
Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting 17 May, 2021

AGM/0521:99

MINUTES of a meeting of the Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting held on 17 May from 1145 – 1415 GMT.

PRESENT

Executive Board	
Dr Vicki Gardiner	President-Elect (elected President at the meeting), Australia
Professor Choon Hong Tan	Singapore
Dr Deborah Nicoll-Griffith	Canada
Professor Ishmael Masesane	Botswana
Professor James Darkwa	Ghana
Dr Michael Forde	Trinidad and Tobago
Professor Peter Mallon	South Africa
Professor Priyani Paranagama	Sri Lanka
Dr Robert Parker	UK
Mr Roger Stapleford	Australia
Professor Sarah Masters	New Zealand
Professor Sourav Pal	India
Secretariat:	
Dr Ale Palermo	Secretary
Ms Gill McGrath	Secretariat
Attendees:	
Professor Abdul Karim	Bangladesh
Professor Amália Uamusse	Mozambique
Dr Andrea Goldson Barnaby	Jamaica
Professor Andrew Holmes	Australia
Professor Avril Williams	Barbados
Professor Basil Shelton Marasinghe	Papua New Guinea
Professor Bice Martincigh	South Africa
Dr Clarence Mgina	Tanzania
Professor D K Kessy	Tanzania

Dr Edward Juan	Malaysia
Dr Erick Awas	Kenya
Professor Florence Nareetsile	Botswana
Professor G. D. Yadav	India
Dr Genevieve Adukpo	Ghana
Professor Gill Reid	UK
Professor Gloria Obuzor	Nigeria
Dr Helen Pain	UK
Professor Iqbal Rouf Mamun	Bangladesh
Professor Ishenkumba Kahwa	Jamaica
Professor Jacob Midiwo	Kenya
Professor Johannes Awudza	Ghana
Dr Laura Reyes	UK
Professor Leonard Gitu	Kenya
Dr Leontios Philotheou	Cyprus
Professor Marvadeen Singh-Wilmot	Jamaica
Professor N Sathyamurthy	India
Professor Sagarika Ekanayake	Sri Lanka
Mr Rajesh Parishwad	India
Professor Sir Richard Catlow	UK
Dr Richard Taylor	Trinidad and Tobago
Professor Robert Byamukama	Uganda
Dr Sisira Weliwegamage	Sri Lanka
Professor Soon Ting Kueh	Malaysia
Professor Steven Holdcroft	Canada
Professor Thabile Ndlovu	Eswatini
Professor Tom Welton	UK
Professor Vincent Nyamori	South Africa
Professor Vinod Singh	India
Professor Zhongxin Zhou	Canada
Apologies:	
Professor Daniel Kumar	Fiji
Dr Francis Mani	Fiji
Professor Michael Mucalo	New Zealand

1.	<p>WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT</p> <p>Dr Vicki Gardiner welcome everyone to the meeting (circa 55 attendees). She confirmed apologies had been received from Professor Mucalo, current President of the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry and from Professor Kumar and Dr Mani from the Chemical Society of South Pacific. She asked everyone to think about questions to put forward for the final item on the agenda. She touched on the running order of the agenda before focusing on the time-line of Commonwealth Chemistry, since its inception at a meeting of scientists in London in 2018 to present day, to include its ethos, vision and aims.</p>
2.	<p>INTRODUCTION TO COMMONWEALTH CHEMISTRY</p> <p>Professor Choon-Hong Tan took the participants through the Commonwealth Chemistry Vision – <i>One community, One Voice, catalysing equality for all</i> and Mission - <i>To inspire, celebrate and elevate the role and practice of the chemical sciences for the benefit of Commonwealth nations and their people</i>. He also talked about the Guiding Principles - <i>Equal and inclusive representation from all Commonwealth nations with the recognition that those with greater resources will contribute more in order to support those with fewer resources</i>. Choon-Hong confirmed that he was looking forward to working with all of the members and to meeting them in person.</p>
3.	<p>GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE</p>
3.1	<p>Articles and Rules (AGM/0521:02)</p> <p>Dr Vicki Gardiner talked through the constitution of Commonwealth Chemistry specifically the Articles and Rules that structure the governance and set out the legal obligations. She also took members through the registration of the Federation as a limited company, at Companies House in the UK. She confirmed that Commonwealth nations without a chemical society would be encouraged to participate as Associate Members and that the Federation would encourage those, wishing to form a chemical society in their nation, to do so. She noted that the Royal Society of Chemistry provides a small amount of seed funding for newly established chemical societies.</p>
3.2	<p>Introduction to Executive Board Members (AGM/0521:03)</p> <p>Dr Vicki Gardiner explained the make-up of the Executive Board as being between 12 and 13 individuals depending on whether a President-Elect is in position and includes 5 elected members, 6 appointed members. In addition to this she talked through the cycle of the President and President Elect. She then asked each member of the Executive Board to introduce themselves, in turn, to the members present at the AGM.</p>
3.3	<p>Introduction to Secretariat and its Role</p> <p>Following the introduction by Board members, Dr Vicki Gardiner explained the role of the Secretariat to Commonwealth Chemistry, currently provided by the RSC. Made up of three people, this group carries out the day to day operations of Commonwealth Chemistry supporting the Executive Board meetings and other events. It operates through the governance contained in the Rules.</p>

