



# Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting by videoconference

7 December 2022; 21:45-23:30 GMT+1

Approved at the 31 January 2023 meeting

## MEMBERS ATTENDING:

1. Vanessa Jordan (Authors)
2. Nai Ming Lai (Authors)
3. Stefano Negrini (Fields: **Co-Chair**)
4. Montserrat Conde (Fields)
5. Erik von Elm (Geographic Groups Directors)
6. Luis Garegnani (Geographic Groups Directors)
7. René Spijker (Information Specialists)
8. Valerie Wells (Information Specialists' representative)
9. Gail Quinn (Managing Editors)
10. Liz Dooley (Managing Editors)
11. Silvia Minozzi (Methods Groups)
12. Jack Nunn (Consumers Network)
13. Robert Dellavalle (Co-ordinating Editors: **Co-Chair**)
14. Jo Morrison (Co-ordinating Editors)
15. Ndi Euphrasia Ebai-atuh (Consumers Network)

## OTHER ATTENDEES:

16. Charlotte Pestrige, Director of Publishing and Technology
17. Roma Grant, Interim Head of Governance

## APOLOGIES:

- Tracey Howe, Governing Board Co-Chair
- Catherine Marshall, Governing Board Co-Chair
- Catherine Spencer, Chief Executive Officer
- Karla Soares-Weiser, Editor in Chief
- Veronica Bonfigli, Administrative Officer
- Santiago Castiello de Obeso (Early Career Professionals Network)
- Ahmad Sofi-Mahmudi (Early Career Professionals Network)

## ABSENT

- Cinzia Del Giovane (Methods Groups)

### **1. Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest for this meeting**

Robert Dellavalle chaired the meeting. The apologies were noted.

### **2. Approval of the Agenda, including the papers and decisions in the Consent Agenda**

The Agenda was approved.

### **3. Approval of the minutes from 14 September meeting**

The Minutes of the 14 September 2022 meeting were approved.

#### 4. Council Co-Chair Report

Stefano reported that at the last Council and Board Co-Chairs update the following items were discussed:

- the frequency of meetings in 2023;
- the recent miscommunications between the Board and the Council;
- the agenda of the 7<sup>th</sup> December Council meeting.

#### 5. Update on discussions and decisions taken at the Barcelona meeting

Stefano reported on the main points discussed at the Board meeting in Barcelona which he and Bob attended in person. The main items discussed were:

- The work of the Central Executive Team with the Governing Board – future challenges and activities;
- Mapping the stakeholders of Cochrane, a complicated and multi-layered activity;
- The Open Access options in a post COVID world.

Stefano explained that there currently were three possible models under consideration but none were considered a good fit for Cochrane:

1. *A pay for publication* model
2. *Universities and/or external third parties payers* model
3. *Subscribe to make the content open* model that built on the current subscription model. Subscribers would continue to pay as a Community to read the content (and to make that content open globally) and to access the content that was behind a paywall (for example Cochrane Clinical answers and CENTRAL).

The next step was for CET to put together a proposal with options to be considered by the Board.

#### 6. RevMan Web for non-Cochrane reviews: proposal to introduce paywall for academic users

Charlotte was thanked by the Council for her work at Cochrane and wished well in her new role. She presented her paper and explained that in normal circumstances access to the Library would continue to remain free for all as that was Cochrane's vision. However because of the plan to be open access by 2025, various options were being considered and summarised in a paper that would be shared with the Council for feedback.

She explained that Cochrane would be moving from Revman5 to Revman web and in terms of access the proposal was that:

- commercial and government users continued in a paid model;
- WHO, HINARI, and LMIC countries continued with free access;
- Academic users would have free access to download Revman 5, and paid access to Revman web with paid access;
- Cochrane authors working on Cochrane reviews would continue with free access;
- Cochrane authors working on non-Cochrane reviews would have free access to download Revman 5, but paid access to Revman web;
- Cochrane group roles and centres would continue with free access.

