

THE BRITISH ACUPUNCTURE COUNCIL

Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting of the British Acupuncture Council

Held on Friday 18 September 2020 by video conference call at 6.00pm

Present	
Sarah Attwell (SA)	Practitioner Director and Chair
Joanna Brown (JB)	Lay Director
Susan Evans (SE)	Practitioner Director
Pia Huber (PH)	Practitioner Director
Alan Longcroft (AL)	Practitioner Director
Joseph Ogbonna (JO)	Lay Director
Samantha Peters (SP)	Lay Director
Naresh Rao (NR)	Lay Director and Vice Chair
Jennifer Norton (JN)	CEO
Rob Strange (OBE) (RS)	Company Secretary
Richard Costella (RC)	Treasurer

Sarah Watkins	Chantal Nogbou
Janice Booth	Jacqui Jensen
Heather Adams	Emily Rumbles
Annya Stoddart	Louise England
Deborah Smith	Helen Fielding
Cornelia (Nini) Davies	Gabriele Stutz
Nicola Rycroft	Philip Hodson
Alex Jacobs	Hannah Swift
Claire Norton	Mark Popplewell
Mark Guggiari	Liz Castle
Laura Gutierrez	Dongyun Huang
Veena Stephenson	Fanyi Meng

Sandra Hart	Julia Exposito
Martin Grasby	Martin Dean
Stacey Chapman	Alison Forsyth
Helen Thomas	Lynn Kirby
Jenny Cherry	Libusa Mayne
Dee Tomlin	Tianjun Wang
Linda Coviello	Wallace Gilbraith
Juliet Fellows	Nicola Court
Elise Johnson	Magda Koc
Eileen Gibbon	Lydia Howarth
Lisa Collins	Charlie Buck
Jacki Winkett	Marianne Buck
Naomi Maynard	Felicity Moir
Elise Johnson	Isabelle Wen
Tania Duby	Sarah Parker
Christine Hutchinson	Susan Thorne
Sandy Sandaver	Susan Woodhead
Jane Frances Wilson	Hannah Charles
Maria Raquel Paiva	James Hill
Stephen Rainbird (staff)	Li Ping Bartlett
Simone Buehner	Lou Radford
Poppy Bowler	Rosemary Norton
Merlin Young	Jacqui Jensen
Siobhan Palmer	Janet Eastwood
Philip Hodson	Lianne Marie Aquilina
Mieke Rainbird-Chill	Monica Jonsson
Jessica Darling	Jane Robinson
Fatima Bailey	Fiona Bullock
Apologies	
Paul Blacker (Practitioner Director)	Isobel Cosgrove
Sally Blades	Giles Watts
Naava Carman	

Opening of the meeting

Welcome and introduction

SA, chair, opened the meeting.

A minute of silence was observed for the passing of Professor Hugh MacPherson.

Meeting introduction

Sandra Hill was offered an honourable mention due to their contributions to the profession.

Alex Jacobs and Paul Blacker were offered an honourable mention due to their contribution to the profession during COVID-19 and with the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19: Guidelines for returning to work..

David Mayor received a nomination from Mark Bovey for fellowship and has been granted fellowship, and his openness, inventiveness, and generosity of spirit, as well as his thirst for scientific knowledge were all noted.

Chair confirmed that the AGM is quorate.

Chair confirmed Non-Members, Student Members and BAcC staff are not entitled to vote.

Minutes and actions

1 Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 13 September 2019

No corrections were required for the minutes of last year's AGM. There were no matters arising.

Janice Booth proposed the minutes be accepted and **Anya Stoddart** seconded. Passed unanimously.

2 Chair's report

SA updated that there was a full GB board for the first time in many years. There were four new practitioner Directors and a new Chair elected at the last AGM.

JO and **SP** were appointed as new Lay Directors at the last AGM and shortly after, **JN** had been appointed as CEO.

Chair encouraged Members to put themselves forward for election to the board.

Chair acknowledged the importance of the new CEO in BAcC's survival and navigation of the COVID-19 crisis. Chair referenced the Chair's Report in the Annual Review, including the focus of the BAcC's response on COVID-19 - to keep Members safe, legal, and insured. The BAcC was the only voluntary regulator for acupuncturists in the country that had a legal basis to tell their Members that they could practise under Urgent Care and High Need, which was supported by PSA accreditation.

