



(FCMtg2Feb11Summary)

6th Fellowship Council Meeting Summary

Tuesday 02 February 2011, 13.30-16.30

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

Convenors:

Robert Porrer (Chair)

Irene Campbell (Deputy Chair)

Ann Packard

Lopa Patel

Graham Sprigg

Wiard Sterk

Helen Westropp

David Young

Present:

Gerry Acher

David Archer

John Bale

David Biggs

Kevin Cahill

Andrew Chidgey

David Clarke

Sybil Crouch

Gerard Darby

David Dickinson

Jackie Elliman

John Elliott

Frances Gallagher

Jemima Gibbons

Andy Gibson

Anthony Hoskin

Susan Jones

Zena Martin

John McMullan

Charles Millar

Katie Moore

Apologies:

Tessy Britton

Paul Buchanan

Nicholas Clifford

Stephen Coleman

Rosie Ferguson

Charmian Love

RSA Staff present:

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive

Julian Thomson, Director of Projects

Michael Ambjorn, Head of Fellowship
Networks

Josef Lentsch, Head of Fellowship Services

Alex Watson, Networks Manager

Live blog of meeting is available via: <http://www.monkeyswithtypewriters.co.uk/rsa-fellowship-council-live-blog-of-sixth-mee>

Welcome

Chair Bob Porrer welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He restated the aims that he and deputy chair Irene Campbell set out in October, namely to:

- facilitate a more constructive dialogue between Council, staff, Trustees and Fellows
- meet needs of Fellows
- improve communications
- ensure FC can have a genuine influence on RSA operations and strategy
- make the Council more representative, with more elected members
- improve the visibility of the Council to Fellows
- listen to Fellows in the nations/regions and better understand what they want
- set realistic goals; and specifically for 2011 around the review of the regions, completing the Charter package, digital engagement, better communications, and encouraging Fellows' projects, e.g., through Catalyst and Skills bank
- learn from history but also find new ways of working together

He and Irene Campbell had started work on all these aims but they sought the Council's active support to achieve them, and expected progress to be measured against them.

Live-Blogging

It was announced that the event was being live-blogged by Council member Jemima Gibbons at www.monkeyswithtypewriters.co.uk/rsa-fellowship-council-live-blog-of-sixth-mee

Summaries of previous Meetings (previously circulated)

Summaries of 5th Meeting of Council and the special meeting to discuss bye-law issues on 5 October were approved by the Council, with no issues arising from them.

Vacancies on the Council

Two resignations from the Council were announced; Stephen Elliott-Hunter (elected, East of England) and Leslie Kossoff (co-opted, International). Since: an election process would normally be taking place later in the year to elect members of the 2011/12 Council and there may be changes recommended by the Governance Review Group (GAG) it was recommended to leave these positions unfilled for now. The balance on the Council still holds, with 19 elected and 19 appointed members.

Election arrangements for Council members, Summer/Autumn 2011

The initial term of office for all current Council members would finish in September 2011. The Governance Advisory Group may have recommendations for changing the Council. But, in the interim, Council was invited to support the following recommendations:

Question: Why are we even discussing this if it will be reviewed and decided by the GAG?

Answer: Because the GAG might not take a view on this matter and implementation of any changes could take some months; and also because the Council should give a clear signal about the direction in which we want to go.

1. That half of the Council members should be elected/appointed every year, rather than all elected/appointed every other year.

Comment: Unless we want complete disruption every year with the whole FC standing for re-election, then the elections will have to be staggered.

MOTION CARRIED: Two votes against.

2. That current elected FC members should be invited to serve an additional year.

Question: Are elected members forced to stay on for an extra year?

Answer: Elected members will be invited to stay on.

Comment: In the spirit of openness and fresh ideas, we should try and get new blood and everyone should stand for re-election.

MOTION CARRIED: Two against.

3. That 35 of the 40 Council members should be elected, with only five appointed to ensure diversity and representation of the wide range of Fellows' activities.

Comment: The view has always been to have as many elected members as possible.

Question: Will elections be from each region or from the whole of the Fellowship?

