

**The Ninety-Sixth Annual Meeting
of the
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland**

Via Zoom

Thursday, 14 October 2021 at 7.15pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Matters of Accuracy
3. Minutes of 95th Annual General Meeting
4. President's Address
5. Head of Business Operations Financial Report
6. Questions to Regulator
7. Chair of the Pharmacy Forum NI's Address
8. Questions to Pharmacy Forum NI
9. Close of Meeting

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MINUTES

The meeting commenced at 19:15 with a welcome to all attendees by Julie Greenfield.

1. The Minutes of 95th Annual General Meeting were presented to the Annual General Meeting.
2. No matters of accuracy were raised.
3. The Minutes were proposed by Eamon O'Donnell and seconded by Sheelin McKeagney.
4. President's Address

A year ago, no-one would have predicted another extraordinary year.

On behalf of Council, I would like to again congratulate all pharmacists across all settings for their resilience and continued ability to adapt to these unique and challenging circumstances whilst still maintaining high standards.

The Annual Report 2020-21 discusses the regulatory steps we have taken since the start of the pandemic and additional measures taken since early June 2020. The pandemic has impacted upon some of our planned work. However, we are pleased that it has not halted progression on all areas of reform and, in some ways, it has brought new focus and has accelerated activity.

Despite the restrictions caused by Government regulations, with Council's approval, we were able to hold the summer registration assessment, at short notice, as close as possible to the usual date. In doing so, we shortened the time period normally required for the release of assessment results and registration. I am pleased to report that the pass rate for the summer assessment was consistent with previous years despite the disruption throughout the training year.

In January 2021, Council approved the new Standards for Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists which focus on a greater application of science, clinical practice, risk management, patient consultation and the development of independent prescribing skills. We are working closely with the Department of Health (DoH), NICPLD and our local universities to fully implement the new Standards by 2026/27, and making progress in the transition from the pre-registration year to the new Foundation Training Year which, in future, will be delivered by NICPLD and quality assured by the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

We are also pleased to continue to work with the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) in England to progress policy proposals for regulatory reform across all UK regulators. We will continue to engage on this work as we seek to ensure improvements to our outdated legislation.

I would like to congratulate Pharmacy Forum NI for its work throughout the past year; in particular, its ground-breaking and inspiring Pharmacy Future Programme.

Finally, on behalf of Council, I would like to pay tribute to all the staff of the Pharmaceutical Society NI. During this period of unprecedented change, they have ensured that the core business of public protection has been maintained through their hard work, diligence and flexibility despite ever-growing demand.

5. Head of Business Operations' Financial Report

Chair of the Finance & Performance Committee

During 2020/2021, the organisation has maintained expenditure within the existing fee structure and this has been achieved with only one fee increase since 2009. Specific development projects have been delayed by legislative issues mainly due to the effects of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In terms of financial performance, income is largely the same although there has been a small increase in the last two years due to an increase in income from registration and retention fees.

Expenditure is in line with predictions and largely comprises staff salaries, projects, legislative change and Statutory and Scrutiny Committee costs.

There has been a significant increase in investments following a decrease of £81k last year. The Investment Strategy is reviewed by Council annually.

Fees were considered by the Finance & Performance Committee. The organisation must hold six months' operating expenses at all times and has several projects in the pipeline. It was considered that registrant members would want the organisation to hold fees at their current rate due to the uncertainties we face at present due to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Head of Business Operations

Total income decreased by £21k compared to the previous financial year to £1,344k. This variance is made up of an increase in retention fees of £41k which is offset by a reduction in registration of £23k, recovery of costs of £24k, dividends and interest of £10k, costs relating to the tutor course of £4k and examination income. The Statutory and Scrutiny Committee future caseload is significant but fees are reasonably stagnant.

Total expenditure was £8k lower compared with the previous financial year at £1,273k. There were increases in some cost categories including an increase in salaries and related costs of £25k. Statutory Committee expenses remain steady at £137k. There has been an increased number of cases and, based on current predictions, caseload costs are expected to increase in the coming year.

There has been a reduction of £6k in facilities and office expenses due to increased efficiencies and the office closure. IT and computing costs have decreased by £10k compared to the increased costs incurred last year which was due to migration to the Cloud and ensuring viable home working solutions for staff.

6. Questions to Regulator

- *Sheelin McKeagney*: Some professional bodies in GB are permitting registrants to pay in instalments. Has any consideration been given to this for NI registrants?

CEO: Regrettably, the NI legislation renders this impossible. The 1976 Order established that fees are due at the end of each retention year. Registrants who fail to pay can be removed from the Register by Council. There is no provision for fees to be spread over a period of time. We would like to look at this as part of the legislative reform.

