

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
General Dental Council
held at 10:30am on Friday 24 February 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	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Caroline Logan	
Simon Morrow	
Laura Simons	

Executive Directors in attendance:

Ian Brack	Chief Executive and Registrar
Gurvinder Soomal	Chief Operating Officer
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Lisa Marie Williams	Executive Director, Legal and Governance

Staff and Others in attendance:

Samantha Bache	Associate Director, Finance (item 8 only)
Clare Callan	Associate Director, Fitness to Practise Case Progression
David Criddle	Head of Business Delivery, Intelligence & PMO (Item 8 only)
Angela Harding	Associate Director, People and Organisational Development (as observer)
Rebecca Ledwidge	Deputy Head of Governance
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement
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

John Cullinane Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
Jeyanthi John

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 John Cullinane and Jeyanthi John.

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 16 December 2022 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 one decision had been taken by correspondence since the last Council meeting:

- a. On 22 February 2023, the Council noted the Review of Specialty Curricula.

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.

7.3 The Council heard that the Committee had scrutinised and received assurance on the timetable for producing and laying the Annual Report and Accounts. A draft would be presented to the Committee at a single-issue meeting in March 2023. The Committee had been pleased with progress in respect of the presentation of the internal audit recommendation tracker.

7.4 The Committee had discussed the continuing issues with resourcing in the Information Governance function and had noted that a plan for recruitment was in place. Mandatory and statutory functions were being delivered, and a prioritised list of wider activities would take place once the team was properly resourced. The Committee had also considered an update on the New Ways of Working (NWOW) pilot scheme, in respect of risks connected to recruitment and retention.

Finance and Performance Committee

- 7.5 The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting.
- 7.6 The Council heard that the Committee had scrutinised the Annual Organisational Performance Report, with a focus on performance issues in Fitness to Practise (FtP) and Registration. The Committee had noted that recruitment and retention in FtP was improving and it had taken assurance that multi-disciplinary reviews were taking place regularly to ensure that there was no risk to patients being 'stored up' in older cases. At its next meeting, the Committee had agreed that it would receive a paper outlining the strategy and tactics for resourcing older and newer cases in due course. It would also conduct an in-depth review of the Dental Complaints Service.
- 7.7 The Council noted that it would receive a recommendation to approve a new corporate project in respect of the review that it had requested take place on the Associates Framework in due course.

Remuneration and Nomination Committee

- 7.8 The Chair of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting.
- 7.9 The Council heard that, in respect of Council Member recruitment, there had been a positive response to both advertised roles. In relation to the role that required less non-executive experience and that would start without a Committee responsibility, there had been a large pool of candidates that offered a range of diverse characteristics. The Selection Panel would meet shortly to conduct the longlisting exercise. The Committee had also reviewed the documentation used in respect of the Chair and Council Member appraisal process and would substantively review that process in 2024.
- 7.10 The Council **noted** the assurance reports.

The Associate Director, Finance and the Head of Business Delivery, Intelligence & PMO joined the meeting.

8. Annual Organisational Performance Report

- 8.1 The Associate Director, Finance and the Head of Business Delivery, Intelligence & PMO presented the paper with the annual report to the Council on organisational performance for 2022. The Council noted that the Executive Management Team (EMT) and FPC regularly reviewed detailed performance reporting and provided assurance to the Council. This was the first iteration of an annual consolidated report. The key themes identified were reward, recruitment, estates and organisational forecasting. The Council was asked to approve the format and discuss the contents of the report.
- 8.2 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. The FPC had asked the EMT to consider interdependencies between organisational initiatives that were being pursued to address the key issues faced by the GDC. This work would be considered by the Committee in May 2023. The Committee had noted that the external climate was extremely volatile, that staff turnover remained high, and that this created issues in respect of the organisation's ability to accurately forecast.
 - b. 53% of corporate projects were in exception. This was being addressed, where possible, but some elements remained outside of the control of the organisation –

such as legislative change. These issues in respect of project delivery were also disruptive to business-as-usual activities.

