

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
General Dental Council  
held at 13:15pm on Friday 8 December 2023  
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 Directors in attendance:**

Gurvinder Soomal	Interim Chief Executive and Registrar
Samantha Bache	Interim Chief Operating Officer
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Lisa Marie Williams	Executive Director, Legal & Governance

**Staff and Others in attendance:**

Lee Avery	Associate Director, People and Organisational Development
Sharon Balmer	Governance Manager
Sam Clements	Head of Risk Management & Internal Audit
Dan Gibson	Head of Facilities
Rebecca Ledwidge	Deputy Head of Governance (Secretary) via Teams
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement
Tina Rosenow	Senior Governance Manager

**Apologies**

Theresa Thorp	Executive Director, Regulation
Katie Spears	Head of Governance and Board Secretary

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from the Executive Director, Regulation and the Head of Governance.

## 2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 The following declarations of interest were received:
- a. In respect of Item 10 – Estates Strategy – all present declared an interest.
  - b. In respect of Item 11 – Council Member Reappointments – Laura Simons and Angie Heilmann declared an interest and withdrew from the meeting for that item.

## 3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The full minutes of the closed meeting held on 27 October 2023 had been **approved via correspondence**.

## 4. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

- 4.1 The Council **noted** that there were no live actions.

## 5. Decisions Log

- 5.1 The Council **noted** that one decision had been taken by correspondence since the last Council meeting.
- a. On 6 December 2023, the Council had noted the Pension Plan – Annual Review of Funding and Annual Report of the Chair of Trustees.

## 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 Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom) meeting of 14 November 2023.
  - b. The Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC) meeting of 9 November 2023.
- 6.2 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:
- a. The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting of 23 November 2023.
  - b. The Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) meeting of 16 November 2023.
- 6.3 There was an ARC closed assurance report outlining a verbal update the Committee had received from the Interim Chief Executive on the change programme, the outcome of the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) review, an IT storage issue, and data security incidents. The Chair of the ARC informed the Council that all members of the ELT would attend ARC meetings in future which was welcomed by the Committee.
- 6.4 There was also an FPC closed assurance report on the optimisation of GDC estates, this would be discussed under the substantive item later in the meeting.
- 6.5 The Council **noted** the updates.

## 7. Interim Chief Executive's Report

7.1 The Interim Chief Executive provided an update to the Council in respect of:

### Recruitment of the Chief Executive and Registrar

7.2 It was noted that the candidate pack would be going out within the next week. The Council asked the team to consider distribution to the four nations when placing the advert.

### Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Outcome

7.3 The PSA report would be published in the new year and a paper would come to the Council in April 2024. The Council requested that this item should be discussed in the public session to ensure transparency.

### Cultural Change and the Change Programme

7.4 The Council suggested that it would be valuable to have more than two Council Members involved in the cultural change work. The interim Chief Executive suggested that Council Members to attend a session with the external consultants in January 2024, this would involve them in the process and enable them to input into the roadmap. It was noted that it might be difficult to secure a date that all Council Members could attend, and that the session could be recorded for those with prior engagements which could not be moved.

7.5 The Council asked for a timeline of all three elements of this work.

7.6 In relation to the 'Total Reward' element, the team would be looking at potential models and affordability. When there were more developed options to consider these would be scrutinised by the RemNom prior to a discussion with the Council.

### Registration

7.7 It was noted that the FPC had commissioned some work on productivity for Registration and FTP to assess whether the additional resource was achieving value for money.

### Case Examiners

7.8 The Council received an update in respect of resourcing at the Case Examiner stage of the Fitness to Practise process.

### IT storage point data issue and Data Security Incidents (DSI)

7.9 The Council received an update on the IT Storage Point data issue, in respect of recent Data Security Incidents and the case of NMC v Somerville.

7.10 The Council was assured that all staff had completed mandatory data protection training.

7.11 The Council **noted** the updates.

## 8. International Registration and Legislative Reform

8.1 The Executive Director, Strategy presented the paper setting out an overview of the ongoing issues with international registration and legislative reform.

8.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. The shortage of dental capacity in the NHS. Following recent changes, there would now be more flexibility for the GDC in relation to the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) but there would be a lag in terms of being able to make an impact. The Dental Recovery Plan has not yet been published and there had been a change in junior ministers at the DHSC.

8.3 The Council **noted** the update.

## 9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2026

9.1 The Interim Chief Executive presented the paper which outlined a direction of travel for the next iteration of the GDC's EDI Strategy. It was explained that the paper was not a finished product, the team was seeking more discussion and input from the Council. The plan was to bring the final strategy back to the Council for sign off in April 2024. The team would be socialising the strategy with a wider group of colleagues and some Council Members would also be involved.

9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. Section 3.4 of the paper should explicitly include patients and the public
- b. The EDI strategy would be linked into objectives throughout the organisation and would also link back to the strategic objectives. The strategy should also make it clear that the ELT was taking a leading role in EDI. There was a need for clarity on the metrics, outlining what the GDC was aspiring to, how it would be measured and 'what good would look like'.
- c. There was a need to be cautious about reframing the strategy to ensure the positive aspects of the existing strategy were not lost. It would be helpful to set out what activity had previously been undertaken that did not work and how this new version of the strategy would help to address those issues.
- d. The strategy was taking shape and moving in the right direction, but it was execution of the strategy that had been the problem in the past. It was therefore necessary to think about how the strategy would be delivered while it was still in development. There was a need to be clear about roles and responsibilities.

9.3 The Council **approved** the proposed framework and direction of travel for the EDI Strategy 2024-2026.

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

## 10. Estates Strategy

10.1 The Head of Facilities presented the paper which outlined the proposed approach to the GDC's Estates Strategy. The Council was asked to approve the recommendation that the GDC would continue to have office presence in both Birmingham and London in the medium term and approve the recommendation that any further estates decision be deferred until after the conclusion of the consultation on remote hearings.

10.2 The Chair of the FPC informed the Council that the Committee accepted the analysis and conclusion regarding the options left on the table. The FPC recommended that maintaining a (central) London presence was the right course in the medium term and that this was something the Council could and should take a decision on now. This would remove a level of uncertainty for staff.

10.3 The Council **approved** the recommendation that the GDC would continue to have an office presence in London and Birmingham in the medium term and **approved** the recommendation that any further estates decision be deferred until after the conclusion of the consultation on remote hearings.

*The Head of Facilities left the meeting.*

## 11. Strategic Risk Appetite

- 11.1 The Head of Risk Management and Internal Audit presented the paper which outlined a proposed approach to strategic risk appetite and sought approval for the risk appetite elements, narratives and appetite levels for 2024. [The Chair of ARC outlined the discussions that the Committee had had on the Strategic Risk Register and risk appetite].
- 11.2 The Council discussed whether it should provisionally accept the risk appetite proposed in the paper or continue with the appetite that was currently set. The Council **agreed** to roll forward the 2023 risk appetite statement rather than making any changes.
- 11.3 The Council requested that the approach to strategic risk appetite and appetite levels for 2024 go to the ARC for scrutiny before coming back to the Council for approval.

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

*Laura Simons and Angie Heilmann declared an interest in the next item and left the meeting.*

## 12. Council Member Reappointments

- 12.1 The Senior Governance Manager presented the paper which proposed that the Council approve the Chair's recommendation that the GDC seek four-year terms of office on the Council for both Angie Heilmann and Laura Simons.
- 12.2 The Council **approved** the recommendation.

## 13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 There was no other business, and the meeting was closed at 15:52.