeals Committee set up by the Council;

“Council” means the Council of the College;

“Registrar” means the Registrar of the College;

“lay person” means a person who is not a veterinary surgeon or a registered veterinary nurse and has never been entitled to be registered as such.

Application

2. These Rules will apply to appeals against refusal of registration [to the RCVS register of veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses]. For the avoidance of doubt this does not include appeals against the results of any examination administered by the College or of any assessment carried out by the College for the purpose of any qualification or distinction awarded by the College.

Composition of the Committee.

3. The Committee will be appointed from time to time by or on behalf of the Council. It will include veterinary surgeons, registered veterinary nurses and lay persons [who may or may not be members of the Council or Veterinary Nurses Council]. Two members of the Committee will be designated by or on behalf of the Council as its Chair and Vice-Chair.

Appeals Panels

4. The Committee will act through panels when dealing with appeals. The quorum for an appeals panel will be three and will include one person who is not a member of the Council or of the Veterinary Nurses' Council. Unless impractical, each panel will include and be chaired by either the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Procedure for making an appeal

5. A person wishing to appeal shall do so by completing an appeal form obtainable from the Registrar and sending it to the Registrar within 28 days of notification of refusal.
6. The appellant shall supply with the appeal form any documents which the appellant wishes to use in support of the appeal.
7. On receipt of a completed appeal form, together with all the documents listed in the form by the appellant, the Registrar shall as soon as practicable refer the appeal to the Committee for

decision. The appeal shall be heard by the Appeals Panel as soon as possible but in any event within three months of the date of receipt of the appeal form.

8. The Registrar shall, not less than seven days before the meeting of the Appeals Panel at which the appeal is to be dealt with, send to the members of the Appeals Panel the papers relating to the appeal. The Registrar shall at the same time send the appellant a copy of the papers circulated to the Appeals Panel with the exception of any legal advice which has been included in the papers relating to the appeal.
9. The appellant shall be entitled, either personally or through a legal adviser (or other friend or advisor) to make oral representations to the Appeals Panel at the meeting to deal with the appeal.
10. The Appeals Panel may require the appellant to supply such additional documents or information as it considers may assist it in reaching its decision on the appeal and may require that any such documents which are in a language other than English shall be translated into English in a translation certified as correct by a notary public or authenticated in such other manner as the Committee shall think fit.
11. The Appeals Panel may adjourn the hearing of any appeal pending the supply of additional documents or information under paragraph 10 of these Rules.
12. The Appeals Panel shall reach its decision on any appeal by majority vote. The Decision of the Appeals Panel will be conclusive for all purposes.
13. Except as provided by these Rules, the Appeals Panel shall regulate its procedure as it thinks fit.

Registration Appeals Rules 2024

Appeal Form

To: The Registrar, The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, 3 Waterhouse Square, 138-142
Holborn, London EC1N 2SW / Registrar@rcvs.org.uk

Name of Appellant.....

Address of Appellant.....

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Details of the decision you are appealing against:

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Please state below why you are appealing:

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(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.)

Please attach copies of any documents which you wish to use in support of your appeal and list them below:

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Signature of appellant.....

Date.....

Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	6 June 2024
Title	Proposed updates to Scheme of Delegation from Council to Committees
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	This paper recommends changes to the Delegation Scheme to bring it up to date – presented as tracked changes. Please ignore any formatting or numbering issues that have arisen due to the track changes, these will we be resolved in the final edit.
Decisions required	To approve the recommended changes.
Attachments	Annex A – updated Delegation Scheme, based on previously-agreed version with track changes
Author	Lizzie Lockett / CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0725

Proposed updates to Scheme of Delegation from the RCVS Council to committees

Background

1. Under a combination of the Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the Council of the RCVS has a range of responsibilities to discharge. It delegates many of these to a series of committees, some of which are statutory and some 'standing'. In turn, many of those committees delegate to subcommittees, working parties and other groups, some of which are permanent and others mounted on a 'task and finish' basis.
2. The Scheme of Delegation gives an overview of the role of Council and outlines the Terms of Reference of the main committees to which Council delegates.
3. This is generally reviewed on an annual basis by Council in June – although changes can be made and approved at any time, if necessary.
4. The current (2023) version is attached at annex A with proposed changes, which have been tracked for ease. There are no major changes proposed this time – just some tidying up. A couple of suggested changes are dependent on other decisions being made at the June meeting.
5. The Scheme does not include anything below committee level, where Terms of Reference are agreed by the sponsoring committee rather than Council. These are available on the RCVS website for reference.
6. Who sits on which committee (and other subsidiary groups) is reviewed each year, to take effect at the start of the new presidential year (after RCVS Day). The current review is a work in progress – with some decisions dependent on the outcome of the election for Chair of Education Committee in June. It will be circulated to Council for ratification by email, before RCVS Day (5 July 2024).

Decision required

7. Council is requested to approve the amended Scheme at annex A, or suggest further amendments, as appropriate. If proposed further amendments are significant, they would go back to the relevant committee for discussion.

Annex A: Scheme of delegation from the RCVS Council to committees

Operative date

1. The following delegations shall have effect from ~~7 September 2023~~ xxx 2024.

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

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

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

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

- xi. Providing information services and information about the historical development of the veterinary professions;
- xii. Monitoring developments in the veterinary professions and in the provision of veterinary services;
- xiii. Providing information about, and promoting fair access to, careers in the veterinary professions.

