

## **Minutes of the 191<sup>st</sup> Royal Statistical Society Annual General Meeting**

Held Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025 12:50 – 13:40 at the RSS International Conference:  
Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC). 150 Morrison St, Edinburgh, EH3 8EE

<b>Present:</b>	Professor Sir John Aston Kevin Barnes	RSS President and Meeting Chair Honorary Treasurer
	Fellows of the Society, including Honorary Officers and Trustees Guests of the RSS International Conference	
<b>In attendance:</b>	Sarah Cumbers Holly O'Brien	CEO Governance Manager, scribe

### **1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

RSS President and Meeting Chair Professor Sir John Aston began the 191<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society, welcoming all present and introducing himself to attendees.

John reminded the room that, although all were welcome to attend the AGM, only fellows and members of the RSS were eligible to vote. He invited attendees to refer to the agendas provided and gave an overview of what was to be expected at this year's meeting.

### **2. MINUTES OF THE 2024 AGM**

John invited attendees to approve the minutes of the AGM held at the 2024 conference in Brighton via a show of hands, noting that these were available via the RSS website and conference app.

### **RESOLUTION:**

- a) The membership in attendance approved the minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting.

### 3. SUMMARY OF RSS ACTIVITIES

John invited Sarah Cumbers, CEO, to speak and provide attendees with an overview of Society activities since the last AGM.

Sarah thanked attendees for coming to the meeting and noted how great an opportunity the conference was to meet members of the RSS in person. She outlined the Society's recent activities in accordance with the 2025 priorities agreed by the Council:

1. Creating a sustainable office
2. Energising the membership
3. Building on what we do well

Sarah noted the following activities that had so far contributed to these priorities:

#### *Creating a sustainable office*

- The completion of the sale of 12 Errol Street in January; Sarah shared that the exploration of suitable properties for the Society continued
- Income generation plans were beginning to bear fruit, with the addition of a new Head of Partnerships and Commercial Director resulting in new relationships and conference sponsorship and the evolution of a new commercial strategy. Sarah also noted the incredible expansion of the conference, with Edinburgh setting new records for the Society, along with plans for accreditation
- Sarah referred to the ongoing review of RSS governance, noting Council's approval of the initiation plan and scope in March and June respectively.

#### *Energising the membership*

- The Society's value proposition project focuses on improving data around RSS members, satisfaction, the RSS brand and on the market, and will allow for deeper understanding of the membership. Work done included member journey mapping and the gathering of qualitative data from interviews – meanwhile, a new member survey is planned for the future
- Volunteer engagement; Sarah noted that the RSS continued to make funding applications for Statisticians for Society (S4S) and that sponsorship was being explored. She also shared that the team were considering how all RSS volunteers need to be supported in future
- Sarah shared that the AI Task Force is bringing together members active across relevant sections, professional affairs and content, planning and coordinating the Society's work for impact and amplifying the voice of AI practitioners. The task force had also been working across the priority areas of:
  - Policy
  - Ethics
  - Evaluation, and
  - Supporting practitioners

### *Building on what we do well*

This priority was broken into four parts in alignment with the RSS strategic goals: a strong and diverse profession, facilitating innovation and growth, championing the public interest, and supporting public understanding and engagement.

- Strong and diverse profession: Sarah noted the work of the Society's work around EDI, including:
  - EPSRC-funded research project on barriers to diversity in research grant funding
  - The RSS member data project (funded by AcSS / ESRC)
  - The continuation of the Future Leaders programme, with one participant running for Council

She also shared progress on the Society's Chartered Data Scientist certification and Data Science accreditation scheme, as well as involvement with the Academy of Mathematical Sciences.

