

# RICS AGM 2024: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

At this year's Annual General Meeting, RICS undertook to answer all questions submitted and publish answers on our website. We have included all questions submitted to us in advance, all questions asked during the AGM and all questions submitted to the AGM inbox.

We have not published the names of those who asked questions and removed any identifying details from questions. We have summarised and/or joined together similar questions in order to avoid duplication.

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## Regulation and public interest

**Q:** A Disciplinary Panel decision earlier this year highlighted a lack of rigorous and effective oversight by the RICS on registered firms and ensuring PII was in place, which has damaged public trust in RICS Registered Firm status. Without going into details of the specific case, can the RICS advise on the steps it proposes to take to ensure the chances of this happening again are reduced, and what immediate steps could be taken ahead of a future review.

**A:** There have absolutely been lessons learned, and we have started to implement some of the learnings with the following changes already made:

- initiating additional audits and checks of Regulated Firms' PII policies and schedules
- establishing a Profession Support & Assurance Regulated Firms team, undertaking reviews of Regulated Firms and supporting on all aspects of firm compliance
- launching free regulatory workshops to support Regulated Firms

In respect of the Disciplinary Panel decision, the matter is currently under appeal so we cannot comment further just yet. Once this process concludes, we are planning to communicate any further learnings and possible changes to processes that may result from the case.

On PII specifically, we are continuing to engage with insurers to ensure they comply with the requirement to notify RICS where a Regulated Firm's PII policy is cancelled. Consideration of requiring Regulated Firms to make payments for annual PII premiums upfront would create financial hardships on smaller firms and is not a proportionate response to a single extraordinary incident of which we are aware.

**Q: A Disciplinary Panel Decision earlier this year raised serious concerns regarding the lack of detailed checks of membership applications, in particular where issues were known yet they received fellowship. Without going into details of the specific case, can RICS advise on the steps it proposes to take to ensure the chances of this happening again are reduced, and what immediate steps could be taken ahead of a future review**

**A:** We are always seeking to improve at RICS, and lessons have been learned from this case.

It is, however, important to note that the vast majority of RICS members are highly professional, and the number who are subject to disciplinary proceedings is very small. We constantly scrutinise our systems, processes and framework to ensure that we can strengthen trust in the profession alongside meeting the principles of good regulation. Some areas we are already working on include:

1. a comprehensive review of RICS' entry and assessment processes ([findings published earlier in June](#)) in relation to all grades of RICS membership
2. commissioning external expertise to ensure our control framework is fit for purpose
3. introducing new checks into the assessment process
4. providing new training for assessors and counsellors
5. ensuring that only those with five or more years of post-qualification experience can apply for Fellowship, regardless of any other support they may receive

Finally, the RICS Entry and Assessment Review Final Report recommended that we should review the current FRICS assessment and introduce a new, robust assessment with clear criteria for admission. The recommendations are now out for consultation (ends on 28 August) and we encourage all members to have their say on the recommendations which will shape the future of RICS' assessment process.

The case in question is currently subject to appeal, but we will share further information and insight when appropriate.

**Q:** *(Added for context: on the day of the AGM, an individual staged a protest outside RICS HQ in London).* There is a man outside who was let down by a Chartered surveyor, and that surveyor has been expelled from the institution. Why can't RICS pay him the money he's having to spend? I'd like to see a surcharge; even £1 per member would cover him and anybody else who was let down this way.

**A:** Anyone who spoke to the protestor couldn't fail to be moved by his story and circumstances, and he has our utmost sympathy. On the day, SRB Chair Nigel Clarke spoke with the affected consumer, and RICS representatives ensured his comfort and access to facilities while he exercised his right to protest.

As with other UK regulators, we are not in the position to provide direct financial compensation for misconduct, but we do [signpost consumers to further support mechanisms](#). These include Regulated Firms PII, Complaints Handling Procedures, ADR mechanisms, as well as RICS' Client Money Protection Scheme and Ombudsman Awards Insurance Policies.

Importantly, we will learn from this case, to continue improving our processes and work with the [pilot Consumer Working Group](#) to review the range of consumer protection.

This particular case is currently subject to appeal, so we cannot comment on further details at this stage, but we will share further information and insight when appropriate.

**Q:** *(Added for context: on the day of the AGM, an individual staged a protest outside RICS HQ in London).* The individual protesting outside has said he has been restricted in communicating with the RICS on a regulatory level. Can you assure me that it isn't the case?

**A:** We can absolutely assure members that the SRB team and responsible executives have communicated extensively with this individual and others involved in the case.

