

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
General Dental Council
held at 13:00pm on Friday 21 June 2024
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	
Serbjit Kaur MBE	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Timea Milovecz	
Simon Morrow	
Laura Simons	

Executive Team Members in attendance:

Tom Whiting	Chief Executive and Registrar
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Clare Paget	Interim Executive Director, Legal & Governance
Gurvinder Soomal	Chief Operating Officer
Theresa Thorp	Executive Director, Regulation

Staff and Others in attendance:

Samantha Bache	Associate Director, Finance
Rebecca Cooper	Associate Director, Policy & Research
Krishangi Dahiya	Policy and Projects Officer
Rachael Gilleard	Interim Deputy Head of Governance (Secretary)
Kelly Marsh	Policy Manager
Jenny McLaughlin	Policy Manager
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement
Katie Spears	Interim Senior Counsel and Associate Director, Legal

Apologies

None

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

2.1 The following declarations of interest were received:

- a. Correspondence item C2, DB Pension Scheme Consultation Outcome report - from two staff members. It was noted that neither individual had access to the report.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 The full minutes of the closed meeting held on 5 April 2024 had been **approved via correspondence**.

4. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

4.1 There were no actions on the rolling action list for the closed Council meeting.

5. Decisions Log

5.1 No decisions had been taken since the last meeting to report to the closed Council meeting.

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

6.1 The minutes of the following non-statutory Committees were **noted** by the Council:

- a. The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting on 22 May 2024. The Committee received a report on progression of new FTP cases. The Committee acknowledged the progress made but expressed concern at the older cases. This matter had also been considered from a performance perspective by the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC).
- b. Due to the tight turnaround between the Committee meetings and the Council papers upload date, the following minutes would be circulated to the Council once approved by the Committees:
 - The meeting of the FPC on 5 June 2024.
 - The Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC) meeting on 18 June 2024.
- c. There were no minutes from the Remuneration and Nomination Committee, which would next meet on 27 June.

6.2 The Council **noted** the updates.

7. Chief Executive's Report

7.1 The Chief Executive provided a verbal update to the Council, highlighting his initial observations and identifying priorities, based on internal and external meetings and activity to date.

7.2 He had identified key priorities through initial engagement and planned to work with the Executive and leadership teams to develop plans for addressing these areas, including in the areas of people, culture and staff engagement; external engagement and partnerships; equality, diversity and inclusion and customer experience; strategy; governance; fitness to practice; efficiency; digitisation and legislation.

- 7.3 The Chief Executive also felt that more could be ‘unlocked’ from the organisation to help it fulfil its potential. There would need to be a focus on projects that would really ‘shift the dial’ in respect of the organisation’s objectives. Evaluation of this opportunity would be assisted by a review and clearer articulation of the prioritised programme of work.
- 7.4 The Council welcomed the Chief Executive’s observations.
- 7.5 The Chief Executive also provided a written update in respect of his induction, provisional registration and applications for registration, FTP case progression, the Dental Professionals Hearings Service, data access issues, a current legal case and the change and culture programme.
- 7.6 The Council **noted** the verbal update and report.

8. International Registration – Approval of Call for Evidence Report for Publication and Approval of Scope and Prioritisation of Policy Development

- 8.1 The Associate Director, Policy and Research, Policy Managers and Policy and Projects Officer presented the report, highlighting that over the last year the GDC had developed and consulted on a new set of rules governing registration processes for internationally qualified dental professionals. The long-term objective of this work was to create a comprehensive framework of robust pathways for entry to the GDC registers for internationally qualified dental professionals.
- 8.2 Three strands of work were presented, and the Council was asked to approve the call for evidence report for publication, approve the scope and prioritisation of policy development on international registration and provide views and direction on the development of a refugee policy.
- 8.3 In respect of the report on the Call for Evidence, the report was helpful. Subject to minor drafting points, the Council **approved** the publication of the report.
- 8.4 In respect of the refugee policy, the report highlighted the issues to be considered in relation to a policy objective to ensure that qualified dentists and dental care professionals (DCPs) could join the GDC’s registers without facing unnecessary barriers connected to their refugee status. Other healthcare regulators had policies addressing this issue in place.
- 8.5 The Council **agreed** that a refugee policy should be further developed with an assessment of the resources required to implement it and its relative priority in relation to other initiatives.
- 8.6 In respect of the scope and prioritisation of policy development, the Council noted that provisional registration was one part of the programme to develop a comprehensive framework for international registration, and other elements in that programme also needed to be addressed. The work required was a combination of developing new routes to registration and enhancement of existing elements. The report set out a proposed prioritisation of the work for the Council’s consideration.
- 8.7 The Executive Director, Strategy commented that the team’s work on provisional registration had been in response to the Department of Health and Social Care consultation and draft legislation, published in February 2024, setting out proposals to introduce a power for the GDC to provisionally register overseas qualified dentists. The work that the team had been planning for was to achieve a regulatory framework within which provisional registration could operate. The report did not advocate for a particular model for provisional registration but set it against other streams of work in this area. It was acknowledged that the total activity identified was unmanageable within current