The rationale behind this proposal was explained:

- There were new costs related to data security, content hosting, data storage, user access controls, review management and customer support associated with the third party hosting of Revman web.
- It would help to secure the long-term sustainability of the review development and authoring tools. All profit would be invested back in the product.
- It was in preparation for 2025 when the open access publishing income of Cochrane will be unable to support the cost of maintaining and developing Revman for non-Cochrane users and reviews.
- Revman web was a new product with new functionality including study-centric data, data management and storage and review portfolio management. People would be paying for a new enhanced service.
- Early sales feedback indicated that the proposed RevMan academic pricing was seen as reasonable.

Following the questions raised by Council members, Charlotte clarified:

- She assumed that the relationship between Revman web and the new evidence synthesis units/thematic groups would be outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding; and that part of the incentive to maintain the Community work would be to grant free access;
- the feedback on the pricing came mainly from librarians based in the UK, the US and Europe;
- all systems would not integrate with Revman, but the standards to import data would be shared with the software providers. The proposal would be clarified with Covidence.
- feedback would include analysis on how the chosen model would impact on different audiences such as members of the public and charities or individuals in high income countries who could not afford to be included.
- the forecast on the cost of support to a high number of non-Cochrane review users doing non-Cochrane reviews was between 50,000 and 75,000 GBP, depending on the number of people Cochrane would need to store and manage data for. Charlotte noted that there were two user cases for Revman, namely For people producing systematic reviews and for .training and education. An option to leave the access free for the training and education user would be considered.
- Revman web for academic users would be ready to launch from January 2023 but the paper would not go to the Board for consideration until March/April 2023. If timelines were met, Revman 5 would be switched off in April 2023 and Revman web would be ready to go live.. Everyone who had downloaded Revman 5 would continue to have a working copy, but no updates will be released and new users would not be able to download it.
- The technology of Revman was old and it would be difficult to keep a 'light' version as a tool with limited functionality for an open science community.
- The reputational risk was being carefully considered by ELT and she agreed that the element of training in the education user case should not be lost; the Board paper would include options to prevent this from happening and to look for a compromise to protect this.

Members expressed concerns over the option of a paid subscription model as it was considered unfit for various countries. Members anticipated a drop in Cochrane authors' numbers as well as a loss in the outreach of the academic proposition of Revman, currently embedded in the educational systems. Council urged the ELT to consider carefully whether the income generated by this new model would have more negatives than positives for Cochrane. Council also noted a further consideration of the payment system suggested for Revman web that would, in its view, cause harm, particularly to trainees. Charlotte committed to collect and include in the paper all of the Council's comments and concerns and to share the paper with the Council before the Board meeting.

**ACTION: Charlotte to collect and include in the Board paper all of the Council's comments and concerns on the Revman web proposal and to share the paper with the Council before the Board meeting.**

## **7. Council meetings in 2023 and attendance**

Council discussed the options presented in PAPER 071222-1 where it was asked to decide on meetings' times and frequency in 2023. As consensus could not be reached, Roma suggested setting up a doodle poll with various timing options for Council to complete before the end of the year; members would be asked to pick their three preferred options. Roma clarified that there currently was no budget to fund a face-to-face meeting of the Council in 2023. Currently the only guaranteed funding was entrance to the Colloquium and a room for a full day meeting on Sunday 6 September 2023. She committed to get more information with regards to the logistics of the Council's attendance at the Colloquium in London and to report back at the next meeting. Council stressed the importance of enabling members to meet in person, especially those who wouldn't have the funds to attend otherwise.

Council agreed that it would be important to reflect on its ability to perform; members agreed that 1.5h meetings quarterly would not allow the Council to be functional and effective as an advisory body to the Board; Roma clarified that, following the restructure, there was no capacity centrally to support monthly meetings. Council considered the possibility of using a new platform to facilitate discussions offline and prep ahead of the meetings.

