

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
General Dental Council
held at 11:00am on Friday 21 April 2023
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	
Jeyanthi John	
Sheila Kumar	
Caroline Logan (via MS Teams)	
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:

Rebecca Ledwidge	Deputy Head of Governance
Colin MacKenzie	Head of Nations and Engagement (item 9 only)
Katherine McGirr	Policy Manager (item 8 only)
Clare Paget	Associate Director, Legal (as observer)
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement
Tina Rosenow	Senior Governance Manager (as observer)
Ross Scales	Head of Upstream Regulation (item 8 only)
Katie Spears	Head of Governance (Secretary)

Others in Attendance:

Sir Ross Cranston	Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC)
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Members of the public attended as observers.

Apologies

Mike Lewis

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, and noted apologies from Mike Lewis.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 No declarations were made.

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 24 February 2023 had been **approved via correspondence**.

5. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

- 5.1 The Council **agreed** that the one action marked 'suggested complete' should be considered complete.

6. Decisions Log

- 6.1 The Council **noted** that two decisions had been taken by correspondence since the last Council meeting:
- a. On 20 March 2023, the Council approved the incorporation of a new corporate project, Associates Project Review.
 - b. On 19 April 2023, the Council noted the Annual Report on the Use of the Seal.

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 for a single-issue discussion of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022 (ARA). The Council heard that the Committee had received detailed reports from the external auditors, haysmacintyre LLP, and from the National Audit Office (NAO). All outstanding items had either been completed before the Committee meeting or updated upon shortly thereafter. The Committee had reviewed and recommended the ARA for presentation to the Council, and seen a final draft, incorporating its comments, via correspondence.

Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee

- 7.3 The Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting.

- 7.4 The Council heard that the good progress had been made in relation to implementing an effective case management system into the hearings process and, in respect of the administrative separation of the GDC's adjudications function, the Chair of the Committee had been in contact with the Chair of the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS) to share learning. The Committee had been involved in training sessions for panellists in recent weeks and had found these impressive and responsive to issues that arose. Work was ongoing to support the process of appointing new Chairs to the statutory Committees and oversee wider panellist recruitment.
- 7.5 The Council also heard a short update on the Council Member recruitment exercise from the Chair of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom). Shortlisting had taken place the preceding day and interviews would take place in the next few weeks.
- 7.6 The Council **noted** the assurance reports.

The Head of Upstream Regulation and the Policy Manager joined the meeting.

8. Improvements to the Specialists Lists Assessed Applications Process (SLAA)

- 8.1 The Head of Upstream Regulation and the Policy Manager presented the paper that outlined the proposed improvements to the process for assessing applications to join the Specialists Lists maintained by the GDC.
- 8.2 Assessments of applications to join the lists had been paused for a year, due to longstanding issues. The key priority of the team was to re-start the assessments and the proposal was to do this by bringing the work in-house. There were currently 110 applications pending assessment: with roughly a third of those in respect of orthodontics; a third in respect of oral surgery; and around a tenth in respect of restorative dentistry.
- 8.3 The Council heard that the proposal was that the Registration team would continue to deliver the administrative side of this work - by preparing applications for assessment - but, instead of sending these applications to the Specialist Advisory Committees (SAC) via the Royal Colleges, the GDC would liaise directly with assessors who would be engaged as GDC Associates. These assessors would be listed specialists from the relevant specialist area. Three assessors would review each application and come together as a panel to make a recommendation to the Registrar. The team were in the process of recruiting assessors and reviewing guidance for the application process, to encourage more streamlined and focused applications. After this, the team would review the appeals process. This work would return to the Council later in the year.
- 8.4 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. There was a need to ensure that there were sufficient assessors to clear the backlog of applications swiftly. The Council heard that there were already sufficient numbers of strong applications to support convening multiple panels to address oral surgery applications. There were fewer strong applications in respect of orthodontics and endodontics at present. The team were focused on appointing assessors to address the backlog as soon as possible.
 - b. There was an interplay between the pressures that a backlog in this area created, alongside the large numbers of applications received by the Registration team for individuals qualified overseas as dentists to register as dental care professionals. The Executive were monitoring this issue closely and appropriate resources were being allocated to tackle the issue.

- c. Decisions made in respect of the 1998 EU Regulations would impact the approach to any later reform of the appeals process. Embedded EU law – if preserved – could mean that the organisation would end up running a two-tier appeals process in respect of oral surgery and orthodontics, and the remaining 11 specialities. Most successful appeals, at present, related to process points.
- d. The general principle in the organisation's fees policy was that, where possible, full costs should be covered where they fell. The Council noted that decisions would need to be taken around the fees for assessing these applications and whether they should be amended.
- e. One way of addressing the size of the individual applications submitted to the GDC might be to move the process online. The Council heard that the team were encouraging the use of e-logbooks and supporting applicants as far as possible to focus their applications.
- f. There were resource decisions to be taken consciously around the costs of convening panels and the approach to addressing the backlog. The Council noted that this work could be usefully considered by the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC).

ACTION: Governance to ensure that the work to implement improvements to the Specialist Lists Assessed Application Process is included in the forward workplan of the FPC at appropriate points.

8.5 The Council **noted** the update.

The Head of Upstream Regulation and the Policy Manager left the meeting, and the Head of Nations and Engagement joined the meeting.

9. Costed Corporate Plan 2023-2025 Publication

9.1 The Head of Nations and Engagement presented the paper that outlined the plan for the publication of the Costed Corporate Plan 2023-2025 (CCP). There had been one change made following comments via correspondence: to add a description of each of the previous strategic aims. The document would be published on 27 April 2023.

9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The document would read slightly more clearly if the reserves policy section was moved to the end of the forecast and expenditure section. There was also a typographical error in the foreword in respect of the Annual Retention Fee (ARF).
- b. On page 16, in respect of the Overseas Registration Examination, it should be given its full title and the fees charged in respect of it should be set out in the table. The Council noted that the presentation of project titles might be confusing to a lay reader, but heard that the team had chosen to present in this way to ensure consistency between an internal and external audience.
- c. In respect of the wording in respect of how the Council sets the ARF, the Council preferred the wording used in the ARA 2022. It needed to reflect, as clearly as possible, that the Council had warned in its consultation on the strategy that there may be a need to increase the ARF in 2024 – 2025. It had kept the ARF for 2023 as low as possible and would limit any increase to inflation levels at most – whilst challenging its own costs – but there was less certainty on the level of fees over a three-year period at this time, given the external volatility in the financial environment.

- d. Between this and the ARA, there was a lot of information published in respect of the GDC's activities and this was welcome in furthering the Council's aims for openness and transparency.

9.3 The Council **noted** the update.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 There was no other business.

10.2 The meeting was closed at 12pm.