

Royal Statistical Society

Minutes of the 189th Annual General Meeting held on
Wednesday September 6th 2023, 1:00 pm-1.30 pm
RSS International Conference
Harrogate Convention Centre, Kings Road, Harrogate, HG1 5LA

Present: Andrew Garrett (RSS President, in the Chair), Officers, Fellows of the Society and guests.

In attendance: Sarah Cumbers, Chief Executive; Nicola Emmerson, Director of Membership and Professional Affairs; Jo Fishwell, Governance Manager

Attending Remotely: Kevin Barnes, Honorary Treasurer

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The President, Andrew Garrett, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that resolutions would only be passed by this meeting where the majority of attendees voted in favour of them. The voting process was explained, and attendees were reminded that only members of the Society were eligible to vote.

2. MINUTES OF LAST YEAR'S MEETING

The President asked members to review last year's AGM minutes, held on Wednesday, September 14th, 2022, at the RSS Conference in Aberdeen.

RESOLUTION: The 188th Annual General Meeting minutes were approved as an accurate account of the meeting.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE SOCIETY'S WORK

The President welcomed Sarah Cumbers as the new Chief Executive and, on behalf of the Membership, thanked Nicola Emmerson for the work she had done in her time as interim CEO. Andrew was also pleased to announce to the Membership the election of Sir John Aston as the Society's 2025-2027 President, confirming that John will take up his role as President-elect for one year from January 1st, 2024, and then the position of President from January 1st, 2025.

Andrew then delivered a summary of a busy year for the Society, including the strategic review, which is currently undergoing stakeholder engagement and plans for the building following an unsuccessful grant bid to refurbish Errol Street.

The Society's Policy team has worked on several projects this year, including the RSS's response to module one of the Covid-19 inquiry, the Government's AI white paper, the PCAC UK evidence Base inquiry and the Department of Education's 'Maths to 18' proposal.

The Society has continued its work on Data Science by launching the Real-World Data Science platform in March and the Data Science Accreditation, which is underway.

This year, the Society has also focused on strengthening its voice in the Climate Change debate and has convened the Climate Change Task Force to help guide the Society's work in this area. To link in with the work on Climate Change, the Society also relaunched the Guy Lecturers with Climate Change as the theme.

Andrew has also overseen new search committees to assist the Honours process, which Fellows felt required improvements to ensure that the awards were accessible and representative of the RSS's diverse Membership.

Andrew thanked Jon Forster, VP for Academic Affairs, for his work on the Council of Mathematical Sciences Maths Academy this year. He congratulated the team at the RSS on the successful publication of the 100th Edition of Significance.

Andrew thanked all Society members for contributing to the RSS this past year.

In closing of this item, Andrew noted the Fellows who had sadly passed away this year, including Professor Tim Holt, a past president of the Society.

4. 2022 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The President welcomed Kevin Barnes, RSS Honorary Treasurer, to the meeting, who presented the Society's 2022 financial year-end accounts:

- Income in 2022 was £3,108k, an increase of £873k on the previous year. The increase came from three primary sources:
 - A restricted grant from the FTX Future Fund for 'good enough statistics'. This will be spent over several years and is restricted for that purpose.
 - Publication income as part of the transition from Wiley to Oxford University Press. 2022 was the final year with Wiley, which is better funded, and OUP provided one-off transitional funding in 2022 to adjust to a lower income level in future years.
 - Commercial training income increased as the training programme returned to its pre-pandemic schedule.

Kevin noted that with the increased income, Society can deliver more, meaning that over £250K more work was delivered in 2022 than in the previous year. This includes work on 'Developing the Profession' and 'engaging the membership'.

The result is a net income of nearly £600K in 2022, of which £100K is restricted income. Kevin advised the meeting that he is not expecting the level of surplus to continue due to the reduction in publication income from 2023, delivering more on charitable purposes and rising costs, especially salaries. 2023 has a deficit budget as the Society transitions to the reduced level of journal income.

Kevin also advised that the reserves have increased during the year; this is due to the operational surplus and an accounting improvement in the pension scheme valuation, which is temporary and highly volatile.

In finishing, Kevin informed the meeting that when considering the approval of the accounts, the Council took assurance from the rigour of the external audit by Sayer Vincent, including their review of the Society's going concern status and the diligent work of the Audit & Risk Committee and finance team during the year.

Fellows discussed the 2022 accounts and questioned how much Significance Magazine costs the Society. Kevin confirmed that the publication cost £22K in the 2022 financial year.

RESOLUTION: The AGM approved the Annual report and audited accounts for 2022 as an accurate and fair report on the normal financial activities of the Society in the year ending December 31st, 2022.

Due to time constraints, the meeting moved to item 6 before Kevin left the meeting.

5. MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Sarah gave an update to the AGM on the Council's decision to increase member subscriptions by 5.5% from January 1st, 2024, noting that the Council were mindful of the cost of living for members and the organisation; therefore, the agreed increase remains lower than inflation, and the Society will continue to provide the same level of service. Furthermore, the Society will continue the subsidised rates to ensure accessibility.

6. ELECTION OF THE AUDITOR

The Honorary Treasurer advised that Sayer Vincent has been the Society's auditors for several years and noted the high-quality, professional service that the Society has received from Sayer Vincent.

RESOLUTION: Members agreed to appoint Sayer Vincent of Invicta House, 108-114 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0TL, as the Society's auditors to hold the office until the next Annual General Meeting concludes.

Andrew then opened the meeting to questions and discussion.

Members queried the reasons for specific professional membership levels reducing, including GradStat. The Society witnesses a slight decline in professional qualification memberships, specifically when new and exciting memberships are introduced into the Society's portfolio. The Society continues to promote and inform members of their options. Andrew also noted the record membership increase and congratulated and thanked the Membership.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members discussed the benefits of aligning CPD with other professional qualifications to avoid duplication.

Members discussed what the Society could do to promote itself to students before they graduate and were pleased to hear the work already in place, such as online lunchtime seminars, liaising with Fellows who are lecturers at universities and including a requirement for organisations to promote the RSS as part of their accreditation.

Members advised they would like the RSS to work with the BBC programme More or Less as much as possible. Members were pleased to hear about the work already done with the programme and were encouraged to continue submitting proposals for the programme.

The Members discussed the role of Honorary Fellows and the benefits the roles bring to the Society. Andrew noted that this was an area of work the Society focuses on, alongside the review of the awards and honours.

Andrew closed the meeting, thanking members for their contributions to the discussion and continued support of the Society.

Prepared by: Jo Fishwell, Governance Manager

Signature of RSS President:

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