
Council Courier

25.06.2020

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

President Alan Jones welcomed the new RSUA President Donal MacRandal and the independent members of the new Board who were attending the meeting as observers: Sir Nigel Carrington (Chair Elect), Matt Jones (Digital), Murray Orr (Business and Enterprise), MaryAnne Stevens (Heritage) and Marjorie Strachan (Organisational change).

Obituary

Council resolved to send condolences to next of kin. Particular mention was made of Patrick Harrison, Hon FRIBA.

Declarations of interest

No new declarations.

Minutes of previous meeting, 9 April 2020

Agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes

MCHLG consultation on combustible materials: following a discussion at the last Council meeting, the RIBA's response to the government consultation had been taken forward in collaboration with a number of practices. RIBA's response was now published on architecture.com. The MCHLG consultation period had not yet ended, therefore its outcome was still unknown.

President's report

The President reiterated his recent apologies. He acknowledged the timing of his leave of absence was unfortunate considering the very important issues that had come to the fore over this

period. The President thanked outgoing members of Council, noting that some might be standing again in the forthcoming elections:

Yemi Aladerun (National), Alice Asafu-Adjaye (Middle East & Africa), John Assael (Hon Treas, National), Alia Beyg (London), Jason Bill (National), Andrew Bourne (Wessex), Wendy Charlton (London), Aaron Chetwynd (National), Tim Clark (Europe), Catherine Davis (Americas), Ben Derbyshire (Immediate Past President), Graham Devine (South West), Stephanie Edwards (London), Debbie Flevotomou (London), Simone de Gale (National), Lanre Gbolade (London), Chris Hampson (London), Indy Johar (London), Anthony Lloyd (West Midlands), Michael Martin (London), Nick Mills (Wessex), Kerr Robertson (Hon Sec, RIAS South), Selasi Setufe (Associate), Robin Webster (RIAS President), John Wilde (South West), Roger Tsan-Sum Wu (Asia & Australasia).

Board report from Chair Elect Sir Nigel Carrington

The newly-appointed Board held its first meeting on 6 May and had resolved to meet monthly to deal with the scope of the challenges. It was to be noted that the Board had a majority of Council members on it.

COVID-19: the executive team needed Council and Board support to manage the impact the pandemic was having on the institute. There was already

significant work in place to maintain engagement with the membership. Black Lives Matter would undoubtedly be a topic for the new Board to address. Several task and finish groups had been set up to deal with certain areas of work (e.g. strategy).

Committee structure: Work was under way to shape a new structure for the work of committees. The committees needed to focus on critical issues facing the profession, such as placemaking and social equity.

Strategic plan: the Board would present the Council with a document in late summer to help shape the strategic plan for the next five years.

Membership issues as a whole needed to be addressed through communication with the wider membership as well as with the Council.

Sir Nigel was thanked for his report.

Chief Executive's Report

Highlights:

- Work was ongoing to enable a return to the offices in Portland Place, though this would not be before 1 September at the earliest.
- The RIBA Recovery Roadmap (an online digest of resources developed in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on architects) was now available behind the membership paywall.
- RIBA was maintaining its dialogue with government including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on COVID-19 matters.

- Find an architect: the RIBA's search engine now appeared fifth on Google after the paid advertising sites.
- Black Lives Matter: the RIBA was in touch with the AIA to compare notes on how to respond to this. It was also looking to make further funds available to equality, diversity and inclusivity work.
- Local Initiative Fund – this was still available to the regions, including for EDI projects.

Finance Report

Although the RIBA's underlying financial position was solid, every effort was being made to mitigate the effects of the economic downturn brought about by the pandemic. Regular updates would be given to Council on scenario planning.

Strategic Plan

Council was updated on plans to engage with the membership on the development of a new strategy. Council members were also invited to sign up to participate in virtual workshops over the next month. Indy Johar offered to provide suggestions on how the development of the strategy could be enriched.

Professional Standards report

Council noted the report.

Membership

Significant flexibility was being shown on payments and members were being encouraged to contact the membership team about deferring their subscription payment should this be necessary. The process for applying for reduced rates for those yet to renew for 2020 and earning less than £20K net in 2020 had been simplified, with the temporary

suspension of the requirement for supporting documentation.

Services and activities highlighted:

- a. Launch of the RIBA Academy and 'online CPD'
- b. The RIBA Covid-19 hub: a suite of resources, continually tailored to respond to member feedback.
- c. Recovery Roadmap' soon be published.
- d. 'Paywall first policy' - to ensure all key member-facing, technical and support content on Architecture.com is locked down to Members only, and an existing project fast tracked to ensure technical delivery.
- i. Content serving the public good and the Institute's charitable aims to remain open to all.
- e. Find an Architect: the most visited section of architecture.com. 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.
- f. Plans for a highly visible 'Why work with an architect?' client campaign underway for launch in the Autumn.
- g. Permanent presence on the Find a Professional section of the Planning Portal (as of 1 June) and an advertorial in the Sunday Telegraph.
- h. Development of a suite of digital Practice Tools, including fee calculator and management applications, and new and updated digital contracts continues.

Discussion: Protection of function

Jason Bill (outgoing National Council member) and Russell Curtis (former Council member) debated the importance of protecting the function of the architect.

Every country in the G7 protected the function of the architect and the UK was out of step in not doing so. Was the emphasis to be on profit or quality?

Conversely, protection of function did not of itself prevent bad architects from failing clients. Actions were more indicative than marketing. The RIBA should be the benchmark for quality in the domestic sphere and should be entirely disconnected from the ARB.

Comments from the floor:

- Building was a public interest act and the role of the professional was to take responsibility for public good (including taking legal responsibility).
- Undercutting of fees not conducive to quality.
- Educating the client was key to improving the quality of architects, i.e. through consumer pressure.
- Legislation and PR campaigns were the solutions.
- Longer, better practical training needed.
- More frequent peer review and post-completion review of buildings desirable.
- Compliance with the code of conduct should be rigorously enforced.

The President thanked everyone for their contributions.

Shape of future Council meetings

There was a discussion of possible new formats for Council meetings now that the new constitution was in place.

AOB

Maryam Al-Irhayim (student member) requested feedback from Council

members on a paper she had recently circulated outlining specific problems faced by younger members and particularly students/associates during the current crisis. She would be pursuing these at the next meeting of the Education Committee on 1 July.

SW 30.06.2020

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