

## **Report from the Chair of Council**

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**Meeting:** 29 July 2015

**Status:** for noting

**Lead responsibility:** Gareth Hadley (Chair) **Paper Author:** Gareth Hadley

### **Introduction**

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1. This report covers my principal activities since the Council meeting held on **13 May 2015**.

### **Stakeholders**

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2. **College of Optometrists:** Ian Humphreys has been appointed Chief Executive of the College of Optometrists: he will take office later in the year following Bryony Pawinska's retirement. On the Council's behalf, I wrote to Ian (**14 July 2015**) congratulating him on his appointment, adding that '*... You will not need me to offer admonition about the challenges facing optometry and those who practise it, namely your members; our registrants. Those challenges will necessitate change: both of our respective organisations will have to demonstrate fleetness of foot as we do our parts to enable professionals to continue to deliver high quality eyecare services to patients and to protect the public from harm. This can most effectively be achieved if Council and College are able to move forward in lockstep. We are looking forward to working with you and your colleagues to seek to achieve this in the years to come.*'
3. **Vision 2020UK:** As you will know, the Council has recently become a corporate member of Vision 2020UK. Together with the Chief Executive and Registrar and the Director of Policy, I attended their recent seminar (**1 June 2015**). This provided an opportunity not only to contribute to discussions about the future direction of optics and the challenges confronting all within optics and health and social care in the wider sense but also to talk informally with other key players, particularly those from the third sector. I meet Vision 2020UK's chair (Nigel Clarke) regularly in his capacity as chair of the General Pharmaceutical Council: together with the Director of Policy. I am meeting their Chief Executive (Mercy Jeyasingham, one of our former Fitness to Practise panel chairs) (**28 July 2015**) later in the month to discuss how our membership of the charity might be exploited to mutual benefit. As Vision 2020UK seeks to consolidate and widen its traction, there could be advantage to both parties from our engagement with opinion formers, particularly those within the political square.

Common ground between ourselves – ground shared with many others within the optics sector – is that our registrants have both the knowledge and skill to do more to preserve eyesight than many public authorities – particularly those within England – currently expect of them. Such convergence of interest should be exploited to the benefit of public protection.

4. **Healthcare Regulators' chairs:** I will be attending a meeting of the chairs of UK healthcare regulatory bodies (**27 July 2015**), on this occasion hosted by the General Pharmaceutical Council. Items for discussion include: the question of legislative change within healthcare regulation following HM Government's decision not to include the Law Commissions' Bill within the Parliamentary programme for the current session: the Professional Standards Authority's performance review process; and the work of the General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council on guidance on candour. I will report orally on the outcome of those discussions.

### Council and Committees

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5. I chaired the Council's evaluation, training and performance review days (**23/24 June 2015**) and the Nominations Committee (**3 June 2015**). I also attended a meeting of the Remuneration Committee (**3 July 2015**).

### Management

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6. In addition to my regular conversations with the Chief Executive and Registrar, we have had three long bilateral discussions concerning the work and direction of the Council. One of these related to the annual appraisal of the Chief Executive and Registrar's performance, which, in accordance with usual practice, will be the subject of discussion during Council's strictly confidential meeting (**29 July 2015**). I have also had discussions with other members of the Executive.
7. I wrote in the following terms to former Fitness to Practise panellists (**22 July 2015**) to thank them for the services that they had provided over the previous decade:

*'David Henley has shared with me a copy of his email to you and to the other Fitness to Practise panellists who left office at the end of last month. From conversations that I have had – both with David and with his assistant Terence Yates – I know that the sentiments that David expressed went beyond the formality of thanking those whose appointments had come to an end: they were heartfelt, reflecting not only the esteem in which both David and Terence held their panellist colleagues but also the camaraderie demonstrated by the whole of the team in coming to grips with challenging issues on which they had to reach judgment.'*

*I would like to add my thanks and those of my Council and executive colleagues to those that you have already received from David. The Council's duty to protect the public through the setting of educational and qualification requirements and the standards of practise expected of its registrants would be undeliverable but for it being paralleled by robust arrangements to reach just decisions on allegations of impairment. That over the past ten years, you and your Fitness to Practise panellist colleagues have exercised this latter responsibility independently with neither fear nor favour in an exemplary manner is borne witness to by the fact that neither our oversight body – the Professional Standards Authority – nor the courts have had much cause to intervene in the judgments that you have made. We are grateful for all that you have done.*

*David has also shared with me both the tips that you and your colleagues have asked him to pass on to your successors and the collective learning points that you have drawn from your experience of hearings. Thank you for sharing these: lessons will be drawn from them.'*

8. I chaired the interview panel for the chair of the Investigations Committee (**22 July 2015**). (Other members of the interview panel were: Helen Tilley, Fiona Peel and independent member of the Nominations Committee Penny Bennett).