



Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting by videoconference

16 May 2022; 09:00-10:30 GMT+1

Approved at the 14th September Council meeting

MEMBERS ATTENDING:

1. Vanessa Jordan (Authors)
2. Stefano Negrini (Fields: **Co-Chair**)
3. Montserrat Conde (Fields)
4. Erik von Elm (Geographic Groups Directors)
5. René Spijker (Information Specialists)
6. Valerie Wells (Information Specialists' representative)
7. Gail Quinn (Managing Editors)
8. Liz Dooley (Managing Editors)
9. Silvia Minozzi (Methods Groups)
10. Cinzia Del Giovane, (Methods Groups)
11. Jack Nunn (Consumers Network)

OTHER ATTENDEES:

12. Judith Brodie, Interim Chief Executive Officer
13. Karla Soares-Weiser, Editor in Chief
14. Chris Champion, Head of Engagement & Learning Support
15. Lucie Binder, Head of Governance
16. Sylvia de Haan, Head of Advocacy, Communications and Partnerships
17. Veronica Bonfigli, Administrative Officer

APOLOGIES:

- Tracey Howe, Governing Board Co-Chair
- Robert Dellavalle (Co-ordinating Editors: **Co-Chair**)
- Jo Morrison (Co-ordinating Editors)
- Catherine Marshall, Governing Board Co-Chair

ABSENT:

- Santiago Castiello de Obeso (Early Career Professionals Network)
- Ahmad Sofi-Mahmudi (Early Career Professionals Network)
- Augustin Ciapponi (Authors)
- Ndi Euphrasia Ebai-atuh (Consumers Network)
- Lotty Hooft (Geographic Groups Directors)

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

Stefano Negrini chaired the meeting. The apologies were noted. He explained that Augustin Ciapponi had resigned from his position as Author representative because of conflicting commitments and a process to elect a new representative was underway. He welcomed Valerie Wells, incoming Information Specialists representative.

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

The Agenda was approved and the reports on the Consent Agenda noted. No other business items were raised.

3. Approval of the minutes from 2 March 2022 meeting

The Minutes of the 2 March 2022 meeting were approved.

4. Council Co-Chair Report

The Chair reported that at the last Governing Board meeting, the transparency of Board papers had been raised as an item. The discussion had been around making sure that Board papers were always made open access unless there was a good reason to keep them restricted to the Board. He reminded members that agenda packs and minutes of all Board meetings could be found on the Board pages on the Community website.

5. Future of evidence synthesis update from the Editor in Chief

Karla Soares-Weiser gave an update on the Future of Evidence Synthesis programme:

- Work was ongoing on the establishment of Thematic Groups, Evidence Synthesis Units, and the scale-up of the Centralised Editorial Service.
- A series of fortnightly webinars were being organised to give Cochrane members a chance to ask questions on the programme.
- The Governing Board was in the process of establishing an Oversight Committee, made up of Board members, Council members, and other advisors, to provide oversight of the programme. More information would follow.
- Five expressions of interest for Thematic Groups had been received to-date.
- The forthcoming Cochrane UK meeting Manchester would be a good chance for Karla to talk to UK-based Cochrane Review Groups about the programme. Any decisions taken at the Manchester meeting would be communicated at the 26 May webinar.
- There had been a drop of 42% in reviews and updates being published to-date in 2022 and this was being monitored closely by the Governing Board, Executive Leadership Team; and Cochrane's publishing partner for the Cochrane Library, Wiley.

Questions asked in response to Karla's update are collated below:

Would there be implications on the publishing contract for the Cochrane Library (with Wiley) because of the drop in Cochrane Reviews being published?

Karla Soares-Weiser responded that her team was working closely with Wiley to understand the reasons behind the drop in content being published. If subscriptions dropped by 30%, Wiley could potentially change the contract. The team was monitoring the situation and working hard to avoid this scenario.

Could more detail be given on the expressions of interest for Thematic Groups?

Four CRGs in Canada, UK and Scotland had put together an expression of interest for a Cardiovascular Thematic Group; they would seek funds to continue working for Cochrane. Groups based in New Zealand and the UK had suggested a Mental Health and Well-being Thematic Group. The Ageing Field had also put forward an expression of interest. The expressions of interest helped Karla and her team identify how the Thematic Groups would interact with each other. Karla's team was working to put together a proper application form for Thematic Groups, so further applications could follow a consistent format.

Are Thematic Groups and Fields essentially the same thing?

Karla clarified that the structure of Fields was not the same as the one that would be outlined for Thematic Groups. The work currently being done by Fields might not be what Cochrane needed going forward; the suggestion was to mix the work of Fields and Review Groups in a brand-new form.

How would the work of Cochrane Review Groups that were already ceasing to function be covered?

The immediate priority would be to ensure that high-priority reviews could still be registered and updated. The Centralised Editorial Service would take over these reviews. Effective communication that showed that Cochrane was still 'open for business' would be essential.

It was brought to Karla's attention that internationally, Cochrane Groups and members were upset with the current change and uncertainty in the organisation, and this discontent could potentially impact on Cochrane's reputation. Karla responded that one-to-one communications with UK and non-UK groups was essential to understand what was in the groups' review production pipelines, what the blockers were, and what kind of support they needed.

