



**Minute of the 2024 Annual General Meeting
of the Royal College of General Practitioners
held on Wednesday 13 November 2024 at 18:30 at
30 Euston Square, London
and virtually via Zoom**

The President, Dr Richard Vautrey, chaired the meeting.

The President welcomed those attending to the 2024 Annual General Meeting and explained how the meeting would run, including arrangements for voting.

The President introduced members of the top table: Professor Kamila Hawthorne, Chair of Council; Professor Mike Holmes, Chair of Trustee Board; Dr Steve Mowle, Honorary Treasurer; Dr Michael Mulholand, Honorary Secretary; Dr Margaret Ikpoh, Vice Chair Professional Development; Dr Victoria Tzortziou Brown, Vice Chair External Affairs; Chris Askrew, CEO.

Those present were notified that the meeting would be recorded – no objections were raised.

The AGM quorum was met with the minimum of 25 College Members and Fellows present as required under RCGP Byelaws 14(1).

**Item
No.**

1. Minute of 2024 Special General Meeting

The minutes of the Special General Meeting held on 17 July 2024 (as contained in Appendix 1 of the papers) were presented.

The President called for a vote.

Resolution 1:

That the minutes of the Spring General Meeting held on 17 July 2024 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

For	76	97.44%
Against	2	2.56%
Abstain	26	

APPROVED

2. Election of Honorary Fellows and Fellows

The election of the candidates for Honorary Fellow and Fellows (as detailed in Appendix 2 of the papers) was proposed.

The President called for a vote.

Resolution 2: That the list as contained in Appendix 2 of the papers be formally appointed as Honorary Fellows and Fellows of the College.

For	101	100%
Against	0	0%
Abstain	9	

APPROVED

3. Chair of Council Annual Report 2023-2024

Members received the annual report of the Chair of Council, Professor Kamila Hawthorne, for the College year 2023-2024.

Prof Hawthorne updated members on ongoing policy and engagement work, including:

- Launch of the college's general election manifesto, *Seven Steps to Save General Practice and Safeguard our NHS*, which resulted in commitments from all major political parties on investment and workforce.
- A parliamentary reception provided an opportunity to engage with key political and sector stakeholders.
- Continued engagement post-general election, building on relationships with key stakeholders including the new Health Secretary, Wes Streeting MP, and the new Minister for Primary Care, Stephen Kinnock MP.
- Reports on health inequalities and GP retention were published.
- Engagement with members on Physician Associates (PAs) took place which resulted in three guidance documents being approved by Council, together with an agreed policy that PAs had no role in general practice.
- Congratulated Research and Surveillance Centre (RSC) on their work, including use of data in the swine flu detection.
- During the year, there was 17,709 campaign actions from members and supporters, and RCGP was mentioned 50 times during Westminster debates.
- Whilst the publication of the Workforce Plan was welcome, Prof Hawthorne noted that whilst there was a plan to increase by 50% the number of GP Registrars, the National Audit Office had produced a report stating this would only result in a 4% increase in the overall number of GPs, against a 49% rise in hospital consultants in the same period.
- The College continues to work on the Council's four strategic priorities: Tackle the workload and workforce crisis; Ensure the College is the Professional Home of General Practice; Reduce the increasing gap in health inequalities; and Respond to the climate emergency.

Prof Hawthorne highlighted the success of both the virtual conference, *Vision for the Future of General Practice*, where over 2k members attended, and the annual conference in Glasgow, where over 2.4k members attended.

Prof Hawthorne welcomed the decision of Trustee Board to fund the phasing out of pharmaceutical sponsorship of e-learning modules.

Prof Hawthorne answered several questions from members:

On employability: Prof Hawthorne reiterated that this was a priority for the College and representation to stakeholders had and continues to take place, including in the College's budget submissions. The inclusion of GP roles in the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme was welcome, but this does not provide the long-term solution to the lack of core funding that is required to increase GP numbers. Whilst contractual matters are the purview of the BMA, the College would continue to campaign for more GPs. She also noted that despite the increase in GP Registrar numbers, the GP per patient ratio has not, and would not, materially increase. Prof Hawthorne called for more work from NHS England on GP retention and disputed the assertion from NHS England that GP retention schemes were not effective.

On Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) replacing GPs: Prof Hawthorne made it clear that whilst MDTs formed an important part of general practice, they cannot and should not replace GPs.

On reviewing Council's stance on Physician Associates (PAs): Prof Hawthorne noted that Council had voted by a 2-to-1 majority to oppose a role for Physician Associates in general practice which followed a member survey. She called on the government to engage in evidence and ensure PAs are working safely.

4. **Chair of Trustee Board Annual Report 2023-2024**

Members received the annual report of the Chair of Trustee Board, Professor Mike Holmes, for the College year 2023-2024.

