



The Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom

96th Ordinary General Meeting

Minutes

The 96th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom was held on Wednesday 17th July 2024 at 14.00. The meeting took place at RCN Cavendish Square, London, and online.

The meeting was chaired Sheilabye Sobrany, President of the Royal College of Nursing.

484 voting members were present (425 remote, 59 in person)

1. AGENDA ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 1.1 The President welcomed everyone to the 96th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal College of Nursing.
- 1.2 She introduced the Chair of Council, Paul Vaughan, General Secretary and Chief Executive, Professor Nicola Ranger, Honorary Treasurer, Carol Webley-Brown, Chief Financial Officer, Gush Uppal, and Executive Director of Governance, Natalie Zara.
- 1.3 In the front rows of the hall and online were fellow Council members, members of the Professional Nursing Committee and Trade Union Committee and members of the RCN Executive Team. Also present were the RCN's independent scrutineers, Civica.
- 1.4 The President reminded members that the AGM provided an opportunity to reflect on the financial year January – December 2023 and also to look at the RCN's recent activity as well as its priorities for the months ahead.
- 1.5 The President acknowledged that 2023 had been a truly positive year for the College which saw it reach record membership levels and she was pleased to say that this upward trend had continued in 2024.
- 1.6 The President vowed that the RCN would continue to fight for its members across all countries and regions, whether in the independent sector or the NHS, for safe staffing and to receive the fair pay, terms and conditions members thoroughly deserved.

- 1.7 The President recognised all those members who had continued to represent others whenever they could during the year, in both the trade union and professional functions. She emphasised how vital their work was in making a difference.
- 1.8 The President then reminded members of the RCN Respect Charter, the RCN Code of Conduct and the NMC Code. She stressed the importance of remembering the values they represent and asked that people treat each other with respect and courtesy throughout the meeting.
- 1.9 The President officially declared that the meeting was quorate and took members through the way in which the meeting would be conducted.
- 1.10 For all questions received, everyone involved would try their best to provide answers at the meeting. If this was not possible, written answers would be provided online after the meeting.

2. AGENDA ITEM 2 - MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2023

- 2.1 Members were asked to raise points of accuracy and matters arising on the minutes of the meeting held in Manchester on Monday 10th July 2023.
- 2.2 The President reminded members that the draft minutes of the meeting had been available on the RCN website since last year on the page titled 'RCN Annual General Meeting 2023' and were also available on the online meeting platform.
- 2.3 With reference to the EGM petition submitted to the RCN in 2023 that contained fraudulent signatures, Jane - Elizabeth Tooke asked whether all signatories had been contacted to ask whether they had actually signed the petition and what happened to the information that had been provided. Jane - Elizabeth Tooke asked whether members who confirmed they had signed the petition would be 'blacklisted'.
- 2.4 The Chair of Council confirmed that any member who had willingly signed the petition would not be blacklisted. In recent days, the RCN had received the report of the secondary phase of the independent investigation, which concurred with the original findings. The Chair of Council explained that it had not been possible to ascertain who was responsible for the fraudulent activity and that to avoid this happening in the future, the RCN now had a secure online platform for members to submit a petition for an EGM which included an authentication process in order to maintain data security and ensure confidence in the process.
- 2.5 With reference to paragraph 1.3 of the previous meeting minutes, Roy Tomlinson commented that there was no reference to how many members had been physically present in the hall. He stated that he believed there had been 17 members in attendance. Roy Tomlinson requested that future

minutes include the number of members attending in person and the number of members joining online. He questioned the practicality of hiring a hall in Manchester when the RCN would have known in advance that only 17 members had registered to attend in person.

2.6 The Executive Director of Governance confirmed that future minutes would include attendance figures in person and online but explained that in reality these figures would fluctuate throughout the meeting as people joined and left.

2.7 Geoff Earl highlighted that the RCN's reserve funds were increasing year on year and, despite the policy being £90m, they currently sat at nearly £200m. Given that last year the RCN made £17m on the previous year, Geoff Earl questioned why reserve funds were so high and continuing to grow and why a decision had been taken to increase membership fees to raise further funds.

2.8 The President thanked Geoff Earl for his question which would be answered under item 4 on the agenda – the 2023 financial statements.

2.9 There were no further questions in the hall or online so the President took the minutes as agreed. The minutes would now be published on the RCN website.

3. AGENDA ITEM 3 - 2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF COUNCIL

3.1 The Chair of Council, Paul Vaughan, presented the report of Council as included in the Annual Report.

3.2 The Chair of Council noted that 2023 had been a strong and productive year for the RCN and he was delighted to be presenting the significant results Council had delivered for the College, the profession and the patients.

3.3 Work was underway to deliver the RCN's ambitious five-year strategic plan which was introduced to members at Congress last year.

3.4 On the RCN as the voice of nursing, the Chair of Council highlighted that industrial action was the major focus of the College for the first half of 2023. For the first time in the College's 107-year history, the RCN received a mandate from its members to undertake strike action across the whole of the UK with strikes ultimately taking place in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

3.5 In England, members voted to reject an improved offer from the Department for Health and Social Care and in Wales members voted to accept an improved offer on non-pay elements in August 2023.

- 3.6 Action in Northern Ireland focused on lobbying for a return of the Northern Ireland executive and, for the second time, members in Northern Ireland played a huge role in forcing the power sharing assembly at Stormont back together.
- 3.7 While strikes did not take place in Scotland, the strike mandate pushed the Scottish government for further negotiations, with members agreeing an improved offer.
- 3.8 Parallel to industrial action, detailed evidence was submitted to the NHS Job Evaluation Group National Nursing Profiles Review which argued for a fundamental uplift to all registered nursing profiles.
- 3.9 A definition of nursing and updated principles of nursing were agreed and published in September as part of the professional nursing framework.
- 3.10 Following ICN Congress in Montreal last year, in December the RCN hosted an international summit on nurse-to-patient ratios bringing together leading international nursing workforce experts and senior nurse leaders from around the UK. This summit was a crucial step for the RCN to build consensus to campaign for the implementation of UK-wide safety-critical nurse-to-patient ratios. This work would continue throughout 2024.
- 3.11 The Institute of Nursing Excellence was one of the cornerstones of the RCN's five-year strategy. The initial plan, organisational design and first phase had been completed, with detailed planning for the launch of the associated academies now underway. The Activism Academy launched earlier this year.
- 3.12 Alongside all of this work, the RCN continued to engage and influence national bodies, amplifying member's voices.
- 3.13 On to the second of the College's key goals - the RCN has an engaged, thriving and diverse membership. Throughout 2023 the Independent Health and Social Care Programme set its focus on the needs of members who work in nursing support roles working for independent employers.
- 3.14 A significant amount of work was undertaken to improve both how the RCN showcases the relevance of RCN membership to those working outside of the NHS and to better communicate and engage with its existing independent health and social care members.
- 3.15 Independent sector members working for Manx Care and the Care Plus Group in Yorkshire undertook industrial action. Manx Care employees, following a long dispute and 2 days of strike action, accepted an improved offer – with employees receiving improved pay, backdated to April 2022.
- 3.16 The RCN worked hard to recruit more Nursing Workforce Standards champions in the independent health and social care sector to drive the standards across a range of health care settings.