**ACTION: Roma to set up a Council meeting in January to include frequency and timing of future meetings..**

**ACTION: Veronica to add the timings of the meetings to the attendance sheet and to re-circulate it.**

**8. 2022 COUNCIL PRIORITY 1:**

**Support the operationalization of plans to restructure the organization under the future of evidence synthesis program of work and ensure the voice of Cochrane Groups is heard as this work is progressed.**

*-Report from the Editor in Chief*

A video message from Karla had been circulated ahead of the meeting.

**9. 2022 COUNCIL PRIORITY 2:**

**Reconsider the Council's own role, representation, and terms of reference in light of the changes to the organizational structure.**

*-Council Roadmap framework and priorities for 2023*

Roma explained that the paper was the result of conversations she had had with the Board, the Council and members of the Central Executive Team. The Governance review had been postponed to 2023 given the many changes that would come into effect and she thought an external consultant could help better shape the role of the Council and to improve its ways of working with the Board. The Council Roadmap would feed into the review. Members voiced concerns over the risk of losing the clinical input and Community representation in council, and agreed that the first step would be to review the Council's terms of reference.

Roma suggested to set up a small Council-led working group composed of Council members, the Board and the CET. The main focus of the work would start in January 2023 and would be carried out mostly via email to pose questions that would feed into the governance review. It was suggested that people leaving the Council should be part of the working group, bringing with them the knowledge and the history of the organisation. Jo volunteered to facilitate the meetings with a white board approach.

**ACTION: Roma to circulate an email to Council explaining the remit and composition of the working group that would define the Council priorities for 2023 and input into the governance review; and to call for volunteers to join the working group. Members interested to join the working group to let Roma know.**

**10. Cochrane Events 2023**

*-Colloquium 2023*

*-30th Anniversary celebrations and awards*

Roma provided an update on behalf of Chris Champion. The Colloquium would take place on 4-6 September 2023 in London and the theme would be: *Forward together for trusted evidence*; it would include the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and awards. The work was progressing, the team was putting together the high level program and there were calls on social media for plenary speakers. Council was invited to provide any input or suggestion to Chris Champion. Submissions and early bird registration would open in January 2023 and sponsorship opportunities for LMIC/ Consumers stipends suggestions were welcome.

Council requested a full day meeting, and a joint meeting with the Board, if possible. Formal feedback was requested on whether Cochrane had any qualified values that sponsors would need to align with, if sponsoring a Council member.

**ACTION: Roma to check with the Director of Development on any Cochrane qualified values for sponsors.**

**11. Constituency Reports:**

Council members noted their struggle to get feedback from their constituencies as people were leaving and offices were closing down. As members were unsure that the reports were an effective way of engaging with their communities they would be paused pending consideration of alternative methods. Members were encouraged to still engage and to bring any issues to the meetings.

**12. Any Other Business**

- Jack provided an update on the values work. He had emailed the CEO to request Cochrane resume work on the statement of values and urged the release of the central budget for the work to progress. He suggested to bring this item for discussion by Council at the Colloquium, as he thought attendees would expect progress.

-Liz explained that the Managing Editors representatives had shared in September 2022 a constituency report with the Council which collected questions and concerns raised by the MEs on EM. The issues had been partly addressed. An outstanding issue was the request of an assessment of the matrix in relation to the success or otherwise of EM and the loss of Archie’s functionality. One year ago, the MEs were told that a retrospective and evaluation process would take place in 2022 and shared with the stakeholders to determine the learnings from the project but nothing had happened so far.

**ACTION: It was suggested the issue was taken offline and Roma would provide an update at the next Council meeting in January.**

**13. Date of next meeting**

January 2023 date to be confirmed.

**Closed session (Council members only)**

Roma Grant was thanked for her attendance and left the meeting. Council members convened in closed session, a record of which is kept by the Council Co-Chairs.

**---MEETING END---**

Remaining action items from 2021 and 2022:

<b>Meeting and Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
4. 14 April 2021	Council Co-Chairs to circulate to Council the key issues discussed at the Board and Council Co-Chairs’ catch-ups in a bullet-point format.	Standing
6.6 October 2021	Constituency and Working Group representatives to provide short written reports of activities and issues for the Council to consider at each formal meeting.	Standing