

Minutes of the Council Public Meeting

Remote – Via Zoom

Tuesday, 10 November 2020 @ 09:30

	Agenda Item	Present	Apologies
		<p>Dr Jim Livingstone (President) Mr Jonathan Patton (Vice-President) Ms Carol Moore Mr Mark McCrudden Prof Patrick Murphy Mr Barry Mimmagh Ms Alison Ragg Ms Chanel Jones Ms Colleen Duffy Ms Sheena Kenny (Boardroom Apprentice)</p> <p>Ms Siobhan Carson (Professional Standards Authority)</p> <p>In Attendance</p> <p>Mr Trevor Patterson (Chief Executive) Mrs Laura Hughes (Registrar) Mrs Joan Duffy (Head of Business Operations) Mr Mark Neale (Head of Public Affairs) Mr Peter Hutchinson (Policy & Standards Engagement Lead) Mrs June Alexander (Executive Assistant)</p>	<p>Ms Sandra Cooke</p>

			Action
1.0	Welcome & Apologies	The President welcomed the representative from PSA and all Council members.	
2.0	Deputations	The President was present for the entirety of the meeting – no deputation required.	
3.0	Conflicts of Interest	The registrant members of Council declared a conflict of interest in relation to the retention fee element of Agenda Point 6.0.	
4.0	Tabling of Any Other Business	None.	
5.0	Minutes & Key Actions from last meeting For Approval	<p>Council approved and adopted the Minutes of the 17 September 2020 Council meeting as a true and accurate record of events.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <p>Skills Audit – later in agenda.</p> <p>NI Board of Assessors appointment – the CEO advised that Alison Ragg had been appointed to the interview panel for a Registrant Member of the Board of Assessors. Two appointments had arisen from the interviews – Johanna Barry (NI representative on the Board of Assessors) and Heather Bell (General representative). Alison Ragg advised that GPhC were impressed with the high calibre of the candidates.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Key decisions Council approved and adopted the Minutes of the 17 September 2020 Council meeting as a true and accurate record of events.</p> </div>	<p>Proposed by: Barry Mimmagh Seconded by: Mark McCrudden</p>

	<p>6.0 Draft Budget & Fees 2021/22 For Approval</p>	<p>The HBO presented, and explained the headlines in, the Financial Dashboard for Q1, cash Projection for Q1 and the Draft Budget 2021/22 to Council for approval.</p> <p>She advised that, should Council wish to increase fees for the 2021/22 year, that decision should be taken now to afford sufficient time for planning and consultation and to give registrants sufficient notice. Council was advised that the Finance & Performance Committee had reviewed the cashflow and projections for this year and the initial budget for 2021/22 and that it had been unanimously agreed by the Committee that a recommendation be made to Council for no increase in the fees.</p> <p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approved the Draft Budget 2021/22 in principle, as recommended by the Finance & Performance Committee and agreed to revisit the Budget at its April 2021 meeting; and • approved no increase to the fee for retention year 2021/22, as recommended by the Finance & Performance Committee. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Key Decisions Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approved the Draft Budget 2021/22 in principle, as recommended by the Finance & Performance Committee and agreed to revisit the Budget at its April 2021 meeting; and • approved no increase to the fee for retention year 2021/22, as recommended by the Finance & Performance Committee. </div>	<p>Proposed by: Jonathan Patton Seconded by: Barry Mimmagh</p>
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<p>7.0</p>	<p>Council Skills Assessment For Approval</p>	<p>The President thanked the Task & Finish for their work on this matter.</p> <p>The Chair of the T&F Group advised that, following Council feedback and observations at the last Council meeting, the T&F Group had two meetings with senior management and the HR consultant. Main points discussed included the linking of the skills and experience to strategic objectives, making the assessment more targeted, affording the opportunity to Council members to reflect on their experience. Council was asked to review the revised assessment tool which would be a starting point as more revisions and refinements will be made over time. It was recommended that Council approve the assessment tool, as presented.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that the data will be collated by the HR Consultant and an analysis then provided to the President and Vice-President. He advised that the skills assessment would assist with Council recruitment and with Council training and development as it would identify skills deficits (i.e. fewer than 2 people with a particular skill) and traffic light colour coding should be adopted.</p> <p>Council members' observations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern that the assessment tool was not pharmacist based, leading to a potential disconnect and a bias to suit non-registrant Council members; may also deter pharmacists (particularly community pharmacists) from applying to be Council members; In discussion it was confirmed that whilst some categories of skill were less likely to be found in pharmacists, others around technical knowledge and sectoral knowledge would not be found amongst lay members – the objective was to have a range of skills across Council, not the same skills in every member ; and 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the assessment tool needs to be in line with the Council member job description to inform future competitions, the training and development strategy and how Council will work better as a team for the benefit of the organisation and its registrants. <p>Council agreed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to adopt and complete the skills assessment tool as a pilot, having removed the questions on page 1 and provided space for respondents to comment on the ease or difficulty they found in completing to the assessment; the same T&F Group & Chair will review the requirements for a training and development strategy (from Day 1 of a Council member's appointment) with a view to bringing their findings to Council in early 2021; subsequently, having tested the pilot skills assessment tool, to refine it to inform the training and development strategy. <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Key Decisions: Council agreed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to adopt and complete the skills assessment tool as a pilot, having removed the questions on page 1 and provided space for respondents to comment on the ease or difficulty they found in completing to the assessment; the same T&F Group & Chair will review the requirements for a training and development strategy (from Day 1 of a Council member's appointment) with a view to bringing their findings to Council in early 2021; subsequently, having tested the pilot skills assessment tool, to refine it to inform the training and development strategy. </div>	<p>Proposed by: Jonathan Patton Seconded by: Patrick Murphy</p>
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8.0	<p>Pre-Registration Training – Audit & Revised Standards For Approval</p>	<p>The CEO advised that, in relation to the recent Pre-Registration Training Audit, four recommendations and actions had been made and these had been approved previously by Council. Council’s attention was directed to the report which reflected those recommendations and actions taken by the organisation. All pre-registration training documentation and supporting materials will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the narrative and terminology used is consistent throughout.</p> <p>Council was advised that the Executive Team was content that the revised standards addressed all four recommendations and Council was asked to approve the standards for pre-registration training which had been revised in line with the audit recommendations and actions.</p> <p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> noted the activities completed to address the audit recommendations; and approved the revised standards for pre-registration training. <p>Key Decisions: Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> noted the activities completed to address the audit recommendations; and approved the revised standards for pre-registration training 	<p>Proposed by: Alison Ragg Seconded by: Chanel Jones</p>