The purpose of RCVS Council [derived from the Charter]

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

How Council members work

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

I. Abide by the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members.

9. This scheme outlines how Council's functions are currently delegated.

Committees

10. There shall be the following statutory and non-statutory disciplinary and investigation committees, and appeals committees:

- the Accreditation of Veterinary Programme Appeals Committee (appeals committee);
- the Charter Case Committee (non-statutory disciplinary committee);
- the Disciplinary Committee (statutory committee);
- the Examination Appeals Committee (appeals committee);
- the Preliminary Investigation Committee (statutory committee);
- the Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee (non-statutory disciplinary committee);
- the Veterinary Nurses Disciplinary Committee (non-statutory disciplinary committee); and,
- the Specialist and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee (appeals committee).

Commented [LL1]: Registration Appeals committee to be added if approved at June Council meeting

11. There shall be the following standing committees:

- the Advancement of the Professions Committee;
- the Audit and Risk Committee;
- the Education Committee;
- the Finance and Resources Committee;
- the Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee;
- the Registration Committee;
- the Standards Committee; and,
- the Veterinary Nurses' Council.

12. The standing committees shall report to Council and shall be constituted and work within the terms of reference set out below. Their Chairs will be elected by Council unless the Chair is role-based (for example, Treasurer for Finance and Resources Committee, incoming JVP for three years for PIC/DC Liaison), with the exception of VN Council, which will elect its own Chair. The Chairs of the standing committees, with the exception of the VN Council, shall be members of RCVS Council. The Chairs of the statutory and non-statutory disciplinary, investigation and appeals committees shall be non-Council members. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee should be an external individual, independent of Council, but elected by Council. Chairs of subcommittees and other groups do not need to be Council members unless otherwise stated.

13. Chairs of the standing committees will generally hold the office for a three-year period and will be re-elected by Council annually. They will be expected to align with the chair role specification.

14. Standing committees will select their own Vice-Chairs, unless otherwise specified. The Vice-Chairs can be any full member of the committee (ie not an observer, but does not have to be a Council member) apart from the Vice-Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, who should be a full member and a Council member. They will be re-elected every year by members

of the relevant committee, from among self-nominated candidates, as soon as possible into the new presidential year.

15. All the standing committees will generally meet ~~four~~ between three and six times a year, either in-person or remotely. If there is no, or not enough, business to justify a meeting, the Chair can cancel a meeting. There may also be occasions when an additional meeting is required if decisions need to be made more quickly. Small amounts of business can also be conducted by email if there is not sufficient time to mount a meeting and full discussion is not required, but this should be the exception. The quorum for standing committees will generally be a simple majority of the total number of full voting members (ie not observers), unless otherwise specified (for example, VN Council, see below). For more detail about the operation of a meeting, see the role specification for an RCVS Committee Chair.
16. If an item crosses the remit of more than one committee, a joint meeting may be held. The Chair of the meeting will be one of the Chairs of the two committees coming together, to be agreed between them. If an item starts with one committee but, over time, becomes more relevant for another, it may be cross-referred to the most appropriate by the original Chair, or come back to Council for either a decision on the item itself, or a decision on the delegation route. The guidance of the President on the most appropriate course of action may be sought.
17. Where a joint meeting is held of two committees, each committee must be quorate in its own right. Where such joint meetings take place, the Chair of the meeting may be the Chair of either committee, or another member of either committee, at the discretion of the President. The Finance and Resources Committee and Audit and Risk Committee meet formally once per year to discuss the annual report and accounts with the auditors, and the ~~Treasurer shall~~ chair shall alternate between the Treasurer and the Chair of ARC for this joint meeting.
18. The committees may appoint one or more subcommittees or working parties for such general or special purpose as they may think fit, subject to the approval of the Finance and Resources Committee and/or Council, and, subject to any contrary direction from the Council, may on behalf of the Council delegate to such subcommittees power to act in the name of the College and the Council in relation to the matters set out in their terms of reference.
19. The RCVS Officer Team may select one Observer for each of the non-statutory standing committees. If an Officer is on the Committee in another capacity, this additional Observer may not be required.

Commented [LL2]: Reflects changes to schedule that took effect from January 2024

Commented [LL3]: To align with practice

Accreditation of Veterinary Programme Appeals Committee

20. The Accreditation of Veterinary Programme Appeals Committee shall deal with appeals of the outcome of RCVS accreditations of veterinary degrees or VN educational programmes, following review by the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC)/Education Committee/VN Education Committee (VNEC), as appropriate. The appointment of the panel is coordinated by the Registrar. One member should be appointed from the Council Officer team (for example, current President or Vice-President), one member from Council and one lay member (should be nominated from the list of RCVS accreditation panel members). The meeting will normally be held within two months

of receipt of the request by the appellant institution for consideration of the appeal by an appeals panel.

