

2024

RCVS

Council election

**Information pack for
prospective candidates**





Contents

4	Introduction from the Registrar	12	Meet RCVS Council member: Dr Louise Allum MRCVS
5	The role of the RCVS	13	Guidance for prospective candidates
7	The role of Council members	17	RCVS Council Election 2024: Nomination form
9	Meet RCVS Council member: Dr Tshidi Gardiner MRCVS	18	RCVS Council Election 2024: Candidate Information Form
10	What else do I need to know about being on Council?		

Introduction from the Registrar

Thank you for your interest in standing to become a candidate for RCVS Council, the governing body for the College responsible for making major decisions on matters relating to the registration, professional regulation and education of veterinary surgeons in the UK.

As a self-regulating profession, elected veterinary surgeons make up a majority of RCVS Council members, joining appointed veterinary nurse members, appointed lay members and Vet Schools Council-appointed members in the mosaic of decision-makers on RCVS Council.

Every year we make significant efforts to ensure the veterinary profession has its say as part of the democratic process of the RCVS Council election, including making sure that the whole of the profession has the opportunity to find out about who is standing for Council, and vote accordingly.

In this information pack you will find out more about the candidate nomination and election processes, the role of RCVS Council and its members, and the committee structure. On the latter, much of the work on the policies that come to Council for decision is done by our standing committees and subcommittees, as well as various ad hoc working groups set up to look at particular issues in greater detail.

As well as serving on the main Council, RCVS Council members also get an opportunity to serve on these other bodies, particularly ones that align with their strengths and interests, and we often hear back from members of Council that this is the best part of the role.

As well as all the information you need about RCVS Council itself, at the end of this pack you will find your candidate nomination and candidate information forms, for you and your supporters to complete.

I do hope you find this useful but if you have any further questions about your candidacy, serving on Council or completing the forms, please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, on d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Eleanor Ferguson
Registrar and Returning Officer





The role of the RCVS

1. Thank you for your interest in standing to become a candidate for RCVS Council, the governing body for the College responsible for making major decisions on matters relating to the registration, professional regulation and education of veterinary surgeons in the UK.
2. The role of the RCVS is to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, in order to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare.
3. It is not the role of the RCVS to represent members of the profession individually or collectively, that is for other bodies. However, the RCVS does have a role in promoting high standards in the profession, particularly in relation to education and professional conduct.
4. The RCVS aims to ensure that it is respected both by the public and the profession as a credible and effective organisation. It must be seen to be objectively fair and open in the way it works. It should not be perceived by the public as run by the profession, for the profession.
Nor should it be seen by the profession as biased in favour of the public or unduly influenced by consumer or media criticism. In effect, the RCVS manages the interface between the profession and the public.
5. The RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession. It is the only remaining Royal College that is also a regulator, which puts it in a unique position in terms of not only setting and

upholding standards, but also being able continually to advance them, for the benefit of animal health and welfare, the public and the profession. We:

- a. undertake statutory responsibilities as set out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 – to maintain a Register, and to regulate veterinary education and professional conduct;
- b. exercise powers under the Royal Charter to award Fellowships, Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others. We also run the voluntary Practice Standards Scheme and regulate veterinary nurses;
- c. support RCVS Knowledge, our charity partner: established to promote and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in particular evidence-based veterinary medicine.

6. Currently, in order to carry out its statutory duties, a Council of 24 members governs the RCVS and meets between six and eight times a year.

The breakdown of members is as follows:

- a. 13 members: elected to Council by the profession itself;
- b. three members: appointed by the Veterinary Schools Council to collectively represent the eight UK veterinary schools;
- c. two members: appointed by the Veterinary Nurses Council;
- d. six members: appointed lay persons.

7. Three or four members of Council (depending on the rotation) retire each year, and elections are held to fill those elected positions.

8. Under the governance arrangements for RCVS Council, the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) for the United Kingdom will be entitled to attend meetings of Council as an Observer and will receive the Council papers. The CVO will not, however, be a voting member of the Council.

9. Under current governance arrangements, Council is supported by an Officer Team (President, two Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Chief Executive, and Registrar), as well as various committees, although all major policy decisions are reserved for RCVS Council.

