
Council Courier

30.09.2020

This is an informal account of the discussions and decisions most recently taken at Council. Action notes and official minutes will be produced in due course.

Introduction

The President welcomed newly-elected members to Council and congratulated Simon Allford on becoming President Elect. He drew Council's attention to his RIBA Journal Column published in January 2020 which described his call at the October 2019 Council meeting for the profession to 'Take the high road' to greater competency, value and impact and the corresponding unanimous vote of agreement from Council.

The President articulated the wider context of this meeting – the impact of Covid-19 on reduced profitability of practices and the laying off of staff. The challenges this posed to the members, their practices, the profession and the institute would no doubt be touched on later in the agenda.

Obituary

Council resolved to send condolences to next of kin. The obituary of Cyril Winskell was noted.

Declarations of interest

There were no new declarations.

Royal Gold Medal 2021

Sir David Adjaye OBE was confirmed as the recipient of the 2021 Royal Gold Medal.

Minutes of previous meeting, 18 August 2020

Agreed as a correct record subject to a minor correction

Matters arising from the minutes

The Board Vacancies Working Group had been set up and work was now under way to appoint a new RIBA Board chair.

A number of other Council working groups were being set up, covering the Standards Committee Review, Strategy and Protection of Function. Council members were invited to put themselves forward.

A report on the 2020 election process would come to Council in the first quarter of 2021.

President's report

Highlights:

Local Members Forum

President's Fact-Finding Mission meetings

Five Presidents' meeting

RIAS Council and

Regional council meetings for North East, North West, South and South East, East, East Midlands, South West and Wessex.

The ministers Christopher Pincher and Robert Jenrick had engaged with the RIBA on planning and housing policy – by meeting the President – who took the opportunity to raise other matters - procurement; that England, unlike many European countries, did not have an architecture policy; that every government-funded or partially-funded project should have a design champion – and the need to raise the funding

levels of educating future architects to the same level as engineering.

The RIBA had meanwhile been responding to various government consultations on regulation, procurement and competence.

Appointments

After receiving presentations and conducting a vote, the following were appointed by Council:

Honorary Secretary: Graham Devine
Honorary Treasurer: Simone de Gale

The terms of main committees were extended to 31 December 2020, pending completion of the committee review currently being undertaken.

Board report

The Board had agreed that a series of chairs from among the Board members would chair it on a rotational basis for the next few months. The report was therefore given by Marjorie Strachan, who was chairing the Board during September.

The Board-Council Relationship Working Group proposed in July had now met and would be considering how the two entities would work together; the aim was to also give Council a better understanding of important issues and how they were being addressed by the Board. As part of this, lines of communication could be established to enable Council and Council members to raise matters with the Board.

There were 25 key items to progress, including the organisation design review. The Board had agreed a financial plan

at its most recent meeting to reduce the underlying deficit.

The RIBA was currently being advised on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy by a specialist consultant who would present later on the agenda.

Chief Executive's Report

Main items:

- Covid-19
- Awards
- Membership

A brief recap of the sale of equity in RIBA Enterprises and the formation of a new company was given for the benefit of new members.

The organisation would be moving away from office-based working in the future, as part of the general trend. About 80% of the RIBA's activities were now being delivered via home working. After a successful transition over half of RIBA staff wanted much greater flexibility in their future working arrangements. This would have the additional benefit longer term of reducing the RIBA's property footprint.

Finance update

Council received an update on RIBA Finances.

The RIBA had majored on CPD during the lockdown, to aid members and to drive income. Various staff teams were working to see how they could deliver more events remotely.

Membership report

Year-end had been delayed by four months to assist members experiencing difficulty in paying their subscriptions. Almost 5,000 calls had been made to

members in a drive to retain them. The extension period had been welcomed.