- *Kate McClelland (by proxy)*: Can you give an update on pharmacy technicians' registration?

President: This is a matter that rests with the Minister and the Department. The Pharmaceutical Society NI does not have that power. We have been pressing the Department for seven years to bring forward this legislation. It is now a key feature of the Pharmacy Workforce Review action plan that the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer is leading. A proposal will be put to the Minister to bring forward the legislation. The registration of pharmacy technicians is probably closer now than it ever was and, in the hope that it may be on the books within the next 24 months, the organisation intends to develop plans for the registration process.

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer: The registration of pharmacy technicians is a priority and a sub-group will be formed to take this complex piece of work forward. The Department is working closely with the Pharmaceutical Society NI. Ministerial approval is required to create a new registered profession in Northern Ireland – that work is under way and a timescale of 12-24 months is anticipated to see real progress.

7. Address by the Chair of Pharmacy Forum Northern Ireland – Sheelin McKeagney

As Chair of the Pharmacy Forum NI Board, I am pleased to present the Annual Report of Pharmacy Forum NI.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has continued to put pressure on pharmacy in Northern Ireland, and indeed the broader healthcare system. But I believe that Covid-19 has been our 'Goliath' - which NI pharmacy has met head-on - and in doing so has gained rightful recognition among policy makers including NI Health Minister Robin Swann.

Likewise, Pharmacy Forum NI has been punching well above its weight over the past year, having launched two landmark initiatives that have shown leadership in the profession and broader healthcare system and should influence the future development of NI pharmacy in years to come.

I am proud that this visionary activity is evolving as part of the exciting new era that pharmacy is entering. The pharmacist role has been on a transition from the traditional dispensing of medicines to more patient-facing clinical roles across all areas of practice. In addition, with the new radical reforms to the initial education and training of pharmacists being implemented, anyone now entering the profession has the potential to be prescribing ready upon qualification. At the same time, the adoption of technologies such as automation and telehealth as well as the potential for Hub & Spoke dispensing between pharmacies of different legal entities will also change the face of pharmacy as we know it. All of this is happening within an ever-changing political landscape and within a health and social care service that is undergoing a time of significant transformation.

From latest virus trends, it is clear that we are not quite out of the woods, and I want to pay tribute to the outstanding contribution that pharmacy has made and will continue to make to the NI vaccination drive. I hope that both PASS and our health & wellbeing support service, developed for the entire pharmacy team, have served you well during this challenging period.

I am coming to the end of my tenure as Chair with a new Chair being elected at our next meeting in November. I want to pay tribute to the existing Pharmacy Forum NI Board members, the Committees and the Special Interest Groups, to Forum staff and indeed to welcome our new enthusiastic and engaged Board members. It is their expertise, drive and commitment that will help Pharmacy Forum NI continue in its work towards shaping a future that ensures pharmacists remain a strong and valued component of patient-centred care in Northern Ireland.

Corporate Plan 2017-2020

The Forum has continued to implement its 3-year Corporate Plan (2017-2020) extended into 2021 due to the pandemic, which prioritises activity under 5 key work strands:

1. Leadership
2. Excellence
3. Development
4. Technology
5. Support.

The Corporate Plan is supported by a work plan which details activity under each of these work strands and their supporting strategies. There is more detail on our website.

Leadership

- Related to our work on the Pharmacy Workforce Review Board, one of the main areas of focus this year continued to be the delivery of a substantial DoH-funded project, Pharmacy Futures NI, to help attract, recruit and retain pharmacists and pharmacy staff in all sectors in Northern Ireland.

Phase 1 of the campaign launched in November 2020 and targeted qualified pharmacists both from NI and not from NI living away; existing NI pharmacists, those off the Register; and students in their pre-registration year. Key activities included a performance managed digital campaign encouraging GB/ROI pharmacists to NI. PR activity reached a combined viewership of over 0.5 million and the majority of digital marketing results performed significantly above average. In addition, the campaign established contemporary, dynamic and modern website and a range of videos, an online professional network of NI pharmacists on LinkedIn and further identified and enrolled 30+ Pharmacy Futures NI Champions as ambassadors for the profession. Press outreach to regional, industry and local media titles, gained an estimated combined readership viewing totals of well over 500,000.

Phase 2 of the campaign launched April 2021 and ran through to June 2021, targeting over 80 post-primary schools across Northern Ireland. Its main activity included the production of a virtual NI pharmacy careers showcase event and school resources attracting NI post-primary schools and encouraging students to make pharmacy their career of choice. The video was promoted on Twitter and earned over 17,600 impressions.

