

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the 170th Meeting of Council held on 28 June 2007

Present: Mrs R Varley (in the Chair),
Ms M Alexander, Professor R S Anderson,
Miss R E Bailey, Ms M Black, Mrs J S Brower, Professor
R J Buckley, Mr D A Cameron, Mr K Cavaye, Mr D
Cartwright, Mr I Hamer, Dr G Harris, Mr S Heatherington,
Dr P M Kyle, Mr K P Lewis, Ms G Morgan, Mr D W Pyle,
Dr S T D Roxburgh, Mr N J Rumney, Mr J Russell,
Professor M Salmon, Professor A Tomlinson, Miss J
Underwood, Mr C Wass, Ms S Wild

In Attendance: Mr P C Coe, Ms K Fielding, Mr P J Ireland, Mr J Levett
Mrs J D Taylor, Mrs C Withall.

Chairman's Opening Remarks

6459. The Chairman opened the meeting and offered her congratulations on behalf of the Council to Mary Perkins, co-founder of Specsavers on being appointed a Dame of the British Empire. The Chairman then congratulated Council on its involvement from the start in Eyecare UK, which had agreed an eyecare strategy for the next ten years.

6460. The Chairman urged the need for Council to continue to maintain its ongoing business at the same time as developing its programme of regulatory reform. Two areas of Council's recent work noted as specific achievements were the success of the CET programme and the significant progress being made in the field of independent prescribing.

6461. Finally, the Chairman also welcomed representatives of the optical bodies, the optical press and members of the public.

Apologies for Absence

6462. Apologies for absence were received from Miss K S Devlin, Mr J Dunne and Mr R W Chappell.

Declaration of Interests

6463. Members were reminded that they must declare to the meeting any matter in which they had any actual or perceived personal or professional conflict of interest that might influence their judgement. The Chairman declared her role as interim Chairman of CHRE.

Confidentiality

6464. The Chairman reminded Members that this was a meeting held in public and not covered by any requirement for confidentiality. The private session of Council to be held later was a private meeting and was covered by the rules on confidentiality

Minutes of the 169th Meeting held on 22 March 2007

6465. The Minutes were signed and approved as being a true and fair record of the meeting, subject to an amendment to record the attendance of Mr. S Heatherington, and would be published on the Council's website.

MATTERS ARISING

Student Fora

6466. It was agreed that student involvement with the Council would be included in the wider work of the Governance Workstream as part of its remit to consider stakeholder engagement.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

Progress on the work from the White Paper

6467. Members noted the progress to date on the implementation of the White Paper through its four workstreams and the Project Board. Progress in each area had been discussed at a Council Seminar the day before.

6468. Members agreed to support the proposal that the GOC express a formal interest to the Department of Health that it be included in the new Independent Adjudication body at the outset. It was noted that Council would wish to consider the terms of inclusion before any decision was taken to include its own fitness to practise cases by such a body.

European Qualifications Directive

The Chairman brought this item forward on the agenda.

6469. This Directive provides for the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in order to assist the free movement of professionals throughout the EU. The GOC was particularly concerned about new arrangements for migrants to provide services on a temporary and occasional basis without having to undergo the same system of checks required by applicants intending to offer services permanently.

6470. The Government was consulting on changes needed to implement the directive into UK law. Council approved a robust response to the consultation, specifically that temporary and occasional registrants should be subject to UK CET requirements; that they have adequate and appropriate insurance; and for applicants to provide details of the services they are to offer in order to carry out the required assessment that those services are temporary and occasional in nature.

6471. The Registrar would write to the acting Chief Executive of CHRE to urge them to support Council in highlighting these very important issues of patient protection.

Audited Accounts for 2006/7

6472. RESOLVED:

that the Audited Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2007 be approved.

Revised Business Plan 2007/8

6473. RESOLVED:

that the revised Business Plan for 2007/8 be accepted subject to the inclusion of therapeutic prescribing within the area of Standards.

Revised Budget for 2007/8

6474. Council noted the variances from the original budget which had resulted from additional expenditure from the work on the White Paper, and some additional income from retention fees. It was agreed that the original budget would remain fixed for the year, but a revised forecast to the year end be produced which would show differences from the original budget.

Consumer Complaints Mediation Service

6475. RESOLVED:

that Council reinstate a tender process for the provision of services for a consumer complaints mediation service.

Preparation of the Annual Report for 2006/7

6476. It was noted that the outline plan for the Annual Report for 2006/7 had been agreed and the final draft would be approved by the Chairman and Chief Executive before publication in August.

Review of Competencies - Consultation

6477. A Working Group, reporting to Standards Committee, had considered the competencies required for qualification as an optometrist or dispensing optician. It had concluded not to make any amendments to the competencies in the short term but to undertake a wholesale review. The first stage of the review was the preparation of a consultation document on a revised framework for setting the competencies.

6478. RESOLVED:

that Council approved the consultation document, subject to a review of the list of consultees to determine whether any patient groups be included at this stage.

The GOC Continuing Education and Training (CET) Scheme

6479. The Chairman prefaced this subject by thanking the Director of Education for the work she had done in making CET such a success.

6480. Members noted the main points of interest from a report on the first cycle of CET. The Scheme had provided assurance that entry standards had been maintained in the profession and this provided a platform for further enhancement of standards for the future. Also, it had been delivered using leading edge technology.

6481. Members were invited to pass comments on the report and any other matters related to CET back to the Director of Education for discussion with the CET Advisory Panel in July.

Proposal for the Quicker Circulation of Committee Minutes

6482. Members agreed a proposal for Committee minutes to be agreed by the committees, and then published on the GOC website and which avoided the necessity for minutes to be embargoed until approved at the following meeting of Council.

New Arrangements for Entry to the Optometry Pre-Registration Period

6483. RESOLVED:

that students who achieve a pass at ordinary degree level be allowed to enter the pre-registration period, and

that students who fail to achieve a 2:2 degree should be allowed one resit only of the final BSc degree examination.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Performance Management Report April to June 2007

6484. Members received the updated report on progress towards achieving the tasks set out in the Council's Business Plan for 2007/8.

Equality Scheme

6485. Members noted the arrangements for the development of an Equality Scheme, which would be consulted upon in September and finalised for approval by Council in November 2007.

Confirmed Minutes of Council Committees

6486. Council received and noted the confirmed Minutes of the following Committees:

Companies Committee	held 13 February 2007	CO(07)1M
Education Committee	held 1 February 2007	ED(07)1M
Finance & Procedure Committee	held 13 February 2007	FP(07)1M
Registration Committee	held 15 February 2007	REG(07)1M
Standards Committee	held 18 January 2007	SD(07)1M

Chairman's Closing Remarks

6487. The Chairman introduced and welcomed Linda Kennaugh to the GOC who had recently been appointed Executive Assistant to the Chairman and Registrar. On behalf of Council, she thanked Caroline Withal, Director of Legal Services who had decided to leave and return to postgraduate study. It was also announced that Philip Grey was joining the Council as the new Director of Legal Services effective 23 July 2007.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

6488. The next Council meeting will be held on **Thursday 22 November 2007** at the **Radisson SAS Hotel, Edinburgh, Scotland.**