3.4	<p>Relationship Between Commonwealth Chemistry and the Royal Society of Chemistry (AGM/0521:04)</p> <p>Dr Robert Parker talked about the relationship between the Royal Society of Chemistry and Commonwealth Chemistry and that the RSC had agreed to provide seed funding over a period of 5-years to a total amount of £1.41 M and also to provide the Secretariat in the development phase of the organisation. There are discussions planned to take place about how the Federation will be funded at the end of the five year period and this will be reported back to members.</p>
4.	<p>Dr VICKI GARDINER BECOMES PRESIDENT OF COMMONWEALTH CHEMISTRY</p> <p>Dr Robert Parker welcomed Dr Vicki Gardiner, President-Elect, as the new First President of Commonwealth Chemistry. He talked about her vast experience and all that she had done throughout the set-up phase of Commonwealth Chemistry as President-Elect. Vicki Gardiner will serve as President for a period of two years.</p>
5.	<p>INTRODUCTION TO MEMBER SOCIETIES (AGM/0521:05)</p> <p>Professor James Darkwa gave a brief introduction to 22 member societies of Commonwealth Chemistry followed by the showing of a video in which each member society gave a short piece to camera - http://rsc.li/CCAGM2021.</p> <p>The 22 Member Societies of Commonwealth Chemistry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bangladesh Chemical Society 2. Canadian Society for Chemistry 3. Caribbean Academy of Sciences Jamaica Chemistry Division 4. Chemical Society of Botswana 5. Chemical Society of Nigeria 6. Chemical Society of the South Pacific 7. Ghana Chemical Society 8. Indian Chemical Society 9. Institut Kimia Malaysia 10. Institute of Chemistry Sri Lanka 11. Kenya Chemical Society 12. New Zealand Institute of Chemistry 13. Pancyprian Union of Chemists 14. Royal Australian Chemical Institute 15. Royal Society of Chemistry 16. Singapore National Institute of Chemistry 17. South African Chemical Institute 18. Tanzania Chemical Society 19. The Chemical Research Society of India 20. The Chemical Society of Pakistan 21. The Institute of Chemists, Papua New Guinea 22. Trinidad and Tobago Chemical Society
6.	<p>FINANCIAL REPORT (AGM/0521:06)</p>

Dr Ale Palermo talked through the finances for Commonwealth Chemistry and the figures as at March 2021 as well as the forecast through April to December 2021.

Commonwealth Chemistry SIF funded expenditure forecast 2021

	2021			Notes
	Actual as at March £	Forecast Apr-Dec £	Total Forecast £	
Externals _ Contractors, Consultants, Commissions etc	3,770	9,430	13,200	1 and 2
Grants, Prizes, Awards	-	7,500	7,500	3
Conference & Event Costs	-	32,260	32,260	4
Technology	-	3,492	3,492	5
Non_Payroll Costs		56,452	56,452	6
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	3,770	(56,452)	(56,452)	

1. Actual spend to March 2021 includes website build and CC IWD webinar sign language translation costs.

2. Forecast spend for social media set-up and initial support in second half of 2021.

3. Prizes for annual poster event to be held in September 2021.

4. Virtual event costs for: Inaugural Commonwealth Chemistry Congress in May, Taking Chemistry to Market and Poster Event in Q3 and EGM in Q4.

5. Annual Federation website hosting fees.

Note - All non-payroll costs prior to 2021 were charged to RSC Operating Budget (c£102k in 2019 and c£49k in 2020).

