



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS

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

Monday 20 June 2022 at 2.45pm

Ironbridge 1 & 2, Telford International Centre, St Quentin Gate, Telford, TF3 4JH and online.

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

Ian Humphreys, Chief Executive; Catherine Bithell, Director of Member Services and Communications; 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 42nd 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 could be submitted throughout the AGM via the virtual platform, and these would be answered at the end of the meeting.

She invited Colin Davidson to give the President's address.

1 Presidential welcome and address

The President welcomed Members and Fellows to the Annual General Meeting, which marked the end of his term as President.

As of 10 May, the College moved into the "Green" phase, marking the start of a new normal following all the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The College had supported the profession over the last two years and were looking ahead as many great opportunities develop for optometry.

The COVID-19 pandemic had created many unexpected challenges for everyone both personally and professionally and had serious effects on the provision of eye care in primary and secondary care. The College helped guide the profession to minimise the risk of visual loss by maintaining essential eye care services across the UK. Across the sector, we worked together rapidly to adapt service delivery whilst continuing to practice safely and effectively in all four nations.

The College prioritised supporting optometrists during the pandemic and led the sector in advocating for the safety of optometrists and their patients. The College advocated for the recognition of the role and skills of optometrists in providing essential and urgent eye care, treating patients, and preserving vision. By making the case for optometrists to be recognised as key workers, the College ensured that they were included in national PPE guidance and were able to secure access to COVID-19 vaccination for all optical practice staff.

The College developed resources and provided timely guidance to help optometrists navigate the new and developing situation. This enabled optometrists to adapt their practice to be able to continue to provide safe and effective eye care.

The College guidance was supported by partners in the sector and the GOC and had been used as the reference point for every health authority, reaffirming the College's clinical leadership and position in influencing national policy to ensure widespread and consistent good practice.

During the past two years, the College had strengthened existing relationships with other optical bodies, with governments and health services in all four nations, and with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. This had enabled the production of common resources and statements that not only provided guidelines to ophthalmologists and optometrists, but also showed the benefits of integrated care and multidisciplinary working.

The pandemic showcased the role of primary care optometrists as 'first contact' healthcare providers for eye health. The profession played a key role in supporting hospital ophthalmology and GP primary care teams in reducing existing burden and dealing with the backlog of patients due to the pandemic.

The President congratulated the College's Clinical Adviser, Daniel Hardiman-McCartney, who had been awarded an MBE for services to optometry in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours. The award recognised Daniel's outstanding personal achievement and contribution to optometry and reflects a growing recognition of the tireless work and commitment of all optometrists throughout the pandemic, by decision-makers and the public.

The College continues to work to ensure optometrists are equipped with the skills required, as the scope of practice changes.

The College will continue working with members, policymakers, healthcare providers, sector partners and patients to ensure we achieve our vision for optometry across the UK.

The College recently published its Workforce Vision outlining the following aims:

- Ensuring that optometrists are at the heart of new models of eye care and that their competences and skills are recognised and used to their full potential across the UK.
- Championing a UK-wide first contact practitioner scheme for optometrists to manage and treat more patients in primary care.
- Working with the GOC and stakeholders to ensure that the future of pre-registration optometry education supports the future requirements of the profession.
- Offering high quality post-registration higher qualifications in specialised areas of practice, as well as training and CPD, all of which align with evolving models of care.
- Championing and encourage the role of optometrists in taking the lead in clinical research.

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 congratulated members for their ongoing support which enabled 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 Tom Collingridge, Honorary Fellow, Secretary of the College from its foundation in 1980 through to 1992, and subsequently the first Secretary of the Optical Consumer Complaints Service; Michel Andre

Millodot, Life Fellow, member of College Council from 1981 to 1990 and the first Professor of 'Optometry' in a UK university; Paul George Douglas Spry, member of College Council from 2009 to 2010 and Chair of the College Glaucoma Panel.

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 via video. He reported that the meeting marked his first year as Treasurer.

Education income had recovered from the dip in 2020 caused by the lack of trainee progression due to the pandemic. The improvement came from the College changing its processes to increase the number of remote assessments, which required GOC approval, and from increasing the number of places available at each OSCE sitting.

Investment gains recovered from the decline in 2020 and outperformed the last three years. However, this performance had not continued into 2022 and investments are currently running at a loss of £256,000.

Membership income remained constant, at around £2.7 million.

Education broke even in 2021, even with the additional OSCE costs. Other College work such as, providing guidance, professional support, and research activities, was paid for by member fees and the prudent investment of reserves.

