



**4th Fellowship Council Meeting Summary**

Tuesday 29 June 2010, 13.00-16.30

RSA, 8 John Adam Street, London, WC2N 6EZ

**Chair:**

Tessy Britton

**Present:**

Andrew Chidgey  
Andy Gibson  
Ann Packard  
Charles Millar  
Charmian Love  
David Archer  
David Dickinson  
Frances Gallagher  
Gerard Darby  
Gerry Acher  
Graham Sprigg  
Helen Westropp  
Irene Campbell  
Jackie Elliman  
Jemima Gibbons  
John McMullan  
Lopa Patel  
Paul Buchanan  
Robert Porrer  
Rosie Ferguson  
Stephen Elliott-Hunter  
Susan Jones  
Zena Martin

**RSA Trustee present:**

Lord Best OBE, Treasurer, Trustee Board, Chair of Board's Audit and Risk Committee

**Apologies:**

David Biggs  
David Clarke  
David Young  
Emma Harrison  
Emma Jones  
John Bale  
John Elliot  
Kevin Cahill  
Mark Ball  
Stephen Coleman  
Stephen Jones  
Sybil Crouch

**RSA Staff present:**

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive  
Belinda Lester, Director of Fellowship  
Julian Thomson, Director of Projects  
Michael Devlin, Head of Fellowship Networks  
Vivienne Long-Ferguson, Senior Networks Manager  
Laura Billings, Fellowship Research and Strategy Manager  
Andy Kirk, Networks Manager  
Sarah Tucker, Networks Manager  
Rebecca Daddow, Researcher  
Alex Watson, Catalyst Coordinator

**Live blog of meeting available via:** [www.interactiveknowhow.com/2010/06/rsa-fellowship-council-live-blog-of-fourth-meeting/](http://www.interactiveknowhow.com/2010/06/rsa-fellowship-council-live-blog-of-fourth-meeting/)

## Welcome

Tessy Britton introduced the session and our first speakers, emphasising that the main session of this Council meeting will be a facilitated session where – as briefed – facilitators will extract a broad range of ideas from the Council.

## Trustee Board Feedback Session

Zena Martin, one of the two Fellowship Council members who sit on the RSA Trustee Board, introduced the session to talk about the Council's relationship with the Trustee Board. She highlighted how useful it would be to get Lord Best's historical perspective on the inception of the Fellowship Council.

Lord Best emphasised the role of the Fellowship Council in creating the link between the Trustees and Fellows around the world. Recognising that many members of the Council may know about being a Trustee, Lord Best expressed a key part of the role as striking a balance; on the one hand challenging and changing the organisation and on the other hand cherishing and championing it.

Touching on some of the issues with the Trustee Board, Lord Best highlighted the calibre of the current Trustees. Previously it was perceived that there was a lack of transparency about the Board's activity. David and Zena have been brought in to support transparent communications between the Board, Council and Fellows.

Lord Best said there has also been some concern expressed about the clarity of the role of the Fellowship Council. He explained that this was quite natural and positive because, to a degree, the Trustee board has encouraged Councillors to define the role themselves.

However, he noted that there were clear objectives; to provide advice on regional engagement, the Fellowship Charter, Fellows' projects and ideas about how to diversify the Fellowship. Lord Best affirmed the shift from old-style committees to new networks focused around project activity, and emphasised the positive and exciting role the Council had in bringing that about.

Lord Best concluded by affirming that Fellowship Council will be at the heart of what the RSA does from now on and, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Council for fulfilling their role.

David Archer explained a little more about the role of Zena and himself. He noted that the Trustee Board had welcomed them as full members and that the Fellowship Council had a standing item on the agenda. He mentioned that the Trustee Board view the Fellowship Council as an excellent resource in which to test out ideas and as the Council begin to show progress (on regional engagement, Charter and Fellows' project encouragement in particular) the Council will be seen as ever-more valuable influence. Lastly, it was stressed that it was early days in the relationship.

