

Council Meeting and RCVS Knowledge Annual General Meeting

Hybrid meeting to be held on Wednesday, 11 September 2024 at 10:00 am in the Annie Altschul / Agnes Hunt Room, Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN (Council members are invited to attend the RCVS Knowledge AGM)

RCVS Knowledge Annual General Meeting	Papers provided to Trustees by RCVSK	
1. RCVSK CEO update	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
RCVS Council meeting - Agenda	Classification ¹	Rationale ²
2. President's introduction and welcome to new member	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. Apologies for absence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4. Declaration of interests	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
5. Minutes		
i. Minutes of meeting 6 June 2024 – Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
ii. Minutes of meeting 6 June 2024 – Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
iii. Minutes of remote decision held 4 – 9 July 2024 and meeting held 5 July 2024 (AGM)	Unclassified	n/a
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 Public Advisory Group	Unclassified	n/a
8. Notices of motion	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
9. Questions	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
10. Any other College business (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
11. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
12. Date of next meeting Thursday, 7 November 2024 at 10:00 am (there is a change to previous scheduling in that this meeting will now be held IN PERSON at the RCN)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
13. Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)		
a. Update on major projects	Confidential	# TBC
b. CMA update	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
c. RCVS Strategic Plan Development	Confidential	1
14. Any other College business (confidential items)		
a. Comments on classified appendices	Oral report Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
b. Other business	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
15. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)	Oral report Confidential	# TBC

Dawn Wiggins Secretary, RCVS Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk		
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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

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. The appointment of the Registrar will be undertaken in consultation with the Chief Executive. 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	11 September 2024
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 6 June 2024
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 6 June 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
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

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Council

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

Members:

Dr S Paterson (President in the Chair)	
Dr L H Allum	Mr T M Hutchinson
*Mrs B S Andrews-Jones	Professor M D Jones
Miss L Belton	Professor S A May
Mr D Bray	Mrs C-L McLaughlan
Dr A L Calow	Dr A J McLeish
*Mr J M Castle	Professor T D H Parkin
*Dr D S Chambers	Dr K A Richards
Mrs O D R Cook	Mr T J Walker
Dr M A Donald	Mr W A S Wilkinson
Ms L Ford	Professor J L N Wood
Dr M M S Gardiner	Ms J S M Worthington
Mrs S D Howarth	

*Denotes absent

In attendance:

Miss H Alderton	Senior Events Officer
Mr L Bishop	Media and Publications Manager
Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar / Director of Legal Services
Ms L Hall	Director of People (DoP)
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 Scanlon	CRM Project Manager (agenda item 16d only)
Ms S Tetsola	Head of Finance (agenda items 16b and 16c only)
Mr D Tysoe	Chief Digital Officer (agenda item 16d only)
Mrs D Wiggins	Secretary to Council

Guests:

Professor D C Barrett	Incoming elected member from July (open session only)
Ms M Gratton	Donor Relations Manager, Vetlife (open session only)
Mr J Loeb	<i>Veterinary Record</i> (open session only)

Professor Christopher Loughrey	Incoming VSC appointed member from July (open session only)
Mr J S Russell	President, Vetlife (open session only)
Ms J Shardlow	Chair, RCVS Audit and Risk Committee

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting. She commented that the Regional Question Time (RQT) held the evening prior to the meeting had been constructive, and a number of topics covered.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mrs Andrews-Jones
- Mr Castle
- Dr Chambers
- Dr Middlemiss (Observer)

3. It was noted that Professor Bray would join the meeting from c.11:30 am.

Declarations of interest

4. Dr Richards declared that she had been appointed as an Honorary Fellow to Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and, in addition, was now President of the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA).

Vetlife update

5. Vetlife President, Mr Russell, provided an update to Council on the charity's work:

Helpline

6. The Helpline was the arm of the charity that most people thought about when thinking of Vetlife:

- a 24/7, 365-days-of-the-year service;
- staffed exclusively from the community it supported;
- volunteers had contributed over 18,750 hours of time in 2023;
- currently c.100 volunteers;
- 23 new volunteers had been trained in 2023;

- churn was c.10%, low compared to other helplines;
- 70 volunteers had received update training;
- expert resource produced in 2023 around anxiety, which was being frequently accessed on the website;
- spoke to six different vet schools;
- exhibited at 21 veterinary events;
- post-venture support: after traumatic death, 'rolled out' over 100 times in the last 10 years;
- supported 13 different practices with incredibly complex needs, some of which impacted multiple practices; this was resource-intensive;
- averaged from one call per day in 2014 to 11 per day in 2024.

Health Support

7. Behind the Helpline was the Health Support arm of the charity, providing professional mental health resources:
 - staffed by two mental health professionals, both of whom had a history with the armed services and who had a good understanding of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
 - averaged four referrals per week.

Financial Support

8. The third service offered by Vetlife was Financial Support. Applications for financial support had been steady up to 2021, whereafter there had been a massive jump in 2022 and again in 2023. It was noted that the charity had changed its Articles of Association in 2022 to make veterinary nurses eligible, but that was not the cause of the jump. Top reasons of those applying included: loss of income; change in circumstances; divorce; health concerns; and assistance with priority debts.
9. A common call was for assistance with paying the RCVS annual retention fees and undertaking enough Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to be able to ensure they were in a position to join or re-join the RCVS and practise. Return to work support was something that could be invested in.
10. As there was the increase in demand, the charity had to 'professionalise' the actions of the Policy Group and had sought feedback from beneficiaries and volunteers working as area representatives to ensure that matters were being dealt with in an equitable way. The charity was also able to offer two alms-houses for members of the professions that had fallen on hard times – one was currently occupied, and the other was being renovated.
11. Income and expenditure were outlined. It was noted that the charity had gone from a half-a-million-pounds charity to a multi-million-pounds charity in ten years', which was reflected in the increase in demand for services. Furthermore, investments had built over time, and dividends could be drawn from them, however, if the charity was to be fit for the future, it was important not just to maintain the investments but to increase them. It was noted that 54% of the fundraising came from donations but that regular subscription income required focus – that was a project for the next couple of years.

12. The donation from the College was hugely important to the charity and was not taken for granted. It was trying to use it in the best possible way to support members of the professions. One area of concern was the answering service that the College also financially supported. There had been some recent issues and, when considering the charity's risk register, it was an area demanding attention. It was expected that changes would need to be made within the next couple of years, which might incur a cost; it was not going to be unsustainable but would likely require future consideration.

13. Mr Russell thanked Council for its attention and opened the floor to questions. Comments and questions included:

- was it possible to expand on the issues regarding the answering service?
 - o the charity used a third-party answering service, who forwarded calls to the Vetlife volunteer, but there was a particular set of challenges: they needed to forward to a new Vetlife person on duty every six hours; not collect many details; and filter out approximately 40% of calls from the Helpline number that were irrelevant e.g. 'how much was it to spay a cat?' There had been a few instances where the process had 'fallen over' and that was a serious matter because it was recognised that by the time someone had made the decision to call Vetlife, they really did need to speak to them;
- it was great to see that the charity was not working in a deficit for 2023 – despite the expansion – were there any projections / expectations in terms of income and expenditure as it must be thinking long-term?
 - o it was unpredictable and there had been a large dip in income in 2020 while everyone dealt with Covid, however, all of the committees were looking into different areas and asking the questions: where was the need for growth and how big should that growth be? The Helpline Manager believed that the growth would be incremental rather than exponential, which could be managed within current resource.

A project would be run in the second part of 2024 to experiment with group therapy sessions (currently one-to-one delivered by March on Stress, who had suggested it); this had been held back in the past as it was recognised that it was a small profession and there were concerns about whether people felt comfortable potentially sharing therapy with people they knew; it was in the user-research stage.