7. COMMONWEALTH CHEMISTRY PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2020- 2023 (AGM/0521:07)

7.1 Professor Sarah Masters took members through the activities that had taken place during 2020. She explained that the first Congress, scheduled to take place in Trinidad and Tobago but which had been postponed because of the pandemic, had been split into various virtual events including a virtual poster event in August 2020 at which 226 people across 40 countries participated. She also talked about the launch of Commonwealth Chemistry on 8 March 2021, which was organised to coincide with International Women's Day and included a webinar on Gender Parity and she touched on the forthcoming Congress, to follow the AGM, and said she hoped that members would be able to attend.

7.2 Professor Vincent Nyamori talked in detail about the first Commonwealth Chemistry Congress *Partnerships for Goals* which would follow the AGM. He also highlighted the launch of the Commonwealth Chemistry website www.commonwealthchemistry.org and events coming up - *Taking Chemistry to Market* webinar and a second virtual poster event, both of which will take place in 2021

Dr Michael Forde talked through the plans for the first physical Congress in 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago and talked through the aims and themes as well as the organising committee and the venue.

7.3	<p>Early Career Chemists' Survey (AGM0521:08)</p> <p>Dr Ale Palermo talked through the Early Career Chemists' Survey which was open for three months in late 2020 and covered the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career progression • Training and funding • Working environment • Collaboration and networks • What the Federation could do to support ECCs <p>She said that the response had been fantastic with 1600 people taking part from 38 countries. Full reporting will be relayed at the Commonwealth Chemistry EGM, later in 2021, as detailed analysis continued to be undertaken.</p>
7.4	<p>COP26 Policy Statement (AGM/0521:09)</p> <p>Dr Robert Parker talked through the Commonwealth Chemistry COP26 Policy paper endorsed at the Executive Board in May 2021 and encouraged member societies to use and share the statement as appropriate. He confirmed to members that the RSC had applied to have a stand at the COP26 conference in November 2021 in Glasgow, UK at which Commonwealth Chemistry input would be welcome, should the application be successful.</p>
8.	<p>MEMBERS' LED DISCUSSION</p> <p>Professor Sourav Pal opened the AGM for member questions and discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will Commonwealth Chemistry be different in its approach and agenda to other Federations? Answered by Professor Paranagama who reminded everyone of the vision and mission of Commonwealth Chemistry, the diversity and shared values and the ability to speak with one voice. 54 countries with equal and inclusive terms for the benefit of all with a focus on solving global challenges as described by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the ultimate aim to benefit society at large. She said that as home to 12% of the world's researchers and Commonwealth Chemistry provided unique opportunities for this group • A comment was received from Professor Soon Ting Kueh that the countries with strong chemical resources should support those with the least resources. Sourav Pal confirmed that this was the guiding principle of Commonwealth Chemistry. • Professor G D Yadav asked if there would be a access to membership for industry associations? Dr Vicki Gardiner confirmed that as per the Rules and Articles the focus would be on chemical societies but there may be room for industry within Associate Member status. • What was the process for selecting the inaugural President for Commonwealth Chemistry? And the Executive Board members? Sourav Pal answered this question confirming that in October 2019, the Task Group issued a Call for Nominations for the First Commonwealth Chemistry President and all societies were invited to consider nominating a candidate from within their membership. A clear role descriptor, explaining the role and person specification and time commitment was also shared with all chem socs. In January 2020, following a

clear transparent process, the Task Group evaluated all submissions which included a statement from each candidate explaining why that individual should be elected and summarising what objectives they would like to achieve during the presidency period. The President-Elect was voted on by the Task Group and this was Vicki Gardiner. Executive Board members were then appointed from the Task Group which was extended to include a better representation across the commonwealth nations. This will change to an appointment and an election process going forward to make it all inclusive.

- **How was it decided to host the first Congress in Trinidad and how will you decide the venue for the next Congress?**

Dr Deborah Nicoll-Griffith answered this question and said that during the June 2018 meeting at Burlington House, London, where the concept of Commonwealth Chemistry was born, the group agreed that a series of regular and distinctive conferences should be organised, commencing in 2020, formally launching the Federation. At the time, the Chemical Society of Pakistan, the Chemical Society of Bangladesh, and chemists representing Trinidad and Tobago offered to host the First Congress. The Task Group supported the development of the Congress and provided guidance on the overall concept. In view of the discussions and points raised in June, it was agreed that the first Congress should take place in Trinidad and Tobago with a key point being that most international congresses in chemistry do not take place in Caribbean nations. For the 2025 conference, expressions of interest will be welcomed and there will focus on supporting and developing the local chemical society of the successful application.