**Question:** What have you learned from working with the Trustees, any myths dispelled?

*Zena: I have been impressed by the incredible commitment to the RSA and to the Fellowship Council and by the individual brilliance demonstrated in careers, passions, projects or otherwise of the Board members. The way in which the Board has helped Matthew and Belinda and others in their mission to transform the Fellowship has to be commended as well.*

*David: I learned to a degree about the need and power of proper process. The preparation of the Board has been impeccable and facilitates proper discussion.*

**Question:** Could you enlighten us as to how much resource has been set aside to fund the Fellowship Council?

*Lord Best: To quickly set out the overall financial situation; it is one where House income has taken a bit of a hit and Fellowship has suffered slightly, both as a consequence of the economic climate. The RSA is pursuing a model of societal change through the organic activity of the Fellowship as opposed to emphasising the role of centralised projects. I reassure the Council that the Council itself will continue to be resourced.*

**Question:** Will the amount set aside for Council affect the amount available for regional activities?

*Lord Best: The global amount will be constant but obviously decisions about how the global amount is split up per capita and per region are more complex.*

*Matthew Taylor: In the context of reductions in External Affairs and more of a requirement on Projects to self-fund their activities it should be noted that the Fellowship budget has grown steadily, first through the expansion of the Networks team and now through the Catalyst and Council. The challenge now is to continue our professionalisation and put numbers to the activities and impacts that the Fellowship is having.*

**ACTION:** Any other comments, please give them to David and Zena and they will be put to the board at forthcoming sessions.

## Mini-Review – Group Discussion

Tessy thanked all those who had provided feedback to the slides sent around on 9<sup>th</sup> June and reminded the Council that its strategy was very much an emerging model, namely, to create working groups and to focus on specific activities. After seven months of running in this way it is time to review it. Tessy reminded everyone – following the meeting pack – that groups should focus on idea-generation, appreciating what is going well and to focus on some concrete proposals.

### 1. Working Relationships - (Facilitated by) David Archer and Sarah Tucker

Clarify and communicate roles to improve efficiency of contact

- Clarify and further communicate the role of the Fellowship Council (hereafter 'FC'), regional committees, network managers and other RSA staff
- Illustrate the relationships between these different parties - who does what
- Write some simple notes to explain to Fellows who they should contact (Regional Committees, FC member, Network Manager etc.) about what. And keep publicising this regularly in the journal and at RSA events etc

Keep momentum of relationships going between FC meetings

- Working relationships are developing best where people have the opportunity (and need) to meet between FC meetings – but often this is not possible
- Ask FC members to say if they are prepared to be contacted between meetings and if so what is the best way to do it – ning/email/phone/face to face etc
- Use technology – Skype, Instant Messaging, and other conferencing/collaboration tools to reduce onus on people travelling
- Provide virtual meeting environments and other IT resources to help FC members (and Fellows) to work together on ideas and projects

Getting to know each other

- Buddy up pairs of FC and staff members to help build personal relationships and also to provide a point of contact into the wider organisation
- Spend more social time together around FC meetings
- Assume “positive intent” in all contact and communications

Mapping of skills

- Share profiles of skills, interests and experience amongst the Fellowship Council members
- Use Fellowship directory to access these FC profiles
- Put RSA staff profiles on the Directory as well
- Share RSA staff organisation structure

Work towards joint deliverables

- A measure of the progress we are making on these working relationships is that outcomes from the work of the Council are seen as joint deliverables
- Focus on outcomes rather than activities
- Be realistic about timescales

## 2. Fellowship Council remit - Andrew Chidgey and Alex Watson

There was a degree of convergence that the nature of the Council's role is twofold (though it is fair to say that Council members varied over the extent to which they emphasised one over the other):

- a) Outward facing role; to champion the Fellowship experience lived through thought-leadership, and to spread the message of the Fellowship to Fellows – many of whom are not clear about the Fellowship offer – and promoting the Fellowship externally
- b) Inward facing; to represent the views of the Fellowship in the Governance of the RSA through the Trustee Board and Working Groups

There were questions about how best to deliver on the remit, and that is where most of the discussion focused:

Positive:

- A number of Council members were encouraged by their ability to transmit the views of the Fellowship through to RSA staff and the Trustee Board via the working committees on Catalyst, Fellowship Charter, Digital Engagement, Project Framework and regional engagement
- A number of Council members stressed that the Council was still feeling its way into its role and that this was to be expected given the infancy of their role

Challenges:

- Difficult to engage with large numbers of Fellows, there was a sense that it was difficult and ineffective use of time to try and listen to Fellows and as a consequence Council members felt that as a collective they weren't listening to large numbers of Fellows, and found it difficult to convey their views to governance bodies with much confidence
- As part of this there was a sense that the Fellowship Council weren't particularly visible to the Fellowship at large
- Some Trustee-appointed Fellows felt that they were at a disadvantage in getting involved in local networks

Proposals to resolve and mitigate the challenges that the Council faces in delivering on their remit:

Strengthen recognition through:

- listing all Council members in the Journal
- update the Council biographies on the RSA website to take account of recent Council activity

Ways of making it easier to reach larger numbers of Fellows:

- making a space on the ning where Council members can publicise the next available opportunity for Fellows to meet them face to face
- focus on building one-to-one relationships with Fellows to create a network of local FRSA's who themselves will champion the Fellowship, perhaps through making a Council surgery time available e.g. 2 hours every month I'll be available in a public/office space should any Fellows feel the need to find out more. Some Fellows are already doing this
- Use ning space to show visual counts and accounts of activities Council members are undertaking
- Ensure that Digital Engagement working group requests are followed through and provided adequate resource if staff and Trustees are serious about Council delivering its remit

### 3. Roadshows - Andy Kirk, Helen Westropp

The stated aims of the Road shows in the briefing slides were:

- Engaging Fellows near where they live
- Letting Fellows know the latest opportunities for activity in the RSA (Catalyst, Social Media, Networked activity)
- Highlighting RSA wide and local FRSA benefits
- Promoting 21st Century Enlightenment

And the key deliverables outlined:

- Identifying new FRSA leads
- The start up of a network (or plan to)
- XX number of Catalyst proposals
- Taking a project forward

The majority of the discussions within the 6 groups focused on what Council members thought the objectives of the roadshows should be.

Opinions were divided whether the roadshows should be for Fellows only or open to anyone, and whether they should be used to recruit new Fellows or engage new and existing Fellows. There seemed to be a view that the messages would be very different if they were aimed at Fellows rather than non Fellows.

If the aim is to recruit new Fellows then there was a view that there are already sufficient mechanisms for this within the RSA. In light of this, recruitment should be seen as a welcome outcome but not a central objective.

If the aim is to engage new and existing Fellows then the range of objectives suggested was:

- Awareness of what the RSA stands for, 21st CE, what RSA and individual Fellows' groups are doing
- Enthusiasm – motivate Fellows to become active
- Re-commitment / engagement with the RSA
- Reciprocity – this should not just be an RSA PR exercise

The use of the term 'Roadshow' was raised on several occasions. It summoned up an image for most people of an orange bus full of RSA publicity sweeping into town. Is this the right medium to achieve some of the stated aims?

There was some discussion about how the roadshows should work. Some of the key ideas were:

- Participatory – involving workshops and input from attendees, 'show and tell'
- Inclusive – using local active Fellows, regional committees and local networks to aid delivery
- Each one different, tailored and topical – specific to local area or theme OR
- Same everywhere, so there is no variation in the experience
- Communicating initiatives
- Short and punchy

Preparation for and outcomes from the workshops and what happens next were thought to be key to their success. Feedback and follow-up need to be carefully thought out.

Venue was also raised by some of the groups. It was felt that the choice of venue could have a big impact on the success of the Roadshow.

**ACTION:**

- Call-out to interested Council members to contribute towards the design of a pilot Roadshow that balances the desired objectives above of Awareness, Enthusiasm, Re-engagement and Reciprocity
- Go ahead with a pilot
- Review the pilot, evaluate the effectiveness of the format and propose changes if necessary

#### 4. Fellowship Engagement - Andy Gibson, Vivs Long-Ferguson

What is working well:

- RSA Journal, 21CE, RSA Animate and Lectures inspire and stimulate debate – recognition that content is essential
- RSA Catalyst and Newsletter provides case studies and stories for Fellows to relate to; demonstrates practical action
- Specialist thematic networks and working groups provide targeted opportunities for Fellowship engagement
- Staff and Fellowship collaboration (through Council) well received and should be expanded across Fellowship where resources allow
- Social media provision is broad
- Balance of online and offline

Questions and comments:

- Mixed regional representation and approaches
- Too many options for Fellows to connect, the online offer needs to be simplified and improved navigation.
- Are we aiming for increased levels of engagement across Fellowship?
- Can Council see online statistics and trends?

Ideas for further ways/methods for engaging Fellows:

- A Central online hub that eases the navigation and signposting to various online options
- Further offline engagement opportunities through events, live streaming, Fellows' evenings etc.
- Fellowship Directory developed further
- Further clarification of the offer
- Technology strategy – the need for a cohesive strategy as online offer increases and develops particularly through digital engagement.