Financial support remained key and that was tied into the budget and closely controlled. Most of the money derived from investments paid the administrative team so every pound donated went into helping people through the charity;

- it was interesting to hear about grants for people that needed to pay their retention fees and CPD, and whether there was the scope for the RCVS, Vetlife, and CPD providers to come up with a bespoke support for return to practice, looking at matters 'in the round'?

- this could be researched, particularly as the precedent had been set with refugees;
- was paying the fees a revolving environment or a gift i.e. once a person becomes solvent, the money could be returned?
 - it was a gift, with no expectation of repayment.

14. The President thanked Mr Russell for the presentation to Council.

Ms Gratton and Mr Russell left the meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024

15. The President reported that the amended January 2024 unclassified minutes had been included in the documentation before Council for completeness – they had already been agreed at the January 2024 Council meeting subject to the amendment being subsequently made, so were before Council to note. Council was urged that, whilst it could make amends during the meetings, members should take the opportunity to feed back any changes or corrections to the Secretary when the draft minutes were circulated, to prevent the need for multiple sets of minutes being put before Council.

16. Regarding the 14 March 2024 minutes, Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendix and these were before Council for approval. A vote was taken by a show of hands to approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix (confidential) of the meeting held on 14 March 2024:

For:	20
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

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

Matters arising

Obituaries

18. 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 and also in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy.

Council correspondence

Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2024

19. Council was reminded that the 2024 AGM would be held on Friday, 5 July 2024, from 10:30 am at the Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place, London. Invitations had been sent from the Events Team and registrations of attendance should be via the Eventbrite link in the invitation.

RCVS Council Election 2024

20. Council had been informed of the outcome of the recent RCVS Council elections 2024. Newly-elected members taking up their four-year terms at the Annual General Meeting were Professor David Barrett, Dr Sinéad Bennett, and Dr Zara Kennedy. In addition, Professor Wood would be stepping down as a Veterinary Schools Council member in July and would be replaced by Professor Christopher Loughrey of Glasgow Veterinary School.

21. The President had spoken to all incoming Council members to congratulate them and to find out their particular skill-sets, which had been fed back to the Junior Vice-President as part of the committee selection process.

22. A formal goodbye and thank you to Dr Donald, Professor May, Dr Richards and Professor Wood would take place at the AGM. The contributions of all retiring members would be annexed to the minutes of this meeting.

23. On the VN Council election, successful candidates were Kirsty Young and Susan Howarth, the latter who has been re-elected, both of whom were congratulated.

24. The President expressed her disappointment at the headlines in one of the veterinary journals that had led, not with congratulations for those members who were elected, but that a previous RCVS President had *not* been elected. Dr Richards had made a fantastic contribution to Council, not just as President, but with other roles as well; however, the comment was considered to be insensitive and unnecessary, and it was hoped it would not be repeated.

Committee membership

25. Committee membership would be finalised once the outcome of the election for the Chair of Education Committee (re-run) was known and would be circulated once complete.

26. The President acknowledged Dr Bertie Ellis, who, after 34 years, was stepping down from the Riding Establishments Subcommittee, and thanked him on behalf of Council.

Meeting dates

27. Meeting dates to the end of 2024 were listed in the Contacts and Calendar Booklet. Dates to the end of 2025 would be circulated shortly.

Congratulations and thanks

28. Dr Richards was congratulated on becoming President of the BCVA, and Dr Donald on her herculean walk for Vetlife, where over £3,000 had been raised.

29. The President had also written and congratulated the latest winner from the show *Masterchef*, who was a veterinary surgeon.

CEO update

30. The CEO updated Council on the following College activities:

- the RQT held the evening prior to the meeting had been a relatively small gathering with lots of good discussions. Topics covered had included the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation; governance; economic sustainability of the profession; pricing; salaries; and, new legislation;
- an Artificial Intelligence (AI) roundtable had been held on 20 May, which gathered 100 people from vet schools; academia; research; practice associations; students; vets / VNs involved in the development of technology (as well as those that were not); and overseas contributions. The day was in the form of a scene-setting exercise to try to help the College to understand the space in which it would be venturing, and starting to regulate how professionals use AI. There had been introductory talks on AI and clinical practice; research; higher education and ethics; the rest of the day had been given over to group discussions, with topics including transparency; client communications; and how to encourage and support the next generation of vets and veterinary students to use AI in an ethical way. It was clear that the College could not regulate technology, it could only regulate its use in a way that was ethical and sound. There would be a report of the day with actions devolved to committees. It was noted that there was also an internal staff group at the College considering the development of guidance for staff teams;
- a communications plan had been developed around the governance consultation, using a wide range of different tools and had commenced this week ahead of the consultation launch. The consultation opened on 10 June and would close on 22 July (a six-week period); communications would continue throughout. Tools included:
 - o press briefing held by the President and Policy and Public Affairs Manager, who gave presentations to journalists;
 - o meetings and presentations at BVA Live;
 - o webinar scheduled for Tuesday, 11 June;
 - o additional press work and social media.

An external agency specialising in regulation and research would be analysing the responses;

- Survey of the Professions data would be coming back in due course; headline data had been shared at the previous meeting and main reports were awaited. Research had also been undertaken with stakeholders; an agency had been commissioned to do one-to-one interviews with c. 20 – 25 stakeholders and that research would also be published in due course;
- a lot of time had been taken with the CMA investigation. Approximately 10 days previously they had announced they were moving to the market investigation stage, and, within 24

hours, the College had received a long list of questions – 43 questions, many of which had sub-parts – requesting information. The information might be simple documents, or ‘please send everything from the last seven years’ on specific items. Some of the items requested went back to the late 1990s and there were approximately seven members of staff working full time on it. The deadline for submitting the information was Monday, although the College had managed to get an extension on a couple of the questions. To put it into context, if the deadline was not met, the College would receive a fine of up to £15,000 per day.

The main veterinary associations and large commercial organisations had had a briefing on the process (two separate meetings). There was a ‘top level’ timetable that would be published shortly, but the College was not yet able to share that with Council. There were some time sensitivities because of the period leading up to the General Election but as soon as there was more information it would be shared with Council. It was expected that there would be various staging points over the next 18 months.

The next step was a ‘teach-in’, where the CMA came to ask various questions; thereafter there would be hearings; visits to veterinary practices; and consultation points throughout. There had also been a preliminary call for veterinary expertise to support the process, which would be a mixture of vets and veterinary nurses, who were independent and had relevant experience to help inform and be a sounding board for some of the things they wanted to look at. This would be publicised through the communications process.

A Working Group had also been set up – with thanks to Council members who had volunteered to support that – a meeting of which would be scheduled shortly. A link to the Mandatory Practice Relation Working Group had been set up so there would be an additional person.

It should be noted that this work would take a lot of time and resources and that could have an impact on other projects – the nature of the input required tended to be from senior staff rather than temporary help. If there was a sense of how much was involved there could potentially be some ‘backfill’ of roles, but this was currently unknown. It was also noted that there was a ‘ripple effect’ from the press coverage of the investigation, which meant that the relationships between vets and their clients had in some cases become strained. Statements of support had been circulated to the professions.

It was also an opportunity to listen to the public, and underlined the importance of new legislation and mandatory practice regulation. There was a forthcoming meeting of the Public Advisory Group, which would consider whether the themes focused on by the CMA resonated with the Group and how it felt they should be addressed.

31. Comments and questions included:

- the workload sounded excessive, but Senior staff should be encouraged to ask for extra help if it was needed, as it was an important process;

- it was great to see the amount of communication going out regarding the governance consultation: social media; webinars; mailshots; BVA Live, and thanks were given to the team. There had been a strong steer from Council that the College had to be proactive in order to take the profession with it and the work being undertaken was noted.

