

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the 172nd Meeting of Council held on 13 March 2008

Culloden Hotel, Belfast

Present: Mrs R Varley (in the Chair),
Ms M Alexander, Professor R S Anderson,
Miss R E Bailey, Mr D A Cameron, Mr. B Carroll, Mr D
Cartwright, Miss K S Devlin, Mr I Hamer, Dr G Harris, Mr
S Heatherington, Mr. R Hogan, Dr P M Kyle, Mr K P
Lewis, Ms G Morgan, Mr D W Pyle, Mr N J Rumney, Dr S
T Roxburgh, Mr J Russell, Mr A Sadiq, Professor M
Salmon, Professor A Tomlinson, Miss J Underwood, Ms
S Wild

In Attendance: Mr P C Coe, Ms K Fielding, Mr P J Grey, Mr P J Ireland,
Mr J Levett, Ms L Oakley, Mrs J D Taylor, Ms N Uddin.

Chairman's Opening Remarks

6527. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Council's first meeting held in Northern Ireland, and stressed the importance of having a presence in all four countries. She noted the importance of meeting with leading members of the professions in Belfast and the opportunity to hear of developments in Optometry Northern Ireland.

6528. The Chairman welcomed new Council members Mr. R Hogan and Mr. A Sadiq and guests from the optical bodies and the optical press.

Apologies for Absence

6529. Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Andrews, Ms M Black, Mrs J S Brower, Mr K Cavaye, and Mr C Wass.

Declarations of Interest

6530. Members were reminded that they must declare to the meeting any matter in which they had any actual or perceived personal or professional conflict of interest that might influence their judgement. The Chairman declared her continued role as interim Chairman of CHRE.

Confidentiality

6531. The Chairman reminded Members that this was a meeting held in public and not covered by any requirement for confidentiality. The private session of Council to be held later was a private meeting and was covered by the rules on confidentiality.

Election of Deputy Chairman of Council

6532. The Registrar announced the results of nominations for the position of Deputy Chairman of Council, for which Dr G Harris was nominated unopposed and duly elected as Deputy Chairman.

6533. The Chairman expressed her thanks to Dr Harris for the support he had given to both her and the senior executive team over the past year.

Election of Treasurer

6534. The Registrar announced the results of nominations for the position of Treasurer of Council, for which Ms Moira Black was nominated unopposed and duly elected as Treasurer. Ms Black was not present but had previously indicated her willingness to accept this nomination until 31 December 2007.

Minutes of the 171st Meeting held on 22 November 2007

6535. The Minutes were signed and approved as being a true and fair record of the meeting and would be published on the Council's website.

MATTERS ARISING: FOR INFORMATION

6536. It was noted that UK enabling legislation had been implemented for the introduction of EU Directive 2005/36/EC the European Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications. Changes to the Opticians Act and Rules had now established two additional registers: one for temporary and occasional registration of optometrists and one for temporary and occasional registration of dispensing opticians.

6537. Amendments to the POM Order which would enable the introduction of independent prescribing were not now expected to be completed until April and so this matter would be brought back to Council in July.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

White Paper Update for Discussion and Issues Requiring Decision

6538. Council considered three options for its future constitution and whether it should consist of parity or a lay majority of members and the timing of any changes.

RESOLVED:

6539. That Council should be constituted of six lay and six registrant members and it would come into place in April 2009.

6540. A future Council may wish in future to appoint an additional lay member to enable a lay majority once legislation is passed in 2010.

6541. Members considered a detailed person specification for Council members. Council acknowledged in its specification the mix of qualities, skills and experience expected of candidates and noted the requirement to reflect the equality and diversity of both the profession and population at large. However, it recognised that appointments made by the Appointments Commission would be made on merit.

RESOLVED:

6542. That subject to inclusion of some amendments to the wording of some sections of the person specification that these would be incorporated into the final version.

6543. The Chairman had received a letter from the President of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists which was read to Members and which urged Council to continue to include representation of ophthalmologists on its new Council.

6544. It was agreed that in her response to the Royal College the Chairman should emphasize the huge contribution made by ophthalmologists to the GOC in the past and particularly their recent involvement in securing independent prescribing status for optometrists. She should explain that the new Council would initially have six registrant and six non registrant members, and that an ophthalmologist would be eligible to apply as a non registrant, with reference to the criteria relating to clinical experience in eye care. The discussion acknowledged the critical contribution that ophthalmologists make to GOC committees and working groups and resolved that this should continue under the new arrangements. It also stressed that optometrists and dispensing opticians have an similarly important contribution to make to the work of the Royal College, particularly in the development of community services, and should be invited to join the relevant Royal College Committees.

6545. An options proposal for the future constitution of Councils committees was discussed. An additional, fourth option was suggested which was that for a transitional period during which newly constituted committees were populated by existing Council members.

RESOLVED:

6545. That for reasons of continuity, that for a transitional period the existing membership of committees be maintained until the new Council was in place and could make its own decisions on committee membership.

6546. Council approved the publication of a consultation paper on rule changes and guidance to support the application of the civil standard of proof in fitness to practise hearings.

5447. It was anticipated that the civil standard of proof would apply to all substantive fitness to practise hearings considered on or after 1 November 2008. It was expected that raining would be given to all FTP Panel members in September of this year and in advance of the application date.

5448. Council noted that a detailed plan for its approach for communicating with its stakeholders was being prepared.

Business Plan 2008/9

5449. The Business Plan for 2008/9 was approved subject to one amendment to include reference to the role of Council in protecting the public from users of services provided by non-registrants and registrants who undertake restricted activities under the Opticians Act.

5450. It was noted that the Plan did not include key performance indicators by which performance could be measured against the plan, and that these might be ordered by department or by each statutory function of Council. It was further noted that the Niall Dickson report proposed that all regulators would need to develop KPI's in liaison with CHRE. It was agreed that this would be adopted for Business Plans in future.

Financial Budget 2008/9

5451. It was noted that a deficit budget of -£227,000 was proposed for 2008/9 and that this latest figure included some further additional expenditure discussed by Finance and procedure Committee and recommended by it to Council. Members noted that registrants' fees had not been raised for 2008/9 but Council had reported surpluses over the past five years.

RESOLVED:

5452. That the financial budget for 2008/9 be approved.

Optometry Undergraduate Competency Based Curriculum

5453. Members approved the Stage 1 competency based curriculum for undergraduate optometry training which also defined the standard of entry into the pre-registration period. It was noted that the standard had been developed with the cooperation of the BUCO universities group.

CET Post 2010

5454. Members received the recommendations of the CET Policy and Development Group which had considered responses to the CET consultation to changes to the CET Scheme from 2010. The responses had been discussed with the CET Advisory Panel and the Group had concluded that no changes be made to the Scheme post 2010.

5455. The lack of CET funding for dispensing opticians had arisen in the responses to the consultation but the Group considered this was not a CET matter. Council recognised the position of dispensing opticians and agreed to continue to support this group of registrants in future to secure CET funding.

Draft Handbook for Optometry Training Establishments

5456. Council approved the draft Handbook for Optometry Training Establishments which defined the content and standards for education and training for undergraduate optometrists.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5457. Members noted the appointments of Chairman and Advisers to each of the Council's committees for 2008.

5458. The achievement to date by Council of its Business Plan for 2007/8 was noted in the Performance Management Report for the same period.

5459. The determinations from all Fitness to Practise substantive hearings and Interim Orders for 2008 to date were noted.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

5460. An additional Council meeting had been arranged for Monday 19 May at Chandos House, London starting at 1:00pm in order to make decisions on aspects of the legislative changes. This meeting would be preceded at 12noon with a lunch for Members to say farewell to Carol Ayton, GOC Finance Officer who was retiring after 20 years of service.