Prof Holmes updated members on the following:

- **People and Culture:** Thanked Trustees, Council members, and staff for their support over the past year. Thanked Dr Steve Mowle and Dr Imran Rafi for their service on Trustee Board as they prepare to demit office, and welcome Dr Heather Ryan and Dr Onyi Okonkwo as they join the Board. Board development work continued including the continuation off the annual away day, a Board/committee summit that brought together Trustees, committee members, UK and devolved nation officers, and senior staff, and an external Board effectiveness review taking place. Work on organisational culture had begun and would continue. The Chair Trustee Board, Chair of Council and the CEO worked closely together as a 'triumvirate'. Several observers to Board had been welcomed, and a new vlog was released after each Board meeting.
- **Finance and Assets:** the college is in a strong financial position with an improved financial record.
- **Building:** new members area had opened, and tenants are being sought for the unused office space. There is a review of the building taking place to ensure the College uses its asset effectively for the benefit of the charity and its members.
- **Governance Review:** work continues in this area as we move into the final phases of reviewing the constitutional documents to ensure they are regulatory and legal compliant and adhere to best practice. As part of this process, KC advice had been commissioned. A new governance review website had been launches and webinars for members had taken place. There was also a governance stand at annual conference.

- Corporate Plan: an organisational Corporate Plan is being developed which will include investment in digital and CPD. The Board had recently approved investment of £300k to remove sponsorship of e-learning modules.

Prof Holmes took a number of questions from members:

MDT possible bespoke membership offer: Prof Holmes noted the Council paper had been acknowledged to have been a mistake and had been withdrawn.

Exams Judicial Review: Dr Ikpoh responded to a comment on this case. Dr Ikpoh emphasised that the Judge found in the College's favour on four of the five grounds of challenge, including that we had complied with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and that we have "a consistent and committed approach to equality", with an extensive programme of reasonable adjustments for examinations and extensive resources relating to disability for trainees. The Court also dismissed claims that there had been a failure to make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates, that there had been indirect disability discrimination and a public law challenge to the validity of the policy. On the remaining point, the Court found that our decision not to offer the individual doctor bringing the case a further attempt, and our AKT attempts policy, were not justified on our evidence. The College are keen to learn lessons from the ruling and are considering how we change our processes to reflect the judgment.

5. **Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024 and Auditors' Report**

The Honorary Treasurer, Dr Steve Mowle, presented the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024 and the Report from the Auditors therein.

Dr Mowle noted:

- that the College needed to make an operational surplus in order to finance the bank loan, pension and capital investments into property and IT. The overall aim is to be cash neutral.
- The College made a £6.2m operational surplus on £51.5m of income and £46.6m of expenditure. Overall, the College showed an increased cash position due to timing of investment transfers.
- The free reserves were £17.8m, which was the middle of the target range set by Trustee Board (three to six months operational expenses).
- That the Defined Benefit staff pension scheme - closed to new staff since 2006 - had reduced its deficit from approx. £10m to under £500k, and thus the College additional contributions to recover the deficit is planned to end.

Dr Mowle answered a number of questions:

Increase in support resource for Health Informatics Group: Dr Michael Mulholland, Honorary Secretary, responded as the officer lead. Dr Mulholland thanked the group for the work they do, and reassured members that he met monthly with group representatives to support the group's activities and work with them to ensure the College supports them in their work.

Request for membership income by member grade/category: This information is not available immediately, but the finance and membership teams will investigate.

6. **Auditors**

Dr Steve Mowle, Honorary Treasurer, asked members to approve Resolution 3: to appoint Crowe LLP as Auditors of the College until the next Annual General Meeting.

Approval of the Resolution had been recommended by Trustee Board and the Audit and Risk Committee.

The President called for a vote.

Resolution 3: Members approved the appointment of Crowe LLP as Auditors of the College until the next Annual General Meeting.

For	99	98.02%
Against	2	1.98%
Abstain	12	

APPROVED

7. **Constitutional Changes (Appendix 3)**

Dr Michael Mulholland, Honorary Secretary, asked Members to note the proposed changes to the constitutional documents as detailed in Appendix 3 of the papers.

Changes to Byelaws as approved by Trustee Board under Ordinance 31 and presented to the general meeting for confirmation under Ordinance 32, as contained in Appendix 3 of the papers.

Resolutions required a simple majority to be approved; Special Resolutions require two thirds approval followed by Privy Council approval.

Unless stated otherwise, all changes to the Charter and Ordinances come into effect when approved by the Privy Council; and changes to the Byelaws come into effect immediately.

Special Resolution 4 - Composition of Trustee Board

Dr Mulholland explained that this Special Resolution amended the Ordinances to increase the number of Independent Trustees from four to five. This would increase the total number of Board members from twelve to thirteen. This would allow the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee to move from being a 'permanent observer' to a full Trustee. Dr Mulholland referred to the information booklet previously issued which outline the rationale for the changes.

