



Minutes of the Forty-third Annual General Meeting of The College of Optometrists

Tuesday 6 June 2023 at 6.30pm

Aston University, School of Optometry, Vision Sciences Building, Birmingham, B4 7ET and online.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt, was in the Chair.

Ian Humphreys, Chief Executive; Michael Bowen, Director of Knowledge and Research; Sarah Cant, Director of Policy and Strategy; Lizzy Ostler, Director of Education, Bill Scott, Director of Finance were in attendance.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt welcomed Members of Council and Members and Fellows to the 43rd Annual General Meeting of The College of Optometrists. She explained that while this AGM was being held face to face, Members and Fellows also had the option to join virtually. She advised that questions would be answered at the end of the meeting.

She invited Leon Davies to give the President's address.

1 Presidential welcome and address

The President welcomed Members and Fellows to the Annual General Meeting, which marked his first anniversary as College President.

The President reflected on the COVID-19 crisis and how this showcased the vital role that optometrists play as 'first point of contact' healthcare providers for eye health. He stated that it is now the College's task to build on these successes and achievements to ensure the profession takes on an even greater role in the future.

During the past year, the College actively contributed to the review of eye care services delivery in each of the devolved nations:

- In England, with the new local NHS structure, the College is working with NHS England and local commissioners to ensure they make full use of optometrists' core clinical skills and competencies. The College is also championing the need to create opportunities for optometrists to play a central role in leading and delivering new models of care to improve patient outcomes.
- In Northern Ireland, work is underway to improve patients' access to eye care outside hospitals, with more clinical care for patients being provided in practice by optometrists with an Independent Prescriber (IP) qualification.
- In Scotland, a new Community Glaucoma Service is being rolled-out. This new service established by the Scottish Government allows patients who have lower risk glaucoma or ocular hypertension to receive care from accredited providers in the community.
- Finally, the College has been working with the Welsh Government on the new General Ophthalmic Services Contract. This represents a significant transformation in optometry services, with optometrists empowered to help patients access more timely care, by

delivering more clinical services within primary care settings, and having greater involvement in local decision making.

The College continues to raise the profile of the profession to ensure eye health is high on the agenda of commissioners and policy makers. By leading the sector, the College ensuring that optometrists' skills continue to be recognised, commissioned appropriately, and trusted by patients and the public.

In recent months, the President has presented the College's vision for the optometry workforce to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Eye Health and Visual Impairment, speaking with MPs and sector bodies about why the full skills and competencies of optometrists should be better utilised for the benefit of patients. The President also discussed the importance of collaborative working to improve patients' outcomes, at the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Annual Congress in Birmingham.

The College gave oral evidence to the Integration of Primary and Community Care Committee at the House of Lords. It was a great opportunity to promote the need to integrate services and highlight the role of optometrists in patient-centred eye care. In addition, the College contributed to a Westminster Hall debate on the need for an eye health strategy in England and informed a debate at the House of Lords on car headlight glare and the challenges caused by ultra-powerful LED headlights, leading to drivers being forced off the road at night.

This year also saw the College continue to strengthen its existing relationships with other optical bodies in all four Nations, and more specifically with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. In October 2022, the College released a joint statement calling for the standardisation of digital imaging co-signed by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, the primary sector Information & IT Committee and the Optical Suppliers Association. The standardisation of imaging is needed UK-wide and will allow eye healthcare professionals to effectively share and open patients' records and diagnostic images digitally across primary and secondary care. The College is co-chairing a DICOM working group with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, which is working to establish a common imaging file standard.

The College recently invited members to take part in a new Clinical Practice Survey exploring the optometry profession in the UK and the work that UK optometrists carry out in their daily practice, and in the multitude of settings in which our members work. The College will use the findings to better understand how we can best support our member community and inform the wider work to improve models of eye care.

The College is leading a UK-wide multi-professional eye care workforce supply and demand data modelling project that is being conducted by York Health Economics Consortium (YHEC). The resulting dashboard, due for completion at the end of 2023, will help inform optometric workforce planning across the UK.

