

University of Leeds, Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee

Minutes 29 July 2020

11 members of the Committee joined the meeting (three for part of the meeting) with one person in attendance.

Minutes

19/100 The minutes of the meetings held on 4 December 2019, 28 January 2020 and 1 June 2020 were all approved.

Update on Actions

(Received paper AWERC 19/17)

19/101 The update on actions was received for information.

Establishment Licence (PEL) holder's update

19/102 The PEL holder informed the Committee that the arrangements made for maintaining good animal welfare during the pandemic had been satisfactory, and he thanked all the animal care staff for everything they had done during what had been a difficult and demanding period.

19/103 Otherwise, there was little to report. There had been no condition 18 reports since the previous meeting, only essential work had continued and the University had maintained regular contact with the Home Office Inspector (HOI).

19/104 The Committee endorsed the PEL holder's comments and asked for recognition to be passed on to the animal care staff for their service. ACTION: Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS) and Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO).

NVS's Report

(Received paper AWERC 19/18)

19/105 The NVS confirmed that he had been in regular contact with HIO for updates and exchange of experiences. The HOI had indicated that she was satisfied with the way the University had been working and how project licence (PPL) applications had been handled. Since June PPL applications already submitted to the Home Office (HO) but returned in order for Covid-19 research to be prioritised, have been resubmitted. In the last 4 weeks, one licence and two amendments had been granted. One further application was under consideration which in due course would clear the backlog of the University's applications.

19/106 A significant number of personal licence (PIL) reviews had become due at the same time as a result of the transfer of all existing PILs into the HO e-licensing system, ASPeL, some years previously. 43 PILs had been due for review which were being actioned by the licensees and this number had been reduced to 27 in the short time since reminders had been sent to the licensees concerned.

19/107 The Committee received a letter from a global company confirming its agreement to ongoing collaboration with the University. The NVS advised that a vast amount of data had been needed in order for the Company to agree to the collaboration. The correspondence confirmed the company's satisfaction with all aspects including the University's arrangements for animal welfare, caging, cleaning, care and biosecurity.

19/108 The Chair thanked the NVS for bringing this to the attention of the Committee and observed that it was good to know that a major company with a global reach, involved in drug development, endorsed the University's animal facilities and local processes that were in place for ethical consideration of animal research.

NACWOs' report

19/109 Because of technical problems the NACWO had found it necessary to give apologies. Under the circumstances the Named Information Officer (NIO) reported on behalf of the NACWO as requested. There had been no reported animal welfare issues in the University animal facilities. The units continued to follow due process as guided by the Faculty Re-entry group but a date for re-opening had yet to be agreed. Risk assessments and approved protocols had been submitted and the legionella results were awaited. It was anticipated that these should arrive within a week

University of Leeds Biomedical Services Committee Report

19/110 Nothing to report.

Draft Annual Report to Council

(Received paper AWERC 19/19)

19/111 The PEL holder introduced the draft annual report, explaining that it followed the same structure as in previous years, starting with background describing the regulatory framework for the benefit of new members. The statistical data (applications and licences) would be updated in September when the report would be finalised for submission to the Council.

19/112 The Committee was told that one of the main points to note in the report was a reduction in animal use at the University since the previous year and, omitted from the report but not overlooked, a tribute to the former chair which would be given at Council.

19/113 During discussions of the report a few suggestions for additions were made:

- A paragraph regarding COVID19 and the Committee's gratitude to the staff who had kept things going during a difficult period.
- Despite being outside the scope of the Committee it was suggested that a comment could be included to report that members of the Committee had visited the new REDACTED.
- A mention of contact with HOI who had attended 2 meetings and commented favourably on the way the Committee handled its business.

19/114 Subject to the above comments, the Committee endorsed the draft for submission to the Council. Members were however invited to email any further drafting comments to the PEL holder within 8 weeks. ACTION: All.

Application A362

19/115 The applicant joined the meeting and delivered a presentation describing the nature of the work along with details of the species to be used. All protocols would be mild and all procedures would be carried out by experienced animal care staff. A 3RS refinement was described and also a reduction in the number of animals from those previously used. This had been as a result of developing expertise and the Committee was told that it was likely

that even fewer animals would actually be needed for the project. The PPL holder's responsibility would be in terms of liaison with the animal care staff and taking their advice to minimise animal suffering.

- 19/116 Questions were invited from the Committee and discussions included details of the procedures each animal would experience; the frequency of procedures; and the nature and duration of the protocols.
- 19/117 Change to the application included: requests for:
- updating the background and to bring out the benefits;
 - the application to start with a description of the basic purpose then drill down into detail;
 - the application to stand alone despite the body of earlier work;
 - the inclusion of a flow diagram to show the number of procedures and any decision points.
- 19/118 With regard to the short lay summary the applicant was asked to amend this to be less challenging for lay persons. This would involve providing explanations for or simplification of technical terms and expanding on the overall benefit of the work. It was acknowledged that the application was for basic scientific research but a clear explanation should be added of how the research would ultimately contribute.
- 19/119 The Chair observed that it would be helpful for him to have any comments sent by members in advance of meetings. ACTION: NIO
- 19/120 Private discussions of the Committee followed. These were concerned with international research in the field which involved only three research groups; the necessity for the use of animals for the work; and limited funds from funding bodies which had driven the need for the work to generate income, which of itself demonstrated a need for the work. It was concluded that this was an important piece of research which the University should continue to support.
- 19/121 Following discussions it was agreed that the Committee should support the application.
- 19/122 Comments sent via email would be conveyed to the applicant who would be asked to re-draft the application to reflect discussions and suggestions of the Committee. The revised application would then be circulated via email for the Committee to see that these points had been addressed before the application would be submitted to the HO. ACTION: NVS and NIO

Schedule of Business

- 19/123 The Committee received the updated Schedule of Business for information.

Other Business

Sub group for mid-term reviews

- 19/124 A sub-group had been identified to deal with the backlog of mid-term reviews. The PEL holder agreed to consider the balance of expertise and representation within the group. A report from the sub-group would be brought to the Committee in September. ACTION: PEL holder, NVS and NIO.

Membership

19/125 A particular member would be reminded about an offer to propose a student licence holder who might be invited to join the Committee. ACTION: NIO.

RSPCA Lay Members' Workshops

19/126 The Committee was advised of the upcoming dates for a series of regional meetings which might ultimately take place virtually. The Chair and another member expressed interest in attending and the limits to the number of attendees for each meeting were noted. Members were asked to liaise with the NIO regarding their intentions. ACTION: Lay members (primarily) and NIO.

Unit re-opening

19/127 Concern was expressed regarding the potential risk of a second wave of the Coronavirus as animal facilities start to open up and commence genetically altered mice breeding programmes. The Committee was invited to consider actions that should be taken to mitigate risks. Although the situation was known to be subject to change, a further complete lockdown was not currently thought likely. Factors already being considered included the practicalities of the necessary clinical academic and technical staff being able to maintain the animals should a partial lockdown occur. With the expectation that work would be at a lower volume and managed at a slow and steady pace, the Committee was told that it should be possible to maintain and care for animals as long as facilities remained available and the work was deemed to be essential.

Date of next meeting

19/128 1000 on Wednesday 30 September.