

COUNCIL

**Report from the Chair of Council**

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**Meeting:** 13 November 2019

**Status:** for decision

**Lead responsibility and paper author:** Gareth Hadley (Chair)

**Introduction**

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1. This report covers my principal activities since the Council meeting held on **10 July 2019**.

**Recommendation**

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2. Council are asked to **note** the contents of this report and **appoint** Deborah Bowman as a member of the Remuneration committee for a period of three years.

**Stakeholders**

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3. **Professional Standards Authority:** Together with the Chief Executive and Registrar, I met George Jenkins (Chair) and Alan Clamp (Chief Executive) of the PSA (**11 July 2019**).
4. **Association of British Dispensing Opticians:** I visited a number of the practice premises of registrant dispensing optician Clive Marchant, President of ABDO (**12 July 2019**). Our discussions covered a number of current issues including progress with the ESR.
5. **College of Optometrists:** Together with the Chief Executive and Registrar, I met Professor Ed Mallen (President) and Ian Humphries (Chief Executive) of the PSA (**11 August 2019**). Our discussions covered a number of current issues including progress with the ESR.
6. **Vision Express:** Together with the Chief Executive and Registrar, I visited the headquarters offices and warehouse of Vision Express. We had discussions about current issues with Onur Koksal (recently appointed Chief Executive), registrant optometrist Dan McGhee (Director of Professional Services), Nick Coton (Chief Financial Officer), and Francisco Lobbosco (Chief Operating Officer) (**13 August 2019**).
7. **Vision UK:** I met Matt Broom (Chief Executive) for a discussion about current issues including the challenges for third sector organisations within the optical world (**14 August 2019**). Subsequently, (**9 October 2019**), I attended Vision UK's conference, which afforded me the opportunity to have discussions with a wide range of stakeholders including many either undertaking or funding practical research into the causes of sight loss and the means of reducing

avoidable sight loss. Vision UK had brought together a wide range of contributors including geneticists and neurologists. Amongst other things, the conference reinforced my understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by technological change including advances that will be facilitated by artificial intelligence, and the advancing speed of change. With AI increasingly offering solutions to eye health problems, it is clearly important for the algorithms embedded within AI applications to reflect the populations served. To that end, I hope that initiatives to capture intelligence that can be collected from routine scans undertaken by eye health professionals not only in hospitals but also in the community will bear fruit. I welcome Vision UK's very strong focus on the science underpinning of eyecare: they are a charity with the capacity to lead the third sector engagement in research into the causes of sight loss and attendant solutions. Other GOC colleagues present at the conference included David Parkins (who chaired one of the Conference's syndicate sessions) and our Director of Strategy, Alistair Bridge (who was present in his capacity as a trustee of Vision UK), and Fitness to Practice Committee registrant optometrist member David Cartwright.

8. **Royal College of Ophthalmologists:** I visited Mike Bourdon (President) to discuss matters of common concern (**15 August 2019**). One of the concerns that Mike raised with me was the possibility that, in England, some CCGs might be rationing access to NHS cataract surgery by imposing criteria beyond that established by the NICE guideline, namely that the sole criterion for reference was the patient's perception that the presence of a cataract was impairing their quality of life. Mike informed me that a substantial number of NHS cataract procedures followed on from individual funding requests submitted by ophthalmologists, 96% of which were approved. He was eager that our registrants were not dissuaded from making recommendations when the requirements of the NICE guideline had been met. Mike and I also discussed issues related to Patient Choice and how that might impact on our registrants' referrals to other services. I have asked Alistair Bridge to consider how these matters might be taken forward.
9. **Health and Social Care Professional Regulators:** The Chief Executive and Registrar and I attended a meeting of the chairs and chief executives of the UK's health and social care regulators. (**26 September 2019**). Our wide-ranging discussions focused on steps that we might take to strengthen the relationships between us and improve co-operation, and objectives for legislative reform.
10. **Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers:** I met Huntly Taylor (recently appointed Master Spectacle Maker) and Gaynor Foulkes-Taylor (Mistress Spectacle Maker) for a discussion about current issues (**15 October 2019**). Both Huntly and Gaynor are former registrant dispensing opticians.
11. **My Optique Group/Glasses Direct:** Together with Helen Tilley, I visited the headquarters of Glasses Direct and met registrant dispensing optician David

Hutchfield (Head of Professional Services, My Optique Group/Glasses Direct) to discuss matters of common interest and to improve our understanding of their operating model (**18 October 2019**). We also met and observed the work of registrant dispensing opticians Dawn Harvey and Carl Rayton who are members of the team of DOs checking and approving orders before they are passed to the laboratory for fulfilment, and Marc King, Head of Production.

12. **Association of Optometrists Ireland:** I attended the annual dinner of the AOI in Killarney, County Kerry (**2 November 2019**). This provided me with the opportunity to discuss current regulation and eyecare service provision issues with direct stakeholders and other interested and informed parties from both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Particularly, I discussed certain aspects arising from the Education Standards Review with two university heads of department of optical science, one from the Republic of Ireland and one from the United Kingdom.
13. **Brewin Dolphin:** Clare Minchington, David Parkins, Sinead Burns, Lesley Longstone, Mark Webster, Manori Izni-Muneer and I met Philip Payne (Divisional Director, Charities) and Julian McCormack (Assistant Director, Investment Management) of Brewin Dolphin, our investment advisers, to discuss the investment performance of our capital reserves (**4 November 2019**). Mandated by Council, we meet our investment advisers annually to receive their report on stewardship of our funds managed by them. Day-to-day engagement with Brewin Dolphin is handled by Mark and Manori.
14. Colleagues report stakeholder engagement as follows:
  - 14.1. Scott Mackie attended the **Optometry Scotland** council meeting (**26 September 2019**) to give a GOC update on current issues. The meeting highlighted the importance of all stakeholders being involved in key decision making an example being the introduction of mandatory reflective learning by all optometry registrants in Scotland by 2019 as part of a prevention agenda.
  - 14.2. Helen Tilley attended the **AIO** (Association for Independent Optometry [Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians])/ **BABO** (British Association of Behavioural Optometrists) conference (**5/6 October 2019**) and took part in a 45-minute panel discussion. Questions raised covered a wide range of issues including: the Education Strategic Review; apprenticeship; university education; business standards; and internet supply, of both spectacles and contact lenses. Other panellists included representatives of the two host organisations, AOP, BLCA, ABDO, the College of Optometrists, and FODO. Helen reports that the discussions were lively and led to requests that, in the future, more time should be allocated such activities. A brief report on the panel discussion – particularly that part concerning the future of optical education – can be found in *Optician* magazine at

