

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
General Dental Council  
held at 12:45pm on Thursday 18 March 2021  
in Closed Session held on MS Teams**

**Council Members present:**

William Moyes	Chair
Terry Babbs	
Catherine Brady	
Donald Burden	
Anne Heal	
Jeyanthi John	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Caroline Logan	
Simon Morrow	
Crispin Passmore	
Laura Simons	

**Executive Directors in attendance:**

Ian Brack	Chief Executive and Registrar
John Cullinane	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Sarah Keyes	Executive Director, Organisational Development
Gurvinder Soomal	Executive Director, Registration and Corporate Resources
Lisa Marie Williams	Executive Director, Legal and Governance

**Staff in attendance:**

Colin Mackenzie	Interim Head of Communications and Engagement
Samantha Bache	Head of Finance and Procurement (items 7 and 8)
Rebecca Cooper	Head of GDC Policy and Research Programme (items 8 and 15)
Melissa Sharp	Senior Counsel and Head of In-House Legal Advisory Service (item 8 only)
Tey Hassan	Senior Advisory Lawyer (item 8 only)
Sam Clements	Head of Risk Management and Internal Audit (item 12 only)
Osama Ammar	Head of Public Policy (item 13 only)
Manjula Das	Head of Education Policy and Quality Assurance (item 14 only)
Katherine McGirr	Policy Manager (item 15 only)
Katie Spears	Head of Governance
Rebecca Ledwidge	Secretariat Manager

**Apologies:**

None

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that there were no apologies.

## 2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 In relation to the substantive agenda, all registrant Council Members declared an interest in Item 8 (payment by instalments). Catherine Brady declared an interest in respect of Item 14 (Education Quality Assurance) as she had a relative who was a final year dental student. As the Chief Executive was due to give Accounting Officer advice around the Defined Benefit pensions scheme as part of his report slot, the Executive Director, Registration and Corporate Resources and the Head of Governance declared a conflict on this item and would step out of the meeting for this discussion.

## 3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The Council **noted** that the full and abbreviated minutes of the closed meeting held on 17 December 2020 had been approved via correspondence and that the abbreviated minutes had been approved for publication.

## 4. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

- 4.1 The Council **noted** the actions list and agreed that all items labelled 'suggest complete' should be marked as completed.

## 5. Decision Log

- 5.1 The Council **noted** that it had considered three papers via correspondence:
- a. Strategic Risk Appetite – the Council had delegated approval of the strategic risk appetite to the Chair of Council and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, and this had been approved on 1 February 2021.
  - b. Annual Report on Significant Litigation – this paper had been noted.

## 6. Chief Executive's Report

- 6.1 The Chief Executive provided the Council with an update on the following topics: Covid-19, legislative reform and a meeting with Jo Churchill MP, the Fitness to Practise Action Plan, Chair and Council Member recruitment and the Defined Benefit pension scheme.
- 6.2 The Council **noted** the update.

*The Head of Finance and Procurement joined the meeting and the Executive Director, Registration and Corporate Resources and the Head of Governance re-joined the meeting.*

## 7. Annual Report and Accounts 2020

- 7.1 The Interim Head of Communications and Engagement presented the paper which set out the proposed content and approach to the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) for 2020. The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) had considered the proposed approach and recommended it to the Council.
- 7.2 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. There was a benefit in combining the Chair and Chief Executive's introductions into a single item which would address the strategic challenges for the organisation in 2020.

- b. The narrative structure would be finessed but there was an important story to tell about how the organisation had responded to the pandemic. Infographics would help tell this story in a more interesting way and the communication approach to the document, when published, should consider how best to reach stakeholders.

7.3 The Council was content with the direction of travel and **noted** the update.

*The Head of GDC Policy and Research Programme, Senior Counsel and Head of In-House Legal Advisory Service and the Senior Advisory Lawyer joined the meeting.*

## 8. Annual Retention Fee – Payment by Instalments

8.1 The Executive Director, Strategy presented the paper, with support from the Head of GDC Policy and Research Programme, outlining the outcome from the external feasibility analysis on implementing a scheme of payment of the Annual Retention Fee (ARF) by instalments. The Council was asked to discuss and approve a scheme to allow payment by instalments, commencing in the summer of 2021 for Dental Care Professionals.

8.2 The proposal was for a scheme of quarterly instalments, available to individuals only initially and that defaulters should be barred from using the scheme for two years following default. The Accounting Officer was of the view that the proposed approach was financially and operationally feasible.

8.3 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. There were strong views, both for and against, the potential implementation of this scheme.
- b. The Council also discussed whether the scheme should be offered quarterly or monthly. The Accounting Officer emphasised that his advice on operational and financial viability related only to the proposal, viz a quarterly scheme for all registrant groups, excluding bulk payers. He would need to reconsider the advice if the scheme was varied.
- c. Ultimately, the Council was persuaded that the simple version of the scheme presented in the proposals, if it were to be implemented, was the most prudent course to take. Future iterations of the scheme could be explored if it were successful and the analysis around feasibility was proven to be accurate.

8.4 By **majority decision**<sup>1</sup>, the Council **agreed** to implement the proposed scheme of payment of the annual retention fee by instalments for individual dentists and DCPs, with the aim of this being operational for the summer DCP collection in 2021.