The Chair acknowledged the necessity of moving all Members into Non-Practising rate when Members were instructed not to practise and that this was an appropriate use of financial reserves. Due to this, the BAcC has had a meticulous spending overhaul to safeguard its financial survival and to recoup those reserves over the next period.

The survival of the BAcC depended on accelerating a restructure of the staff that was already in the pipeline. However, due to the financial situation this was bigger, deeper, and faster than it would otherwise have been. The Chair thanked all staff, past and present.

The political gains made in terms of acupuncture standing in the UK due to the COVID-19 pandemic were noted. Including the move from a lack of recognition as health care providers to the only one with that legal basis to provide urgent care. There was also a turnaround in the Channel Islands view of acupuncture and recognition as health care practitioners. Opinions were also changed in Northern Ireland due to the work of SE and JN, along with various local councils.

Learnings from this will inform the future lobbying work of the BAcC.

Over the course of the pandemic, the BAcC's membership had dropped by twenty-four Members. The Chair noted that acupuncturists wanted to join the BAcC during the pandemic due to the management of the crisis and the Safe Practice Guidelines.

Moving forward, BAcC will work towards replenishing their financial reserves, to protect against future crisis. There will also be a focus on improving Member engagement.

Chair noted the positive affect of acupuncture on those emotionally and physically affected by the pandemic and the importance of the BAcC's role in supporting their Members build their patient numbers as they reopen their clinics.

Chair will be leaving on maternity in October and Pia Huber will take the role of Acting Chair.

3. Chief Executive's report

Jennifer Norton assumed Chief Executive Officer position in December 2019.

The highlights from 2019 include, the Scope of Acupuncture report and the To the Point video. The conference, the research symposium, and the regional group meetings have been a great resource to Members, as has the Acu. magazine.

JN commented that overall, the impression that she received in December was of an organisation, both board and staff, who are working hard to support and recognise the professionalism of its Members.

In 2020, the pandemic changed everything. She highlighted COVID-19 Guidelines and related webinars and members meetings. As well as the popular 'Let's talk about...' campaigns. She noted that the PSA accreditation helped open the door with governments and councils, who may otherwise would have ignored the BAcC's lobbying efforts.

BAcC's goal during this was to support Membership. Therefore, membership fees were reduced while Members could not practise. As Members were able to return to practice, the BAcC ensured that there was a gradual process with clear phases of practice and robust COVID-19 guidelines. BAcC increased communications with Members through weekly newsletters. **JN** commented that due to furloughed staff, communications were at times a little difficult and Members' patience with that was noted and thanked. Moving forward, communications will continue to be increased and developed further to ensure a constant flow of communication.

BAcC's financial responsibilities had to be reviewed to ensure the survival of the organisation. Had it not been for the restructure, the BAcC would have had to close its doors in September.

JN thanked staff who had left the organisation and she thanked staff who worked tirelessly throughout the crisis to support Members.

Looking to the future, BAcC can, and will always, aim to do better on behalf of Members. The conversation around this will begin on social media as that is already where Members are, as well as through the usual means of communication such as enews and Acu.

These improvements include improving in-house communications to and on behalf of Members, expanding events such as the Let's Talk About campaigns, conferences, webinars and townhall meetings.

JN noted the importance of working with regional groups highlighted by the pandemic and differing approaches to public health. The BAcC will also be working to continue developing strong working relationships with governments.

Mentoring and Supervision will be coming back online.

PSA Accreditation will be maintained.

Committees will be expanded to ensure Members are at the heart of decisions, membership categories will be reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose and benefits for Members will be developed, depending on where they are in their career.

In February 2020, the BAcC had 2,623 Members. In August 2020, membership had fallen by a small amount, to 2,601. **JN** noted that any loss in membership, no matter how small, is upsetting so the BAcC will be working hard to bring those Members back and ensure membership is made up of the most highly qualified acupuncturists.

Since April, the number of Members back in Full membership has risen, especially towards September and October.

4. Treasurer's report (relating to 2019 thus pre-pandemic finances)

Richard Costella explained that 2019 showed a deficit of £58,000. This was an improvement from 2018.

The BAcC income is down by approximately £43,000 due to the reduced number of Members but expenditure is down by £53,000.

Continued deficits of this size are not sustainable.

The Finance Risk and Audit Committee has been looking at ways to eliminate continued deficits, including a two-year plan which was approved by the governing board in the autumn of 2019.