- Facilitating innovation and growth: Sarah noted Society work on ensuring innovation and growth, sharing that members of the Executive Committee and Campaigns Advisory Group and EDI Advisory Group had met over the summer as part of a new horizon scanning initiative. Expansion of the RSS conference in response to feedback was recognised along with developments with the Society's journals and publications, including:
  - The launch of the new Data Science and AI Journal
  - The relaunch of Real World Data Science, championed by the Society's new Head of Content
  - The development of a new content strategy
- Championing the public interest: Sarah reminded attendees that, since the 2024 AGM, the RSS had designed and delivered the first statistical assembly in partnership with UKSA, contributed to the Devereux and PACAC reviews, and is currently engaging with appointments in and future governance of the statistical system, user engagement mechanisms and through methodology roundtables. In particular Sarah noted the success of RSS work on:
  - Public statistics
  - Household Cost Indices (HCIs)
  - Statistics Under Pressure
  - COVID-19 Enquiry testing and economic impact modules
- Supporting public understanding and engagement: the RSS has continued its work to ensure wider society has an increased understanding of the data and statistics that influence their life and decisions:
  - The Climate Change Task Force continues its efforts, producing explainers
  - The 'Stats Ambassadors' programme has welcomed a new cohort
  - The RSS has responded to the House of Commons Education Committees' inquiry into Further Education and Skills
  - The Society has submitted evidence to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology briefing about the STEM skills pipeline
  - The RSS has fed into reviews of the education system

- The Statistics and the Law section continue to work to improve the use of statistics in the legal ecosystem.

#### 4. TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

John invited Honorary Treasurer Kevin Barnes to provide an overview of the 2024 Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements – Kevin noted that this was his second time doing so in-person and hoped to make it the norm.

##### *Unrestricted income:*

Kevin explained that RSS income comes from five main sources, and that he would be focussing on unrestricted income received:

1. Membership fees and accreditation was the largest source of income; these came to £913,000 in 2024, a 5.8% increase since 2023. This included an inflationary increase of 5.5% for Standard Fellows but also represented growth in overall membership (with 3.2% more members in 2024 than in 2023). In addition to the over 7,000 paying members, there are nearly 6,000 e-students and teachers benefiting from the Society's publications and services – total membership in 2024 came to 12,973
2. The publication of *Significance* and RSS Journals was the second largest income source. Though the new publishing contract generates less income for the Society, it generated £594,000 – just over a quarter of all income (a reduction from the previous third). Kevin noted that he is hopeful that the new Data Science and AI Journal will increase both influence and income
3. Income for conference and events (including the 2024 conference) was £324,000 – an increase of 27% compared to 2023 figures. The 2025 conference was the largest so far in both attendance and revenue
4. Commercial training suffered a small decrease, generating £260,000
5. Grants and sponsorship were the final source of income for the Society; £124,000 was generated in 2024, a significant increase from the £26,000 in 2023. Kevin shared that the RSS was awarded with a £122,000 contract from UKRI in 2024 for a project investigating potential bias in the EPSRC peer review process (the final report was published in March 2025).

Kevin noted that these five sources accounted for 98% of unrestricted income and 97% of restricted and unrestricted income.

- Total unrestricted income was £2,298k in 2024, an increase of £258k; the largest increase was seen from grants and sponsorships.

##### *Unrestricted expenditure:*

The RSS spent £2,794,000 in 2024 – it spent nearly £500,000 more than it received on supporting the membership and promoting statistics. Kevin shared that, unsurprisingly, the largest area of expenditure was on staff and direct service costs.

Kevin noted that the excess of expenditure over income has to be funded. In 2024, £195,000 was from an increase in the value of investments, and the remaining £300,00 was from reserves. Kevin highlighted that, although this is acceptable in the year, it cannot occur repeatedly as reserves will ultimately diminish.

- Unrestricted reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 were £3,356k, a reduction of £300k from 2023.

Kevin shared that the long-term strategy launched in March 2024 aimed to stabilise income and expenditure and to deliver a balanced budget with investment in several areas: training income, improving the RSS' offering to members and legacy fundraising.

He also noted the search for a new headquarters and the funding of the pension scheme, hoping that he would be able to update the membership on both of these in 2026.

Kevin shared that, when considering the approval of RSS accounts, Council had been assured by the rigorous external audit undertaken by Sayer Vincent (the Society's auditor) - including their review of the Society's status as a going concern – and by the diligent work of the RSS Audit and Risk Committee and internal Finance Team.

### **RESOLUTION:**

- a) The membership approved of the financial statements presented for the year-end 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 as a true and fair report of normal financial activities.

John thanked both Sarah and Kevin for their hard work, highlighting that there were a huge number of things happening at the Society and noting that he was very proud of both this work and to be able to say that he was President.

John also took the opportunity to thank the internal Finance Team in particular for the care taken to ensure RSS accounts are in the best possible shape to allow for an understanding of the Society's position.

