

**Minutes of the Meeting of the General Dental Council  
held at 10am on Friday 5 April 2024  
in Open Session at 37 Wimpole Street, London**

**Council Members present:**

Lord Harris	Chair
Terry Babbs	
Ilona Blue	
Donald Burden	
Anne Heal	
Angie Heilmann MBE	
Serbjit Kaur MBE	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Timea Milovecz	
Simon Morrow	
Laura Simons	

**Executive Team Members in attendance:**

Gurvinder Soomal	Interim Chief Executive and Registrar
Samantha Bache	Interim Chief Operating Officer
Clare Paget	Interim Executive Director, Legal & Governance
Theresa Thorp	Executive Director, Regulation

**Staff and Others in attendance:**

Lee Avery	Associate Director, People & Organisational Development
Rebecca Cooper	Associate Director, Policy & Research
David Criddle	Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery & PMO
Richard French-Lowe	Head of OD and Wellbeing
Toby Ganley	Head of Right Touch Regulation
Rebecca Ledwidge	Deputy Head of Governance
Katherine McGirr	Policy Manager
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications & Engagement
Michelle Roach	Interim Associate Director, Finance & Procurement
Alice Santos	Policy & Projects Officer
Ross Scales	Head of Upstream Regulation
Katie Spears	Head of Governance (Secretary)

## Others in Attendance

Sir Ross Cranston            Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee

Members of the public attended as observers.

## Apologies

Stefan Czerniawski            Executive Director, Strategy

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including members of the public who had joined to observe. Apologies were noted from Stefan Czerniawski and Rebecca Cooper attended in his stead.

### 2. Declaration of interests

2.1 The following declarations of interest were received:

- a. Item 11 – Professionalism – from all registrant members.

### 3. Questions Submitted by Members of the Public

3.1 No questions had been received within the required timeframe before the meeting.

### 4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

4.1 The full minutes of the public meeting and the abbreviated minutes of the closed meeting held on 8 December 2023 had been **approved via correspondence**.

### 5. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

5.1 The Council **noted** that there were no live actions at present.

### 6. Decisions Log

6.1 The Council **noted** that the Council had approved the following items via correspondence:

- a. Interim Chief Executive's Objectives – approved by the Chair on 8 January 2024.
- b. Overseas Registration Examination Fees and Regulations – the fees were approved, and the regulations were made on 29 February 2024.
- c. Committee Appointments – Timea Milovecz was appointed to the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (until 30 September 2025) on 15 March 2024.
- d. Chief Executive Appointment – Tom Whiting was appointed as Chief Executive & Registrar for the GDC on 29 March 2024.
- e. Annual Report on the Use of the Seal – noted on 3 April 2024.
- f. Communications and Engagement: Quarterly Review and Insights – noted on 3 April 2024.
- g. Costed Corporate Plan: Publication – noted on 3 April 2024.

## 7. Assurance Reports from the Committee Chairs

- 7.1 The Council heard from the Committee Chairs in respect of the assurance taken from work conducted in Committee since the last Council meeting.

### Audit and Risk Committee

- 7.2 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) updated the Council that the Committee had met three times since the last Council meeting and had scrutinised the GDC's Annual Report and Accounts (ARA), the risk appetite and the Strategic Risk Register.

### Finance and Performance Committee

- 7.3 The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) updated the Council that the Committee had met twice once since the last Council meeting and had scrutinised the planning approach for the next iteration of the Costed Corporate Plan (CCP), organisational performance reporting and noted performance improvements in the Regulation directorate. The Committee was focused on understanding the key contributions to these improvements, such as personnel, resource investment or changes to ways of working. The Committee had also reviewed the income plan and review for 2024 – 2026 and chosen not to activate projects that were on hold. This would be reviewed again at the next meeting.

### Remuneration and Nomination Committee

- 7.4 The Chair of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom) informed the Council that the Committee had met twice since the last Council meeting and heard updates on the appointments processes in respect of the Chief Executive, Council Member and Independent Governance Associates. The Committee had also scrutinised work in respect of Total Reward, workforce development, Board-level appraisal and objective setting processes and approved an approach to Associates remuneration. The Committee had also welcomed a new Member, Timea Milovecz.

### Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee

- 7.5 The Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC) updated the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting and had discussed recent training for new panellists and legal advisors which had been received positively. For future meetings, the Committee was planning to focus on disclosure in Fitness to Practise cases and equality, diversity and inclusion in panellist recruitment. It had also noted that, due to resource pressures in the Hearings function, the pilot for legally qualified panel Chairs had been placed on hold. The Committee would receive an update toward the end of the year in respect of the future plans for that pilot exercise.
- 7.6 The Council **noted** the assurance reports.

## 8. Annual Organisational Performance Report

- 8.1 The Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO presented the paper which set out the annual performance report for the GDC in 2023. It consolidated reporting in respect of operational performance, delivery of the Costed Corporate Plan and the analysis and insights in respect of financial data. The Council heard that a detailed suite of operational performance reports was presented to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) monthly and to the FPC quarterly. The Council received a weekly update from the ELT on performance issues or successes, an assurance report from the Committee Chairs at each Council meeting, and a holistic report was presented to the Council in public session each year.

8.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. In respect of staff turnover, there had been 134 recruitment campaigns in 2023. This was a large amount of activity and represented a fairly high level of attrition. The Council noted that benchmarking and trend analysis was taking place to set this information in context in future reporting. The Council heard that attrition had improved but its impact had been felt within teams. It was noted there had been good progress in several business areas but there were other areas where resource was clearly more stretched. It was necessary to ensure that the organisation was resourced properly to ensure that it was sufficiently resilient to cope with challenges that arose.
- b. In respect of Part Two of the Overseas Registration Examination (ORE), it was noted that certain sittings had not run to capacity in the earlier part of 2023. Although the most recent sittings were full, this was largely outwith the control of the GDC. To respond to increased demand, the organisation had increased capacity in respect of Part One of the exam, but this only translated into full sittings for Part Two when candidates felt ready to sit the exam. The examinations were expensive, and candidates were limited to four opportunities to take them, so it was understandable that candidates wished to be confident in their abilities to pass. The Council noted the pass rate was better for Part One than Part Two – although both were over 60% - and noted that these exams were robustly quality assured.
- c. Good progress was noted in respect of addressing the backlog of applications for registration, where there had been a 49% improvement in completed applications compared to the previous year. Active processing time had returned to three days for UK dentists and processing applications under all routes, save for overseas dental care professionals (DCPs), was within targets for key performance indicators. In respect of overseas DCPs, these applications represented the significant influx of applications that had been received between February and 8 March 2023, and – with the additional resource that had been agreed - it was anticipated that this queue would return to normal levels by the end of 2024.

8.3 The Council **noted** the report.

*The Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO left the meeting.*

## 9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024 - 2025

9.1 The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development and Associate Director, Policy and Research presented the paper which outlined the draft EDI strategy for 2024 – 2025. The Council heard that this was a two-year bridging strategy, and the proposed approach was that the EDI strategy would form one of the core anchors of the next Corporate Strategy. Five proposed objectives were presented for approval. Each objective was underpinned by priority areas for action and the objectives focused on the GDC's responsibilities as both a regulator and employer. It had been mapped against the Professional Standards Authority new Standard 3 on EDI.

9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. This draft of the strategy, which had been a joint endeavour between the People Services and Policy teams, was much improved.
- b. The introduction should make clearer the GDC's statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- c. In respect of Objective 1, the work done to review the Standards for Education would support the delivery of this objective and it was important to ensure that the ongoing work in relation to international registration captured EDI considerations to ensure that those who joined the register understood their duties in respect of EDI.
  - d. In respect of Objective 3, it would be useful to clearly signpost the data published by the organisation in respect of regulatory outcomes for different groups and to ensure that this data was collected proportionately. There was planned work in respect of this that would be shared with the Council in due course. Reference to this could be strengthened in the strategy.
  - e. Objective 5 could be seen as an enabling element, but it was noted that it could equally stand alone.
  - f. It was vital that the organisation could hold itself to account in respect of delivery against the strategy, so timeframes and tangible deliverables would enhance the presentation of the work and enable effective performance reporting. Much of the underpinning activity was work that was already part of the Costed Corporate Plan and would be reported via the CCP reporting process. Consideration would be given as to how best to report progress effectively. The Council would welcome progress updates twice a year.
  - g. The use of EDI Champions was welcomed, as was constructive engagement with the staff networks, which the Council agreed needed increased support. There were key responsibilities for leadership within the GDC to support the delivery of this work and ensure consistency of approach.
  - h. The Council agreed that the next iteration of the EDI Strategy should be incorporated into the Corporate Strategy as a key plank. For the future iteration of the work, it could consider intersectionality, social mobility and potential vulnerabilities of different groups.
- 9.3 Subject to the feedback above, the Council **approved** the draft EDI strategy for 2024 – 2025.

