

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
General Dental Council**

**held at 09:30am on Thursday 17 December 2020**

**in Open Session held on MS Teams**

**Council Members present:**

William Moyes	Chair
Terry Babbs	
Catherine Brady	
Donald Burden	
Anne Heal	
Jeyanthi John	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Caroline Logan	
Simon Morrow	
Crispin Passmore	
Laura Simons	

**Executive Directors in attendance:**

Ian Brack	Chief Executive and Registrar
John Cullinane	Interim Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Sarah Keyes	Executive Director, Organisational Development
Gurvinder Soomal	Executive Director, Registration and Corporate Resources
Lisa Marie Williams	Executive Director, Legal and Governance

**Staff in attendance:**

Osama Ammar	Head of Public Policy (item 10 only)
Katherine McGirr	Policy Manager (item 11 only)
Samantha Bache	Head of Finance and Procurement (item 12 only)
Dave Criddle	Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO (item 12 only)
Colin Mackenzie	Interim Head of Communications and Engagement
Katie Spears	Head of Governance
Rebecca Ledwidge	Secretariat Manager
Lee Bird	Governance Manager

**Others in Attendance:**

Rosie Varley	Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC)
Sir Ross Cranston FBA	Incoming Chair of the SPC
HHJ Philip Sycamore QC	Incoming SPC Member
Serbjit Kaur MBE	Incoming SPC Member
Members of Staff	Attending as observers

Members of the Public    Attending as observers

## Apologies:

None.

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that there were no apologies.
- 1.2 Members of the public and staff observers in attendance were reminded of the meeting etiquette that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

### 2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 In relation to the substantive agenda, all Council Members declared an interest in the Council and Chair appointments process. On the Scope of Practice item, all registrant Council Members declared an interest.
- 2.2 In relation to items considered via correspondence, the Chair and Chief Executive declared an interest in their respective appraisal processes. All Council Members declared an interest in the managing interests and gifts and hospitality policies for Council Members. All staff and all Council Members declared an interest in the item on Financial Policies and Procedures. On the Quality Assurance Decisions items, any registrant Members with connections to the inspected educational establishments in the paper declared an interest.

### 3. Questions Submitted by Members of the Public

- 3.1 The Council **noted** that no questions had been received.

### 4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 4.1 The Council **noted** that the full minutes of the public meeting held on 22 October 2020 had been approved by correspondence, and published shortly thereafter, alongside abbreviated minutes of the closed meeting held on the same date.

### 5. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

- 5.1 The Council **noted** the actions list and agreed that all items labelled 'suggest complete' should be marked as completed. The Council was content with the progress of the other live actions.

### 6. Decision Log

- 6.1 The Council **noted** that it had considered thirteen matters via correspondence:
  - a. Appointment of the SPC Chair and SPC Members – the Council had approved the appointment of Sir Ross Cranston FBA as the new SPC Chair, HHJ Philip Sycamore and Carol Ashton as new lay Members of the SPC and Serbjit Kaur MBE as a new registrant Member of the SPC. These members would commence their four-year terms of office on 1 January 2021.
  - b. Access to Free Reserves – the Accounting Officer, Chair of Council and Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) had approved access to free reserves in the sum of £8,500 to meet the cost of recruiting an additional Member to the SPC.

