

Draft President's Speech to AGM 2010

Good Evening Everybody and thank you for coming tonight. It shows you have an interest both in pharmacy and the Society

I, like so many others of you here this evening, have practised pharmacy all my working life, which is why .-I am pleased to have been able to give something back to the profession through involvement with the Council of the Society, most recently as its President.

When presented with the Government's White Paper, "Trust, Assurance and Safety" nearly 4 years ago, all health professional regulators were faced with the realisation that a new dawn was beginning in the way healthcare professionals in the four home countries of the United Kingdom were to be regulated, and also in the way in which their regulatory bodies were organised. None more so than ourselves and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

Both of us faced significant changes in terms of future strategic direction and structures. And as member organisations, we both conducted a conversation with the membership on the best way forward . On the basis of

the different responses received from registrants, we have each chosen separate paths, with some similar features.

We have both committed to:

- regulatory arrangements governed by joint lay and pharmacist councils.
- CHRE oversight of our regulation
- increased powers for our Fitness to Practise Committee, including interim orders and other powers of sanction other than simply removal from the register.
- introducing Continuing Professional Development as a compulsory component of registration.

And we are both still adhering to the Government's desire for revalidation models to be developed, based upon identified risk, for all regulated health professionals.

But in one very significant area we have taken a different view.

The RPSGB determined to completely separate its professional and regulatory roles, with a new General Pharmaceutical Council to take on regulation, and the RPSGB becoming the professional body - The Royal

Pharmaceutical Society. Albeit, they will continue sharing accommodation as well as some facilities such as IT, HR and support functions. .

Alternatively, Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, on the basis of an independently conducted consultation with the membership - the 2007 Helm Report – resolved that this was not a direction appropriate or proportionate for the profession or public in Northern Ireland, but rather, a model existed whereby the strengths of both local regulation, and local professional leadership, could be enjoyed – by creating a Council with responsibility for regulation, and a new arms-length Professional Forum to drive the Professional Agenda forward.

Although again there are some similarities with RPS model – there will be separate governance arrangements but shared support facilities.

Having launched these proposals, it was enormously encouraging to receive the unanimous support of the Northern Ireland Assembly for this approach in 2008, a year after the White Paper's publication.

Given that this is the preferred direction of registrants, Assembly Members and Council, I, and my predecessor have made it our priority to see it achieved.

So if 2007/08 was a year of drawing up and approving the blueprints, 2008/09 consisted of preparing the ground, 2009/10 has certainly seen some measurable work in laying the foundations, notably the drafting of a new legislative framework, and the appointment of a Professional Forum Manager, Julie Greenfield to drive forward the creation of this new body for professional representation.

This is certainly an exciting time to be President and also for the membership of the Society and I hope members will like what they see in the coming year.

But as well as creating the future, we must also continue to manage the present.

Therefore, amongst the highlights for me over the past year, was gaining an agreement on a new Corporate Strategy to guide the Society from 2010 to 2013.

It sets out 8 key strategic aims, some of which are very specific to functions, but 3 are over-arching and I think worth describing as they will give you a

flavour of the spirit in which we now seek to conduct our work. They are primarily about partnership working and accountability.

Key Strategic Aim 3 – To identify and work with appropriate partners to ensure delivery is sustainable, effective and provides value for money

As a pharmacist, I have to declare a personal interest in keeping the registration fee at a reasonable level - but which still provides adequate resources to carry out the necessary work of the Society. One of the ways in which we can do this is by ensuring that, we do not duplicate activity, and also by learning from the experience of organisations who have similar roles; in other words - partnership working.

This is not a new outlook for our Society . For many years we have operated successful and sustainable partnership arrangements, with the Royal Society on matters such as University Accreditation and reciprocal registration arrangements, and with the DHSSPS in investigations, prosecutions and Statutory Committee cases.

However, there is a clear desire by the current Council, to maximise the effectiveness of our partnership working and, if possible, and where sensible, find new partners, or expand current partnerships.

Some other partners we are developing and expanding working relationships with are:

- The newly established General Pharmaceutical Council and the new RPS;
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland;
- The other UK and European professional bodies and regulators;
and,
- Other local professional regulators such as the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

Where we face common challenges, much can be learned and improved by sharing experience and pooling resource.

Key Strategic Aim 5 – To ensure that relevant stakeholders have influence in all aspects of policy making and planning

In terms of engagement with stakeholders, the earlier their involvement, the better and more useful the outcome.

All of us at times are overcome by “consultation fatigue”, but we haven’t run a consultation yet that hasn’t given us fresh insights and contributed to the final outcome .

Beyond consultation, we also want to ensure that stakeholder engagement is part of our corporate governance agenda and day-to-day working arrangements.

This is the thinking behind the Public and Professional fora.

No major policy or planning decisions of the Society will be made without full reference to our primary stakeholders: the people who develop, deliver and receive pharmaceutical services.

Julie Greenfield, Professional Forum Manager, is in attendance tonight, and can speak to you individually about the plans in place for the Professional Forum’s launch and its development in 2010/11. I do believe it will be the voice for professional pharmacy leadership for Northern Ireland .

Key Strategic Aim 8 – To develop and publish results against measures that are focussed on the outputs of the organisation’s work

Accountability is the last subject I intend to address. , This is very much the principle behind this Corporate Strategy Aim.

The purpose of this evening's meeting is to give you a direct opportunity to hold us to account However in order to do this we need to give you the appropriate tools and information..

One way of providing that, is clear, transparent and consistent performance measures.

In 2010/11, we will be working towards a way of reporting, showing how we operate in a more useful and easily understandable manner. .

And so, to come to a close. This is the 85th AGM of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland. . Older than the United Nations and the European Union!

But the AGM is not just another meeting – and it is not just to hear from me, the Chief Executive or the Treasurer. It's an opportunity to hear from all of you in the room.

After the Chief Executive's and Treasurer's speeches we will be moving to questions, to my mind, a very important part of the meeting.

I hope you will take the opportunity to seek clarification on any burning issues, and we'll do our best to provide you with the answers.

And in case you are under any misapprehension that we don't listen. We do.

We heard your views on fees last time we consulted on the matter, and have worked hard to produce efficiencies against rising activity pressures to enable a freeze in 2010.

So your input can and does make a difference. We are responsive to our stakeholders. We do listen. We do respond.

And I would like to thank *you* for listening to me.

I will now hand over to Trevor Patterson, our Chief Executive, to elaborate on our work and plans for the future.