

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 17th Meeting of the Registration Committee
held on 17 April 2008**

Present: Dr G Harris (in the Chair)
Mr D Cameron, Miss K Devlin, Dr P Kyle, Mr K Lewis, Mr A Sadiq, Miss J Underwood, Mrs S Wild.

In Attendance: Mrs J Burrow, Miss K Fielding (part)
Mr P J Ireland, Mrs J D Taylor

Apologies for absence

400. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M Alexander and Professor A Tomlinson.

Declaration of Interests

401. Members were reminded of the requirement to declare to the meeting any matter to which they had or may be perceived as having a personal interest.

Confidentiality

402. Members were reminded that proceedings of the Committee were confidential under Standing Orders 5.23 to 5.26

Minutes of the 16th Meeting held on 17 January 2008

403. The minutes of the 16th meeting of the Committee held on 17 January 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

404. There were no matters arising.

White Paper - Trust, Assurance and Safety

405. Members noted for information the progress to date of the Council's Governance, Revalidation and Tackling Concerns work streams.

406. The Chairman expressed an interest in the responses to the consultation on the civil standard of proof.

407. It was noted for information that the Tackling Concerns Locally National Working Group had discussed complaints handling processes made against healthcare professionals. The Chairman questioned whether the TCWS had considered a change which had recently been introduced which moved the responsibility for leading on complaints handling from the Healthcare Commission back into NHS Trusts and PCT's. This point was noted and would be fed back to the TCWS for it's input.

Future Constitution of the Registration Committee

408. The Committee had been asked to consider a recommendation to go to Council as to the future constitution of the Registration Committee.

409. It considered the size and composition essential to ensure that amongst its members the committee could provide the necessary expertise and competence to carry out its statutory functions. It concluded it should recommend to Council:

- a. a 'legislative minimum core' of one optometrist, one dispensing optician and one lay member.
- b. In addition, it should include one member from an educational or training background, and one member who is employed by a corporate body who could provide a business perspective to the committee's work.

This group of 5 persons would provide the core competencies of the committee.

- c. if the committee felt it necessary, it could appoint advisers who could provide other perspectives, e.g. an ophthalmologist, a stakeholder representative etc.

It was recommended that the ideal overall size of the committee should be two each of the minimum core of members, plus the additional two members indicated above i.e. 8 persons in total.

410. It was agreed the quorum should be one optometrist, one dispensing optician and one lay member.

411. The committee felt that for consistency with each of the other committees that the decision on how a committee Chairman should be appointed should be left for the new Council to decide.

The Committee discussed at some length the suggestion that the chair of the committee could be the senior executive of the Council who had executive responsibility for the registration function. The new Board, through the office of the Chief Executive, would hold the senior executive responsible for delivering the strategic objectives of registration matters to Council. That person would need to be able to set the agenda for the Registration Committee, and would be accountable to the Board for its delivery.

This suggestion was discussed in relation to the appointment of the Chairman to all statutory committees and not just Registration committee.

412. The Committee felt the term of office should be left to the new Council to determine in order to ensure consistency across all committees. It noted the need to stagger appointments from a standing start so that members' terms of office did not all terminate on the same date.

413. The Committee was content that the provisions of Annex 2 to the Paper concerning disqualification, suspension and removal of a member of Council be incorporated into the Committee Constitution Rules too, but that these provisions be consistent across all statutory GOC committees.

CHRE Performance Report

414. The Committee considered those aspects of the latest CHRE Performance Report which related to registration matters. While the Council had received an overall favourable review, it noted that CHRE had scored the Council with a rating of '5' (fails to meet standard) on the accessibility to the public of relevant fitness to practise history and sanctions included within registration information.

415. The executive had been able to demonstrate to CHRE that all determinations of the Fitness to Practise Committee were listed back to 2005 on the Council's website, including those where no action had been taken against a registrant. CHRE had acknowledged this but felt the Council could do more to make this information more accessible to the public. It had recommended a link between a registrant's record and the outcome of any relevant FTP history.

416. The Committee agreed that where a sanction was in force i.e. a current sanction, then it was appropriate for this information to be linked to a registrant's entry in the register. It was less satisfied that 'spent' sanctions or determinations of 'no case to answer' should also be linked in the same way.

417. It was agreed to go back to CHRE and seek clarification on the thresholds for information to be linked to a registrant's entry, while accepting that conditions currently in force should be linked as described.

EU Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications

418. The Committee noted the processes established for consideration of all applications received under this Directive.

Registration Retention 2008/9

419. Members noted the final outcome of the current retention cycle, which had resulted in the Registrar removing 442 registrants for failing to apply by the deadline. These individuals would need to restore in order to continue to practise legally. An issue had come to light about the position of any individual to practise in the few days between removal and restoration. The Committee was strongly of the view that should there be evidence where the Council considered an individual had been practising in this interim period, then they would be referred to the Investigations Committee.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

420. Members noted the status of the implementation of this new legislation due to be phased in from October 2009. Both Standards and Registration Committees had agreed earlier this year that membership of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) would become a condition of GOC membership, but initially only new applicants to our Register would be required to confirm their monitored status at the point of registration.

421. The optical bodies had been advised that the GOC had taken this decision, and would continue to be reminded closer to the time.

Issues on Teacher and Student Registration

422. It was noted that a cross-Committee working group of Registration, Education and Standards committees had now met on two occasions to formulate guidance on issues of teacher and student registration. A *GOC Scheme for Student and Teacher Registration* would be prepared by the Executive which would be brought back to each of these committees in the autumn and which would include the principles to be recommended to Council.

Registration Fees

423. The committee considered a number of issues concerning registration fees and how these might be applied across different areas and members concluded:

- (a) that corporate bodies should continue to pay the same fee for registration as individuals, currently £169.00, and that this fee would continue to include the element for CET;
- (b) that despite a number of quite compelling reasons to the contrary, the dispensing members of the committee considered the registration fee for dispensing opticians should continue to be the same as that for optometrists;
- (c) there should not be a charge for the recording of a specialty on the register;
- (d) that if it was possible, a charge be made for the processing of an application for temporary or occasional registration from an overseas applicant;
- (e) that student registration fees should be reviewed to ensure the charge covers the costs of processing and that a penalty charge be considered for students who come off the register and have to restore.

Consultation Document on the Scheme for Equality and Diversity Monitoring

424. Members noted the consultation document which would be issued forthwith to all stakeholders for comments. The timetable was to run the consultation for eight weeks and then review all responses at the next meeting of the Committee. Subject to the discussion at the next meeting, it was intended to commence the monitoring exercise at the next retention cycle in late 2008.

Registration Committee Work Plan 2008/9

425. The current Work Plan was noted and there were no items presently under discussion which needed to be added.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

426. The next meeting of the Committee would be held on **Thursday 11 September 2008** at **2.00 p.m.**