

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 184th meeting of the Council held on 25 February 2010 at
41 Harley Street, London W1G 8DJ**

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

In attendance: Dian Taylor, Kate Fielding, Rosalyn Hayles,
Linda Kennaugh, Jon Levett, Lesa Oakley, Clare March,
Maria Claridge, Joan Burrow, Simon Grier (for agenda
item 10), Matthew Tait (for agenda item 11)
Alan Tinger (GOC Financial Consultant)

Chair's opening remarks

7083. The Chair welcomed members and guests to the 184th meeting of the Council.

Apologies for absence

7084. No apologies for absence were received.

Declarations of interest

7085. 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.

Minutes of the 183rd meeting held on 18 November 2009

7086. The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2009 were signed as being a true and fair record of the meeting with the alteration of the figure for fees in minute 7041 from £315 to £325.

Matters arising from the 183rd meeting: for information

7087. Members received **Paper C(01)10** being an update on the matters arising from the previous meeting and progress on action taken.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

Strategic Plan 2010-15

7088. The Council received paper **C(02)10** being the proposed Strategic Plan for 2010-15. The Registrar explained that this paper contained a summary of the responses from Phase 2 of the consultation on the draft plan, which ran from 4 December 2009 to 1 February 2010. There had been 16 responses, seven being from the optical bodies and nine from registrants. The key messages from the responses had been summarised in paragraph 7 and more detail was given in paragraphs 8-12. Following the consultation a small group of Council members had considered the amendments to the mission statement and strategic priorities arising from the responses received.

It was noted that **Annex 1** to the paper was an analysis of responses to specific questions and **Annex 2** was the complete Strategic Plan with the suggested changes following consultation added. Council was asked to consider the proposed changes recommended by the group.

Mission Statement

7089. In discussion it was suggested that the word 'innovative' (as used in the mission statement) had been misinterpreted in the responses. It was intended to mean that the GOC was innovative in its regulation and not in changes in optical practice. It was suggested that a change to the wording to say '*Our mission is to be recognised as a modern healthcare regulator, innovative and effective in our processes*' would clarify the meaning.

Strategic Priority 1

7090. It was noted that there had been several responses relating to Continuing Education and Training (CET) but it was agreed that there would be a danger in adding the words 'including appropriate education, training and CET to 'Strategic priority 1' as it may suggest, inappropriately the need for a greater emphasis on education over other parts of the GOC's regulatory framework.

7091. In the section on '*What success will look like in five years' time*' for Strategic priority 1 point (i) It was suggested that it was not the role of the GOC to 'encourage changes' in the nature of service delivery in the optical sector but that this should be the role for others and that the words '*and encourage*' should be deleted from this paragraph.

Strategic Priority 3

7092. With regard to the suggested addition in 'Strategic priority 3', of the words '*(including the public, patients, registrants, educators and their representatives)*' it was noted that it could be seen to exclude some stakeholders, however, Members considered that the phrase clearly indicated that. It was agreed that it was clear that the list of stakeholders was not exhaustive, but included those listed in particular and therefore, the phrase did not need to be clarified further.

7093. It was suggested that it should be ensured that acronyms not be used as this would be a public document and those outside the optical world would not understand them.

7094. It was also noted that, in responses, it was suggested that the GOC should not itself be collecting data on the supply and demand for optical services, but should be the recipient of such data generated by other bodies. Members agreed that it needed a good information base in order to make decisions.

7095. **RESOLVED:**

- (i) **that the Mission Statement be amended to read "Our mission is to be recognised as a modern healthcare regulator, innovative and effective in our processes;**
- (ii) **that Strategic priority 1 remain as originally drafted so that it reads: *Develop the regulatory framework to support UK eye care in delivering safe, high quality care which meets society's needs and expectations;***
- (iii) **that 'and encouraged' be removed from (i) in Strategic priority 1;**
- (iv) **that Strategic priority 2 remain as originally drafted so that it reads: *Continue to modernise our core functions and put in place systems for improvement to become more efficient and more effective;***

- (v) that Strategic priority 3 be revised so that it reads:
Promote a wider understanding of our role and engage stakeholders (including the public, patients, registrants, educators and their representatives) in our work.