- 3.17 RCN Congress in Brighton last year was another incredibly successful event. As well as an increase in both first-time attendees, and attendees from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, there was a notable increase in the number of Forum Steering Committee members attending and delivering the professional content of the event.
- 3.18 Forum members also played a key role in some of the RCN corporate policy developments such as the production of the RCN professional framework mentioned earlier.
- 3.19 Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was a key theme of the RCN's work following the anti-racism resolution agreed at Congress 2023. In August, Council approved the re-establishment of the EDI Committee to provide oversight of a new EDI strategy which was published in May 2024 ahead of Congress in Newport which took place in June 2024.
- 3.20 The College's SenseMaker tool, which used lived experiences shared by the nursing profession, was rolled out across the UK in 2023 following its successful use in Northern Ireland. This is a groundbreaking tool which the Chair encouraged as many members as possible to use. It enabled the RCN to hear directly from members about their real-world lived experiences of nursing, which helped the RCN plot trends and identify patterns and areas of concern. This allowed the RCN to use real examples to strengthen its calls for change with employers, policy makers and politicians.
- 3.21 Many members had found the SenseMaker process helpful in itself. The process of thinking, writing and anonymously sharing their thoughts, feelings, doubts and concerns helped process some of the pressures many of us feel on a daily basis.
- 3.22 The August student recruitment period included a pilot scheme offering students in several regions a free first year of membership. This was extended into 2024 and would be evaluated later in the year to determine its effectiveness and overall impact.
- 3.23 The RCN Prince of Wales Nursing Cadet Scheme continued to help young people develop their skills and support them towards a career in nursing. The scheme celebrated a significant milestone last year, with the first of its alumni becoming a Registered Nurse. This year cadet alumni webinars and newsletters were launched, and the first meeting of the National Cadet Voice Forum took place.
- 3.24 The third of the RCN's key goals is a sustainable and commercial business model for the benefit of staff and members.
- 3.25 The review and re-design of some of the RCN's services was underway, with the transformation of its Legal Services aiming to improve structures and processes and bring consistency for members across all nations.

- 3.26 The Commercial Development Strategy sets out proposals for income generation and diversification of revenue. This included proposals to increase membership as well as ways to increase and diversify income using 20 Cavendish Square – with the aim of doubling the income generated from HQ.
- 3.27 Tendering for a new HR and finance system that simplifies process and expands capability has begun, while the RCN’s IT Strategy is in development. This would align closely with the RCN Data and Analytics Strategy and approach, which outlines how the College will become a data-driven organisation.
- 3.28 The fourth of the RCN’s key goals is that good governance and a strong culture underpins the delivery of the RCN strategy.
- 3.29 The 2023-2027 five-year strategy was the RCN’s key response to the reviews into its governance and culture undertaken by KPMG and Bruce Carr KC respectively.
- 3.30 A dedicated Governance and Culture Reviews Programme was established to deliver change. It encompassed 38 unique recommendations, to be delivered through 221 specific activities.
- 3.31 The Chair of Council was pleased to be able to report that as of today 101 of these had been completed, and the RCN was on track to complete all work to the agreed timetable.
- 3.32 Some of the recommendations resulted in clear and immediate action, such as the resolution to reaffirm the strength of the dual role of the RCN as both trade union and professional body which was passed overwhelmingly by members at Congress 2023 in Brighton.
- 3.33 And the members vote at last year’s AGM to change the threshold required to call an Extraordinary General Meeting to 5% of the total RCN membership.
- 3.34 The RCN had also developed a new RCN Whistleblowing Policy, and a Conflicts of Interest Policy.
- 3.35 Other work covered in this programme was going on behind the scenes but was just as crucial in ensuring the good governance of the College. For example, there were over 150 policy documents which set out how the RCN should operate. A robust new schedule was now in place to track all of those policies, ensuring they were reviewed and when necessary updated and republished.
- 3.36 Responsibilities and terms of reference for many of the RCN’s governance committees had been reviewed, restated, and agreed to improve the clarity of their responsibility and authority.

- 3.37 The progress the RCN was making against all recommendations was continually updated and available for members to track on the RCN website.
- 3.38 That concluded the summary of Council's work, but as always, further detail could be found in the RCN Group Annual Report 2023 and in the Annual Review of Year – both of which were available on the RCN website.

4. AGENDA ITEM 4 – THE 2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 4.1 The Honorary Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee, Carol Webley-Brown, delivered a presentation on the annual accounts for 2023.
- 4.2 The Honorary Treasurer began by stating that she was proud to be a nurse, an activist and an RCN Council member and that this role enabled her to combine two of her passions: nursing and protecting the interests of members.
- 4.3 2023 had been an important year for the College. It began with widespread industrial action across England and Wales, and members' action led to significant improvements on what had previously been offered.
- 4.4 This action also contributed to membership increasing to a record level, and the RCN had retained that membership throughout the rest of 2023 and into 2024.
- 4.5 RCN revenues were almost £96m in 2023, while overall group revenues were £105m.
- 4.6 There were corresponding increases in RCN costs reflecting the impact of inflation, and investment in services and infrastructure.
- 4.7 The RCN investment portfolio saw a return to growth following the significant losses in 2022. By the end of 2023, the portfolio had regained some of those losses and had continued to recover in the early part of this year.
- 4.8 Overall, both investment and cash reserves were strong and generating income, providing the financial foundations the RCN needed to allow it to invest in the RCN's present and, importantly, in its future.
- 4.9 The Honorary Treasurer noted that there was the need for a modest rise in member subscriptions by a few pence each month to cover the increases in day-to-day expenditure but reassured that RCN finances were in very safe hands.

- 4.10 Council regarded financial propriety as one of the fundamental cornerstones of the College. Diligence was applied at all times regarding the way the College's finances were handled, and how member money was spent, while always remembering the vast majority of income comes from hardworking members' pockets.
- 4.11 Processes were thorough, considered and transparent and members were invited at any stage to request information related to the annual accounts and the RCN's financial position.
- 4.12 The Honorary Treasurer next spoke to the annual accounts for 2023:
- there had been a strong increase in membership last year and corresponding growth in revenue;
 - member income increased to £89.9m;
 - membership continued the growth seen towards the end of 2022 in the first six months of 2023;
 - membership numbers were still increasing, but at a slower rate;
 - other income rose by £0.9m and the financial performance of RCN venue services and commissioned programmes continued to improve;
 - the RCN had received £116k of public donations to its strike fund in the first few months of the year.
- 4.13 Overall, expenditure had increased by £5.1m resulting in an RCN operating surplus of £2.7m compared to the operating deficit of £600k the RCN reported in 2022.
- 4.14 The increase in costs was due to a combination of an increase in headcount to support the delivery of services, and inflationary increases.
- 4.15 As mentioned earlier, during 2023 RCN investments began to recover from the significant drop in 2022 where unrealised losses for the RCN alone were £22.4m plus a further £8m loss in the RCN Foundation.
- 4.16 This meant that the RCN had reported a total comprehensive gain for the RCN of £12.9m versus a total comprehensive loss in 2022 of £12.6m resulting in RCN net reserves of £150m.
- 4.17 The Group position was similar with the Group reporting a total comprehensive gain of £14.2m in 2023 and Group reserves of £193m including £37m of charitable funds not available for general use.
- 4.18 Again, this was a significant improvement from 2022 when the Group reported a total comprehensive loss of £18.3m.

