

Report from the Chair of Council

Meeting: 13 May 2020

Status: For noting

Lead responsibility and paper author: Gareth Hadley (Chair)

Introduction

1. This report covers my principal activities since the Council meeting held on **26 February 2020**.

Management

2. **Council membership:** I am pleased to report that the Privy Council has appointed Tim Parkinson to be a lay member of Council to fill the vacancy caused by Deborah Bowman's resignation. Tim's appointment is for an initial term of four years effective from **16 April 2020** until **15 April 2024**. Tim has already started his induction and, amongst other things, has already had bilateral videoconference discussions with all other Council members. **Council is asked to approve** Tim's appointment as a member of Remuneration Committee in the room of Sinead Burns who kindly temporarily stepped into the role following Deborah Bowman's departure.
3. **Covid 19 – GOC operational arrangements:** As noted in the Chief Executive and Registrar's report, following the pandemic outbreak the office was closed and steps were taken to enable staff to work remotely. I am proud of the way in which all of our staff have readily taken to the challenge of new methods of working: they have continued to deliver our services to patients and to registrants alike, not only in the new operational environment within which they are now working but also when presented with novel challenges that have been generated by the impact of the pandemic on the way in which registrants engage safely with their patients – and all in the context of the wider societal pressures and fears that have impacted upon the UK population as a whole. I am sure that I speak for all Council members in expressing our gratitude to the team.
4. **Covid 19 – guidance for registrants:** Pursuant to the delegation approved by Council (**18 March 2020**), The Chief Executive and Registrar, David Parkins and I have approved Covid-19 statements and guidance to apply during the Covid-19 emergency on:
 - 4.1. supply of spectacles and contact lenses;
 - 4.2. contact lens aftercare;
 - 4.3. verification of contact lens specifications;
 - 4.4. Continuing Education and Training (CET);
 - 4.5. Continuing Education and Training (CET) providers on CET provision;
 - 4.6. optometrists, dispensing opticians and students working in different settings;

and

- 4.7. our approach in fitness to practise for the service of documents and facilitating hearings.
5. Each statement/guidance note was produced following consultation with key stakeholders including the professional representative bodies and NHS bodies. We also agreed not to proceed with a statement on the delegation of refraction to dispensing opticians based on consultation feedback indicating that there may be patient safety issues and reduced demand. Initially the statements were issued with a review date of **30 April 2020**, all have now been reviewed following further consultation with key stakeholders and have been extended – some with minor amendments – to **31 March 2020**.
6. **Performance review discussions:** I have undertaken bilateral performance review discussions with all Council members.
7. The Chief Executive and Registrar, Interim Director of Resources (Yeslin Gearty), Head of Finance (Manori Izni-Muneer), Clare Minchington, and I met our investment adviser, Brewin Dolphin (**7 April 2020**), via videoconference, to discuss questions concerning the management of the Council's capital reserves during the current unsettled period within the financial markets.
8. I have continued to have regular conversations with the Chief Executive and Registrar and with members of the Senior Management Team and the Leadership Team concerning the work of the Council. During the Covid-19 emergency I have had either telephone or videoconference discussions with the Chief Executive and Registrar on most days.

Council and Committees

9. I chaired a special Council meeting (**18 March 2020**) called to consider arrangements to support registrants' practice and to ensure business continuity during the Covid-19 emergency. Council decided, inter alia, to delegate to the Chief Executive and Registrar, the Chair, and David Parkins, authority to approve statements and guidance to apply during the emergency, and to appoint substitutes should any of the delegates be unable to act (Leonie Milliner for the Chief Executive and Registrar, Josie Forte for David Parkins, and Helen Tilley for me).
10. I chaired Nominations Committee (**27 March 2020**) and attended Audit, Risk and Finance Committee (**27 April 2020**).

Stakeholders

11. With effect from **1 April 2020**, the Privy Council has appointed Dame Glenys Stacey to be chair of the Professional Standards Authority in succession to George Jenkins. I have written to Dame Glenys to congratulate her on her appointment. We have agreed to arrange an early meeting between ourselves, accompanied by our chief

executives.

12. I have had informal bilateral conversations with the professional services directors of three largest corporate community optical providers, namely registrant optometrist Paul Carroll (Specsavers Optical Group), registrant optometrist Dan McGhee (Vision Express), and registrant optometrist Claire Slade (Boots Opticians).