We have just launched our new animation - Career Choices Ahead on World Pharmacists Day in September to compliment the resources we have in place

and have an active outreach programme ongoing utilising our champions at live school student events.

- Marking 1 March 2021, Zero Discrimination Day, Pharmacy Forum NI launched a new initiative aimed at advancing, encouraging and supporting Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in the Northern Ireland pharmacy workplace. As part of its activity, the Forum has organised throughout 2021 a 3-part EDI webinar series – Diversity & Inclusion in NI Pharmacy – Creating the right Culture. The first of these took place on 23 March on the case for inclusion and handling race with almost 70 participants including the Northern Ireland Assembly Chair of the Health Committee. The webinar series is set up to promote a culture of diversity and inclusion within the NI pharmacy profession that aims to cultivate a safe and inclusive workplace environment, keeps us in step with our increasingly diversified workforce and population and supports current and future workforce needs.
- We have since held a further event on ‘Gender in NI pharmacy & the Power of Parity’ and our next event is on 23 November focusing on dealing with disability (inc. mental & physical health) and I would encourage you to put the date in your diary.
- As a result of new pressures caused by the pandemic, we secured funding from the Health and Social Care Board for a further six months of the Pharmacy Team’s Health & Wellbeing Support Service. This enables our members to support their teams by providing access to and promoting a 24/7 service for all members of the pharmacy team including pharmacy technicians, dispensers, healthcare assistants and anyone providing any other type of pharmacy support role. Alongside, the Pharmacist Advice and Support Service (PASS) remains a solid source of assistance for those in our network during times of need. We have just secured funding to ensure this continues until at least March 2022.
- This year was an election year for the Forum and saw four Board members retire by rotation. Following the election launched in May, we welcome four newly elected Board members, who were formally constituted at the September 2021 Board meeting, and they are as follows: - Philip Boyle, Andrew Cheung, Neill Elliott, Dr Oisin Kavanagh
- In 2020/21, the Forum undertook a range of policy advocacy work and responded to a significantly higher than usual number of consultations, presenting the views of pharmacists on key issues impacting the profession.

Excellence

Among the highlights in this strand are:

- In January, NIPEC and Pharmacy Forum NI convened a multidisciplinary task and finish group from across NI to complete a review of the RPS/RCN co-produced Guidance on the Administration of Medications in Healthcare Settings (2019). The review process amended the references where applicable and reflected current NI legislation in the guidance; this work followed on from Forum endorsement of the guidance last year. Next year, we plan to continue collaboration with RPS/RCN colleagues to ensure the guidance remains enabling for the New Models of Prescribing work in Northern Ireland.
- In the second half of this reporting period, we participated in the review of the RPS Competency Framework for All Prescribers which was published in September 2021 and endorsed by the Forum, as the national standard for independent prescribers and all other non-medical prescribers.
- Undergraduate Gold Medals were also awarded to the student with the overall highest mark in the final year of their MPharm in Northern Ireland's two Schools of Pharmacy.

Development

- The Forum continues to deliver online resources and a one-to-one service where peer facilitators can support members with their portfolio submission for CPD. We delivered five one-to-one sessions across the year mainly supporting those who did not meet standard on first submission and those newly joining the register. With the new CPD framework operational this year these resources are being updated accordingly.
- In March, we partnered with Marcomm Training and delivered two 'Preparation of Pharmacists for Public Appointment' workshops, designed to build the confidence and critical competency interview skills and techniques required to ensure success at interviews using a public appointment process, or equivalent. The Forum facilitated these two fully booked workshops for over 40 participants to support our strategy to develop future leaders and ensure pharmacists maximise their recruitment opportunities.
- We continued with our programme to develop the leaders of tomorrow by recruiting and appointing three apprentice members to our Board and committees. The apprentices are early career pharmacists (<5 years qualified) who complete a year-long programme commencing in January each year. The recruitment for this year is underway if anyone is interested the details are online
- Pharmacy was advanced through the Forum's Trust Funds:
 - C.W. Young Charitable Trust awarded £6,600 to two research projects: 'Designing Support for Assessors in Pharmacy using a Co-designed Roadmap' and 'Understanding the Value of Community Pharmacy Delivery Services in Northern Ireland'
 - With regard to the Ronnie McMullen Charitable Trust, the prize has been awarded to recipients however with pandemic restrictions the usual in-person attendance at the All-Ireland Pharmacy Conference has been curtailed

however we look forward to . the 10th All Ireland Pharmacy Conference which is planned this Autumn.

