

**Minutes of the Meeting of the General Dental Council
held at 13:45pm on Friday 27 October 2023
in Open Session at 1 Colmore Square, Birmingham**

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 Directors in attendance:

Ian Brack	Chief Executive and Registrar
Gurvinder Soomal	Chief Operating Officer
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Theresa Thorp	Executive Director, Regulation

Staff and Others in attendance:

Samantha Bache	Associate Director, Finance (item 8 only)
David Criddle	Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery & PMO (item 8 only)
Richard French-Lowe	Head of OD & Wellbeing (item 10 only)
Tey Hassan	Principal Advisory Lawyer (Items 8 and 9 only)
Rebecca Ledwidge	Deputy Head of Governance
John Middleton	Head of People Services (item 11 only)
Clare Paget	Senior Counsel and Associate Director, Legal
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement
Katie Spears	Head of Governance (Secretary)

Others in Attendance

Members of the public attended as observers.

Apologies

Sir Ross Cranston	Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC)
John Cullinane	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
Lisa Marie Williams	Executive Director, Legal and Governance

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Serbjit Kaur and Timea Milovecz to their first Council Meeting, and members of the public who had joined to observe. The Chair noted apologies from Sir Ross Cranston, John Cullinane, Executive Director, Fitness to Practise and Lisa Marie Williams, Executive Director, Legal and Governance. Clare Paget attended in her stead.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 The following declarations of interest were received:
- Items 8 and 9 – Costed Corporate Plan 2024-2026 and Budget 2024 – all Council Members and staff present declared an interest in respect of the budgetary provision for staff salaries and Members' fees. Registrant Members declared an interest in respect of any attendant impact of budgetary discussions on the Annual Retention Fee (ARF) and the Fees Regulations.
 - Item 11 – Chair and Chief Executive Objectives Setting 2023. The Chair, Chief Executive and Registrar and Chief Operating Officer – who would shortly be the interim Chief Executive and Registrar - declared an interest.

3. Questions Submitted by Members of the Public

- 3.1 No questions had been received.

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 22 September 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 no decisions had been taken by correspondence since the last Council meeting.

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 once since the last Council meeting and welcomed two new Members (Laura Simons and Serbjit Kaur). The Committee had scrutinised the Strategic Risk Register (SRR), discussed the implementation of the current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and noted two audit reports from RSM as having had substantial

assurance. The Committee had carefully scrutinised the internal audit recommendation tracker and noted good progress in carrying out recommendations. The Committee had also approved a contract extension in respect of the internal, external auditor, (haysmacintyre LLP), considered reports on significant legal developments and conducted an in-depth review in respect of financial risk.

Finance and Performance Committee:

- 7.3 The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) updated the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting and had discussed the Costed Corporate Plan and Budget for 2024-2026. The Committee had scrutinised and provided feedback on the plans. In respect of organisational performance, the Committee had noted a surge of registration applications and discussed the need for scenario planning in respect of registration appeals. The Committee had also scrutinised the proposals in respect of the Defined Benefit Pensions Scheme and the Estates programme. The Council discussed the need to properly support the various staff networks to support the delivery of the EDI Strategy and noted progress in the staffing of the People Services and OD functions.

Remuneration and Nomination Committee

- 7.4 The Chair of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting and welcomed Angie Heilmann as a new Member. The Committee had considered updates in respect of Total Reward, Workforce Development, the cultural change blueprint and an in-depth review into Associates.
- 7.5 The Council **noted** the assurance reports.

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

8. Costed Corporate Plan 2024 – 2026 and Budget 2024

- 8.1 The paper presented the final iteration of the Costed Corporate Plan 2024 – 2026 (CCP), alongside the Budget for 2024, and portfolio and workforce plans. The CCP was driven by a set of EMT priorities, aligned to the delivery of the Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2025. These provided the focus for business-as-usual activities and change projects. The CCP budget position indicated a requirement of £126.3m over the course of the three-year plan, which was an increase of £0.5m to the current budget envelope.
- 8.2 This budget position – if the current levels of Annual Retention Fee (ARF) were retained – would result in forecast free reserves at the end of 2026 being at an equivalent level to 7.1 months operating expenditure. This would be in excess of the Council's Reserves Policy, so consideration had been given as to how to reduce forecast free reserves to within the Policy levels.
- 8.3 Two options were presented to the Council for discussion.
- a. Option A – This would reduce the ARF over the remainder of the current strategy period (2024 and 2025). This option would carry a risk of a more substantive increase to the ARF when it was formally re-visited alongside the Corporate Strategy for 2026 – 2028. It would not, however, cut across deliberations for resourcing in the next strategy period. The Dentist ARF level would be £621 (a 10% reduction of £69) and the Dental Care Professionals (DCP) ARF level would be £96 (a 15.8% reduction of £18). The FPC had endorsed this option.