- 4.19 The other entities in the RCN Group produced the following results:
- RCNi had a difficult year due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on its subscribers and the difficult economic climate in which its business customers operate reflecting the trend within the sector. This meant that RCNi had a breakeven year but due to a tax refund from a previous year reported net profit of £285k. 2023 saw the launch of RCNi's new event Nursing Live and they are exploring new markets. RCNi's reserves reduced slightly to £4.7m;
 - The RCN Foundation met its charitable expenditure target for the year. It reported a positive net movement of funds of £1.9m which incorporated net gains on investments of £2.2m and net expenditure of £0.4m;
 - In 2023 RCN Law reported a total profit of £869k of which RCN Holdco's share was £565k. That is an increase on the previous year's figure of £511k.
- 4.20 The Honorary Treasurer next spoke about the performance of RCN's investments over the last 5 years which had been impressive, even when allowing for the sharp drop last year due to external factors.
- 4.21 The investment portfolio had outperformed inflation and surpassed returns from the peer group.
- 4.22 Looking forward, there had been a slight recovery this year, and longer-term investments had consistently provided the best returns.
- 4.23 The investment performance was mirrored in the RCN's reserves which showed year-on year-improvement up to 2021 before last year's dip, but overall investment and cash reserves remained healthy.
- 4.24 In summary, the RCN remained in a robust financial position. Its balance sheet was strong and provided income generation and capital growth.
- 4.25 A key part of the RCN's financial security came from stabilising and growing the income it received from the membership. That is why Council made the difficult decision to ask each member to pay a small amount extra each month. This provided a guaranteed extra amount of money to cover the RCN's day-to-day costs which were increasing.
- 4.26 In September, the RCN was introducing a modest membership rate increase of 42 pence per month for the full nurse membership on renewal. This was the first increase for over 10 years.
- 4.27 The Honorary Treasurer noted that Council did not take any increase in subscription fees lightly, particularly in a cost-of-living crisis. Council had tried to keep the increase to a minimum, as it was acutely aware of placing any extra financial burden on its members.

- 4.28 That rise was required to maintain the RCN's position of financial strength, to ensure the RCN had a sustainable future. That was one of the key goals within the RCN strategic plan and it was vital for the future of the RCN.
- 4.29 That strong financial position was what allowed the RCN to continue to work for its members whether it was continuing the fight for fair pay or campaigning for safe nurse-to-patient-ratios or working to eradicate corridor care.
- 4.30 There was also significant investment in infrastructure required which historically the RCN had not always been in a position to carry out, but this was long overdue. The RCN was now able to make that investment to safeguard the future of the College.
- 4.31 There was a £12m building fund earmarked from reserves to ensure RCN buildings remained fit for purpose. That included improvements at RCN Headquarters which were safety critical and to ensure that the building remained energy compliant. This would allow the RCN to continue to use the building to deliver member services and further develop income opportunities. It would also make the RCN more sustainable while maintaining the building for future generations. This was a multi-year project starting later this year.
- 4.32 There was also a need for significant investment in technology and the RCN had started a £6m programme to replace its HR/finance system. The current systems were decades old and making this investment would provide systems that were fit for purpose.
- 4.33 This was phase 1 of a much wider programme of work which would require millions in further investment in coming years.
- 4.34 Development of the Institute continued and, while it was expected to generate income once fully established, investment was still required.
- 4.35 In addition to the work just highlighted, the RCN was also making significant investment in extra resources to support the delivery of member services. This was primarily for member facing roles including a significant number of additional staff in the Employment Relations Department, Officers and Legal teams.
- 4.36 The Honorary Treasurer hoped that this look ahead to the future of the RCN explained the need for an increase in membership fees. She highlighted that the desire to invest and improve day-to-day systems should not come at the expense of the RCN's future financial security. The change was required to ensure that recurrent income covered recurrent costs into the future. It allowed for the RCN to ensure on-going development and maintenance of infrastructure and services.

- 4.37 It was the financial strength of the College that provided the platform and resilience required to withstand the volatile and sometimes turbulent times the RCN operated within and allowed it to continue to support its members.
- 4.38 The President thanked the Honorary Treasurer for her presentation and next invited members to ask their questions on the 2023 Annual Report of Council and the 2023 Financial Statements.
- 4.39 Geoff Earl queried how much the RCN had been spending annually on ICN membership. The Chief Financial Officer, Gush Uppal, responded that the RCN had spent £329k pro rata on ICN subscription in 2022, £477k in 2023, and £489k was forecast in 2024.
- 4.40 Geoff Earl asked about the cost of travel and accommodation for RCN staff attending ICN related events. The Chief Financial Officer responded that travel costs for staff attending ICN related events was just under £200 in 2022, circa £5k in 2023 and £200 was forecast in 2024. He added that staff travel time was not tracked.
- 4.41 Zeba Arif sought reassurance around Congress 2025 and asked about the ongoing strategic review of Congress.
- 4.42 The Executive Director of England, Patricia Marquis, responded that the strategic review into Congress was focussed on many considerations which included ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of Congress. Council had agreed to the review of Congress in 2018 but since then the brief had changed to consider, for example, the different ways of working following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.43 For 2025, the Executive Director of England added that Congress would be one day shorter due to venue availability, however the RCN was looking at how it could deliver the same experience as in previous years.
- 4.44 Professor Rod Thomson asked why the Council report had not mentioned the 2023 report into the Member Resolution Policy and the processes contained within it.
- 4.45 The Chair of Council responded that the 2023 report into the Member Resolution Policy had been internally commissioned and contained a variety of responses given on a confidential basis. Therefore, it was not possible to share this report, however Council had reviewed the report's recommendations and accepted the majority. Those recommendations had been incorporated into the latest iteration of the Member Resolution Policy which would be made available online, once signed off by Council.

