Friends of Imperial College

Annual General Meeting
2 December 2014 at 18.00
Meeting Room opposite Theatre 1
Sir Alexander Fleming Building, Imperial College

The Chairman apologised for the delay in issuing the papers for the AGM, due to an exceptional administrative workload created by the very full programme of events this year.

1. Attendees

William Arthurs, Azad Ayub, Alan Bergman, Viorica Bergman, William Blackburn, Eugene Blake, Howard Bromley, Selwyn Castleden, Jim Cunningham, Brian Dean, John Evans, Michael Gore, Alan Grant, Sean Hackett, Tony Hillyer, Anna Jalbrsan-Rave, Stewart Katz, Edward Lam, Rita Leek, John Liles, John Little, Karen Little, S H Merrylees, Paresh Parmar, Roderick Rhys Jones, Sandi Rhys Jones, Mohammadre Sohbati, Riita Soininen, Travis Spurling, Jaana Tama, Hilary Temple, George Wilkes, Frederica Wilkes (not a member, proxy for daughter), Katri Yates

2. Apologies for absence

The Chairman, Roderick Rhys Jones, reported apologies for absence from Richard Glencross.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last AGM, on Tuesday 12 November 2013., were approved.

4. Report by the Chairman

The Chairman reported that over the past year:

Membership rose 281 to 358, the number of events went up from 13 to 23, Member-only events rose from 6 to 11.

Ticket sales increased from 1537 to 1830 and the number of members attending increased from 625 to 833. Friends increased its donation to the College from £3,500 to £4,000.

Last year two new style of events linking arts with science were held, including Paul Gladstone Reid (which took admin and committee time) which resulted in a packed audience crammed into 170 Queensgate and some new faces. Friends also had a musical evening with Richard Dickins earlier in the year.

Due to the changes taking place at College, following Sir Keith O’Nions stepping down and the new structure, it was decided to pause the application for charitable status and also the new logo as it is vital that Friends is linked appropriately with the Imperial College brand.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman John Little recently met with the new President Alice Gast, who was enthusiastic about the concept of Friends and felt that Friends should be treated as on the same level as alumni.

Winton Capital Management has continued to support Friends and discussions have been held about increasing its donation and also on it’s financing the video recording of certain lectures.
5. **Report by the Hon Treasurer**

The Treasurer presented his report in a new structure, following the helpful suggestion of Hilary Temple. He thanked Deputy Chairman John Little for setting up the website and database, which can be used to coordinate booking system. He also thanked Stewart Katz for assistance on accounting systems to help improve administration.

**Income**

The impact of increasing the number of events from 13 to 23, has made a difference to income and membership. When there is a high cost event compared with a relatively low cost, they are charged appropriately. Income has increased from £14k to £24k.

Winton have been giving the same contribution for seven years, so it is seen as timely to investigate the possibility of an increase.

**Expenditure**

Overall expenditure has gone from £17k to £37k, with administration, catering etc related to a larger number of events representing a proportionately higher cost. There has been a shift to attract new members, by giving additional value to Member-only events. This promotional activity has been possible only because of a surplus built up in recent years.

The goal for the coming year is to increase income and reduce expenditure, whilst sustaining promotion. The choices are to:

*Increase income by:*
  - Increasing subscriptions
  - Increasing special event prices
  - Increasing regular event prices
  - Gaining additional income through sponsorship.

*Reduce expenditure by:*
  - Reducing recruitment activity – mailshots
  - Justifying additional events during year
  - Increasing voluntary contribution to admin
  - Identifying a lower cost alternative to the summer party.

A proposal was put for debate, based on these two options:

To raise subscriptions up to £30

To raise subscriptions up to £40

**Debate:**

The Chairman commented that Hilary Temple would remember that it was decided to halve the subscriptions some years ago, reducing it from £40 down to £20.

Travis Spurling commented that the sum of £40 is quite reasonable.

One member commented that the intention of Friends is an attractive one, and would have thought that a large corporation, such as Shell, would want to sponsor. He posed that question as to whether such conversations had taken place.

In response, the Chairman told members that Winton Capital Management wished to be sole sponsors, so other contributions had not been sought. This was seen as a sound argument on which to request an increased contribution for Winton. He also pointed out that Winton take a neutral approach to the Friends activities and do not make any sponsor demands on content or style.

He also pointed out that two people from Winton were present at the AGM.
Someone asked if there was information available about the frequency of attendance at events, commenting that sleeping members are more likely to leave.

Jaana Tarma commented that many organisations have tiered membership levels, at different rates.

Hilary Temple asked to what extent the events are self-financing. The response was that special events should be self-financing. Some margin is made on ordinary events. The summer party costs £2,500 and does not pay for itself. The hiring cost of 170 Queensgate is high, whereas no charge is made by the College for use of lecture theatres.

Alan Grant suggested increasing the ticket cost for the normal events £10 for members and £12 for non members, pointing out that the current rate of £5 is less than a bus ticket.

He also suggested that if big events break even because they are so popular we should increase subscriptions appropriately. However event fees should not be increased for groups such as students.

The Chairman informed Members that for a recent Friends musical event at 170, the hire cost plus the fee for the singer was paid for by charging £25 per head. The event attracted largely an arts crowd and was a sell out. A number of attendees commented that it was good value for money. Others joined Friends because membership was such a good deal.

It was suggested that consideration be given to putting events online at no charge

A show of hands vote on whether to increase ticket prices for events, resulted in 20 people being in favour and four against.

A show of hands vote on increasing the annual subscription to £40 resulted in 18 for and 1 against.

A show of hands vote on increasing the annual subscription to £30 resulted in nine for.

It was agreed that the committee would look at increasing subscriptions and also plus investigate attracting another sponsor.

The Treasurer confirmed that work would start again with regard to seeking charitable status.

6. New constitution

Following on from this discussion, John Little, Deputy Chairman, reported on response to the Friends’ application to become a charity.

Although the committee felt that it was appropriate to be very specific in its constitution and objectives, he reported that Charity Commission has requested that the organization should simplify it. He proposed that an extraordinary meeting should take place at one of the upcoming events, at which members will be able to debate and agree changes to the Constitution

7. Election of officers

Re-election

The Chairman advised that three Committee members were due for re-election, Rita Leek, John Sanderson and himself, and that all expressed a wish to continue. He acknowledged the particular contribution of Rita Leek, a stalwart and generous committee member in organising events, including the highly successful trips to CERN and of John Sanderson, always a convivial and valuable host at the events and dinners.

It was unanimously agreed for all three to be re-elected.
Election

The Chairman advised members that two Committee members had been co-opted during the year:

Alan Grant, a Cambridge physicist, had attended a number of events and also joined the first trip to CERN. He had put forward a number of ideas for lectures for this and next year’s programme. He has agreed to assist with identifying appropriate speakers and topics for next year’s programme.

John Evans, Physics, became a member of Friends as a result of the Imperial College Festival and has already become involved in working with Simon Foster’s Quantum Physics showcase.

8. Any other business

There was a suggestion that the on-line booking form might be revised to allow people to sign up for every event, rather than one by one. In response, John Little commented that difficulties with the computer software prevented this when the form was originally designed, but that he would revisit the matter and try to resolve it.

The Chairman thanked members for attending, commenting that it was the largest ever audience for the AGM. He thanked the Committee, many of whom work unseen, and expressed particular appreciation of the contribution of John Little and Bill Blackburn.

The meeting was followed by a lecture at 19.00 entitled The Solar Revolution, by Emeritus Professor Keith Barnham, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Physics.