As the case in question is still under appeal, we are not able to comment on the specific circumstances directly. However, we can assure members that significant care has been taken to

follow the correct procedure throughout. RICS has provided detailed responses, carefully explained our regulatory remit and signposted the affected individuals to other mechanisms of support and potential action.

**Q: RICS has made clear it passionately believes in robust self-regulation in the public interest, albeit has never set out the case why. Will RICS initiate comprehensive engagement with members to gather their views and opinions on self-regulation, and move towards members having a vote to seek their opinion?**

**A:** We are committed to independent regulation within RICS as being the most effective framework for the profession. With the support of members, we have continued to strengthen and evolve this model further – for example, with the establishment of the Standards and Regulation Board in 2019.

Extensive member feedback went into the recent external reviews undertaken by Peter Pereira Gray and by Lord Bichard, where our model of regulation was analysed and assessed as being credible and viable.

There are clear structures and processes in place to ensure the independence of standards and regulatory functions – our Senior Executive Officer, Standards and Regulation, Chris Alder, sets out why this is the most effective model [here](#).

**Q: Transparency, trust and confidence are key to RICS moving forward from the challenges of recent years, and yet it still struggles on all fronts. What does RICS propose to do to improve transparency, trust and confidence in the residential and home surveys sector and when?**

**A:** We are currently reviewing the Home survey standard and the assurance processes for those carrying out home surveys. We plan to consult with members and the public on proposals in these areas by early 2025. As part of the review, we are also carrying out research with members and the public into their experience of home surveys, which we will use to improve our communication with the public about RICS regulation and standards.

**Q: Regarding consistency of RICS standard processes, especially with the profession (pathways) practice, how will RICS ensure that there will be no makeshift or substandard processes happening regionally or in local professional organisations?**

**A:** Our processes for developing and maintaining standards and guidance are agreed with the Knowledge and Practice Committee and with the Standards and Regulation Board. These ensure a consistent and transparent approach to initiation, consultation and finalisation of standards and guidance which apply to our members in specific jurisdictions and globally.

**Q:** In relation to RICS being a major proposer in formulating International Property Measurement Standards (IPMSs), can you confirm whether, other than the All Buildings Standard, all other existing IPMSs will be dropped, that the remaining one will not become a mandatory requirement for the profession to follow and give an indication of the costs please, especially in relation to what ultimately seems a majorly flawed project? It would be interesting to learn how many of the coalition partners are adopting IPMS.

**A:** The [International Property Measurement Standard](#) (IPMS) (All Buildings) is the only IPMS standard. It replaces the previous versions and is not mandatory. RICS is currently in the process of revising the UK Code of Measuring practice for members.

It is widely used by global organisations who are part of the coalition, including BOMA and bodies in Germany, USA, New Zealand, Australia.

**Q:** When it comes to the implementation of the RICS' three-year strategy, what do you envisage are the challenges that you will face, particularly with regards to trust in the profession?

**A:** One of the key challenges of any strategy is developing a robust way to measure its success.

The RICS Governing Council is committed to tracking the progress being made and communicating that to members. To achieve this, a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) have been put in place, such as member sentiment, retention and others.

In terms of trust specifically, we are working with the SRB to make sure that the regulatory work they oversee is visible to our members and the public. Our aim is to bring greater clarity and transparency around decisions taken, lessons learned and the significance of our professional standards in public life.

**Q:** What measures are now in place for effective regulation of senior members of the RICS leadership and what process exists for them to be reported to the current SRB, for investigation of breaches of rules or bye laws, which facilitates that such a referral can be made in the

confident expectation that there will be no interference from them or others falling within their influence and acting on their behalf?

A: Senior leaders who are RICS members are regulated by the SRB and, as with any other member, any alleged breach of RICS Rules of Conduct or professional standard would be a matter for due regulatory process. If the conduct of any individuals who aren't members is in question, this would be handled within our framework e.g. the CEO reports into the RICS Board Chair.

The SRB and RICS Board both sit under Governing Council in [our governance structure](#), but the SRB is not instructed by Governing Council. While the SRB and Standards and Regulation executive work closely with the membership body, its impartiality is ensured through independence of its leadership, staff reporting lines and decision making.

Q: The mass resignation of members from the Standards and Regulations Board (SRB) raised questions on the appropriateness of the wording of the letter from the then president Ann Gray to SRB chair Dame Janet Paraskeva and had GC reviewed and approved the letter.

The new SRB Chair was on board and was announced on the 24 July. I formally wrote to the RICS President several weeks after on 18 August to seek clarity on the circumstances that led to these resignations and the engagement and approvals given by GC rather than the specifics that led to the request for Dame Janet to attend a meeting. I forwarded this email to Justin Young, Martin Samworth the same day and asked they forward it to GC. I, nor the wider membership never received an answer or explanation.