- 4.46 He added that re-drafting the policy had taken longer than expected because Council sought the views of those who had previous experience of the policy to be taken into consideration.
- 4.47 Professor Rod Thomson then asked why those previously affected by the Member Resolution Policy had not been provided with a summary of the learning. The Chair of Council responded that a timeline of the policy and a summary of learning would accompany the latest iteration of the policy when this was published online.
- 4.48 Annafleur Van Mourik Broekman asked about the RCN Investment Portfolio and if there were any plans to disinvest from companies complicit in global conflicts.
- 4.49 The Chief Financial Officer responded that the RCN had an Ethical Investment Policy which dictated how the RCN Investment Portfolio operated. For example, there were exclusions in the policy, which included investments in cluster bombs and landmines, adult entertainment, alcohol, and civilian firearms. The Ethical Investment Policy was under constant review by the Finance and Investment Committee and when it made changes to this policy, the RCN's Investment Manager, Sarasin, would ensure that the Investment Portfolio was compliant. The Investment Manager, which was graded A by the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, made sure that there were no investments in any companies that breached human rights.
- 4.50 Annafleur Van Mourik Broekman also asked if a breakdown of the RCN Investments Portfolio would be made available. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that a breakdown of the Investment Portfolio would be made available online following the meeting.
- 4.51 Brian McAllister asked why the RCN headquarters was in Cavendish Square and if it would be cheaper for the organisation to move its headquarters outside of London. The Chief Financial Officer responded that the RCN paid peppercorn ground rent for the Cavendish Square building and that it was a fantastic heritage for the College that needed to be protected. There was a programme of work to invest in the building to ensure that it remained fit for purpose.
- 4.52 The General Secretary and Chief Executive, Professor Nicola Ranger, added that the Cavendish Square building had been gifted to the RCN and was an integral part of the organisation's history.
- 4.53 Tunde Aduragbemi asked why an increase in membership subscriptions was now necessary, particularly as RCN Council had previously mentioned that there were no plans to increase this.

- 4.54 The Chief Financial Officer noted that Council had not increased membership subscriptions in over 10 years but felt that a small increment was necessary to ensure the future financial sustainability of the College. Council had fully considered the impact on members and did not take the decision lightly, it therefore decided on the smallest increase that would ensure the rate of income continued to meet the rate of expenditure. He added that the RCN did not want to have rely upon its reserves to meet day-to-day expenditure, as the reserves would be used for necessary and significant multi-million-pound investments (such as investing in a new HR and finance system). £12m of the reserves had also been ringfenced for building maintenance to ensure that buildings remained fit for purpose and continued to deliver for staff and members.
- 4.55 Ali Upton stated that the Eastern region Council member had been unavailable now for 18 months and that she did not feel it was appropriate for the Eastern Board Chair to provide cover for this role on top of their existing responsibilities. She believed that there needed to be an appropriate work/ life balance for all elected members in carrying out their volunteer responsibilities for the RCN. She closed by asking what Council was doing to ensure there was no disconnect between itself and the regions moving forward.
- 4.56 The President responded by recognising the concerns raised and stating that these would be taken on board by Council should any Council members become unavailable in the future. While it was not appropriate to discuss individual cases, she fully empathised with any members who had seen an increase in their responsibilities following an elected member being unavailable.
- 4.57 The President reiterated that the Member Resolution Policy had been redrafted. The views of members who had been affected by the policy had been taken into account and the revised policy would shortly be made available online.
- 4.58 Jackie Davies asked about the £116k that had been donated by the public to the Strike Fund and whether this money had been spent. The Chief Financial Officer praised the generosity of the public and noted that this money had been helpful in contributing to the £3m+ that was paid to members to cover strike action. He added it was important that money continued to be ringfenced in the reserves to cover any future industrial action and potential pay outs to members to cover those who strike.
- 4.59 Joan Pons Laplana asked about the increase to membership subscriptions and the President noted that this question had already been answered earlier in the meeting by the Chief Financial Officer.

- 4.60 Jonathan Hanbury felt the increase to membership subscriptions was not unreasonable but recognised that the presentation on the 2023 Financial Statements showed the RCN was in a healthy position financially. In response, the President highlighted that the Chief Financial Officer had explained that the increase to membership subscriptions was essential to ensure that the rate of income continued to meet the day-to-day expenditure.
- 4.61 Geoffrey Walker spoke about his recent experience of representing a member at a Member Resolution Hearing and the challenge of being up against a legally qualified KC representing the RCN. He asked why the RCN sought legal representation externally when it had its own team of internal lawyers and whether spending money on KC lawyers was an appropriate use of members money.
- 4.62 The Executive Director of Legal and Member Relations, Jo Galbraith-Marten, responded that the RCN receives complaints, which are mostly from members about other members, and the RCN administers the member resolution process in compliance with the Member Resolution Policy, as approved by Council. She added that external lawyers had been used to act as chairs and investigating officers (but not to provide legal advice to the RCN) to ensure the process was independent of RCN staff and Council were fully briefed on the costs associated with this legal provision. She acknowledged that the RCN needed to improve its Member Resolution Policy and that the redrafted version would be presented to Council shortly for approval before being published online. She added that staff and members would be used more in the member resolution process in the future to help reduce costs, where this was possible, and where it was appropriate to do so.
- 4.63 Geoffrey Walker added that he felt the issue around the Member Resolution Policy had been staff and senior members failing to implement it properly. However, he was reassured that the RCN was looking to improve the process moving forward.
- 4.64 Bejoy Sebastian asked what proportion of income was spent on member services and activities that aimed to achieve fair pay for nursing. The Chief Financial Officer responded that the majority of expenditure was spent on member services, not only to fight for fair pay but on other challenging issues facing nursing, such as the increase in corridor care and the impact this was having on members.
- 4.65 Bejoy Sebastian followed up by asking how the RCN supported members who were struggling financially.

- 4.66 The Director of the RCN Foundation, Deepa Korea, responded that the RCN Foundation provided benevolent grants to help support nurses and midwives who were struggling financially. Further, the Foundation had spent around £200k on direct grants as well providing advice on income maximisation to several hundred members; that advice had helped to save those members on average £10k a year.
- 4.67 The President thanked everyone for their input and noted that all unanswered questions would be addressed in the Q&A document that would be published online after the meeting.

(The meeting adjourned at 15.15 and resumed at 15.25)

5. AGENDA ITEM 5 – TO CONSIDER AND VOTE ON TWO RESOLUTIONS

- 5.1 The President resumed the meeting and informed attendees that she had been joined on the top table by the General Secretary and Chief Executive, Professor Nicola Ranger, Chair of Council, Paul Vaughan, and the Executive Director of Governance, Natalie Zara.
- 5.2 On behalf of RCN Council, the Professional Nursing Committee and the Trade Union Committee, the President took the opportunity to formally congratulate Professor Nicola Ranger on her appointment as the RCN's new General Secretary and Chief Executive. Those present in the room gave her a round of applause.
- 5.3 The President then invited the Chair of Council to introduce item 5.
- 5.4 The Chair of Council began his speech by noting there were two resolutions to discuss and agree. The first was on the definition of Council Officers and the second was on Council Elections.
- 5.5 He noted that it was important for all members to focus on the future of the RCN when considering the resolutions. Both resolutions would make important and necessary changes and help the RCN to deliver its five-year strategy. And, as both were special resolutions, they required two-thirds majorities to pass.
- 5.6 On Resolution 1 covering the definition of Council Officers, the KPMG Report on Governance and the Independent Review of the Culture of the Royal College of Nursing by Bruce Carr KC, it was explained that both made recommendations designed to improve the governance processes, and culture, of the RCN.
- 5.7 These recommendations were accepted in full by Council in 2022. Both reports called for the need to clearly define key governance roles.