**ACTION: The Associate Director, People and OD to liaise with the Associate Director, Policy and Research and Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery & PMO to devise appropriate performance reporting in respect of the delivery of the EDI Strategy.**

*The Associate Director, Policy & Research, Policy Manager, Policy and Projects Officer and Head of OD & Wellbeing left the meeting.*

## 10. Change Programme and Cultural Change Update

- 10.1 The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development presented the paper which provided an update on the ongoing work in relation to change and cultural change.
- 10.2 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. Although the timescales for delivery of cultural change reached into 2026, this was necessary to deliver and embed meaningful change in the organisation. The work had been planned and sequenced and there was a lot being delivered simultaneously using similar resource.

- b. The work in respect of Total Reward, in particular, was vital to get right, be clear and simple to understand, and the RemNom had made clear that pacing the work was appropriate.
  - c. 94% of staff had uploaded their Personal Development Reviews and those that had not were either on a different development pathway (in probation or trainees) or had been followed up. Moderation exercises were planned to ensure that objectives were sensible and aligned with organisational objectives.
- 10.3 The Council noted congratulations to the People Services and OD function for the good progress and **noted** the update.

*The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development left the meeting.*

## 11. Promoting Professionalism

11.1 The Head of Upstream Regulation and Associate Director, Communications and Engagement presented the paper which outlined the feedback from the recent engagement exercise and sought approval for further work to prepare for public consultation on a new framework for setting standards and providing guidance to the dental team.

11.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The direction of travel was welcome and a clear understanding of how this change would impact operational delivery, in areas such as Fitness to Practise and consequential changes to other regulatory provisions, would be vital.
- b. Supporting materials for the engagement exercise were key. Examples against each of the priorities would also be helpful to support understanding. Engagement with pre-registration students and registrants with overseas qualifications would be valuable.
- c. There were elements of GDC Guidance – such as indemnity, reporting matters to the GDC and adherence to the Scope of Practice – would be considered mandatory to follow. It would be important to consistently use ‘must’ and ‘should’ in language surrounding this work to ensure that this distinction was clear.
- d. There was a significant amount of work required to deliver these changes appropriately and it would be important to understand the resourcing requirements and not place undue pressure on the teams tasked with its delivery alongside other organisational priorities.

11.3 The Council **noted** the feedback and **approved** the approach to preparing for public consultation.

*The Head of Upstream Regulation left the meeting.*

## 12. Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Report 2022-2023

12.1 The Head of Right Touch Regulation presented the paper which provided an overview of the PSA’s recent report into the GDC’s performance against its standards. 16 of 18 Standards had been met and the PSA had assessed that the GDC had failed to meet Standards in respect of timeliness in Fitness to Practise (Standard 11) and in respect of Registration (Standard 15).

12.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. In relation to timeliness in FtP and Registration, the Council was alive to these issues and had agreed additional resourcing in those areas that was beginning to deliver improved performance.
- b. The backlog in respect of specialist list applications had been cleared in the timescales anticipated.
- c. The PSA had noted that the Council's approach to publishing its organisational performance information had changed. In light of the external review into its effectiveness, the Council had decided to make full use of its assurance framework and lessen duplication of effort in respect of the scrutiny of reports. The Council received weekly updates from the Executive in respect of organisational performance and the FPC scrutinised performance data at each of its meetings and provided a written assurance report to the Council quarterly. The Council also received an annual report into organisational performance which had been considered earlier in the meeting. The Council also noted that all FPC papers and minutes were available in the Reading Room in Board Intelligence.
- d. Slow progress with regulatory reform was a real factor but this could not be treated as an 'excuse' for not meeting PSA Standards. There was room to be more efficient and effective to deliver improvements and the organisation would continue to seek to achieve this.

12.3 The Council **noted** the update.

### **13. Any Other Business**

13.1 There was no other business, and the meeting was closed at 12:45pm.