

Cochrane Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting by videoconference

4 April 2023; 20:00-21:30 BST

Approved at the 27th June meeting

MEMBERS ATTENDING:

1. Vanessa Jordan (Authors)
2. Stefano Negrini (Fields: **Co-Chair**)
3. Irena Zakarija-Grkovic (Geographic Groups Directors)
4. René Spijker (Information Specialists)
5. Liz Dooley (Managing Editors)
6. Silvia Minozzi (Methods Groups)
7. Robert Dellavalle (Co-ordinating Editors: **Co-Chair**)
8. Cinzia Del Giovane (Methods Groups)
9. Valerie Wells (Information Specialists' representative)
10. Luis Garegnani (Geographic Groups Directors)

OTHER ATTENDEES:

11. Catherine Marshall, Governing Board Co-Chair
12. Catherine Spencer, Chief Executive Officer
13. Lucy Johnson-Brown, Head of Governance
14. Veronica Bonfigli, Administrative Officer

APOLOGIES:

- Tracey Howe, Governing Board Co-Chair
- Karla Soares-Weiser, Editor in Chief
- Nai Ming Lai (Authors)

ABSENT

- Ahmad Sofi-Mahmudi (Early Career Professionals Network)
- Santiago Castiello de Obeso (Early Career Professionals Network)
- Jack Nunn (Consumers Network)
- Ndi Euphrasia Ebai-atuh (Consumers Network)
- Jo Morrison (Co-ordinating Editors)
- Montserrat Conde (Fields)

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

Robert Dellavalle chaired the meeting. There was a round of introductions. The apologies were noted, people absent were noted.

2. Approval of the Agenda, including the papers.

The Agenda was approved.

3. Approval of the minutes of the 31st January 2023 formal meeting

The minutes of the 31 January 2023 formal meeting were approved.

4. Report from the Council Co-Chairs

Catherine Marshall reported that at its meeting on 21 March 2023, Cochrane's Governing Board:

- Accepted the Council's report on its' activities.
- Noted that when the Council was established in 2017, a review of the Council's terms of reference and function had been planned after 18 months and then 5 years, but the reviews had not been undertaken.
- Noted that the Council Terms of Reference state that members may not serve longer than six years in total.
- Agreed with Council's recommendation that elections for new members to the Council should be suspended until the Governance Review has been concluded.
- Agreed that:
 - those Council members coming to the end of their terms should be automatically renewed, for up to a maximum of 12 months or until the Governance Review has been concluded.
 - individuals will not remain on the Council if they no longer work for or with Cochrane.
- Reaffirmed that funding will be made available for remaining Council members to attend the Colloquium in London in September 2023 and for the Board and Council to hold a face-to-face meeting.
- Invited Council members to use time at their upcoming online and face to face meetings to contribute to:
 - the upcoming governance review and provide advice on the options for future community engagement in Cochrane;
 - the development of the new organisational strategy;
 - the implementation of the future of evidence synthesis projects;
 - the consideration of new review formats;
 - to the development of the new Cochrane Library and other Cochrane products.
- Thanked Council members for their ongoing commitment and dedication to Cochrane and the Community.

The logistics (date and time included) of the Council's meeting at the Colloquium had not been finalised yet. A suggestion to split the Council in groups (one rep per group) to cover different items of the agenda was put forward.

ACTION: Lucy Johnson-Brown to find out the date and logistics of the Council's meeting at the Colloquium to inform members.

5. Report from the Chief Executive Officer including an update on the Strategy

Catherine reported that a draft Strategy was presented to the Governing Board on March 14th. The Board had broadly liked the direction, but given the many projects over the next couple of years, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) had concurred that no new project could start until the foundations to deliver the new Cochrane were built. The Strategy was agile and it included review points against which assessing the progress of the work. A working group made up of Board members and ELT members would be formed to work with a consultant, as well as a panel made up of external people to Cochrane to provide ideas and views. The results of this work would be presented at the Board meeting in May where comments would be considered. A process of consultation with the Community would follow at which stage the Council would be engaged. Gavin Adams, Development Director, was working on the engagement strategies. Council members commented that it was important to provide them with material and information ahead of the discussions in London to facilitate the discussion.

