



Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting by videoconference

14 September 2022; 14:15-16:00 GMT+1

The recording of this meeting can be found in the Council Dropbox folder/2022/14 September meeting

FOR APPROVAL

MEMBERS ATTENDING:

1. Vanessa Jordan (Authors)
2. René Spijker (Information Specialists)
3. Gail Quinn (Managing Editors)
4. Santiago Castiello de Obeso (Early Career Professionals Network)
5. Lotty Hooft (Geographic Groups Directors)
6. Luis Garegnani (Incoming: Geographic Groups Directors)
7. Robert Dellavalle (Co-ordinating Editors: **Co-Chair**)
8. Jo Morrison (Co-ordinating Editors)

OTHER ATTENDEES:

9. Catherine Spencer, Chief Executive Officer
10. Karla Soares-Weiser, Editor in Chief
11. Chris Champion, Head of Engagement & Learning Support
12. Roma Grant, Interim Head of Governance
13. Veronica Bonfigli, Administrative Officer
14. Tracey Howe, Governing Board Co-Chair

APOLOGIES:

- Catherine Marshall, Governing Board Co-Chair
- Stefano Negrini (Fields: Co-Chair)
- Valerie Wells (Information Specialists' representative)
- Liz Dooley (Managing Editors)
- Jack Nunn (Consumers Network)
- Erik von Elm (Geographic Groups Directors)
- Silvia Minozzi (Methods Groups)
- Cinzia Del Giovane, (Methods Groups)

ABSENT:

- Ahmad Sofi-Mahmudi (Early Career Professionals Network)
- Ndi Euphrasia Ebai-atuh (Consumers Network)
- Montserrat Conde (Fields)

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

Robert Dellavalle chaired the meeting. The apologies were noted. There was a round of introductions. Luis Garegnani, new Geogroups representative replacing Lotty Hooft, was welcomed and he introduced himself. Lotty Hooft, present at the meeting, was thanked for her work on the Council.

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

The agenda was approved. No other business items were raised.

3. Approval of the minutes from 16 May 2022 meeting

The minutes of the 16 May 2022 meeting were approved.

4. Council and Board Co-Chairs' meeting Report

Tracey was invited by Bob to present the report. She thanked the Council for its work and input in a moment of change for the organisation. She added that, as Co-Chair she considered that in the short-term the focus should be on better defining its role as an advisory body.

5. Report from Editor in Chief

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

- The team was identifying ways for UK groups' reviews to transition to the Central Editorial Team. A survey had been run among UK groups to identify the number of on-going reviews to be finalised by March 2023, with groups being asked to start the editorial process by January 2023. Team expected between now and the end of the grant ±300 reviews from UK groups.

The process was two-fold; there was work on the pipeline and work to scale up reviews to the central editorial service. A report was being finalised following the end of the pilot.

Challenges encountered:

- there were 3 categories of reviews: those where the editorial process took overall 2 months to be concluded; between 2 and 3.5 months to conclude; and reviews whose editorial process took more than 3.5 months. There were distinct differences in the quality of the review.
- The rejection level in the pilot was between 25-30 per cent and was now higher because of the quality of the reviews.
- Three projects were crucial to support the transition: 1. scaling up the Central Editorial Service:2. providing support to high priority reviews to identify issues much earlier in the process 3. developing a new format for reviews, for which there had been a lot of consultation on.
- During the Barcelona Strategic meeting there would be a full day discussion with the Governing Board about the programme of work.
- Karla recognised that despite the attempts the team needed to do more regarding communications, and were working on creating a tailored website and have someone dedicated to internal communications.
- Editorial Manager (EM) issues- Karla confirmed that the best way to deal with EM issues was to flag everything to support@cochrane.org to make sure the team would document the issues and fix them.
- Eight applications to set-up thematic groups had been received. The five selected ones would be announced in October.

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

What is the plan to solve the EM delays to copy-edit?

Karla replied that the team was aware of the issue and had met face-to-face to discuss it and seek solutions. She would provide an update at the next webinar in October 2022.

What is the plan for moving forward for continued requirement for clinical expertise at editorial level once the CRGs are dissolved, especially for areas that are not supported by thematic groups?

Karla responded that most CRGs were applying to become thematic groups and a conscious decision was made that CRGs with financial support would not be dissolved at present, although their reviews would be also submitted to the Central Editorial Service from the end of 2023.

Clinical support – what are the clinical priorities, and do they make clinical sense? What's the plan moving forward without Co-Eds?

Karla explained that this was discussed by the Editorial Board which had put forward the idea of the creation of a pool of associate editors. After the pilot, a few challenges had been identified and Karla's team was putting together a plan to tackle these.

Desk rejections process: would there be a chance to re-submit after rejection?

Karla explained that in the pilot there had been five round of major revisions for some reviews, which had delayed the process making it unsustainable and expensive. The team was looking at ways to change this and the editorial board was keen to implement a desk rejections process. A review would be rejected earlier based on red flags in terms of methodology and approach. It could potentially be resubmitted as a new protocol.

