

TRUSTEES' TALK

October 2020

The current Board of Trustees (Council) thought it could be useful to provide you all with regular updates about what we are working on. This is all part of my "Trust and Truth" agenda and our desire to be totally transparent with members. It is our intention to email these to you fairly regularly. These will be informal friendly emails and will not necessarily be final decisions as we work through projects; much more updates and thoughts as we go along.

Through the Representatives Committee we hope that you feel you all now get the opportunity to discuss key issues and feel that we are listening and engaging with the various groups and membership. We are genuinely listening to what members have to say, but as trustees, we do have the oversight that individuals will quite reasonably lack in part, and this may mean we make decisions that will not necessarily align with your personal view. However, we hope that you will trust us to deliver a strategy and governance review that will lead the RPS to become more inclusive, modernised and progressive, whilst respecting our existing membership.

Currently, the Board are working on a number of projects, aimed at delivering this cohesive strategy and governance review. We may need to hold one or more EGMs early next years to achieve this. In my AGM President's Address, given after the AGM last month, I highlighted much of the ongoing work. We aim to publish the Address in a future issue of the RPS Journal, but for the moment we felt it would be good to start off this new 'Trustees' Talk' communication with a brief overview of the various projects.



Alan Hodgson

STRATEGY

Since the last document was conceived in 2018 much has changed both for the RPS and the world in general. Council is therefore developing an updated strategy and we are rigorously working through a well-defined process. We have identified key stakeholders and are engaging with them and staff – more information will follow in the coming months.

As CEO, Evan is working closely with Council on this to ensure the final strategy will be reflective of the needs of our members, other stakeholders and is fit for purpose. We intend for this to be an evolving document and anticipate that we will be ready to publish in the first quarter of 2021.



Heather Field

DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

A year ago we began to put together a strategy for diversifying every aspect of the RPS. Now we are pushing ahead with a group of 'critical friends', led by trustee Andy Golding, to measure our progress, and to make sure everyone feels welcome and supported, to encourage participation and to offer opportunities for all.

With our consultation and with our advisors we aim to ensure equality and inclusion in everything we do - governance, staffing, membership, education, exhibitions; and to reach out to new audiences and seek to be relevant to the whole of society. Members already come from a wide range of different cultures, especially amongst our international membership. We will build on this to ensure we are relevant and attractive to young people and to the full diverse population in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability. We are determined to demonstrate that everyone is genuinely welcome and supported, and seek to remove visible and invisible barriers to engaging with us.



Andy Golding

GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Governance encompasses our Charter, Rules and By-Laws. Over the years these have been reviewed and updated, with some additional changes in interim years. With the fast moving changes of the world around us the RPS needs to stay relevant and up to date. As our various governing rules dictate the parameters of how we can operate it is imperative that we conduct a thorough review.

This project is currently ongoing and so far we have interviewed and surveyed a broad spectrum of stakeholders to establish what currently works/needs revision. We have undertaken research on other similar Charities, identifying two where best practise is evident, from which we can learn. In the next week an interim draft report will be delivered to Council by our external consultant. The following day this will be briefed to the RepCom members to update them.

The next step will be to formulate and agree proposed changes/amendments. It is anticipated that we will have the final proposed changes completed and these will be presented to the membership for approval at the end of February/early March 2021 at an EGM. It will be important to make any changes needed to the By-Laws in plenty of time in readiness for the 2021 AGM. This is key as in September 2021 new Trustees will be voted on to Council.

For anyone wishing to check out the current governance documents they can be found on <https://rps.org/about/governance/>



Janet Haines

TRUSTEES SKILLS

The success or failure of any organisation, however large or small, depends so much on the calibre of those entrusted with its governance, and their individual and collective skills, experience, knowledge and personal qualities. Good governance puts extreme demands on Trustees so it is essential that the skills of the Board of Trustees (what we call 'Council') encompass all of those skills that are required to deliver the organisation's strategy.

When Alan asked me to lead on the process to identify and appoint co-opted Trustees, we decided to look first to our strategic plan and then to the skills of the elected Trustees. We found that the RPS does not have an effective strategic plan and so my first job was to design a process for undertaking a strategic review (June 2020). For this, I followed best practice guidance from the Charity Commission, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and New Philanthropy Capital. The strategic review process is almost complete and Heather is now leading on completing the review and transitioning this to a strategic planning process.

My next task was to find a way to identify and map the skills of the existing Trustees (July 2020). All RPS Trustees have now completed a Skills Audit using a model that we developed following a wide-ranging scoping exercise with reference to competency framework and skills audit models from the Institute of Directors, the Community & Voluntary Services Organisation and the Chartered Governance Institute.

When the strategic planning process is complete, Heather and I will be able to undertake a gap analysis that will identify what additional skills are required on Council. This can then inform the Trustee co-option process to ensure that Council has the necessary skills to deliver the Strategic Plan for the RPS.



Simon Hill

FINANCE AND BUDGETS

This area is much more ongoing than perhaps the projects stated above, but of course is paramount in how we can deliver the strategy. For a number of reasons, we inherited a particularly challenging financial position and a significant amount of work is being undertaken to put the RPS on a solid financial footing as we go forward.

We are working closely with Evan and the staff team to ensure all costs are carefully controlled and new sources of income are identified. This won't be a quick fix, but with the right strategy and strong management, we expect the financial performance to improve over the medium term.



John Miskelly

We hope that this first 'Trustees' Talk' email sets the scene for you all. It is likely future emails won't be so lengthy, but we felt it was a good idea to give you a thorough first briefing so that you understand the basic ideas behind the various projects.

If you wish to provide any feedback to this email then do by all means contact any of us. You will find our email addresses on www.rps.org/about/meet-the-team

Please feel free to share this email with any RPS member who might be interested. If you have received this email via a third party and would like to be contacted about future Trustees' Talk updates, please email janet.haines@rps.org. Similarly, if you no longer wish to receive this email.

