

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
General Dental Council
held at 1.00pm on Friday 23 September 2022
in Closed Session at 37 Wimpole Street, London**

Council Members present:

Lord Harris	Chair
Terry Babbs	
Ilona Blue	
Donald Burden	
Anne Heal	
Angie Heilmann MBE	
Jeyanthi John	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Caroline Logan	
Simon Morrow	
Laura Simons	

Executive Directors in attendance:

Ian Brack	Chief Executive and Registrar
Gurvinder Soomal	Chief Operating Officer
John Cullinane	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Lisa Marie Williams	Executive Director, Legal and Governance

Staff and Others in attendance:

Osama Ammar	Interim Associate Director, Policy and Research (item 10)
Samantha Bache	Associate Director, Finance (item 8)
Lee Bird	Interim Deputy Head of Governance (throughout the meeting)
Dave Criddle	Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO (item 8)
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement (throughout the meeting)
Katie Spears	Head of Governance (throughout the meeting)

Apologies

Dawn Bettridge.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from Dawn Bettridge, Interim Executive Director, People and Organisational Development.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 Registrant Council Members declared an interest in relation to the text relating to the Annual Retention Fee (ARF) as part of Item 8 - Corporate Strategy Consultation Update.
- 2.2 All Council Members and staff declared an interest in Item 10 – Costed Corporate Plan 2023-2025 (CCP) and Budget 2023. In respect of Item 10.1 – Pensions Update, Gurvinder Soomal and Katie Spears withdrew from the discussion.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The full minutes of the closed meeting held on 24 June 2022 had been **approved via correspondence**.

4. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

- 4.1 The Council **noted** that there were no matters arising or rolling actions.

5. Decision Log

- 5.1 The Council **noted** that no decisions had been taken by correspondence since the last meeting.

6. Minutes of the meetings of the Non-Statutory Committees

- 6.1 The Council **noted** the minutes of the recent meetings of the Audit and Risk (ARC), Finance and Performance (FPC), Remuneration and Nomination Committees (RemNom).

7. Chief Executive's Report

- 7.1 The Chief Executive provided an update to the Council on recent stakeholder engagements, including a meeting in July with the previous Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steven Barclay).
- 7.2 The Council noted that the current Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Thérèse Coffey) had made a statement in Parliament the preceding day on 'Our Plans for Patients', which sat alongside longer-term plans for the NHS, and had referenced the shortage of NHS dentists. The Government planned to shortly issue guidance on making the best use of the dental workforce, which would be welcomed, and the implications would be monitored closely.
- 7.3 The international registration section 60 would be re-laid in Parliament shortly.
- 7.4 It was **agreed** that on Council meeting days, the regular Friday email update to Council was not required.

8. Corporate Strategy Consultation Update

The Interim Associate Director, Policy and Research joined the meeting.

- 8.1 The Interim Head of Public Policy and Research presented the paper and noted that it did not yet contain a summary of the responses to the recent consultation on the Corporate Strategy. This would be presented at the upcoming Council meeting before approval for

the Strategy was sought. The Council noted that there had been a trebling of response levels in this consultation which was a positive improvement.

8.2 The Council **noted** the update.

9. Communications and Engagement Strategy

9.1 The Associate Director, Communications and Engagement outlined the paper and noted that, whilst the Council had previously agreed the Communications and Engagement Strategy, there was a decision to be taken as to whether there was presently sufficient resource to incorporate the full extent of the implementation plan into the CCP 2023-2025.

9.2 The Council heard that there had been a fundamental shift in the financial climate since it had approved the Strategy, and the Accounting Officer's advice was that funding to deliver additional activity in this area was not available.

9.3 The Chair of the FPC highlighted that the Committee did not see that the use of free reserves to fund the implementation of the Strategy was appropriate at this time. The Executive had been pushed hard on efficiency savings and the Committee was satisfied that this work could only be funded by displacement of resources from other business areas.

9.4 The Council noted that whilst this work was important, and was aligned to the organisation's key objectives to move regulation upstream, the financial climate was currently very uncertain.

9.5 The Council discussed the potential for the team to utilise in-year savings, temporary resource and re-prioritise activities internally to deliver the key parts of the Strategy but **decided** that it was not the right time to allocate the requested resources to the delivery of the Communications and Engagement Strategy and, accordingly, its delivery would not appear in the next iteration of the CCP in October.

10. Pensions Update

The Chief Operating Officer and Head of Governance left the meeting.

10.1 The Associate Director, Finance, informed the Council that, due to the external economic environment, an opportunity had arisen to make additional annual contributions to the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme (the Scheme). This would serve to progress the goal of moving to an insurance buy out of the Scheme.

10.2 The Council discussed the affordability of the approach. It was noted that if additional contributions were not made to the Scheme at this point there was a risk that the fund would be in deficit at the next triennial review. This would lead to an even greater call on the GDC to address the deficit over a significantly shorter period of time.

10.3 The Council **agreed** to incorporate the additional investment into the CCP 2023-25 plan. The Chief Operating Officer and Head of Governance re-joined the meeting.

11. Costed Corporate Plan (CCP) 2023-25 and Budget 2023

The Associate Director, Finance and the Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO joined the meeting.

11.1 The Chief Operating Officer, Associate Director, Finance and Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO presented the most recent iteration of the CCP and Budget for discussion. The final iteration had the potential to be quite different when it

was presented to the Council for approval in October, given the uncertain financial climate.

11.2 The Council discussed the following:

- a. The Accounting Officer's advice was helpful on income risk, inflation, free reserves and pension risk. The Accounting Officer's advice was designed to be prudent but not over-cautious.
- b. The FPC had carefully scrutinised multiple iterations of the CCP and budget and was able to provide assurance that the financial assumptions were robust, efficiency savings had been made and that the portfolio plan (and re-prioritisation exercise) was appropriate. There still remained considerable uncertainty in the financial climate and the organisation had to be cognisant of that. The FPC had approached the scrutiny exercise with the organisation's strategic risk appetite, as set by the Council, in mind.
- c. The staffing and headcount provisions took into account the resource previously allocated to Fitness to Practise. The balancing exercise around risk and opportunities had been conducted carefully and the Executive could provide assurance that the numbers were robustly calculated. The inflationary risk provision was set at a medium level, using all available tools, rather than the feasible worst-case scenario.
- d. The organisation had managed to absorb a significant amount of the rise in inflation by making efficiency savings.

11.3 The Council **noted** the update and that the picture may be different in four weeks' time when the final iteration of the work was presented to it for approval.

The Associate Director, Finance and the Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO left the meeting.

12. Communications Principles - CCP, Budget and Annual Retention Fee Levels

12.1 The Associate Director, Communications and Engagement presented the paper which outlined the selection of communications messages that the organisation might need to deploy but noted that those contained in the paper were not the final communications products.

12.2 The Council **agreed** the approach to communications principles as set out in the paper.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 There was no other business and the meeting was closed at 15:30pm.