Answer: The current assumption – unless changed by the GAG – is that numbers elected from each region will continue to be decided according to a principle of i) a minimum of one Council member from each region and ii) the remaining Council seats divided up according to numbers of Fellows in the region.

Question: If there are only 5 co-opted members, will they not consider themselves an elite?

Answer: Co-opted members are essential in order to ensure the diversity of skills and of people required.

Question: If there are only 5 co-opted members, will they not consider themselves as having less of a mandate?

Answer: The dichotomy between elected and non-elected has always been a false one. Many 'elected' members were unopposed. Many co-opted members came second and third in elections.

Question: What is the process by which the five Council members are co-opted?

Answer: The Nominations Committee will meet to discuss gaps in the skills and diversity of the elected members and will (after elections) decide on the five to be co-opted.

MOTION CARRIED: Unanimously.

Outcomes of RSA AGM on 6 December 2010: Establishment of the Governance Advisory Group (GAG)

Concerns about the establishment of the GAG were summarised in two proposed motions put forward by Tessy Britton via email. Concerns centred around the text in the motion carried at the AGM which stipulated that the GAG is to consist in part of “three elected representatives of the Fellowship Council elected by the Council... [among the 12 on the GAG]”. Legal advice sought by Matthew Taylor concluded that if the Trustees departed from the wording of the original resolution passed at the AGM, they could be subject to legal action by the proposers of the motion. So as it is, only elected members of the FC would be allowed to stand for these three Council members co-opted to the GAG. Appointed members of the Council would be eligible for co-option to the GAG as one of the “three further Fellows who do not belong to any of the aforementioned groups.”

Bob Porrer proposed that the FC, if it so wished, could make a strong recommendation to the GAG that that their first priority in allocating to the three co-opted places on the GAG should be to consider co-opting from amongst the appointed members of the FC.

Comment: The motion starts from a standpoint that the elected FC members have more of a mandate than the non-elected ones. In fact, the dichotomy between elected has always been a false one. Many ‘elected’ members were unopposed. Many co-opted members came second and third in elections.

Comment: As a co-opted member I think it is right that I should have been excluded from the GAG. It is very bad democratic process to appoint a group of people to take a vote on how democratic they think they are going to be. Advisors can be called in but they need not have a vote.

Comment: As another unelected member I do feel that I have a responsibility to talk to Fellows about what they want so I have been actively trying to understand and deliver the views of the wider Fellowship.

Comment: It sounds sensible that co-opted Council members be considered for the three co-opted members of the GAG. But there should be no bias to the co-opted Council members and candidates from the wider Fellowship should also be considered.

Comment: Enough of the Council’s time has already been taken up by RSA governance matters. Yes, the Council should help with consultation and this is reflected in the motion. Yes the motion does reflect a bias among Council members. But the past is the past, and time should be concentrated on matters that are of more direct concern to the Fellowship. The GAG will come up with sensible conclusions and if it does not, these will not be accepted by the Fellowship.

Question: Has general awareness been created amongst the wider Fellowship in order to get the right talent for the three co-opted members of the GAG? Will the RSA write out to Fellows?

Answer: No. A write-out will attract a quantity of candidates that would require a fair process for selection. If the GAG is to have a chance of making considered resolutions to this year's AGM, then there is no time for such a process. We have a lot of ground to cover in the months to come.

NO MOTION PASSED: [Co-opted Council members and candidates from the wider Fellowship will be considered by the GAG for co-option on to the GAG based on what skills are missing]

ACTION: Council members should inform Robert Porrer and Matthew Taylor if they know of a potentially useful candidate for the GAG.

Improving the operation of the Fellowship Council

Irene Campbell deputy chair, facilitated a discussion on: views of the Council; how FC members worked in the regions; what it might seek to achieve in 2011; and how we might change the way the Council works to make it more effective. She had sent out a questionnaire before Christmas to get views on this in advance. Unfortunately only six responses had been received in advance of the meeting. This session was the opportunity for all Council members to raise views.