- b. Option B – This would reduce the ARF over the planning period (2024 to 2026). This option would carry the least risk of a substantive increase to the ARF when the Corporate Strategy was revisited for 2026 – 2028 but would cut across the Council's deliberations for the next strategy period. This would result in a Dentist ARF level of £646 (a 6.8% reduction of £44) and a DCP ARF level of £99 (a 13.2% reduction of £15).
- 8.4 The Council noted the advice of the Accounting Officer that had been provided in closed session and noted that the Finance and Performance Committee had scrutinised the work and endorsed this iteration of the plan and budget proposals. The Committee had recommended Option A for reducing the ARF levels.
- 8.5 The Council noted the risks in relation to this approach and agreed to reduce the ARF over the remainder of the current strategy period; 2024 to 2025. The Council reserved the right to revisit the ARF annually, in order to ensure that the organisation was properly funded to meet its statutory obligations to protect the public and public confidence in the professions.
- 8.6 The Council **approved** the CCP 2024 – 2026 with attendant portfolio and workforce plans and the Budget for 2024. The Council **approved** Option A in respect of the ARF levels for 2024 and **set** the Annual Retention Fee as follows:
- a. Dentists - £621 (10% reduction of £69)
 - b. Dental Care Professionals - £96 (15.8% reduction of £18).

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

9. Annual Retention Fees – Fees Regulations

- 9.1 The Senior Counsel and Associate Director, Legal presented the paper seeking approval of the Annual Retention Fees Regulations to reflect the decision of the Council to set the ARF at the levels outlined in Item 8.
- 9.2 The Council **approved and made** the following Regulations:
- a. The General Dental Council (Dentists) (Fees) Regulations 2023 – these would come into force on 31 October 2023.
 - b. The General Dental Council (Professions Complementary to Dentistry) (Fees) Regulations 2023 – these would come into force on 31 May 2024.

- 9.3 The Regulations would be signed and sealed at a separate meeting arranged by the Governance team.

The Principal Advisory Lawyer left the meeting and the Associate Director, People and Organisational Development and Head of OD & Wellbeing joined the meeting.

10. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024 – 2026 – Planning Principles

- 10.1 The Head of OD & Wellbeing outlined the principles and plans proposed to review and develop the EDI Strategy for 2024-2026.
- 10.2 The Council discussed the following:
- a. The data collection proposed would include considering profiles of Fitness to Practise cases and outcomes.

- b. There was a need to drive action towards an outcome, rather than a perfectly worded Strategy. It would also be useful to see which actions from the current Strategy were being halted. The audit from RSM might be useful to design activities to sit under the strategy.
- c. The principles were sensible, and it was important to hold ourselves accountable for delivery. There were close links with the cultural change work.
- d. The team should alert the Council and ARC quickly if the proposed timelines were too tight to conduct proper engagement work as staff engagement was vital.

10.3 The Council **noted** the update.

The Associate Director, People and OD and Head of OD & Wellbeing left the meeting, and the Head of People Services joined the meeting.

11. Chair and Chief Executive Objective Setting 2023

- 11.1 The Head of People Services attended to present the paper that outlined the objectives for the Chair and Chief Executive for 2024. These were aligned with the delivery of the Corporate Strategy 2023 – 2026 and the Costed Corporate Plan 2024 – 2026 and had been developed through appraisal conversations with the Senior Independent Council Member and Chair respectively. Given the changes in the composition of the EMT since these conversations had taken place, the Council decided to **remit the process** to the RemNom for fresh consideration and noted that fresh objectives would be discussed for the Chair and the Interim Chief Executive & Registrar.

The Head of People Services left the meeting.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 The Chair of Council noted that this was the Chief Executive's last meeting of the Council and expressed his thanks for his eight years of service with the organisation and his achievements during that time. The Chief Executive noted his thanks to the Council.
- 12.2 There was no other business, and the meeting was closed at 14:50pm.