- c. Chair and Chief Executive Appraisal Process – the Council had approved a new, streamlined process.
- d. Process for the Appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and Policy on the Appointments of non-Statutory Committee Members – the Council had approved the process to recruit a new independent Member of the ARC and the revised policy on the appointment of non-statutory Committee Members.
- e. Extension of the Chair’s Strategy Group (CSG) – the Council had approved the extension of the CSG until 28 July 2021.
- f. Managing Interests for Council Members and Independent Governance Associates – Policy – the Council had approved a revised policy.
- g. Gifts and Hospitality for Council Members and Independent Governance Associates – Policy and Annual Report – the Council had approved a revised policy and noted the annual report.
- h. Review of Financial Policies and Procedures – the Council had approved the Financial Policies and Procedures 2021, Financial Delegated Authority 2021 and Council Member and Associates Expenses Policy 2021. The Council agreed that these policies would continue to be reviewed by the Council annually. The Council also approved the Procurement Exception Policy 2021, the staff expenses policy 2021, the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy 2021 and the Corporate Credit Card Policy 2021. The Council agreed that these policies would, in future, be approved by the EMT as they related to the operational management of the organisation.
- i. Quality Assurance Decisions – this paper was noted. It would be communicated onwards to the Privy Council.
- j. Public Affairs, Policy and Media Update and Stakeholder Engagement Report – these papers were noted.
- k. Research Programme – Update – this paper was noted.
- l. Annual Reports on Committee Effectiveness – these papers from the ARC, FPC, Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom) and CSG were noted.
- m. Promoting Professionalism – Update – this paper was noted.

## **7. Assurance Reports from Committee Chairs**

- 7.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) updated the Council on the work of the ARC since the last Council meeting. The Committee had met once and had considered the timetable and plan for the GDC’s Annual Report and Accounts for 2020, the strategic risk register (SRR) in detail and the Board Assurance Framework (BAF) and the Committee had conducted a deep dive into the effectiveness of governance. The Committee had considered internal audit reports on risk management reporting and People Services (where substantial assurance was available) and had approved the internal and external audit plans for 2021. The Chair of ARC also noted that the Executive continued to act promptly implementing internal audit recommendations. The Council heard that the Committee would conduct deep dives in 2021 into areas of strategic risk which were largely outside of the control of the organisation, such as EU Exit, legislative reform and Covid-19, to scrutinise organisational resilience to deal with them

- 7.2 The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) updated Council on the work of the FPC since the last Council meeting. The Committee had met once and had considered the organisational performance data and analysis, a second iteration of the work on performance and productivity during the pandemic, an update on the work of the Education Quality Assurance function an update on Organisational Development key performance indicators. The Committee had also considered the proposals around the Defined Benefit pension scheme and scrutinised the investment strategy for 2021 and the Fitness to Practise action plan. The Council heard that the Committee would continue to scrutinise performance and resource in Fitness to Practise at its meeting in February 2021, alongside the ongoing scrutiny work around productivity during the pandemic.
- 7.3 The Chair of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RemNom) updated the Council on the work of the RemNom since the last meeting. The Committee had met once and had considered the Chair and Council Member recruitment process for 2021. The Committee had taken assurance that the organisation's drive for diversity within the recruitment process was a key focus and that this would be supported by the external recruitment partner and a clear communications plan. The Committee had also scrutinised the recruitment process for the independent Member of the ARC, the assurance of the EMT reward policy and the Council Members and Associates Expenses Policy.
- 7.4 The Chair of Council updated the Council on the work of the Chair's Strategy Group (CSG) since the last meeting. The Group had met once and had considered the ongoing work around the GDC's presentational and communications approach and an update on the economic impact of Covid-19 on the dental sector from the research team. The Council heard that both streams of work would return to the Group in the new year and would be presented to Council at an appropriate point.
- 7.5 The Council **noted** the updates.

## 8. Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC) – Annual Report

- 8.1 The Chair of the SPC presented the annual report of the Committee and highlighted the key areas of scrutiny and oversight that it had conducted in 2020. The Committee had monitored a large programme of in-house recruitment of statutory panellists which had been successful in the appointment of 52 new posts. This had taken place remotely, due to Covid-19, and staff involved had been resilient and adaptable. The Council noted that there would likely be some benefit in cross-organisational discussion, perhaps at the RemNom, of any lessons learned from that exercise to inform wider Member recruitment exercises. The Council discussed the ongoing issues presented by attracting and appointing suitable DCP candidates into these roles and that there continued to be work to be done in this area. The Council also noted the continuous development of the panellist cohort had been facilitated by the Committee's scrutiny of Quality Assurance feedback through the various assurance mechanisms in place. The Council noted the view of the outgoing Chair of SPC that the use of remote hearings and any attendant impact on their quality would continue to be a challenge to be monitored by the organisation.
- 8.2 The Council **noted** the update and thanked the outgoing Chair and SPC Members for their commitment and service to the organisation.