Overall, the College achieved a surplus of £1.2 million for the year to September 2021, compared to a deficit of £980,000 in 2020. This came from the timing of trainee income and progression through the Scheme for Registration, cost savings and the significant improvement in investments.

Over the past four years, the College averaged an annual 3% surplus.

Reserves had recovered to almost their pre-pandemic position, although free reserves that the College can spend on any activity, were slightly lower than in previous years. This is because an amount had been transferred to designated reserves to reflect the acquisition and development of the new IT systems, including website and customer relationship management software. In subsequent years the costs of further software development will be charged against the designated reserves rather than free reserves.

At the end of the financial year, the College's free reserves amounted to almost 50% of the College's annual costs, a reassuring position to be in. This means the College has sufficient reserves to continue to operate at the levels needed to progress its ambitious strategic plan.

The level of reserves has also allowed College Council to keep membership fees the same for the 12th year in a row. However, the fee level is being kept under active review and the 2023 fees will have to take account of increased costs of running the College.

The College had net current liabilities of £1.9 million as of 30 September 2021. Such a high figure can be a cause for concern. However, the net current liability arose solely because a higher number of trainees than usual did not complete their assessments by the year end, and therefore the College could not take the fees that it had received for the Scheme for Registration as income. Whilst the lack of progression was a significant issue for the trainees who were affected, the liability is not a financial problem for the College.

The auditors were content with the accounts.

The College remains a significant contributor to the Benevolent Fund and passed £25,000 to the Fund during the year. The College also continued to provide pro-bono accounting services to the Fund.

The Treasurer thanked the College's staff, particularly the Director of Finance, Bill Scott and the Finance Team, for all their efforts to deliver the College's services during these unusual times. 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 congratulating members across all four nations for achieving a great change in the understanding of optometrists' roles in the minds of decision makers and the public.

Throughout the pandemic, the College had been at the forefront of ensuring that eye health was recognised as a public health priority, and that optometrists were appropriately supported and resourced to be able to provide safe and effective practice.

As part of this, the College issued a joint vision for safe and sustainable patient eye care with The Royal College of Ophthalmologists. This vision, and other joint statements, continued to inform the College's support for eye care transformation activities across the UK.

The College continued to ensure that its CPD provision, including its higher qualifications, provided the knowledge, skills and recognition that optometrists require to be able to play a central role in the delivery of these integrated and multi-disciplinary initiatives.

The College's campaign on lockdown vision kept the public informed of changes to services and reassured them about safety measures. It achieved extensive coverage - including interviews on Sky News and BBC Morning Live.

In October 2020, the College launched a national campaign on the impact of living with reduced or impaired vision with a short film called 'Focus on Life'. This was a world first, being shot entirely out of focus, and thousands of our members shared the film on social media platforms and hosted it on their practice websites.

Throughout the year, the College continued to work with the GOC on developing and adapting the Scheme for Registration, introduced a new quality assurance framework, and recruited and trained additional assessors. This enabled the College to deliver more than 4,500 Stage 1 and 2 assessments. The College also developed and gained approval for a wholly online hospital eye service experience, so that trainees could progress through the Scheme for Registration, despite restricted access to hospital clinics during the pandemic. Due to how effective these changes were, the College plans to continue to deliver aspects of this in the future.

As a result of the College's COVID adaptations, more than 96% of 2020 graduates were able to join the Scheme for Registration, and more than 800 new optometrists joined the profession.

The College also adapted the IP qualification to enable the profession to continue to qualify in therapeutics by moving the assessment online. The College also secured approval for an extension to the maximum period between the academic course and placements, and for appropriately qualified IP optometrists, rather than solely ophthalmologists, to supervise individual sessions.

The College delivered 47 CPD events virtually – including Optometry Tomorrow Bitesize, which provided a month of online learning opportunities and more than 10,500 CET points.

At a time when physical events weren't possible, the College's extensive online CPD materials provided professional development to more than 8,000 members. DOCET also recorded a 17%

increase in enrolments - and more than 20,000 listens to their monthly podcast, Sound Optometry.

The College took a leading role in the response to the consultation on the GOC's Education Strategic Review and will continue play a central role in the post ESR route to qualification. The College had been appointed to host a new online knowledge hub which would support the sector in developing new curricula, and the College would also lead the UK-wide delivery of the in-practice experience.

Throughout the lockdowns, and the resulting changes to practice, the College's COVID-19 guidance remained the single reference point for all the UK health systems and organisations, reaffirming the College's clinical leadership and influence on national policy.