Highlights of member services:

- a. Launch of the RIBA Academy and 'online CPD', exclusive to Members for the first 3 months, with a growing volume of 'free-to-Member' content
- b. The RIBA Covid-19 hub provides a suite of resources. The content is wide ranging and regularly updated, with plans tailored to respond to member feedback.
- c. Publication of the member-exclusive 'Recovery Roadmap' – an online digest of resources that have been developed in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on architects.
- d. 'Paywall first - a planned piece of work was fast-tracked to ensure all key member facing, technical and support content on Architecture.com is locked down to Members only
- e. Content that serves the public good and the Institute's charitable aims to remain open to all.
- f. Find an Architect: Nearly 7,000 clients have used the service in the last year, for projects worth a combined total of £2.83bn, resulting in 50% of RIBA Chartered Practices being matched to at least one client.
- g. Launch of the 'Why work with an architect?' client campaign.
- h. Permanent presence on the Find a Professional section of the Planning Portal (as of 1 June) and advertorial in the Sunday Telegraph over the summer.
- i. Development of a suite of digital Practice Tools, including fee calculator and management applications; new and updated digital contracts continues.

Membership subscriptions 2021

Council agreed to a reduction of 8% in the membership rate for 2021.

There was a discussion around member hardship, the looming recession and

how the RIBA should support its members as much as possible. The RIBA was moving towards a value-based offer and more work needed to be done to enhance services. Some Council members did not consider that a reduction in the subscription fee would be a significant help, and it had posed financial planning problems to the RSUA and RIAS which had joint membership arrangements with the RIBA. Chief Executive Alan Vallance agreed to work with these nations on this matter.

The scope of the next membership review was to be discussed by the RIBA Board in October which would be chaired by VP Membership Valeria Passetti. She and the membership team were praised for their efforts in supporting members during a difficult time.

Professional Standards report

Council noted the report.

There was a discussion about the importance of business skills in the profession, both pre- and post-qualification. An improvement in this whole area was likely to reduce the number of complaints. CPD could help. Jo Bacon invited anyone wishing to share their expertise via a series of free online talks for members to come forward. Jack Pringle recommended a RIBA certified course on fire safety which, if recognised by insurers, could help to reduce PI fees for members.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update:

Antoinette Boateng, EDI consultant to the RIBA, made a presentation on the RIBA's EDI programme. After the RIBA Inclusion By Design Festival, a busy week of events aimed at staff, members and the wider built environment, Antoinette was working with the RIBA to

develop an ambitious programme of work planned for 2021. This was intended to permeate all RIBA activity.

Work was under way to create a RIBA 'inclusion charter', which could be rolled out to include different groups over time.

Next steps would involve the launch of the charter, the sharing of the RIBA transparency report and action plan, and the appointment of a new EDI director to the RIBA by December who would take forward this work.

Antoinette was congratulated on her presentation.

Discussion: What is the RIBA for?

To start the discussion, the President had assembled various answers to the question recently provided by past presidents.

As a former president himself, Jack Pringle highlighted the importance of a strong profession creating strong architecture – the two aspects of the RIBA charter were symbiotic and quite clear. The RIBA was a learned organisation which empowered its members. Others voiced support for the basic aim expressed in the charter.

Other points:

- Who should be ensuring the competency of architects?
- A distinction was drawn between the RIBA and the ARB. RIBA was concerned with the practice of architecture, whereas the ARB was about single architects.
- What was an architect – one who was ARB registered, or a RIBA chartered member?

- Developing professionalism would be very important in the future economy of Asia and RIBA was the platform to do that.
- The profession had much to contribute in the current crisis. RIBA could become a beacon both for members of the public and architects.
- The RIBA had to be agile internationally to make itself relevant in territories where local institutes already operated. It should position itself as an 'upper chamber'.

Any other business

The President apologised for the meeting running over and made a request that the items to be raised under AOB by Roger Shrimplin and Valeria Passetti were submitted in writing to the Council Secretary – for progression before the next Council meeting.

Council members were invited to propose topics for debate at the next Council meeting on 9 December and onwards.

There was a strong desire by Council members to feed back into the organisation as well as to receive information about what it and the Board was doing.