Advancement of the Professions Committee

21. The Advancement of the Professions Committee will oversee work that is non-statutory in nature and contributes broadly to the advancement of the veterinary and/or veterinary nursing professions.
22. Such activity includes, but is not limited to, leadership, innovation, mental health (Mind Matters), the Fellowship, international strategy, Vet Futures, VN Futures, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and other workstreams to be defined by Council.
23. This will exclude work that is non-statutory but sufficiently covered by existing standing committees, such as postgraduate education.
24. The Committee shall comprise the chairs of relevant working parties or taskforces, or appropriate Council member champions, together with up to four other members of Council (chair, lay member, veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse), together with relevant members of the Senior Team. Other Committee members may be co-opted if necessary. RCVS Knowledge, an independent charity, will contribute by means of its Chair of Trustees, who will be an invited observer. Although they each have responsibility for individual projects or areas of work, Committee members will review and input across all areas, with collective responsibility.
25. The Committee shall:
 - a. Take regular reports from the leads on these areas of work and consider the ongoing effectiveness of the work against agreed strategy, timing and resourcing, making recommendations for changes, where appropriate. Consider any additional budgetary impact of these workstreams, which would then be escalated via the Financial Controls process;
 - b. Ensure that potential synergies between the various projects and initiatives reporting into the Committee are identified and exploited, and that opportunities for working collaboratively to maximise the impact of workstreams is explored;
 - c. Provide a forum for in-depth consideration of the issues surrounding or arising from the projects and initiatives that report into the Committee;
 - d. Provide a forum for blue-sky thinking to support the identification and development of new non-statutory projects that would serve to advance the professions;
 - e. Flag up any issues of concern to the Audit and Risk Committee, via the Risk Register, particularly in terms of financial, reputational or legal risks associated with the project and initiatives reporting to the Committee;

- f. Make recommendations to Council for any new streams of work which may be appropriate under our Royal Charter; and,
- g. Make a report to Council on a regular basis summarising the work that comes under its purview (usually via the minutes of its meetings).

Audit and Risk Committee

- 26. The Audit and Risk Committee shall support the Council by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances and internal controls in meeting the Council's oversight responsibilities. The Committee is a non-executive committee and has no executive powers except as set out below.
- 27. The Committee has delegated authority to:
 - a. Monitor the Council's risk management arrangements;
 - b. Approve the internal audit programme; and,
 - c. Advise the Council on the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances and internal controls, including internal and external audit arrangements, and on the implications of assurances provided in respect of risk and control.
- 28. The Committee may request the attendance of any employee or member, as set out in paragraph 41 below, and may incur expenditure for the purpose of obtaining advice in terms of paragraph 45 below.
- 29. The Committee is accountable to the Council. The minutes of each Committee meeting shall be circulated to the Council. The Committee shall report to the Council annually on its work. It may also submit separately to the Council its advice on issues where it considers that the Council should take action. Where the Committee considers there is evidence of *ultra vires* transactions or evidence of improper acts, the Chair of the Committee shall raise the matter at a formal Council meeting.
- 30. The Committee shall have five members, but may operate with fewer while a vacancy exists, provided the quorum is maintained. The members shall include two Council members, of whom one shall be a lay member and one a registrant member. Neither the President, Vice-Presidents, nor the Treasurer shall be members of the Committee. The members of the Committee who are not Council members (the "external members") shall have appropriate audit and risk management experience.
- 31. The Council will elect one of the external members serving on the Committee as Chair, based on relevant background and skills. The Committee will elect a Vice-Chair and in the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair will chair the meeting.

32. The Committee shall support the Council by reviewing and advising the Council on the operation and effectiveness of the arrangements which are in place across the whole of the Council's activities that support the achievement of the Council's objectives. In particular, the Committee shall review the adequacy of:
- a. All risk and control related disclosure statements, together with any accompanying internal audit statement, where appropriate, external audit opinion or other appropriate independent assurances, prior to endorsement by the Council;
 - b. The underlying assurance processes that indicate the degree of the achievement of corporate objectives, the effectiveness of the management of principal risks and the appropriateness of the above disclosure statements;
 - c. The policies for ensuring compliance with relevant regulatory, legal, governance and code of conduct requirements; and
 - d. The policies and procedures for all work related to fraud and corruption.
33. In carrying out this work the Committee will primarily utilise the work of internal audit, where appropriate, external audit and other assurance functions. It will also seek reports and assurances from Department Managers as appropriate, concentrating on the over-arching systems of governance, risk management and internal control together with indicators of their effectiveness.
34. In reviewing risk management arrangements, the Committee shall draw attention to areas where:
- a. Risk is being appropriately managed and controls are adequate (no action needed);
 - b. Risk is inadequately controlled (action needed to improve control);
 - c. Risk is over-controlled (resource being wasted which could be diverted to another use); and,
 - d. There is a lack of evidence to support a conclusion (if this concerns areas which are material to the organisation's functions, more audit and/or assurance work will be required).
35. In relation to internal audit, where appropriate, the Committee shall:
- a. Ensure that there is effective internal audit activity that complies with any applicable standards and provides appropriate independent assurance to the Council, Audit and Risk Committee, Secretary and Registrar;
 - b. The internal audit activity will include reviews into RCVS internal processes, policies and procedures. These reviews will be based on identified high risk areas from the Corporate Risk Register and assurance map;
 - c. Ensure that the College makes adequate resource available to internal audit activity, where required;

- d. Review the need for an internal audit strategy, operational plan and work programme;
- e. Consider the major findings of the internal audit/review work, where carried out, and management's response; and,
- f. Annually review the effectiveness of internal audit.

