



**Minutes of the Council meeting of BSHAA
Held by GoToMeeting**

Thursday 23rd April 2020

Present:

A Coulter (AC) Chair
 D Foley (DF)
 S Dixon (SD)
 H Kennington (HK)
 A Pugh (AP)
 Prof D Welbourn (DW) CEO
 P Sydserff (PSy)
 R Garcia Medina (RGM)
 A Hopkirk (AH)
 Paula Cook (PC)
 Robert Donnan (RD)
 Elizabeth Adesugba (EA)
 Jasmine Opoku-Ware (JOW)

20-04-1a

In Attendance:

K Girling (KG)
 Dr J Jindal (JJ)
 J Summerfield (JS)

Apologies:

R Kewney (RK)

Did not attend: None

20-04-1b

Members Contact Details and Conflict of Interest

(AC) reminded Council members of the need to declare any conflict of interest (including potential conflict of interest) or change of circumstance that may have arisen since the last Council meeting. (AH) advised that he had joined the professional body AIHHP and is in the process of updating his Declaration of Interest document.

20-04-1c

(KG) to update BSHAA Council meeting attendance record with details of all present.

20-04-2

Review Agenda

(AC) asked Council if there were any items for consideration under AOB. It was noted that (RGM) wished to add the subject of collaboration between Committees. (AC) confirmed this subject would be added to the agenda under section 8 Strategy and Policy. (AH) wished to add the subject of people not adhering to the BSHAA guidelines concerning COVID-19, (AC) confirmed this would be added to the agenda under section 4e Perspectives.

20-04-3

Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes from Council meeting on 23rd January 2020 were reviewed and approved.

20-04-4

Perspectives

A. Presidents Report

(AC) gave a verbal report on the presidential activities, advising that his workload had been dominated by COVID-19. He informed Council that until recently he has chaired nightly meetings with (DW) and Chairs of each Committees regarding COVID-19 as the situation has been changing on a daily basis. He advised these meetings have now reduced to 2-3 times a week (usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday) (AC) confirmed that the overriding aim has been to make current clinical and business advice available to members by direct emails, the BSHAA website and a webinar on the 27th March 2020, which was oversubscribed but recorded for members to access.

(AC) advised Council of the process and complexity of producing a joint guidance document with BAA, BSA, BSHAA and AIHHP which is available on the BSHAA website. He also advised this document will be reviewed by the Presidents / Chairs of each of the association on a regular basis as the situation and government advice changes. He commented on this being challenging times both personally and professionally.

(DW) wished to formally thank (AC) for his leadership and guidance during this period and considered the Society is privileged to have him as President during these unprecedented times. (PSy) commented that (AC's) period of Presidency is the most difficulty of any time in history and he wished to thank him and the team who supported him through this unprecedented time.

(AC) confirmed business guidance has been welcomed by members along with the clinical guidance.

B. Marketing activities report

(JS) referred to Appendix G which contained the activities of communication with members. He commented that this has been a challenge to get the communication balance right as information has been changing on an hourly basis. He advised there had be a high interaction and response from members, with engagement on the BSHAA website greatly increased.

(RGM) thanked (RD) for his help with the BSHAA website and social media communications. (AC) commented that the format of working in small focused groups enabled the communications to go out quickly and he thanked all involved for their contribution in such difficult circumstances.

C. Questions arising

There were no questions arising from the previous discussions.

D. Initial membership survey results

(RGM) gave Council an overview of a recent survey which went out to members to try to establish data on the Society's clinical and business advice to members around COVID-19 and identify areas where further help is needed. He advised that the response was better than expected with 347 members participating, some of which dropped out during the process. He informed Council that the questions were formed around the four membership groups of employed, self employed, director and retail chain.

(RGM) thanked (RD) and (JS) for their help with this survey and confirmed the results would assist in the future strategy for COVID-19 communication.

20-04-AP1

(RGM) to share the results of BSHAA member survey about the Society's COVID-19 communications to Council.

E. Reflection on last 4 weeks and current position (COVID-19)

(AC) asked Council for comment and reflections over the last four weeks, noting that in these unprecedented times, not everything had been perfect, in what is an exceedingly difficult situation. He referred to the information regarding clinical and business advice on the BSHAA website, noting the increase in engagement with members. He also made Council aware of the increase of engagement with manufacturers regarding regular training updates which are to be made available to members and none members via the BSHAA website.