9.0	<p>President's Report For Information</p>	<p>The President advised that he had attended the recent NICON event and PSA Symposium, both of which were interesting.</p> <p><u>Retiring Statutory & Scrutiny Committee Members</u> The President advised that, on 09 November 2020, he had met with the members of both FtP committees who had reached their 8-year tenure and were, therefore, retiring from their respective committees. These committee members had been pioneers of the fitness to practise process, having taken up post at the start of the new regime in 2012. The President advised that normally Council does not engage with the FtP committees. However, on this occasion, he thought it right and proper to thank them, on Council's behalf, for their sterling work over the past 8 years.</p> <p><u>Recruitment of New Council Members</u> The President advised that he had written to the Deputy Head of the Department on 28 September 2020 and did not receive an acknowledgement. After 2 weeks, he contacted Jackie Johnston. The President had proposed that the organisation proceed to recruit the new members using the process employed for recruiting the Registrar, also a ministerial appointment.</p> <p>A list of the names of appointable candidates would then be submitted to the Department for selection and approval by the Minister. Jackie Johnston thought this was a sensible approach but advised that he had passed it on to the Public Appointments Unit who were currently very busy. One week later, having had no response, the President contacted PAU and received an apology from the head of the unit for the delay. It was explained that Jackie Johnston had given his approval, and that the proposal now needed to be approved by the CPO who was on leave and a response was expected on her return.</p>	

		<p>Last week, the President had spoken with the CPO who was supportive of the proposal. She advised that the Departmental Solicitors' Office would give advice on using this approach. As yet, no response had been received.</p> <p>The President advised that it is likely that, as the Minister's approval is required for the appointment of Council Members, his approval will also be required for the proposed recruitment process.</p> <p>The President advised that, on 09 November 2020, he had met with PSA and they shared Council's concern around quorum for Council business. PSA may raise their concern with the Department that this matter constitutes a risk to public health, as Council is at risk of not being in a position to transact business in the middle of the pandemic. If the delay in responding continues, the President advised that he would write directly to the Permanent Secretary or the Health Minister asking for an explanation as the Department's lack of urgency in addressing this important issue.</p> <div data-bbox="719 1018 1693 1166" style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President is to continue to pursue the Department for a response in relation to the early recruitment of new Council members. </div>	

