

# Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting 25 May 2023

AGM/0523:99

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting held on 25 May 2023 from 14:00 – 17:00 GMT at University of West Indies, St Augustine, in Trinidad and Tobago.

## PRESENT

<b>Executive Board</b>	
Dr Vicki Gardiner (President)	Australia
Dr Genevieve Adukpo	Ghana
Professor Steven Bottle	Australia
Professor Neil Coville (President Elect)	South Africa
Dr Michael Forde	Trinidad and Tobago
Professor Peter Mallon	South Africa
Professor Sarah Masters	New Zealand
Dr Deborah Nicoll-Griffith	Canada
Dr Naumih Noah	Kenya
Professor Sourav Pal	India
Dr Ale Palermo	UK
Professor Priyani Paranagama	Sri Lanka
Dr Ting-Kueh Soon	Malaysia
Professor Sandeep Verma	India
<b>Secretariat:</b>	
Dr Andrew Shore	Secretary
Dr Aurora Walshe	Secretariat
<b>Member country representatives:</b>	
Professor Avril Williams	Barbados
Professor Jean Claude Ndom	Cameroon
Professor Jennifer Love	Canada
Dr Josephine Tsang	Canada
Dr Thabile Ndlovu	Eswatini
Mr Sainey Cham	Gambia
Professor Johannes Awudza	Ghana
Dr Francis Nsiah	Ghana
Professor Uday Maitra	India

Professor Vinod K Singh	India
Professor Dr Ganapati Yadav	India
Dr Nadale Downer-Riley	Jamaica
Dr Andrea Goldson-Barnaby	Jamaica
Ms Dorice Situma	Kenya
Professor Mosotho George	Lesotho
Dr Timothy Biswick	Malawi
Professor Dr Zuriati Zakaria	Malaysia
Mrs Wadheea Thaufeeq	Maldives
Professor Henri Li Kam Wah	Mauritius
Professor Sally Gaw	New Zealand
Professor Oluwole Familoni	Nigeria
Professor Dr Gloria Ukalina Obuzor	Nigeria
Professor S O Okeniyi	Nigeria
Mr John Kia Nema	Papua New Guinea
Professor Theoneste Muhizi	Rwanda
Professor Vincent Nyamori	South Africa
Professor Namal Priyantha	Sri Lanka
Professor Dr Charles Kihampa	Tanzania
Dr Clarence Mgina	Tanzania
Dr Denise Beckles	Trinidad and Tobago
Dr Terry Mohammed	Trinidad and Tobago
Professor Robert Byamukama	Uganda
Professor Gill Reid	United Kingdom

1.	<p><b>WELCOME</b></p> <p>Commonwealth Chemistry President, Dr Gardiner, opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting. She took attendees through the Participant Agreement and Housekeeping, encouraged members to ask questions and reminded participants that time was available, towards the end of the meeting, for this.</p> <p>Dr Gardiner introduced the agenda, she explained that UK Executive Board Member, Dr Parker had retired at the end of 2022 and that Dr Palermo had taken on the position as representative for the UK.</p> <p>Dr Palermo provided a brief history and context of Commonwealth Chemistry.</p>
2.	<p><b>PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS</b></p>
2.1	<p><b>Changes to the Commonwealth Chemistry Rules (CCAGM/0523:02)</b></p> <p>Dr Gardiner introduced the Rules and Articles of Association documentation. She asked participants to note that the Rules may be changed by the Executive Board, whereas changes to the Articles needed agreement from 75% of members. Dr Gardiner summarised the following changes to the Rules, as agreed by the Executive Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Creation of the role for Past-President (new Rule 4.8.3)</b> The Past President attends Executive Board meetings in an advisory capacity with no voting rights and for one year only – to help to retain corporate knowledge.</li> <li>• <b>Appointed Executive Board directors for an individual nominated by the Society Member(s) of Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and United Kingdom (new Rule 4.8.6)</b> This new Rule was adopted in the interest of continuity, stability and sustainability.</li> <li>• <b>Process for casual vacancies on the Executive Board (new Rule 4.9)</b> This new Rule was adopted in the interest of stability and sustainability.</li> </ul> <p>These changes had been made in line with the original intention - to review the Rules after the first three years.</p> <p>The adoption of the new Rules meant that other minor changes were required throughout the Rules document, to better reflect the current state of Commonwealth Chemistry and to remove references to the initial set-up phase, which were no longer relevant.</p> <p>It was necessary to change these Rules without consultation, in order that the appointed Executive Board positions could be announced at this AGM.</p>
2.2	<p><b>Announcement of 2023 Commonwealth Chemistry Executive Board elections and appointments (CCAGM/0523:03)</b></p> <p>Dr Gardiner explained that UK Executive Board Member, Dr Parker, had retired at the end of 2022 and that Dr Palermo has taken up his position for the remainder of his term. Dr Shore had now filled the position of Secretary. previously held by Dr Palermo.</p>