Did the Central Editorial Team have capacity to fill in for the workload of all the Managing Editors currently leaving Cochrane?

Karla responded that they were working with the UK Centre to prioritise reviews and the team was keen to work with the Community; a plan was needed, information from groups was key to plan next steps, and capacity for the Centralised Editorial Service staff would be increased.

When would the Centralised Editorial Service be fully launched across the organisation?

Karla clarified that the pilot project would end in June; UK Cochrane Review Groups and five non-UK based groups would scale up from Quarter 3 2022. The plan was to finalise all UK groups by March 2023 and then all groups worldwide would scale up by the end of 2023.

6. Update on the planned governance review

The Governing Board and Judith Brodie, Interim CEO, had asked Lucie Binder, Head of Governance, to review organisational governance structures in light of changes to the organisation's overall structures and functions. The project would unfold in the next few months once the uncertainties and questions, especially around the structures and roles of Thematic Groups and Evidence Synthesis Units, had been clarified. The role of the Council and Executives would form part of the review, but no changes would take place in 2022.

7. Update on the Cochrane Statement of Values

Jack Nunn provided an update on the development of a Cochrane Statement of Values, which was being led by the Consumers Executive. The terms of reference for the work had been drafted, but the Executive was cautious about embarking on the work without proper resources in place. As there were competing priorities in a very busy time, plans had been paused until the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Catherine Spencer, was in post.

Jack added that Iain Chalmers, founder of Cochrane, had provided input and had stressed the importance of collaboration. Judith Brodie added that the work was going to need to be resourced centrally and agreed that it would be a collaborative activity. She suggested a brief of the project work be drafted for the new CEO. Jack added that feedback from Council members was welcome.

ACTION: Jack Nunn to draft a brief of the Cochrane Statement of Values for the new CEO, capturing the work done so far, next steps and budget requirements, for the Council to review at its next meeting.

8. Plans for improving internal communication

Sylvia de Haan explained that following the restructure of the Central Executive Team, responsibility for communications had been moved under a new 'Development Directorate'. The communications team wanted to focus on external communications, particularly on external funders and supporting fundraising.

However, Sylvia recognised the importance of keeping an open communication channel within the Community, too. Her team recognised that there was insufficient internal communications support, particularly around the Future of Evidence Synthesis programme. Therefore a position would be recruited.

A summary of the concerns and questions raised are summarised below:

- Concerns were raised around how Council members liaised with their constituencies; it was suggested that the new member of staff responsible for internal communications could support improvements in this area.
- There was a discussion about how Council members were interacting with the Group Executives and reporting back in the Council forum. The Managing Editor representatives explained that their process included sending an email to all Managing Editors before each Council meeting and reporting back on the questions brought forward. The Information Specialists' representatives explained that they would liaise with the Executive and not directly with the constituents. The Fields' reported that they too would liaise with the Executive directly to avoid too much exchange of information. A suggestion was to reduce the number of issues brought for the Council's attention and to rethink the remit of the Council and its way of interaction with the constituencies.
- Sylvia was alerted that with the weekly communications from the Editor in Chief being stopped and the amount of news received decreasing, it had become difficult to get and advertise information, especially around new reviews being published. It was suggested to make the communications more generalised rather than tailored for selected groups. Sylvia responded that she was aware of the issue. She reassured members that communications would become more regular and detailed. A concern was also raised about Slack not being a useful tool to work for people working on different time zones.
- Board and Council summaries that used to be put together after each face-to-face meeting had stopped being shared. Lucie Binder said she would pick it up again with Sylvia as this was easily implementable, once the open access agenda and papers pack had been published.

9. Constituency reports

Lucie Binder noted that the response rate from Council representative sending reports from their constituencies was not regular, despite previous agreement by the Council that reports should be submitted to every formal meeting. The members said the Executives were not meeting frequently enough to send reports through so regularly. Therefore, it was agreed that they only needed to be sent when there was news to report or items to raise at the Council. Where there was no news to report or items to raise, this should be confirmed by the Council members.

10. Any Other Business

Membership and Awards Committee: Council representatives

Chris Champion put out a final call for Council members who were interested in joining the Membership and Awards Committee. The group was made up of three Board members (Catherine Marshall, Jordi Pardo Pardo and Vanessa Piechotta) and two seats had been reserved for Council members. He reminded members that the aim of the Committee was to make recommendations on Lifetime and Emeritus Membership awards for members. He invited Council members to let him know if they were interested to join by the end of the week.

ACTION: Council members interested in joining the Membership and Awards Committee to contact Chris by the end of the w/c 16th May.

11. Date of next meeting

The next Council meeting (informal, no agenda) would be held on 15 June at 22:45 BST.

12. Closed session (Council members only)

Judith Brodie, Karla Soares-Weiser, Catherine Marshall, Sylvia de Haan, Chris Champion, Lucie Binder 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 2021 and 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.	Standing
8.16 May 2022	ACTION: Jack Nunn to draft a brief of the Cochrane Statement of Values for the new CEO, capturing the work done so far, next steps and budget requirements, for the Council to review at its next meeting.	
10.16 May 2022	Council members interested in joining the Membership and Awards Committee to contact Chris by the end of the w/c 16th May.	To be completed by 20 th May