(PC) commented on the quality of the joint statement with BSHAA, BAA, BSA and AIHHP which was produced within 2 weeks. She advised of her difficulty in receiving emails recently which highlighted the need for good communication in this difficult period. (EA) agreed with (PC) and recognised that working in a small group assisted the short timeline available to produce the joint guidance, commenting that in the future it would be useful to be made aware that such groups were being formed and receive regular updates of the progress. All Committee Chairs apologised for the failure to report back to their Committees. (AP) commented on the lack of communication to Council and felt this affected the way she was able to respond to members and to comments on social media, which in turn affected her ability to protect (AC) and other Council members from some of the vitriolic comments made. (AP) also shared her support of the joint guidance document.

(AC) recognised there is an ongoing issue of BSHAA Council email addresses failing, which is being investigated, advising the private email addresses of those concerned with also be added to the circulation list in future.

(PSy) also commented on the personal attacks towards the President of BSHAA on social media and agreed that the approach of 'not engaging' was the best outcome.

(SD) recognised the need for communication within Council and urged all Council members who felt in need of more information to contact the Chairs and wider Council for updates as necessary, advising that communication works both ways and Council members are responsible for gaining information they desire. She also drew attention to the covid@bshaa.com email address where any questions could be direct to as a central point of contact.

(DW) suggested that on a every two weeks on a Friday (or as appropriate) the BSHAA COVID team should send a summary email to Council with updates on current situation.

(AC) commented that he recognised Council's comments on the communication issues, whilst recognising that the smaller group has worked, considering the demands on getting information out quickly, not only to BSHAA members, but the other membership organisations involved in the joint guidance document. He advised that going forward the workload should be at a slower pace, with more opportunity to keep Council informed.

(AH) raised a concern about an alleged Fitness to Practise issue of a member and suggested that BSHAA should self report to HCPC due to failing to take action. (DW) advised that this is incorrect as BSHAA is investigating the matter. Further discussion was deferred to AOB to enable AC and RGM to withdraw from those conversations.

20-04-5

Sub Committees & project updates

(AC) reminded Council of the request for a photograph and biography to be sent to (JOW) for inclusion on the Council Member's page of the BSHAA Website.

A. Membership Committee

(RD) advised Council that the Membership Committee are making good progress with their allocated projects. He highlighted the website improvements including updating the online profiles of Council members, Google Calendar is now working and advised of work which has now started on a new advice page for members. (RD) also thanked (JOW) for her work on the Diversity Page.

(RD) informed Council of a member survey, which was interrupted by COVID-19, confirming the limited responses received from members was positive. He also advised of a new project he is working on with (AH) regarding enhanced members benefits and will report back to Council in due course.

B. Standards Committee

(RGM) gave an overview of the Standards Committee's activities, informing all the Committees projects/actions and document sharing is now on Airtable with (AH) and (RGM) monitoring the progress of the 4 active projects, including End Point Assessments, Education CPD allocation and accreditation of courses and regulatory engagement of HCA's. (RGM) wished to thank the volunteers on the Standards Committee for their help with the projects.

C. Delivery Committee

(SD) confirmed the cancellation of the Master Class on 27th and 28th March 2020 advising all registrants had been refunded. She informed Council of an educational Webinar on 30th April 2020 which (JJ) is overseeing. She also advised the Delivery Committee are investigating new education offers which may include blended learning, e-learning and group discussions, recognising the need to adjust the methods which educational events are delivered in the future.

D. Customer Care Committee

(DF) advised Council of a review of the Customer Care Scheme administration process which he has been working on with (DW). He also advised (AP) has been leading a review of BSHAA's published guidance material.

Governance**A. Discussion on future ways of working – COVID-19**

Council discussed the possible future ways of working in the light of COVID-19. (AC) noted the comments made by Council earlier in the meeting regarding communication between Council and the COVID-19 response team which he assured Council would be addressed ongoing. It was recognised that although Council will not meet face to face for the foreseeable future it may be necessary to meet more frequently by electronic methods.

(AC) advised Council that the joint guidance document is to be reviewed week commencing 27th April 2020 to ensure the advice is current and up to date. He also advised the four societies will look at future guidance in preparation for the country coming out of lock down. (RGM) confirmed the recent survey indicated members are overall satisfied with the advice published by the Society.

(AC) advised the COVID-19 response team are due to meet Mon/Wed/Fri each week at 5.50pm with the aim to publish any revised guidance by the next day. Council discussed the level of communication between the COVID-19 response team and Council. It was identified that it would be useful for the agenda to be shared around Council, with any comment/feedback to be sent to the Chairs of each Committee.

20-04-AP2 (AC) to send out details of the COVID-19 response team meeting agenda to Council for feedback/comments, which are to be fed to (AC) or the Committee Chairs.

20-04-AP3 COVID-19 response team – one person from the team to feedback to Council after each meeting.