	<p>Dr Gardiner thanked the outgoing members of the Executive Board for their contributions. Dr Gardiner then thanked all nominees for taking part in this year's elections.</p> <p>Dr Gardiner set out the results of the recent elections of Commonwealth Chemistry.</p> <p>The new members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Clarence Mgina from Tanzania, Elected Member</li> <li>• Professor Alison Thompson from Canada, Elected Member</li> <li>• Professor Steve Bottle from Australia, Appointed Member</li> <li>• Professor Peter Mallon from South Africa, Appointed Member</li> </ul> <p>Dr Gardiner welcomed the new members and asked each to introduce themselves.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Commonwealth Chemistry Membership (CCAGM/0523:04)</b></p> <p>Dr Gardiner referred attendees to the paper which showed the current membership of Commonwealth Chemistry with the Chemical Society of the Gambia being the most recent to join.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Royal Australian Chemical Institute</li> <li>2. Bangladesh Chemical Society</li> <li>3. Chemical Society of Botswana</li> <li>4. Chemical Society of the Gambia</li> <li>5. Cameroon Society of Chemistry</li> <li>6. Canadian Society for Chemistry</li> <li>7. Pancyprian Union of Chemists</li> <li>8. Ghana Chemical Society</li> <li>9. Indian Chemical Society</li> <li>10. Chemical Research Society of India</li> <li>11. Caribbean Academy of Sciences Jamaica Chemistry Division</li> <li>12. Kenya Chemical Society</li> <li>13. Chemical Society of Lesotho</li> <li>14. Institut Kimia Malaysia</li> <li>15. New Zealand Institute of Chemistry</li> <li>16. Chemical Society of Nigeria</li> <li>17. The Chemical Society of Pakistan</li> <li>18. The Institute of Chemists, Papua New Guinea</li> <li>19. Rwanda Chemical Society</li> <li>20. Singapore National Institute of Chemistry</li> <li>21. South African Chemical Institute</li> <li>22. Chemical Society of the South Pacific</li> <li>23. Institute of Chemistry Ceylon</li> <li>24. Tanzania Chemical Society</li> <li>25. Trinidad and Tobago Chemical Society</li> <li>26. Royal Society of Chemistry, UK</li> </ol> <p>Dr Gardiner highlighted that there were no Associate Members and encouraged those present at the meeting, that would meet the criteria, to contact the Secretariat to discuss this membership option.</p>