Comment: I'm worried about the lack of continuity. Some working groups have completely disappeared; the RSA Roadshow and gender group caused a great discussion and then completely disappeared and the Projects group – aiming to bridge the gap between Fellows' projects and RSA Projects – has just dropped off. We need more consistency in how progress is tracked and reported.

Comment: We need to take more actions from these discussions as a whole group.

Comment: One achievement was to get the Trustees to withdraw the motion calling for an all-appointed Trustee board, following a long discussion with the Council.

Comment: Some find the work of the Council itself satisfying, whereas changing the RSA for the better is what I find satisfying. The fact that the working groups are doing good work doesn't mean that the Council as a whole is not achieving anything. I do not think we, collectively, have begun to make any kind of impact on the RSA at all, and we have spent too much time concerned with ourselves as an institution rather than our impact on the RSA as a whole.

Comment: One thing we have achieved is a Fellowship voice on the Trustee board. The emphasis on Fellowship has significantly altered. We have been asked by the Trustees to seek Council views on certain matters and vice versa. We have a channel there that was not there before.

Comment: We have raised too many issues and we have not had the resources to tackle them.

Comment: I think it is a question of too much ambition. I am nervous about too much introspection. For me the best session was in June where there was a lot of discussion about different initiatives and I was able to go back to Fellows offering ways they could get involved.

Matthew Taylor commented that part of the reason the Council was established was because he was bringing issues to the Trustee board on behalf of Fellows. The Council is a means by which Fellows can do so instead. He wants to see the Council active in the Fellowship, representing the activity and change within it, in order to be in strongest position to present Fellows' issues to the Trustee board

who govern. Fellows are more engaged than ever in the history of this organisation e.g. we have received an average of 16 Catalyst applications a month over 8 months. He urged the Council to continue to ask itself; 'are we the catalyst core of the Fellowship?'

Comment: There is a lack of clarity about the purpose (reflecting change, bringing it about are two purposes we have already heard) which must be resolved ahead of the next election of members.

Comment: It is worth remembering the starting points. The Council is new a new body finding its way. On supporting Fellows' projects, we have made fantastic progress with Catalyst – co-designed and co-delivered by four Council members – having funded 25 projects in 9 months and helped many more.

Comment: Why are we discussing what RSA staff are doing and what the Council is doing? Why are we not outwardly focused on what *Fellows* are doing?

Comment: The Royal Charter says that the RSA is set up to "help the poor... reform humanity and society" and that Fellows are central to this. One way Fellows organise to achieve these aims is in regions, so why are we not sharing best-practice about how they self-organise on a regional basis. 9% of Fellows voted for the AGM governance motion. In contrast, 30% of Fellows in my region have attended an event, but I have not had the opportunity to share with the Council why this form of engagement with Fellows have worked.

Comment: We need to interpret our mission in a more modern way. This is the forum where that should happen.

Comment: There is a feeling that a lot of stuff that is operating on the ground needs to be pushed up to the Fellowship Council to spread it across the Fellowship.

Comment: Being a member of the Council has brought me a lot closer to the regional committee; deciding to try to report back to the London Regional Committee after every meeting has made me a lot more aware of the activities that they are involved in.

Comment: Unlike others, I do not feel like I meet anything but a small group of Fellows.

Comment: The RSA – like every charity – is governed by its Trustees. That's where strategy and policy is decided. The Council should focus on sharing projects and ideas of Fellows, not making itself into some sort of surrogate Trustee board.

Comment: One of the issues is what do Fellows want? And I think the answer is; not a lot. I did a survey a few years ago and there is a fairly high level of apathy when it comes to engagement.

Comment: We should be here, in part, to link Fellows together across geographic areas.

Comment: I do not want to get involved with Trustee strategy but I do want to know what it is. We need the strategy to see how Fellows' projects fit with that. We need more transparency.

Comment: I do not believe that strategy and policy should be left to the top layer. There are many different ways of contributing to these and everyone in the organisation should be able to play a part e.g. that is exactly what the digital engagement working group is trying to do.

Proposal: To focus Council minutes and working group reports around concrete actions with clearly assigned owners which they report on at every Council meeting.

