

Draft Minutes from National Council meeting 6th September 2022

Present:

George Kempton, Chris Kitchin

Michael Bennett, Jenny King, Ros Lobo, Pat Oliver, Lorraine Taylor, Barbara Ham, Sue Williams, Kath Gibson, Loreen Smith, Judith McMurray

In attendance:

John Rostill

Debbie Arnold

Apologies : Suzanne Taylor, Sharon Slack,

Action

1635	The Chair, George Kempton welcomed everyone to the meeting and accepted apologies from Sharon Slack and Suzanne Taylor.	
1636	<p><u>Notes of National Council meeting held on 26th April 2022</u> The notes were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. The Chair thanked Debbie Arnold for her diligent preparation of the minutes of the meetings</p>	
1637	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jenny King asked for an update on the report regarding bank charges, which was promised at the National Council Meeting in April. The Chief Executive apologised and confirmed a note would be sent out once Walsall have resolved some issues relating to their move to the Co-op Bank (this bank was recommended to the Fellowship by some other charitable organisations but there is currently a backlog in processing applications) Bereavement Commission launch – the Chief Executive has contacted the Bishop of London and he will receive an invite to the launch on 12th September 2022 [This event was postponed] Jenny King asked about the standardised form for the Development Officer report. The Chief Executive confirmed that Lucia Hiden took responsibility for the production of this report. Templates were agreed by the Development Officers who completed them using information from Regional Representatives and branches. Some Regional Representatives reported difficulties in completing the new format It was recognised that only salient points could be included in the final report. Comments from National Council will be passed to Lucia 	CE
1638	<p><u>Report from Development Officers</u></p> <p>The Chair thanked Lucia for the reformatted Development Officer report and commented that it was clear and easy to read and also that the content was, in the main, encouraging. Sue Williams asked that 'West' was removed from the Regional Representatives table to show her as Regional Representatives for Midlands Ros Lobo commented that the South West Thames branches were omitted from the original version. The Chief Executive apologised and added that Debbie Arnold had corrected this and issued a revised version Lorraine Taylor apologised for not submitting any information – this was due to her increased workload covering South East Thames as well as North West Thames. The Chair thanked Lorraine for taking on the additional workload</p>	DA/LH
1639	<p><u>Chief Executive's Report</u></p> <p><u>Ballot</u> The Ballot papers were sent out in mid August and a small number have been completed and returned to Central Office. Minor changes to clauses 2,14 and 20 of the Constitution needed Charity Commission approval and this has now been received</p>	

P60 campaign

Membership now stands at 8894 and around 50 new members are continuing to join each week via Central Office. The Fellowship, however, continues to lose members and without the campaign, membership is likely to have declined to around 6000 by this stage. Membership in 2015 was 13992 and by March 2022 this had reduced to 6574. The period between March 31 2021 and March 31 2022 saw a decline of 843 members.

Postal membership has grown significantly as a result of the campaign. The majority of these members have expressed a clear preference to join as a postal member as they did not want branch membership. Michael Bennett enquired if postal members were made aware of branches in their localities. The Chief Executive replied that he will write to all postal members and remind them that branch membership is always an option if they are interested. Michael Bennett suggested referring to the website branch finder in this letter. The Chief Executive emphasised that whilst communication with these members is important, but the Fellowship should be careful to avoid pestering them. An attempt was made to hold a Zoom meeting with some newly recruited postal members to identify their specific membership expectations, but unfortunately, possibly due to the proposed date being mid-summer, the meeting was not well attended and another date in the autumn will be arranged.

The Chief Executive canvassed views of postal members who attended the roadshows earlier in the year and found that in general, they were happy with this type of membership and were not interested in joining a branch. The three main reasons postal members join are to take advantage of travel insurance, associate membership of the Civil Service Club, and access to the Blue Light Card.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to Central Office for their work in taking calls, providing information signing up and processing new members and passing on details of potential members to branches.

AGM and Conference 22nd/23rd October 2022

Regional Representatives were asked to continue to encourage members to attend the AGM. Bookings are increasing slowly with concerns regarding train strikes and the cost of living crisis affecting bookings. It is anticipated that final attendance numbers will be in the region of 160-200. The visit to the Arboretum on Monday 24th October is proving popular.

Loreen Smith and Judith McMurray expressed concern that their final payment was now due but the timetables for trains from Scotland were not yet confirmed. The Chief Executive agreed to discuss this with Geoff Holt from IOW Tours to ask for some leeway to enable firm arrangements to be made before payment is required.

Financial position

The Chief Executive provided some background to NHS funding granted to the Fellowship. Traditionally a grant of £150,000 was provided annually by NHS England, but in recent years this was reduced and then discontinued. A grant of £50,000 was then secured for a number of years via Sir Simon Stevens, the previous Chief Executive of NHS England, but as he has now stepped down from this post, and the final grant has not yet been received, there is now no guarantee that any support will be available from this source.