The College published a report charting 40 years of research and demonstrated how the College's work, including over £5 million in funding, had provided the foundation for clinical and professional practice. The College also collaborated with King's College London on research which examined the changing role of optometrists in assessing vision and eye health during and after COVID-19. The College research journal, OPO had been cited by more than 400 peer reviewed publications around the world and continues to be a leading international journal for contemporary research in vision science and optometry

Looking ahead, the College will realise its role in the new route to qualification for optometrists, update its qualifications, and work to achieve its ambitions for the advancement of the profession through the delivery of the College workforce vision. The College will engage with its members on all 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. He gave a special thanks to the outgoing President, Colin Davidson for his steadfast support of the College and the profession over the last two years.

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 13 vacancies being filled and welcomed the new members to Council.

The results were:

Madeleine Mould	North East	(new representative)
Kathryn Trimmer	Scotland	(re-elected)
Kyla Black	East Midlands	(re-elected)
David Jameson	London	(new representative)
Joy Myint	London	(new representative)
Matt Roney	North West	(re-elected)
Gillian Rudduck	North West	(re-elected)
Mike Horler	South East	(re-elected)
John Tickner	South East	(new representative)
William Gillan	South West	(new representative)
Kiki Soteri	South West	(re-elected)
Aleksandra Mankowska	Yorks and Humber	(new representative)

The President announced that in accordance with the College rules, Council members confirmed the election of Professor Leon Davies as President and Dr Gillian Ruddock as Vice President.

The President reported that Kyla Black, Matt Roney and Dr Aleksandra Mankowska 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 Stephen Clark to fill a vacancy on Council in the Yorkshire and Humber 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 Dr Rob Hogan who had served on Council since 2003 and co-opted to the Board since 2015 to Chair DOCET.

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 Inauguration of new officers

The President invited Professor Leon Davies to receive the President's Medal.

The new President thanked Colin Davidson for his hard work and achievements during his two-year presidency and presented him with his Past President's Medal.

The President invited Dr Gillian Rudduck to receive the Vice President's Medal.

7 Any other business

The Chair reported that no questions had been received during the AGM.

There was no other business.

8 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

In person attendees

Abbas Moledina
Adam Wannell
Aleks Mankowska *
Alexandra Young
Andrew McGregor
Andrew Morgan
Ann Barrett
Annette Parkinson
Antony Mazeika
Barbara Watson *
Bernadette Waters
Bhavin Shah
Brian Gleave
Brodie Wainwright
Bruce Avery
Caitlin Harragan
Catherine Viner
Cathy Wooldridge
Cindy Tromans
Clair Bulpin
Claire Matheson
Clare Pearce *
Colin Davidson *
David Ehrlich
David Elks
David Hill *
David Jameson *
David Parkins
Denise Connor
Donna Thompson
Ed Mallen
Elaine Yorwarth
Emily Hedley

Emmanuel Amoniba-
Burnley
Gillian Rudduck *
Grant Robinson *
Hassnain Safdar *
Heidi Behnam
Helen Tzouves
Helen Wilson
Ian Price
Irene Ctori *
James Wolffsohn
Jane Veys
Jay Varia *
Johnathan Waugh *
Joy Myint *
Karen French
Kathryn Saunders *
Kathryn Trimmer *
Kevin Woodbridge
Kez Latham *
Kiki Soteri *
Kyla Black *
Leon Davies *
Lewes Hambrey *
Lewis Jacobs
Lewis Marshall
Lisa Gerson
Lucy Blown *
Madeleine Mould *
Mandy Davidson
Mark Esbester
Mary-Ann Sherratt *
Matt Roney *
Meera Shah *

Michael Wolffe
Michaela Glover
Michelle Hanratty
Mike Horler *
Muhammad Asghar
Niamh Coyle *
Nicola Logan
Opinder Malhi
Pam Bramwell
Paramdeep Bilkhu
Patrick Richardson
Paul Hopkins
Penny Thakrar
Rachel Hiscox
Rebecca Daly
Reenu Ramlogan
Richard McNeight
Robert Harper *
Robert Whitehead
Roger Lee
Roisin Carruthers
Russell Peake
Ruth Bennett
Sean Matthews
Shamina Asif *
Sophie Harper
Steph Hartley
Stephen Clark *
Susan Blakeney
Tania Constable
Tom Elliott
Will Holmes *
Yannick Dyant
Zoe Richmond

** Members of Council*

Online attendees

Alvin Leong Leong
Asma Issat
Dimple Pipalia
Fiona Baker
Katie Curran *
Mary Bairstow
Meenakshi Sivanandam
Tony Gibson *
Ubaidullah Razzaq