2.4	<p><b>Commonwealth Chemistry Boards and Committees (CCAGM/0523:05)</b></p> <p>Dr Gardiner outlined the composition of the current Commonwealth Chemistry Boards and Committees as detailed in the supporting paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth Chemistry Executive Board</li> <li>• Commonwealth Chemistry Finance Committee</li> <li>• Early Career Network Committee (which supersedes the Report Working Group)</li> </ul>																																																																														
3.	<p><b>Commonwealth Chemistry Financial update (CCAGM/0523:06)</b></p> <p>Professor Pal provided an update on expenditure for 2021 and 2022 and forecasted expenditure for 2023.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 60%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">2021 Actual £</th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">2022 Actual £</th> <th style="width: 5%; text-align: center;">Notes 2022</th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">2023 Forecast £</th> <th style="width: 5%; text-align: center;">Notes 2023</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Income</b></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Travel bursary for Early Career Chemists</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">100,000</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sponsorship</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">TBC</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Expenditure</b></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>External contractors (Consultants, Commissions, etc)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8,000</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5,120</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Production Costs</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: right;">320</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prizes</td> <td style="text-align: right;">12,500</td> <td style="text-align: right;">12,500</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: right;">13,654</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Conference &amp; Event Costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5,624</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5,840</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: right;">135,170</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Technology costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2,398</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2,500</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2,695</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Publicity, Marketing &amp; Advertising</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: right;">9,311</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Travel and accommodation expenses</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: right;">19,744</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> <td style="text-align: right;">283,527</td> <td style="text-align: center;">11</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total Costs *</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>-28,522</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>-55,335</b></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>-335,046</b></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* All costs prior to 2021 were charged to RSC Operating Budget (ca. £102k in 2019 and ca. £49k in 2020).</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. External consultancy fees (website development, social media campaign).</li> <li>2. Production of Sustainable Workforce Report social media resources.</li> <li>3. Prizes for 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Posters event (25 x £500).</li> <li>4. Virtual event costs for Commonwealth Day event held in March 2022 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Posters event held in September 2022.</li> <li>5. Federation website hosting fees.</li> <li>6. <i>Elements</i> video campaign costs and social media channel set-up and advertising.</li> <li>7. Board member travel to September 2022 Board meetings.</li> <li>8. Contribution from the RSC Chemists' Community Fund to support Early Career Chemists from low- and middle-income countries to attend 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Congress.</li> <li>9. Prizes for 4<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Posters event (25 x £500) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Congress (6 x \$250).</li> <li>10. Venue and catering costs for 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Congress; virtual event costs for 4<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Posters event and a possible additional 2023 event.</li> <li>11. Delegate travel and accommodation for 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Congress.</li> </ol> <p>2023 spend would be significantly higher, due to the Congress, and it was likely that expenses would increase further.</p>		2021 Actual £	2022 Actual £	Notes 2022	2023 Forecast £	Notes 2023	<b>Income</b>						Travel bursary for Early Career Chemists	-	-		100,000	8	Sponsorship	-	-		TBC		<b>Expenditure</b>						External contractors (Consultants, Commissions, etc)	8,000	5,120	1	-		Production Costs	-	320	2	-		Prizes	12,500	12,500	3	13,654	9	Conference & Event Costs	5,624	5,840	4	135,170	10	Technology costs	2,398	2,500	5	2,695	5	Publicity, Marketing & Advertising	-	9,311	6	-		Travel and accommodation expenses	-	19,744	7	283,527	11	<b>Total Costs *</b>	<b>-28,522</b>	<b>-55,335</b>		<b>-335,046</b>	
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	<p>The Finance Committee was investigating ways to make Commonwealth Chemistry financially sustainable, and plans would be shared with the membership, once in place.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Commonwealth Chemistry Activity Report (CCAGM/0523:07)</b></p> <p>Professor Masters chaired this section of the meeting.</p> <p>Dr Walshe provided an update on the launch of the Commonwealth Chemistry Facebook account and “Elements” social media campaign.</p> <p>The campaign highlighted seven “Elements” which represented the diversity of Commonwealth researchers. The campaign was incredibly successful and saw a rapid – at times almost exponential – growth of Commonwealth Chemistry Facebook page, to over 16,000 followers. A Twitter account was also set up and referred to events, like the #RSCPoster Twitter Conference to engage with audiences and build an online community. Followers grew to over 400 during the Congress.</p> <p>Dr Walshe thanked those at the Congress who had interacted with the new CC social media presence and encouraged participation to help build an online presence.</p> <p>Professor Verma summarised the 3rd Commonwealth Chemistry Poster event. The standard of the posters was extremely high as were the three live networking sessions, which had led to interesting discussions. There were 25 winners across 6 themes, with 17 countries involved across the 2-day event. The next poster event would take place on the 4 and 5 October 2023.</p> <p>Dr Forde provided an overview of the Congress; 212 registered delegates representing 33 countries attended. One highlight was that the event had revitalised the University of West Indies and the Department of Chemistry within the region.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Launch of Commonwealth Chemistry Early Career Network (CCAGM/0523:08)</b></p> <p>Professor Mallon reminded everyone that the first output of Commonwealth Chemistry was the <a href="#">Sustainable Workforce Report</a> and a Working Group had been formed to turn the recommendations contained within the report, into actions. Early career chemists were key to achieving the goals.</p> <p>Focus groups took place in November 2022, to determine what the early career community would need and want from an early career network.</p> <p>The outcomes from the focus groups were shared; the main desire was for support/mentorship from senior members of the community. Therefore, the Executive Board appointed Professor Paranagama, a senior chemist with vast experience, as the inaugural chair of the Commonwealth Chemistry Early Career Network Committee.</p> <p>Professor Paranagama would look at the outcomes of the Focus groups and support the formation of the Early Career Network. The aim was to offer networking between Low-Middle- and High-Income countries and strengthen research capacity.</p> <p>Professor Paranagama introduced the makeup of the committee; Dr Genieve Adukpo and Dr Naumih Noah would join the group as representatives of the Executive Board. There would be one or two early career representatives from each Commonwealth region, allowing for gender and geographic diversity.</p>