- Professor Florence Nareetsile asked if a date was set for 2023 Congress– it was confirmed that it had not but this would look to be confirmed as soon as possible.
- Professor Thabile Ndlovu asked how smaller countries can be helped to start their own chemical society. Ale Palermo confirmed that seed funding was available and also support in terms of sharing best practice.
- Professor Marvadeen Singh-Wilmot asked how to build sustainable infrastructure for the development of chemical societies within Commonwealth countries. Sourav Pal said this could be very country specific in terms of need but that Commonwealth Chemistry should try to enable. Vicki Gardiner agreed with this and that the ECC survey would report on some important information. As Commonwealth Chemistry continues to gather data, the picture will become clearer as to where resources are needed. Soon Ting Kueh said the chemical society in the closest geographical location is usually best placed to assist.
- Professor Leonardo Gitu asked how Commonwealth Chemistry could assist in good chemicals management. Vicki Gardiner said that this was one of the areas that would fit into the sustainable development goals and that CC conferences and seminars could include this. Michael Forde said that members should be in touch with the Executive Board to put forward ideas directly so that they can be discussed and actioned by the Board.
- Florence Nareetsile asked if undergraduates and masters students could be included in conferences she also asked about the terminology relating to Early Career

Chemists and how this can be misconstrued. Vicki Gardiner agreed and said that ECC status has nothing to do with age but the stage of a career. She also said thought would be given to including undergraduates.

- Dr Edward Juan suggested a mentor/mentee scheme and also asked about Commonwealth Chemistry's long term strategic plan. Vicki Gardiner said that the planning had been thrown off course by Covid19 and the inability to meet face to face but that that the long term plan was a priority and this would get back on track as we come out of Covid19.
- **What are the main priorities for the Executive Board for 2022?** Professor Peter Mallon answered this question and said that firstly it was to structure activities around the UN sustainable development goals and secondly to stimulate activity between Early Career Chemists and that these are areas where CC can have the biggest impact providing a forum for discussion. He also said the COP26 statement would be useful.
- **How societies can provide feedback ahead of the Extraordinary General Meeting and how the societies can contribute?** Peter Mallon said that feedback from all of the member societies is very important and that this should be through the Secretariat. Meetings will always have a section for feedback and discussion.
- **How do we make sure that we are capturing and engaging with all Commonwealth chemists?** Vicki Gardiner said CC is keen to engage with chemists in countries without a national chemical societies and as this is a challenge she asked members for help in terms of contact and relevant information. Sarah Masters highlighted the website and said that all members should sign up to this as it a way to communicate with each other.
- **How did you secure the funding to launch Commonwealth Chemistry?** Robert Parker said that as CEO of the RSC he had asked Trustees to support the seed funding of the Federation and RSC was able to do this from a strategic initiatives fund and that the RSC Board was very supportive. Sourav Pal gave thanks to the RSC and its Trustees.
- **Funding for the future – RSC has funded 5 years – what will we do after this?** Mr Roger Stapleford said that thanks to the generosity of the RSC CC has a 5 year window in which to secure the future. The Executive Board is grateful to receive feedback on this and also a sub-committee had been put together to form ideas. Activities will be key to future funding rather than relying on grants or government funds. Sourav Pal suggested that industry and its involvement might be another source of funding.
- A question was asked as to whether support was available from CC for individual national chemical societies and their AGMs and conferences. Ale Palermo said could be evaluated on a 1-1 basis and RSC may have small amounts of funding available and Commonwealth Chemistry to think about this for the future. Chemistry World is currently available free of charge to all chemical societies. Marvadeen Singh-Wilmot suggested a Fundraising Committee. Dr Richard Taylor suggested a journal.

9. **CLOSE**

Dr Vicki Gardiner closed the AGM, thanking everyone for their input and ideas which the Board can take forward with an update to take place at the EGM later in 2021. She highlighted a few last key action points for members:

- to promote Commonwealth Chemistry to their Boards and members,
- to use the Commonwealth Chemistry website and to feedback via the site,
- to promote the access to Chemistry World amongst their membership,
- and encouraged society members to get involved further.

Dr Ale Palermo
Secretary