Technology

- The Forum continued to make optimum use of new technologies to communicate and interact with our stakeholders and meetings and events continued online as a result of the pandemic.
- We worked on keeping the website up-to-date, through the regular publication of relevant news, featuring multimedia elements like photos, graphics and created an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Hub on the homepage.
- As a means to periodically communicate with and engage our network of nearly 3,000 contacts, we continued monthly publication of the Forum newsletter to better maintain continuity and momentum.
- We also became more active on social media. The Forum increased engagement by using Twitter as an essential feed of real-time information, allowing us to quickly disseminate bite-sized comment to a steadily growing audience. Our largest Twitter interaction was recorded in May 2021 – helped by the paid digital campaign supporting Pharmacy Futures NI - with the announcement of the careers in pharmacy showcase event which earned approximately 59,600 impressions. We also created a new Pharmacy Futures NI LinkedIn group, which acts as an online network where members of it can ask and answer questions.

Support

The Chair highlighted the work of PASS

- During 2020/21, PASS continued its work across a range of functions including providing grants in excess of £1,600 and the provision of 45 counselling sessions (telephone and online due to Covid-19). Ten new service users availed of the standard Inspire counselling, of which three individuals were referred for specialist counselling outside the provision of the existing assistance programme. Areas that are being dealt with include coping with stress and anxiety as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, bereavement, couples counselling and the need for high intensity CBT treatment. In addition, PASS proactively helped in the relief of financial distress with provision of budgeting and debt advice in parallel; the trend continued of younger pharmacists accessing the support service.
- Inspire Support Hub, was launched last year, where we saw new service users sign-up to proactively access a wide range of information and resources online tailored specifically to help care for individual wellbeing needs.
- PASS continues to outreach where we have opportunity for example delivering a presentation to UCA pre-registration students to raise awareness of PASS services and benefits. PASS also has had a visible presence at 2 of our 3-part

webinar series on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in March 2021 and will continue to partner with the working group for the rest of the series to outreach to those affected by the issues discussed.

- I would like to use tonight as an opportunity to raise awareness of PASS. More people are using the service and the intensity of therapy required has taken a step up – importantly we are there to help and so can you by ensuring people know about what we do.
- We have developed a standalone Risk Register to review and monitor all risks including the Covid-19 pandemic and potential impacts for the charitable fund. A Safeguarding Policy was also developed and implemented in November and further training will be completed by all Trustees during 2021 when providers resume training.
- We would like to extend our thanks, on behalf of those who have benefitted from PASS services, to everyone who already donates. As a charity, it is vital that we can continue to offer a range of services and the financial support received from pharmacists ensures that we can continue to do so. We urge you to please consider donating and you can do so online at: www.pfni.org.uk/pass/donate

Conclusion

The Forum recognises how challenging the past year has been for pharmacy but a year that should instil a sense of pride in each of us for the part we have played in handling the pandemic.

While undoubtedly much work is still to be done and there are important issues to be addressed, we must also recognise that there has been significant and demonstrable progress for our profession during the past 12 months.

The challenge for us now is to embrace these changes and to continue to strive to provide the highest standards of patient care.

8. Questions to Pharmacy Forum NI

Anne McAlister expressed how proud she was on the work throughout the last year on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and asked what the plans were for EDI going forward and what members thought of the Forum leadership shown in leading on this piece of work. Are there any further ideas for taking EDI forward in other ways?

Eamon O'Donnell responded by advising the webinars were part of the offering and Pharmacy Forum Strategy would be a major piece of work in early 2022 where discussions on how EDI could progress would be discussed as a workstream of the Forums core activities over the next 3 years and ensuring EDI is built into all other workstreams. There is the possibility of turning the themes of the webinars into pieces of guidance, the hub was a lasting legacy with all the valuable resources it contained.

Cathy Harrison praised the Pharmacy Forum staff for the output in relation to Pharmacy Futures campaign and was particularly pleased it was fully supported by the profession and was a lasting legacy. The campaign is seen as an exemplar to other areas of the health and social care professions, particularly policy colleagues looking to support the wider workforce review for health and social care.

Cathy Harrison praised the EDI programme describing it as impressive and innovative programme which was to be applauded. Cathy highlighted the youth of the profession had contributed to both programmes and this was wonderful to see s they develop into the profession of the future.

9. Close of Meeting

Eamon O'Donnell thanked the Pharmacy Forum staff for their work throughout the year and Julie Greenfield thanked all those who helped in the making of materials for the Pharmacy Futures campaigns and who stepped out of their comfort zone and starred in videos and other activities.

Sheelin McKeagney thanked all those present for their attendance and participation and for the Pharmacy Forum NI and Pharmaceutical Society NI team for bringing the AGM together. Sheelin McKeagney thanked the President, Jim Livingstone, for his address and hoped to see everyone next year in person or a hybrid version.