Yet a few months later in October 23 Martin Samworth, Chair of the Management Board confirmed to EG in an article that "The contents of the letter were not shared explicitly with the governing council before it was issued." If it was ok for the RICS to share this with EG why was it not possible to provide a direct update to members?

A: The process and circumstances of Dame Janet Paraskeva's and SRB's resignation was communicated to members and the public via a Q&A on [rics.org](#) in June 2023.

Unfortunately, we were not able to respond to your questions in August 2023, as there was an ongoing HR procedure in progress, relating to one of the involved parties. We regret that this was not made clearer in writing at the time. As an alternative, we offered a face-to-face meeting to discuss any concerns as far as we were able to. Since then, information relating to the former SRB's resignations has been provided publicly, including in the EG article referenced.

RICS is committed to maintaining transparency in all matters. However, we must recognise the importance of confidentiality and due process around sensitive matters, which require discretion until the appropriate time.

**Q: I welcome the approach of openness. Is the threat of government 'stepping in' gone now, considering the actions taken?**

**A:** The UK government recognises the important role that RICS plays in setting and upholding professional standards and providing world-leading technical expertise. The Governing Council's commitment to regular independent reviews to ensure continuous improvement and transparency is important in providing external confidence about how RICS meets its Charter Objectives.

We work with and across a range of UK (and international) government departments, to ensure we continue to build strength and confidence in the quality of the relationships at senior and technical levels - and will continue to do so with the new administrations in the UK and elsewhere. Given how those close working relationships have grown, and given the wider actions we have taken, we do not see any reason for government to 'step in'.

## Member value and engagement

**Q:** Is it time to consider relocating from Great George Street and establishing a more central, easily accessible hub? Such a move could provide a space which offers real value to its members for them to meet, entertain, work, network and engage more actively with the Institution and the profession at large.

**A:** Our central London space at Great George Street is a huge asset to RICS. This is why last month we [announced plans to revitalise our London headquarters](#) as part of our ongoing work to ensure a sustainable future for RICS, while enhancing member value and experience.

RICS member spaces are accessible in all parts of the UK, with offices in London, Birmingham and Edinburgh, with Cardiff and Belfast offering hot desks and meeting spaces for member use.

We believe that the Great George Street building, with its rich history and significance for RICS, is an essential part of our member offering, for both UK and international members.

**Q:** In August 2020 RICS stopped the publication of Modus and the four journals, in hard and soft copy – this decision was made without any member consultation. After much lobbying consultation did take place in May 22 - 84% were in favour of the digital plus optional print, and notably 56% viewed digital as having a negative effect on wellbeing and accessibility. Can an update be provided?

**A:** We know that many members would like to see our written publications made available. We are pleased to confirm that members will be able to receive printed Modus and journals on an 'opt in' basis. We are working on this now, with a view to making the opt-in available at the end of 2024.

**Q:** In Nepal, geomatics education is available at Kathmandu University and WRC under Tribhuvan University. I retired from government service in 2010 but I still actively help to enhance geomatics education in Nepal. My humble request to RICS HQ is to be aware of this and encourage these two universities to pursue RICS activities. This will promote geomatics education in Nepal and support overall development.

**A:** Thank you for your support in enhancing geomatics education in Nepal – your service and dedication is hugely appreciated.

We agree that geospatial education is the bedrock of a functioning land and property system. In November this year, Kathmandu will host a [large conference exploring land governance and disaster resilience](#) – RICS representatives will be in attendance, and it would be our pleasure to engage with local stakeholders, including the universities you have mentioned.

**Q:** Given the proposals to increase the CPD requirement to 30hrs per year, how much support will be given for Local Associations to deliver free or low cost CPD to help members meet that target? Will the same level of support be given even if the requirement remains at 20hrs?

**A:** There is an engagement plan in place to support local boards and teams in delivering CPD events for members. Our ongoing decentralisation effort means there is a joined-up way for local members to feed into these plans, so any potential changes in CPD requirements will be part of those conversations.



There is a lot of free CPD available in the CPD Support Pack. This year's content includes:

- 52 podcasts
- Over 150 webinars on technical, professional and regional CPD
- Two global conferences
- Regional CPD and networking: 121 events held so far this year, with 5,055 members attending in over 25 countries
- Modus, Journals, library service
- All standards and thought leadership content

There is much more CPD available at low or significantly discounted cost.

If you would like to have your say on the new CPD requirements, please do engage with the [CPD Framework consultation](#) which is open until 18 July.

