

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 190th meeting of the Council held on 25 November 2010 at
the General Optical Council, 41 Harley Street, London W1G 8DJ**

Present: Anna Bradley (in the Chair),
Morag Alexander, Paul Carroll, Robert Hogan,
Liam Kite, Kevin Lewis, Fiona Peel, Nicholas Rumney,
James Russell

In attendance: Satjit Singh, Jeff Cant, Linda Kennaugh, Ami Samra,
Irina Miksa, Philip Hallam, Liz Carr, Matthew Tait,
Maria Claridge, Joan Burrow

Alan Tinger, GOC Financial Consultant

Interim Chair's welcome

7264. The Interim Chair welcomed Members and guests to the 190th meeting of the Council and introduced Jeff Cant, Interim Director of Corporate Resources. Council was informed that a former member of Council, David Pyle was very ill and it was agreed that Council's best wishes be sent to him. Nick Rumney agreed to do this.

Apologies for absence

7265. Apologies for absence were received from Brian Coulter and Peter Douglas.

Declarations of interest

7266. 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. None were declared.

Minutes of the 189th meeting held on 23 September 2010

7267. The Minutes of the 189th meeting held on 23 September 2010 were signed as being a true and fair record of the meeting. It was noted:

- *Minute 7240* – a question was raised as this minute stated that it would not be possible to introduce a low income fee for this year's retention. It was confirmed that this should read that it would not be possible to introduce staged payments.' A proposal for a low income fee would be brought to Council later on the agenda.
- *Minute 7228* – It was confirmed that the modernisation of the IT system had been postponed to the New Year. Work with an IT consultant had been carried out and now that the new management team was in place this would be progressed and brought to Council at its January meeting.

Matters arising from the 186th meeting: for information

7268. Members received **Paper C(37)10** being an update on the matters arising from the previous meeting and progress on action taken.

7269. It was suggested that the answer to Item 5 relating to the use of 'optician' in the FTP Annual Report was not satisfactory even though it had been recommended by the Plain English Campaign. The professional titles were not being used and it had been agreed at a previous Council meeting that the terms 'optometrist and dispensing optician' would be used in GOC publications. It was agreed that the Communications Department would revisit this and report to January 2011 Council.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

Performance review

Project milestones

7270. Council received **Paper C(38)10** being the schedule of performance indicators for the delivery of the 2010/11 Business Plan. The Director of Corporate Resources reported that the majority of the projects were 'green'. Council was briefed on those projects indicated as 'amber':

- Amendment to the FTP Rules - there has been a slight delay in the consultation process with the professional bodies.
- IT Modernisation – all systems in the GOC have evolved separately. Work to bring them all together will be undertaken and a report will be brought to Council in January.
- Electronic case management system – this falls into the same category as the IT modernisation.
- Performance management – it was agreed that this area would be reviewed by the Registrar.

Key Performance Indicators

7271. The Director of Corporate Resources reported on **Paper C(39)10** which detailed the KPIs and measures and targets for these:

Strategic Priority 1

- i. Revalidation – this was three months ahead of target and on budget; CHRE and the DH were happy with the proposals.
- ii. Knowledge gaps – it had been recognised that this would require a large amount of work over the next few years.

Strategic Priority 2

- iii. CET undertaken – the statistics show that this should be on target. Provision is being reviewed and communication with registrants and liaison with optical bodies to assist with peer review provision is being undertaken.
- iv. Employee turnover – this is to be reviewed following the organisational review as a period of stability is needed to be able to assess this.
- v. Employee sickness – it was noted that this could be overcomplicated as the GOC was a small organisation and this was being reviewed by the management team.
- vi. System downtime – it was noted that there had been very few incidents.
- vii. FTP allegations processing time – ideally the aim should be to get this down to six months. This could take some time as some things would require rule changes and other issues need to be addressed both internally and externally.

- viii. Processing of registration/restoration applications – this was nearly 100% and overall very good. It was requested that the delays to applications with declarations be minimised and it was confirmed that this was an area which had been identified for review.
- ix. Online retention – this would be in place for the 2011/12 retention and the target was for 85% of registrants using the system.

Strategic Priority 3

- x. Stakeholder engagement – this needs to be reviewed although there has been considerable stakeholder engagement.

7272. Council was asked to note that as the Registrar was reviewing the reporting of the KPIs, the member of SMT responsible for key areas had not been included in this report. The new format including this will be brought to January Council for consideration.

7273. The Interim Chair wished to put on record that there was a need to review all of this in the light of the new plan for the financial year 2011/12. It was also important to note that the delivery of the projects agreed at the beginning of the year had been achieved.