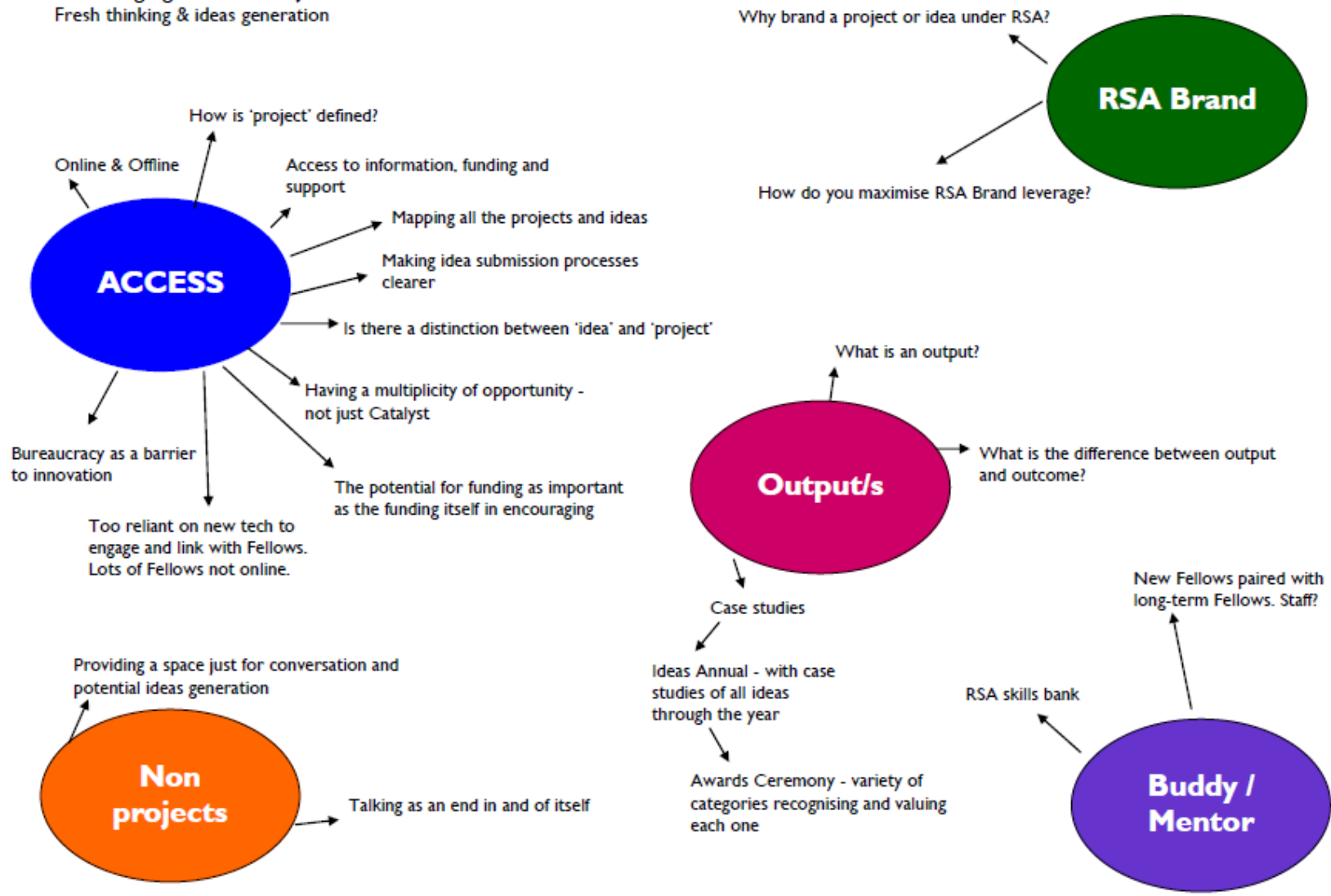
Summary of the 5 priorities to take forward:

- I. continue the Staff & Fellow collaboration
- II. develop targeted Fellow engagement
- III. continue to develop the Fellowship Directory and link to other areas
- IV. the value of content: Lectures, Animate, Journal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Enlightenment etc . in order to inspire
- V. keep it local

5. Encouraging Fellows' projects - Rebecca Daddow and Graham Sprigg

**Encouraging Fellow's Projects**

Fresh thinking & ideas generation



## 6. 21st century enlightenment (hereafter '21CE') - Julian Thompson and Frances Gallagher

Five points came out of the discussion:

- There seemed to be a strong consensus about what 21CE meant for the Fellowship. It was about realising human progress both individually and collectively. Fellows (pursue not merely wealth creation but happiness and sustainability). It was encouraging that there was a strong convergence about what 21CE means, at least in broad terms, for Council members. However it will need to be understood at a more concrete level when it comes to identifying opportunities for action.
- Picking up on a question raised during Matthew Taylor's annual lecture, it was expressed that there is a danger we look at this argument specifically from a western perspective; the human as central, linear idea of progress etc. However this is avoided as long as maintain the ultimate focus on human fulfilment and the realisation of potential, which is thought to be a universal aspiration.
- It not entirely clear how individuals and organisations might go about applying the principles of autonomy, humanism, universalism. One way to deliver this was through our conduct in daily life: i.e. for Fellows to "be the change they want to see" in the world, by asking the challenging questions that society needs to ask of itself, leading by example, and encouraging others. It was also suggested that if we are to extend our capacity for empathy, we have to experience the "other" in a much more visceral way than we are currently doing. There is always a tendency within a community, society, network or membership organisation for people to want to attract, interact and engage people like themselves. If we are to empathise we need to increase the diversity of fellowship, and try walking in the shoes of people who's lives we want to improve e.g. the homeless, marginalised, stigmatised. Fellows must be wary of being pious and insular.
- The Council had a role in ensuring that the RSA underpins all the facets of the organisations with its 21CE principles. If we apply the enlightenment values to, for example, the lectures programme, it might mean thinking how to make lectures more interactive, more about making the learning mutual rather than one way, and more productive rather than purely reflective. It might also be about increasing diversity in the Fellowship to have a range of people from all walks of life and backgrounds in order to avoid groupthink.
- The Fellowship has a role in ensuring 21CE activity. Not everyone in Fellowship should be expected to "act big". We need to find ways to encourage tiny "micro-acts" from Fellows which add up to something transformative, from a single tweet, vote or user rating, right through to involvement in the larger scale programmes underway (e.g. Catalyst) It was also expressed that Fellows need to be more involved in their local community, otherwise the RSA could still be perceived in some quarters as elitist, London-centric and divorced from reality.

## Regions Working Group – Feedback by Bob Porrer

It was reported that the Working Group is developing a qualitative questionnaire, which will be sent to regional committees and discussed at network events, in order to map activity as well as enable us to challenge our preconceptions. The questionnaire will cover engagement with Fellows, project activity, communications and to find any key elements of common structure that might exist – respecting the regions’ right to self-determine of course.

Bob will be emailing local committees this by the end of July, with the instructions that the set of questions should also be a prompt for discussions, and is an attempt to reach out to the less active regions. Whilst the aim is to present findings in time for the AGM, the Working Group is conscious of the need to do this properly not quickly.

**ACTION:** Council members should ensure that they are active and participating in this discussion.

## Digital Engagement Working Group – Feedback by Jemima Gibbons and Vivienne Long-Ferguson

### Live-Blogging/Twitter

It was announced by Jemima Gibbons that the event was being live-blogged at [www.interactiveknowhow.com/2010/06/rsa-fellowship-council-live-blog-of-fourth-meeting/](http://www.interactiveknowhow.com/2010/06/rsa-fellowship-council-live-blog-of-fourth-meeting/) and that #thersa and #rsade were designated as the twitter feeds.

The scope of the Working Group is to ask how we help Fellows and staff to use online methods and tools to engage with each other.

The group has 43 members and last met in May, but also has met subsequently online via Skype.

The three main priorities of the group are to:

- I. Increase online participation: focus on [www.RSAFellowship.com](http://www.RSAFellowship.com) & [www.citizenpower.co.uk](http://www.citizenpower.co.uk) (existing social networks on Ning).

Recommendations:

- Sustain [www.RSAFellowship.com](http://www.RSAFellowship.com)
- Sustain regional social networks
  - Review/ monitor participation and engagement
  - Develop online facilitation techniques ‘build the online Fellowship community/ network’
  - Identify community builders (Fellows & staff)
- Integrate and combine where appropriate
- Pilot an alternative social network platform

- II. Advance the ‘how to’ offering; build on social media surgeries, review usability and navigation of RSA Fellowship web pages.

Recommendations:

- Develop a Fellows’ ‘how to’ blog
  - Share toolkits
  - Disseminate case studies and FRSA projects
  - Signposts for engaging (dashboard)
- Use back channels more effectively to engage with RSA activities (eg: using Twitter for events, encourage fellows to comment on each others’ blogs)

III. Develop RSA Support, the skills bank for Fellows into an online clearing house where Fellows who have registered their skills can match themselves up to RSA Catalyst, and investigate how it can link to the Fellowship Directory.