Product development, fundraising and Emeritus and Lifetime membership had also been discussed at the Board meetings.

Fundraising: Gavin Adams, Development Director, had provided an outline of the work that he had been doing in developing the fundraising strategy, and updated the Board on some of the bids made. He had been working with an external consultant to outline the fundraising strategy which would be presented to the Board at the May meeting. As there had been good funding opportunities, the fundraising committee had agreed the case for support and the terms of reference.

Product development: Catherine explained there were a number of products which offered innovation and the potential to ensure that as Cochrane moved towards open access, some money could be retained behind the paywall. The Board had agreed to proceed with an initial amount of money, and also agreed that an oversight committee would be formed to focus on product development specifically and report to the Board.

Emeritus and lifetime membership : The Board had approved the list of names based on criteria agreed by the Membership and Awards Committee, following a call out for recommendations. The names would be announced under the banner of the 30th Anniversary celebrations.

6. Update on the Governance Review

Lucy provided an update on the Governance Review, following a paper that had set up the background and next steps, which Council members had received before the meeting. With the lead of Roma Grant, former Interim Head of Governance, the Council had done an exercise of imagining what the Council would look like in three years' time; the results of that exercise had been shared, along with other documents, with an external consultant who would work with the organisation to deliver the review. The consultant would come up with a set of recommendations, hopefully in July, which the Board would then review, prioritize and come up with an implementation plan. The purpose of the review was to understand the different groups, governing bodies and committees of the organisation, to understand how each one contributed to the overall governance and to get some clarity around accountabilities, making sure the governance structures supported the Strategy.

7. Council's face-to-face meeting at the Colloquium

Following its meeting in March, the Board had suggested a few topics for the Council's consideration at their face-to-face meeting.

Members discussed and agreed that:

- It would be useful to have people facilitating the discussion;
- Preparation in advance of the meeting (papers, presentations etc..) would be essential to have enough time to consult with the constituencies. The Council should be involved earlier in the decision-making process to allow for it to provide feedback from the Community at an operational level including feedback on the future of evidence synthesis programme.
- The first three topics suggested by the Board would be more in line with the remit of the Council, these being:
 - the upcoming governance review and provide advice on the options for future community engagement in Cochrane
 - the development of the new organisational strategy
 - the implementation of the future of evidence synthesis projects;
- It was important to define the end result which the Board wanted out of the Council's discussion on the suggested topics.
- Clarity around the role of the Council in the future organisational framework should be discussed.
- The meeting in London could be the opportunity for a consultation meeting on how to better collect input from internal stakeholders.
- The Communication paper should be reviewed.
- The result of the Miro board exercise done by the Council should be shared with the Community.
- The use of the Cochrane logo could be included in the agenda as a discussion topic.

8. Any Other Business

Silvia Minozzi reported that she had been informed that the participation to the Colloquium of a member of the Methods' Executive could not be funded centrally. This was disappointing given this person was also one of the organisers of the Methods' symposium. Catherine Spencer expressed empathy with the situation, but she explained that for budget reasons the participation and travel expenses of the Execs to the Colloquium could not be funded centrally. This was not the case for Council members because participations at face-to-face meetings was included in their terms of reference.

ACTION: Catherine to bring the situation reported by Silvia Minozzi to the attention of Karla Soares-Weiser and the Board Co-Chairs at the next Leadership group meeting.

9. Date of next meeting:

9 May 2023 (informal)

COUNCIL ONLY TIME

Catherine Marshall, Catherine Spencer, Lucy Johnson-Brown and Veronica Bonfigli were thanked for their 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 2022:

Meeting and Agenda Item	Action	Status
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.	Paused
4.4 April 2023	Lucy Johnson-Brown to find out the date and logistics of the Council's meeting at the Colloquium to inform members.	
8.4 April 2023	Catherine to bring the situation reported by Silvia Minozzi to the attention of Karla Soares-Weiser and the Board Co-Co-chairs at the next Leadership group meeting.	