
Council Courier

30.9.2021

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

Newly-elected President Simon Allford welcomed the Council to its first ever hybrid meeting. He explained that the meeting was structured in two parts, comprising a closed session for confidential and governance items, and an open session which would include attendance by the press. Inviting the press was a return to previous, pre-pandemic practice.

Obituary

Members remembered and Council resolved to send condolences to next of kin.

Welcome to new Council members and introduction of honorary officers

The President warmly welcomed new members attending:
Julian Baker, North West
Tom Foggin, VP Membership
Graeme Dodd, North East (participating remotely)
Stephen Drew, Associate
Kerr Robertson, RIAS South
Sumita Singha, National
Gavin Traylor, RSAW President

He also introduced the serving honorary officers: Graham Devine (Honorary Secretary) and Simone de Gale (Honorary Treasurer) and introduced Maryam Al-Irhayim as Vice President Students/Associates.

Declarations of interest

There were no new declarations.

Minutes of previous meeting, 20 August 2021

Agreed as a correct record subject to two minor amendments.

Matters arising

Mis-selling of architectural qualifications: Adrian Dobson (Executive Director, Professional Services) updated Council on steps the RIBA could take to address this. This included asking schools to clarify the status of their courses where they advertise them and improving the RIBA's own guidance on architecture.com.

Fire safety and training for Council members: A full briefing would be provided to Council members on fire safety and regulatory compliance knowledge that will be required of architects acting as designers and Principal Designers to comply with the proposed Appointment of Persons, Industry Competence and Dutyholders (England) Regulations. This would be offered as soon as the first draft BSI PAS competence standard was published alongside the draft Regulations.

Governance update

Board-Council protocol – this had been accepted by both the Council and Board as an interim statement of intent.
Volunteer's handbook: documents within the handbook which referred to the setting up of chapters, the joint application for the LIF funding and the setting up of international regional

councils will be published to architecture.com. The next step was to put out other elements of the handbook for branch/regional consultation at an appropriate time.

CPD auditing and compliance policy

Council feedback was sought and Joni Tyler (Head of CPD) attended to collect any comments from Council and answer questions.

Non-RIBA members: the question of making the platform for recording CPD more widely available than currently would be looked at as part of technological improvements planned.

Chartered practices: there were arguments for and against all members of RIBA chartered practices being obliged to comply with CPD requirements. This was noted.

Virtual CPD: points around accessibility and different world time zones were noted.

Communications around compliance: members needed to know how to be compliant, how to record their CPD, and the benefits of doing so. It was confirmed a monthly newsletter already went out to members with CPD information.

Pre-qualified architects: they should be introduced to the advantages of undertaking CPD before it actually became a requirement.

Further observations were invited in writing.

Fit and Proper Person test and Professional Standards threshold test

Council gave feedback for the Standards Committee to consider, pending a vote by Council on the final document.

Afternoon session - with press in attendance

Report from the President 'The State of the Institute'

The 2034 Masterplan had been approved by both Council and the Board during the summer. Each President had a two-year plan ('biennial plan') synchronised with the longer term Masterplan. The 2022-23 biennial plan had also been approved by Council and was to be discussed.

Biennial plan and objectives

The following were highlighted:

- House of Architecture
- Technology
- Property footprint

The institute's global reach would be furthered by work already under way to increase the RIBA's technological capability. The building at 66PP needed investment too – it would require a masterplan architect to oversee improvements and make the building fit for the 21st century. To further the 'House of Architecture' a director of programmes would be needed to develop the RIBA's cultural offer.

The institute needed to be opened up to a wide range of people: the architecturally-engaged, pre-chartered, technicians and so on. Practices needed to be supported. The plan would be to have a virtual programme and three galleries, for the general

public, for members of the profession, and for the exploration of public affairs and policy issues.

Report from the Chair of the Board

There was a list of some 20 items which the Board intended to deliver, including

- Strengthened partnership with the V&A
- Refurbishment of 66PP
- Built Environment Summit (Pre-COP 26 event)
- EDI programme
- Education initiatives
- HR policies for practices
- Reaching a balanced financial position by 2023
- Organisation Restructure/new committee structure/governance issues

Every area of the RIBA was being transformed and modernised.