6.	<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Congress</b></p> <p>Professor Mallon explained that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Chemistry Congress, in 2025, was due to take place in South Africa with the support of South Africa Chemical Institute (SACI), the oldest chemical society in Africa. The South African Journal of Chemistry, one of the oldest continuously published journals, was currently discussing the possibility of a themed issue to link to the Congress.</p> <p>Commonwealth Chemistry would be looking to build on the success of the Congress in Trinidad &amp; Tobago, fostering the ideas of Commonwealth Chemistry of equitable opportunity and access for all. All groups involved in the planning were committed to working closely with the Executive Board and would consider models for the long-term financial stability of the Congress.</p> <p>Professor Mallon informed members that the guidelines and bidding process for those planning to submit a bid to host the 2027 Congress, would be available in due course.</p>
7.	<p><b>OPEN DISCUSSION</b></p> <p><b>Review of election process</b></p> <p>Dr Nicoll-Griffith chaired a discussion around the Executive Board election process and experiences since the last AGM. The Executive Board had approved that all voting should take place online – this would aid inclusivity and allow announcements to be made at the AGM. The Executive Board had also looked at simplifying the voting process and reducing the number of rounds.</p> <p>They posed three questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. What in the process is going well?</b> A: Easy to use, transparent, bios available on platform, democratic.</li> <li><b>2. What is not right?</b> A: Takes a long time, can we change mode of voting to limit the number of rounds.</li> <li><b>3. What suggestions would you make to address some of these issues?</b> A: Ranked voting system, single transferable vote, one round per post with someone being elected in each round then stop, preferential voting to narrow down candidates</li> </ol> <p>Dr Nicoll-Griffith thanked members for their input and said that the Executive Board would take feedback into consideration, when planning the new voting process.</p> <p><b>Contributing to Commonwealth Chemistry</b></p> <p>Dr Noah reminded members that the Federation belonged to them and that that they were critical to its success.</p> <p>She encouraged all members to promote the activities of Commonwealth Chemistry to their members and communities. The aim was to enrich the content on the website, and she asked everyone to share content, including non-funding website ideas, with the Secretariat.</p> <p>The overarching themes for the day had been collaboration and all members were encouraged to have conversations back home to facilitate this.</p>

## Future ideas for Commonwealth Chemistry

Professor Coville put forward his ideas for the future of Commonwealth Chemistry.