32. The update was noted.

Professor Bray joined the meeting

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

Discretionary Fund

33. 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.

34. Approved applications to date had amounted to approximately £126,000. Since the last Council meeting there had been approval of £14,580 for a cyber security review and migration of data to a new system. It was emphasised that the application had not arisen as a result of a security breach.

35. It was questioned if the Fund could be drawn upon if extra resourcing was required to deal with the CMA work. It was noted that a lot of the fund had already been drawn upon, but it was recognised as an important project. The question was how to backfill the day-to-day work and getting the balance correct, there was also the possibility that the College might need additional legal support once there was a better understanding of what the CMA required.

36. The update was noted.

Review of private prosecutions trial period

37. The Registrar introduced the paper. In March 2023, Council agreed the protocol around investigations, prosecuting illegal practice and to a trial of 12 months; feedback from the trial was outlined in the paper and the objective was to decide what should happen going forwards.

38. It was noted that there had been no private prosecutions taken forward thus far, but that the protocol had been successful in the actions taken against the illegal activities outlined and clearly signposted what the RCVS would do if cases arose.

39. The Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) / Disciplinary Committee (DC) Liaison Committee (PIC/DCLC) had discussed the matter at its recent meeting, and it felt that it was a good idea to continue with the protocol for the reasons outlined in the paper. The trial had had a ring-fenced budget allocated to it, and the Committee had felt that, rather than having a budget just sitting waiting for a case, the protocol should continue and should any case arise to go forward to a

prosecution that it could be done initially under the Discretionary Fund and thereafter allocated in the next budget.

40. Council was asked to consider the continuation of the protocol, with or without an allocated budget; continue ongoing action but stopping short of prosecution; or whether to extend the trial.

41. Comments and questions included:

- paragraph 35 of the protocol stated the Registrar / Director of Legal Services (DoLS) made the decision on what should be taken forward; as the current incumbent, who had a lot of experience, was shortly retiring, would it be better to have a panel to make the decision in terms of bringing a private prosecution, in case the next individual was either risk-averse or very cavalier? To maybe also include registrants (vets / vet nurses) in the decision to prosecute because they had the expertise of what it would look like 'on the ground'; and its implications;
 - o it was up to Council how it wished to continue. It would, however, never be a decision taken in isolation by any Registrar, the key would be whether there was enough evidence to take a case forward, therefore it would not be the registrants on the ground but rather a legal point of view, and the requisite evidence that would bring a case to conclusion. Paragraph 35 stated that any decision would be following up a recommendation from external reviewing solicitors;
- paragraph 36 of the protocol referred to the RCVS' over-riding objective to protect the public interest; part of that would be to make sure that the profession itself was supportive of the RCVS and appropriately aligned with its objectives. The issues outlined mattered to the profession as a whole when individuals stepped out of line and sanctions should follow that, therefore [I] am strongly for extending the trial;
- as a previous sceptic, the data was interesting and it would be reassuring to the public and to the profession to see actions taken – an extension would be better than making the trial permanent, because until a case went to court, full implications would remain unknown; suggest an extension of three years and thereafter having a comprehensive review;
- the College already knew enough; there was the important element of public protection, but it would also be welcomed by the profession as it protected its reputation. There was a slight reservation to linking it to the Discretionary Fund as the process could potentially be cumbersome and risk delay as there would be a need to know the potential costs of taking a case further – it would be counter-intuitive to pursue a private prosecution only to realise there was not enough money in the Fund to do so;
- the data was impressive and having an understanding of the type of complaints and outcomes was important; annual reporting would be good. [I] wish to push back on the suggestion that there should be panel involvement of members / Council / or others as the line should not be crossed on making decisions on who was investigated, either in the Disciplinary Committee context or the private prosecution context – that was why there were

legal advisors and professional staff. However, taking any prosecution forward would likely obliterate the Discretionary Fund and the College might not be able to recover associated costs;

- support the previous comment. In terms of using the Discretionary Fund, [I] would not be comfortable using that model, however, other organisations had a ring-fenced reserve element that recognised the cost of these types of issues; thereafter it would not be a decision of how much was in the Fund competing with other projects, but rather it would be an allocated pot within the bigger reserves policy;
 - o confirm that had been done in the past.

42. The President summarised the discussion that the will of Council was:

- to continue with the process, reporting on an annual basis to Council in order to get an understanding of the cases that had been considered, and subsequent outcomes;
- that the Professional Conduct Department / Registrar should have the ability to take the cases forward it saw fit based on the advice the College received from external solicitors; and,
- that private prosecutions should not be funded through the Discretionary Fund, rather that they should continue to be funded by a ring-fenced reserve within the budget, i.e. not to spend it but to have access to it should the need arise.

43. A vote was taken by show of hands to agree items outlined in paragraph 42 above to: continue with the private prosecution process; report to Council on an annual basis; and to be funded by a ring-fenced reserve within the budget:

For:	21
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

44. This was agreed by a unanimous vote.

Registration Appeals Rules 2024

45. The Registrar introduced the paper. An action within the current Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024 was to consider all of the appeals processes College-wide, to see if there were any gaps. One area identified was around registration, which had no process and there had been no direct appeals; reasons for which were historic and largely dictated by the way people came on to the Register.

46. Paragraph 5 of the paper was highlighted, where there were slight changes owing to the trade arrangements being made post-EU-Exit, for which the College needed to have cognisance of the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Implementation of International Recognition Agreements (amendment) Regulations 2023 (the 2023 Regulations), but that related to a very limited number of countries, some of which did not have any vet schools. The appeals process

was simply against an individual joining the Register, it was not interfering with the rights of whether the College choose to accept someone with a comparable degree.

47. Also highlighted were areas where people came onto the Register under one of the accepted routes, for example, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE); Statutory Membership Examination (SME); etc., and the final part of the 'jigsaw' in the decision of whether they go onto the Register and whether they were in good standing i.e. did they have a decision against them from another regulator?
48. The intention of the paper before Council was to expand the appeals process to all categories of registration, including for veterinary nurses. There were not expected to be hundreds of applications because of the way people joined the Register, but it was worth considering in terms of good practice. Registration Committee had considered that an Appeals Committee was the way forward; what was outlined largely followed the format that was in existence pre-EU-Exit when the College had been required to have a process for those coming on under Section 5 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA).
49. Comments and questions included:
- fully support the process and set up. Would it be possible to take one step back and reflect on what increasingly looked like a two-tier process for new registrants coming into the College; through a tightly regulated UK-based system, and a much more laxly regulated external system such as EAEVE approval?
 - was the 28-day window for appeals the standard amount of time? The time taken to get support statements could potentially take longer when having to contact multiple people;
 - o 28 days was the norm, and there was always the ability to request a discretionary extension;
 - re: the form, it could leave the College open to a lot of variations as it was quite vague – should there be a more structured template to support people to make their appeal, for example, more of a tick-box approach for the reason for appeal? They would need to state their reason, which was a personal thing, but there were templates that could be shared to help guide applicants to follow a more consistent process and to understand the basis on which they were permitted to appeal within the form itself;
 - o thank you, that would be taken away as an action;
 - many people did not understand what an appeal was, so the wording “*why are you appealing?*” was not appropriate; instead ask them “*what are the grounds of your appeal?*” because disagreement with a decision, or illness, were not grounds for an appeal on this matter, and the College needed to support its standards and abide by its own rules to register appropriate people; those that were not appropriately qualified it did not register;

- make clear appeals should be written, not oral; also, the wording “legal adviser” was used, should that be “representative”, because it meant different things?
- for clarity, did that include applications for Temporary Registration?
 - o yes, it was for all classes of registration.
- were there any other processes that did not have an appeals process?
 - o no, this was the final areas to be considered as part of the Strategic Plan objective.