*The Head of GDC Policy and Research Programme, Senior Counsel and Head of In-House Legal Advisory Service and the Senior Advisory Lawyer and the Head of Finance and Procurement left the meeting.*

## 9. Perceptions Research

9.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and Interim Head of Communications and Engagement presented the paper outlining the research findings on the perception of external stakeholders of the GDC. This research focused on the views of the dental professions and the Council noted that the Chair's Strategy Group had stressed the importance of

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<sup>1</sup> 'By majority decision' reflects the fact that some Council Members did not endorse implementing the scheme. In line with GDC practice, no vote was taken, nor a record made of those Members who dissented from the proposals, but the Council agreed that a majority of its Members were in agreement with the proposed approach, and it was therefore approved.

also examining the views of patients and the public to gain a holistic view of the external perception of the organisation.

- 9.2 The Council **discussed** the research and noted that the important elements of its findings should be used to inform the communications strategy.

## 10. Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2021

- 10.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and Interim Head of Communications and Engagement presented the paper outlining the proposed communications approach for 2021. The team had developed a set of guiding principles for the communications strategy and prioritised their workstreams to make most effective use of resource.

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

- a. The use of digital technology was key in the communications arena and the Council was keen to ensure that the public and patients could readily access the information that they needed to engage effectively with the organisation.
- b. The guiding principles were positive but needed to be linked in more clearly to the prioritised work and a thematic approach to the communications work for the year was to be encouraged.

- 10.3 The Council was not ready to approve the strategy and accordingly asked that it return for consideration and approval at its next meeting in June 2021.

## 11. Publication of the Costed Corporate Plan 2021-2023

- 11.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and Interim Head of Communications and Engagement presented the paper outlining the proposed approach to publication of the Costed Corporate Plan (CCP) 2021-2023. The Council heard that this was the second year that the organisation had published its Costed Corporate Plan and welcomed the continued transparency around the organisation's corporate project commitments over the next three-year period. The Council discussed the document as a communications vehicle and noted the Accounting Officer's reminder that its primary purpose was to be a business and financial planning document and that there were wider communications opportunities that would complement it, including a planned State of the Nation report.

- 11.2 The Council **noted** the approach to publication.

*The Head of Risk Management and Internal Audit joined the meeting.*

## 12. Strategic Risk Register (SRR)

- 12.1 The Executive Director, Registration and Corporate Resources and the Head of Risk Management and Internal Audit presented the paper which outlined the current strategic risk position for the organisation. The Council discussed the strategic risk position and **approved** the SRR.

*The Head of Risk Management and Internal Audit left the meeting.*

*The Head of Public Policy joined the meeting.*

## 13. Routes to Registration – Update on the MRPQ, ORE and EU Exit

- 13.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and Head of Public Policy presented the paper which provided the Council with an update on the impacts on the GDC's routes to registration following the end of the EU Exit transition period. The Council heard that there were several strands of work taking place around this topic; including the recently announced

proposals from BEIS on the approach to recognition of professional qualifications and draft legislation around international registration. The Council also noted that the team were collecting information around European dental education and developing relationships with key institutions, such as the Council of European Dentists and FEDCAR.

13.2 The Council **noted** the update.

*The Head of Education Policy and Quality Assurance joined the meeting.*

#### 14. Education Quality Assurance – Update

14.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and the Head of Education Policy and Quality Assurance presented the paper which provided the Council with an update on the work of the Education Quality Assurance function.

14.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The team were working closely with dental education providers to seek evidence of the readiness of their student cohorts to graduate safely. This evidence would be analysed by a group of the GDC's Education Associates, these decisions would be calibrated and then decisions would be made internally as to whether targeted Quality Assurance inspections should take place. These processes had been communicated clearly in advance and had been well received.
- b. There had been some benefits to the pandemic in that it had allowed the acceleration of some important projects, such as personal development plans, which would have a positive effect on bridging the gap between undergraduate and postgraduate training.
- c. The team were also looking to share examples of best practice to highlight areas that were working well and drive knowledge sharing in the sector.

14.3 The Council **noted** the update.

*The Head of Education Policy and Quality Assurance left the meeting.*

*The Head of GDC Policy and Research Programme and the Policy Manager joined the meeting.*

#### 15. Remote Orthodontics - Update

15.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and the Policy Manager presented the paper providing an update on the Registrar's position on the application of the Standards for the Dental Team for those practising remotely. The Council heard that the team had developed a position statement for the organisation, setting out the parameters in which this treatment model should operate and making clear the requirement that treating practitioners adhere to the GDC's Standards for the dental team.

15.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The organisation's primary purpose was to protect patient and public safety. It should acknowledge that innovation in the dental sector is welcomed, however this did not negate the need for patients to know who was offering them treatment or for standards to be maintained.

15.3 The Council **noted** the update.

*The Head of GDC Policy and Research Programme, the Head of Public Policy and the Policy Manager left the meeting.*

**16. Any Other Business**

16.1 There was no other business.

**17. Review of the Meeting**

17.1 The Council discussed that the papers had been good, and the agenda had generally allowed sufficient time for discussion, although it had been a long day.

*The meeting was closed at 17:00pm*