The College will continue to focus on supporting optometrists so they can contribute to the education of the next generation through supervision and mentoring schemes. The College is in the process of putting together the curriculum for the first two modules, which are expected to be piloted over summer 2023. The College is also keen to champion and encourage optometrists to take the lead in clinical research and will be promoting research and funding opportunities to members. This is part of our Workforce Vision that was published in the Summer of 2022.

Over the next year, the College is committed to continuing to work with our members, our partners in the optical sector, governments, and healthcare representatives across the UK, to set out the priorities for delivering eye healthcare, including addressing workforce challenges, developing new ways of working and harnessing new technologies, to improve patient outcomes in every setting.

The President thanked Council members and the Board of Trustees, Chief Executive and the College team for their hard work and dedication over the past year. He thanked the members for their ongoing support which has enabled him to represent and promote the profession and has helped the College to continue its work to ensure that the profession was valued and heard.

2 Deceased Fellows and Members

The President announced the names of the 17 Members and Fellows whose deaths had been notified to the College since the previous AGM. There was special mention for Baroness Boothroyd, Honorary Fellow, President of the Institute of Ophthalmology's charity Fight for Sight and involved in the formation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health, co-sponsored by the College and RNIB; Roger Buckley, Honorary Fellow, who played a very significant role in the development of the College's Clinical Management Guidelines; Baroness Knight of Collingtree, Honorary Fellow, for her support of optometry; Ronald Janes Shanks MacGregor, a much-valued adviser to the College Museum for his unparalleled expertise in the conservation and restoration of ophthalmic antiques; George Dallas Miller, Life Fellow, President of the Scottish Association of Opticians and the Scottish Contact Lens Society, and President of this College from 1984-1986; and Michael Redican, Life Fellow, member of the College Council in the 1990s.

There was a one-minute silence in remembrance of colleagues and friends.

3 Treasurer's report

The College Treasurer, Dr Tony Gibson delivered his report. He reported that the meeting marked his second year as Treasurer.

Education income had continued its recovery from the dip in 2020 caused by the lack of trainee progression due to the pandemic and had seen a rise due to the increased number of Optometrists graduating. The College expects 2022-23 to have a further uplift in trainee numbers, which will then plateau in subsequent years. The Treasurer noted that College costs also increase in line with trainee numbers.

During the year, membership income remained constant, at around £2.8m. This is because, even with higher numbers of Optometrists graduating, the College offers Newly Qualified Optometrists a discounted membership fee for their first four years.

Policy and Research costs increased by £715,000 over the previous year, reflecting the increased focus on influencing policy matters in eye health, and the move of the Library and Museum into the Research Department – which now leads on our Knowledge Management activity.

As anticipated at last year's AGM, the College's investments showed an unrealised loss for the 2021-22 year of £504,000. However, since the year end, the investments have recovered some of that loss. Overall, the year ended with a deficit of £763,000 compared to a surplus of £1.2 million for the year to September 2021.

Over the five years shown, the College averaged an annual deficit of 1% of turnover. This reflects the additional costs of working during the pandemic (to maintain trainee progression to qualification), investment losses, the costs of improvement in systems and member services as well as increased Policy and Research spending.

Reserves as at 30 September 2022 were £7.4 million, with an increase in designated reserves reflecting the increased investment in new systems. Reserves are satisfactory but have been utilised to improve services and in time it will be necessary to re-establish free reserves to allow the College to continue the improvement in member services and to replace the reserves used during the pandemic.

As with last year, there is one unusual number in the balance sheet. This is the net current liabilities figure of £2 million as at 30th September 2022. Current liabilities can be an indicator of an issue, however this is not so in the College's case, as the liability reflects the difference between the fees paid by trainees when they enrol in the Scheme for Registration, and the income earned, which is based on the progression of the individual trainees.

The auditors were content with the accounts and we have an unqualified auditor's report.

The past few years have been a key period to support members who need financial help and advice. The College remains a significant contributor to the Benevolent Fund and passed £24,000 to the Fund during the year. The College also continues to provide pro-bono accounting services to the Fund.