10. The President, two Vice-Presidents and Treasurer are elected by Council from within its number, as well as the chairs of the Advancement of the Professions, Education, and Standards Committees.

Further information is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us





The role of Council members

1. Council members undertake the governance of the College, in accordance with the powers and obligations set out in the Charter and the Act.
2. Council meetings usually take place between six and eight times a year, at which Council members:
 - a. make Bye-Laws under the Charter and approve draft regulations for submission to the Privy Council, to be made under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966;
 - b. agree the Strategic Plan; the five-year financial plan; and the budget for the forthcoming year, including fees to be levied;
 - c. ensure that income and expenditure are properly accounted for, investments prudently made and audited accounts presented to the membership in the Annual Report and at the AGM;
 - d. receive reports from committees;
 - e. elect the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer;
 - f. appoint the CEO & Secretary, and Registrar, and any Assistant Registrars.
3. Council members are also required to sit on working parties, boards and committees (which can act with delegated authority on certain matters and make recommendations to Council on the more important and strategic issues).

NB the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees are set up by statute and have autonomous powers. No Council member may sit on either of these committees.

4. Council members may be asked to represent the College on outside organisations and at meetings, or to speak to the media on behalf of the College, as requested or agreed with one of the Officers.
5. All Council members are required to act in accordance with the public service principles set out in the Nolan Committee's First Report on Standards in Public Life, which include selflessness (acting solely in the public interest); integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and, leadership.
6. Council members are required to maintain up-to-date declarations of interests for publication on the website and to provide the College with biographical information and photographs for publication on the website and elsewhere.
7. Council members will be asked to participate in induction and training sessions.

For further details, please download the [Code of Conduct for Council and Committee Members](#) and [RCVS Policy for Managing Conflicts of Interest](#).

NB Council Members are not elected or appointed to represent any constituency and all have a responsibility equivalent to trustees for the governance of the College.



How Council members work

In order to enable the RCVS to fulfil its vision, and to discharge its functions under its Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, RCVS Council members are required to:

- a. Abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life;
- b. Work in the best interests of the public, and of animal health and welfare and public health;
- c. Respectfully listen to the voices of the professions, the public and other stakeholders, and reflect them in discussions where appropriate, ensuring they are put into context;
- d. Neither be answerable to, nor represent, any group of individuals;
- e. Support the College's vision and work towards the success of the College and its functions;
- f. Live the College's values;
- g. Act at all times in a constructive, supportive and compassionate manner;
- h. Exercise a duty of care to the staff employed by the College, working through the CEO and Registrar;
- i. Recognise the importance of a collegiate atmosphere where robust discussion is welcomed in the formation of policy and multiple points of view are listened to and respected;
- j. Respect and support the decisions made by Council when communicating externally;
- k. Communicate College activities and positions to relevant stakeholders;
- l. Abide by the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members.

Collective responsibility

Council members are collectively responsible for the decisions, even if they have voted against, abstained from voting or were absent when the decision was made, and are expected to respect and support the collective decision, when communicating externally.

Confidentiality

Council members must not disclose information that has been shared with them but designated by the RCVS as private or confidential. If members are in any way unsure if they can disclose information, then they should in the first instance seek advice from the President. If members disagree with a classification of private or confidential then members should raise with the relevant Committee Chair / President.



Meet RCVS Council member

Dr Tshidi Gardiner MRCVS

RCVS Treasurer, first elected to RCVS Council in 2021

Why did you decide to stand for Council?

I wanted to understand the conversations that were being had surrounding well-being, diversity, and inclusion within the RCVS Council. Acknowledging my limited understanding of its operations, my objective was to actively participate in decision-making, specifically addressing the impact of mental health challenges on the overall well-being of the veterinary profession. I aimed to position myself strategically to improve diversity and inclusion and contribute meaningfully to discussions that positively influence the profession as a whole.

What have you enjoyed most about being a Council member?

I've found immense joy in engaging with diverse perspectives from—vets, nurses, lay members, and College staff—across various backgrounds.

Delving into challenging discussions and hearing a range of opinions has been particularly rewarding. Additionally, the pleasure of traveling to different vet schools for meetings and experiencing warm welcomes has been a highlight, enhancing my overall enjoyment of the Council experience.