- 5.8 The reasons for this were to ensure greater understanding, distinction and mutual recognition and respect between roles and individuals. This applied to both the Executive and members to establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability.
- 5.9 A definition of Council Officers - which means Chair, Vice Chair and Honorary Treasurer - in the Standing Orders would set out clearly those responsible for holding the key governance positions within the Council. It would also draw a distinction between Council Officer roles and the President and Deputy President roles.
- 5.10 In addition, the changes to the Standing Orders would clarify that no person may hold more than one Office holder role at the same time and that none of the Officers may simultaneously hold the position of President or Deputy President. While this was commonly understood among the membership, and was best practice, it was not explicitly stated in the Standing Orders.
- 5.11 On Resolution 2 on Council elections, at the AGM last year members voted to extend the terms of office for current Council members until 31 December 2024 in order to provide stability while the recommendations of the Governance and Culture Review reports were implemented.
- 5.12 Consequently, all of Council were due to refresh at the end of the current year. This included the regional and country seats and the President and Deputy President positions.
- 5.13 Normally, the President and Deputy President elections were run in separate years to the elections for country and regional Council seats. While an election comprising the Presidential role and other seats on Council had not occurred previously, this would become the normal timetable in future years as there was no plan to return to separate Presidential elections. Running the elections in this way significantly reduced costs but may attract candidates to consider more than one role.
- 5.14 While the guidance had always been clear that people should stand for one role only in a Council election, it was not explicitly stated in the Standing Orders. The proposed additional sub-clauses were designed to make this clear and remove any ambiguity: candidates would only be able to put themselves forward for one role.
- 5.15 The President thanked the Chair of Council for his introduction and invited members to ask any questions.
- 5.16 Jane – Elizabeth Tooke asked whether there had been any discussion in relation to restricting Board elections and whether these arrangements in relation to Council Officers and Council elections would filter down to Boards.

- 5.17 The Executive Director of Governance assured members that there was no 'hidden agenda' in relation to Boards and that these resolutions related purely to Council. No discussion had taken place in relation to Board elections.
- 5.18 Ali Upton asked for clarification on Council Officers simultaneously standing for President and Deputy President. The Executive Director of Governance explained that once a Council Officer's term of office came to an end, they were free to take on the President or Deputy President role. The issue was that a member could not hold office at the same time as being President or Deputy President.
- 5.19 Ali Upton followed up with a question on whether these arrangements would filter down to prevent Council members also being the Chair of their country or regional Board. The Executive Director of Governance stated that this was just the start of a big programme of change and that all of those things would be considered in due course.
- 5.20 Jane – Elizabeth Tooke asked about the process for filling a vacancy when someone died in office and the length of time the newly appointed member would have in post. The Executive Director of Governance confirmed that in that instance, the casual vacancy process would be followed and the new member would be appointed until the end of the original tenure. It was possible that they would be able to stand for election for a second term at the end of that period but that would depend on their total length of service at that time.
- 5.21 The President then thanked all those who had asked questions. She confirmed that any unanswered questions would be addressed in the Q&A document that would be published online after the meeting.
- 5.22 The President stated that members would now have approximately 15 minutes to vote on the resolutions. She reminded members that the wording of the resolutions was available in the agenda of the meeting and that members attending the meeting in person would need to complete their poll cards which would be collected by the Governance Team. Those attending online were reminded to click the 'voting' tab on their screens.

(The meeting adjourned at 15.40 and resumed at 16.00)

6. AGENDA ITEM 6 - MATTERS OF A PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER

- 6.1 The President resumed the meeting and confirmed that all the poll cards in the room had been collected and would be counted by the RCN's independent scrutineers, Civica. Once all the votes had been counted and added to the votes cast online, the results would be revealed at the end of the meeting.

- 6.2 The President was pleased to welcome Denise Kelly, Chair of the Trade Union Committee, and Rachel Hollis, Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee, to the top table for item 6.
- 6.3 The President invited members to ask questions on any matters of a professional character.
- 6.4 Zeba Arif asked whether the RCN had a strategy to address the failure of UK governments to give members an appreciable pay rise.
- 6.5 The Chair of the Trade Union Committee reassured members that the RCN had a strategy in place. She stated that as soon as the NHS Pay Review Body recommendation on a pay award for nursing staff employed on Agenda for Change (AfC) contracts in England was announced, the RCN would be consulting members on whether they were prepared to accept or reject the offer and what action they would be prepared to take up to and including industrial action. She noted that the RCN had balloted members on industrial action in 2023 but did not meet the required threshold. The RCN remained in dispute with the UK government.
- 6.6 Zeba Arif followed up with a query on how the RCN would ensure it met the threshold for industrial action this year given how downhearted and lost many members currently felt.
- 6.7 Colin Poolman, Executive Director for RCN Scotland and Executive Team lead on pay, responded that it was important to note that the RCN was already putting pressure on the new government and had written to them to request the release of the NHS Pay Review Body report. The government's response to it would have an impact on the devolved administrations in both Wales and Northern Ireland which would need to make decisions on pay as well as the Labour government for England. He noted that negotiations were just beginning in Scotland.
- 6.8 The Executive Director for RCN Scotland emphasised that any delays were due to the government and not the RCN. The RCN would do all it could to meet the required thresholds and it would always be members who made the decisions. He added that the RCN would be putting all of its resources into informing members and encouraging members to vote. He urged those present to also encourage their colleagues to vote in order that the RCN could meet the thresholds unlike last time.
- 6.9 Zeba Arif requested that consideration be given to mobilising the RCN's retired members to talk to members and encourage them to vote. She noted that retired members could be a useful resource for the College.
- 6.10 The Chair of the Trade Union Committee welcomed this suggestion and stated that she would take it to the Trade Union Committee meeting the following day for discussion there. She recognised the amazing contribution that retired members already made to the RCN and thanked Zeba Arif for raising it.

