

Advisory Council meeting 4 July 2024 - Draft Minutes (WEB)

Report Information	
Meeting Date	Thursday 04 July 2024
Venue	Digital via Zoom
Author:	Rowena Lovell, Board Secretary

Advisory Council Members Present:		
Chair Carolin Göhler (CG) Chair / President	Allison Walters (AIW) Elected Chartered Member	John Ingham (JI) BrRep – Yorks & Humber
Mark Smeeden (MS) Hon Secretary	Jennifer Smith (JS) BrRep - EMids	Mark Ross (MR) BrRep - Scotland
Ben Gurney (BG) Elected Chartered Member	Daisy Parsons (DP) BrRep - EofE	Steve Mann (SM) BrRep - Wales
Ruth Holmes (RH) Elected Chartered Member	Annabelle Silver-Setchfield (AS) BrRep - London	Vanessa Ross (VR) EMC Rep
Nicola Phillips (NP) Elected Chartered Member	John Clay (JC) BrRep - Mids	Anastasia Nikologianni (AN) PCC Rep
Will Sandy (WS) Elected Chartered Member	John Turner (JT) BrRep - NE	John-Paul Friend (JPF) BrRep - SW
Akash Wadhawan (AkW) Elected Chartered Member		
Apologies:		
Noel Farrer (NF) Vice President	Debbie Bartlett (DB) BrRep - SE	Marko Yau (MY) Student Rep
Mat Haslam (MH) Hon Treasurer		
Staff In Attendance:		
Rob Hughes (RH) CEO	Yvonne Matthews (YM) Executive Assistant	Naomi Taylor (NT) Head of Membership Services
Rowena Lovell (RL) Board Secretary	John O'Keefe (JO) Head of Education & Careers	Neelam Sheemar (NS) Head of MarComms & Events
Emma Wood (EW) Governance & Regulation Manager		

1. Opening business

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The meeting being quorate, Carolin Göhler, Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those detailed above, with a particular welcome to new members Jennifer Smith, Annabelle Silver-Setchfield and Steve Mann attending their first Advisory Council meeting.

The Council noted congratulations to Marko Yau, Student Rep as the garden he worked on for RHS Hampton Court was awarded a [Gold Medal and the BEST garden award](#) in category.

1.2 Declarations of interest

The meeting noted no potential conflicts of interest declared in relation to the items on the agenda for discussion.

1.3 Minutes of meeting held 15 February 2024

The Advisory Council unanimously agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024 as an accurate record of discussions.

1.3.1 Matters arising from the last meeting

In relation to item 2.2 Business Plan 2024-25: the meeting noted that the action arising from that discussion is still outstanding and the expected outputs from LI accredited courses and alternative routes alongside the accredited courses and the membership assessment processing will be explored.

1.3.2 Update from Board

The meeting noted an update from CG from recent Board and Board Committee meetings including the following key highlights:

- ***The office location of the LI:***

The Board are reviewing the office needs for the LI in the future to ensure value for money, an environment that supports a better working culture for the organisation and a location that will enable better engagement with the members.

The current office space at Tottenham Court Road is expensive and no longer fit for purpose. Therefore, the organisation will be moving to a period of remote working for all staff as from November 2024 to give the flexibility to explore more flexible alternative options for the future. 85 Tottenham Court will though remain the registered office for the LI until the trial period of 2years max has passed and alternative office options have been finalised.

- ***Update on the Standing Committee Review:***

There is a need to build stronger relationships between Standing Committees and to ensure a better flow of information between them and the Board, Advisory Council and Branches.

The Standing Committee Review Group presented their final report to the Board and the Governance Committee. The Governance Committee, which now includes new members from the Advisory Council, will be looking at next steps to bring about consistency of approach and how members views can shape the work and the important role the Standing Committees play in future.

The next important stage will be for the Governance Committee to look at the requirements for the replacement for the previous Technical Committee, discuss and agree proposals and to get this in place as soon as possible.

- ***Update on the Branch Review:***

The findings from the first stage of the Branch Review are due to be considered by the Governance Committee and Board later this year.

- ***Independent Trustee Recruitment:***

There are currently two vacancies on the Board for independent trustees – one with finance skills and expertise, requiring finance qualifications and the other for corporate marketing and communication expertise and experience. An open

recruitment process will be launched, and Board and Advisory Council are encouraged to share the opportunities with their networks once live.

Council discussions on the update noted that:

- It will take some time to implement the changes to the Standing Committees, but it is recognised that the replacement for the previous Technical Committee is urgent and will be addressed as quickly as possible.
- Although one of the main drivers for the change of the Lif office is financial, the change in working practices and staff locations post COVID mean that the current office is no longer used effectively. There is also a need for a location that is more appropriate for the LI and the Landscape sector and at the same time offers more flexible and useful space such as meeting facilities. Alternative options and locations including the potential to partner with another organisation will be explored.

During the interim period there will be regular opportunities to staff to come together as a team and with members to retain that community and relationships.