What advice would you give to someone looking to become a member of Council?

As a Council member, you operate akin to a board member, being representative of the wider veterinary profession. Your responsibilities include contributing to the regulation of the profession without advocating for any specific group whilst on the Council. The role is both challenging and fulfilling, requiring a commitment of time for effective execution.



What else do I need to know about being on Council?

1. The term of an elected member is four years. Most serve a full term but, on occasion, some may retire early.

There is a maximum limit of three consecutive terms on Council, with a mandatory two-year break required before a person may stand again.

Under the **Code of Conduct for Council and Committee Members** a mechanism is in place so that Council members may be investigated and potentially removed for issues relating to poor conduct/behaviour.

2. How much time a Council member spends on Council business during their term depends on the committees and working parties on which they are asked to sit. Most RCVS committees generally sit four times a year, though some may meet more frequently depending on the nature and urgency of the business they are to discuss.

RCVS Council meets more frequently (usually six, but up to eight, times per year) allowing it to make decisions in a more timely fashion.

You may also be asked to join a working party on a particular issue, and there may be other College events and activities that you can attend on a voluntary basis.

On average, therefore, successful candidates might expect to spend around 15 to 18 days a year on Council business in terms of formal meetings during their first year on Council. Additional time will be required to keep on top of emails, read paperwork etc.

As your Council career develops, you may be required to take a more active role meaning that you may be expected to spend more than the average days a year on Council business, for example, if you become a Committee Chair or member of the Officer Team.

3. The RCVS is currently in a transition period between temporary office space and its new headquarters, so we cannot guarantee at present where future meetings of RCVS Council will take place, although we are aiming to hold around 50% of these meetings virtually. However, more information about where the RCVS will be holding its committee and Council meetings will be published in due course.
4. In 2024, Council meetings are scheduled in January, March, June, July (RCVS Day), September and November. Most committee meetings are four times per year. Subcommittees and working parties meet on a more ad hoc basis.
5. The RCVS tries its utmost to be a family-friendly environment, both for staff and Council members. Council and Committee meetings are planned at least a year in advance, although additional meetings may be added at shorter notice. Generally, there are fewer meetings during the holiday periods because we follow an academic calendar.
6. Council members are not paid directly for the work they do. However, we do have a Financial Loss Allowance which is intended to compensate for lost earnings as a result of attending to RCVS business. For Council and committee members attending in-person meetings, the claim rate takes into consideration commuting time where meetings are held in-person. Financial Loss Allowance rates are reviewed annually and updated on Royal College Day - our Annual General Meeting - every July.

Additional reading/administration time can be claimed at the end of the College year if the meetings had been attended:

RCVS Council – two days

RCVS Council committee members – one day

Chairs of RCVS Council committees – two days

7. Reasonable expenses are covered for Council and committee work, including an overnight stay if that is required.





Meet RCVS Council member

Dr Louise Allum MRCVS

Chair of the Public Advisory Group, first elected to RCVS Council in 2021

Why did you decide to stand for Council?

It was something on my 'to do' list when I was retired and getting a bit bored at home. But a friend who was on Council at the time tapped me on the shoulder and said that I should consider it now. With a full time job, two other volunteer roles and three kids, I did wonder if this was the right time. However, I am glad I went for it and am super grateful that people made the time to vote for me. It has been something that is achievable with a full-time job with a little bit of planning.

What have you enjoyed most about being a Council member?

Meeting different vets, vet nurses and other professionals from varied backgrounds and finding out about aspects of the profession I would never have seen in my day job. Each member of Council serves on several different committees which are selected for you to start with. From my time spent on the Standards Committee I have been involved with topics such as exporting bees to the huge challenge of the 'under care' guidance. I have been involved in further committees this year such as Mind Matters and have heard about the amazing work this group is doing to support the profession. I have also started chairing my first committee

via the brand new Public Advisory Group.

What advice would you give to someone looking to become a member of Council?

Don't wait until the perfect time. If you want to have a voice in this profession and want to get involved why not do it now? I would say don't apply if you have an issue/soapbox that you want to promote. You need to have an enquiring mind and be able to deal with a whole range of issues and not be focussed on one area.