36. In relation to external audit, the Committee shall:

- a. Consider the appointment and performance of the external auditor, the audit fee and any questions of resignation or dismissal and make appropriate recommendations to the Council;
- b. Discuss and agree with the external auditor, before the audit commences, the nature and scope of the audit as set out in the external audit plan and their local evaluation of audit risks;
- c. Review the work and findings of the external auditor, consider the implications and management's responses to their work; and,
- d. Review all external audit reports, including agreement of the annual audit letter before submission to the Council and any work undertaken outside the annual audit plan, together with the appropriateness of management responses.

37. The Committee shall review the annual financial statements, focusing particularly on:

- a. Disclosures relevant to the terms of reference of the Committee;
- b. Changes in, and compliance with, accounting policies and practices;
- c. Unadjusted mis-statements in the financial statements;
- d. Major judgmental areas; and,
- e. Significant adjustments resulting from the audit.

38. The Committee shall ensure that the systems for financial reporting to the Council, including those of budgetary control, are subject to review as to completeness and accuracy of the information provided to the Council.

39. The Committee shall meet not less than three times a year. The external auditors may request a meeting if they consider that one is necessary.

40. Only Committee members shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Committee. The Treasurer, CEO, Secretary and/or Registrar, and Director of Operations shall normally attend meetings. Representatives from the external auditors shall attend meetings as required for relevant items.

The President and other Council members may attend meetings at the invitation of, or with the agreement of, the Chair of the Committee.

41. The Committee may request any employee or member to attend a meeting to assist with its discussions on any particular matter or to provide any information it may reasonably require in order to fulfil its remit. All employees and members shall co-operate with any reasonable request made by the Committee.
42. The Committee may ask any or all non-members to withdraw for all or part of a meeting if it so decides. In such an instance, the Chair shall ensure that a proper record is made of the meeting.
43. The senior representatives of external audit shall have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Committee. At least once a year, the Committee shall provide an opportunity to meet privately with the external auditors. College staff will not be present during these confidential meetings.
44. The Committee may investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It may seek any information it requires from any employee and all employees shall co-operate with any request made by the Committee.
45. The Committee may obtain legal or other independent professional advice and secure the attendance of external advisers with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary, within the budget approved by the Council. The CEO and/or Registrar shall ensure that appropriate secretariat support is provided to the Chair and Committee.

Remit relating to accreditation functions of the College

46. The Committee will receive assurances that the quality assurance work undertaken by the College in relation to the accreditation of veterinary degree programmes and veterinary nursing educational institutions is operating in accordance with its published procedures. This process of assurance is also designed to contribute to compliance with the requirements for membership with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) that 'Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities'. This will be achieved by:
 - a. At the beginning of each calendar year, the Committee will be provided with a work plan, detailing the accreditation visitations that are scheduled for the forthcoming year;
 - b. Brief progress reports against this work plan will be provided as a standing item at each meeting of the Committee. These reports will also highlight any major concerns or issues that had arisen as a result of quality assurance activities conducted in the period covered by the report;
 - c. An annual report will be produced at the end of each calendar year. This will be presented to the Committee together with the work plan for the next calendar year. The annual report would be expected to include:

- Confirmation that quality assurance activities have been completed in line with the work plan, or reasons for any variation;
 - Actions that have been taken or that are planned as a result of discussion by committees;
 - Actions that have been taken or that are planned as a result of feedback from stakeholders (visitors/universities); and,
 - Trends and themes identified in information presented year on year.
47. Findings of the Committee arising from assurances received on the quality assurance activities of the College in relation to veterinary degree programmes and veterinary nursing educational institutions shall also be circulated to the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC), Education Committee and the Veterinary Nurses Education Committee.
48. The Committee may choose to invite attendance from representatives of Education Committee and VN Education Committee for the purpose of receiving assurances on quality assurance activities undertaken by those Committees.
49. Where an appointed member of the Audit and Risk Committee is also involved with the education quality assurance activities of the RCVS, they shall not be permitted voting rights on any issues discussed however they may remain present at the meeting for points of clarification.

Charter Case Committee

50. The Charter Case Committee shall deal with matters referred to it by the Preliminary Investigation Committee or the Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee and decide whether a warning (confidential or public) would be appropriate.

Disciplinary Committees

51. The Disciplinary Committee shall be constituted in accordance with Schedule 2 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The Veterinary Nurses Disciplinary Committee shall be constituted in accordance with the Veterinary Nurse Conduct and Disciplinary Rules 2014.

Education Committee

52. The Education Committee shall set the policy for undergraduate and postgraduate education and training of veterinary surgeons and determine the requirements for those seeking registration, for the award of qualifications under the Charter, for continuing professional development, and for recognition as RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist.
53. Under normal circumstances Council members will form the majority on non-statutory committees, but on Education Committee (and the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC)) a minimum of one third and a maximum of one half of members will be co-opted external members with education expertise, for example, Heads of the Veterinary Schools or other

veterinary school staff members. Two students will also sit on the Education Committee (and two on PQSC). In addition, the Chairs of the Education Subcommittees and a member of the Officer Team will sit as non-voting observers.