## 9. Council and Chair Appointments Process

- 9.1 The Executive Director, Legal and Governance presented the paper which outlined the proposed recruitment approach for the appointment of a new Chair and Council Member in 2021. The RemNom had scrutinised and recommended the process to the Council.
- 9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. The need for maximum diversity in the candidate pool was imperative and would be challenging. A strong communications approach and effective communication with the external recruitment partner would support this. There would also be the need for careful candidate management, given the lengthy process required to move from initial application to appointment to the Council.
  - b. Special care should be given to ensure that the GDC's policies and PSA's policies on conflicts of interest were clear to candidates to ensure that prospective candidates were aware of the approach that would be required to be taken in that respect.
  - c. Panellists would undertake unconscious bias training, and this would be built into the timetable.
  - d. Communications with DCP stakeholders would also be key. Utilising existing Council Members to speak to their experience as Council Members might prove a fruitful way of allaying any fears or concerns from this group as to the possibility of combining a Council role with their existing employment responsibilities.
- 9.3 The Council **approved** the recruitment approach and high-level timetable for recruitment.  
*The Head of Public Policy joined the meeting.*

## 10. Review of the Corporate Strategy

- 10.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and the Head of Public Policy presented the paper which outlined a revised approach to strategic priorities for the organisation. The Council heard that the changing environment necessitated a dynamic approach to strategy. The exercise that had taken place did not revise the fundamental principles in the strategy but attempted to respond to the changed environment and to re-cast the strategic aims for clarity.
- 10.2 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. The Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted healthcare access inequalities and the organisation had an interest in understanding the extent of this, and how the additional pressures of the pandemic impacted the dental professions. The Council noted the implications for patient access to treatment if dental practices and dental laboratories continued to be affected. The Council heard that the team were participating in research across the healthcare professions to further this understanding.
  - b. The team provided assurance that the research discussions that had taken place to inform the strategy were fine grained and involved outreach to dentists, the various DCP groups and the public.
  - c. Careful thought was required as to how the updated strategy should be communicated, both internally to staff and Associates, and to external audiences. There continued to be a need for clear and accessible information to be available to the public, to further understanding of the GDC's regulatory role and remit, and to the professions to support improved patient care. The Council asked the team

to consider the inclusion of an element of strategic ambition to support public understanding of desirable clinical outcomes, by working with key stakeholders. This approach would build on the work conducted as part of Shifting the Balance.

- 10.3 The Council agreed that the paper was clear, well expressed and thanked the team for their work on reviewing the strategic approach. Accordingly, the Council **approved** the revised Corporate Strategy, subject to the refinements outlined above.

*The Head of Public Policy left the meeting.*

*The Policy Manager joined the meeting.*

## 11. Scope of Practice – Purpose and Approach

- 11.1 The Executive Director, Strategy and the Policy Manager presented the paper which outlined options for a review of the Scope of Practice for the dental team. The primary purpose of the document was to protect patients and the team were keen to explore the approach of merging the Scope of Practice guidance with existing guidance and to take an evidence-led approach to setting high level reserved duties.

- 11.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. Consideration of whether the organisation could have a simpler approach of dental professionals being trained, competent and indemnified was superficially attractive but there were clear benefits to providing additional detail to support registrants to manage roles within the dental team and that gave clarity around expectations and parameters for practice. The work was both timely and intended to be supportive to practitioners managing the most appropriate care pathways for patients.
- b. The proposals to consult with the professions about the approach were welcomed by the Council and the communications approach around any potential changes would need to be carefully considered.
- c. A patient-facing version of the guidance, once the registrant-facing document was prepared, would also be beneficial.

