

CIPR Council Meeting
Tuesday 12 March, 1400-1630, Zoom

Minutes

Attendees:

Donna Castle (left at 14.30 and rejoined at 15.18), Rachael Clamp (Vice-President), Teela Clayton (left at 15.08 and rejoined at 15:52), Paul Compton, Alison Gallagher-Hughes, Ruth Jackson (left at 15:36 and rejoined at 15:46), Claire Melia-Tompkins, Naj Modak, Rhian Moore (left at 15.17), Jenifer Stirton, Crispin Thorold, Tim Walsh and Martyn Williams.

Staff:

Jon Gerlis (item 7), Sukhjot Grewal, Alastair McCapra and Eva Mota.

Apologies:

Claire Bloomer, David Hamilton, Sarah Ion, Binu Jacob, Hayley Mace, Paula McNulty, Arlene McPhillips and Advita Patel.

1. President's welcome

Rachael welcomed attendees and explained a couple of people might be standing down from Council as they could not commit to attend more than two meetings per year. She also noted this would be a very busy year and Council's participation was crucial. She also asked attendees to use the Zoom chat only for links or similar info during the meeting and when sharing opinions, to please raise their hands and speak so no comments or discussions are missed.

2. Apologies and declarations of interest

Apologies were received from Claire Bloomer, David Hamilton, Hayley Mace, Sarah Ion, Advita Patel, Arlene McPhillips and Binu Jacob.

Naj declared his work for a media organization.

Crispin declared being a CIPR chartership assessor (just started).

Council members were invited to declare any interest/conflicts in relation to items on the agenda. Should any non-agenda items be discussed during the course of the meeting, Council members were asked to declare any interests as they arise.

3. Board Update

Rachael highlighted the usual flow of reports from Standing Committees to Council and Board. Reports are usually shared before Council meets, however the Finance Committee update will be given verbally in this occasion. She and Advita can be contacted for conversations if needed, and attendees are welcome to contact them. Rachael introduced the new Board members; Advita Patel and Rebecca Deegan. She also mentioned the Board Away Day which took place on Thursday 18 January in Edinburgh this year, which was a very positive event. Rachael also highlighted the three volunteer-led projects; Organisational Design led by Hayley James, PRide awards led by Donna Castle and a review of our On-Demand Learning Platform by Laurel Hetherington to see how it will work best for members and stakeholders.

Rachael invited attendees to get involved in any of these projects, if they were interested and to let her know.

Alastair explained that in Q3 and Q4 of 2023 we were struggling to get customers to financially commit to payments before the end of the year. The loss predicted towards the end of last year had turned out to be an underestimate and we had actually made a total loss of £210k. This was the worst financial result for CIPR since the 2008 financial crisis. He also reported that we have spent some time working on how this happened, and are rewriting our forecast for 2024 with more realistic targets. We did grow last year but not as much as expected; we cannot repeat this mistake and must turn it around, but it's not a major crisis, we are still very liquid and our reserves are sufficient though low. Rachael with Advita will be working with the SLT on a Commercial Roadmap

project. Alastair also reported that our figures and membership renewal for January, February and March are currently ahead of budget. He also noted Hayley's observation that we started well at the beginning of last year but then things changed later on. He and Rachael then welcomed questions.

Ruth asked if chartership would be available to pay monthly, as the chartership cost can be a financial barrier for many, and if it was available as a monthly payment, this would be an encouraging option for more individuals to commit. She also observed that it would be realistic to expect a downturn, as a reflection of what is happening worldwide. Rachael agreed that we indeed have to hear more from the community on what is going on so we can be more aware of current trends, business wise.

Sukhjot noted that there has been a change in member behaviour, with people taking longer to decide and commit than before. Chartership wise, we are launching a combined offer with membership and this will be included in the Commercial Roadmap project.

Allison asked if last year's loss was related to the previous year's loss, and Alastair explained that last was a very unusual year. If we forecast realistically it should put us in a better expectation for this year. Rachael confirmed that we should focus on steady growth of activities that we know we are doing really well.

4. Approval of 15 November and 7 December 2023 Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Crispin proposed and Ruth seconded.

5. Actions and Matters arising from November and December meetings

15 November

Council needs more info on Nominations Committee for December, including how they will be selected and what responsibilities they will have. **Complete**

7 December

Alastair to update strategy accordingly after budget discussion. **Complete**

Claire to liaise with Jon Gerlis and Jim Riches on fixing the UKLR site registrations as soon as possible so that we do not lose data leads. **Complete**

6. Update on Governance Change

Alastair reported that the governance survey had closed; Sarah noted that although many hundreds of members looked at the proposals, 266 actually submitted replies, with some members leaving their email address and asking questions. The Governance Working Group had looked at the replies and a response is currently being drafted, which Jon confirmed is going out today. Alastair also noted that the group is now suggesting two amendments to the proposals following the consultation – one is to have 7 members in the Nominations Committee rather than five, and the other is removing the proposed block on allowing Group Chairs and Office Holders from standing for Council.

Alastair also requested Council members to please attend the EGM on Thursday 18 April, as they need at least 25 members present to be quorate. Proxy voting is also going to be available. He also reported that we require a special resolution to change our chartership bylaws, and 75% of voting members have to support it for the Privy Council to approve it. The next set of tasks for the Governance Working Group will be the Nominations Committee Terms of Reference and the independent Chair's job description.

Action EM to pass Council's appreciation comments back to the Governance Working Group.

Action AMC and EM to provide more information on the Standing Committees in the CIPR website.

7. Presentation on ONS PR population survey

Jon shared the PR Population report, which had been published early February. It's essentially a summary of ONS census data that was captured in March 2021, and completed by about 97% of people in England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have decided to do their own censuses although they're not ready or haven't been completed yet.

Jon noted that in March 2021, the PR population was 63,563 in England and Wales. Numbers have grown slightly comparing to previous studies taken in 2016 and 2018 but it looks as if the industry has slightly plateaued. He noted numbers on diversity and other census analysis details such as membership, training, CPD and recruitment, inviting attendees to use this data to help business performance in the short and medium term and opened the floor for questions and comments. This data can help directing financial resources and strategic thought.

Action Alastair and Jon to summarise Council's discussion on the ONS report and bring back comments on it for the next Council meeting on Thursday 20 June.

8. Questions from standing committees updates

No questions were raised regarding the Standing Committees updates.

Rachael reported that she and Advita had requested Aimee Postle, PPC chair, to look at policy regarding behaviours on bullying and harassment towards staff, so we can have something similar to our already robust and strong policies and procedures towards volunteers, but for staff instead.

9. AOB

No other business was requested. Rachael thanked everyone for their work and contributions towards a busy and significant year, and closed the session half an hour early.

Next Meeting Dates for 2024 (all virtual via Zoom)

- EGM Thursday 18 April 6pm
- Council Meeting Thursday 20 June 2pm
- AGM Thursday 4 July 5pm
- Council Meeting Thursday 19 September 2pm
- Council Meeting Thursday 5 December 2pm