Terms of Reference: Communities Committee

PURPOSE

Reporting to the Board, the goal of the Communities Committee is to increase engagement with and amongst our membership, to encourage engagement of our membership with communities and allied professionals, and to support professional development in physiology. The aim of this work is to strengthen the pipeline of physiologists and their continued career in the discipline. This is in line with our strategic purpose to support and inspire our community to advance the physiological sciences leading to our vision of a world in which physiological discovery leads to healthier lives.

REMIT

- To develop, support delivery and review the engagement offering of The Society:
  - Consider and interpret the external environment so that changes that could impact on the strategic direction and/or activities are identified and acted upon. Where appropriate, these should be highlighted to the Board;
  - Generate proposals for new initiatives, including activities and resources, that can be taken to the Board;
  - Provide relevant input/expertise;
  - Identify appropriate areas for Society focus, specifically in the provision of professional development;
  - Review and approve, where appropriate, resources and other external-facing documents
  - Work with Senior Management Team (SMT) to prioritise, develop and review the impact of key activities;
  - Champion opportunities for Members to contribute to professional development, education and teaching discussions;
  - Work with the relevant member of the SMT to identify projects or areas of work for which a Task and Finish group or Expert Panel would be appropriate;
  - Receive written or oral reports from SMT, Task Forces, Task and Finish Groups and Expert Panels. These reports will follow the principle of reporting by exception;
  - Maintain oversight of the annual budgets, drawn up by SMT, reviewed by Communities Committee, recommended to Finance Committee and approved by the Board;
  - Receive and review budgetary updates from SMT and ensure appropriate recommendations and corrective action are taken when significant changes are detected.
  - Under the concept of reporting by exception, ensuring that relevant advice and recommendations are properly reported to the Board.
GOVERNANCE

Membership

- The membership requires a balanced portfolio of skills knowledge and experience to be able to fully support and engage with the remit of the Committee. The maximum size of the Committee shall be less than maximum size of the Board.

The Committee will comprise of:

- The Chair of the Committee, who will be a Trustee. In the absence of the committee chair, due to for example, illness the remaining members present can elect one of themselves to chair that meeting;
- The Scientific Editor of Physiology News;
- The Education and Teaching Theme Lead;
- Other members, of whom up to three do not have to be Members of The Society.

The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be 50% of the membership of the Committee, plus one.

External members should be chosen to include an appropriate range of skills and expertise not found among the membership. The Chair of the Committee will serve for four years; further details are provided in the subsidiary regulations. Other Members of the Committee will normally serve a term of three years.

The Committee may co-opt additional temporary members for particular tasks or projects. It is expected that wherever possible, a new Task and Finish group or Expert Panel would be created for significant projects or to investigate new areas of work.

There is a minimum expectation of 33% female representation and ideally 50% across all Society activities. All Society meetings should be conducted in a manner that is supportive of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to ensure that the entire talent pool be considered in all discussions regarding Society activities.

Staff Attendance

The Associate Director of Strategy and External Relations (ADS&ER) will attend the meetings and provide the conduit between the staff and the Communities Committee. Other staff may, at the ADS&ER’s discretion and by agreement of the Chair, attend meetings as required.

Recruitment of Members

- New Committee members and Task Force members will be recruited through the following process:
  - Identify need for skills and experience;
  - Open call to Membership, complemented by targeted search where appropriate;
  - Potential new members provide CV and statement of interest and suitability;
  - Committee Chair, one member of SMT, and up to three other members of the Committee discuss applications, assess and record demonstration of skills and experience against requirement, where required undertake interviews and appoint positions;
  - Successful candidates invited to join the Committee.

- Members of Task and Finish Groups, and Expert Panels will be sourced by the Committee and by relevant members of SMT. Committee members can serve on any of the above.
Terms of Reference

Subsidiary Groups

A range of Task and Finish groups, Task Forces, and Expert Panels will support the delivery of the relevant implementation plans.

Delegated authority

In carrying out its business, the Committee will refer to its both its Terms of Reference and the Delegated Authority Framework.

Frequency and duration

The Committee will meet virtually at least twice a year.

Consideration should be given to the timing of the other Advisory Committee meetings. In addition it may transact its business between meetings by email and other communications to ensure sufficient reporting mechanisms to the Board.

Members are expected to miss no more than two meetings throughout their term of office. Where absence is unavoidable apologies should be sent to the Chair as soon as possible and comments on the agenda items and papers submitted prior to the meeting. Reasonable adjustments in the form of remote access to meetings and allowances for absence in exceptional circumstances may be made. Members, who miss more than two meetings without extenuating circumstances, will be required to stand down.

Finance and legal

A Committee may not authorise expenditure and must observe any budget set for it and follow the financial controls and accounting procedures and requirements set by the Board for The Society in general and for Committees specifically. A Committee must not enter into any legal commitments or incur any financial or other liabilities on behalf of The Society.

Conflicts of interest and loyalty

A Committee member who has a clear and substantial interest in a matter described above should declare that interest before, or at the beginning of any Committee meeting where the matter is to be discussed, whether or not that interest is already recorded in the Register of Interests. Ideally, a notice should be sent to the Chair before the meeting. The Chair of the meeting should ask, at the beginning of each meeting, whether anyone has or may have a conflict, where this might be relevant. As new conflicts are discovered they should be added to the Register of Interests. Further details are provided in The Society’s Policy on Conflicts.

Reporting procedure

Agendas and associated documentation will be distributed seven days before the meeting, via email.

All meetings of the Committee are carried out through reporting by exception where upon staff, with input from the Committee lead, provide the relevant information on areas of activity where input is required.

The Committee must have formal minutes of its meetings and record all proceedings, decisions and recommendations. Minutes, approved by the Chair, should be written within two weeks of the meeting and circulated to Committee members. The “Chair’s minutes” will be submitted to the next Board meeting.

Confidentiality Clause

Committee members are expected to observe appropriate confidentiality and discretion in matters of the committee and handling/safe-keeping of information and documents, in particular in relation to any personal, proprietary, or commercial information.
In particular, papers marked as confidential or information disclosed in committee deliberations should not be discussed with colleagues who are not members of the committee, with other organisations, the media, or members of the committee who are excluded from discussions because of a conflict of interest. The approval of the Chair should be sought prior to any disclosure.