**Q: Is there a plan to get more members to participate on myRICS community and make it more useful for member activities?**

Making sure that our technological solutions are effective and represent good value is part of the RICS transformation programme. A dedicated workstream has been set up in the Governing Council to explore the possibilities of this platform and how members can achieve the most value from it, and we will be updating members on this progress in due course.

In the meantime, we'd like to gather your thoughts on what makes a successful community – please take part in our short survey [here](#).

**Q: How is the membership progressing in Asia Pacific?**

**A:** As of now, our membership base in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region stands at approximately 17,000 members, including around 3,700 candidates. We are continuing our member-led approach and working with the APAC World Regional Board, Regional Advisory Board, and engagement groups to support and engage our members and candidates.

For example, we are developing local case studies on the recognition and adoption of the RICS qualifications, standards and regulations. We are also looking to establish a dedicated portal for APAC on the RICS website and RICS APAC LinkedIn pages to support professional growth and networking opportunities for our APAC members.

**Q:** Are there any plans to open a branch in Turkey for assessments and member relations? We have about a hundred existing members and at least twice that number waiting in line to give an attempt for a candidacy journey.

**A:** While we currently do not have plans for a dedicated branch in Turkey, there is a support system for our members in the region.

We actively assess candidates and have trained RICS assessors available in Turkey. We are also pleased to have an accredited university partner in Ankara that supports our initiatives.

We are committed to supporting our members in Turkey and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for their professional growth and development. If you want to get involved in a local engagement group, please reach out to Arianna Barboglio at [Abarboglio2@rics.org](mailto:Abarboglio2@rics.org).

**Q:** The Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago (ISTT) is one of the biggest surveying bodies within the Caribbean Americas. It is made up of RICS members and most members are lecturers from the University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine Campus. What plans does RICS have for assisting an organisation such as the ISTT in the impartation of knowledge to the next generation in the Americas?

**A:** RICS is eager to strengthen our partnership with ISTT. We already have a direct entry agreement in place and are developing marketing strategies to engage more effectively with ISTT and other direct entry bodies. More broadly, we are working to expand our early careers community [Matrics](#) into international markets, including the Americas.

We would love to hear from you with any ideas on how we can collaborate more closely. Please contact Lorella Paterson at [LPaterson@rics.org](mailto:LPaterson@rics.org) to discuss further.

**Q:** Has RICS considered more engagement of professionals within the Caribbean region through the respective government of the Caribbean islands to drive professional regulation standards as part of the RICS strategy?

**A:** Yes, there has been work underway with local governments and the central banks in the Caribbean to discuss standards. There is also representation of the Caribbean membership on

the Americas World Regional Board and significant engagement activity has taken place, including an [upcoming conference in October 2024](#).

**Q: Why are Middle East & Africa in a single geographic group? Are there any plans to make Africa its own?**

**A:** We recognise the distinct needs and strategies of the Middle East and Africa, which is why we are actively working on differentiating our approaches for these regions. We now have dedicated staff in both the Middle East and Africa, ensuring focused attention and support for each area.

Additionally, our MEA (Middle East and Africa) World Regional Board includes representatives from both regions to ensure that each is adequately represented, and their unique requirements are addressed. As such, there are currently no plans to separate this geographical group but we are committed to providing tailored support and engagement for our members in both regions, and we continually assess our organisational structure to best serve our membership.

**Q: The European World Regional Board had a great meeting with the new Chief Experience Officer. What will RICS do in the short term to inform members about the progress being made in member engagement since members do not recognize all the good things happening yet?**

We are pleased you had a productive meeting with our new CXO, he is committed to enhancing the experience all members receive from RICS.

There are many ways we inform members about progress being made in member engagement, covering both global and country/region specific updates, as well as professional group updates.

[This page](#) lists some of the ways you can keep up to date with our progress on member engagement and other areas of performance but in terms of regular communications we also issue updates on our social media platforms and website in addition to face-to-face briefings and events on the ground. Two key emails to look out for with both global and regional updates are the monthly 'All Profession' email which is tailored to serve specific global markets and the regular 'Chairs newsletters', conveying updates from RICS Board chairs in your country or region.

**Q: What is RICS doing in 2024 / 25 about addressing apathy within its membership? Incidental data, i.e. responses to RICS surveys, etc. suggests that only 5% of the membership is engaged beyond paying their annual membership fee.**

**A:** We are actively doing more to engage our members, such as the ongoing Shaping the Future member events across the UK, with more events (including internationally) planned for later in the year.