Some savings had already been made in 2019, for example, a reduction in the number of senior management posts and therefore salaries.

Significant savings have been made in legal and professional expenses by bringing some of the work back inhouse.

At the end of 2019, BAcC had around three months of our expenditure in reserve. The need for having strong reserves was proved in 2020, as the BAcC needed to support Members with their membership fees. However, this also led to an acceleration needed cost saving measures. A substantial deficit is forecast for this year, and there will therefore be much reduced reserves at the year end. But steps have been taken that will

allow the council to come out with a stable cost base on which services can then be expanded in the future.

Value for money is a key element to the work of the Finance Risk and Audit Committee.

23% of a member's membership subscription fee is spent on administration and 12% on governance. Both will fall in 2020 as the organisation is streamlined.

Membership fees have remained around the same for eight years and were due to be reviewed, however the governing board decided not to make changes in 2021 due to the pandemic. To conclude, the 2019 accounts showed no surprises, but events since then had a major impact. The focus will now be on creating a stable financial base to move forward again.

The opinion of the auditors given to the Members of the BAcC states that 'The financial statements give a true, fair view of the state of the company's affairs at 31 December 2019 and of the deficit for the year. They have been properly prepared in accordance with the United Kingdom's generally accepted accounting practice and have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.'

The Chair proposed to adopt the Directors' report and the audited statements of accounts, for the year ending 31 December 2019. Proposed by Sandy Sandaver seconded by Susan Evans and passed with a majority. The company seal has been used 75 times between 13 September 2019 and 18 September 2020.

5. Annual subscriptions for the forthcoming year January to December 2021

Richard Costella proposed that the annual subscriptions are not increased. This was unchallenged and thereby agreed.

6. Appointment of auditors

SA proposed that **HL Barnes & Co** be appointed as the auditors for a further year and to authorise the directors to fix the auditors' remuneration. **Fatima Bailey** seconded the proposal.

7. Any other business appropriate to the meeting

Elizabeth Temperley submitted the following formal question, how will the BAcC use the scope of acupuncture publication and the 'To the Point' video?

JN answered, that the 'Scope of Acupuncture' report is being used to put pressure on councils and regional governments and to show the efficacy of acupuncture. There have also been discussions to use it as part of the BAcC's 'Let's Talk About...' campaigns by breaking it up further and highlighting certain aspects of it.

The 'To the Point' video has been on the front page of the BAcC website, this will also be cut that down into snippets which Members can use on their own websites for marketing purposes. BAcC will also be using the snippets on social media to highlight the work of acupuncture in a much broader sense. **JN** confirmed these will continue to be used in new ways going forward.

Lee Ping Bartlett submitted the following formal question: Mainstream medicine is increasingly adopting acupuncture as a part of various treatment regimes, but not by professional acupuncturists, potentially compromising its effectiveness and therefore its reputation. Do you believe that recognition of acupuncturists as allied health care professionals would enable a more effective delivery of acupuncture treatment?

SA confirmed that the answer is yes, allied healthcare professional status would be an advantage to the profession. However, it was recognised that some Members would prefer not to be formally regulated, as would be required to become allied health care professionals. Therefore, this isn't a decision that the board can unilaterally make. A consultation process will need to take place with the membership. Which will form a key part of the lobbying strategy should there be a consensus amongst Members for this to be the case.

JN added, that the BAcC is working and will continue to work to ensure councils, regional and national governments better recognise the power of acupuncture. The process to get to the point of an allied healthcare profession takes time and that the BAcC will remain in communication with the membership about this and build the relationships with councils and regional groups to ensure appropriate support is provided.

Formal meeting concluded – meeting opened for verbal questions

Simone Buehner asked: Is there any outreach or PR work happening with the Welsh government to raise the profile of acupuncturists in Wales?

JN responded that the BAcC are putting together a feasibility group, with Members from across the regions, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and

England. They will be looking at building inroads with those regional governments to lobby, to create a voice that is particular to the region and putting pressure on those regional governments to advocate on behalf of acupuncture in a joint way.

Simone asked: Along with blood donation certificates, BAcC Members also used to be allowed to sign people off work. Will that happen again?

Action:
JN

SA responded that BAcC Members are still able to do that, however it is down to the employer whether or not they accept our sign off. **SA** requested that the BAcC Safe Practice Officer look into this further.