Council recognised there would be different exit strategies for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which would influence the advice given to members. (AC) highlighted the difficulties in agreeing the interpretation of government advice over four societies when producing the joint guidance document. (JJ) highlighted the importance of accuracy as well as speed in responding to any change in interpreting government advice.

B. Handling breaches of guidance

(DW) gave Council an overview Appendix D (Handling breaches of guidance) informing Council of reports he has received regarding potential breaches of the BSHAA guidelines. He advised that historically the Society has dealt with complaints on a case by case bases using the Articles of Association for reference but recommended the Society should produce a policy on disciplinary process.

(DF) was concerned that the document appeared to be rewriting the procedure which is already contained in the Members' published Code of Practice.

Council discussed the content of Appendix D various forms this may take. (DW) summarised the discussion identifying the following points arising from the conversation:

- the term Compliance Officer was suggested as an alternative to Sponsor, and this responsibility should not sit solely with the CEO;
- a specific email address should be created for complaints, to be managed by the responsible individual;
- additional guidance is required to help with the consistency of the Terms of Reference if these are to be prepared by different members of Council;

- the TOR should identify which agencies should be considered for potential external referral;
- the disciplinary procedure should be aligned with the Customer Care Scheme.

20-04-AP3 Council members to forward any feedback on Appendix D (Handling breaches of guidance) to (DW) by Thursday 30th April 2020

20-04-AP4 (DW) to amend Appendix D (Handling breaches of guidance) in light of Council members feedback and circulate to Council by 7th May 2020

C. AGM planning

(DW) advised the 2018/2019 AGM must take place by 31st July 2020. He informed Council that the Articles of Association require notice to be given of the AGM three weeks prior to the event, with a suggested date of the end of May 2020. He confirmed the meeting will be held virtually and preparations are ongoing to increase the Webinar capacity on the contract with GoToMeetings. He advised Council he is still to receive the audited accounts for that period due to a change of auditors and questions over the VAT exemption on membership fees.

20-04-AP5 (DW) to make preparations for the 2018/2019 AGM including receive the audited accounts for 2018/2019, increase the Webinar capacity with GoToMeetings and give three weeks notice to members of AGM date.

(AH) suggested a business support or educational event could be tagged onto the AGM. (SD) agreed to investigate if this was feasible.

20-04-AP6 (SD) to investigate the possibility of holding a business support or educational event in conjunction with the BSHAA AGM.

20-04-7 Finance and Commercial

A. Period 7 Financial Report

(DW) referred to Appendix E (financial report) covering the period up to the end of February 2020 and is not influenced by COVID-19, advising of a potential effect reflected in the next period as the refunds for the cancelled education meeting are taken into account. He commented on the positive membership income which is 12% up on budget. He drew attention to the ongoing concern regarding lack of advertising income from BSHAA People. (DW) also advised all aged debt issues have been resolved and period 8 figures will be circulated to Council in the near future. He also advised work is in progress to open a new bank account, but this had been affected by COVID-19.

B. Update on preparation of 2018/19 end of year accounts

Covered earlier in the meeting.

C. Current position & planned mitigation

(DW) gave Council an overview of Appendix F2 regarding managing the effects of COVID-19 on the Society and the suggested cost saving measures.

D. Discussion on financial models re: COVID 19

(PSy) referred to Appendix F1 and gave Council an overview of the recent Finance Committee meeting where the financial effects of COVID-19 to the Society were discussed, identifying BSHAA's main source of income from membership subscriptions. Council discussed how the different groups of membership/payment

methods may be affected and what support the Society could offer, recognising this could be a financially difficult time for members.

(PSy) asked Council to be mindful of new initiatives such as improvement to the Customer Care Scheme and plans to create a Compliance Officer may have additional costs to the Society. He also indicated a portion of the revenue from BSHAA People advertising may have to be refunded.

E. Risk discussion

(DW) indicated that BSHAA would have reduced income and as such, plans need to be in place to protect the Society. He advised that the contractors Eutropia, Digitalis and Ace India had been issued with a 3 month notice of a 50% reduction in their contract hours which will take them to the beginning of the next financial year, with the hope that this can be reviewed and potentially reinstated at a later date if membership retention and recruitment activities are successful. (DW) also advised that JH Secretariat Services had been given 1 month's notice of termination of their contract for the Customer Care Scheme administration, and sought approval for a temporary arrangement with (DF) to combine the administrator and assessor role on a three month basis, whilst an alternative model for operating the scheme was developed. (DW) drew attention to the risk of perceived conflict here, and the need for full transparency and open recruitment once the new model is agreed.