We do recognise that some members want to have quiet enjoyment of their membership, but we want to make sure that what we provide is available to as many members as possible. Whether that's accessing the new hard copies of Modus and the journals, attending a regional CPD event, entering for local awards or participating as a member of a regional Board.

We have also launched a new webpage that covers [all the ways in which members can be more involved](#) with the RICS, both for their individual benefit and for the advantage of the profession and public at large.

**Q:** I appreciate your efforts to promote and regulate the profession and support the next generation. What initiatives have been taken or are planned to encourage RICS members and Fellows to support budding professionals in completing their practical training after graduation?

**A:** Our [Matrics community](#) is a network of professionals in their first 10 years of post-qualification. They are an enthusiastic and energetic cohort, supporting candidates and new entrants into the profession.

Our Regional Boards in the UK&I also hold regular CPD events. If there are specific topics members would like to see covered, the Regional Boards welcome this feedback as they develop their market plans.

**Q:** How does RICS plan to assist members who are desperately struggling to pay, due to the current climes and exchange rate issue? Is there any reprieve, as the promise of reviewing rates has been ongoing for at least 10 years.

**A:** RICS membership fees have been frozen since 2020, to reflect the challenging conditions of a global pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. We've focused on delivering a programme of transformation and improvement, while absorbing 25% inflation on average across our global regions.

However, we recognise the current fee structure needs to be fairer and reflect the value proposition and affordability. This is why we have worked on a proposed framework which is being shared with the World Regional Boards for review. We will communicate a 2025

subscriptions update to members in the coming weeks, ahead of the next subscriptions cycle beginning.

## Entry and Assessment

**Q:** Having dedicated 18 years of PQE experience to RICS at Member level before spending months preparing for my Fellowship application, I was extremely disappointed to discover RICS had awarded Fellowship to several Members with no more than 2.5 years PQE. Can you comment on rumours that RICS plan to introduce a minimum 10 years PQE before any Fellowship can be considered?

**A:** All applicants for Fellowship must have at least five years' experience at MRICS to be eligible. Before March 2024, Chartered members who applied for FRICS with less than five years experience, were permitted to progress with their application only if they had the support of their local World Regional Board. This requirement was amended in March 2024 requiring five years' MRICS to apply for Fellowship. More information here: [RICS Fellow \(FRICS\)](#)

One of the recommendations in the RICS Entry and Assessment Review Final Report calls for changes in the FRICS assessment and we encourage all members to have their say on this and the rest of the [Review recommendations](#).

**Q:** Referees/Supporters who sign off Membership/Fellowship applications carry out an important role in ensuring that the information provided by the applicant is correct and if they have any concerns these should be raised. There have been occasions in the past where questions have been raised regarding the due diligence carried out by Referees/Supporters. Can RICS advise on the steps it proposes to take to ensure that the importance of the role of Referee/Supporter is reinforced?

**A:** The natural expectation for all membership 'sign-offs'/supporter signatures is that the appropriate due diligence is undertaken. Where this may not have been the case, appropriate investigation should take place.

The requirements for Fellowship membership, including referee/supporter obligations and the process of assessment, feature in the [Entry and Assessment Review final report](#). We encourage all members to have their say on the recommendations.

**Q: Can you provide an update on what initiatives there are to encourage apprenticeships?**

The availability of varied routes into the profession, such as the surveying apprenticeships and the Design, Surveying, and Planning T-Level, are an important aspect of our strategic goal to attract a diverse new generation.

The surveying apprenticeship standards are due to be reviewed and we will continue working closely with the Employer Trailblazer Working Group and the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education \(IfATE\)](#) on this.

More information on surveying apprenticeships, including information for prospective employers is available [here](#).

**Q: Why does RICS of recent since 2023 take as long as 6-9 months to pay APC reviews and assessments in for the Middle East and Africa region? This discourages us from taking part in the assessments.**

**A:** We are not aware of delays in paying assessors after assessment claim forms have been received. To support assessors in submitting the forms without delay, we will now proactively contact assessors to ensure their fee claim forms are submitted as soon as possible to expediate payment.

**Q: How are RICS members protected and treated equally and fairly in any future retrospective agreement(s) with other overseas professional bodies without any manmade obstacle, i.e. undertaking local examination/interviews and other undue exercises for becoming their local professional member? Will RICS HQ even take part in the process? I am from Hong Kong, and my career in the city is now limited, same as my peers locally. I am a qualified Building Surveyor.**

**A:** RICS is an international organisation operating in more than 137 countries, working with governments, regulators and local associations. We respect local qualifications and their regulatory requirements for specific sectors and individual professionals.