54. The Committee shall develop and keep under review education and training requirements for registration, and in particular shall:
 - a. Define Day-One Competences and advise on the content of the veterinary undergraduate curriculum;
 - b. Oversee the approval process and ongoing monitoring of veterinary degrees and international recognition agreements, considering subcommittee reports on appointment of accreditation panel members, accreditation event reports, follow-up reports and annual monitoring reports from veterinary schools, subcommittee reports on overseas degrees from other accrediting bodies [or the College](#), and subcommittee reports on operation of the statutory membership examination; and,
 - c. Make recommendations to Council on any change in approved status concerning registrable degrees, on the regulations governing the statutory membership examination and on the regulations governing practice by students.

55. The Committee shall develop and keep under review policy for continuing professional development, revalidation of Advanced Practitioner and Specialist status, and postgraduate training and qualifications, and in particular shall:
 - a. Define Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) for, and monitor, the VetGDP;
 - b. Set the requirements for and monitor continuing professional development within the profession;
 - c. Develop and maintain a framework of College postgraduate awards, receiving reports from subcommittees on the standards for College-awarded certificates and fellowships by thesis, examinations and accreditation of other recognised postgraduate qualifications as part of the framework;
 - d. Define the requirements for RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist status, receiving reports from subcommittees on the maintenance of lists for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists; and,
 - e. Recommend to Council amendments to the certificate rules.

56. The Committee shall recommend fees to the Finance and Resources Committee for all related activities, for example, application and annual fees for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists, together with reviewer remuneration; fees for Statutory Membership exam candidates and remuneration for examiners; remuneration for accreditation panel members and reviewers of Advanced Practitioners and Specialist applications.

Examination Appeals Committee

57. The Examination Appeals Committee shall deal with appeals relating to the conduct of examinations administered by the College.

Finance and Resources Committee

58. The Finance and Resources Committee shall be responsible ensuring the finances, resources and framework of the College governance system is fit for purpose, thus enabling the Council and committees to deliver against the College's objects. It shall comprise the Treasurer (Chair), nominated representatives from Education, Standards, Advancement of the Professions, Preliminary Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Committee Liaison and Registration Committees and VN Council, together with two lay members of Council and two veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse members of Council (ie two in total). The CEO, Registrar, [Director of People](#) and Director of Operations will be non-voting members.

59. The representatives from the Committees will be selected by the Committee as soon as possible after RCVS Day and will hold the role for a three-year period or until they come off the Committee that they are representing, or off Council.

60. It shall make recommendations to Council as appropriate.

61. It will be chaired by the Treasurer, and its functions will include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- a. Presenting an annual budget to Council for approval and recommending proposed fee changes;
- b. Laying down procedures for budgeting and financial control;
- c. Approving expenditure from the Discretionary Fund;
- d. Seeking the approval of Council for expenditure from the College's reserves;
- e. Managing the assets and investments of the College;
- f. Working with the executive team to ensure management of organisational risks, maintenance of a risk register and delivery of appropriate internal audit reviews, with oversight provided by the Audit and Risk Committee;
- g. Overseeing the appointment of professional advisers to the College, over £50,000;
- h. Acting as Project Board for substantive projects, where applicable under the project protocol, unless another dedicated group exists;

- i. Approving rates of travelling and subsistence expenses, and remuneration for work carried out on the College's behalf;
- j. In consultation with the APC and the Fellowship Board, deciding fees for application and ongoing membership of the Fellowship;
- k. Advising Council on corporate governance matters, including the terms of reference and composition of committees (but not individual membership);
- l. Approving the setting up of subcommittees, working parties and other such bodies, and determining their composition (but not individual membership), by considering proposals made by sponsoring committees, Officers or senior staff members (Council to ratify members of long-term groups as part of the annual cycle, sponsoring committees to agree terms of reference);
- m. Approving the disbanding of subcommittees, working parties and other such bodies, as appropriate;
- m.n. [Taking oversight on people resources within the organisation to ensure efficient delivery of activities, with a focus on role numbers, engagement, recruitment and retention;](#) and,
- n.o. Keeping under review the rules and arrangements for Council elections (the operation of the annual elections themselves being overseen by the Registrar, as returning officer).

Preliminary Investigation Committees

62. The Preliminary Investigation Committee shall be constituted in accordance with Schedule 2 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee shall be constituted in accordance with the Veterinary Nurse Conduct and Disciplinary Rules 2014.

Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee

63. The Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee shall include the chair of the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC), the chair of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC), the chair of the Disciplinary Committee (DC), at least two members of Council one of whom is a member of the Officer Team, the chair of Standards Committee (SC). The member of the Officer Team to undertake the role of chair of the (liaison) committee for a three-year term, usually incoming Junior Vice-President in the year that the role becomes vacant.
64. The Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee shall serve as a channel for communication between the Preliminary Investigation, Charter Case and Disciplinary Committees and Council, discussing policy issues in connection with the supervision of professional conduct. These shall include the following:

- a. The setting and monitoring of key performance indicators and monitoring processes;
 - b. Working methods;
 - c. Monitoring costs and resources related to the committees;
 - d. Arrangements for the recruitment of members of the Committees, including deciding the membership of the independent selection panel and overseeing the process (final decision on successful candidates to be ratified by Council), appraisal of their performance and the process for selection for chairs;
 - e. Arrangements for the appointment of legal advisors (including legal assessors) in connection with the professional conduct function;
 - f. Planning for a public review of the implementation of the legislative reform order; and,
 - g. Facilitating a 'feedback loop' between DC and CCC decisions, outcomes of the PIC and RVN PIC, the SC and the Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS).
65. The PIC/DC Liaison Committee shall also monitor ~~the 12-month trial of the~~ [impact of the](#) protocol for private prosecutions against unqualified individuals, which commenced on 1 April 2023.

