

Last Word

Charles Winstanley, Chair, Board of Trustees

In last year's review, I began by saying that I thought the last year had been one of the most extraordinary in our lifetimes. I did not know then, as no one knew, that COVID-19 would continue to make extraordinary changes to our professional and private lives for the best part of another 12 months.

I think many of us are just beginning to feel a little optimistic that the worst of the pandemic is hopefully behind us, and we are slowly able to get back to more normal ways of living and working. But, perhaps like everyone else, I remain cautious about what the future holds.

I am pleased that in this vein, this year's Academy Policy Day will be held in person. I for one am looking forward to renewing old acquaintances face to face without the inevitable 'you're on mute!' or the split-second time delay caused by bandwidth issues as other family members seek to 'connect with the outside world'.

I know the Academy, with Helen Stokes-Lampard's excellent leadership of the Council, has continued to be at the heart of decision-making as Government tries to chart a course through the challenges of the pandemic. I was pleased the Academy spoke out in July to warn that Covid-19 wasn't over. It is a credit, I think, to the convening power of the Academy and to all its members that medical royal colleges now enjoy such a high profile and influence on public life.

I know Helen is supported by a good team, and I must pay particular tribute to Alastair Henderson who continues to work tirelessly to support Helen. I should also take this opportunity to say how pleased the Board of Trustees are that Helen's predecessor, Professor Carrie MacEwen is now Professor Dame Carrie MacEwen. It was a well-deserved honour for her.

I should say thank you to colleagues who have left, to Ravi Mahajan, who has provided wise counsel for the last three years and thanks must also go to Alan Boyd, who will be demitting in November and who has acted as Independent Clinician Trustee for three years and was a board member before that. His input into the Academy Review Group, which is looking at a three-year strategy for the organisation is very welcome. Alan will be succeeded in his role by Anne de Bono who has just completed her term as Trustee and we are grateful to her for taking on this role as 'the keeper of the corporate memory'. I should also say a warm hello to Mike Osborn and Bernie Chang who have recently been elected to the Board. Their advice and insight will be most welcome as the Academy continues to look for opportunities to build.

This review will be my last as Board Chair, as I formally step down after two terms of office in March next year and we are formally beginning the process of recruiting my successor. I owe a debt of thanks, of course, to my colleagues on the Board who have all been wonderfully supportive and appropriately challenging over the last twelve months. I think we have come a very long way in ensuring that the Academy continues to be well-run, well-managed and enjoys good governance. It is thanks also to them and to the sterling efforts of the Chair of Council and the staff team, that the Academy now has a solid pipeline of well-funded work on the horizon which means it is less reliant on member subscriptions and should secure its future for many years to come. And finally, I must also thank Council, for its continued wise counsel and support of the Academy. We have come a long way over the last six years and that is thanks, in no small measure, to the people on this body.