Proposal: Have a rolling list of all the things that the Council has done or influenced in relation to staff, Trustees and Fellows since it was established (both collectively and in working groups).

Proposal: Use Council meetings to discuss what can be replicated across regions in terms of Fellowship engagement (networks and projects).

Proposal: Use Council meetings to discuss what Fellows are doing; the activities of Catalyst projects and what the Social Entrepreneurs Network – an emerging a network of activists – is doing? In order to try to amplify the impact they are having.

ACTION: Bob Porrer and Irene Campbell to pull together feedback and see what outcomes might be made from the proposals.

Bob Porrer moved on to discuss a number of revisions suggested for the Council's terms of reference. The revisions were offered in order to reflect current practice and also to inform any discussion of the Council by the GAG.

Question: Why are we no longer going to have co-convening of Council working groups? It has worked well so far having co-convenors; one RSA staff member and one Council member
Answer: There will still be at least one member of staff on each group, but as FC groups they should be convened by a member of the FC.

Question: How often will the terms of reference be reviewed?
Answer: Roughly every two years. The terms of reference need to constantly evolve.

MOTION PASSED: The proposed revisions to the terms of reference were agreed with the proviso that the Mission and Purpose and Objectives could be revisited in the light of the discussion.

Report from Council Trustee Board Members and brief discussion

Zena Martin and David Archer reported back from the last Trustee meeting. David invited ideas from the Council as to how RSA Academies might be supported by Fellows.

Matthew Taylor gave some context. It was before he became CEO that the Trustees created the first RSA Academy to give practical expression to the Opening Minds curriculum. The new model is to develop three other academies which will partner with schools in deprived areas to spread Opening Minds. The original model was to take over a failing school, the model is now working with schools that are already doing well in deprived areas.

Question: Is the Opening Minds project just in the UK?

Answer: The Education team is also exploring potential to spread to schools in Europe.

Question: There was initially a lot of anger in the Fellowship when the first RSA Academy was set up, because the Fellowship was not consulted. The RSA should focus on Opening Minds and not on creating an academies network. This to me would be another example of the Trustees not consulting with Fellowship on such a politically sensitive matter

Answer: The RSA Academies would have been government academies anyway. The decision about the RSA Academies has been taken by the Trustees. This is an opportunity for the Fellowship to have input into how the RSA Academies develop in order to better involve Fellows.

Question: I am worried whether the commitment to Opening Minds is paramount. I would be very concerned if any of our schools picked up organisations that were not committed to Opening Minds. How do these schools where curricula are based on Opening Minds differ to where they actually practice the Opening Minds curriculum?

Answer: I completely appreciate that. These are opportunities to build a system of regional hubs and work on other forms of relationships with exciting schools; one of which is looking to build a hostel for its pupils who do not have access to stable accommodation.

Members sought further information on the developments outlined above and the Chair agreed to circulate this. He noted that it was hoped that the April Council meeting might include a visit to the RSA Academy in Tipton. Council members were invited to email suggestions on how Fellows could engage with the next group of RSA Academies.

David Archer turned his next point which was a new iteration of RSA strategy which was approved at the last Trustee meeting.

[RSA Strategy 2011-13 is handed out]

Matthew Taylor noted that the strategy is an iterative process reflecting a number of conversations at Trustee level. They would be grateful for suggestions from the Council about areas Fellows want to drill down and focus on.

Matthew also mentioned that in time for the next Council meeting there will be a new Director of Programme, Adam Lent, who will cover both the Projects and Fellowship Networks teams. This appointment – while it will take time to bed down – will help take forward the work that was done by the Projects working group.

Comment: There are two pages on Fellowship strategy. I would have liked the Council to have been consulted before these decisions had taken place and not simply asked to react.

Answer: Nations and regions have their own sense of what the RSA can offer to its Fellows and it is different in each region, reflecting Fellows' interests. I do not think the Trustees want to second guess that. If the Scottish committee decides they want to focus on say design, that's great and completely up to them where they want to focus resources.

