ROYAL SOCIETY FOR ASIAN AFFIARS: MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT 14/15 BELGRAVE SQUARE, LONDON AND ONLINE ON 15 JULY 2026 AT 17:30 BST

The Chairman, Professor Kerry Brown, opened the meeting. 42 members were present in-person and 16 online.

Reports of the Officers of the Society

The Chairman and CEO (Michael Ryder) presented their reports for 2025. In the absence of Andrew McKee, the CEO presented the Treasurer's report. Texts are available from the RSAA office on request.

Remarks by Sir Harold Walker, Former Chairman

Sir Harold addressed the meeting, reflecting on the Society's present difficulties, recent progress and expressing confidence in its future direction. He congratulated the staff and trustees for their commitment and achievements over the past year and thanked them for their continued work on behalf of the Society.

Questions

One member asked whether the Society had considered reviving its dinner club. The Chairman said that it could be considered as a fundraising opportunity. The principal constraint was cost. The CEO added that the Dinner Club had consistently run at a loss. The trustees had decided in 2019 that subsidising it could not be justified.

One member asked whether public access to the Society's archives could be used as a source of income. The CEO said that the archives were currently inaccessible while the digitisation project was underway and were expected to remain so for at least another two years. He added that any decision on whether to generate income from the archives should be considered once the project was complete. He noted that the wider trend in the archive community was towards open access and that, in his own view, charging for access would be inconsistent with the Society's charitable objectives.

One member asked whether there had been any progress in securing a royal patron. The CEO said that the Society had maintained contact with the Palace but that no progress had been made. He added that he remained optimistic, while recognising the demands on the reduced number of working Royals.

A member asked about the Society's business plan for 2027 and beyond and whether mergers with other organisations had been explored. The Chairman said the business plan was in development. He added that discussions had taken place but had not proved fruitful, as no suitable organisation could be found without the Society's assets being selectively acquired.

One member asked whether links with universities had been explored to attract younger members. The Chairman said that students generally had limited time and financial resources and that, given the Society's own limited resources, it would be difficult to offer a sufficiently engaging membership package.

One member asked why the investment portfolio had fared poorly. The CEO said that broadly speaking, the portfolio had underperformed in the last five years due to poor global market conditions. But while its capital value had suffered, dividend payments had largely been sustained.

Adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts
It was proposed and agreed that the Annual Report and Accounts for 2025 be adopted.

Appointment of the Independent Examiners
It was proposed and agreed that Prentis & Co of 115 Milton Road, Cambridge, CB4 1XE, be reappointed as Independent Examiners for 2026.

Election of Trustees
Kerry Brown and Lucy Spink were re-elected unopposed.

The meeting concluded at 18:15.