The Treasurer thanked the College's staff, particularly the Director of Finance, Bill Scott, the Head of Finance, Zorica Nikolic-Parry, and the Finance Team, for all their efforts to deliver the College's services during the year. The Treasurer also thanked Andrew Kitchen, Lay Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee, whose financial expertise and sound judgement had been invaluable.

4 Report from the Chief Executive

Ian Humphreys, Chief Executive began his report by noting some key accomplishments from the College year.

Many of the College's achievements reflect the overall aim of the Workforce Vision, which was launched last summer. This vision ambitiously sets out to shape the delivery of eye care services and build the necessary evidence base to advocate on behalf of optometrists across the UK. It ensures optometrists are positioned at the heart of eye care provision, as the sector evolves to meet the demands of changing demographics and new technology.

To support the Workforce Vision, the College is currently working with its members and key stakeholders on a new multi-professional eye care workforce data modelling project, which will be crucial in understanding workforce supply and patient demand, both now and in the future.

Over the last year, the College has provided a strong voice for the profession and actively worked with key partners and decision makers to contribute to regulatory reform, and influence eye health policy. The College welcomes the General Optical Council's (GOC) response to its call for evidence on the need for change to the Opticians Act. The review was a vital opportunity for the College to help shape the future of the profession and ensure safe, high-quality eye care, and the College is pleased to report that the GOC has agreed with many of its recommendations.

The College's advice and guidance continues to provide essential support to members in their daily practice. Annual usage figures on the Clinical Management Guidelines reveal how much members continue to value the CMGs as a current, trustworthy, and evidence-based source of information. The College's CMG review led to 29 updates, with more to come and there has been the introduction of a fresh look and structure on the website and app to enhance the member experience and reflect evolving optometric practice.

The College also reviewed all the published evidence relating to myopia management and updated guidance. To make the College position clearer, our recommendations have now been separated from the evidence review to make College guidance easier for members to use. In addition, the College has recently started the three-yearly review of the Guidance for Professional Practice and the new GfPP will be published at the end of 2023.

Lastly, the College's team of clinical advisers have played a key role in answering members' clinical queries and have ensured that CPD and events remain aligned with the College's evidence-based guidance. Throughout the year, the Clinical Advisers have been called upon to raise public

awareness about eye care on mainstream TV and radio which has increased awareness and visibility of the College.

When it comes to education, the College's role in training, upskilling, and developing the profession is expanding, including a growing range of CPD courses, events, and higher qualifications. New qualification requirements for optometrists and dispensing opticians will start to be introduced in 2023, and the College is working with partners in the sector to deliver work-based placement experiences, under the name of 'CLiP' as part of the new Education and Training Requirements.

In addition, the College successfully delivered the first two SPOKE projects, designed to support qualification providers with the roll-out of the GOCs new education and training requirements.

In 2022, the College saw the return of in-person events, with many of our members travelling to Telford for Optometry Tomorrow 2022.

The College was especially proud to welcome 600 new College members at the Diploma Ceremony last November. The ceremony was also a wonderful opportunity to recognise the outstanding work of talented and committed researchers working in the fields of optometry, optics, and vision science.

Looking ahead, the College will continue working to support optometrists and advance the profession, in line with our Workforce Vision. The College looks forward to engaging with members on all of these planned projects, and many more.

The Chief Executive concluded by thanking College staff, the Board and Council and the members for their inspiration, support, and hard work.

5 Election of members to the new council and the board of trustees

The President announced the results of the Council elections, which had resulted in 11 vacancies being filled over 9 regions and welcomed the new members to Council.

