

**Optometry Northern Ireland Annual General Meeting  
7.15 pm on Wednesday 23 May 2018  
Stormont Hotel, Belfast**

Present

Judith Ball	Jonathan Keys
SJB Barbour	Julie Anne Little
Karen Breslin (Chair)	Lynn Mackey
Lorcan Butler	Deirdre McAree
Lyndsey Caldwell	Alan McCandless
Jill Campbell	Sean McCauley
Michael Coates	Moyra McClure
Wendy Coates	Cahal McCollam
Paula Cunningham	Geoff McConville
Paul Curtis	Brian McKeown
Marie Fee	Carmel Murray
Sylvia Ferguson	Davin Quinn

Apologies

David Barnes	Andrew Petticrew
Geri Dynan	Frank Petticrew
Helen Knox	William Stockdale

In attendance: Sara Ball

**1 Chairman's Welcome – Dr Karen Breslin**

Karen thanked everyone for coming and welcomed Richard Edwards who would present CET on “Candour, Consent and Complaints” after the AGM.

**2 Apologies**

Apologies were received from the above.

**3 Chairman's Report – Dr Karen Breslin**

Karen highlighted some changes to the Council. Within the past year Moyra McClure (Ulster University representative and Treasurer), Dr Sara McCullough (College of Optometrists NI representative) and Rachel Scott (Independent) had stepped down from Council. Thank you to all for their hard work. Welcome to Lorcan Butler who has replaced Sara as College of Optometrists representative. There are now two vacant positions, one to be appointed from University of Ulster and one to be elected.

Four sub-committees have been working hard: Strategy and Policy; Education and Professional Development; Financial and Legal and Marketing and Communication.

Strategy and Policy are updating the constitution to make it fit for purpose. Following some complications we are now almost there. Currently at the consultation stage with the various relevant bodies and once this is complete, it needs to be affirmed by ONI members. This will require an EGM in due course.

Committee members have been engaging with non-paying practices and encouraging them to sign the levy. There have been a few inaccuracies in the BSO data received but we are working with BSO and the Ophthalmic Committee to resolve this.

ONI have starting working more closely with the Ophthalmic Committee in order to better understand what our functions are as committees and to support each other in the work that we do. Thank you to Martin Holley (Chair Ophthalmic Committee) for his recent work with ONI and best wishes on his retirement. ONI hope to continue to develop the working relationship with the Ophthalmic Committee.

October 2017 saw the completion of the five year Developing Eye-care Partnerships 2012-2017, which was set up to improve commissioning and provision of eye care services in Northern Ireland. One of the main aims of the project was to “contribute to the independence of adults and maintaining them well in the community, for as long as possible, by improving access to current Health and Social Care (HSC) treatment for acute and/or long-term eye conditions”. The legacy of this project is of interest to ONI as it could lead to primary care optometrists being better utilised in Northern Ireland. The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) had been asked to carry out a review of DEP in early 2017. RQIA reviews aim to provide assurance to the public about the quality, safety and availability of health and social care services in Northern Ireland, ensure improvement in services and protect the rights of service users. The RQIA Review Panel comprised of mainly UK health care professionals with working knowledge of enhanced eye care services. Karen said that several ONI council members including herself took part in the review and we were encouraged by the review panel’s endorsement of ONI’s work and their general support for primary care optometry in Northern Ireland. The report, which was due to be published in September 2017 has not yet been published. Building on the final DEP report, Raymond Curran is working with the Department to establish a Northern Ireland Eye Care Network. ONI look forward to being a key player within this new body.

This year, in a bid to combat inertia, ONI broke with traditional meeting format and met with a cleared agenda. Each subcommittee met and reported back, which was a success. This proved a useful exercise and one that we plan to repeat later in the year.

Although the current (NI) political climate provides limited engagement opportunity, in March 2018 Karen and William Stockdale had a useful meeting with Jim Shannon MP (Chair of the All Party Parliamentary group on Eye Health and Visual Impairment and also one of the AOP's Honorary Associates whose role is to represent member interests and raise the profile of optometry). The GOS Uplift, Post-cataract care within primary care optometry and Northern Ireland PEARS were all discussed. Following this, Karen sent him four letters expressing ONI current concerns, which he has communicated to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, Richard Pengelly. ONI will continue to meet with Jim Shannon. Karen also met with Mark Lee, Director of Primary Care at the Department of Health in March 2018 and briefed him on current ONI projects, and the significant role our members could play in the eye care agenda. She also used the opportunity to highlight ONI successes to date and any concerns. Mark works closely with Richard Pengelly.

ONI continue to engage formally and informally with the NIOS and to meet regularly with Raymond Curran and his team at the HSCB. Karen attended the Five Nations meeting, to hear what is happening in other regions. In past years, Karen had felt more like an observer than a participant, but was now pleased to say that Northern Ireland is now able to stand alongside the other UK nations with evidence of a change practice.

In addition to this, Karen had met with representatives from other professional bodies and had attended various events on behalf of ONI. Karen had also submitted responses on consultations on behalf of ONI including the ongoing GOC Education Review.