10.0	<p>CEO's Report For Information</p>	<p>The CEO advised Council as follows:</p> <p><u>Fitness to Practise Hearings</u> A number of substantive hearings had been conducted – via Zoom – and with the consent of all parties involved. Guidance is being developed. There has been good feedback on the virtual hearings from the registrants involved which is reassuring.</p> <p>The CEO advised that GPhC were starting to develop best practice for the use of compliance aids – medication bubble packs, etc – which is a complex issue as so many people are involved. The current pandemic had strengthened the argument. GPhC will share the best practice with other regulators.</p> <p><u>CEORB</u> The Registrar attended a meeting of the CEO's of regulatory bodies on the CEO's behalf. The Registrar advised Council that Brexit was discussed, in particular, around the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. No definitive provision has been put in place for the end of 2020. However, it was reassuring to note that this organisation was ahead in that it had reached out to PSI and GPhC to draft an agreement in relation to registration of pharmacists and data sharing.</p> <p>The Registrar advised that she had attended a meeting of BEIS and it was clear that the organisation will rely on this agreement or the transition measures put in place by the UK government in early 2021</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pre-registration year will become the Foundation training period from Summer 2021 with enhanced support for trainees and new ways of working; • Foundation year trainees will continue to be employed in their 5th year and will not pay additional fees; • the Common Registration Assessment will be implemented from Summer 2021; • the key workstreams will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ learning outcomes; ○ independent prescribing ○ foundation training year ○ admissions ○ equality, diversity, inclusion and support ○ post-registration education & training; and ○ funding – NI specific. <p>The CEO advised Council that funding has been an issue in the past. However, the Department was committed to finding the funding to make this work, given that the reforms will be a regulatory requirement.</p> <p>Council acknowledged the importance of this work which would be the biggest change in the education and training of pharmacists in many decades and expressed their support for the direction of travel and proposals thus far.</p> <p>In response to a Council query, the CEO advised that the current independent prescriber training – academic, clinical and practical – will be developed further as the programme progresses and this will inform the undergraduate IP programme.</p>	
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11.0	DHSC Consultation on Covid-19 Vaccines & PSA Covid Learnings For Information	<p>Council reviewed the papers provided.</p> <p>The HPA advised that the Executive Team had responded to three consultations re Covid-19, namely, Distributing vaccines and treatments for Covid-19 and flu, the PSA's Learning from Covid-19 Review 2020 and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications: Northern Ireland Issues. Council was directed to the organisation's responses.</p>	
12.0	Temporary Registration Survey For Information	<p>Council reviewed the findings of the survey.</p> <p>The HPA advised that the Department has asked that the organisation provide initial information regarding the temporary registration of pharmacists. 264 eligible former registrants were added to the Temporary Register and we have been in regular contact with them regarding Covid-19. A survey was undertaken to ascertain how many were working and the results were set out in the report provided. Of those who responded to the survey (50), 27% were working (mostly in the community) and the majority had been working for more than 16 weeks with the remainder working for more than 9 weeks.</p>	

		<p>The CPO had asked if we had evidence to show that the Temporary Register had been useful – and we can confirm that it has and continues to be with percentage figures comparable to those of other regulators. The HPA advised Council that the Temporary Register remains valuable and should remain in place for the duration of the pandemic.</p> <p>Council agreed for the findings of the survey to be passed to the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer.</p>	
13.0	<p>Provision of Services – Guidance For Information</p>	<p>Council reviewed the content of the paper provided.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the guidance received more interest than anticipated and that the final report and recommendations will be presented to Council at its January 2021 meeting. The main issues are around conscientious objection, not only in relation to abortion but also to wider issues, and how to handle refusal of provision of services in relation to violence or threats of violence.</p> <p>The HPA advised that the NI Human Rights Commission had contacted the organisation re the implementation of the Executive Bill. They have been provided with our consultation. In addition, health trusts have contacted the organisation in relation to its limitations and consequences in a hospital setting.</p>	
14.0	<p>Report on Progress against Strategy For Information</p>	<p>Council reviewed the report provided and were advised by the CEO that there had been no change since the September 2020 Council meeting. The ambers within the report denote matters that will not be concluded in the lifetime of the strategy due to the time remaining for the current Assembly. Some may change to red. He advised that, when new Council members have been appointed, Council should revisit the Corporate Strategy to review and reassign timelines.</p>	

15.0	Finance & Performance Committee To Note	Council noted the Minutes of the Finance & Performance Committee and were advised by its Chairman that, although its first meeting focussed on the budget and fees, early 2021 meetings will include the performance aspects of the organisation.	
16.0	Removal of Names from the Register To Note	Council noted the content of the paper provided and were advised that the list of names removed from the Register had been posted on the organisation's website.	
17.0	Correspondence Log For Information	Council reviewed the content of the correspondence provided.	
18.0	Any Other Business For Information	None.	
19.0	Date of next Council Public Meeting	The next public meeting of Council is scheduled for 09:30 on Tuesday, 26 January 2021. This meeting will be conducted via Zoom.	

The Meeting closed @ 11:15