

**The Ninety-Eighth Annual Meeting
of the
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland**

In Person and Via Zoom

Thursday, 12th October 2023 at 7pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of 97th Annual General Meeting
3. Matters of Accuracy
4. Adoption of the Minutes
5. President of the Pharmaceutical Society NI's Address
6. Financial Statement
7. Questions for the Pharmaceutical Society NI
8. Chair of the Pharmacy Forum NI's Address
9. Questions for Pharmacy Forum NI
10. Thanks and Close

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MINUTES

1. The meeting commenced at 7pm with a welcome to all attendees by Julie Greenfield. Apology noted from Jonathon Patton.
2. The Minutes of 97th Annual General Meeting were presented to the Annual General Meeting.
3. No matters of accuracy were raised.
4. The Minutes were proposed by Prof. Paul McCarron and seconded by Anne McAlister.
5. President's Address: [Dr Geraldine O'Hare]

Good evening everyone.

Firstly, a very warm welcome to Society House, and thank you for joining us this evening after what I imagine has already been a very long and busy day for you all. Your support tonight is very much appreciated.

On behalf of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, I welcome you to our 98th Annual General Meeting and launch of the Annual Report for the period 2022 to 2023.

For those of you whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Geraldine O'Hare and this is my first AGM with the Pharmaceutical Society NI, having taken up post in November 2022 as the new President. I am very honoured to be in this position and grateful to everyone who, over the past year, has reached out to me with a very warm welcome and the level of engagement and appetite to work collaboratively is much appreciated and I look forward to meeting with and working with you all going forward in my tenure as President. My background is as a Forensic Psychologist and Director within the Criminal Justice System, and over my 30-year career, I have a deep passion and commitment to regulation across health and justice professionals and I continue to do this in my work with regulatory bodies both in the South of Ireland and the UK.

I want to begin with some thank yous and some more welcomes and but at the outset I would like to pay tribute to Dr Jim Livingstone, the previous President of the Council

whose 8-year tenure as President of the Pharmaceutical Society NI came to an end in September 2022, and to Trevor Patterson who retired after 15 years as Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Society NI in December 2022.

While Jim's departure was reported at the last AGM by the Deputy President, it is fitting that I again highlight Jim's contribution to both the Council and the Society at the end of this reporting period.

Over his 8-year tenure, Jim led the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society through a period of significant change and challenge, not least the Covid-19 pandemic. We all remember Jim for his passion for the work of the Council in public protection, for having open and healthy debate and finding the best route forward in any situation as much as for his good humour and company. Jim's strategic thinking, his strong constructive challenge, and constant push for high standards has left the Pharmaceutical Society NI and the Council in a very strong position going forward which I am very grateful for, and I am sure you will join me in wishing Jim and his family all the best in his new ventures, of which I know there will be many of them!

In his 15 years' as Chief Executive, Trevor presided over unprecedented challenges and developments most notably, the challenges from the pandemic, whilst working with Council, he ensured the Society continued to fulfil its primary role in public protection and supported pharmacists at a time of unparalleled pressure on the profession and through the structural and legislative changes following the legislative reform of the organisation in 2012. The move from an elected, all pharmacist Council to an appointed Council, comprising lay and registrant members was the most profound change in the organisation since its creation in 1925. I wish Trevor all our best wishes and a very happy retirement on behalf of all of us here tonight and the pharmacy profession in Northern Ireland.

I would also like to welcome our new Chief Executive, Michaela McAleer to her first Annual General Meeting. Michaela took up her post in December 2022 bringing with her 20 years of public sector experience in the oversight of public bodies through independent investigation of complaints and the regulation of statutory codes of conduct. Over the last 10 months in post, Michaela has worked tirelessly with Council and the executive team, bringing new insights and new ways of working to the organisation and has renewed the organisation's resolve to ensure the delivery of safe and trusted care to the public by the pharmacy profession, which we are very grateful to her for and we wish Michaela all the best in her Chief Executive role with the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

I would also like to congratulate Sheelin McKeagney on being elected as Chair and to Anne McAllister as Deputy Chair of the Pharmacy Forum. I look forward to working closely with you both over the next year, best wishes to both going forward.

Turning to the performance of the Regulator in the last year, 2022-23, I am pleased to report that in March 2023, the Professional Standards Authority published our annual Performance Review. As a small regulator with limited resources, required to meet the same standards as all other UK wide regulators, I am delighted to report that we were successful in meeting all 18 Standards of Good Regulation. This success was, in no small measure, due to the continued dedication and hard work of all of our staff whom I would like to take this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to and we look forward to building on this success in the coming year.

This reporting year has again been another challenging year for pharmacists, healthcare professionals and all those working in the health and social care system. The health system continues to work through the impact of the pandemic and staffing pressures, whilst it makes the changes necessary to address many of the issues revealed by the stresses of the pandemic and to meet increasing public demands. In this changing environment, pharmacy services have become even more critical to the health of the public in all areas where pharmacists work. Pharmacists within the community and in hospitals are increasingly taking on a clinical role with an increasing number becoming independent prescribers with 821 on the Register in September 2023.