The results were:

Hassnain Safdar	East Midlands	(re-elected)
Meera Shah	London	(re-elected)
Kathryn Saunders	Northern Ireland	(re-elected)
Ian White	North West	(new representative)
Laura Sweeney	Scotland	(re-elected)
Lucy Blown	South East	(re-elected)
Hamza Mussa	West Midlands	(new representative)
Stephen Clark	Yorks and Humber	(re-elected)
Barbara Watson	Yorks and Humber	(re-elected)

The President reported that Professor Kathryn Saunders had been elected to the Board of Trustees. It was announced that Dr Irene Ctori was elected as Chair of the Education & Standards Committee. The Council also agreed to the co-option of Nkosi Yearwood and Eleanor Thomas to fill two vacancies on Council in the Wales Region and Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt and Andrew Kitchen to the Board of Trustees for one year.

The President thanked outgoing Council members and Trustees for their contributions, particularly Pratik Patel who had served on the Lay Panel since 2011.

The new Board of Trustees was as follows:

Professor Leon Davies	President
Dr Gillian Rudduck	Vice-President
Colin Davidson	Immediate Past President
Dr Tony Gibson	Treasurer
Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt	Co-opted Trustee, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Dr Irene Ctori	Trustee, Chair of the Education and Standards Committee
Kyla Black	Trustee
Andrew Kitchen	Co-opted Lay Trustee
Dr Aleksandra Mankowska	Trustee
Mark Redhead	Lay Trustee
Matt Roney	Trustee
Professor Kathryn Saunders	Trustee
Jonathan Waugh	Trustee

6 Any other business

The Chair reported that no questions were received during the AGM.

There was no other business.

7 Close of meeting

The Chair thanked all Members and Fellows for attending the AGM both in person and virtually, and formally closed the meeting.

Attendance List

** Members of Council*

In person attendees

Aleksandra Mankowska*
Ashok Chowdhury
Barrie Bench
Beez Beasley
Beverley Hill
Chris Langley
Christine Astin Holloway
Clare Pearce
Colin Fowler
Craig Woods
Daryl Newsome
Ed Mallen
Fred Giltrow-Tyler
Gill Marshall
Haris Iqbal

Harjit Sandhu
Howard Collins
Ian Jones
Jagdeep Singh*
James Wolffsohn
Jeremy Guggenheim
Julian Hill
Keziah Latham*
Kyla Black*
Leon Davies*
Louise Munns
Mark Dunne
Mark Bullimore
Mary Bairstow
Mary-Ann Sherratt*

Michael Wolffe
Michelle Hanratty
Mukesh Sodha
Nick Rumney
Nicola Logan
Paramdeep Bilkhu
Peter Meredith
Rebekka Heitmar
Sam Strong
Shehzad Naroo
Sue Morris
Toni Darby
Tony Marshall
Tony Gibson*
Wendy Newsom

Online attendees

Ammaad Haider
Anne Wright
Annette Parkinson
Anuja Shah
B.O. Onyekpe
Barbara Watson*
Bek Stevens
Bhirti Raja
Chidinma
Onyenezido
Chris Howell-Duffy
Christian Dutton
Christina Metaxa
Cindy Tromans*
Clare Minchington
Colin Davidson*
Daniel Hardiman-
McCartney
David Jameson*
David Hill*
Dr Jonathan Pointer
Eleanor Thomas*
Faith Mills
Farha Hanif
Gillian Rudduck*
Harsh SHAH
Hassnain Safdar*
Hetal Buckhurst
Ian Moss
Irene Ctori*
John Lawrenson

Johnathan Waugh*
Joy Myint*
Judy Lea
Kalbinder Kang
Katie Engel*
Lewes Hambrey*
Lisa Gerson
Louise Nicklin
Louise Thomas
Mark Rosenfield
Mark Redhead*
Martin Rubinstein
Meera Shah*
Michael Fairbairn
Mojgan Mola
Mohieddin
Muhammad Asghar
Muhammad Anwar
Mushir Bakhsh
Olivia Howells
Patricia McMaster
Paula Freedman
Rafique Ahmed
Rajula Karania
Rakhee Shah
Rita Tanna
Ronald Rabbetts
Sam Chiu
Sarah Inchley
Sarah Canning
Sem Chin

Sharifa Hirani
Siran Craine
Stephen Clark*
Steve Stone
Stuart McConnachie
Tania Stewart-Davies