Report from the Chief Executive

Some of the priorities:

- Two-year budget planning
- Improved conditions for staff to attract, retain and develop talent.
- Staff restructure
- Review of property footprint
- 66PP refurbishment
- Technological improvements, including the new Member Hub.

Q&A

When would the 2034 Masterplan be published?

The President would see that it was posted on architecture.com as soon as possible.

What is the future of regional activity beyond technology?

RIBA needs to facilitate the delivery of content from wherever it derives. Everything can now be virtual, or physically moved around and delivered according to where it is wanted. The nations and regions will be able to access funds to put on their own events - having a strong HQ is no impediment to this, and is a desirable improvement of an asset the RIBA could never sell. The regions will be able to reach a wider audience for their activities than has previously been possible.

How much of a restriction is the listed status of 66PP?

Preliminary analysis undertaken suggests the challenges are not insoluble and a design team will be put in place.

How will money be spread across the international membership? And how will the RIBA negotiate the cultural differences inherent in growing the membership?

The RIBA will use its digital assets for the benefit of the membership as a whole. Gaining a foothold in a new country does take time – and an improved global reach, membership offer and membership growth will be key to delivering more activities.

What will happen to the incubation space? Will it be part of the new plan for 66PP?

The brief for the improvements to 66PP is not yet formed, it requires a design team. A long term strategy for the building will have to be developed, though clearly there will be a need for a working environment as well as public spaces. 76PP will not be opened up for the moment, so there will be no incubator space either, but it needs to go into the considerations for the brief. The possibility of practices donating

their own incubator space around the country should also be explored.

How will the cycles of business planning work?

We will be mapping individual budgets against the biennial plan. We will look at reducing cost and increasing income to reach a balanced position by end of 2023, and focus on the deliverables in this plan. The budget will need to be drafted for agreement by the Board in mid-November. Council will be regularly updated.

Issues such as EDI, access to the profession, apprenticeships may be lost sight of. Some things won't wait until 2023. How will we deliver on these important things sooner rather than later?

The staff have two mandatory competencies: EDI and climate emergency. These will be embedded in all RIBA activity. The Chair of the Board is in favour of campaigning hard on these areas with practices and schools. We need to increase existing outreach to schools and young people. Models other than apprenticeships exist.

Other comments:

Wherever possible we should work smartly, and preserve the RIBA's capital. Good that 76PP will be phased out.

We should shape ourselves as an inclusive profession and work through our member networks to produce a community of collaboration. Other languages should not be seen as a barrier.

Expert Advisory Groups (EAGs)

The President explained how he wanted to take forward the list of EAGs agreed by Council in June 2021. Council members had been insufficiently engaged at this level of the RIBA's work to date and he hoped members would join these groups as they started to be formed. The intention would be to augment existing expertise with Council members and others, and to prioritise the subjects which needed to be addressed.

A skills matrix would be produced to help map the skills and interest of the Council members. The Council members would provide a direct strategic link between the groups and Council.

By a vote of 28/2/1¹ Council agreed

- i) that the Fire Safety Task and Finish Group should continue until the conclusion of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry;
- ii) that the other standing Expert Advisory Groups be paused and at the next Council meeting, following a review of the skills matrix, they are reviewed again in the light of specific task(s) to be undertaken.

Discussion items

PII

The Council voted (25/2/2) to agree to set up a task group to examine the current challenges arising from PII and to seek expert input. The Member Hub to be used to serve the group, as a continuation of the current pilot scheme.

¹ Numbers in brackets are votes for/against/abstentions

Government review of architects regulation

Council voted (24/0/1) to form a task and finish group to respond to the MHCLG consultation on architects regulation (6 November deadline for responses), the group to include Roger Shrimplin, who had made a presentation on aspects of the ARB earlier on the agenda. The group would need to be operational beyond the November deadline date, for approximately six months.

Reports for noting:

- Finance report
- Chief Executive's report
- Audit Committee
- Membership
- President's diary