Karen updated the meeting as to the following developments within primary care optometry:

- Following a successful pilot of Southern Primary Eye-care Assessment and Referral Service (SPEARS), the scheme been rolled out in the Western and Belfast Trusts (now known as HSC funded NIPEARS – not MECS). ONI continues to work towards a fully funded service throughout NI (to include Northern and South Eastern Trusts).
- Local enhanced service LES 1 (Intraocular repeat measures) continues with 380 plus providers.
- Over 100 practitioners have been trained to deliver Local enhanced service LES 2 (enhanced case finding)
- Practitioners are encouraged to pay attention to recent changes made by HSCB in LES 1 and LES 2 service specifications taking into account recent NICE guidance.
- Work has begun on the next step of the Glaucoma/OHT pathway. This service is for OHT monitoring only and will initially involve practitioners who have participated in ECHO and hold a Professional Certificate in Glaucoma. Patients considered suitable by their secondary care clinician will be asked to select a primary care monitoring optometrist from a list.

- Out of 275 practices, 219 are now enabled within the Clinical Communications Gateway (CCG), which facilitates electronic referral. Karen stressed the importance of engagement with this as GPs are becoming increasingly reluctant to process referrals from optometric practices that are not using the system. ONI continue to push for feedback from secondary care and optometric access to the Electronic Care Record. Reminder from the HSCB for practitioners to check their HSCB email accounts on a regular basis (preferably daily).

Karen stated that ONI hope to continue the good work that has been ongoing. Make contact through our website with any feedback or issues you have. Thank you to the NIOS for their continued support, council members and Sara for their hard work and thanks to the practitioners, for engaging in the new initiatives.

Judith Ball asked Karen why there was a delay in rolling out NIPEARS to the Northern Trust. Karen replied that it was due to lack of funding, which has been applied for. The decision was taken that it was better than not doing it at all, to do it initially in two trusts.

#### **4 Treasurer's Report – Mrs Deirdre McAree**

Deirdre McAree presented the accounts (YE March 2018).

Expenditure	
NIOS	39 192
NIOS Conference	
Training (NIOS)	
Salaries	21 500
PR/ Advertising Eye Health Week	
Chair/Sec/Committee Expenses	4 529
Accountancy Fees	1 250
Room Hire (2x last year)	300
Miscellaneous	803
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67 574</b>

Surplus for YE 2018

- Deficit for the year 2016/17 was £32 872
- Surplus for the year 2017/18 was £7 384
- Total cumulative surplus to date: £ 156 115

\*Cumulative surplus increased by 5% -

\*Slight reduction in Levy by £962

\*Control of costs and expenditures by 38% - resulting in a savings of £ 41 218

## Balance Sheet

- Net Current Assets £156 115
- - Improved cash position year on year (+£16 700)
- - Increased level of reserves year on year (+£7372)
- - Reduction in deficit and increase in surplus (page 2)
- - Reduction in corporate liability tax to £12

## Regular Expenditure:

- NIOS Levy £35 and ONI £32
- Reduction in key elements of payments
- Reduction in NIOS subsidy of 37 %
- PR/Advertising reduced by £17 681
- Donations/Gala/Printing reduced by £760
- Room Hire costs down £907

## Financial Projection:

- Total Net Assets £156 115 as at March 2018
- Total Cash Holdings £154 011
- ONI aims to maintain current levels with moderate expenses in 2018 eg training events for members, sponsorships. Continue to engage with our colleagues to encourage membership
- Surplus - £7 384

## ONI

- Projected Income 2017/18 £75 000
- Reimburse NIOS 37 500
- Expenditure
- Salaries 21 000
- Committee Expenses 5 500
- Accountancy Fees 1 500
- Meeting Rooms 1 000 (AGM)
- Other 2 000
- Total 31 000

Thanks to our accountants, Jackson Andrews, Karen Breslin and Moyra McClure.

## Questions

Michael Coates "Subsidy" NIOS was actually splitting of levy. Why is there a large amount remaining in current account, when investment was

discussed 18 months ago – investment portfolio. Deirdre replied that ONI hadn't gone ahead with the investment as Brewin Dolphin were unhappy with status (need to know who owns the funds). Michael - Lot of money there – make it work for us. Deirdre acknowledged Michael Coates and agreed that it was a fair point that the money in the current account would be much better moved into a savings account and that this should be done ASAP.

Julie Ann Little – what percentage of practices subscribed to the levy? Deirdre replied – Just over 60%. Number of Levy payers has increased but there are still a few that don't. ONI have identified the practices and are contacting them to find out objections to signing up. Some don't see the need – or any benefit. When we were in meetings negotiating fees, it has been said that ONI don't represent all practices – working towards remedying this.

Geoff McConville – what do you get for your levy? He felt that we are underpaid for everything we do and opts out of initiatives from the board. The current approach is not working and that we should withdraw GOS services. Deirdre responded that ONI are working hard to ensure that practitioners receive a fair fee for services provided. £40 fee for PEARS is higher than originally proposed and higher than comparable schemes in UK. We did get an uplift this year in GOS fees. Karen told meeting that she understood how members are frustrated, but we currently have a “brick wall” – no government to negotiate with. Richard Edwards (LOC) reasoned that you need local negotiators as the negotiating role played will evolve and the cash stream will devolve to a region. ONI have got a start, something to build on. Pre and post op cataract care schemes on the way. OHT – 25 opticians are currently undergoing training. We have no way of calculating how much we are losing out, not the value of the money but by being in the game.

Deirdre concluded by asking for a proposer and seconder for the accounts. They were proposed by Alan McCandless and seconded by Brian McKeown.

It was agreed to keep Jackson Andrews as accountants.

Thanks to Moyra McClure (Past Treasurer) and Committee Members

## **5 Elections**

In absence of any nominations – Eavan Kennedy was elected to Council

## **6 Any Other Business**

GDPR – appointment of DPO – ONI have sought advice from AOP and got feedback and the advice is not to panic. ONI will send out information we have to date.