Business Priorities & Budget 2010/11 and Risk-based Reserves

7096. The Council received **Paper C(03)10** being the final versions of the business priorities and budget for 2010/11 and the recommendations of the Audit Committee for risk based reserves.

7097. The Chair of the Audit Committee explained that the Committee had looked at the way in which the GOC had quantified risk in the past and at how other regulators set their reserves. The Committee concluded that the GOC reserves should be set at a level equivalent to three months turnover. This would be kept under review annually and, if necessary altered from time to time. It was noted that, if the budget for the next financial year was approved, the current reserves were at an appropriate level. After a short discussion it was agreed to approve the Audit Committee's recommendation. It was also agreed that it was appropriate that the GOC had a reserves policy in place.

7098. **RESOLVED:**

- (i) that the **GOC Reserves Policy be that the equivalent to three months turnover be retained as reserves;**
- (ii) that the **current level of reserves be retained for 2010/11; and**
- (iii) that the **level of reserves be reviewed annually.**

7099. Members received presentations from the budget holders on their key projects for 2010/11 and also the core work of their departments.

[Note: presentation slides are available on request, together with narrative]

7100. The Chair thanked the Registrar and Directors for their presentations and noted that it demonstrated what the GOC does and the transparency of its work.

7101. **RESOLVED:**

that the business priorities and budget for 2010/11 be approved.

Performance review

7102. The Council received **Paper C(04)10** being the quarterly report from the Executive to the Council on its delivery against the performance indicators and project plans. The Registrar informed the Council that there were no red items but there were five ambers.

7103. Within revalidation there were two research projects that had not met the milestones but there was no danger to the implementation of the revalidation scheme.

7104. There was a slight delay in the resources and timing for the FTP electronic case management scheme.

7105. There was a delay in the Council members' induction but it was agreed that following a comprehensive induction throughout the first year of appointment, other than statutory induction, this training was no longer necessary.

7106. The shortfall in the visits to iSpy had in part been caused by the web developers not yet having made a direct link from staff computers onto iSpy.

Financial Position

7107. The Council received Paper **C(05)10** being the financial position at the end of the nine months to 31 December 2009. The Registrar confirmed that the capital expenditure was within budget and that the forecast had improved as shown in the tables. Members congratulated the Executive on achieving the improved year-end financial position against budget.

7108. **RESOLVED:**

that Council accept the report on the financial position to 31 December 2009.

FTP legal services tender process

7109. The Council noted **Paper C(06)10** being an update on progress on the legal services tender. The Director of Legal & Fitness to Practise drew the Council's attention to the Chair's agreement to a change in the Standing Financial Instructions. This meant a more sophisticated approach to the process for appointing providers of external legal advice.

7110. The Director asked that the Council meet by teleconference on either 10 or 11 March to approve the appointments. It was confirmed that this would need to be done before the end of the financial year as this was when the current contract ended.

7111. In discussion queries were raised as to the type of contract. The Director confirmed that a framework would be developed to fix costs as much as possible to the end of the contract period of 4 years with the possibility of a further year's extension.

7112. **RESOLVED:**

that a private meeting of Council, by teleconference, be held at 08.30 on Thursday 11 March 2010 in order to approve the appointment of the successful legal firm(s).

Stakeholder reference groups

7113. The Council received Paper **C(07)10** outlining proposals for the recruitment to the GOC's stakeholder reference groups. The Communications Manager advised the intent was to form two groups; one representative of professionals and the other representative of patients and the public. It was proposed to run the groups as one year pilots. The input of the groups would be sought mainly by e-engagement as this was the most flexible way of gaining their input.

7114. The Manager confirmed that the groups would be utilised according to business needs. Possible subjects for their input include: changes to the website, reviewing leaflets, awareness of the GOC, registration, revalidation, changes to FTP (OHPA) and to raise awareness of GOC strategies. The launch of the groups will be at a facilitated meeting on 22 September 2010.

7115. The Manager confirmed that to ensure the best use of resources, the posts would be advertised in the optical journals, the GOC website, the volunteer pages of the Guardian, job centre plus and patient liaison groups.

7116. In discussion it was suggested that, although the idea had been adopted at the new Council's first meeting, it may not now be appropriate to set up these groups as the GOC was already making use of stakeholder input. It was also suggested that the committees which had now been recruited to, were akin to stakeholder reference groups.