We are continuing to work with colleagues and stakeholders in progressing the necessary changes to fully enable the completion of the Integrated Pharmacy Education and Training programme of work, leading to all pharmacists joining the Register as Independent Prescribers on completion of their Foundation Training Year from 2026. I applaud all the work that is taking place and the commitment of the pharmacy leadership across Northern Ireland for their drive in realising the vision and opportunities that this work presents for the future of pharmacists and our new generation of pharmacists. Furthermore, it has been my pleasure to work with our Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Cathy Harrisson and the Department of Health over the last 12 months and Cathy's passion for the professional development of pharmacists is reflected in her leadership and many achievements in her role across pharmacy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register who supported our pharmacy services and provided vital health care to the public during such unprecedented circumstances. The Department of Health NI has advised health profession regulators that the circumstances to justify the continuation of all Covid-19 healthcare Temporary Registers will no longer apply after the coming winter, with the register closing on 31 March 2024. On behalf of the Council, I would encourage all pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register to apply for full registration with the Pharmaceutical Society NI to enable them to continue to provide this vital care and support to our community that they have done and which we all have benefited from and indeed appreciate it.

In terms of training, this reporting period saw the first full year of the Foundation Year Training programme by NICPLD and the first UK-wide Common Registration

Assessment run jointly by the General Pharmaceutical Council and the Pharmaceutical Society NI. I am very pleased to report that local candidates achieved a pass rate of 83.5% in June 2022 rising to 93% in June 2023. This is an excellent reflection of the standard of training to the candidates entering pharmacy and congratulate each and every one of them and say thank you to our wonderful universities and trainers for their exceptional teaching and their commitment to the calibre of students and professionals you are all producing. Your work is what makes pharmacy the highly sought after career so many want to aspire to and my sincere thanks to our leaders in education for everything that you do to inspire our future generations of pharmacy.

Once again, the Society enabled successful applicants to join the professional Register in the shortest possible time while maintaining the required levels of rigour and assurance, and I am very grateful to our staff for making this happen, which you will appreciate was no easy feat.

Turning briefly to Pharmacy Technicians, the Society is continuing to work with colleagues from the pharmacy sector and the Department of Health NI to register and regulate Pharmacy Technicians in Northern Ireland with a target completion date in 2024. Registering Pharmacy Technicians will provide enhanced public safety and is vital in relation to delivering wider service provision reforms planned for pharmacists and pharmacy in Northern Ireland. Whilst we are pleased with this progress, we would sound a note of caution. The continued lack of a Northern Ireland Executive may impact upon the legislative aspects required to deliver on this work in a timely manner, as you will be alert to. However, we will endeavour to ensure the work that we need to do is introduced and developed as far as possible.

Several issues, not least the pandemic, but also delays by Government in bringing forward legislative reform have impacted on progress against the Corporate Strategy 2017- 2022, which following review, was extended by a further 12 months as an addendum. Council's review has resulted in several of our objectives being amended or removed and replaced with new objectives to be completed. The Annual Report 2022-23 documents progress against those amended objectives and goals which are highlighted throughout the report which I would invite you to read.

Looking forward to this year 2023/24, we are consulting on new regulations in relation to the Knowledge of English which will be a requirement to join the Register and also on the outcome of the review of the Code. We will be driving forward a programme of work to review and refresh our standards, focusing initially on our Guidance on Internet Pharmacies and on Independent Prescribing, so work ongoing and indeed planned.

Internally we are continuing to implement a programme of modernisation and development within the Society with a use of technology and engagement across the system. These developments will give greater assurance around the cost effective,

efficient and proportionate performance of our regulatory functions in meeting our overarching objective of public protection.

Turning to our vision, Council is developing a new Corporate Strategy for 2024-2028, building on the progress that has been made and seeking to set challenging and ambitious goals for the future. The theme of this strategy will be transformation and modernisation, looking ahead to the future of healthcare regulation as proposed through the ongoing work to bring about full-scale reform of the regulatory frameworks of all the healthcare professional regulators. The current UK model of regulation for healthcare professionals is considered to be rigid, complex and in need of improvement to better protect patients, support our health services and to help the workforce meet future challenges for the future. So we look forward to embracing these challenges and the opportunities that we know challenges bring to us all.

One of the key elements of the reform programme will be the introduction of a modern, fit for purpose regulatory system. In particular, the aim is to provide each regulator with greater autonomy to set out the details of their regulatory procedures in legislation that they themselves publish.

Turning to our celebrations and celebrating success, as 2025 approaches rapidly we are beginning the planning to mark the centenary of the founding of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland and we would welcome input from the public and all members of the pharmacy family into how to mark this significant event to celebrate. It is a wonderful opportunity to work across the board together to garner ideas, creative ways to mark this very important year in pharmacy.

As I close, I would like to pay tribute to Council members and the staff at the Pharmaceutical Society who have ensured that the core business of public protection has been maintained and is at the core of what we do, with progress in key areas, through their hard work, flexibility, and their professionalism. I would like to extend my thanks to Sandra Cooke whose term of office finished on Council in September 2022 after eight years and would like to mark her dedication to Council. Thank you.