- 6.11 Rod Thomson asked about the RCN's lobbying work with organisations such as the Local Government Association and Directors of Public Health in the UK to jointly tackle the cuts being made in relation to adult social care and children's social care. The current financial pressures on local authorities made it more likely that health visiting staff, school nursing staff and sexual health services would experience further cuts. While acknowledging that funding arrangements differed across the UK, Rod Thomson asked what was being done to ensure the RCN was working collaboratively with local government to ensure such services were protected and fully funded.
- 6.12 The Executive Director of RCN England, Patricia Marquis, responded that at a local level engagement was taking place through the Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) which by their nature were partnerships bringing a number of health and care organisations together. She stated that the RCN was aware of the current challenges in public health and addressing these was high on its agenda. As changes would happen at a local level, engagement with the ICSs was key. She stated that the point around collective working at a national level was different and would be picked up.
- 6.13 Rod Thomson added that he was aware of the issues from both sides as a commissioner and a provider and he believed that the cuts being made were so severe that they would lead to a significant loss of critical services should the RCN not lobby effectively with the new government. He highlighted that the ICSs were in England only. Rod Thomson noted that because of the current focus on acute services, particularly acute physical care services, mental health services, for example, were being asked to make efficiency savings even though they had already met financial targets.
- 6.14 Vicky Brotherton asked whether the RCN's previous CEO declared her political affiliation.
- 6.15 The Chair of Council stated that the RCN had a declaration of interests policy and everyone who held a governance role or was on the Executive Team was required to complete a declaration. He said he was content that all relevant declarations were made.
- 6.16 Martin MacGregor asked what action the RCN was going to take to address the misuse of information with regards to the EGM petition.
- 6.17 The Chief of Staff, Phil Ball, stated that the RCN took protection of its member data very seriously and did a lot of work on information governance. In respect of the EGM petition early last year, not one but two external reports were commissioned due to the seriousness, the second of which was only received earlier this week. Both reports confirmed that there was significant fraud, but neither was able to identify the perpetrator. Both found no evidence that RCN services and systems were at fault. There had been no hacking of the RCN's membership database and no data had been exposed in any way.

- 6.18 Further to the question asked earlier in the meeting, the Chief of Staff explained that the first company investigating had asked whether members signed the petition to establish whether the names that appeared on the petition were genuine or not which was the only way to establish the extent of the fraudulent activity. The data collected was completely confidential. He apologised if there was no information within the emails that went out at the time making that clear to members. He stated that the members contacted had been kept informed of progress with both of the investigations since and would now be updated following receipt of the second report to confirm that it supported the first and that it had not been possible to establish the origins of the data leak.
- 6.19 Shelley Pearce asked how the RCN could strengthen its governance arrangements for Branches and Boards, including succession planning and supporting those members to deliver in their elected roles.
- 6.20 The Executive Director of RCN England recognised that work to improve governance arrangements for Branches was ongoing with some Branches requiring more assistance than others. The Activist Academy, as part of the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence, would be able to support local Branches moving forward, ensuring they had the right structure as well as providing support to those members in helping them to run successful Branches. She added that many Boards had been focussing on looking forward and succession planning.
- 6.21 Ian Norris referred to the minutes of the RCN's 2023 AGM where he asked why the RCN did not seek to influence the NHS Staff Council to enforce the correct payment of NHS staff who worked additional or overtime hours over their contractual hours in accordance with their contractual agreements as contained in the Agenda for Change handbook. He asked for a follow up to this question.
- 6.22 The Executive Director of RCN Scotland informed that there was no easy answer to this question. He noted that the correct payment for NHS staff who worked additional or overtime hours was raised at the NHS Staff Council on a regular basis. He was hopeful that the change in UK government would see a strengthening of the existing contractual arrangements to ensure they were enforced as the RCN expected them to be. On overtime payments, he recognised that members were entitled to this as part of their Agenda for Change contracts, however this was not utilised as it should be. He added that the RCN continued to push for job evaluation reviews and where this was continually ignored by employers, the RCN would intervene and go into formal dispute, if necessary. Moving forward, the RCN would be actively encouraging members to seek a job evaluation if they had not had one in so many years, to ensure they were being appropriately remunerated.
- 6.23 Peggy Pryer recognised that there was a piece of work around supporting internationally educated nurses who may come from countries where they were not able to take industrial action and may be fearful of doing so for fear of repercussions.

- 6.24 The President understood why some internationally educated nurses did not support industrial action, particularly if they were from countries where this was illegal. However, she wanted the RCN to support all of its members, including internationally educated nurses, to be fearless in using their voices.
- 6.25 Peggy Pryer invited eligible members to join the retired members network steering group. The President noted that retired members could work with the internationally educated nurses and share their wealth of experience and knowledge.
- 6.26 David Vickers sought updates on the Membership Category Review and the Forums and Networks Review.
- 6.27 The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC), Rachel Hollis, provided an update on the Forums and Networks Review. The recommendations had been agreed and progress had been made in several areas, such as streamlining the governance arrangements for forums. There was a greater challenge around networks as the RCN currently did not have a clear definition of network. As a result, there were many networks at the RCN that were operating very differently from one another. The recommendations around networks would therefore take longer to implement, however the PNC was working with staff to formalise the network structure and have a clear definition of what constituted a network.
- 6.28 The Chair of Council stated that the Membership Category Review was ongoing with some quick wins, such as for career break membership. The RCN Governance Committee would be taking on this work moving forward and there was a focus on student and Nursing Associate membership categories at present.
- 6.29 Celia Manson sought reassurance that any ongoing work on the recent Congress resolution on assisted suicide/assisted dying considered the wide range of members' views on this topic.
- 6.30 The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee responded that the Committee had already been carrying out work in this area from a previous Congress resolution and would likely be assigned the similar 2024 resolution. She recognised the topic was complex but reassured those present that the wide range of members views would be fully considered; an expert reference group would be set up to assist.
- 6.31 Martin MacGregor asked about the process to call an Extraordinary General Meeting and how this would be facilitated.

- 6.32 The Executive Director of Governance responded that under the 'Get Involved' section of the RCN website, there was a link to 'raise a petition or general meeting resolution' which was a secure platform for members to initiate a petition or general meeting resolution. A link would be generated that members could share with one another, however all information entered onto the RCN website would be confidentially stored and GDPR compliant.
- 6.33 Pontiana Bruno asked about the RCN's reimbursement process. The Chief Financial Officer stated that the RCN generally processed all reimbursement requests within two weeks but asked if the member had any specific concerns to contact him directly after the meeting.
- 6.34 Dionne Daniel asked about the RCN's engagement with Executive Directors of Nursing and Chief Nurses who seemed to be the key to influencing the direction of nursing. She also requested an update on the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence.
- 6.35 The General Secretary and Chief Executive responded to this question. She stated that she believed the College had done very well engaging with senior nurses in the past but had not done so well over the last 8-10 years. A lot had been done for more junior staff but engagement with senior leaders was now lacking. The General Secretary and Chief Executive agreed that they were key and that they needed to feel that the College was a safe space.
- 6.36 The General Secretary and Chief Executive explained that with the establishment of the Institute, there was now a Leadership Academy headed by Associate Director, Emily McWhirter. One of the Academy's first tasks was to re-establish that safe space and begin to improve engagement with senior nurse leaders. The General Secretary and Chief Executive said that she had heard 'loud and clear' from members that this needed to be UK-wide as people wanted to be able to speak as one collective voice and have a safe space. She wanted the College to be that truly safe space for its senior leaders.
- 6.37 Ali Upton thanked Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee, Rachel Hollis, and Vice Chair of Council, Theresa Porrett, for assisting with an issue she raised at Congress 2024. She was grateful for their prompt resolution to the situation.
- 6.38 Shaida Ghazala Akhtar spoke to make members aware that there was a peaceful protest currently taking place outside the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) by Equality 4 Black Nurses. She asked what the RCN's response was to the independent culture review of the NMC.
- 6.39 The President confirmed that that the RCN had formally responded to the review and had released a statement that was available on its website. She stated that the NMC played a crucial role in health and care and must be fit to uphold standards and safeguard the public. The President

acknowledged that the report was distressing to read and showed that the NMC was failing in its core duties. The recognition of those failings in the report was a start but the trust of nursing professionals and patients would only be re-established through immediate and ongoing action. The RCN was committed to ensuring that, in the future, the NMC represented the modern reality and interests of nursing, patients and midwifery.