Where possible, we work with local bodies to establish Direct Entry (DE) routes or [Mutual Recognitions Agreements \(MRAs\)](#). This is a rigorous process of mapping entry requirements of both organisations. Where these do not directly correlate, one organisation may require

members of the other to undertake additional training, assessments, or to meet other requirements. This can also happen where there are state or national legislative requirements.

To discuss specific circumstances further, please contact the RICS APAC team at [apac@rics.org](mailto:apac@rics.org).

**Q: What are the policies or guidelines for entering into a reciprocity agreement between RICS and other cognate professional institutions in the surveying field particularly as regards developing and emerging economies? (specifically the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors)**

**A:** If an opportunity to collaborate with another organisation is identified, our Standards and Regulation teams would undertake an evaluation and comparison of the entry and assessment requirements to those of RICS.

Then, a recommendation would be made for Qualifications and Assessments Committee's consideration and, later, SRB's approval. This process focusses on standards and admission, rather than reciprocal membership, access to events, training etc. These aspects would be resolved through a Collaboration Agreement between RICS and the professional institution in question.

## Matrics

**Q:** Pakistan is a market which has more than 50% population of 250M under 40, and a large number is technical in nature. With a growing real estate industry, RICS has absolutely no foothold in either the professionals or in the universities. I'm based in Karachi and would like to spearhead the Matrics activity here to boost RICS accreditation. RICS should seriously consider entering this large and technically educated population.

**A:** We would be delighted to hear from you and support efforts in expanding Matrics to support early career surveying professionals in Pakistan. Please get in touch with us via the [Matrics international](#) page.

**Q:** Can we get RICS Matrics well decentralised for more networking opportunities? I have been trying to form a Matrics base in Milton Keynes but haven't got anywhere with this just yet.

**A:** Since 2022, we have been working hard to get RICS Matrics back into key areas across the UK where our membership numbers are the highest. There are now 27 local committees running up to 200 events each year across the UK. We are always open to looking at the creation of new committees and would be delighted to hear from you on [matrics@rics.org](mailto:matrics@rics.org).

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**Q:** What are you doing to stem the flow of talent leaving the industry by women, people of colour and other minority groups?

**A:** Retaining great talent remains a challenge across the profession. This can only improve if the culture in the industry, at firms, on building sites etc becomes safer and more inclusive, acknowledging the individual and systemic challenges people face and taking the necessary steps to address them.

1. Last year, we published a [suite of guidance to support Rule 4 of Rules of Conduct](#), with the aim to help member firms create more inclusive workplace cultures
2. We are also working with five other built environment bodies ([RTPI](#), [LI](#), [ICE](#), [RIBA](#), [CIOB](#)) as the BE Inclusive initiative, to share data, resources and best practices place emphasis on data as an essential component for understanding why talent continues to leave the profession early. Only complete and accurate data, collected by firms and professional bodies, can show where the gaps in support are, and what can be done to close them.

**Q:** How can the RICS mandate regulated RICS firms provide collaborative events that include diverse panels and presenters?

We recognise the differences between our regulated firms across the world. While we set expectations in our Rules of Conduct that firms encourage diversity, inclusion and respect, we are also taking the approach of supporting our firms through the [Rule 4 DEI guidance](#). This will also be supported by free member webinars.

SRB will monitor the impact of the guidance and other DEI initiatives and will decide whether any mandatory requirements may be necessary in future.



Finally, we do our best to lead by example: setting expectations internally that our events are collaborative, inclusive, and as representative of our membership as they can be throughout our global regions.

**Q: How much is the DEI team looking at people with disabilities?**

**A:** Our DEI strategy, which will be published in July 2024, prioritises the development and delivery of a Disability Inclusion Framework. This includes reasonable adjustments policies for employees and members, as well as training to ensure that managers, member-facing staff and critical roles like Assessors can adequately understand and implement those adjustments effectively.

We have evaluated our digital presence, publications, etc., identifying areas for improving the accessibility of our standards, CPD offerings, and other important outputs. This is an ongoing process, and we always welcome feedback from our members on how we can further improve. We have also made improvements and will continue to evaluate our events, to ensure they are as accessible as possible for all who would like to attend and engage, whether in person or online.

We recognise the importance of insights and inputs from those living with disabilities and experts in inclusive design, to ensure that our guidance and standards properly reflect the critical value of accessibility in planning, developing, delivering and retrofitting spaces and communities.

## Governance

**Q: Why are the dates and times of General Council meetings not published well in advance, and why have members of RICS (distinct from members of GC) not been permitted to speak, as specifically provided and permitted under RICS Byelaws? Is this not a breach of the Royal Charter requirements?**

**A:** The Governing Council (GC) meeting schedule until the end of 2024 is available on [rics.org](https://www.rics.org).