50. The President summarised the discussion that there was a sense that Council was happy that there should be a Registration Appeals Committee to consider all registrations, including that of Temporary Registration, and that some minor amendments be made to the Registration Appeals Rules / Form as suggested above. Once the minor amendments were made, it would return to Registration Committee for sign off.

51. A vote was taken by show of hands to approve the setting up of a Registration Appeals Committee. The Registration Appeals Rules would be subject to minor amendment and put to Registration Committee for final sign off:

For:	21
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

52. This was agreed by a unanimous vote.

RCVS Delegation Scheme 2024

53. The CEO introduced the paper outlining that the RCVS Charter gave all of the work to Council, which was not practical, so Council delegated responsibility via this Scheme to the key committees. It did not include statutory committees as they were outlined in the VSA. In addition, the Scheme did not include Subcommittees, Working Parties, or Project Boards, as their terms of reference did not go before Council but instead their parent committee (but were available on the RCVS website).

54. It was noted that there were no major changes to the Scheme and the Registration Appeals Committee would need to be added after being agreed earlier in the meeting.

55. Comments and questions included:

- paragraph 5 spoke about the responsibility of Council to appoint the Chief Executive, and the Registrar. In the past, the Registrar had been the senior officer of the College, as noted in the VSA, but the role was split during the previous CEO's time in office. [I] would never want to see a situation where Council appointed a Registrar that the CEO was not content with, because that was a potential problem for any organisation where there were two sources of

power; whilst it was unlikely to happen, there was still a risk – was there a way to write it that the Registrar was appointed (via Council) on the recommendation of the Chief Executive?

- it was a point well made. However, it was slightly problematic because it was written into legislation; so long as it was a recommendation it was ultimately Council’s responsibility to make that decision. The process would include an independent panel that would make a recommendation;
- it was slightly different when it was just the CEO; this was about somebody – albeit written in legislation – that worked for the CEO so there was potential to be an issue;
 - how it had been written elsewhere, was that there was “*obligation on Council to consult with the Chief Executive*”, the word ‘consult’ did not eliminate the problem but it placed an obligation on Council to take into account and listen to the views of the Chief Executive – it could then override them if it had a reason to do so, but it added a formality to the process;
 - the College could not overwrite what was written into the current legislation;
- the concern was noted. It was put forward for good reason but there should not be anything that was seen to be ‘tying the hands’ of Council or restricting its ability to make its own decision as there was the potential to undermine it; any changes should be made absolutely clear that it was Council’s decision;
 - it was a recommendation put to Council and, ultimately, in the legislation that it was a Council decision. However, Council would need to be mindful of the implications of countermanding any recommendation;
- suggest that there was additional wording under paragraph 5 of the Scheme to include “*the appointment of the Registrar would be undertaken in consultation with the CEO*”, and also make a note to add it to the legislative paperwork going through governance changes;
- re: paragraph 19 of the Scheme, was an Officer Team Observer role was simply to observe?
 - it was also to assist in the co-ordination of work as Council was now much smaller.

56. Taking the amendments on board, Council voted by a show of hands to approve the 2024 Delegation Scheme:

For:	21
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

57. The 2024 Delegation Scheme (as amended) was approved by a unanimous vote.

Reports of standing committees – to note

Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

58. At paragraph 5 of the unclassified minutes, it was noted that trigger warnings on learning materials should be used sparingly according to qualified professionals. It was questioned if they should be used at all if the title described what the material essentially covered?
59. It was confirmed that there had been a long discussion on the topic but that no decision had been made. It was put as an action point for the Executive to research what other groups did, and it would be brought back to the next Committee meeting; the question would be taken to the meeting also.
60. There were no further comments or questions raised.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

61. There were no comments or questions raised.

Education Committee (EC)

62. There were no comments or questions raised.

Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

63. There were no comments or questions raised.

Registration Committee

64. There were no comments or questions raised.

Standards Committee

65. There were no comments or questions raised.

Veterinary Nurses Council

66. There were no comments or questions raised.

Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee

67. There were no comments or questions raised.

Reports of statutory committees – to note

Preliminary Investigation Committee

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

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

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

Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee

70. It was noted that details of individual cases were on the website. There were no comments or questions raised.

Notices of motion

71. There were no notices of motion to report.

Questions

72. There were no questions to report.

Election of Chair, Education Committee (re-run)

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

Candidate:	Professor T D H Parkin
Supporters:	Mrs S Howarth Professor M D Jones Mrs C-L McLaughlan Professor J L N Wood
Date of first joining Council:	July 2021 (VSC appointed)
Current term due to end:	July 2025

74. The candidate had circulated a letter to Council.

75. 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.

76. 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 was identified.

77. As agreed at the March 2024 Council meeting, the candidate voted and left the room prior to Council being asked if it required a private discussion.

78. Council did require a discussion, so guests and non-Council members left the room so Council could meet in closed session.

[NB. Comments minuted in unclassified minutes as the discussion was about the process, not the individual concerned.]

79. Comments and questions included:

- it was noted that the candidate was going onto the Officer Team and the presidential 'cycle' was normally for a three-year period; the Chair position was also a convention of three years – how common it was to have an Officer as Chair of such a large committee, particularly with the time commitments required for each role? There was an expectation to complete the three years;
- o there were similarities to the current Junior Vice-President (JVP) and President being Chairs of Standards Committee, and Advancement of the Professions Committee, respectively. It was a good discussion to have to look at the wider engagement of Council, succession planning, and time commitment. Council was reminded that the roles for JVP, Treasurer, Chairs of Advancement of the Professions, Education, and Standards, Committees were elected annually and there was an opportunity to reassess the performance at that time;
- this was raised a couple of years ago. Before the size of Council was reduced, it was unusual to have an Officer as Chair of one of the major committees, and that included the public-facing roles and working parties. In terms of governance and diversity both in terms of the profession and public perception of what was going on, Council should reconsider this – the Treasurer and Finance and Resources Committee was a special case – it was important to be diverse, in particular with cognitive diversity, it was nothing to do with the competence or integrity of the individuals;
- there were two issues: the election of a Chair for one year – Council could decide to elect them or not; then there was the broader issue of having enough diverse views versus concentration of power where key Officers with Chairs of major committees – Council needed to carefully consider that, but it was not a question for that day;
- there was also the broader question of how to nurture talent so that members were prepared and mentored in order to be able to step up into the roles potentially earlier than had been done historically; the matter was compounded by the smaller numbers on Council and the inability to put your name forward due to the process (i.e. the number of supporting people required per candidate, and that you were only permitted to support one person);
- this was an opportunity to have a deputy / Chair-in-waiting type role as, currently, Vice-Chairs basically did not do much besides cover for the Chair in their absence; use it as a training opportunity;
 - o further discussion would be an action point to take forward;
- once guests and non-Council members rejoined the meeting, it should be emphasised that the discussion was about the process, not the candidate.

80. The Registrar and Director of Operations (DoO) briefly left the room to count the ballot papers and note email responses from remote attendees.
81. The candidate returned to the room, where he was reassured that the discussion was around governance and the role of Officers and their position as Chairs of standing committees, it was not about him personally. A wider discussion was required to include the role of Vice-Chairs; training for leadership positions (succession planning); it could be an extension of the discussion that Officers should not be involved in accreditation visits; Officer duties compared to allocation of roles to members of Council, particularly as in the 2024-2025 College year three Officers would be Chairs of three main committees. Long-term expressions of interest could be captured when members had their individual conversations with the President to tie in with the development training.
82. The Registrar and DoO returned to the room and Professor Parkin was congratulated on his successful election as Chair, EC for the forthcoming College year, July 2024-July 2025.