- 6.40 The President acknowledged that deep rooted issues took time to resolve but that there could be no further delay in addressing the backlog of cases and making genuine improvements to fitness to practise screening. The RCN would represent the views of many registrants to secure the necessary reforms and improvements. While the majority of staff would never appear before the NMC, those who did deserved a transparent and fair process, free from racism and all forms of bias. It also had to be timely and recognise the impact on individuals.
- 6.41 The President stated that the second NMC review by Ijeoma Omambala KC into concerns about fitness to practise cases must take note of the findings but make more substantive recommendations. The need for change was urgent. The President noted that the RCN was currently on its own journey and had recently launched a strategy to become more diverse, inclusive and reflective as an organisation that truly represents its members. Through this process, the College had seen that many nursing staff experienced racism and bullying on a daily basis which was never acceptable, and the NMC must be fit to play a stronger part in bringing that to an end.
- 6.42 The General Secretary and Chief Executive agreed with the President's comments and emphasised how appalled everyone at the RCN had been by reading the recent report. She highlighted that the NMC had failed its inspections three times so these issues were not new and had been going on for as long as ten years. Enough was now enough. She recognised that the impact on individuals was shocking and that it was disproportionately affecting members of the global majority. It was disturbing that there were very few senior nurses making decisions or reviewing decisions on fitness to practise cases. It was noted that there was only one senior nurse on the Board at the NMC and there were very few nurses making triage decisions right at the beginning looking at what the impact was to the public, the patient and the member of staff.
- 6.43 The RCN was aware that there had been a lot of public criticism of the NMC, which was understandable, but the RCN was trying to be very targeted in its response to set out what the College believed the solutions were. The General Secretary and Chief Executive emphasised the RCN's belief that getting this right at the source and ensuring strong nursing leadership within the NMC was absolutely key. The RCN had been invited to meetings with officials from the Department of Health and Social Care as well as senior leaders at the NMC to voice its opinion and play a key role in effecting change. It was crucial that the NMC got this right because if there was no NMC, members would be regulated alongside other

professionals. She stated that the RCN's role was to be a critical friend and very solution-focused with the NMC to stop them failing another inspection. It was appalling that approximately 5,000 people were awaiting fitness to practise hearings, some of whom had been waiting 6-7 years to have their cases heard. The report was absolutely clear that nurses had taken their own lives because of this so the RCN would be uncompromising in its response. It would not, however, be commenting via social media. It was felt that that was not the place to discuss this very serious professional issue. It required a strong and professional response which the RCN was absolutely prepared to give.

- 6.44 As an agency nurse, Zvichapera Jokonya stated that she felt the private sector was often left out when it came to salaries and general involvement. She asked whether the RCN believed there was a divide between the NHS and the private sector.
- 6.45 The Chair of Council explained that engaging with members in the independent health and social care sector was more challenging due to the vast number of different employers. There were some examples of good practice, however, where the RCN's newly employed independent health and social care sector leads, had been able to galvanise members across the country. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, for example, in the Yorkshire and the Humber region through going out on strike, members at one employer had managed to get better terms and conditions of employment. The Chair of Council stated that health and social care was a big issue for the new government and that they would need to give thought to how this was done differently going forward. The RCN intended to be in that lobbying space to ensure it effectively represented its members in the independent sector.
- 6.46 The Executive Director of RCN England understood why it might look like there was a division between the work the RCN did in the NHS and in the independent sector. She believed that there was a need to get more members in the independent sector active to help the RCN in what it could achieve. In relation to general practice nursing, for example, where there were thousands of different practices across England with staff employed on different terms and conditions and on different pay rates, there was no easy way of rectifying that. The RCN was currently working with the British Medical Association (BMA) to seek a resolution to this but understood that that process would take time. In the meantime, she urged members to work with the RCN and their employers.
- 6.47 The Executive Director of RCN England highlighted that the RCN had designed its employment standards, which were currently in their final draft form, to act as a toolkit/ benchmark to help members in other sectors look at what they should be getting and negotiate, with RCN support if needed, for those terms and conditions and employment standards in their own employer. The Executive Director of RCN England acknowledged that this was a very difficult space to move into. However, she highlighted that there were some early signs that the new government might be interested

in sectoral bargaining and having a collective bargaining process for all social care providers but this was again something that would take time to implement. Finally, through the RCN's independent health and social care sector leads, there were some networks being established, for example for agency nurses and nurses working in care homes. She encouraged members to get involved in those networks.

- 6.48 In response to a comment in the hall, the Executive Director of RCN England confirmed that seeking and maintaining recognition agreements across the 75,000 employers where RCN members worked was not something that could be achieved overnight and would not solve the problems straight away.
- 6.49 Mark Butler highlighted the importance of engaging with the Branches who were key to promoting the RCN within the independent sector.
- 6.50 Sana Gul asked whether the RCN had any solid plans to strengthen the inclusion of early career nurses and midwives into leadership positions within the RCN for the coming years.
- 6.51 The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee stated that just that morning a workshop of the Professional Nursing Committee had taken place involving the RCN's professional lead for students as well as a member of the RCN UK Students Committee to give some thought to how the RCN could strengthen the journey that begins as a student nurse moving through years of involvement with the College. There were two important developments happening now, the first being the establishment of the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence which encompassed the Academy of Nursing Practice as well as the Academy of Nursing Leadership, both of which would be critical in improving the journey from student nurse through to leadership of the RCN. The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee agreed that there was a need to encourage more early career nurses and midwives into leadership positions within the College and that the Activism Academy would also assist in enabling this. Additionally, she stated that the RCN's new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy would ensure the RCN was more inclusive as an organisation going forward to bring in new voices, new perspectives and be able to guide new potential into leadership positions within the College. Further, succession planning was also important in recognising and involving those early career nurses and midwives who wished to become leaders within the College.
- 6.52 The General Secretary and Chief Executive added that the RCN had also made some structural changes, supported by the Professional Nursing Committee and approved by RCN Council, to enable early career nurses to join forum steering committees by removing the requirement to have been in membership for a period of 3 years before becoming eligible. It was hoped that this would encourage more members, particularly early career nurses, to get involved in the work of the RCN's forums.