Commented [LL4]: May be subject to change pending discussion at Council in June

Registration Committee

66. The Committee shall comprise the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer of the College, together with two veterinary members of Council, a veterinary nurse member to be appointed by Veterinary Nurse Council (VNC), and a lay member of Council or VNC. The Committee shall be chaired by one of the Officers of the College, who will chair for a three-year term. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Registrar, and Director of Operations shall attend and participate in the meeting but shall be non-voting members.
67. The Committee shall be responsible for activities relating to the registration of veterinary and veterinary nurse members of the College (and, in due course, other Associate members of the College), and will provide and make recommendations to Council and/or VNC on matters relating to registration as appropriate.
68. Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:
- a. Reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966 related to the registration of veterinary surgeons; (in conjunction with the Education Committee as appropriate);
 - b. Reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules related to the registration of veterinary nurses; (in conjunction with VNC);

- c. Reviewing and monitoring the policies and procedures relating to registration and publication of the Register;
- d. Advising in relation to the creation of new categories of Associate members of the RCVS;
- e. Keeping under review data relating to Find-A-Vet;
- f. Monitoring registration activities (including trends in Registration for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses);
- g. Monitoring reports from relevant Appeal panels, ie
 - the Examination Appeals Committee;
- h. Considering applications for Temporary Registration in accordance with the VSA 1966; and,
- i. Reporting to Council on a regular basis summarising the work that comes under its purview (usually via the minutes of its meetings).

Specialist and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee

69. The Specialist and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee shall determine appeals relating to recognition of Specialists and Advanced Practitioners after reviewing the original papers considered by the first instance panel, subcommittee or committee.

Standards Committee

70. The Standards Committee shall provide advice and guidance on the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, including, but not limited to:
- a. Publishing a Code or Codes of Professional Conduct, subject to the approval of the Council;
 - b. Publishing as necessary advice on professional conduct;
 - c. Responding to professional conduct issues raised by the RCVS Council, Veterinary Nurses' Council or any committee of the RCVS;
 - d. Responding to requests for advice from members of the profession and the public, as agreed by the chair; and,
 - e. Overseeing the development of the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme by the Practice Standards Group, making recommendations to Council as appropriate, and considering appeals from the Practice Standards Scheme Review Group.

Veterinary Nurses' Council

71. The Veterinary Nurses' Council shall consist of the following members:

- a. Six veterinary nurses practising or living wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom, elected by ballot of all veterinary nurses, conducted substantially in accordance with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Council Election Scheme 1967 (as amended), with the necessary adaptations;
 - b. Two veterinary nurses to be appointed by the Veterinary Nurses' Council;
 - c. Two veterinary surgeons, to be appointed by the Veterinary Nurses' Council in consultation with RCVS Council;
 - d. Four lay members to be appointed by the Veterinary Nurses' Council.
72. The term of office of elected and appointed members of the Veterinary Nurses' Council shall be three years in each case, and one-third of the elected members shall retire in rotation each year, being eligible for re-election if still qualified to serve. A member elected or appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall serve the unexpired portion of the predecessor's term of office.
73. Members of the Veterinary Nurses' Council shall serve a maximum of three successive terms and after which they will be eligible to re-stand for election or be re-appointed after a gap of two years.
74. The quorum for meetings of the Veterinary Nurses' Council shall be seven members, which must include four veterinary nurse members, one veterinary surgeon member and one lay member.
75. The Chair and up to two Vice-Chairs of the Veterinary Nurses' Council shall be elected by the Veterinary Nurses' Council, by secret ballot. The Chair will be either an elected or appointed veterinary nurse. The election of the Chair shall be confirmed by the RCVS Council.
76. The term of office of the Chair shall usually be three years and Vice-Chair(s) shall serve for either one or three years, with the outgoing Chair normally serving one year as Vice-Chair.
77. The Veterinary Nurses Council was established in 2002 and the Supplementary Royal Charter confirms its functions shall encompass the regulation of the profession of veterinary nurses.
78. The Veterinary Nurses' Council shall, in addition to those functions specified in the Supplemental Royal Charter:
- a. Set standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered into the Register;
 - b. Set requirements in relation to the registration of veterinary nurses;
 - c. Set standards for the conduct of veterinary nurses;
 - d. Maintain the register of veterinary nurses;

- e. Recommend to the Finance and Resources Committee a budget and levels of fees to be charged; and,
- f. Recommend to the Council amendments to the rules relating to the registration, conduct and discipline of veterinary nurses.

79. In exercising its functions, the Veterinary Nurses' Council may delegate responsibility for matters related to veterinary nurse education, both licence to practise and post registration awards, to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee.

