



*Dr Derek Allen*

## Your College Regional Council needs you!

**Y**our editor's view is that it certainly does. If you want to prevent a College being dominated by 'the usual suspects' and make it more representative of your views and perspectives, if you want to find out what's on the horizon or what new development is coming to get you, if you want to find out where your College subscription goes, then I heartily recommend getting involved with your Regional Council. That's what I did and four years later here I am as Editor. In any event, please read this article by Ian Frayling and Derek Allen to find out more.



*Dr Ian Frayling*

Are you thinking "What does the College do for me? It runs exams, tells me what to do and sends me a nice journal every so often to keep me up to speed. Oh, and it charges a hefty subscription to do so!"

Well, you are in for a surprise because The Royal College of Pathologists is YOU – its membership. In order to improve communication, a policy of regionalisation was implemented some seven years ago. There is a Regional Council in each of the eight English NHS regions plus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Now in their third term of office since inception, they are regarded by the College Council as important functional units in maintaining two-way communication with the College membership. The Regional Councils, however, face challenging issues such as their effectiveness and sustainability. There could be a danger of complacency and a perception of them being irrelevant to professional practice, distant and 'cliquey'. This short paper seeks to address the who, why, what, how and where of the Regional Councils, highlighting their importance to both the College and its membership.

### Who?

A maximum of twelve elected and three co-opted members is permissible, with tenure of three years. The aim is to achieve a specialty and geographical balance with representation from throughout the Region, inclusive of both medically trained pathologists and clinical scientists. Councillors are elected from amongst their local College constituency peer group. Each Regional Council can also opt to include observers as required, for example trainee, lay, coronial and devolved Government representatives, or a member from an adjacent geographical region. Elected members of College Council also have the right of attendance. Elected and co-opted Regional Councillors nominate a chair. Options can include election of a vice-chair to help with the various duties, including deputising rights at College Council. An honorary sec-

retary can help with organisational matters and minutes of meetings. Each Regional Council is provided with a modest budget from the College for travel and secretarial support.

### Why and what?

The terms of reference for Regional Councils are currently under review but encompass multiple functions.

- Communication: effective two-way communication between the College and its membership is one of the most important roles.
- Policies and standards: dissemination from the College and devolved Governments to the College membership.
- Advice and consultations: collated advice and consultation responses on local and national issues from the membership to the College and devolved Governments.
- Job descriptions: scrutiny of local career-grade job descriptions in pathology specialties through the nominated Job Description Review Panel and its chair.
- Workforce: a monitor of local medical and scientific workforce statistics through the designated Workforce Lead and encouragement of maintenance of personal entries into the Electronic Workforce Database (EWD).
- Continuing professional development (CPD): approval of local educational events for CPD activity through the designated CPD Advisor and coordination of the review of CPD portfolios through the College Tutors.
- Symposia: organisation of local educational and social events.
- Pastoral visitation: facilitation of visits by officers of the College as appropriate.
- Achievement of distinction: nomination of meritorious local individuals for Clinical Excellence Awards and advice on those who might be invited to join the College without examination or submission of published work.

- Performance: advice on local issues of professional performance and maintenance of standards of pathology services.
- Public profile: maintenance of an information page on the College website and promotion of pathology through contact with local outside bodies and the media.
- Regional Council news: it is useful for Regional Chairs to periodically circulate the local membership about the Regional Council, as to who they are and what they do.
- Database: integral to all of this is maintenance of an up-to-date electronic database of current Fellows and other membership categories. This can be difficult due to its ever-changing nature, but is a shared responsibility between the Regional Council (chair/honorary secretary/workforce lead), the College secretariat and Fellows notifying any relevant change in their personal details.
- Availability: the Chair and Regional Councillors have an 'open door, pick up the phone' policy to any College member with an issue for personal, local or wider consideration.

### How?

Communication is vital and is facilitated electronically. However, to avoid a surfeit of email correspondence it must be warranted, concise and relevant. One such example is the President's regular e-newsletter, highlighting those areas of importance to the practice of individual pathologists and providing readily accessible electronic links. Most pathologists in busy clinical practice do not browse websites and value such a trigger to visiting relevant content.

The communication framework comprises the following.

- Regional Council Chair: attends College Council, College Executive (Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland), their College Specialty Advisory Committee and the annual meeting of Regional Chairs with the College's honorary officers. The Chair also has an annual appraisal with the College President to highlight current issues and objectives.
- Regional Council minutes: tabled and discussed as an agenda item at College Council. It is helpful for the timing of Regional Council meetings to be coordinated with College Council. A minimum of three meetings per annum is recommended, with prompt production of the minutes by the Chair/honorary secretary for verification by Regional Councillors and submission to the College. Once tabled and discussed at Council, they are then made available on the College website and freely accessible to Fellows and Registered Trainees.
- Council news: it is useful for Regional Chairs to itemise Council proceedings for consideration by Regional Councillors.

### Where? The way forward

These are just a few of the strategies for College Regional Councils to function satisfactorily. There may be others – why not send in some ideas?

Regional Councillors have a significant role to play in College life and are well served by the three Cs: communication, commitment and creativity.

- Communication – prompt, concise and relevant.
- Commitment – to have a say in local and national issues.
- Creativity – of ideas and consensus to influence local and national policies and standards of service delivery.

This is a call to commit, for there is a job to do. Where Regional Council numbers are low, think of letting your name go forward. Finally, plan ahead to ensure succession planning and continuity of professional clinical advice at both a local and national level.

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## The Jean Shanks Foundation/ The Royal College of Pathologists Research Fellowship

The Royal College of Pathologists and The Jean Shanks Foundation are pleased to invite applications for a research fellowship in a pathology discipline or related field of three years duration to commence in 2009.

Further information and application forms are available on the College's website at [www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=127](http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=127)

The closing date for receipt of applications is Monday 2 March 2009.