<https://www.opticianonline.net/opinion/simon-jones-degrees-of-uncertainty>.

14.3. Josie Forte and Helen Tilley participated (**24 October 2019**) in a **webinar** on the new **Business Standards** effective from 1 October 2019. At our meeting, I will be asking Josie and Helen (and Alistair Bridge and Marcus Dye who also participated) to reflect on the webinar – the first that we have run – in terms both of its content and of its potential as a medium for continued future engagement with our stakeholders.

### Council and Committees

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15. Along with other Council members, I participated in our development day (**25 September 2019**). We used our time to take forward further work on developing our strategic plan to come into force following the conclusion of the current plan (2017/2020) and to review the outcome of research into risk in the optical professions.
16. Along with other Council members, I attended the first meeting of the Advisory Panel comprised primarily of Council statutory advisory committee members (**10 October 2019**).
17. Along with members of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee, I attended the annual review meeting with the Council's investment advisers, Brewin Dolphin (**4 November 2019**).
18. I attended the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee development session (**5 November 2019**).
19. Mike Galvin attended, as observer, a 2-day Fitness to Practise substantive hearing. The matter in question was not concluded in the course of the two days for which it was listed, so had to be adjourned part heard.
20. In the course of her induction, Deborah Bowman has attended a number of meetings with members of the Executive and key stakeholders including the OCCS team.

### Management

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21. In addition to my regular conversations with the Chief Executive and Registrar and with members of the Senior Management Team and the Leadership Team, I have had three long bilateral discussions with the Chief Executive and Registrar concerning the work and direction of the Council.
22. **Council leads/committee chairs:** Individual Council members' lead and committee chair responsibilities are set out in **Annex one**. So that we can maintain good open channels of communication between Council members and Executive leads following the changes that we have made in the operation of our statutory advisory committees, I am asking Council leads/advisory

committee chairs and Executive leads to diarise discussions, at lead bimonthly, to keep everyone up to speed with current developments.

23. **Council membership on Committees:** There is a vacancy on the Remuneration committee now that Selina's term of office has come to an end. Following a review of Council member leads and committee membership with members, I recommend to Council that Deborah Bowman be appointed as a member of the Remuneration committee for a period of three years.
24. **Fitness to Practise – cap on panelist numbers:** Our representations to have lifted the cap on the number of members that we are empowered to appoint to our Hearings Panel (from which our Fitness to Practise committee and Registration Appeals committees are drawn) has borne fruit. The Privy Council, on **6 August 2019**, approved the General Optical Council (Committee Constitution) (Amendment) Rules Order of Council 2019 (SI 2019 No. 1189). The Order came into force on 1 September 2019.
25. **Hearings Panel:** interviews for lay members – conducted over eight days between **19 September 2019** and **1 October 2019** have now concluded. From amongst the 705 applications received, the interview panel (comprised of Josie Forte, Penny Bennett – independent member of the Nominations Committee, and me) selected 53 candidates for interview. 23 candidates have been appointed with effect from 1 December 2019: a further 11 are held in reserve to fill any casual vacancies that arise in the course of the next 3 years. All have been invited to induction training planned for **28 November 2019**.

## Annex 1 - Council – Lead Roles and Committee membership

Member	Type	Lead	Committee Chair	Committee member
Deborah Bowman	Lay	Legislative reform		Remuneration Appointments Panel
Sinead Burns	Lay		Companies	Audit, Risk and Finance Appointments panel
Josie Forte*	Registrant	Education Strategic Review CET/CPD		Appointments panel
Mike Galvin	Lay	IT Plan (including CRM/Fitness to Practise case management)	Education	Audit Risk, and Finance
Rosie Glazebrook	Lay	Registration (jointly with Josie Forte)	Registration	Nomination Appointments panel
Gareth Hadley	Lay (Chair)	(As necessary)	Nomination	Remuneration Appointments panel
Scott Mackie*	Registrant	Website development MyGOC application		
Clare Minchington	Lay	Standards	Audit, Risk and Finance	
David Parkins*	Registrant	Strategic planning advice		Audit, Risk and Finance
Roshni Samra	Registrant	People Equality, Diversity and Inclusion		
Helen Tilley	Registrant (Senior Council Member)	Investigations and Fitness to Practise	Remco	Appointments panel
Glenn Tomison	Registrant		Standards	Nomination Appointments panel

\* Additionally:

- **Josie Forte** will assist Rosie Glazebrook in her role as Council Lead for registration and provide a registrant opinion on questions raised by the Executive team;
- **Scott Mackie** will continue to provide expert advice on CET/CPD to the Project Team; and
- **David Parkins** will continue to provide expert advice on Education Strategic Review to the Project Team.