Oversight Committee and Assessment panel for applications for thematic groups

Karla clarified that the Assessment Panel for the applications of the thematic groups was a different entity to the Oversight Committee which was composed by representatives from the Board and Council and had only met once. Both groups were independent bodies.

Comment from Martin Burton: How does the Council plan to support the CEO and EiC in implementing the future changes?

Council voiced concern about this comment, as members were unclear about what the Council would be supporting in the future. Members did not feel they had enough information or were aware of all the changes and plans moving forward.

DECISION POINT: Council agreed to address Martin Burton's comment in a future discussion.

6. Proposal for Council roadmap

Given Cochrane's present state of change, Roma suggested that the Council might anticipate how it would react to various scenarios and describe how it would look in the future. She put forward three questions for Council members to focus on in future discussions and to frame its future workplan:

- How to represent the Community more effectively in a period of flux?
- How to transition effectively from being a Council representing CRGs to a Council representing different groups?
- What does accountability look like for the Council in the future? How would it get information and how to communicate effectively with the community, the Board and ELT?

She suggested the establishment of a Council working group in the first quarter of 2023 to focus on these questions and to develop a Council roadmap for when the changes would be implemented.

Members voiced their struggle to identify how to be more effective, when not being clear on how the Council would function especially in a long-term context where the organisation would not be the same. Members considered that their role was, in fact, unclear, and that to develop a roadmap they needed someone (the CEO, the CET, the EiC, the Board) to describe the future landscape of the organisation to enable the Council to input on it.

Members expressed concern about attendance at Council meetings and they agreed that this should be improved by reviewing the timings for the 2023 Council meetings' schedule. A suggestion was made for facilitated meetings outside the Council meeting schedule to focus on specific issues, especially the quorum, the constituents and remit.

Tracey responded that the Council had been originally conceived as a mirror of what used to be the former Steering Group, representing different groups of the Community. Focus on a new purpose was the key element to make the Council more effective. Catherine suggested utilising the expertise of Council members for specific topics only; the Council would then meet with ad-hoc meeting agendas rather than monthly.

7. Update on the Cochrane Statement of Values

Catherine reported that, as there were competing priorities and lack of resource, plans to work on a Cochrane Statement of Values had been paused until the work on the strategy was concluded. She also wanted to see a wider participation in the making of these values. Tracey added that these would form an integral part of the Board decision-making framework.

DECISION POINT: The work of the Statement of Values is deferred until the work of the Cochrane strategy is completed.

8. Plans for improving internal communication

-30th Anniversary Awards

Catherine welcomed suggestions and feedback on categories for the 30th Anniversary awards. She clarified these would be non-monetary. Tracey added that the Council and Board Co-Chairs had discussed a People's Award and the possibility of asking the stakeholders to suggest some areas for the awards. She invited members to ask their constituencies for ideas and send feedback to Roma or to support@cochrane.org

-Plans for improving internal communications

Catherine updated members that the recruitment for a Head of Director of Communications had been disappointing as the role was difficult to recruit and the market was very fast. She was now working with an external advisor to put together a communication plan to describe the changes in Cochrane. This work would be finalised after the strategic meetings in Barcelona.

-Opportunities to be featured in Cochrane social media

Catherine had circulated an email about being featured in My Cochrane Story. This would be a chance for everyone to tell the story of how they got involved with the organisation.

9. Update on Open Access

Karla provided an update on behalf of Charlotte Pestrige. The team was looking at ways to implement open access which would be discussed by the Governing Board. The team was also putting together a product development strategy for the Cochrane Library to identify new resource income, working closely with Wiley. Charlotte would be invited to a future Council meeting to provide an update, in the meantime, Council members were invited to send their suggestions.

10. Cochrane meetings 2022/23

-Board Strategic Meeting, Barcelona – October

-AGM – October

-Colloquium 2023

-30th Anniversary celebrations

Chris Champion informed members that in the next few weeks the dates of the Colloquium would be publicised. Roma informed members that the Annual General Meeting taking place in Barcelona on 17 October would be in a hybrid form (both in person and online).

Members requested to view the attendance rate at the Council 2022 meetings to discuss the 2023 schedule of meetings.

ACTION: Veronica to put together the attendance sheet showing attendance at 2022 Council meetings.

11. Date of next meeting

The next Council meeting (informal, no agenda) would be held on 5th October 07:45-09:30 UK.

12. Closed session (Council members only)

Catherine Spencer, Karla Soares-Weiser, Tracey Howe, Chris Champion, Roma Grant 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-Chair who chaired the meeting.

---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
5.14 September 2022	Council agreed to address Martin Burton's comment in a future discussion.	
7.14 September 2022	DECISION POINT: The work of the Statement of Values is deferred until the work of the Cochrane strategy is completed.	
9.14 September 2022	Veronica to put together the attendance sheet showing attendance at 2022 Council meetings.	Completed