Guidance for prospective candidates

Election Scheme

1. The election of members to RCVS Council is conducted in accordance with the Election Scheme made by the Privy Council under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (however, please see details below of governance arrangements in paragraphs 4-5).

A copy of the Scheme may be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/rcvs-council-election-scheme.

2. Every candidate for election to the Council must be a member of the RCVS including if they are a member who resides in the Republic of Ireland and to whom the

provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988 do not pertain or who has retained their right to vote under that Order.

Timetable

3. The election is run on behalf of the RCVS by Civica Election Services (CES), which undertakes the ballot and election administration for a number of professional bodies and trade unions.

4. You are welcome to contact the Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson (e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk), the CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) or the President, Dr Sue Paterson (president@rcvs.org.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or RCVS Council members. RCVS Council will also be holding a meeting on Thursday, 18 January 2024, prior to the closure date for Council candidates. Prospective candidates are welcome to attend the Council meeting as an observer. Please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, at d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk if you wish to attend.
5. **The timetable* for the 2024 election is:**
Closing date for submission of nominations
 5pm, Wednesday, 31 January 2024
Posting of voting papers to members (approx.)
 Week commencing Monday, 11 March 2024
Closing date for receiving votes
 5pm, Friday, 26 April 2024
Candidates informed of results
 Monday, 29 April 2024
New Council Members join Council
 Friday, 5 July 2024 (RCVS AGM)
6. As soon as possible following the date when Civica Election Services sends the results to the RCVS, the Executive Office will contact all candidates individually to pass on the results; candidates are therefore asked to let the office know where and how they can best be contacted on that day. Once all the candidates have been told the results they will be published.
8. The two proposers must be Members of the RCVS and include their **registered** address in the nomination form. Before filling in the nomination form, we recommend contacting our Registration Department on **020 7202 0707** to double check your registered address as this may be different from your correspondence or practice address. Proposers may not be members of RCVS Council, but **must be** members of the RCVS, including those members who reside in the Republic of Ireland and to whom the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988 do not pertain or who has retained their right to vote under that Order.
9. No proposer may nominate more than one candidate.
10. The nomination form may be accompanied by:
 - a. the **Candidate Information Form**** containing:
 - i. full name, title and qualifications;
 - ii. contact details, including any or all of: postal address, telephone number(s), email address, campaign website (for example, Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) account). **NB** Only the address listed in the RCVS Register will be included on the secure voting website; an alternative contact address may be included on the Candidate Information Form; and,
 - iii. Candidate biography and statement for publication on the secure voting website (see 'Candidate biography and statement' paragraph).
 - b. a recent colour photograph in digital format (at highest resolution possible, i.e. minimum of 300dpi at 100%).

Documentation

7. Those wishing to stand for election should return their completed **Nomination Form, by email**, to Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, at d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk, ensuring that it reaches the RCVS by the date/time stated above. Please note that we require electronic signatures from candidates and their two proposers upon submission of the form. These signatures can either be added to the nomination form itself or attached as electronic picture files (preferably Jpegs) to an email when you submit your nomination form. Further instructions on electronic signatures can be found in the FAQs for candidates.

NB forms received after the closing date/time will not be accepted.
11. Forms and photographs must be submitted in electronic format and via email to Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, at d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk
12. All statements and photographs supplied will be published on the RCVS website prior to the start of the election period. We may also run our '*Quiz the candidates*' initiative (see paragraph 24) to allow members of the profession to submit questions to candidates in advance. Candidate statements and photographs will also be included on the secure voting website so that voters can read them before casting their votes. Photographs and statements may also be made available for publication in the veterinary press.
13. All nominations will be acknowledged, and the RCVS will confirm that the names and addresses of the candidates and proposers conform to those in the **RCVS Register**.

*Guideline dates subject to change, with the exception of closing date for submissions, which will always be 31 January each year.

**Please note that this will be used as a web profile and all information will be publicly available on the RCVS website.

Candidate biography and statement

14. The biography should be no more than 200 words and the statement no more than 300 words (excluding name, qualifications and contact details). These will be published on both the RCVS website and the secure voting website.
15. The biography should contain information about a candidate's education and training, previous and current employment, relevant achievements, membership of other organisations, interests and hobbies etc., but it should not contain any testimonials. Candidates should also declare any relevant conflicts of interest in this paragraph.
16. The statement is an opportunity for candidates to promote their suitability to serve on RCVS Council and set out what they could bring to the Council and the activities of the RCVS. Candidates may wish to address current issues facing the RCVS and the veterinary profession generally, and/or those that might arise in the future. Candidates who are previous or existing Council Members may also, or instead, wish to highlight their RCVS-related activities and contributions to the work of the Council and its committees.
17. We recommend that the candidate statement should attempt to answer the following three questions:
 - Why are you standing for Council?*
 - What can you bring to Council in terms of your insights and skillsets?*
 - What relevant experience do you have?*
18. It is strongly recommended that candidates familiarise themselves with the role and function of the RCVS and that of Council Members so their statements can be as relevant as possible.
19. Candidate statements need to be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Candidates should therefore ensure that their election statements do not contain claims that are inconsistent with the legal position of the RCVS and should be aware that the Election Scheme gives the Registrar, as the Returning Officer, power to delete any material that s/he considers to be defamatory, or the publication of which would be unlawful or factually misleading.
20. Hyperlinks or web addresses are **not permitted** in either the candidate biography or candidate statement. Any such details included in either paragraph will be removed. A single web address or hyperlink to a campaign website, such as a Facebook, LinkedIn or X (formerly Twitter) account, is permitted in the contact details.
21. Candidates who are currently involved in the investigation of a complaint against them which has been, or might be, referred to the Disciplinary Committee, or the RCVS Conduct Panel (in the case of complaints made against

a current Council or committee member under the Council Code of Conduct), or who are otherwise engaged in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession, are particularly asked to consider whether standing for election might be inappropriate and represent a conflict of interest until the matter is resolved.

22. Candidates wishing to submit statements should ensure they are received by the RCVS by **5pm on 31 January 2024**. No late submissions will be accepted and those exceeding the word count **will not** be included unless adjustments can be made before the closing date.

Canvassing

23. Candidates may canvass members either orally or in writing. The RCVS will supply a single set of names and postal addresses of all members in electronic format to any candidate upon request – please note, however, this information will not be available before the names of the members standing have been announced. It is expected that any communications to members will be legal, decent, honest, and truthful, and that election expenses will be kept to a reasonable level.
24. In recent years we have organised '**Quiz the Candidates**', which gives members of the profession the opportunity to pose a question to the candidates directly. We have then asked all candidates to produce written answers to two questions of their choice. It is anticipated this may be repeated in 2024. Whilst it is not compulsory to participate in '**Quiz the Candidates**', we consider that it enables candidates to make their points in a way that will engage a broader range of voters than the candidate biographies and statements alone.





RCVS Council Election 2024 Nomination form

page 1 of 1

RCVS Council Election Scheme 1967 (Paragraph 5)

Please type of print in BLOCK CAPITALS

We hereby nominate (name in full)

of (registered address)

as a candidate for election to the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Proposer details

Name, registered address (the address as recorded in the RCVS Register of Members) and signature of two proposers

Proposer 1 (name in full)

Proposer 2 (name in full)

of (registered address)

of (registered address)

Signed

Signed

I hereby declare that I am the person nominated on this form, that I consent and am eligible to be so nominated and that I will accept office if I am duly elected.

I confirm that I will comply with codes of practice or guidance issued by Council governing the conduct of Council members and that I am prepared to serve on any RCVS Committee to which I may be appointed.

I confirm that I have not engaged in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.

Signed

Dated

RCVS Council Election 2024 Candidate Information Form

Candidate information (Please note this information will be publicly available)

Title **Forename** **Surname**

Qualifications

Address

Landline **Mobile**

Email

Website

Proposer 1 **Proposer 2**

RCVS Council Election 2024 Candidate Information Form

page 2 of 2

Candidate biography and statement (Please note, hyperlinks and web addresses are not permitted in the biography or statement, testimonials are not accepted in the biography)

Candidate biography (up to 200 words maximum)

Candidate statement (not more than 300 words – please refer to guidance notes)

**Royal College of
Veterinary Surgeons**
The Cursitor
38 Chancery Lane
London WC2A 1EN

**www.rcvs.org.uk
info@rcvs.org.uk**