20-04-AP7 (DW) to write a draft contract for the role of Customer Care Scheme administrator and circulate to Council.

(PSy) confirmed the Finance Committee agreed the position of CEO should not be furloughed.

(DW) advised EBS had made efficiencies in the management of Finance and Membership administration but Secretarial administration was over contracted hours. (KG) advised this may be due to the allocation of tasks which did not have a clear indication as to which part of the contract they applied to. (DW) urged Council members to show restraint when using (KG) services. (DW) also advised the EBS contract is due for renewal in January 2021.

(DW) advised the initial reaction to the effects of COVID-19 will be reviewed as the situation develops and the effect on income are known.

Council discussed the future format of BSHAA People, recognising the need to reduce costs as a result of a drop in advertising revenue, whilst being mindful of the member benefit of the publication.

(PSy) commented that the Society has a responsibility to members to be in a financially good place when the effects of COVID-19 are eased. (DW) advised that with the cost saving measure currently in place, including reducing the issues of BSHAA People to 4 per year and reducing meeting cost by not meeting face to face a potential reduction in cost by one third.

F. Income generation

(RGM) commented that the Society should recognise that effort must be put into income generation along side the cost cutting measures. He suggested the Society could investigate the possibility of developing online tutoring which could be available both nationally and internationally.

Strategy and Policy**A. Membership offering**

Council discussed the timing of the BSHAA membership renewal period and the different scenarios which could be put in place to ease the financial burden to members, including moving the renewal date, monthly payments and a membership holiday period. (RGM) advised the information gathered in the recent member survey should be referred to when making decisions regarding the membership renewal period.

(RD) referred to a member benefit project he is currently working on which would give a significant reason for members to renew their BSHAA membership. He advised this is still in the planning stage and he would share with Council in due course. (AC) commented this would be an advantage if it could be brought to fruition in the near future.

(DW) commented the Society could be in a stronger position because of its Professional Body status rather than a membership organisation and the work the Society has done in supporting members in a professional capacity during these difficult times hopefully will be taken into account by the members.

B. Short term response to COVID-19

(AC) summarised discussions from earlier in the meeting, confirming the Council is overall in agreement with the current response whilst recognising the need to communicate with all Council members on a regular basis.

C. Long term response to COVID-19

(AC) highlighted the affect membership renewal has on the overall long term response to COVID-19 as this is the Society's largest revenue source. (RGM) suggested the COVID-19 response team should work on advice for returning to work as the lock down measures are gradually released at some point in the future. (AC) advised of a planned meeting with BAA, BSA, AIHHP and BSHAA to review/update current joint guidance and to develop guidance on returning to work, which he will report back to Council on in due course.

D. Review of Projects

(AC) gave an overview of the current projects, commenting there may be more capacity for delivery of projects in the current environment. (RGM) advised there may be an overlap of work on education programmes between the Standards and Delivery Committee. He recognised there may be a need for Committees to collaborate on project work with another Committee and asked for clarity on the process approval of business plans. (AC) recognised there is a natural progression in some areas where Committees will interact, such as Standards developing an education programme and the Delivery Committee delivering the event. He advised any business plans should go to Finance Committee for approval whilst keeping the project sponsor informed.

9. Actions arising**A. Matters arising not on minutes**

Council discussed the issue of a member allegedly practicing outside of the current BSHAA guidelines regarding COVID-19. This was a closed section of the meeting. (AC) as President left the meeting at this point, (RGM) also left due to a historical connection with the organisation concerned.

B. Update / progress on agreed actions

It was agreed the actions would be reviewed online via Airtable. (AC) asked Council members to update any actions applicable to them.

10. External relationships and consultations

A. Overview of key relationships

(AC) advised the Society will continue to work closely on joint COVID-19 guidance with BAA, BSA and AIHHP.

(DW) informed Council that although BSHAA were observer members of AEA in the past, the Society did not take up full membership due to the level of fees, he advised he is in contact with them regarding information/experience of countries coming out of other European countries, and will share with Council in due course.

(DW) advised that on BSHAA's behalf, he is a trustee on the UK Council on Deafness. He confirmed the deaf community has been badly served in the quality of guidance received in the current lock down situation, informing the UK Council on Deafness have been lobbying PHE for signing to be included on the government updates.

20-04-11

Agreed items brought forward

There were no agreed items brought forward at this meeting.

20-04-12

Review of the meeting

(AC) gave a review of the meeting and reminded all present to complete their actions in a timely manner, ensuring deadlines are met.

20-04-13

Date of next Council Meeting

Next Council meeting will be held on 1st July 2020 by Webinar

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed.