MINUTES

Extraordinary Council Meeting (August 2026)

An extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Royal Astronomical Society was held from 14:00 to 16:00 on Thursday 27th August 2026 at the Royal Astronomical Society, Burlington House, and online via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

- Prof. David Alexander, Councillor (A); online
- Dr Chrysa Avdellidou, Councillor (G); online
- Prof. Paul Crowther, Vice President (A); online
- Mrs Karen Anne Devoil, Councillor (G); online
- Prof. Stephen Eales, Councillor (A); online
- Dr Iain Hannah, Councillor (G); online
- Dr Olivia Keenan, Councillor (A); online
- Prof. Mark Lester, Senior Secretary (G); online
- Dr Andy Nowacki, Vice President (G); online
- Dr Arvind Parmar, Treasurer (A/G); online
- Dr Mike Peel, Councillor (A); online
- Prof. Jim Wild, President (G); online
- Dr Andrew Young, Councillor (A); online

In attendance:

- Mr Connor Brown (M&E Consultant, Ritchie + Daffin); online
- Mrs Sue Cleverdon (Facilities and Buildings Consultant); Burlington House
- Mr Mark Kendernay (Architect, Gibson Thornley); online
- Ms Jan Morton (Incoming Finance Director); Burlington House
- Ms Sian Prosser (Library and Archive); Burlington House
- Mr Ian Russell (Executive Director); Burlington House
- Ms Elizabeth Smith (Heritage Architect, Purcell); online
- Mr Matt Thornley (Architect, Gibson Thornley); online
- Mr Ben Wright (PA) Burlington House

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Prof. Jorick Vink, Prof. Steve Miller, Prof. James Hammond, Dr Emma Woodfield, Prof. Andrew Curtis, Dr Cyrielle Opitom, Prof. Peter Gallagher, Prof. Matthew Griffin

2 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of interest were noted.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 23 July 2026, and matters arising

This item was deferred until the scheduled October Council.

Strategic Items

4 Introduction

Mr Russell explained the meeting had been called because the total cost of the works to the building had been established for the first time.

He noted that the project had now reached a point where it made sense to slow down and consider the options.

Mrs Cleverdon introduced the project team present. Mr Matt Thornley, Mr Connor Brown, and Ms Liz Smith.

She reported that, since the last update to Council at the National Astronomy Meeting, the quantity surveyor (QS) had costed every element of the brief.

Mrs Cleverdon outlined the proposed arrangement of the building, noting that the necessary repair works need not be addressed all at once and could be phased, though some would need to be undertaken within the next five years.

Mrs Cleverdon concluded that Council now had a sound basis on which to plan and set priorities, with the design team ready to support the next stage. Matters to consider would include whether the works would need to be phased in order to manage the financial commitments, if so how to phase the work into logical packages, how to make best use of budget, contractor's time and scaffolding, whether any elements of the brief might be omitted, and whether external funding might be sought. She then handed over to Mr Thornley to take Council through the design team's work.

5 Refurbishment of Burlington House – presentation on options and costings.

Mr Thornley took Council through the design team's proposals.

The President observed that the lifetime of a refurbishment of this kind was around twenty-five years. Mr Thornley confirmed this, adding that a cyclical maintenance strategy should be implemented to keep the systems in good repair.

Mr Russell noted that the external fabric of the building falls under the shared head lease with the other courtyard Societies, while the internal works are the Society's own responsibility, and that meaningful maintenance of the building had now begun, led by Mrs Cleverdon and the Society's Facilities Manager.

6 Questions and Discussions with the project team

Council discussed the design team's proposals, including the sequencing of the works, the protection of the library and archive collections, and the implications for use of the building during the works. Council agreed that it should consider the options in full before giving the design team clear direction, and that priorities should reflect the Society's values, particularly on accessibility and sustainability.

ACTION: The design team to prepare an initial proposed ordering of the works, with options for

consideration by the steering committee and Council.

The Chair thanked the design team, who then left the meeting.

7 Discussion – Closed Session

Council discussed the scale of the proposed works and how they might be prioritised and funded, alongside the Society's other charitable activities. Council agreed that a clearer picture of the Society's financial position was needed before decisions could be taken, and discussed a range of funding options, including external fundraising. The future use of the Council Room was discussed, and the question was held over for the strategic away day.

Council agreed that the design team should develop a fuller, costed proposal for the works, broken down into stages.

ACTION: Prof. Wild, Dr Parmar and Mr Russell to bring a fuller picture of the Society's financial position to a future meeting of Council.

ACTION: The design team to develop the proposed packaging of the works into costed stages.

8 AOB

No additional business was recorded for this meeting.

9 Date of next meeting

The next Council meeting will be held on the 9th October in Burlington House and online.

To note: The Strategy Away Day will be held on the 8-9th September on the outskirts of Stratford.

The Chair thanked attendees and brought the meeting to a close.