I would like to personally extend my sincere thanks to Council and all staff in Society House and across the pharmacy profession for their unwavering support to me over the last year as I begin my tenure as the new President and I continue to make a firm commitment to continue to drive and to support the high standards of regulation across pharmacy to drive innovation, creativity and to modernise the Society, but most importantly, to develop partnerships and effective, respectful relationships across pharmacy to maximize opportunities to work together in our collective vision to protect the public. As the famous quote that we all know goes, "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together". Let's go together and support each other in the important and critical work that our registrants do in delivering excellent healthcare to our communities across Northern Ireland.

My last but most important thanks must go to our registrants for their tireless work and their professionalism in keeping the communities of Northern Ireland safe and my many thanks to you all here this evening for your ongoing support and your commitment and I look forward to continuing work and our opportunities to work in partnerships and to realise the benefits that those partnerships can bring us all. So thank you very much for your time. Thank you.

6. Financial Report: [Mr Gary McMurray]

Good evening everyone – as Chair of the Council's Finance & Performance Committee I am pleased to present the overview of the Society's financial performance.

By way of context the Society's Annual Report and Accounts in respect of the year ended 31st May 2023 was approved by Council on 19th September and as required was laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly on 5th October 2023. If anyone wishes to peruse the full report and accounts they are available on the Society's website but for the purposes of this evening I will give a high-level synopsis of the Society's financial performance.

Before I begin, I would highlight that the Society's auditors Moore (NI) provided the society with a clean, unqualified audit report and I would like to acknowledge the work of our Director of Business Operations, Mrs Joan Duffy and her team in maintaining the financial records of the Society in such a way that we achieved a clean audit report.

Moving onto the actual figures then you can see from the chart that for the past year The Society had Income of £1.38m and Expenditure of £1.56m resulting in a deficit after project costs of £179k. After tax and a small loss on the revaluation of Investments the overall deficit for the year was £200k.

You can see the comparative figures for the previous 3 years but you will note that the deficit has materially increased from the previous year deficit of £118k.

I will now look at Income and Expenditure in some more detail.

- ❑ Retention Income has increased by £47k, reflecting further growth in the number of pharmacists retained on the Register. This is in line with budget expectations as we continue to see a year-on-year increase in this category.
- ❑ Premises Licence Income has remained steady and in line with prior years.

- ❑ Registration Income has decreased by £12k - there were fewer students starting and finishing their Foundation Year Training than in the prior year and fewer previous registrants wished to rejoin during the year.
- ❑ These 3 streams represented 95% of the Society's income for the year.
- ❑ Salary and related expenses have increased by £64k - whilst these costs were in line with budget, the variance on the prior year was due to a number of factors including higher level of costs incurred on temporary staff to cover maternity and staff absence than in 21/22; coupled in this financial year with the recruitment of a new CEO and their overlap with the retiring CEO, annual staff increments, the outworkings of an administration benchmarking exercise and a one-off cost of living payment, these increases were offset in part by savings due to the delay in the recruitment of new posts.
- ❑ Statutory costs have increased by £36k - this increase reflects the increased number of cases brought by the Pharmaceutical Society NI. Whilst we continue to focus on reducing costs and timelines associated with each case, based on our current prediction, caseload costs are expected to increase again in the coming year. This area is receiving particular scrutiny from Council to ensure costs are tightly managed with process changes introduced to bring more of the work in-house, but it will probably be into the following year before we will see the benefit of that coming through.
- ❑ Legal, Professional and Consultancy fees have decreased by £24k, the requirement for consultancy services is subject to and dependent on specific and/or short-term requirements. The reduction also reflects drive to bring work in-house whenever possible which has been a consideration in recruitment to fill vacancies.
- ❑ Facilities and Office Expenses have increased by £38k whilst this represents an increase compared to the previous year, it is a reflection of the return of staff to the office post-COVID and the additional costs incurred as a direct result of this change in working pattern.
- ❑ Governance Expenses have increased by £26k, Council attendance fees were broadly in line with budget. A proportion of these governance costs are attributable to the development and completion of a new Learning & Development Strategy. It is important as we move forward that Council members are appropriately skilled to enable them to fully perform their roles and the new Learning & Development strategy supports this and is considered an appropriate investment.

- ❑ Computer Expenses decreased by £24k - Costs associated with the introduction of a new online registration database were incurred during 2021/22.
- ❑ The above Expenditure categories account for 86% of total expenditure for the year.

Moving on to our level of reserves, you will note that the level of Reserves has fallen in each of the last 2 years reflecting the deficits incurred as discussed earlier.

Council has recently reviewed its Strategic Reserves Policy and has determined that the Society should maintain reserves in the range of £1.08 - £1.5m to provide a sufficient buffer against both a delay in receipt of income (which happened during COVID for example) as well as unforeseen legal costs should a FtP case, or cases, be subject to Judicial Review.

In light of last year's deficit and a deficit again forecast for the current financial year Council has commenced a 3-year financial planning exercise to ensure necessary steps are taken to maintain reserves within the agreed target range. This will entail close scrutiny and challenge of each cost line to ensure any potential cost savings are identified and realised whilst not compromising on the Society's statutory responsibilities or on the service provided to registrants. In this context it will also be necessary to review all income lines including the level of fees which have remained unchanged since 2016-17. It is important that we ensure the Society operates on a sound financial basis over the longer term and the 3-year financial plan which we have begun to develop will be key to this.

Thank you for your attention and patience and I am sure there may be questions and I am going to hand over to Michaela our Chief Executive and Michaela will field the questions for the Pharmaceutical Society. Thank you.

7. Questions for the Pharmaceutical Society NI

Ms M McAleer thanked Mr McMurray and the President for the warm welcome and noted that she was delighted to be at the 98th AGM. Ms McAleer invited questions from attendees.

Prof. Roisín O'Hare: Prof. O'Hare raised a question in relation to the new Learning and Development Strategy and the advent of developing prescribers for all future Registrants from the year 2025-26 and the impact of this on the profession in terms having 821 prescribers on the register in September 2023 and the fact not all prescribers are Designated Prescribing Practitioners, who support our future prescribers. In particular, Prof. O'Hare sought clarification with regard to what the

strategy for dealing with this is in Northern Ireland and how are we going to build that? Prof. O'Hare also asked, what is the responsibility that a Registrant holds as a DPP in relation to the future prescriber? Prof. O'Hare noted that, at the minute, in a postgraduate space, it is ten years from the point of registration and asked if this going to be the same for the undergraduate prescribers, bearing in mind they are at a different level in their training?

Ms Laura Hughes: Ms Hughes noted that the Society is running in tandem to the legislative reform programme about the IP requirement and that it is currently involved with a number of work streams that are looking in that space and that it is not placed to articulate the job of works and what will be covering that space at this moment in time, but that it is part of the Short Life Working Group, along with Prof. O'Hare, and that it is acknowledged that there are a cohort of pharmacists that will need to be up-skilled in that space to catch up with the arrangements that are going to initiate for all graduates from 2025 to 26.

Prof. Roisín O'Hare: Prof. O'Hare, noted that there are currently 821 prescribers and that, whilst she did not realise that there were so many, she was delighted to see that there is the opportunity for future DPP's. She asked for clarification on what the plan would be for moving forward, particularly as she felt that it would not be that long to the start of the training programme in August 2025 to get all of those people who are potential DPP's to become DPP's and that she had not heard much about what the plan is, particularly as nobody has to do it, it is a voluntary process. Prof. O'Hare also sought further clarification with regard to what is the responsibility of a DPP in relation to the prescriber that they sign off? Is it going to be the same as it currently is in a postgraduate space, which is ten years from the point of registration, or is it going to be something different for these undergraduate prescribers?

Ms Laura Hughes: Ms L Hughes responded by stating that it was fair to say that there is a work stream and that the Society is currently working with the Department to enhance the numbers and the capacity of the Designated Prescriber space with the ambition that has been set, that the number of intakes is increasing both at UU and at QUB and with the aspirations around that, it is fully recognised that we need to enhance the Designated Prescriber space. Ms Hughes also noted that whilst there is work going on in other spaces, until that is further ratified, she would not be in a place to state what that was, but that she would note that it is being worked through as a strategy in terms of how we get there, so that there are sufficient Designated Prescribing Practitioners to upskill the workforce and capture the undergraduates coming through, and that what has been termed the legacy workforce then to add that addendum to their prescriber.

In relation to the second part of Prof. O'Hare's question, Ms Hughes noted that given the governance arrangements in place, that as the regulator, PSNI will react in accordance with what the plan is. Ms Hughes elaborated stating that, in terms of what that will mean, PSNI are working through a number of programmes and work arounds

and particularly with regard to what accountability will mean, PSNI will be looking at that in terms of what is the responsibility to you as the Designated Prescriber, signing something off, so it is fully transparent and everybody is fully aware of what they are walking into and what they are engaging into as a programme. Ms Hughes said that what she expected to hear from Prof. O'Hare and others would be the communication strategy around that, and that what would need to be considered in those work streams has not been communicated out, because at this stage, it is probably still in fruition and being worked through. Ms Hughes concluded that the focus has been around, consolidating the legislative reform aspects which have been quite labour intensive, just in the current climate and to note that PSNI are adopting an approach that we will communicate all plans out.

Mr Michael Guerin: Mr Guerin congratulated Dr O'Hare and Ms McAleer on their new roles and thanked everyone for the information conveyed so far. He then moved on to ask Mr McMurray for clarification with regard to the financial review that he indicated would be taking place to maintain reserves at £1,000,008 - 1.5 million. Mr Guerin went on to note that he had asked the question last year of the relevant personnel about the deficit, which at that stage he stated was £34,000, and that this year we are looking at £194K. Having been told that there were no immediate plans to increase costs to Registrants, but that there seemed to be an implication in what Mr McMurray said that in the three year financial planning there would likely have to be increasing costs, and bearing in mind the economic climate that we are in at the minute and the stress that community pharmacy is under, would he have any comment as to what the scale of those increasing costs might be? Mr Guerin also reported that this would be concerning for him personally as he pays one hundred Registrants, Registrant fees and has over fifty premises to register and he noted that the cost is quite significant.

Mr Gary McMurray: Mr McMurray thanked Mr Guerin for his question. He explained that there has been quite a material movement in costs over the last year and that part of that has been down to the general cost of living increases that have been impacting across the board in terms of inflationary pressures, but whilst this has had some bearing, there have also been one-off costs encountered and he noted that the organisation has had quite a significant level of staff turnover and there was much higher recruitment costs incurred than would normally have been the case. Mr McMurray went on to report that approximately £23,000 had been spent on the attract, retain and recruit campaign, without Department of Health funding, as it was important to try and maintain the flow of pharmacists coming through and that there had been some unplanned costs, against which statutory costs have increased significantly over the last few years. With regard to fitness to practise cases, which Mr McMurray noted are taking longer to bring to fruition, have more costs involved. He explained that steps have been taken recently to address the cost of recording hearings and that the approach being taken has been to move to audio recording rather than having to have minute takers, which has made quite a saving.

Mr McMurray went on to outline that the Pharmaceutical Society is also looking at progressing bringing some of the legal costs associated with hearings in-house. He concluded that there are a number of areas being looked at closely in terms of cost reduction and that the organisation has just kicked off the three year financial planning process, the first focus of which will be to try and make sure that the organisation identifies where cut backs can be made.

Mr McMurray noted that it may not be possible to address the full nature of the deficit faced from costs, and in which case, the organisation will have to look at the income side but that will not just purely be a matter of looking to increase fees. He elaborated by saying that efforts have been made recently to look at the capacity for making more use of the facilities in Society House and renting out space to other regulatory bodies and that has been happening and that there is scope to increase that further. Mr McMurray noted that Pharmaceutical Society will want to look at everything in the round, including potentially fees, which have not increased in seven years, but that the Society is conscious that by the same token Registrants are facing increased costs in their employment and in their home lives.

Mr McMurray explained that the Society is looking at the possibility of being able to spread the payment of fees for registrants on a quarterly basis and that it is also looking to make sure that residents are fully aware of, for example, the tax reliefs that are available where they pay the fees themselves. He noted that whilst he appreciated in Michael's case, he was picking up the fee on behalf of the employees, and that he appreciated that the latter point will not have the same resonance for him, but that the Society wants to look at all of those areas.

Mr McMurray highlighted the importance of bringing together a budget that enables the Society to operate within an acceptable level of reserves and that if there are fee increases involved, that will have to go out to consultation as part of the process. He concluded that whilst work is being done, the three-year plan has not yet been finalised and is only at the early stages, but given where the Society is on the deficit, it is only appropriate that we are looking at the financial position and taking prudent steps to try and bring the budget back into line.

Mr Michael Guerin: Mr Guerin thanked Mr McMurray and asked if there was any external assistance with the review or was it all being done internally?

Mr Gary McMurray: Mr McMurray replied that the review was primarily being led internally, but that the Society will be able to call on the support of its auditors as well to assist if required.

Mr Michael Guerin: Mr Guerin thanked Mr McMurray.

Ms Michaela McAleer: Ms McAleer asked if there were any further questions for the Society and thanked everyone.

8. Chair of the Pharmacy Forum NI's Address: [Mr Sheelin McKeagney]

Good evening. As Chair of the Pharmacy Forum Board I am pleased to present this summary of the work undertaken by the staff, Board and committees of the Forum in the year 2022/23.

You will be able to read more detail about everything covered in this speech in the Annual Report that you all now have a copy of, but first of all, on behalf of the profession I would like to extend a warm welcome into post the new President of the Society, Geraldine O'Hare and CEO, Michaela McAleer. We look forward to working with you over the coming year and I would like to echo your kind words about the hard work and long hours contributed by Jim and Trevor over the years.

It has been a busy year for the Forum, and we have continued to be guided by our mission to promote and support the pharmacy profession to deliver improved outcomes for patients.

Pharmacy continues to be a keystone of healthcare provision in Northern Ireland, and we are proud to be its champion.

We are responsible for, and always endeavour to, empower **pharmacists** to lead the future vision for pharmacy and pharmacy teams within the wider Health and Social Care sector.

How do we do this?

Through **collaboration** with all key stakeholders and partners, and by harnessing the expertise and collective insight of the excellent Northern Ireland pharmacists who are our members.

After two years it is an honour and a privilege to have been chosen once again by the Board to return to the position of Chair, and I am delighted to be joined by the very able and committed Anne McAlister as Vice Chair, who will be well-known to many of you in the room tonight.

As incoming Vice-Chair Anne has also taken on the responsibility of chairing the Policy and Practice Committee.

Because the Annual Report covers the period 2022-23, it would be remiss of me not to thank our outgoing Chair and Vice Chair, Eamon O'Donnell and Dr Oisín Kavanagh, who led the Board ably and diligently from the autumn of 2021 up until earlier this year.