This will one of the next priority areas to cover.

**ACTION:** Council members must ensure that they are registered on the Directory accessible via <http://www.thersa.org/fellowship/fellows-facilities/fellowship-directory-page>

## Nominations Committee – Report & FC Council Member Replacements

Irene Campbell confirmed that the Council has had four formal resignations. It was proposed that the Council will re-fill those places according to the nominations process drafted in the meeting pack in consultation with RSA lawyers. It was noted that all four members who have stood down were all Trustee-elected, and pending approval we will go ahead now and start the re-election process.

**RESOLUTION PASSED:** The nominations process proposed in the meeting pack was approved by the Fellowship Council.

## Fellowship Charter Working Group – Feedback by Laura Billings

Laura Billings presented on behalf of the Charter Working Group, which had met in the morning.

Laura confirmed that they had engaged with Fellows in a total of ten meetings with over 150 Fellows and have also received 53 direct emails or phone calls. The majority of feedback was supportive and the second largest feedback suggested changes, leaving only a small amount of negative feedback. The positive comments received were mostly about the consultative process.

The suggestions for changes mainly centred around the following:

- that the version was still too long;
- that the tone was too arrogant;
- that the language was too full of jargon and corporate language.

In comparison with September, when we did the first draft, the majority of comments were around language being used, rather than any issues around the content itself.

Following this consultation another sweep for plain English was undertaken, to find ways to shorten, to edit the introduction to clarify the shared ethos and aims, without altering the founding principles.

Many wanted to remove the process of 'signing up' individually, and replace it with a tripartite sign-off of the Executive, the Trustees and the Fellowship Council.

The Working Group had agreed that the Charter cannot list all the things the RSA does. It had been agreed that the Charter should therefore not mention one or two activities for fear of leaving out others, but instead reference some of the activities visually in the accompanying illustrations.

The Charter will be produced in A4 printed version (which can go out in new Fellows' packages) and possibly as an RSA Animate video. It is worth remembering that the Charter is part of a package: website navigation, welcome and orientation to new Fellows etc.

The Charter was designed to reaffirm common aims and values across fellowship and organisation, and its impact on doing so will be evaluated according to comparison with examples from the NCVO Future of Membership project, regions working group mapping and social impact reporting.

**Comments:**

... "I really recommend everyone looks on the website to see the changes that have been made, and how the whole consultation process has worked..."

... "That was a great presentation, thanks for all your work in the process of reviewing the Charter..."

Deputy-Chair proposed that unless any Council member lodged an overwhelming objection to any wording in the charter by the end of the next week the endorsement of the text of the Charter by this Council meeting should be final. The Chair agreed and the motion was put to vote.

**RESOLUTION PASSED:** The Charter was passed by the Fellowship Council.

## Succession of designated roles & timeline pre- and post-October

In December 2009 it was agreed that the succession arrangements for Chair and Deputy-Chair should be revisited after a year. Constitutionally, the Council began at the AGM 2009 and so it is suggested that prior to the Council meeting accompanying the AGM 2010 is the appropriate time for an election. It was proposed to bring forward the election process for the Chair and Deputy-Chair from December to September.

**RESOLUTION PASSED:** To bring forward the succession of the Chair and Deputy-Chair to September 2010 in order for the election to take place before the 2010 AGM.

**ACTION:** If any Council member is interested in the positions, they are free to contact Tessy or Paul if they have any questions about the roles.

**ACTION:** Michael Devlin will coordinate the election criteria and process.

## Closing Thoughts

Tessy noted how she had been very impressed by the dedication in which Council members have set to their tasks, having been copied to a number of the emails of the Working Groups. It was noted that this meeting should be an enormous boost to regain some momentum and energy.

**ACTION:** If any Council member should find that he/she have been at the edge of things, please email Tessy and a discussion can be had about where it is possible for to engage further.

Determination does not always come across but behind the day-to-day activity what has impressed Tessy is that among RSA staff there is a real and genuine wish to co-design. Everyone should bear in mind that co-design is new for both staff and Council members.

Lastly, Tessy thanked the Council for its contributions to today's session.

Paul Buchanan thanked Tessy on behalf of the Council and the RSA staff for her energy and commitment to the Council throughout her tenure.