## **5. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS UPDATE**

John invited attendees to refer to information provided on annual subscriptions for the next year, noting that rates for fellows and professional recognition will increase by 3.4% and sharing the following figures with them:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Fee from 2026 (£)</b>	<b>Current fee 2025 (£)</b>
Fellow / Data Analyst	165	160
GradStat	181 (inc. £16 add-on fee)	175 (inc. £15 add-on fee)

CStat

217 (inc. £52 add-on fee) 210 (inc. £50 add-on fee)

John informed attendees that this was in alignment with the financial statements presented by Kevin and the need for the Society to remain sustainable, and that it had been applied with an aim of keeping increases as minimal as possible.

## 6. AUDITOR APPOINTMENT

John agreed that the audit conducted by Sayer Vincent was extremely comprehensive, noting that they were an engaged auditor and that they ensured trustees were assured in their approval of Society accounts.

### **RESOLUTION**

- a) The members approved of and reappointed Sayer Vincent of Invicta House 108-114 Golden Lane London, EC1Y 0TL as the Society's auditors, to hold office until the conclusion of the next AGM.

## 7. GOVERNANCE REVIEW

John was keen to spend time explaining to attendees why the Society was undertaking this review, and why member engagement and involvement was so important to its success.

He noted input from within the Society and also expressed his gratitude to the Foundation for Science and Technology for their expertise. However, he noted that it was for RSS members to choose how the Society is governed.

*Why?*

John noted that rules around charities are becoming more complex, and that it is crucial that the RSS remains in line with these – meanwhile, trustees must ensure that they are fulfilling their obligations. John also highlighted that regular reviews of governance were good practice.

John reminded attendees that RSS governance is enshrined in its Bylaws, which are then underpinned by its Regulations, and noted that many changes had taken place since these documents were first introduced.

Attendees were informed of the proposed timeline for the review; John particularly drew attention to the webinar planned for 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025, which would allow members the opportunity to ask questions and contribute. He also reminded attendees that they would receive updates via email and member newsletters at key stages.

*Timeline:*

- March 2025 – Council approve initiation
- June 2025 – Council approve detailed scope
- September 2025 – RSS AGM and member engagement webinar

- November 2025 – Working group presentation to Council, discussion of foundational issues and solutions
- March 2026 – Council consider final recommendations on foundational issues
- April 2026 or later, as required – RSS general meeting and membership vote, seek Privy Council permission to make the changes.

John highlighted that all options would be considered, and the resulting changes could range from very minor to significant. He was keen to express that while the good things should be maintained, there were things that could be changed to strengthen Society governance.

## **8. HELP THE RSS BUILD A BETTER FUTURE**

John noted that the RSS' financial footing meant that the Society was in a position in which it must consider all sources of income – as well as this, there were many members who wanted to know how the RSS was thinking about its long-term future, and what can be done to help.

For some members, John shared, helping the RSS has meant thinking very long term – a personal choice regarding the legacy they could potentially leave to the Society. One of these members was Past-President Denise Leivesley, who had taken the time to work with internal staff to film a video for the membership.

John expressed his gratitude to Denise for her work on the video and for her thoughts on leaving a legacy to the RSS. He reminded attendees that, as the RSS is a registered charity, its future work and charitable aims can be supported by gifts in wills. He shared that occasional, unsolicited gifts are very gratefully received, and that more members had been interested in ways they could help.

John recommended that attendees interested in leaving a gift should speak to either Stella Macaskill, Director for Professional Services, or Ricky McGowan, Head of Standards and Corporate Relations, for further information.

## **9. CLOSE OF MEETING**

John invited attendees to raise any other business or questions at this point in the meeting.

Attendees were interested to hear more on the role of sections and local groups in the work of the Society. Sarah noted that these continued to be of crucial importance, raising the work of Member Support Manager Amirah Chaudry on supporting sections and groups and maximising their impact.

The work of the Young Statisticians Section was also raised, along with the importance of engaging with them as the next generation of the discipline. John agreed that it was fantastic to see so many career-young members and noted that he had benefitted throughout his career from the work of local groups. He took the time to thank those who volunteer from within the Society for their time and effort, noting that the RSS would not be able to reach such achievements without them.

Attendees offered their congratulations regarding the uptick in membership; John felt that this increase was largely due to what people feel the RSS can offer them, including interaction with other members.

John closed the meeting, thanking all for their attendance and reminding them that the 2025 Council Election was officially open for voting. He also encouraged them to please attend the governance review webinar later in the month.