GC is committed to maintaining transparency around its work and provide a range of opportunities for engagement with members. However, some decisions GC needs to reach concern sensitive matters, which require a degree of confidentiality. In addition, given the size of RICS' global membership, member attendance runs the risk of inhibiting good reporting and debate from a governance perspective.

For those reasons, it was deemed not in the best interests of the organisation and the membership as a whole for RICS members to attend GC meetings.

GC has implemented a series of additional avenues by which members can contribute, participate, ask questions and make suggestions – [read more here](#).

We believe we've established the right balance of openness and transparency for the GC meetings, whilst maintaining their effectiveness.

**Q: What steps, if any, have been taken to recover costs arising from the Levitt Report especially in respect of the apparent reluctance by a Firm of Solicitors to disclose their reasons for advice given?**

**A:** We can reassure you that all potential options for RICS to recover costs arising from the matters detailed in Alison Levitt's report have been fully explored and concluded accordingly.

**Q: Which ones of the Levitt Recommendations have been implemented meaningfully?**

**A:** All Levitt Review recommendations have been implemented. We continue to develop and improve our processes to reflect our mission to be a world class organisation.

**Q: Who authorised RICS advising the Chinese government; who carried it out, what income was derived and where did it go?**

**A:** RICS does not provide any advice to the People's Republic of China (PRC) government. However, recognising that RICS is apolitical, occasionally, as in other markets around the world, we may invite some of the government stakeholders to provide keynote speeches or updates for a specific industry and/or sector. RICS has also never had any income derived from advisory services or payments made (except taxation) related to the PRC.

**Q: What steps have been made to recover our money from Tomkins, General Council, Fieldfishers and all the other staff and members who led RICS so badly that it led to the Levitt report, other than withholding some of Tomkins bonus?**

**A:** We can assure you that all potential options for RICS to recover costs arising from the matters detailed in Alison Levitt's report have been fully explored and concluded accordingly.

Q: A recent LinkedIn poll indicated that 97% of 793 respondents voted in favour of members having a voice and vote in the election of the President, highlighting the growing sentiment among members for a more inclusive and democratic process. Will RICS initiate comprehensive engagement with members to gather their views and opinions on how future Presidents should be elected?

A: We aim to engage with as many members as possible to increase the number and diversity of applications for member roles. We've already made changes to the process this year, based on member feedback, and we will continue to review the process to make sure we're making meaningful improvements.

We are open to exploring different processes of electing the Presidential team. However, a different process would require a change to RICS Bye-laws, for which Privy Council approval is needed, and this takes time. This topic could be added to the independent review set for 2025 and, if appropriate, a new process could be put forward to the Governing Council for approval.

Q: Only eight of the current 29 GC seats were elected by members – nine were appointed unopposed. Following the next election, the number elected by members should increase to 20, but five unopposed still remain – Land and Natural Resources PG seat and four UK&I Geographic seats. To improve member trust and confidence in GC, will RICS ask the five who hold the unopposed to stand down?

A: It isn't fair to ask any GC members to step down before their term ends, when they have dedicated their time and expertise to serve the profession.

RICS' approach to uncontested seats aligns to that of other similar organisations and even UK local government elections (where candidates for uncontested seats, too, are duly elected).

It is essential that we encourage our members to stand for the 11 GC seats that are currently available: [you can apply to stand here](#). The best way to ensure a competitive election this year is to stand for election.

Q: In the minutes to the RICS AGM confirmation was provided that GC commissioned Kingsley Napley to produce a further report covering the findings and observations in Chapter 5, which

concluded that nothing required specific action, but common themes and issues were identified. If there is no follow-up action required, will RICS publish Chapter 5, or if not explain why not?

**A:** Alison Levitt KC recommended that chapter 5 of the report should not be published as it included unsubstantiated allegations that were outside of her review scope. In line with this advice the Council decided not to publish chapter 5 to protect the identities of those complainants who had shared information in confidence. Lord Bichard was provided with the unredacted version of Chapter 5, as well as Kingsley Napley's report for context and consideration. The allegations were investigated, and no further concerns arose from these.

This has been an open and transparent process, but we also have a responsibility to protect the integrity of the process for commissioning the Review agreed with Alison Levitt KC, as well as for protecting the identities of the people who shared information anonymously.

**Q: What expectations has the GC set for boards, panels and steering committees to ensure they are more representative of the membership? How are you holding yourself accountable?**

**A:** Improving representation across all levels of leadership within the membership is a priority in our corporate strategy.

The Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NRC) is leading a programme of work in conjunction with the RICS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair and the Head of DEI to establish a baseline for current appointments, review and improve the global appointments model and set expectations and targets for improvements.

In addition, one of RICS' corporate objectives for 2024 is to increase diverse representation on our boards, committees and panels. A dedicated working group is looking into this important area and will be relaying their findings to NRC. The improvements we make this year should start to have an impact as we move forward and gradually replace the current members of our boards, committees and panels when their terms come to an end.

**Q: Can we learn what percentage of GC is directly elected by the global membership through elections and whether this should be moved to upwards of 80%?**

**A:** If there are no vacancies in the Council, then 71% of the Council is elected directly by members and is in line with the requirements set out in the Bye-laws.

Q: Could the Governing Council please give an update on progress in establishing the Public Interest Panel, as recommended by Lord Bichard and approved by the Governing Council when they accepted his report?

A: Governing Council decided that the objectives behind the creation of a public interest panel could be more efficiently achieved by allocating appropriate public interest responsibilities to Governing Council and RICS Board. This would give greater prominence to the RICS' public interest mandate.

Lord Bichard was a member of Governing Council (as senior independent governor) at the time the decision was made and was supportive of this decision. RICS employees are now working with the current senior independent governor to ensure our public advantage remit and activities are reflected in our annual review and relevant reports.

## Miscellaneous

Q: A number of organizations have encountered cyber-security problems in recent times including compromise to personal data. How is RICS dealing with such risks? Will RICS consider removing sensitive data such as date of birth, etc. from the member-personal portal sites?

A: RICS has a fully documented approach to risk management: we monitor all risks, mitigations and controls through a dedicated risk register for cyber security and data loss prevention, which is in line with recommendations from specialist government bodies, such as the [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) and the [National Cyber Security Centre](#).

We have achieved the [Cyber Essentials Plus](#) accreditation and regularly undertake third party penetration testing. In addition to this, we regularly review what data we hold, how it is stored, how it is accessed and who can access this information. As such, there are no current plans to change the way member data is stored.

Q: RICS is making good headway with being at the relevant tables to discuss sustainability. Documents like WCLA are also helping to provide clear ways for members to make a difference in their work and mitigate climate impact. Is RICS making any moves to actively lead by example in terms of measuring and reducing their own emissions impact, perhaps by achieving a recognised certification?

**A:** Yes, we are and this is a responsibility we take very seriously. RICS is ISO accredited for 50001 (an international energy management system standard with the aim to reduce consumption and environmental impact) and seeking recertification now. Our utilities come from green sources and our plant replacement lifecycle and fit out programmes all have sustainability improvements at their core. The members lounge in our Birmingham office has also been nominated for an [Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management](#) sustainability award.

**Q:** What would RICS consider to be a significant achievement, five years from now?

**A:** It is our aim that in the future, our profession remains credible, relevant, trusted and necessary. This will require the membership as well as the institution to embrace the changes in the profession and the world, as well as lead change efforts with our collective expertise.

1. We want to grow the number of members we meaningfully engage with in their local areas and create a member experience that builds a sense of belonging within their professional community, creates opportunities and makes them feel proud to be part of the profession.
2. We want to achieve an even more strengthened trust in the profession and the institution, following recent and ongoing transformation programme activity.
3. We want to achieve better representation of currently underrepresented groups through our collaboration with members, firms and industry partners, so that our profession truly reflects the communities it serves.
4. We want to position RICS and our members as global leaders on all key elements of sustainability across the built and natural environment. Ensuring that our members are in demand as the experts that they are and ensuring that they have the skills and competencies

**Q:** Can you please provide the reason for increase in the staff cost when the staff number reduced compared to 2022?

**A:** Staff costs increased in relation to the number of employees due to budget allocated to annual pay raises, redundancy costs in late 2023, and the higher market salaries needed to attract new hires.

**Q:** Why do I have to reapply each year for academic concession once my situation has not changed after a prior approval?

**A:** We recently changed a number of concessions to be non-perpetual, asking members to reconfirm the terms and conditions of the concession they are applying for each year. This was done for couple of reasons:

1. to recognise that circumstances change, e.g. returning to work after a break.
2. to ensure members are actively signing up to the terms and conditions of the concession
3. to ensure members understand their CPD requirements and any other regulatory obligations

Any members who have previously claimed a concession that is no longer perpetual have been contacted and advised how to reapply. However, there is no change in how members initially apply for concessions. Find out more here: [Concessions \(rics.org\)](https://www.rics.org/concessions)