Lou asked: Can you clarify, if full PPE is worn, are practitioners exempt from quarantining? This question was in reference to the Track and Trace app.

AJ responded that the COVID-19 team are still trying to get clarification on this from the government. Currently, the government says BAcC Members are not sufficiently trained in PPE to be able to have the exemption in the same way NHS workers would. The COVID-19 team are continuing to push back on this with their contact in Public Health England. **AJ** requested that if any Members have information to support their work, to send that through to the BAcC.

An anonymous question was posed: Could BAcC Members get the training in PPE that the government require.

AJ responded that this is part of the policies that they are pushing for from government and that they will continue to work on.

Lou wished **SA** good luck and thanked **JN** for the work with the BAcC expressing a newfound joy at being a member of the BAcC.

JN thanked the BAcC staff and board.

Cornelia Davies asked: If we have to self-isolate for fourteen days due to track and trace and close our practice, could someone talk to Locktons about what that means. **JN** confirmed that she would talk to Locktons about this and asked if anyone else has insurance queries, to email those directly to **JN**.

Action:
JN

Tan Jun Wang: Thanked the BAcC staff for their work during the pandemic and noted that although they are a member of other professional bodies, they are grateful for the guidance from BAcC and the ability to practice under urgent care. For the future, there are lots of opportunities for acupuncturists to support those directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19. Members should be supported through CPD, research and policy as well as supporting each other, to encourage those affected by COVID-19 to seek acupuncture treatment and for

acupuncturists to feel empowered to treat those patients. All Members will benefit from this crisis and this opportunity.

SA agrees with this commentary and **JN** confirmed that the BAcC are aware of the marketing opportunity and developing that further. Support for this continued in the chat box, as attendees stated that effective acupuncture strengthens the immune system, so this should be publicised.

JN stated that next summer Members will be consulted about the CPD and support they require, so this feedback will inform future work.

Alice Rogers stated: We need to find a way to reduce the costs and reduce the membership fees.

SA responded that BAcC have reduced costs significantly in a very short space of time and identified further cost savings such as the lease on the Jeddo Road office. There is still a while to run on the lease before we see the benefits of that saving as we look at other premises that are more suited to a streamlined team. In reference to a reduction in membership fees, the first priority at the moment is to regain a financial footing and replenish reserves, as part of corporate governance and as part of keeping the BAcC sustainable. The BAcC will then look at the membership categories but no promises can be made about reducing membership fees.

JN stated that this will be looked at further in 2021. The importance of a healthy balance sheet and healthy reserves is essential. The BAcC want to create a system that is fit for purpose and that ensures Members are paying fees appropriate to where they are in their career cycle. So if you're a student or if you're retiring or if you're somewhere in the middle, membership should suit your needs at that time.

Rosemary Norton commented: We need to pay for the service of the BAcC, so I think the fees are reasonable.

Veena: regarding promoting excellence of acupuncture, I think that the key COVID-19 related issues to focus on would be direct respiratory, long Covid, systematic, mental, emotional, i.e. grief, stress, loss, anxiety, depression,

Martin Dean asked: Will the online way of working remain?

JN responded yes, they will continue including the online townhall meetings once every six months, COVID-19 webinars as required and weekly webinars on different topics around a theme.

Close of meeting

PH closed the 2020 AGM at 7:25pm

PH thanked SA on behalf of the Governing Board and of the whole of the BAaC and wished her a very enriching and joyful time with her family for the next few months.

PH: To all BAaC Members: 'I would like to stress that as acting chair, I would like to listen to anybody who would like to raise any concerns to suggestions, ideas, or opinions on our professional body. So feel free to contact me or any other member of the board, of course, I will be very happy to pick up the phone and listen, I run my own acupuncture clinic, but I've made space to be ready to listen.

Governance work for the coming year will include looking at the present committees which have been working for only just over a year now: are they fit for purpose, do we need to make any changes?

We are actively looking at how to build on our self-declaration as healthcare providers. How to gain further acknowledgement of acupuncture and specifically BAaC Members.

We will also look again at the strategy. You haven't heard about that for a while. And that's simply because we concentrated all our efforts on COVID-19. A lot of the content stands as it is and in fact **JN** has been working in line with the strategy. But we may have to rethink some of it in the light of what has happened.'

PH thanked all for attending today's meeting.