Any other College business (unclassified items)

Policy for complaints against Council (and committee) members

83. The President drew Council's attention to the Policy for complaints against Council (and committee) members agreed in September 2022. At that time, it had been agreed to review the Policy in two years, however, as no complaints had been received since the amended policy was agreed, there was no rationale to bring it back to the September 2024 Council meeting unless Council had a specific reason to do so.
84. Council agreed it was unnecessary to bring this item to September 2024 Council.

Timing of publication of Council papers

85. It was commented that Council received Council papers before the profession / public had access to the unclassified papers via the website, and questioned if it was possible for them to be published at the same time as there had been feedback that there had been interest in the proposed discussions, but that the short notice had prevented members from observing the open session.
86. This was noted. It was explained that the agenda could change up to / including the day of the mailing and Council had to receive papers a minimum of seven days in advance of the meeting and this was given priority; thereafter the papers had to be split into unclassified and confidential as only unclassified items were publicised, given to the Committee Liaison Officer (position currently vacant, recruitment to be done shortly) to load them to the website, and await approval from the web team before they went live. It was an extended process involving multiple people and was completed as soon as possible.

Regional Question Time (RQT)

87. It was similarly commented that it would be useful for details of the RQT be made public a month in advance, as there appeared to be quite a lot of people that were unaware of it – the most recent e-bulletins did not appear to include the details, so it would be good to put it in the previous month's news.

88. It was confirmed that it was normally publicised as early as possible, but there had been some difficulty acquiring a venue for the Birmingham RQT so there had been a delay; invitations were sent to members within a 50-mile radius of the event, however, people were in the vicinity for BVA Live who had come from further afield so they would not have been made aware of it

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)

89. It was commented that the workload generated by the CMA investigation and the potential impact on staff resourcing and other projects should be included on the risk register. This was agreed.

Date of next meeting

90. The next scheduled Council meeting was **Wednesday**, 11 September 2024, commencing at 10:00 am, reconvening in the afternoon. The meeting would be held in person (venue to be confirmed).

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

Update on major projects

91. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 3.

2023 Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements

92. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 4 – 9.

Registration and retention fees 2025 – 2026

93. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 10 – 15.

Customer Relationship Management system

94. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 16 – 22.

Professor Bray left the meeting

Statutory Membership Examination

95. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 23 – 34.

RCVS accreditation of veterinary programmes in the European Union

96. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 35 – 41.

Strategic Plan

97. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 42 – 79.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Ensuring good governance leaflet

98. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 80 – 83.

Comments on classified appendices

99. There were no comments or questions relating to classified appendices as noted at paragraph 84 of the classified appendix.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)

100. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 85 – 88.

101. The meeting was drawn to a close.

Retiring members at RCVS Day – main contributions

(Membership is not exhaustive as there were a number of years that Boards/Working Groups were not added to the main committee lists, also electronic records incomplete prior to 2006.)

Dr Melissa Donald: elected 2016 – 2024 (eight years)

- President 2022 – 2023
- (Chair) Registration Committee
- (Chair) Standards Committee
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Nominations Committee
- PIC / DC Liaison Committee
- Registration Appeals Committee
- Specialist Recognition and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee
- (Observer) Advancement of the Professions Committee
- (Observer) Education Committee
- (Chair) Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice Subcommittee
- Fellowship Board
- Vet Futures Project Board
- (Chair) Hardwick Street Refurbishment Group
- Brexit Taskforce
- Covid-19 Taskforce
- RCVS Knowledge Board of Trustees
- Officer Team

Professor Stephen May: elected 2021 – 2024 (three years) and 2012 – 2020 (eight years) / university (London) appointed 2001 – 2009 (eight years)

- President 2017 – 2018
- (Chair) Education Policy and Specialisation Committee
- (Chair) Specialist Recognition and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee
- Disciplinary Committee (pre-LRO)
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Planning and Resources Committee
- Registration Appeals Committee
- Specialist Recognition and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee
- Standards Committee (also latterly as Observer)
- (Observer) Education Committee
- CPD Policy and Compliance Subcommittee
- Post-nominals Subcommittee
- Register and Registration Sub-committee

- (Chair) Operational Board
- Estates Strategy Project Board
- Vet Futures Project Board
- Brexit Taskforce
- (Chair) CPD Compliance Panel
- (Chair) CPD Working Party
- (Chair) Graduate Outcomes Working Party
- (Chair) Graduate Outcomes Working Group: EMS / Clinical Education
- (Chair) Legislation Working Party
- (Chair) Panel of Assessors for Advanced Practitioner Status
- (Chair) Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging Board

Dr Kate Richards: elected 2020 – 2024 (four years) and 2015 – 2019 (four years)

- President 2021 – 2022
- (Chair) Education Committee
- (Chair) Nominations Committee
- (Chair) PIC / DC Liaison Committee
- (Chair) Specialist Recognition and Advanced Practitioner Appeals Committee
- (Chair) Standards Committee
- Advancement of the Professions Committee
- Finance and Resources Committee
- Registration Committee
- Veterinary Nurses Council
- (Chair) Certification Subcommittee
- Primary Qualifications Subcommittee
- Register and Registration Subcommittee
- (Chair) Mind Matters Initiative
- Council Culture Working Group
- Covid-19 Taskforce
- Environment and Sustainability Working Party
- Estates Strategy Group
- Federation of Veterinarians of Europe
- Hardwick Street Refurbishment Group
- Vet Futures Project Board
- Officer Team
- Operational Board

Professor James Wood: Vet Schools Council appointed 2020 – 2024 (four years) / university (Cambridge) appointed 2013 – 2020 (seven years)

- (Chair) Registration Appeals Committee
- Education Committee
- Veterinary Nurses Council
- Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice Subcommittee
- CPD Policy and Compliance Subcommittee

- Recognised Veterinary Practice Subcommittee
- Routine Veterinary Practice Subcommittee
- Council Culture Working Group
- Covid-19 Taskforce
- Estates Strategy Group

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	11 September 2024
Title	4 – 9 July 2024 Council minutes
Summary	Minutes of the remote decision made 4 – 9 July 2024 and the meeting held on Friday, 5 July 2024 (AGM).
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes.
Attachments	None
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 0207 202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

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

²Classification rationales

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

Council

Minutes of the remote decision held between 4 – 9 July 2024

Members (per College year 2023-2024):

Dr S Paterson (President)	
Dr L H Allum	Mr T M Hutchinson
Mrs B S Andrews-Jones	Professor M D Jones
Miss L Belton	Professor S A May
Mr D Bray	Mrs C-L McLaughlan
Dr A L Calow	Dr A J McLeish
Mr J M Castle	Professor T D H Parkin
Dr D S Chambers	Dr K A Richards
Mrs O D R Cook	Mr T J Walker
Dr M A Donald	Mr W A S Wilkinson
Ms L Ford	Professor J L N Wood
Dr M M S Gardiner	Ms J S M Worthington
Mrs S D Howarth	

Committee, Subcommittee, Board and Working Party Membership 2024-2025

1. Council was asked to ratify the membership of committees, subcommittees, boards and working parties for the forthcoming College year July 2024 – July 2025.
2. A vote was taken:

For:	15
Against:	0
Abstentions:	0
Did not vote:	6
3. It was noted that one of the four retiring members of Council voted prior to the changeover of members at the Annual General Meeting held on 5 July 2024, the remaining three retiring members did not vote; the incoming members were contacted separately from the vote to discuss their forthcoming roles on Council and committees, etc. Therefore, the vote was out of 21.
4. The membership for the College year 2024 – 2025 was agreed by a majority vote.