NHS Scotland grants of £20,000 per annum have been received but similarly, these are no longer guaranteed and grants of £20,000 from the NHS in Wales ceased some time ago.

The capitation fee was reduced to £10 for 2020-21 and 2021-22 and therefore Fellowship income from members was significantly lower. Some of this loss was mitigated by a Lottery Grant in 2021 but a second application for funding was unsuccessful.

This reduction in income and the resultant effect on cashflow, has necessitated utilising money from deposit accounts to cover the cost of the P60 campaign. Most face to face meetings have been replaced by virtual meetings and this has resulted in some cost savings for the Fellowship. The Treasurer reports regularly to the Audit Committee and will be providing the latest financial information to the Board of Trustees on 20th September.

Judith McMurray asked whether the next Council meeting planned for January 24th 2023 will still be held in London. The Chief Executive confirmed that as this could be the first meeting of the Members Council then this was likely.

Blue Light Card

The Blue Light Card is a very popular benefit for Fellowship members, and many have saved significant sums of money.

It is available to members of the NHS and emergency services and to retired employees of the NHS. This excludes those who have worked in GP or dental surgeries. The Chief Executive has been in discussions with Blue Light Card since 15th August to ask for the Fellowship membership number to be accepted by the organisation as a proof of eligibility to join (this would therefore include members who worked in these organisations). A reply was received on 5th September indicating that the Fellowship membership number was unacceptable as our members include some who worked in social care and the card is not available to those in this sector. The Chief Executive will continue to pursue this.

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	<p>Short Story Competition The Chief Executive was pleased to report that 52 submissions have been received and the winner will be announced at Conference. The prizes have been sponsored by Hempsons – solicitors specialising in health and social care. Members of the Liverpool branch who attended the recent NHS Confederation Conference in Liverpool, to help promote the Fellowship, were instrumental in securing this sponsorship (£1000) and the Chief Executive expressed his gratitude for their efforts. It was suggested that members may like to hear or read the winning entry and the Chief Executive agreed to investigate how this could be managed</p> <p>Fellowship Holiday 17 adults have now booked to join this holiday. Lorraine Taylor reported that contact with Newmarket Holidays improved when Sian Nugent provided her email address for Fellowship members to contact her directly.</p> <p>NHS 75th anniversary The Fellowship is intending to participate wholeheartedly in these celebrations and to celebrate its own 45 year anniversary at the same time. Lucia Hiden is joining the NHS steering group on behalf of the Fellowship and an internal steering group chaired by trustees and including some branch and postal members, will also be established</p> <p>Pensions Portal The NHSBSA is developing a Pensions Portal. The Chief Executive was contacted by them with a view to including representatives of the Fellowship in a meeting to demonstrate the system and to receive feedback and understanding of our members’ needs as pensioners. The portal will include a link to the NHS RF. A meeting was held on 5th September 2022 and included 8 postal and branch members as well as the Chief Executive. A follow up meeting will discuss further developments and answer queries raised by participants.</p> <p>Dr Navina Evans - incoming Chief Workforce Officer NHS England The Chief Executive has met with Navina who affirmed her support for the Fellowship. She also emphasised her commitment to developing a workforce plan to support NHS staff from pre-employment to post retirement. A further meeting will be arranged in due course.</p>	CE
1640	<p>Expenses Policy The Expenses Policy has been slightly amended to give the Chief Executive discretion over accommodation costs, especially in London. Prior consent from the Chief Executive must be given before any bookings are made. This policy has been agreed by the Audit Committee and will be recommended to the Board on September 20th 2022. Judith McMurray commented that the policy indicates that expenses can be claimed by Regional Representatives attending the AGM. This was confirmed. Loreen Smith asked why there has been no change to the amounts which can be claimed for lunch or dinner. The Chief Executive explained that the Fellowship continues to follow the NHS expenses policy to which no changes have been made.</p>	
1641	<p>AOB Ros Lobo asked for details of the processes to be employed to implement any changes, following the AGM. The Chief Executive informed the meeting that any detailed processes and timescales will be confirmed once the results of the ballot are announced at the AGM.</p>	
1642	<p>The Chair closed the meeting by recognising that the current attendees may change after the AGM. He offered his thanks to all the Regional Representatives for their valued contributions to National Council and the time they have given in support of the Fellowship. The Chief Executive added that Development Officer Sally Bundock, had asked him to thank all those who had sent their good wishes during her period of ill health.</p>	

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 24 January at 12 noon in London venue to be confirmed

The meeting closed at 11.04

Debbie Arnold
07.09.22