

Guide to being a Branch Secretary

1. Role of the branch secretary

All RSB branch committees must consist of the following:

- a) the honorary officers: chair, vice-chair (optional), secretary and treasurer, nominated from the individual voting members of the branch
- b) up to 12 ordinary members, nominated from all grades of membership of the branch
- c) up to three additional members of the branch, co-opted by the committee

The main roles of the secretary are:

- Act as primary contact for the branch, internally and externally
- Deal with enquiries from regional members either directly or through the HO regional coordinator
- Inform RSB HO of any changes in branch committee membership
- Arrange committee meetings and the AGM
- Notify committee members and confirm attendance
- Produce Minutes and Notice of Actions at committee meetings

2. Acting as primary contact

Each branch has an RSB email address e.g. london@rsb.org.uk which is set up to redirect to the supplied email address of the secretary. Additional committee members can also be added to this redirect list, by asking the events and regions team at regions@rsb.org.uk

When HO has relevant information to send to branches (such as *The Biologist* deadlines or external regional activities) this will be sent to the branch email address, to be circulated by the secretary to committee members.

The branch email address is used on the branch landing page to allow members to send any regional enquiries to. This branch email address will also be used as a point of contact for branch events, where any enquires from members may come to.

3. Committee membership

Branch secretaries should update the events and regions team to any committee changes by emailing regions@rsb.org.uk

HO can then update relevant records including the branch landing page.

4. Committee meetings and AGM

Each branch must carry out one AGM per financial year. The secretary's duties for the AGM are as follows:

- Send HO a proposed agenda six weeks before the AGM, to be circulated to branch members so they can submit AOB
- Take minutes during the AGM
- Send minutes to HO after AGM to ensure events and regions team are aware of upcoming branch activities.

The secretary is responsible for organising the date and venue of branch committee meetings. It is recommended to have a minimum of four meetings a year, which may also include virtual meetings.

The date can be agreed at the end of the previous meeting or through a doodle poll. The secretary should send these dates to HO, to allow the relevant events officer to attend.

The secretary should take minutes during committee meetings, to be circulated to committee members and HO after the meeting.

5. Minutes

The secretary should minute all committee meetings and the branch AGM. Examples of what minutes should include are:

- The date, time and location of meeting
- The names of the participants and any apologies
- Agenda items
- Approval of previous meeting minutes
- The main points
- Decisions made by the participants
- Calendar or due dates
- Actions or tasks
- Future decisions
- Next meeting date

6. Support for the secretary

First point of contact for any queries are the events officers, who you can contact at regions@rsb.org.uk

The branches are also supported through the Royal Society of Biology Council, who act as the Trustees of the Society and consist of three Honorary Officers: President, Secretary and Treasurer. Four members are elected from the College of Individual Members and four are elected from the College of Organisational Members. Another four members can be appointed by Council to ensure coverage of the breadth of the life sciences based on skills gap amongst Council.

The chair of the College of Individual Members, Nigel Brown CBIol FRSB, supports the regional branches and chairs the Branches Working Group.

7. Testimonial of a branch secretary



The life sciences have been a strong driving force throughout my early years and during my education. I was fortunate to study applied biology at University and go onto postgraduate education in pharmacology during my seven years with the Medical Research Council. I then spent 35 years in the pharmaceutical industry working in research and development. I became a member of the Institute of Biology in 1980 and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology in 2002.

When I retired from full time employment I wanted to maintain contacts with the wider subject matter that biology has to offer. So what better way to do this than join a group of likeminded colleagues who reside in the geographical area represented by the Thames Valley branch. The last ten years have been a most enjoyable time where I have been able to engage in so many different activities in biology. It has allowed me to

capitalise on the working and learning skills of a lifetime and the reward has been to give something back in the field of science that has motivated me throughout my life.

The role of branch secretary is diverse and primarily focusses on organising events and branch meetings. This year we are trialling combining the roles of secretary and

treasurer to establish greater efficiency in arranging venues and engaging guest speakers. The time commitment is variable but as a branch committee we meet every six weeks and the secretarial role is to agree an agenda, arrange a meeting venue and record the minutes and actions of our meetings.

It takes a maximum of eight hours a month and in no way impinges upon my otherwise busy life and holiday plans. I have always been a pragmatist, so making things happen is rewarding and allows me to use project management and planning skills acquired during my professional life. My secretarial/treasurer role also provides great opportunities to work closely with colleagues in Charles Darwin House and attend meetings when appropriate to ensure the spokes in the wheels of branch membership engage with the aims and objects at the hub of our great society. In all a very enjoyable, fulfilling and satisfying role in helping to bring life to the life sciences