7274. The Council joined the Interim Chair in thanking the staff for the delivery of these projects in a difficult period.

Financial position

7275. The Council received **Paper C(40)10** being the financial position to 30 September 2010. It was agreed that a proportion of the underspend be used for restructuring and other liabilities and that the forecast surplus of £300,000 be added to the reserves.

7276. It was noted that some of the underspend arose from timing differences. But in addition, budgeting at the beginning of the year had not been as accurate as it should have been and expenditure had been overestimated. Finally, income was more than had been anticipated at budget making time. Systems were now in place to rectify this and ensure budgeting is more accurate for 2011/12. Notwithstanding these difficulties the surplus, has allowed investment in restructuring, which is underway and investment in systems, including the case management system.

7277. **RESOLVED:**

that a proportion of the underspend be used for restructuring and other liabilities and the forecast surplus of £300,000 be added to the reserves.

Fees proposal for 2011/12

7278. Council received **Paper C(41)10** being the proposal for the introduction of a low income reduced fee for those earning less than £12,000 from all sources. It was expected that around 5% of registrants would come into this category and it was estimated that this would cost approximately £100,000. The suggested level of £100 below the full fee was comparable to other regulators and the optical bodies. This would be a light touch scheme and It was hoped that this would also encourage some professionals back onto the register. The Registration Policy and Projects Manager was thanked for a paper that gave the Council the evidence to make a sound decision.

7279. **RESOLVED**

- i. that a low income fee of £100 below the full fee be introduced;**

- ii. **that the reference to income being assessed in the application form and the guidance notes be removed; and**
- iii. **that a reference to the Code of Conduct be added to the guidance notes.**

7280. Council received **Paper C(42)10** being the forecast outcome and budgets for 2011/12 – 2013/14 and the proposals for retention fees for 2011/12 and **Paper C(43)10** being the proposed Registration Fees Rules. Costs were expected to decrease by £250,000 in 2011/12 and therefore the proposed fee for 2011/12 was £270 for optometrists, dispensing opticians and corporate registrants and £170 for low income earners. Student registration was frozen at £20

7281. This cost saving was expected to be maintained for the years 2012/13 and 2013/14 and therefore the fees can also be estimated for those years at £274 and £277 (based on current information). It was confirmed that the proposed fees absorb provision for the rise in VAT and the current levies for OCCS and CET and would also cover any CHRE levy in the next three years. The registrant numbers do not reflect the impact of the current financial climate as student numbers for the next three years are already known.

7282. **RESOLVED:**

that the retention fees for 2011/12 be set at:

- i. **£270 for optometrists, dispensing opticians and corporate registrants;**
- ii. **£170 for low income earners; and**
- iii. **£20 for students.**

Revalidation

7283. Council received **Paper C(44)10** being a progress report on the revalidation scheme. The Head of Education informed Council that this was three months ahead of schedule as it had been agreed at the September Council meeting that further consultation would be unnecessary. A meeting had been held with the optical bodies and it was agreed that it was not the right time for a change of name from CET as this was in the legislation and funding was available. The necessary amendments to legislation and the IT infrastructure were being looked at. Developments were being made to the CET Scheme which would lead into the revalidation scheme if implemented in January 2013

7284. **RESOLVED:**

that the term CET be retained until such time as the legislation is changed.

Report on behalf of the Devolved Administrations

7285. Council received **Paper C(45)10** being proposals for the future reporting by Council members on behalf of the devolved administrations and it was suggested that a specific member of the Executive should be tasked with supporting and co-ordinating with these members.

7286. **RESOLVED:**

- i. **that the Registrar's office would support the members from the devolved administrations and the team would be structured to allocate resources for this;**
- ii. **that the Registrar would report back on this at the next Council meeting;**

- iii. **that this would be an item on Council agendas half yearly and more frequently if necessary.**

Online retention

7287. Council received **Paper C(46)10** being a progress report on the online retention project and it was noted that this was on track for launch within the agreed timescales.

Determinations of FTP hearings

7288. The Council received **Paper C(47)10** being the determinations of FTP hearings since June 2010 and the outcome of an appeal to the High Court.

Stakeholder engagement activity

7289. The Council received **Paper C(48)10** being information on GOC stakeholder engagement activity since April 2010.

Any other business

7290. No further items were raised.

Date and time of next meeting

7291. The next Council meeting will be held at **14:00** on **Thursday 27 January 2011** at 41 Harley Street, London W1G 8DJ.