80. The Veterinary Nurses' Council shall ensure that the welfare of animals and good veterinary practice are central to its work.

Other groups with delegated responsibilities

81. In addition to the abovementioned Committees, the following groups of individuals are tasked with oversight and/or delivery of specific areas of activity.

Chairs of standing committees

82. In addition to leading the work of their respective committees, the chairs of the standing committees (excluding the independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and the chair of the PIC/DC Liaison Committee, which is a co-ordinating role) will meet with the Officer Team and senior staff members prior to each Council meeting to discuss the running order and presentation of papers. They will also provide advance notice of major decisions likely to be put before Council at future meetings, in order to enable the flow and time management of those meetings.

Officer Team

83. The Officer Team comprises the President, Junior Vice-President, Senior Vice-President and Treasurer, who are elected by the Council according to the election rules.

84. The Officer Team will meet on a regular basis with senior staff in order to discuss relevant matters, with a focus on external meetings, media management, communications and stakeholder relationships. The Chair of the Veterinary Nurses' Council will be invited to attend meetings of the Officer Team.

85. The Officer Team will also act as the **Nominations Subcommittee**, together with the Chair of VN Council, CEO and Registrar, and one veterinary and one veterinary nurse member of Council, proposing who will be awarded College honours and awards (choices will be ratified by Council and, for the VN Golden Jubilee Award, VN Council).

86. The Officer Team will also act as the **Remuneration Subcommittee**. The Remuneration Subcommittee meets annually to decide a policy on how the budget allocated to staff salaries, as agreed by Council as part of the budget-setting process, should be allocated, for example, what percentage should be allocated to salary increases and what to bonuses. It does not look at individual staff salaries, which is the role of the Senior Team, apart from the remuneration of the

CEO, which is considered by the President in line with the aforementioned policy. The Subcommittee consists of the Officer Team, with the [following staff members attending in a non-voting capacity](#): Directors of [HR-People](#) and Operations, ~~and the Registrar and CEO attending in a non-voting capacity.~~

Commented [LL5]: Previous wording implied Directors of People and of Operations voted, which in reality they did not.

Senior Team

87. The purpose of the Senior Team is to enable Council to set the strategic direction and oversee governance of the RCVS, and to enable the College staff team to deliver.
88. The Senior Team comprises the RCVS Departmental Directors and is led by the CEO, who takes responsibility for delivery of the RCVS strategic plan, as agreed by Council, and the day-to-day running of the College.
89. The Senior Team meets regularly and a summary of points raised is communicated to departmental teams. The CEO chairs these meetings, and the Executive Director of RCVS Knowledge is invited to sit as observer.
90. The key responsibilities of the Senior Team are as follows:
 - a. Support and advise the Officers (President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer), Council and committee members in the development and delivery of the Strategic Plan;
 - b. Ensure delivery of the Strategic Plan and keep Council regularly updated on progress against time, budget and intended impact;
 - c. Enable understanding of the RCVS purpose and Strategic Plan throughout the organisation and to ensure continual, coherent and consistent communication;
 - d. Create an environment in which our people can deliver, learn and thrive;
 - e. Ensure the effective and efficient day-to-day direction and management of the organisation in line with key functions as a Royal College and regulator;
 - f. Propose and manage the College budget ensuring the most effective use of resources;
 - g. Recommend Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and service standards, and review activities against these, making adjustments to procedures and resources as applicable in association with the relevant Committee Chairs;
 - h. Utilise the collective wisdom and expertise of the Senior Team and wider organisation by collaborating to exploit synergies and advance our organisational priorities;
 - i. Ensure appropriate mitigations against risk, keeping the organisational and departmental Risk Registers up to date and report regularly to the Audit and Risk Committee;

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- j. Horizon-scan for opportunities and threats, building networks to understand, for example, research and best practice from other similar organisations both at home and overseas, and act on this information appropriately; and,
- k. Identify and consider issues and activities for communication to the wider organisation, professions and public.

[Approved by Council ~~7 September 2023~~[XXXXX 2024](#)]

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	6 June 2024
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since RCVS Council's last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the RCVS.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Chris Murdoch Senior Case Manager c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
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Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

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Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council June 2024

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since the last report (24 May 2024 being the date of writing the report).
2. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 1 March 2024), there have been six Stage two Preliminary Investigation Committee (S2PIC) meetings (6 March, 20 March, 10 April, 24 April, 8 May and 22 May).

New cases considered by the S2PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the S2PIC at the six meetings referred to above is 16. Of the 16 new cases considered:
 - 9 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee.
 - 7 cases were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports.
4. No cases have been referred to the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The Stage two PI Committee is currently investigating 29 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports (for example).

Health Protocol

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

Performance Protocol

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

Professional Conduct Department - Enquiries and concerns

8. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
9. In the period 2 March to 24 May 2024:
 - the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 788, and
 - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 178.

10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 2 March and 24 May 2024.