- 11.3 The Council was content with the direction of travel for the work and the proposed approach (Option 3).

*The Policy Manager left the meeting.*

*The Head of Finance and Procurement and the Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO joined the meeting.*

## 12. Organisational Performance – Q3 of 2020

### Part A: Financial Review and Forecast

- 12.1 The Head of Finance and Procurement presented the paper and outlined that, for Quarter 3 of 2020, income had been £0.5m lower than budgeted. This was largely due to exam deferment and had been offset by investment income and sales of assets which had reached the end of their useful life. Expenditure was £5.6m lower than budgeted and this underspend was as a result of the impact of Covid-19 on planned activities. These activities were incorporated into the Costed Corporate Plan period for 2021-2023. There was a forecast operating surplus of £5.9m by the end of year and the reserves at the end of the CCP plan period were forecast to be at 3.6 months – a reduction from the Q2 forecast outturn. The Council heard that the FPC were monitoring the forecast surplus closely and would reactivate pending projects if income risk did not crystallise and the



Executive were keeping under review the organisation's ability to commence work earlier within the year if it were possible to do so.

- 12.2 The Council discussed the provision of the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) by the external supplier and noted that efforts were ongoing to attempt to safely hold exams in 2021 but, under current legislative constraints, this decision ultimately lay with the external provider.
- 12.3 The Council **noted** the update.

#### Part B: CCP Quarterly Performance Report

- 12.4 The Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO presented the paper and outlined the key performance insights. 37 of the 43 listed projects were on track and the six Amber rated projects were not expected to be delayed in relation to overall delivery. At the end of Q3, there were 28 FTE vacancies and recruitment activity had resumed in that quarter.
- 12.5 The Council **noted** the report.

#### Part C: Balanced Scorecard

- 12.6 The Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO presented the paper which provided key performance highlights and exceptions for the period. The Council heard that registration application volumes had increased across all routes, bar to the specialist lists, and this was a result of later graduation periods due to Covid-19. In relation to Information Governance, in this period there had been no major ICO or GDC impacts and the team had successfully responded to the highest volume of Freedom of Information requests since 2016. In relation to People Services, recruitment following probation success had increased to 87% in this quarter and, in relation to Governance, the team had delivered 16 more Board meetings in the period than had been planned and had improved performance since Q2 – with over 80% compliance on all KPIs. The Council discussed the spike in FOI requests and noted that the volumes had returned to a more normal level.
- 12.7 In relation to FtP timeliness, the Case Examiner to Hearings referral rate had decreased to 19% for the quarter. Cases had been postponed due to Covid-19 and a reduced hearings capacity presented challenges for the team. The Council heard that the Fitness to Practice Action Plan continued to focus on improvement areas and staff shortages had impacted delivery in this area. In relation to the Dental Complaints Service, the Council heard that a 10% decrease in performance from Q2 was as a result of delays in response times from dental professionals during Covid-19 and the impact of two large corporate practices that had closed where it had been difficult to establish a clear ownership structure.
- 12.8 The Council also heard that sickness absence, outside of Covid-19, had been lower than usual which may have been a result of less social mixing generally. The Council also heard that the FtP team were working with People Services to look at different ways to recruit into the team to improve resilience.
- 12.9 The Council noted that whilst the presentation of the data (with colour coding and arrows) was helpful, it requested that the team look again at the volume of the data that was presented in relation to organisational performance, with a view to streamlining the pack. When there was an issue about which the Council should be concerned, it would require more granular detail. When performance was as expected, the additional detail was not required. The Council heard that the team were working on this, following a request from the FPC, and would present proposals in the new year.

12.10 The Council **noted** the performance information.

*The Head of Finance and Procurement and the Head of Business Intelligence, Delivery and PMO left the meeting.*

**13. Any Other Business**

13.1 There was no other business.

**14. Review of the Meeting**

14.1 The Council noted that the papers for this meeting had been useful and that the agenda timings had worked well.

*The meeting was closed at 11:45am*