2. Items for discussion and decision

2.1 Introduction to the role of the Advisory Council

As there are new members recently joining the Advisory Council, the meeting took the opportunity to discuss the role and function of the Advisory Council:

- The LI is governed by the Royal Charter, granted by the Privy Council with how these are implemented in practice set out in the By-Laws and Regulations.
- The role of the Advisory Council is to monitor and ensure the organisation, including the Board, complies with the Charter and its main responsibilities are to:
 1. Ensure accountability and oversight of the Board
 2. Advise the Board and senior team
 3. Influence strategy and policy
 4. Inspire support amongst and for the membership.
- The terms of reference of the Advisory Council set out in full its role and responsibilities. However, these have not been reviewed since 2019 and discussions agreed that they should be updated to improve effectiveness and the flow of information and communication as well as flexibility and agility.

Council discussions noted that:

- Papers shared with Advisory Council that outline early thinking around an issue or internal structure should remain confidential until the Advisory Council has input into evolving thinking and proposals agreed. However, every effort will be made to be as open and transparent as possible and ensuring such papers are kept to a minimum.
- A diagram showing the structure of the LI and how the members, staff and other stakeholders are interlinked and engage is being developed and will be shared once finalised for further discussion.

2.2 Plans for Elections 2025

The Council noted an update on the timetable and plans for the 2025 elections including that:

- The paper was marked confidential as these are draft proposals and not yet approved or in place.

- Elections for Advisory Council are held every 2 years with the next election due in 2025.
- The parameters for elections are set out in the By-Laws and Regulations.
- The key responsibilities to note in this process are that:
 - The Council oversees the elections.
 - The Board is accountable for the delivery of well-run elections and approves changes to any governance processes and documentation.
- At the current time there is no overall election policy in place, and this will be a priority for the Governance Committee to complete ahead of the 2025 elections.
- The following 3 categories of roles will be up for election in 2025:
 - 4 officer positions with each having an ex-officio role on the Board of Trustees including President Elect; Vice President; Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.
 - 10 Council members including 7 Chartered members; 2 Associate members and 1 student member.
 - 1 Non-Chartered Trustee.

Council discussions noted that:

- Terminology is important, especially in relation to the roles being elected, and not easily understood by the membership. For instance, it would make more sense to talk about 7 places on the Advisory Council for Chartered (CMLI or FMLI) members to make it simpler to understand.
- It would be useful for the timetable to include Branch AGMs.

Decision: The Council approved the timetable for the 2025 elections as presented.

2.3 Appointments & Selection Committee

The Council noted an update on the current position of the Appointments and Selection Committee (A&SC) and that:

- The A&SC plays a key role in the governance and functioning of the LI and therefore needs to have a stronger alignment to governance process and cycles and to ensure closer working with the Advisory Council, Board and the Governance Committee.
- Recently four members of the Advisory Council have joined the Governance Committee which is helping to bring about that closer working and alignment.
- The terms of reference for the A&SC have not been reviewed since 2016 and do not reflect the recommendations from the governance reviews or the current approach that is required.
- The Committee has not been quorate for a while and there have not been any volunteers to fill the vacancies.

Council discussions noted that:

- It is important for the Board to identify skills gaps and advise the A&SC for any Trustee recruitment.
- The A&SC are a sub-committee of the Advisory Council and are separate and independent of the Governance Committee even though there is now a shared membership between the two.
- Membership of the A&SC can require a significant time commitment especially during recruitment.
- At the current time the requirement for one member of the A&SC to be an FLI is set out in the By-Laws and as a result is not easy to change.

- There is a real need to increase promotion and raise awareness of Fellows and how to become one.
- The LI has TMLI members now and it is important that they are also encouraged to become involved.
- How the A&SC will work with the Board in relation to Trustee recruitment needs to be clarified in the terms of reference.

Decision: The Council approved the revisions to the terms of reference for the A&SC subject to any additional edits to be agreed by Ben Gurney, chair of A&SC and Rowena Lovell, Board Secretary in relation to how the A&SC will work with the Board.

2.4 CEO and SLT update

The Council noted an update on LI activity over the last year and plans for 2024 -25 including the twelve critical areas of focus over the coming year and aligned business objectives detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Council discussions noted that:

- The key in all of this will be to improve engagement with members including:
 - Looking at how to re-energise members engagement with branches and encouraging opting into communications
 - Sharing role descriptions for the various roles on panels and proactive communications to ensure members know about the opportunities and increase the pool of talent.
- Engaging Council members earlier when agenda setting for meetings will help to ensure there is time for conversations with members in advance and bring views and thoughts back to discussions
- Currently 12 accredited universities, 11 in the pipeline and 3 potential new courses identified (the list is available online: [Chooselandscape](#)) and work is underway to explore how to recognise associated courses outside our traditional approach.
- The current skills shortage means that increasing awareness of profession and understanding of the routes is critical including greater communication and engagement with schools and utilising other partners and branch networks.