In summary, Dr Mulholland stated the proposal makes the Chair of Audit and Risk a full Trustee by creating an additional Independent Trustee position. This change strengthens corporate governance, provides legal clarity around who are Trustees, and aligns with best practice codes. The current observer status poses legal and accountability risks. The role requires financial expertise and direct accountability to the Board for audit and risk matters. The change increases the Board from 12 to 13 members but maintains a member majority (8 members, 5 independents). Dr Mulholland noted the Independent Trustees' valued contributions, adding essential skills and perspectives, supporting the College's effective, transparent, and member-led governance.

The President invited comments from the meeting.

Whilst there was a general acknowledgment of the contribution of independent trustees as subject matter experts, some member expressed concern that the changes would 'dilute' the member voice and perspective on the Board as members would make up eight out of thirteen Board members rather than eight out of twelve.

One member also expressed concern that there was a lack of assurance that non-GPs would have the same 'values' as GP members.

The President called for a vote.

For	36	32.14%
Against	76	66.86%
Abstain	12	

NOT APPROVED

Special Resolution 5 - Change of Nomenclature of President and Chair of Council

Dr Mulholland, Honorary Secretary, explained that Michael Mulholland) that the Special Resolution related to the changing of titles from 'Chair of Council' to 'President', and from 'President' to 'Provost'. The eligibility, nomination and electorate for both posts remains as the status quo. The Council Officers – the new President role and their Officers – will continue, as currently, to be elected from, nominated by, and voted by Council. Once elected, they will continue to be accountable to Council. The ceremonial post – the new Provost role – will continue to be voted by an all-member national vote.

Dr Mulholland referred to the information booklet previously issued which outline the rationale for the changes.

Dr Mulholland stated that the new terminology will strengthen the leadership of college by:

- Having a clear single strategic leader of the College titled President, so that both stakeholders and members more readily understand to be the leader in the media, in work with Government and with members.
- Enhancing member engagement by understanding the role of President as the individual who represents them at the highest levels of Government and other fora – removing the current confusion.
- Maximising influence with Government and stakeholders which is diluted by the confusion about who leads College and their authority to make decisions.
- Equalising the parity of esteem that currently exists between us and other Royal Medical Colleges.
- Should this Resolution be passed, the Council Vice Chairs would be Vice Presidents.

Dr Mulholland also clarified what the changes do not do:

- Not merging the President and Chair of Council role. We will continue to have a ceremonial and member engagement role (called Provost) who will be a senior member of the College and profession.

- No changes to the role or remits of either post.
- No changes to the eligibility criteria to stand for either post.
- No changes to the electorate or election process for either post.
- No changes to the terminology for Devolved Council officers.

The President invited comments from the meeting.

Some members expressed support for the status quo believing this presented a preferred naming model.

Some members expressed concerns that the name changes would result in a change of roles and possible overwork for the new President role. Dr Mulholland clarified that there was no changes to the role responsibilities attached to this proposal, this was about titles of roles.

Some members expressed concerns that there had been a lack of engagement during the process, particularly with senior former officers.

Another member disagreed, referring to several discussions at Council, the College's representative body, including an indicative vote with demonstrated almost three quarters support from Council members; multiple all member webinars; and discussions at faculty boards.

Prof Hawthorne, as Chair of Council, gave her support to the proposal, stating it would give parity of esteem with colleagues from other medical colleges and prevent confusion between roles.

The President called for a vote.

For	76	76.84%
Against	22	23.16%
Abstain	6	

APPROVED

Resolution 6 - Designation of AiTs

Dr Mulholland, Honorary Secretary, explained that those who hold the 'Associate' membership grade and are undertaking training in general practice were referred internally as 'Associates in Training' (AiTs). At its meeting in September 2024, Council decided to discontinue the term AiT and adopt the term 'GP Registrars'. This followed calls from our AiT Community Group to find a name that elicits a greater sense of belonging and is more widely understood. Although their membership category remains 'Associate' under Ordinance 7; the term 'AiT' is referenced in the Byelaws in reference to the ability to vote in Presidential (or Provost/Chancellor, if changed) elections. This Resolution corrects that reference to reflect the new name.

The President invited comments from the meeting.

The Chair of the AiT Network Committee, Dr Akram Hussain, welcomed the change in name and asked members to support the Byelaw amendment.

The President called for a vote.

For	93	98.94%
Against	1	1.06%
Abstain	2	

APPROVED

Special Resolution 7 - Number sequencing

Dr Mulholland explained that this Special Resolution was designed to correct any numerical sequencing or referencing errors.

The President called for a vote.

For	77	95.06%
Against	4	4.94%
Abstain	7	

APPROVED

8. **Provisional Dates of Future General Meetings**

The date of the 2025 Annual General Meeting and any other General Meetings will be published at a future date in the usual manner.

There were complaints from some participants that they had difficulties participating in the meeting using the CESJoinIN software. The President noted this, apologised, and would investigate post-meeting. It was noted this did not affect the ability to vote.