Eamon retired by rotation in May, and Oisín stepped down in August because his practice is now entirely GB based. Their contribution will be greatly missed by all of us.

On the subject of the Board, this was an election year, and we were delighted to be able to manage a truly competitive race, with seven candidates each trying to win one of four spaces.

Myself, Anne, and Glynis McMurtry were all returned to our places on the Board, and have been joined by new member, Judith Gray, who is with us in the hall tonight.

But as we are the Forum - and we want to encourage anyone who would like to develop into a leadership role - we have invited anyone who stood for election to join our committees.

We are delighted to welcome both Fonde Nkonki to our Policy and Practice Committee, and Dr Aaron Courtenay to our Education Committee.

We thank everyone who took part in this election, and everyone who voted.

We have also continued with our programme to develop the leaders of tomorrow by recruiting and appointing three apprentice members to each of our committees. The apprentices are early career pharmacists (under five years qualified) who are completing a year-long programme that commenced in January 2023.

Our new three-year Corporate Plan was published in the spring of 2023 and will provide the road map for the development of our work until 2026.

As you can see the five key guiding principles will be:

- Leadership
- Support
- Innovation
- Excellence
- Development

The staff team have developed, and will continue to refine, their work plans to deliver on these principles over the three-year timeframe. The Board will oversee the rollout of these work plans, and the membership will be continually updated through our website, membership newsletters and social media channels.

After a particularly busy year for consultations in 2021/22, there was a welcome drop off in the number that the Forum felt were relevant and warranting a response in the 2022/23 period. Most notable among them was the Hub and Spoke Dispensing consultation in June 2022. Activity has picked up again over the summer of 2023, and

the Policy and Practice Committee has been very busy over September and October of this year in responding to a new wave of consultations.

You will see a full list of policy forums in which we have been representing our membership at the highest level – and you will hear more about two particular areas of work in a moment – around the future of supervision and professional leadership. We are proud to champion our members' interests on a Northern Ireland and UK-wide level when it comes to policy development.

In the reporting period we maintained a regular stream of communications with our membership and the wider public. There were 11 editions of the Forum's monthly newsletter throughout the year. An additional 25 bulletins were sent to our audiences in order to promote events and training; the 2023 Board Election; the Pharmacy NI Champions programme; and the launch of the 2023-26 Corporate Plan. The newsletter's average open rate has risen from 40% in 2021/22 to 50% in 2022/23, which is excellent against the industry average. 18 news articles were published during 2022/23, and the website was also used as a vehicle for event promotion and management.

Two projects received grants from the CW Young Fund in 2022/23 – one focused on experiential learning in an updated MPharm programme, and the other being around remote provision of care by community pharmacies. More information on both is available in the Annual Report.

There was a notable upturn in members seeking support after not meeting standard in their first submissions of their CPD portfolios this year. Over 20 sought facilitation from us across resubmissions one and two – a threefold increase on the previous year. We were delighted at the feedback we received from those who responded to our evaluation of the facilitation we provided, which was overwhelmingly positive.

We were delighted to host our first Rewarding Excellence event since the pandemic in November 2022. Three new fellows – Mr Gerard Green, Professor Paul McCarron and Ms Kathryn Turner – were conferred (and I extend my congratulations to them); 2021 and 2022's top scoring MPharm graduates received their Gold Medals; and winners of the Ronnie McMullan prize for top marks in their Foundation Year Common Registration Assessment from 2019-2021 were also honoured.

As mentioned previously since December 2022 the Forum worked in collaboration with the group of UK-wide pharmacy bodies that you can see here, in order to co-produce a report and a set of recommendations that will inform the work of the UK Department of Health and Social Care in the development of future legislation around supervision.

The group modelled professional practice for the community pharmacy team that will enable individuals to maximise their unique skill set and their professional roles. The

group's priority was to ensure that developments in community pharmacy practice, relating to supervision, enhance the ongoing delivery of safe and effective care to patients whilst enabling innovative practice that benefits patients, the career prospects of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, the pharmacy network, and the wider NHS.

The report was published in the summer in advance of the anticipated consultation on supervision from the UK Department of Health and Social Care.

Throughout last year we were also actively involved in the steering group and select working groups of the UK-wide Commission on Pharmacy Professional Leadership, set up by the four Chief Pharmaceutical Officers (CPhOs) of the UK in May 2022 to ensure all registered practitioners are supported in their practice.

The Commission's report was launched in February 2023, and includes significant asks of the UK's pharmacy Professional Leadership Bodies (PLBs) and Specialist Pharmacy Groups (SPGs).

Since the report's release the Forum has worked with four CPhOs, and the other PLBs and SPGs in order to establish the best process for the creation of the transitional Collaborative Pharmacy Leadership Council, which has been recommended in the report.

This is a once-in-a-generation change to the arrangements of professional leadership, and the Forum has been and will continue to represent the interests of Northern Ireland pharmacists as part of this UK-wide work.

Calculations training was provided in-person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic at Society House in Belfast.

Thirty-seven trainees attended one of two events held in May 2023. All attendees were provided with pre-coursework and webinars upon booking, before attending a four hour in-person workshop, hosted by Forum facilitators.