Question: Can we know more about Fellows undergoing RSA training to become accredited RSA project managers in their areas?

Answer: Because of the action-research projects and funding received for them, the RSA has got quite a good idea of what works. It seems a good idea to pass that info on. What we are hearing from organisations working on the ground is that they need some kind of quality assurance about individuals who are coming to them offering help and saying they have experience in certain areas. At the moment this is only a suggestion and there are no immediate actions from it.

ACTION: Circulate a soft copy version of the strategy document to the Fellowship Council.

ACTION: Discuss the aspects of the strategy document relevant to Fellowship at the next Council meeting.

David also announced that concerns about Fellows' access to the RSA House expressed in the last meeting during discussion around the renovation of the Great Room had been referred to the House Development Committee. The new House Development Committee will be chaired by Andrew Summers on behalf of the Trustee Board and will have Andy Gibson and David Archer as FC members.

Report on Meeting of Regional Chairs

Notes on this meeting, held in November, had been circulated with the agenda. It was announced that the Regional Chairs will once a year meet with the incumbent chair of the Fellowship Council – and also convene on their own accord in between these meetings. The meeting held in November had raised a number of issues, which the Chair and Deputy Chair were currently discussing with Fellowship staff.

Report on Review of Regions

To some extent this has been overtaken by events but Bob Porrer explained his concern to get to this point before the GAG started its deliberations so that the work completed so far by the FC group could provide a good reference point for the GAG's deliberations.

The main points of the review are summarised as follows:

- new **"Team" approach** to nations/regions, with the creation of a collaborative national/regional team made up of active Fellows and the Network Manager, all of whom can help to facilitate more activity and collaboration between Fellows
- a **clear statement of purpose for all national/regional teams** and of how these should represent Fellows, to be supplemented by objectives specific to the RSA's activities within each nation/region.
- **flexibility** in permitting different approaches within regions/nations according to needs
- **election of Regional Chairs, alongside FC representatives**, by a vote of all Fellows in the nation/region
- **annual reporting from each nation/region to the FC**, which would work more closely with the Central Fellowship Team and have input into both policy and operational matters
- need to review the **resourcing** of activities within the nations/regions
- need to improve **communications and information** on national/regional activities

Comment: I am surprised the review has not come to some more radical conclusions. The regional committee currently has little role other than acting as a treasurer. What about splitting up this function to local networks and initiatives rather than the extra bureaucratic layer of the regional committee? What about mandating those elected to become chair to serve for a year as deputy chair?

Answer: Committees do serve a role, bringing together Fellows across a wider area. A project leader in my region recently said how much he appreciated the support he received from the committee and the regional committee is also looking to replicate the success of this project elsewhere within the region.

Comment: It might be helpful for the nations to have more focus on what is the difference between a region and a nation; distance to travel (and costs associated) is certainly one factor.

Comment: There is a different narrative coming from government about how we define communities, including how funding is distributed (more locally for example). It would be great to see the RSA learning from and contributing to this national debate.

Comment: I live in one region and work in another. We need to look at the distinct needs of each region, and at population density, e.g. the London region has a third of the Fellowship (probably more given that many Fellows will work there), should it be broken into north and south?

Comment: Whatever funding mechanism is decided, it must not be too rigid and not exclusively about engaging Fellows in your own region, but also enabling the sharing of a successful project or network with other regions e.g. RSA Scotland is developing a project with RSA USA.

Comment: I think the review is a very good document but there should be clarification between the regional committees and the regional fellowship teams. I think it's a good idea but worried there will be too much overlap.

Comment: There is a need to ensure continuity in the regional teams and the current rules for the election of a Deputy Chair who takes over as Chair after one year aid this.

Bob Porrer commented that flexibility was important - one size would not fit all when it came to meeting the needs of different regions. It was essential that all those involved on the national/regional teams shared objectives and that the teams were made up of active Fellows. There might be a need to review regional boundaries in the light of experience, but the draft proposals recognised the porosity of boundaries and better information on activities across the regions and accessible to all Fellows should help overcome geographical boundaries.