resourcing levels, and that the approach to provisional registration would impact the deliverability of other activity.

- 8.8 The Council **noted** the scope and potential prioritisation of work in this area but, given the uncertainty around provisional registration, noted that it was premature to form a conclusion as to which elements should be prioritised or deprioritised at this stage.

The Associate Director, Policy and Research, Policy Managers and Policy and Projects Officer left the meeting.

9. Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite

- 9.1 The Associate Director, Finance presented the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and the annual review and update of risk appetite, highlighting that:

- a. The SRR had previously been presented to Council after risk appetite had been set, however it was felt helpful for the Council to see both together, to assess whether updates to the Strategic Risk Register were in keeping with risk appetite.
- b. Following discussion by the ELT and ARC, changes were proposed to the risk appetite levels for finance, value for money and people, recruitment and retention.
- c. Following recent ARC meetings, the SRR had been overhauled, but the risks facing the GDC had not significantly changed.
- d. A risk horizon scanning session had been undertaken with the ELT, the outcomes of which had been incorporated into the update.

- 9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The Chair of the ARC reported that a lot of work had been done to elevate risks to make them more strategic and the current iteration of the SRR was a significant improvement. The Committee had tested whether there was appropriate escalation and relegation of risks and had been assured on this point. The Committee intended to return to the question of risk tolerance, but this was not considered a barrier to addressing risk appetite at this point. Consequently, it was suggested that the risk appetite was approved, noting that further work would be ongoing.
- b. The Chair of the FPC confirmed that when the Costed Corporate Plan proposals were reviewed, they were tested against strategic objectives and whether they helped to address strategic risks which were out of appetite. The Chair of FPC was content with the proposal for the finance risk appetite, in the context of the various controls in place.
- c. References in the report to risk appetite as 'adverse' should read 'averse'.
- d. The development of the SRR was welcomed.

- 9.3 The Council **noted** the Strategic Risk Register and **approved** the updated risk appetite.

10. Review of Reserves Policy

- 10.1 The Associate Director, Finance presented the report on the review of the Reserves Policy, explaining that when the Reserves Policy was approved in 2023, there was a commitment to revisit the policy to complete a more substantive review. The results of the review and the proposed revised Reserves Policy had been discussed by the FPC.

- 10.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The Council heard that the FPC supported the proposed range, target level of reserves, that these should be expressed in months and the proposed change to making financial provisions. Items would be treated as provisions if they were highly likely to crystallise and a business case was in preparation. Access to reserves required Council approval and access to financial provisions would have the same gatekeeping arrangement.
- b. It was observed that consistent use of metrics (months being the preferred approach) would be helpful in any communication with Registrants.

10.4 The Council **approved** the Reserves Policy.

11. External Auditor Appointment

- 11.1 The Associate Director, Finance presented the report recommending the appointment of the independent external auditor, which had been discussed by the ARC.
- 11.2 The changes proposed were a result of the revisions in the auditing standard.
- 11.3 The Chair of the ARC explained that the Committee had tested the proposal and concluded that there was no alternative viable option.
- 11.4 The Council **approved** the appointment of The National Audit Office as the independent external auditor (tier 1).

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 The Chair reminded the Council and the ELT that the original objective of reporting from Committees was to demonstrate in public that Committees were seeking and receiving the assurance that they required, and it was correct that the Council should receive the full minutes of Committee meetings in private session. The balance of reporting was generally considered to be right and there was the opportunity for Members to raise issues or concerns in either session.

13. Date of next meeting

- 13.1 The Council **noted** the date of the next meetings.

The meeting closed at 15:45pm.