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## A HISTORIC DECISION

This week's *Journal* is dominated by the decision made unanimously by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council that it would be seeking a new Charter (p379). The decision is without doubt historic — but it is not without precedent. The current Charter came into being 50 years ago, but was not the first to change the original Charter of 1843 — so the profession of pharmacy has a history of updating its aims and purpose when the need arises.

The question, therefore, that members of the Society will need to address during the consultation process over a new Charter, is "Does that need exist now or does the existing Charter provide the safeguards the profession needs for the next 50 years?". The Council seems convinced that a new Charter is necessary. The meeting held last week to discuss whether or not to seek one was attended by 21 of the 24 members. All 21 voted in favour of a new Charter, partly on the grounds that, without it, legislation to reform the Society would undermine the existing Charter and leave the Society in a weak position and unable to undertake the professional leadership role that members rightly wish to protect. For further explanation of the benefits of a new Charter, the centre pull-out document in this issue should be read closely.

The Society intends to consult widely with members over the elements that should be included in a new Charter. Next week *The Journal* will carry a draft Charter for comment — together with the current Charter and some explanatory notes. There will also be roadshows and other meetings, as well as the annual general meeting and branch representatives' meeting when members will have the opportunity to discuss the contents.

Of course, there will be a few members who do not see any need for change and who will be spluttering into their porridge or cappuccinos. However, the Privy Council has made it clear not only that consultation should be with as wide a range of the membership as possible, but also that the Society should be seen to be consulting the membership. If the consultation were restricted to a meeting, for example, attended by only a small group of people, the outcome of that meeting would not necessarily reflect the general mood of the profession. Everyone must have a chance to have their say.