- 6.53 Holly Johnston discussed the difficulty faced by students and newly qualified nurses in getting nursing jobs. There was particular concern over potential Trust recruitment freezes.
- 6.54 The Executive Director of RCN England responded that the RCN was aware of the challenges faced by students and newly qualified nurses in being able to secure their first jobs. The RCN had been exploring the issue and found that there were still a wide range of jobs available, however these were sometimes not in the speciality that some students or newly qualified members wanted to work in. There were some areas where there genuinely appeared to be no jobs available, and the RCN was raising concerns locally and with universities to see what extra support could be provided. Meanwhile, the RCN was continuing to work with the NHS to ensure that no Band 5 jobs required significant experience which was not allowed under Agenda for Change. The RCN would continue to do all it could to ensure that student members had jobs available to go into once they were newly qualified.
- 6.55 Geoffrey Walker reflected on the recent NMC Independent Culture Review. He suggested that the RCN introduce Key Performance Indicators in its revised Member Resolution Policy to ensure that members could hold staff and elected members to account.
- 6.56 The President responded by recognising that the RCN had work to do but that she was proud of the progress made by Council in 2023. She felt that the RCN had moved on considerably since the publication of the Bruce Carr KC Report and KPMG Governance Report but noted that a change in organisational culture took time.
- 6.57 John Hill enquired whether members could expect to see Forums more involved with the Branches in the future as part of the Forums and Networks Review.
- 6.58 The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee considered that the Branches and Forums had different functions and therefore members on each were active in different ways. For example, many of the Forums contributed to national issues such as providing feedback on national policy or guidance. Whereas Branches were involved in supporting members at a more local level. Some Forums had already been involved with Branches by providing educational sessions. There would be learning to see how these two different platforms for members to be active could learn from one another and support each other's different activities moving forward. Both the Forums and Branches were crucial in terms of how the RCN supported and encouraged activism.
- 6.59 Martin MacGregor asked again about the increase in membership subscriptions and why money was not being taken from the reserves.

- 6.60 The Chief Financial Officer reiterated his earlier responses and highlighted that matching income with the day-to-day expenditure was crucial for the long-term financial sustainability of the College. He noted the recent market volatility and that this was why the RCN needed to retain a healthy reserves balance.
- 6.61 Joan Pons Laplana asked why the RCN Awards had not taken place this year and whether there were any plans to reinstate them in the future.
- 6.62 The President confirmed that the RCN Awards took place immediately before Congress 2024 opened at the ICC in Wales this year. It was believed this question related to the RCNi Awards.
- 6.63 Jane McCreadie requested the RCN's support in addressing the huge rise in children suffering with mental health issues since COVID. She asked that consideration be given to establishing a Children and Young People's Mental Health Forum and highlighted that she already knew members who would be interested in joining such a Forum. She anticipated that there would also be a number of members working in A&E, children's wards, schools and residential homes who would be interested. Jane McCreadie explained the instances where it would be helpful to have a CYP Mental Health Forum to go to for advice as children's mental health was very different to adult's mental health.
- 6.64 The President thanked Jane McCreadie for articulating the case for a CYP Mental Health Forum and confirmed that the RCN now had a formal process in place for requesting the establishment of a new Forum.
- 6.65 The General Secretary and Chief Executive acknowledged the issues currently facing CYP nursing and in order to address these had upgraded the RCN's CYP professional lead post within the Nursing Department to enable an individual with even more experience to be recruited. That member of staff, Carli Whittaker, was now in post and would be looking at the issues around children's mental health as a priority. The General Secretary and Chief Executive recognised that many members, and also their children, were struggling post-COVID so there was a need to provide a toolkit for nurses, not just for the people they cared for, but within their own families. She agreed that there was an urgent need to establish a CYP Mental Health Forum.
- 6.66 The Director of the RCN Foundation (RCNF) added that CYP mental health had also been high on the agenda of the RCN Foundation for several years. RCNF had carried out a scoping review which clearly identified the big issue was that young people were not just presenting themselves to trained mental health nurses but they were also presenting to school nurses and in A&E departments. The RCNF had worked with the University of Huddersfield to create an evidence-based toolkit which included assessment and intervention and was funding the development of a module on how to use that toolkit. Work was now underway to promote the toolkit and get it into the hands of the people who needed it.

- 6.67 Maureen Harris asked what steps the RCN was taking to support nurses with transitioning into self-employment or into entrepreneurial roles within the NHS or health care sector.
- 6.68 The President stated that she was unsure of the answer to this question and agreed to provide a written response after the meeting.
- 6.69 Maya Sacre noted that at Congress 2024 a motion was passed to update and implement a policy for responding to humanitarian crises. She requested more information on the process for updating and implementing this policy and asked for an assurance that this would be member led with consideration given to the possibility of creating a member working group.
- 6.70 The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee stated that she had been the proposer of that item at Congress. It was noted that Council would be reviewing all work arising from Congress 2024 at its upcoming meeting including next steps on this particular item. The process was that Council would review all resolutions that had been passed and allocate a committee to take each one forward. That may be the Professional Nursing Committee or the Trade Union Committee, for example, each of which was a committee of members. The Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee confirmed that she had already put the member who seconded this item in touch with the Associate Director of the Academy of International Nursing. The proposal being taken to the next meeting of Council was that this work should be overseen by the International Committee, which was a committee of members chaired by the RCN President. It was noted that those members had significant experience of humanitarian work and that they would now work with the member lead for that item to agree next steps.
- 6.71 The President thanked all those who had voted at Congress to pass that resolution.
- 6.72 The President then thanked all those who had asked questions and informed the meeting that any unanswered questions would be included in the Q&A document which would be published online after the event.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- 7.1 Before closing the meeting, the President announced the results of the resolutions voted on at item 5. The results were as follows:

RESOLUTION 1 – (Special resolution – requires a 2/3 majority)

To amend the Standing Orders as per Annex A to the agenda.

The proposed amendments in Annex A can be summarised as follows:

Annex A

- To amend the Standing Orders to include a definition and paragraph defining and setting out who the Council Officers are; and
- To amend the Standing Orders to make it clear that no Officer may simultaneously be President/Vice President and vice versa.

For: 4,026 (96.92%)

Against: 128 (3.08%)

Abstain: 116

The resolution was PASSED.

RESOLUTION 2 - (Special resolution – requires a 2/3 majority)

To amend the Standing Orders as per Annex B to the agenda.

The proposed amendments in Annex B can be summarised as follows:

Annex B

- To amend the Standing Orders to make it clear that no Council member may occupy more than one of the 17 Council Member roles on Council simultaneously.
- To amend the Standing Orders to make it clear that in a Council election, candidates may not stand for more than one position.

For: 4,033 (97.04%)

Against: 123 (2.96%)

Abstain: 110

The resolution was PASSED.

- 7.2 The President closed the meeting and thanked all members for their participation.

(The meeting closed at 17.30)