- c. In relation to the assessment of applications to the specialist lists, the Specialist Advisory Committees (SAC) had suspended assessment of the specialist list applications. This was said to be due, in part, with their dissatisfaction with the appeals process. A decision had been made to bring this assessment process in-house and would be expedited.
- d. The recent section 60 order amending the legislative framework meant that the route for overseas qualified dentists applying for registration as dental care professionals in the UK would be closed on 8 March. The Registration team were actively engaging with Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) partners to increase capacity for assessments and those candidates who had been impacted by the five-year time limitation due to Covid-19 would be prioritised for the April diet.
- e. In respect of FtP case progression, the new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were helpful and the Council noted that both new and older cases were being progressed appropriately. The FPC would examine this issue on behalf of the Council at its next meeting and report back on its assurance levels.
- f. In relation to retention of staff, the Council noted the importance of celebrating success and ensuring that targets were realistic and achievable, whilst also driving performance improvement. It was noted that staff development would be an increased focus in 2023. In respect of recruitment, the hybrid working model was a useful tool and analysis was taking place to examine any impacts to productivity. It was difficult to segregate the specific impact of the pilot from other factors, such as sickness levels and absence, but the EMT would continue to analyse the available evidence alongside work in respect of the Estates Strategy.
- g. In respect of Registration, the FPC had been assured that elements outside of the control of the organisation had also impacted performance, but the area was recovering well. The Committee had urged the expedition of the paperless office project.
- h. There might be value in the FPC conducting a reflective exercise around projects that had been de-prioritised to ascertain whether there had been significant shifts in their importance, or the declassification or cancellation of projects was due to a refinement in understanding as to whether work required a full project structure, or it was better classified as an operational initiative.

8.3 At 11am, the Council observed a one minute's silence marking the one-year anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

8.4 The Council **approved** the format of the annual report into organisational performance.

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

9. Board Development

9.1 The Head of Governance presented a paper with proposals for a three-year programme of Board development for the Council that were aligned to identified and future strategic challenges. The composition of the Council changed regularly, and the external environment was volatile. A three-year framework of development activities would support the induction and progression of new Council Members whilst supporting the maintenance and enhancement of the skillset of the current iteration of the Council. The

first year would include a session at the Council away day in the summer, two smaller group sessions and self-directed learning. A reflection session would then be planned to evaluate the impact of the learning and any priority focus areas would be built into the rolling programme.

9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. It was supportive of the work and proposed approach and recognised the impact that the Council could have on the culture, tone and behaviours of the organisation. Building in reflective time for discussion on these topics would be helpful and these themes could be threaded into the sessions in 2023.
- b. The efficient use of the assurance framework – through ensuring that there was minimal duplication of work considered by Committees and the Council – remained a priority.
- c. Self-directed learning would be very important and relevant areas for improvement could be picked up through the appraisal process.
- d. If possible, and if it aligned with the timelines for appointment, incoming Members to the Council could be invited to join the summer development session. Thought would need to be given to ensuring that the Council Member without initial Committee responsibilities was inducted thoroughly without overburdening their time, given the advertised time commitment. Building relationships of trust and providing adequate peer support for incoming Members was vital.
- e. Previous Council Members could also be invited to support the mentoring approach proposed.
- f. Once approved, sessions should be diarised promptly to facilitate Council Members' attendance.

9.3 The Council **approved** the proposed approach.

10. Research Programme

10.1 The Executive Director, Strategy presented the paper which outlined the research work conducted in 2022 and proposed a research strategy for 2023 and beyond. The Council had approved a refreshed approach to GDC research in the summer of 2022, whereby the Council would approve the direction of research by the organisation and its attendant publication would be considered more automatic, save for contentious or significant research findings. The Council was invited to approve the research approach, as outlined in section 5 of the Council paper.

10.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. In respect of primary large-scale research with the public and a population study in respect of registrants, the organisation was keen to develop an understanding of the professional life cycle of dental registrants and how effective current systems were in respect of a safe transition from education to practice. There was a 'long term' intention in respect of this work, but it would not be procured on the basis of a 'long term' contract and value for money would be a key consideration.
- b. There was a need to ensure that research pieces could impact organisational effectiveness and were pragmatic in focus.
- c. The primary focus of the research work was impacting the ability of the organisation to protect the public, and ensure public confidence in the professions. The external impact of the work was of second order of importance

but it was useful to understand whether it would support wider policy development.

- d. The Council requested an update on the work for 2023 at its December 2023 meeting.

10.3 The Council **noted** the update for 2022 and **approved** the proposed approach for 2023 and beyond.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 There was no other business.

11.2 The meeting was closed at 11.55am.