Concerns registered between 2 March and 24 May 2024

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	0
- Appeal against DC decision	0
- Certification	2
- Client confidentiality	0
- Clinical and client records	1
- Clinical governance	0
- Communication and consent	5
- Communication between professional colleagues	5
- Conviction	4
- CPD compliance	0
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	0
- Euthanasia of animals	0
- Euthanasia of animals – ‘Tuk’s law’	1
- Fair trading requirements	0
- Giving evidence for court	1
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Illegal practice	0
- Microchipping	0
- Miscellaneous	5
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	0
- Performance case (<i>potential</i>)	1
- Recognised veterinary practice	0
- Referrals and second opinions	0
- Registration investigation	0
- Restoration application	0
- Social media and networking forums	2
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	0
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	1
- Veterinary care	142
- Veterinary medicines	2
- Veterinary medicines – ‘under care’ query, other	2
- Veterinary teams and leaders	0
- Whistle-blowing	0

- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	2
- Unassigned	2
Total	178

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 2 March to 24 May 2024, the Committee has referred 3 cases involving 3 veterinary surgeons to the Disciplinary Committee.

Veterinary Investigators

12. The Chief Investigator and Veterinary Investigators have undertaken 5 unannounced visits in the reporting period. The first was a visit to a veterinary surgeon to serve disciplinary papers. The second and third were visits to the same veterinary surgeon to serve statements at the direction of PIC. The fourth was a joint visit with the VMD and Defra Investigation Services to a dog groomer following reports of medication being administered by a lay person. The fifth was a joint visit with the VMD and Defra Investigation Services in relation to a canine fertility clinic carrying out canine artificial insemination, taking blood samples and POM-Vs.

Concerns procedure

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

Month in which case concluded	Median number of weeks taken
February 2023	13
March 2023	13.3
April 2023	14.9
May 2023	14.3
June 2023	14.4
July 2023	15
August 2023	15.9
September 2023	13.4
October 2023	12.6
November 2023	18.3
December 2023	11.5
January 2024	16
February 2024	15
March 2024	17.6
April 2024	15

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

15. In line with the above KPI, cases that commenced in September and October 2023 have been assessed retrospectively to determine what percentage of them met the six-month KPI. These can be seen below, and we will continue to report on this percentage in the future.

16.

Month case started	Cases that met KPI
October 2023	94%
November 2023	84%

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

18. In the period 2 March to 24 May 2024, the PIC reached a decision (to close, refer to the Charter Case Committee, or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI in 4 out of 13 simple cases.

19. 9 complex cases were decided, of which 2 met the 12-month KPI. In accordance with normal practice, these cases (and the work of the department in general) are reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

20. At its meeting in May 2024 PIC/DC Liaison Committee undertook a full review of the Stage 2 KPI, the conclusions of which can be seen in the minutes for the meeting.

Illegal practice

21. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 1 March 2024), 10 new reports of suspected illegal practice have been received. Of these, 6 have been closed after issuing advice/cease and desist letters or referring matters to other relevant agencies; and 2 are subject to ongoing enquiries. There is a total of 9 ongoing enquiries.

Operational matters

22. A training day for PIC members and Profcon staff took place on 25 March 2024, which provided an opportunity for the Committee members to meet altogether, along with new members due to start in the summer. Topics included dishonesty and the handling of convictions/adverse findings.

23. One lay member will be leaving the vet PIC in July and a veterinary nurse will leave the VNPIC. Replacements for both are ready to attend and training sessions have been arranged for them.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	6 June 2024
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Sandra Neary Secretary to the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee s.neary@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0730</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0740</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

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Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council

Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Council, there has been two meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee, which took place on 5 March and 16 April 2024. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 28 May 2024.

RVN Concerns received / registered

2. In the period 2 March to 24 May, there were 10 new Concerns relating to RVNs. Of these 10 new Concerns:
 - 1 case closed at Stage 1 PIC.
 - 8 cases are currently under investigation by a Case Manager, Veterinary Nurse, Veterinary surgeon, and a lay member (Stage 1 Preliminary Investigation Committee).
 - 1 case has been referred to Stage 2 PIC.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. Five new cases have been considered by the RVN PIC between 2 March and 24 May. Four cases were referred to external solicitors for formal statements to be taken. One case was referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Ongoing Investigations

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

Health Concerns

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

Performance Concerns

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

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

7. Since the last report, two cases have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Disciplinary Hearings

8. Since the last report, four disciplinary hearings have taken place in relation to veterinary nurses. The first hearing took place between 19 and 26 February 2024 and the Disciplinary Committee found the veterinary nurse not guilty of serious professional misconduct. The second hearing took place on 18 and 19 March 2024. The Disciplinary Committee directed that the veterinary nurse should be removed from the Register. The third hearing took place on 26 and 27 March 2024 and related to a veterinary nurse's conviction. The Disciplinary Committee did not consider that the conviction rendered the veterinary nurse unfit to practise. The fourth hearing took place between

3 and 5 April 2024 in relation to a veterinary nurse's conviction. The Disciplinary Committee found that the veterinary nurse's behaviour and conviction brings the veterinary nursing profession into disrepute but after taking all the facts and circumstances into consideration, the DC decided that it would be most appropriate to take no further action against the veterinary nurse.

Operational matters

9. At the end of June 2024, we will say goodbye to our Chair (Sally Bowden RVN) who has served on the Committee for 8 years. We are very grateful for the contributions Sally has made to the Committee and we will miss her vast experience and knowledge.