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 5 July 2024 at the Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD

Members:

Dr S Paterson (in the Chair)

Dr L H Allum

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Professor D C Barrett

Miss L S Belton

Dr S E Bennett

Mr D Bray

Dr A L Calow

Mr J M Castle

*Dr D S Chambers

Mrs O D R Cook

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mrs S D Howarth

Mr T M Hutchinson

Professor M D Jones

Dr Z J Kennedy

*Professor C M Loughrey

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

Dr A J McLeish

*Professor T D H Parkin

Mr T J Walker

Mr W A S Wilkinson

Ms J S M Worthington

*Denotes absent

In attendance:

Ms E C Ferguson Registrar

Ms L Lockett CEO

Ms C L McCann Director of Operations (DoO)

Ms J Shardlow Chair, Audit and Risk Committee

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies of absence were received from:

- Dr Chambers
- Professor Loughrey
- Professor Parkin

2. Dr C H Middlemiss (Observer) was not in attendance.

Declarations of interest

3. There were no new declarations of interest received.

Matter for decision by Council

Appointment of the Presidential Team and Treasurer 2024 / 2025

4. Council was asked to approve the appointment of the new Presidential Team and Treasurer for 2024 / 2025 as follows:

President:	Miss L S Belton
Vice-President (Senior):	Dr S Paterson
Vice-President (Junior):	Professor T D H Parkin
Treasurer:	Dr M M S Gardiner

5. The Presidential Team and Treasurer appointments for 2024 / 2025 were approved.

Date of next meeting

6. The date of the next Council meeting was confirmed as Wednesday, 11 September 2024 to be held in person at a venue to be confirmed.

[Afternote: The venue has now been confirmed as the Rosalind Paget Room, Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN.]

Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	11 September 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.
4. Alongside those changes noted in the Strategic Plan table to follow, since the June 2024 Council meeting, we have also:
 - a. Launched our 'good governance' consultation – due to report to Council in November
 - b. Published our Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023
 - c. Admitted new members to the register from the UK veterinary and veterinary nursing schools, with in-person ceremonies
 - d. Hosted an event on support for neurodivergent students on veterinary placements
 - e. Celebrated the contribution of our retiring Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson
 - f. Launched a new Academy Course to help veterinary professionals understand our concerns process, and a new course for VetGDP peer reviewers
 - g. Hosted RCVS Day, including our awards programme
 - h. Admitted 48 new Fellows, with gender parity, and announced our new Fellowship Board Chair, Dr Niall Connell
 - i. Published our landmark research on supporting those with chronic illnesses and disabilities
 - j. Responded to the CMA's Issues Statement
 - k. Launched our new Mind Matters grants programme
 - l. Published the report of our AI roundtable
 - m. Continued our series of Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways stakeholder focus groups
 - n. Continued our series of Veterinary Nursing Vision workshops
 - o. Launched an evidence-based compassion-focused therapy course via Mind Matters

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"> • Discussion around governance took place at January 2024 Council meeting. A consultation ran 10 June – 22 July, following a launch event at BVA Live. Responses are currently being analysed by an external agency. Results and paper for decision due to be brought to November 2024 Council meeting. • CMA inquiry mentions out of date regulatory framework. July 2024 discussion with CVOs and deputy CVOs to remind them about importance of new legislation (they continue to be supportive), and brief them on the governance reform consultation. Letters written to new Ministers calling for new legislation – meeting arranged with Baroness Hayman (relevant Minister in the House of Lords) in September 2024. • 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 23 September. • 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 was shared with Education and Audit and Risk Committees to ensure we continue on a journey of quality improvement. • Work continues with Defra to consider how current regulations on the Statutory Membership Exam can be updated to make the exam more accessible and flexible. • Following VN support meetings, there have been eight successful accreditations. • Launched the External Examiners (EEs) course providing standardised training, for both educational and RCVS requirements, for those responsible for reviewing veterinary nursing programmes.

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"> • A Fellowship Science Advisory Panel (FSAP) Working Party is investigating whether and how animal behavioural medicine should be regulated; its final meeting is expected before the end of 2024. • 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. The new policy has been the subject of widespread communication and engagement. • Work on Reasonable Adjustments continues, with the aim of developing co-created principles with the veterinary schools. Research to inform the process ongoing. We aim to have a draft available for consideration by Council by the end of 2024. • Disability and Chronic Illness survey has now been published. • Neurodiversity and clinical placements stakeholder day was hosted in June with excellent feedback from all who attended. This is part of a longer term initiative that cuts across AP, VN and Education and will result in various publications and outputs such as Academy content. • VCCP project is progressing. The three workstreams are 1) Development of Specialty training for GPs; 2) Definition of roles; and, 3) Development of flexible routes to specialisation. Two stakeholder meetings have taken place in London (May) and Edinburgh (June). A further two are planned in Cardiff (Oct) and Belfast (Nov). We have also scheduled several online lunchtime sessions for specific stakeholder groups, to ensure those who cannot get time away from practice to attend in-person events can contribute to this work, including sessions for independent, remote and rural, student, new graduate and early career vets, APs, Specialists, equine and farm vets. • Roundtable on regulation of use of AI on 20 May; report now published and workstreams underway. • An online stakeholder briefing was held on 13 March 2024 to update numerous veterinary and veterinary nursing organisations on a range of RCVS initiatives. • VN Futures sponsored online and in-person events (VN Vision), yielding valuable and insightful data on how RVNs and SVNs see, or would like to see their profession evolving, which will inform future projects.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<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>Legal</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. At its June meeting, RCVS Council agreed to move the protocol to a permanent footing.
<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. Council has approved direct approaches to some schools. EAEVE has agreed for RCVS to attend its accreditations as an observer, to facilitate RCVS accreditation, should a school wish this. 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. IAWG meetings held online over two days in July 24. 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 underway with AVBC. 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.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending the North American Veterinary Community’s (NAVC) Vet Nurse and Teach HiVE event in Anaheim in November to deliver the VN Vision outcomes (see A2). • 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, also taskforce to celebrate FVE’s 50th anniversary, in 2025.
Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>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.</p>	<p>APC/ Comms/ Exec</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing work with Public Advisory Group members on development of animal owner advice and to discuss issues raised by the CMA, which fed into development of response to CMA issues statement • Chronic Illness and Disability Survey has now been published. • Fellowship elections have taken place, with a new Chair. We will now be electing a Vice-Chair and recruiting FSAP members. A number of projects for FSAP have been identified, and Fellowship Day will be used to refine these. Current topics include disease preparedness and disaster relief. • New set of Fellows on Tour events at UK veterinary schools being planned. • 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. The findings were discussed by the Officer Team at their planning day in August. • 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 continue, following a successful event at the Titanic Vet Show, ECVIM and VetNet, are planned for the autumn. CEO also speaking at Canmore Trust interprofessional event on mental health in November. • New research webinars continue to be popular, showcasing outputs from MMI grant awardees. • New MMI Grant programme now launched. • Reinstated the VN Educator forums to update on RCVS policies and procedures, such as the updated Standards Framework and discuss topics such as academic integrity.



Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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 delayed. Data management system (CRM) review project ongoing – Discovery phase now complete and we have moved into the development phase. Paper on access to Register for third-party software approved by FRC at May 2024 meeting.
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. Veterinary Clinical Career Pathway workstreams underway. VN support meetings now include assessment and examination specific support. A review of the accreditation standards for the post registration Cert AVN will commence in autumn 2024. Review of the Veterinary Nurse Apprenticeship Standard will commence 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 approved by Council 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 has registered with us. • New Research Manager now in post and reports from Surveys of the Professions to be published in autumn.
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 (AFI) set up, and current focus is on mentoring and an inclusive book club. Also, AFI to deliver a session at the staff away day on September 5 to promote inclusion. • Online staff learning hub due to launch, to provide employees with a 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. Requests for funding increasing given there is now a clearer focus on funding requests and impact for learners. • Thematic review of data from exit interviews presented to Senior Team on a quarterly basis with managers able to take responsibility for improvements. Ongoing, next update due early September. • Growth mindset group in place to encourage different ways of thinking remains strong and positive, with personal development being the main focus • Manager Charter developed to support new and existing managers, next steps of this work to be discussed with wider manager group. To be shared in drop-in sessions for leaders due to start end of August for discussion and how to use the charter in the future.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional mental health and wellbeing support introduced via MyMynd, with positive initial feedback, Masterclasses to take place in September, for managers only initially, onboarding sessions for new starters also to take place in September. • In-depth recruitment training took place in June for managers to aid decision making and strengthen competence on inclusive recruitment / competency questioning. Phase I completed, with excellent feedback, new materials building on what was already in place introduced. Phase II to take place late September for remaining managers. • Wellbeing calendar launched, to focus employees' minds on specific events or activity to support health and mindset. Data gathering for most popular topics to start early September, with quarterly advanced planning.
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. • Further conversations with VetSupport NI and in order to further promote this service updates / information have been communicated to MEG, associations and other large groups. • Public Advisory Group will support us developing more compassionate approach for animal owners. • Academy courses on our concerns system, 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 15,500 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 (see A5).




Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>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.</p>	<p>APC</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Chair Louise Allum now in post. Outgoing Chair Kate Richards supporting in ambassador role. • Speaking at ECVIM, VetNet and Canmore Trust interprofessional event. • 2025 themes being refined with moral injury, women's health and rural mental health being prioritised. • New grant programme now launched, with a smaller grant also now available. Increased support for applicants and clear direction of topics in alignment with the MMI strategy. Good attendance and feedback at the research webinars, aimed at improving interaction with the grant awardees and to support dissemination. • Heavily subsidised MHFA courses well attended, three more planned for this year. • Preparation for MMI Symposium 2025 is now underway. Abstracts will be open from 10 October 2024. • New course on civility being designed in collaboration with the Academy and leading experts (based on the Civility Guide launched earlier this year by Aberdeen). Aiming to launch by January 2025. • Continuing to be members 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.
<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 video profiling vet nurse leadership has been launched, and more will be available this year and next. • Insight from the Disability and Chronic Illness Survey will inform the plans for leadership and management CPD, combined with a campaign soon to be launched on reasonable adjustments within the workplace. • New unconscious bias course launched via the Academy, has had good feedback, and all Fellowship Assessors completed prior to Fellowship assessments. This will be mandatory for all assessing the new MMI grants. It remains open to all vets and nurses. • 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. • Continued engagement with UKHACC as the only veterinary voice in that group. Significant efforts to demonstrate the UK approach to welfare and AMR and progress that has been made • ViVet strategy under review at present. • AI roundtable took place on 20 May, report now published and workstreams underway. • 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 published (more detail above). • Student specific report on disability and chronic illness will be published soon. • 'Reasonable adjustments' campaign imminent, this will help support and educate line managers and employers on what is reasonable and support those who are asking support to engage in this process. • Continued membership of MEG DIG to share learnings and support communication. • 'RVN – Starting Out' course, designed to support the transition from student to registered nurse, launched May 2023, currently being updated. • Nurse Returner course developed and launched Sept 2023.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'RCVS & Me' course for student vet nurses and tutors with an introduction to the RCVS, its purpose and how it can support students, launched September 2024. • 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.
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 - tweaks due to be made to 2025 process based on feedback from Nominations Subcommittee. • New building will include history and future of veterinary practice – thought to be given to commissioning new items for historic collection. • Education 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. • Increased number of women applicants, and then successful applications for Fellowship reported in 2024. The new marking rubric has been well received by the assessors, as well as mandatory unconscious bias training and updated guidance. Further refinement of the process continues. We are pleased to welcome 48 new Fellows this year, a trend that will hopefully continue. • Fellowship Day themes will look at disease preparedness, species introduction and disaster relief, with the aim of practical materials to be developed where appropriate which will be free for the professions to access. • Fellowship student competition has been growing, this year will see a new pre Fellowship Day networking evening for students with Fellows and a chance to present their research. The top three students will continue to have a session at Fellowship Day. • 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.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>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.</p>	<p><i>Education MMI ViVet Academy Exec</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability and chronic illness survey, combined with the Survey of the Profession, gives insight into some of the challenges with recruitment, retention and return and what support might be helpful to the professions • 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) developing inclusive recruitment toolkit to support organisations 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.
<p>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.</p>	<p><i>Education VN</i></p>		<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 started in January and progressing well. Substantial stakeholder engagement involved. • 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 by end of the year. • Actions within Workforce Action Plan also consider fulfilling careers. • VNF sponsored events (VN Vision) underway throughout 2024 (See A2)
<p>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.</p>	<p><i>Comms APC</i></p>		<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 will attend a range of freshers' weeks and careers fairs at the vet schools. VN school induction weeks also attended. • Regional Question Time took place in June in Birmingham and more planned. • Opportunities for vets and VNs to join various working groups put out to application.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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 to be launched for 2025. • 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"> • Fellowship Day keynote speaker booked, two interactive sessions planned (disease preparedness and disaster relief). • Student competition open, and a new networking evening (online) to enable more students to benefit from Fellowship interaction being planned for November. • Elections completed for Chair, now elections for Vice-Chair and applications for FSAP membership open. • New Academy course on unconscious bias and training for Fellowship assessors has been completed by all assessors. • Fellowship 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. • Sustainability consensus statement now approved by APC and can be used by Fellowship for sustainability activities.
8. Review new ways of reaching consensus and driving change within our leadership and governance structure.	<i>Exec Officers</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction carried 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.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<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>	Exec		<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. Events so far held in NI, Scotland, Shropshire and online. Wales, Derby and London in the planning stages. Educator and equine specific sessions held. (see A2) • VNF sessions on 'impact change' and having difficult conversations at BVNA Congress 2024. • Defra hosting meeting to discuss future of the profession with key stakeholders. • CMA process likely to have impact on future of the professions. • RCVS Strategy Plan process for 2025 onwards underway.

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 launched in June 2024 and will report to Council in November 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 and Officers agreed in August 2024 that the governance survey would be carried out again in January to identify learning needs. 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 praised by ARC for its effectiveness. Annual Business Continuity Planning meeting takes place and changes are made to the plan in response – next meeting due September. Work ongoing on risk dashboard and assurance map, reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee. Greater visibility of Corporate Risk Register now available to Council, with annual risk workshop.
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, remains ongoing. Research and initial framework completed. Developed end-of-case survey with the Professional Conduct team. This has been in place for around two years as an ongoing service-user feedback tool.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Services team now well established and looking to extend its remit. Team currently covers calls for Finance, Registration & Membership. Cross-trained on Reception and now Reception overflow in place. • 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. This is a major project and will not start until 2025 • Regular 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. Further sessions due early October due to new legislation. • New career web page review under construction to better promote career opportunities externally. • Work on intranet ongoing. • Skills Share Week (SSW) delivered as a direct result of 2023 Staff Away Day discussion, feedback very positive; 2024 SSW plans underway. • Trialling a series of drop-in sessions in August/Sept to offer managers an outlet to share their challenges as a leader of people and explore the learning options to support their growth as managers. • New maternity policy launched with enhanced pay arrangements. Roundtable meetings to invite parents-to-be and parents to share ideas for work/family balance, and other challenges they experience. • Finance training due to be delivered in October by Wingate, on four aspects of financial management and planning. • 2024 Staff Away Day due to take place on 5 September, under the theme 'better together'.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
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. • Polices for financial processes being 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 Board in place and tender process has identified two front runners for the contract. Due diligence process underway.
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; finalising dilapidations agreement. • Levy Real Estate appointed and acting as project managers for the works. • Peldon Rose appointed as design and build company. Hardwick Street now turned over to them and weekly update meetings taking place. • Staff Technical Group set up and responsible for ensuring building infrastructure, kit and layout meet the current and future needs, within agreed budgets.
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"> • Communications priorities for this Presidential year discussed by Officers at the August planning meeting. • 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 – see above