2.5 Review of joint meeting

The meeting noted a summary of all group discussions from the recent joint meeting of the Council, Board and senior leadership team including that:

- The summary report of discussions will be shared with Board.
- The following headlines and key themes have been identified where similar comments were made in more than one group on the day around the current and future role of the Advisory Council:
 - **Member representation and communication:** a conduit for communication with members; to be the voice of members and to facilitate two-way communication between Board and Advisory Council but also Advisory Council, Branches and Standing Committees
 - **Oversight and accountability:** monitor and hold the Board to account and ensure transparency in activity.
 - **Innovation and problem-solving:** a conduit for new ideas and thinking and to formulate ideas not just listen.

- **Policy development:** a crucial role in developing effective policy and guidance; advising and making recommendations to the Board on policy matters and recognising key issues that need to be addressed.
- **Members voice:** Providing a mechanism for feedback to ensure members have a voice and concerns represented effectively.

Council discussions noted that:

- It will be important to improve the frequency and consistency of Board reports to Advisory Council and updates to members on decisions and actions to prevent disillusionment.
- More frequent, informal opportunities for Council to engage such as early morning catch up sessions would help to build stronger engagement
- Identifying a pool of expertise from within existing committees and groups would harness what exists already. Recognising that it is important to keep it simple and focused so as to be sustainable and not overwhelm staff and potential volunteers
- Adopting a more proactive and planned approach to developing content for the Journal such as a series of articles rather than ad hoc one-off articles along with shorter articles and snippets not just major articles and daily news feeds would help to build engagement from a wider pool of expertise.
- It will be for the LI to maintain relevance particularly in appealing to new generation
- Some language can act as a barrier and better use of terminology can feel more inclusive. Recognising that some terminology, even if formal, is recognised and valued for that formality.
- it is important to clearly setting out what's involved with any role being recruited for including time commitments.
- It is really important to find a way for Branches to communicate with each other and members.

The report from the day will be circulated to Board and Advisory Council and any further suggestions and thoughts will be welcome.

ACTION: Any additional feedback and suggestions based on the joint session workshops to be sent to regulations@landscapeinstitute.org

3. Meeting Close

With no items of AOB raised the meeting was closed.

Appendix 1: 2024 – 25 Business Plan



2024-25 business plan – 12 critical areas of focus

Critical Areas of Focus for 24-25	
1. A robust focus on Core Business Delivery	7. Be financially stable by March 2025
2. Increasing membership satisfaction from 39% to 52% and beyond	8. Setting baseline for Net Zero target by 2029 and pathway
3. Launch of new Corporate Strategy and Brand Identity in 2025	9. Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan – evidence of activity against each action
4. Digital Transformation (Project Kestrel) by 2025	10. Prioritise education & careers to meet the challenges of the Skills for Greener Places research
5. General Election - scheduled no later than Jan 25.	11. Implementation of CfGS recommendations - New Ways of Working
6. Landscape and Carbon – first phase of actions building on the report are delivered	12. Rerun of the Skills Survey – Publish December 2024
These are the ‘absolutes’ for 2024-25 and will frame all business objectives for 2024-25	

2024-25 business plan – 19 additional business objectives

19 Additional business objectives for the LI (in addition to core business delivery)	
1. Undertake Skills for Greener Places Research (in yr)	11. Scope Careers & Outreach plan (i.e LI Ambassadors) (2-yr plan)
2. Landscape and Carbon - next phase of action plan (3yr plan)	12. Scope plan to review Competency Framework (CF) (2 yr plan)
3. Implement Green Skills Action Plan (3yr plan)	13. Develop a framework to recognise other associated qualifications (2 yr plan)
4. Implement Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan (up to 2030)	14. Launch Corporate Strategy (2-yr plan)
5. Membership satisfaction survey increases 39% to 52% (in yr)	15. Complete Project Kestrel (2-yr plan)
6. Volunteer Strategy and Policy (2-yr plan)	16. Implement New Ways of Working
7. Membership Value Proposition Project (2-yr plan)	17. Talent Acquisition and Recruitment (in yr)
8. Apprenticeships - Ofqual recognition/EPAO Solution L7 (in yr)	18. Learning and Development (in yr)
9. Strategic development of the LI Academy (2-yr plan)	19. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (2-yr plan)
10. Review Level 3 apprenticeship proposition (2-yr plan)	

Appendix 2: Summary of Decisions and Actions

Summary of Decisions		
Item:	Decision	Details of decision:
1.3	1	Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024 as an accurate record of discussions.
2.2	2	Approval of the election 2025 timetable
2.3	3	Approval of revised terms of reference for the A&SC subject to any additional edits to be agreed by Ben Gurney, chair of A&SC and Rowena Lovell, Board Secretary in relation to how the A&SC will work with the Board.

Summary of Actions			
Item:	Action	Action:	
1.3.2	1	All encouraged to share two new trustee vacancy opportunities with networks once recruitment open.	AdCo
2.5	3	Any additional feedback and suggestions based on the joint session workshops to be sent to regulations@landscapeinstitute.org .	AdCo