100% of attendees who responded to our post-event evaluation reported that the workshop had met their expectations.

97% of respondents rated the overall value of the workshop to them as very good or good.

Passing the Calculations section of the Common Registration Assessment requires practice, practice, practice, and I would truly recommend any pre-reg students that you know to participate in the sessions, as they provide great peer support.

The Forum and the Department of Health SPPG worked together to create a series of three online events around insulin safety in community pharmacy.

The systematic approach explored how preventable harm can be reduced by well understood and designed systems and practices, focusing on the high-risk medicine insulin.

The co-produced series created a fresh perspective and learning opportunity using human factors and tools that can be applied across any area within community practice.

An average of 30 people attended each of the three events between September and November 2022.

The events were recorded and are now available as online webinars, and will soon be hosted as a learning hub on the Forum's website.

In post-event evaluation, 100% of respondents agreed that the event delivered on its learning objectives, and that it was useful, interesting and relevant.

The Forum facilitated a workshop designed to build the confidence and critical competency interview skills and techniques required to ensure success at interviews using a public appointment process, or equivalent.

Our event training partner was Marcomm – a training and development consultancy who provides consultancy to chief executives, their boards and management teams.

Two workshops were provided and both were fully booked.

Through this work we hope to ensure pharmacists voices are heard at the highest level in policy development and implementation in the wider HSC sector.

Throughout the spring of 2023 the Forum worked on Phase 3 of our Pharmacy Futures NI –Attract, Recruit, Retain campaign.

A new suite of materials to support outreach was commissioned and produced, as you can see here.

We also recruited and trained 35 new Pharmacy NI Champions.

These are pharmacy professionals (including pharmacy technicians for the first time) who volunteered to support the campaign by reaching out to schools and colleges to promote pharmacy careers to school pupils and students.

The materials mentioned previously have been and will continue to be used by them at various outreach events and talks.

Most exciting of all, we produced a new video to promote pharmacy careers to GCSE and A Level pupils.

This video featured a mix of some of our new champions, Board members, and experts from different areas of practice.

However, to optimise the impact of our campaign, we delayed the launch of this video to coincide with the start of the new academic year.

Hopefully you will have noticed, or even taken part in our major launch of the new phase of the campaign taking place on World Pharmacy Day 2023 in September, at a Pharmacy Careers Showcase at W5, where over 130 school pupils heard keynote speeches (including one from CPhO, Cathy Harrison) and were able to speak to representatives of different areas of practice at a careers fair.

Feedback so far has been absolutely fantastic, and has been praised by colleagues in the Department of Health Workforce Directorate, and has been forwarded to nursing colleagues of a great example of an Attract and Recruit campaign.

As always we are extremely proud of the support we give through the Pharmacists Advice and Support Service.

PASS is there for all registered pharmacists, former pharmacists, Foundation Year Trainees, and dependents of all of the above.

In the year 2022/23 PASS provided grants worth £11,900, and provided 49 counselling sessions (via telephone, online and in-person) via our partners at Inspire.

PASS also signposted 11 other service users to external sources of advice and support.

In April 2023 we updated our Inspire Support Hub extended the support available to users as part of the employee assistance programme.

PASS promoted its services via UCA-NI Ltd's Foundation Year Trainee network, and at the Calculations training in May, as well as other events throughout the year.

Please consider giving to the PASS charity by going to www.pfni.org.uk/pass/donate.

On other Trusts matters, the merger of the Ronnie McMullan and CW Young trust funds was completed in May 2023, after delays that were outside of our control. Ronnie

McMullan funds will be ringfenced and continue to be used in memoriam to Mr McMullan.

I would like to conclude by thanking Pharmacy Forum staff, my fellow Board members, our committee members, and the wider membership.

In particular I would like to acknowledge our outgoing Forum and PASS Coordinator, Sharon Bell, and we wish her well in her new role. We welcome her replacements – Dr Jenny Millar who is our new Forum Coordinator, and Katie McQuade who will be starting next week as the new PASS Coordinator.

I look forward to yet another busy and productive year in 2023/24.

Thank you for listening.

9. Questions for Pharmacy Forum NI:

Ms Anne McAlister: Ms McAlister thanked Mr McKeagney before inviting questions from attendees and added that in terms of professional leadership, which is one of the five guiding principles in our three-year strategic plan, is how we will support our professional leader colleagues and that she welcomed any comments or discussion around that.

Prof. Roisín O'Hare: Prof. O'Hare thanked Mr McKeagney for his wonderful overview and noted that she was overwhelmed by how much the Pharmacy Forum have done on our behalf this year and thanked everybody. Having attended the recent attract and recruit event in the Odyssey, Prof. O'Hare wished to thank J Greenfield and her team for all of their work. Prof. O'Hare then moved on to raise a question in relation to the Pharmacy Leadership Council that the Pharmacy Forum have been involved with across the UK, in particular, she asked if any more detail was available in terms of what has come out of that, given that the report was published in February, but that we are now in October, and whilst there is still work going on, she asked if there is a plan, what it is and what does it mean for change?