Matthew Taylor commented that each region is very different in the way they organise themselves: South Central has nine local committees, London has just one and there is another region with no committee at all - they just want to act as a catalyst for local groups. Networks Managers have worked very hard for the salaries they earn and where they are working effectively with regional committees, they are really getting results. He expressed that he is grateful for your collaboration with them. Matthew thanked those on the regional review and Bob Porrer for convening it.

The Council gave its general support to the approach outlined in the draft paper. Members were invited to send in any detailed comments by email to Bob Porrer.

Reports from other Council working groups (material submitted prior to the meeting)

Gerard Darby on behalf of the Catalyst group mentioned that it is moving forward well with grants awarded to 25 to date. In particular he noted that it is fantastic to know that even those who have not received funding have appreciated the feedback and non-financial support they received from the panel. Charles Millar added that one immediate priority was to tap into all the resources registered in the Skills bank.

David Dickinson on behalf of the Projects group posed the question whether it should be reconstituted or collapsed into the Catalyst group. It was agreed that with the production line of Catalyst operating on a very different timeline, the Projects group should be very much informed by Catalyst but separate from it. It was agreed that a satisfactory response from RSA staff to the earlier stages of the Group's work should be sought before it continued.

Jackie Elliman on behalf of the Charter group said that the group thought it was complete and would go to the AGM for approval. Matthew Taylor commented that the Charter was to be presented within the RSA re-brand which is currently pending; he hoped that the Charter could be available in the new design within a few weeks. Bob Porrer reminded Council that the Charter "package" included "how to" guides, which would be available on the website; he believed that it was important for this work to be completed by April and would seek a report on progress at the next Council meeting.

Jemima Gibbons on behalf of the Digital Engagement group said that the latest development is the creation of Digital Engagement Guidelines v1.0 which has been uploaded to the RSA Fellowship Social Network (www.rsafellowship.com). The group would welcome Council members' feedback and comments. The group is also pleased that staff agreed to its proposal for a full-time RSA member of staff for digital engagement. The job description is currently being written up with the hope that the role will be filled by the early summer.

John Elliott, on behalf of the Education group, updated that a bid to Catalyst is coming up. The group, piloting in Norwich, has a partnership with one of the six national beacons, Community University Engagement East. He noted that University partnerships can be very significant when concerned with community engagement. He encouraged Council members to get in touch if they are looking to set up a similar partnership .

Report on RSA Cymru/Wales

Bob Porrer attended a meeting of Fellows in Cardiff and reported that they were working to find an appropriate model for Wales. The main challenge has been identified as how to make things happen while still keeping bureaucracy to a minimum.

Reports from other Regions/Nations

[No issues raised]

Improving Communications

Bob Porrer gave a brief verbal report on discussions between FC Chair and Deputy Chair and RSA staff on practical steps to improve communications, where there was agreement on the following priorities:

- central web-based calendar
- improvements to the regional web pages
- new form for input of events information
- enhancement of the Fellows Directory
- display roller banners

Small improvements could help to improve the relationship between JAS and the Fellowship in the regions/nations.

Any Other Business

Question: Can we have more information about changes in funding for the regions?

Answer: There are no planned changes in funding for the regions.

Question: Could the next Fellowship newsletter include a summary of the recent staff changes?

Answer: There are no further planned staff changes but key contact points will be included in the next Fellowship newsletter.

Question: Can Matthew Taylor be present at each Council meeting?

Answer: Matthew Taylor is invited to all Council meetings.

Dates of next Council meetings

The next meetings are:

- Tuesday 19 April
- Wednesday 21 September
- Thursday 8 December

At least one of these will be out of London, most likely in Birmingham, with a visit to the RSA Academy (in close proximity to Birmingham New Street).

ACTION: Car-sharing options be highlighted when the agenda for the Birmingham meeting is sent around

Thanks

Bob Porrer, on behalf of the Council, thanked the out-going Director of Fellowship Belinda Lester for her efforts and achievements in creating a more active and engaged Fellowship.

The Council thanked Bob Porrer and Irene Campbell for their chairing of the meeting.

[ends]