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>10. Develop and implement a corporate social responsibility strategy that befits an organisation that works in the public interest.</p>	<p>FRC Ops</p>	<p style="background-color: #FFA500;"></p>	<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 has signed off sustainability and biodiversity consensus statement. • New webpage being built to showcase internal and external sustainability information. • Next edition of internal Green Team ‘Green Zine’ due in September in line with Zero Waste Week. • 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. • Evaluating accreditation options that cover economic, ethical, environmental and social responsibilities for the new building (we secured Investors in the Environment (iiE) 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	RCVS Council
Date	11 September 2024
Title	Annual report from Public Advisory Group
Summary	This paper summarises the activity of the Public Advisory Group (PAG) during its first year of activity.
Decisions required	The original agreement was that the PAG would be reviewed after one year. Is Council content to continue with the Group beyond the initial 12-month period on the basis that key work remains ongoing, with a review of its input and relevance once that work has concluded?
Attachments	Annex A – Terms of Reference for the Public Advisory Group
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Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.

Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.
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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

Report from Public Advisory Group

Background

1. RCVS Council agreed to the setting up of a Public Advisory Group in September 2022.
2. The purpose of the PAG is to:
 - a. To enable the RCVS to better understand issues affecting the public, so that this can inform future strategy, policy and consultation
 - b. To act as a sounding board with whom the RCVS can confidentially consult on draft policy whilst under development
 - c. To support the development and improvement of RCVS services for the public, for example, Find a Vet, Check the Registers and the concerns process
 - d. To help to pilot and test messages and communications to ensure they are clear and understandable
3. The full terms of reference can be found in Annex A.
4. Recruitment of PAG members was carried out by means of a press release to animal owner publications and websites, via social media, and via veterinary practices. An initial sift of applications was carried out by RCVS staff, mainly to take out people with clear conflicts of interest, and a longlist then discussed with the Chair, Council member Louise Allum.
5. Although the PAG reports to the Officer Team, it was felt that an annual report to Council would be useful. This report marks roughly one year since the first meeting took place.

Meetings

6. The first meeting of the PAG took place on 22 September 2023. This was mainly an introductory meeting, outlining the role of the College, setting the scene in terms of the role of the PAG, and expected values and behaviours, and allowing members to introduce themselves. It then went on to explain how the first area for consideration was a new animal owners' section on the website. The aim of the section was to help animal owners have more informed interactions with their veterinary professionals, understand what to look for when choosing a practice that would be right for them, and explain who's who in the veterinary team etc.
7. Following the meeting, a form of words was circulated for the benefit of those who wished to announce their membership of the PAG on their social media channels.
8. A survey then went out to members of the PAG to better understand the spread of animals that the group owned/kept, where they were based in the UK, the number of different veterinary practices that they used and the topics that they would find useful to be covered in the new section on the website. The survey also asked about other areas on which they felt the PAG could usefully work.
9. The second meeting took place on 10 January 2024. At this meeting a summary of the survey responses was reviewed, and then the PAG broke into groups to discuss what information would

be useful to know with respect to two out of the following four topics. A summary was fed back to the whole group and is being used to inform development of the new advice section:

- a. Getting to know your vet practice
 - i. Thinking about buying a pet
 - ii. Who's who in the vet team
 - iii. How to choose a vet practice
 - iv. Practice facilities

- b. Key areas of veterinary care
 - i. Vet medicines and prescriptions
 - ii. Remote consultations
 - iii. Second opinions vs referrals
 - iv. Out of hours care
 - v. Fees

- c. Improving practice communications and client awareness of owner responsibilities
 - i. What are your practice communications like?
 - ii. How often does your practice contact you? What about?
 - iii. Is there anything you think should be explained better? For example, out-of-hours rota, prescriptions, consults times, medicines purchase etc
 - iv. Do you think practices could help to educate clients about owner responsibilities, for example, timely check-ups, prompt appointment requests, understanding of Code of Professional Conduct?
 - v. How should they do this, or should it be the RCVS, or someone else?

- d. Raising awareness of RCVS role, Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS), British Veterinary Association (BVA) etc
 - i. What do you understand we do? Main responsibilities, other activities?
 - ii. What are other people's assumptions?
 - iii. Do we serve the profession or the public?
 - iv. What is the role of the VCMS, the BVA, Defra?
 - v. How would animal owner advice from the RCVS land with owners?

10. The third meeting took place on 11 June 2024. At this meeting the focus was on the issues identified by Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) review (this was prior to the Issues Statement being published, but the themes remained similar). The Group was given an overview of the role of the CMA and the issues raised, ie:

- a. Are consumers getting the information they need, at the right time, to make informed decisions?
- b. Is a limited choice of vet businesses in some local areas impacting pet owners?
- c. Are profits earned consistent with the levels expected in a competitive market?
- d. Do vet businesses have the incentive and ability to limit consumer choice when providing treatments or recommending related services, particularly when they are part of large integrated groups?

- e. Is the regulatory framework preventing the market from functioning as well as it could?

11. Regarding these issues, the PAG members were asked:

- a. Do they resonate with you?
- b. What is the impact on animal owners?
- c. What can the RCVS – or others – do?

12. Key points from the discussion were fed into the CMA Working Group and helped to inform the response to the Issues Statement.

13. A fourth meeting is due to take place on 4 September 2024. At this meeting content for the animal owners' section of the website will be reviewed, and the Group will also hear from the CEO of RCVS Knowledge about the resources available and planned future projects.

Review

14. As can be seen from the ToR (Annex A) the PAG was originally to be active for one year and reviewed their after. However, since the first stream of work has not yet been completed, it is recommended that we continue until the end of this piece of work has concluded and review thereafter.

15. In general terms, the work of the Group has been useful, although progress has been slow in terms of the main workstream, due to resource issues within the Communications Team, the resolution of which is being prioritised.

16. Now more than ever, the question is likely to be less around whether animal owner/keeper input is necessary, but the vehicle via which it is achieved, and whether the set up of the PAG meets our needs, but it would be more effective to review that on completion of the first workstream.

Decision to be made

17. Is Council content to review the effectiveness of the Group after the first workstream has concluded?

Annex A – About the Public Advisory Group

1. The Public Advisory Group (PAG) exists to support the activities of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which are to set, uphold and advance the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health. The RCVS works in the public interest and the PAG will help to ensure that this objective is met.
2. Its members will comprise users of veterinary services and will include, but not be limited to, owners/keepers of companion animals, and equine and production animals. A pool of members will be selected, from whom smaller groups will be drawn to focus on specific tasks.
3. The PAG will be chaired by a member of RCVS Council, decided by the Officer team based on applications.
4. Terms of reference are as follows:
 - a. To enable the RCVS to better understand issues affecting the public, so that this can inform future strategy, policy and consultation
 - b. To act as a sounding board with whom the RCVS can confidentially consult on draft policy whilst under development
 - c. To support the development and improvement of RCVS services for the public, for example, Find a Vet, Check the Registers and the concerns process
 - d. To help to pilot and test messages and communications to ensure they are clear and understandable
5. The PAG will report to the Officer Team. Members will be regularly rotated and are likely to serve for between two and four years.
6. The PAG will not decide on College policy or strategy.
7. Members of the PAG will be compensated for attending meetings at the same rate as RCVS Council members. Where possible, meetings will be held online, to improve access, diversity and inclusion, and reduce the environmental impact.
8. The Group will initially be set up for a 12-month pilot and reviewed thereafter.