Ms Anne McAlister: Ms McAlister handed over to Ms J Greenfield who she said was best placed to give a good update and insight into where this work is headed.

Ms Julie Greenfield: Ms Greenfield thanked Ms McAlister noting that this was a difficult one to comment on because the Forum has been working with the four chief pharmacists and that they had asked for those from the special interest groups and the professional leadership bodies not to go public with any information and therefore the Forum was actually working behind closed doors, but that she could say the Forum has probably been a little bit frustrated with the slow progress. Ms Greenfield added that the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has been quite vocal in the press in terms of its

frustration with the process as well and that the Forum shares some of that with its colleagues in GB. Speaking on behalf of the Board, Ms Greenfield noted that the Forum would rather be in the process than outside it and that this was the view of everyone involved, including the RPS, and that there are some frustrations around how it is moving forward and our involvement in, for example, the selection of the Chair and the funding etc. Ms Greenfield explained that we do not know at this stage what the model will look like going forward but that is something that as the Council comes together they will decide what the priorities for the work are and what it looks like, as there are a lot of unknowns. Moving on, Ms Greenfield noted that she thought that it had already been made known that the Chair, who has been selected, will be announced in the not too distant future, so that will be made public and we will be given a heads up first as one of the participants in it and then it will be made public, adding that she thought that there would be a lot more progress whenever that happens and whilst it may seem a bit shrouded in mystery, that was all that she could say at this stage.

Prof. Roisín O'Hare: Prof. O'Hare thanked Ms Greenfield.

Mr Paul Kelly: Mr Kelly stated that he would like to congratulate the Society for the regulatory role which they have performed to an excellent standard for the last one hundred years and he added that the Forum was also doing a great job, through its educational work and otherwise, however, he highlighted having concerns about the financial stress that community pharmacies are in. Mr Kelly went on to say that they were probably the biggest contributors to the Society's fees and he wondered if that could be put on the agenda and if the Society had any ideas or solutions to resolve issues like that?

Ms Anne McAlister: Ms McAlister handed over to Ms McAleer to respond to Mr Kelly.

Ms Michaela McAleer: Ms McAleer said that the Society was aware of the impact of stress on Registrants and that this was something it wanted to look at more widely in terms of looking at the community piece. She noted that Mr McMurray had already answered the question around the fees and that they would be being spread across all of the sector and that there would not be anything specific towards community, but in terms of health and well-being, that was something that was on the Society's agenda, anything that we can do to support Registrants when they are feeling under stress. Ms McAleer asked Ms Hughes if she wanted to say anything more on this.

Ms Laura Hughes: Ms Hughes replied that it was a really good question and that it was heavily on the Society's radar. Ms Hughes asked if Mr Kelly was meaning in terms of funding to stabilise pharmacy, before adding that the Society was probably limited in a regulator space in terms of how much it could impact on that effort, but what the Society does is that when it sees a challenge by funding constraining an area where it is wishing to regulate, it sees that in the education space, it certainly exercises its voice within the constraints that we do have and in the past year the Society has

probably done that harder than ever, but that it was not fair for the Society to comment around how it could shape that because it is probably subject to negotiation with CPNI and the Department. Ms Hughes noted that she thought that there probably was more to see in that space as a potential new contract may come in the future, in line with the changing land. She added that PASS is a service that she holds in high regard and that as a regulator the Society truly recognises the burden that is on Registrants in terms of their daily work and the hardship that they can sometimes find themselves in. Ms Hughes went on to say that the Society was in the fortunate position of being able to signpost Registrants that it encounters to that service and that the takeaway from that was that it recognises how limited it is in terms of our offer to Registrants. Ms Hughes concluded by saying, as Ms McAleer had alluded to, the Society has seen an increase in both stress and the mental health and well-being of Registrants, and it is starting to look at that as a project in terms of how it can better support Registrants that intentionally or unintentionally find themselves in that space again within the remit of who we are, because obviously we are regulating and public safety is probably our primary goal.

Ms Anne McAlister: Ms McAlister added that from a Forum perspective, a lot of the work with stakeholders is very mindful of the workload and the tipping point as we are conscious of how the service agenda and the contract is changing and it is helping to prepare the workforce for that, so certainly the engagement in the pharmacy technician registration and the scheme of work around that and we are very actively involved in that. Ms McAlister stated that she wished to echo what Ms Hughes had said in terms of PASS, and that the increased numbers speak for themselves. She added that whilst it was gratifying to know that we are there to help more people that more people need our help and support. Ms McAlister concluded that she was happy to bring the Pharmacy Forum piece to a close and to hand over to Mr McKeagney to bring the evenings proceedings to a conclusion.

10. Thanks and Close:

Mr Sheelin McKeagney: Mr McKeagney said he was conscious that he was keeping everyone from getting home, so he was not going to say very much, but that he was quite taken by the President's address earlier saying if you want to travel far, travel together and so he encouraged everyone to travel together and bring things forward. He thanked everyone for coming to the AGM, before thanking all of the staff who helped put the evenings proceedings together from the Society and from the Forum. The Meeting was duly closed.

Meeting concluded 8.15pm.