British Veterinary Association

annual general meeting 2016

The 2016 annual general meeting of the British Veterinary Association was held at the At-Bristol Science Centre, Bristol, on September 22, as part of the Association’s Members’ Day

THE members-only business section of the AGM was chaired by Derek Williams, chairman of the BVA Board.

The meeting approved the report of the 2015 AGM, which was published in Veterinary Record on October 31, 2015 (vol 177, pp 443-444).

Mr Williams noted that the Association’s annual report had been published in the August 20/27, 2016, issue of Veterinary Record (vol 179, pp 203-208) and a copy had been made available on the BVA’s website at the end of August.

The meeting formally adopted the Association’s accounts for 2015. Mr Williams reported that the BVA Board had approved the accounts at its meeting on July 28, 2016, and a copy had been made available to BVA members on the website.

Financial report

Derek Thorpe, the BVA’s finance director, reported that, in the year ending December 31, 2015, the BVA had made an operating surplus, before tax and donations, of £91,787. The Association’s total income for the year had been just under £5.7 million, and all key business areas had yielded an above-cost return.

Total expenditure for the year had been just under £5.6 million, and the BVA continued to invest heavily in policy activities and running media and public affairs campaigns to lobby on priority issues, such as animal welfare. Progress also continued to be made with member-focused initiatives, with the successful publication of the Vet Futures project report at the 2015 BVA Congress. Capital expenditure totalled £17,100, focused mainly on further developments to the BVA’s membership database and website.

After allowing for tax and £13,000 of donations to veterinary-related charities, and allowing for unrealised movements on the Association’s investment portfolio, the BVA’s total reserves had increased by £94,731 in 2015, to just over £10 million. This included working capital reserves of just over £2.3 million, and the BVA remained debt free.

Mr Thorpe said that the outlook for 2016 was for the BVA to make a small operating surplus, which would be somewhat reduced because the BVA Board had decided to invest the majority of the 2016 surplus into the membership strategy, which was seeking to increase membership recruitment and retention rates.

Subscription rates

The membership subscription rates for 2017, as set out in VR, August 20/27, 2016, vol 179, p 199, were approved. Rates will increase by approximately 2 per cent across all categories of membership. The meeting also approved an aggregate remuneration of £175,150 for directors, including Officers, for the period October 1, 2016, to September 30, 2017, with non-Officer Directors’ remuneration making up £39,650 of the total.

Election of Officers

Gudrun Ravetz was elected as the BVA President for 2016/17 and John Fishwick as junior vice-president. In accordance with the Articles of Association, Sean Wensley, the outgoing president, serves as senior vice-president for 2016/17.

The meeting approved the appointment of the auditors Buzzacott to serve until the next AGM.

The meeting also approved Affiliate status for the BVLGBT+ (British Veterinary Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and others) group. Mr Williams explained that the group, which had been formed in June 2015, now had some 460 members, including veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and students. It had agreed a constitution and elected a committee at its first AGM in April this year. The group’s focus was to improve the mental health and wellbeing of its members by creating a friendly community for LGBT+ people to engage with and by promoting equality and providing support. He reported that both the BVA Board and the BVA Council had already approved Affiliate status for the group.

The meeting approved the re-election of the BVA’s existing Honorary Associates and the election of new Honorary Associates approved by the BVA Council. It also approved the election of Angela Smith, MP, as an Honorary Member of the BVA. Mr Williams told the meeting that Ms Smith, currently an Honorary Associate member, had given a high level of support to the BVA and the veterinary profession.

Mr Williams placed on record the BVA’s thanks to all its Honorary Associates and Honorary Members for the ‘excellent support’ they had provided to the Association over the past year.

It was confirmed that the 2017 BVA AGM would be held in September at a date and venue to be confirmed.

Mr Williams thanked his fellow Board members for their hard work over the year. He particularly thanked John Blackwell, who was leaving the Board having served a three-year term while part of the BVA Officer team, and Bill Reilly, who retired from the Board in July having come to the end of his term.
New officers
The open session of the AGM was chaired by Sean Wensley, the outgoing President. The induction of the new Officers took place during the open session.

Speaking to the election of Gudrun Ravetz as President for 2016/17, Adi Nell described Mrs Ravetz as ‘a really accomplished person’. She brought energy and passion to her work, and believed that the profession should be as strong as it could possibly be. She was able to work with vets from all different areas of the profession, as well as with people from outside it. She listened to what people had to say, and had the ability to make people feel that they had been listened to.

Mrs Ravetz was a keen athlete, enjoying cycling, swimming and running, and had completed IronMan triathlons. She had also swum the length of Lake Windermere. However, she managed to balance and combine her work with her family and leisure time. She had taken her son, Leo, to a BVA parliamentary reception when he was just three weeks old. Leo, said Mr Nell, had had ‘an earlier start in the world of veterinary politics than most vets’.

Gudrun Ravetz: the veterinary profession is a family, all of whose members are equally important, whatever field they work in

‘Gudrun is going to make a great BVA President,’ he said, ‘I can’t think of anyone I’d be happier to endorse, or anyone who would do a better job’

The election of John Fishwick as junior vice-president was endorsed by David Harwood, who said that Mr Fishwick, head of the department of production and population health at the Royal Veterinary College, would bring his farm animal expertise to the BVA officer team, as well as his experience within veterinary education. Noting that Mr Fishwick, like two former BVA Presidents, was a past-president of the British Cattle Veterinary Association, Dr Harwood commented: ‘BCVA presidents make very good BVA presidents’!

Mr Wensley paid tribute to John Blackwell, the outgoing senior vice-president. Mr Blackwell had played a leading role in many BVA policy areas, particularly antimicrobial resistance, said Mr Wensley. He had also been a ‘massive presence’ in discussions about the BVA’s bovine TB policy, which he had handled sensitively and appropriately.

New President’s address
Addressing the meeting following her induction as President, Mrs Ravetz explained that she had chosen ‘The veterinary family’ as the theme for her presidential year. She believed strongly that family, ‘whatever shape that may take’, was vitally important. ‘It’s our rock,’ she said. Families provided the support and love that allowed their members to succeed, and also, importantly, to fail and then to pick themselves up.

‘As a profession, I think we are a veterinary family,’ she said. ‘We’re a very diverse family . . . the veterinary science degree gives us a passport to so many roles – whether that’s in practice, academia, health, food production, research.’ Each member of the veterinary family was as important as any other, she said, emphasising that ‘You’re a veterinary surgeon whatever it is that you do with your degree.’ Among the ambitions of the Vet Futures project was to celebrate the diversity of the profession and Mrs Ravetz said she was committed to doing this.

BVA was an organisation for ‘any and every vet’ within the veterinary professional family. ‘It is so much more than its tangible benefits. It’s a place for vets to discuss the important issues, it’s a hub of support and advice, and it’s a network to nurture new vets. It’s also a source of career guidance; it’s a home for employers and employees. It really is a veterinary family; it really is the voice of the veterinary profession.’ BVA allowed the profession to debate, agree and disagree on important issues and to search for a common view: ‘It’s OK to disagree, and it’s OK to have those thorny conversations,’ she said, ‘but we are a proud profession that can come together and make that common approach for the good of animal health and welfare and our own wellbeing.’

She saw the coming year, and the BVA’s priorities, through the eyes of a veterinary family. ‘We’re going to navigate it together,’ she said.

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