There was discussion around networks and connecting people, sharing of equipment, collaborating on grant proposals and shared lab work. Discussion also focused on identifying metrics for the success of Commonwealth Chemistry, goal setting for the Early Career Network, and understanding the retrospective impact of the Trinidad and Tobago Congress in 5-years time.

It was highlighted the Federation should make best use of what resources it already possessed, and that members should be willing to share and disseminate knowledge with each other. Dr Adukpo gave an example - that she had organised training for her university after attending a RSC Pan African Chemistry Network workshop.

Dr Gardiner suggested the Secretariat investigate platforms for hosting an online community, forum or board for capturing and sharing ideas/information amongst members of the Federation. To **action** – the CC website to provide access to resources and events from across the Commonwealth.

## General discussion

Dr Gardiner Chaired the open discussion.

- **Update on accreditation from The Commonwealth?**  
Commonwealth Chemistry had applied for accreditation from The Commonwealth. Applications are reviewed regularly throughout the year and Commonwealth Chemistry was currently awaiting a decision.
- **Is there support to run workshops?**  
Commonwealth Chemistry had run successful virtual workshops in the past and ideas for future workshops would be discussed by the Early Career Network.
- **Can Commonwealth Chemistry facilitate grants, mobility grants and other such opportunities?**  
Commonwealth Chemistry did not have the financial capacity to make a significant difference in equal terms. It was hoped that The Commonwealth accreditation would facilitate access to connections with Commonwealth sources of funding.
- **Is there an Alumni group?**  
No, a national chemical society can be a member, representing their Commonwealth country and it is they that are the conduits to the individual chemists. For countries without a national chemical society, an institution or group of institutions can join as Associate members with a named representative from that country acting as the main point of contact who would then share and disseminate information among their colleagues and chemistry community.
- **Is it possible for individuals, in a country, who are not members of the member society but want to get the benefits of Commonwealth Chemistry?**  
National chemical societies are the members, and it is they that are the conduits to individual chemists. For countries without a national chemical society, organisations or institutions can become Associate Members by having a named representative from that country acting as the main contact for Commonwealth Chemistry, who would share and

	<p>disseminate information among their colleagues and the chemistry community. Commonwealth Chemistry activities are open to individuals resident Commonwealth countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Need to focus on chemistry education, reviewing curriculum, need benchmarks, forming collaborations with senior chemists.</b> Some organisations e.g. CIC, RACI, RSC, offered an accreditation service which could help with benchmarks and standards, and this could be shared outside of Canada, Australia, and the UK respectively.</li> </ul>
8.	<p><b>Presidential handover</b></p> <p>Dr Gardiner inaugurated Professor Coville as President of Commonwealth Chemistry and Professor Coville thanked the outgoing members of the Executive Board.</p>
9.	<p><b>CLOSE</b></p> <p>Professor Coville set out his priorities for Commonwealth Chemistry during his presidency as focussing on SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. He said he wished to focus on this, with emphasis on building networks/partnerships between the Early Career Chemists (ECCs) across the Commonwealth. Building a cohort of young chemical scientists would provide leadership for Commonwealth Chemistry in the decades ahead. The strategy would build on the report, which identified the needs and aspirations of the ECCs, starting with the formation of the Early Career Network Committee, led by Professor Paranagama and supported by Dr Adukpo and Dr Noah.</p> <p>Professor Coville thanked everyone for their input. He welcomed again new members and thanked outgoing Executive Board members and then closed by saying he looked forward to working with everyone over the coming year.</p>

*Dr Andrew Shore  
Secretary  
October 2023*