7117. However, Council agreed to proceed with undertaking a one-year pilot of the groups, with a review of their effectiveness at the end of the pilot. It was suggested that there should be a GOC-wide review of all stakeholder engagement to consider what works most effectively.

7118. **RESOLVED:**

that the appointment of the Stakeholder Reference Groups proceed on a pilot basis with feedback to Council post September 2011.

Equality and Diversity Scheme

7119. The Council received **Paper C(08)10** being the report on the first full year of the GOC's Equality and Diversity Scheme. The Action Plan 2008-09 was attached as **Annex 1** and the Registrar informed Council that there were still some objectives shown as amber but these were expected to be in place by April.

7120. In response to a query, the Director of Communications and Information confirmed that there was a statutory obligation to report annually on equality and diversity activity which formed part of the GOC's Annual Report.

7121. The Registrar informed the Council that the Draft Scheme for 2010-12 was attached as **Annex 2** and that a new action plan would arise from this.

7122. It was suggested that the GOC should provide more information about access to the building to reduce barriers to people visiting. It was suggested that this information should be provided to people attending FTP hearings in particular. Also, as other buildings in Harley Street have buzzers in the street for wheelchair users, the GOC should have this provision.

7123. It was noted that the training institutions have to comply with legislation regarding students with disabilities and Registration Committee had worked with them on guidance for this. The Director of Education confirmed that, in the annual monitoring forms for training institutions, there were questions about the universities' equality and diversity arrangements. It was agreed that this should be detailed in the action plan.

7124. Attached as **Annex 3** was the Registration Department's Equality and Diversity Monitoring report for 2009. The Project and Policy Officer informed Council that the response rate had been good (68% of full registrants and 26% of students) and that there were interesting findings in relation to age, ethnicity and FTP. It was confirmed that, in trying to increase the response rate, particularly amongst students, there had also been a separate mailing from Registration Department to those who had not responded to date. It was also confirmed that in 2011-12 there would be different data available as religion and belief information would also be added to the forms. It was probable that the dataset would be refreshed at that time so a complete mailing would be sent to registrants to renew their data.

7125. It was confirmed that the results would be published on the GOC website. It was agreed that it would be useful for demonstrating trends in the future but, as it was the first report, this would not yet be possible.

7126. It was noted that the results did not agree with the experience of Council in that there were an increasing number of ethnic minority female students entering training, but this did not seem to be reflected in the data relating to full registrants. It was noted that data was collected at retention and that it would be useful to collect data from those leaving the register to reflect changes in behaviour patterns.

7127. It was noted that the dataset would need to be updated every two or three years.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence

Performance review

7128. The Registrar confirmed that the Self Assessment had been submitted before the end of 2009 to the CHRE against the performance review standards and the initial judgements had recently been received. CHRE had asked the GOC to submit further information and a meeting had been arranged for 26 February. A report would be made to Council in due course.

CHRE activity

7129. The Registrar informed the Council that there had been a number of CHRE policy papers which the GOC had responded to, as outlined in February Registrar's Report.

7130. The Chair reported that he had attended a CHRE symposium on 4-5 February 2010. He reported that discussions focused around whether regulator's 'lead or follow'; whether they are 'agile' (i.e. responsive); that regulators should continue to demonstrate consistency and cost-effectiveness in all that they do; and the future of healthcare regulation in a changing political environment.

Committee Appointments

7131. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that the appointment process had been completed for Education and Standards Committees. There were still vacancies for a dispensing optician on Investigation Committee and Standards Committee, a possible optometrist vacancy on Standards Committee and a lay vacancy on Education Committee.

Determinations of FTP Hearings

7132. The Council received **Paper C(09)10** being the determinations of FTP hearings since November 2009 and noted the cases listed in **Annexes 1 and 2**.

Stakeholder Engagement Activity

7133. The Council received **Paper C(10)10** being information on GOC stakeholder engagement activity and noted the summary table in **Annex 1**.

Any other business

7134. No further items were raised.

Date and time of next meeting

7135. The next Council meeting will be held at **09:30 on Thursday 17 June 2010** at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham B40 1PP.