

**Minutes of the 58th meeting of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.  
Wednesday 22 March 2017 – The Mount Conference Centre, Belfast**

**Present:** David Canning (Chair), Paul O’Doherty, Clive Bowles, Paul Boyle, Joanne Burns, David Cargo, Paul Fitzpatrick, Sheila Fleming, Grainne McAleer, Carmel McCartan, Brian McGrath, Brendan Morgan, Maria Mullally, Catriona Mullan, Chris Murdock, Louise O’Prey, Susan Parlour, Rosemary Rainey, Gordon White, Clodhna Scott-Wills, Mary-Lou Winchborne

**In attendance:** Anne Dickson, Gerry Devlin, Majella Matthews, Lesley Dickson, Mark Mawhinney (DE).

**Apologies:** Aine Andrews, Raymond Beggs, Delma Boggs, Malachy Crudden, Monica Culbert, Martin Hagan, Vicky Johnston. Paddy McAllister and Siobhan McElhinney (Industrial Action).

**1. Welcome, introductions and apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and recorded the Council’s sympathy to Aine Andrews on the death of her husband Aodhan.

The Chair advised that Jenny Irwin and June Graham of RSM would be attending the meeting to inform members about the DE Review and indicated that it would be an opportunity to ask questions about the Review.

Apologies were noted.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest, but Sheila Fleming advised that she had worked with Jenny Irwin (RSM) previously.

**3. Minutes of previous meeting held on 12 December 2016 (GTC/16/Min57)**

With 2 corrections for accuracy, the Minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting of 12 December 2016.

Proposed: Rosemary Rainey  
Seconded: Susan Parlour

Matters Arising:

The Chair advised that John Dickson had returned to the Department and noted the Council’s thanks to John for his work.

In relation to attendance at meetings, the Chair informed members that employers were generally supportive in permitting teachers to attend but that there were still a few problems.

He noted the possibility of this impacting the work of GTCNI's Regulatory Panel, once established.

The Chair thanked members for their comments on the draft Terms of Reference for the DE Review. He advised that the Chairs of the Council committees had met to discuss the suggested amendments, which were subsequently provided to DE. The Department had accepted every recommendation except one..

He advised that consultation on GTCNI's draft Equality Scheme Consultation and Disability Action Plan would commence shortly.

The Chair advised that Standing Order 36 in the Corporate Governance Framework would be amended to reflect that the Chair and Vice Chair of Council no longer had ex officio membership of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, and that the Committee's Terms of Reference have been similarly amended.

The Chair informed members that the Department had offered training on Risk Management and Finance on either the 7<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> April. Members would be asked to confirm their availability.

Members were advised that a business case has been submitted to the Department of Education to procure consultancy services to complete a review of Teaching Qualifications and a reply is being awaited.

With regard to putting details of future consultations on teachers' payslips as an additional means of communication the Chair was pleased to advise that this will now be possible and thanked the communications staff and the Department of Education.

#### **4. DE Review – Oral Update**

Jenny Irwin and June Graham from RSM provided members with an oral update and presentation on the purpose of the review, advising that it was normal for NDPB's to be reviewed and that the Terms of Reference were similar to those for other NDPBs. They indicated that they would look at the functions, sustainability, strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and provide proposals for effective future delivery.

RSM provided members with a timeline of the review.

The Chair advised that any member of Council can speak to RSM about the review

#### **5. Regulation**

**(GTC/17/58/01)**

##### Consultation Report (i)

The Interim Chief Officer advised that a number of papers had been tabled on regulation and took members through the Consultation Report, indicating that Council carried out a consultation exercise on its proposed approach to regulation between January and March 2017. 47 responses were received ranging from individuals to teaching unions, employers, HEIs and other regulatory bodies. A response from the EA which was received after the closing date was tabled for members' information

She advised that officers have carried out an initial review of the responses in conjunction with the Departmental Solicitors Office. The majority of responders were positive and supportive of the Council's draft Conduct Rules, but a range of important and constructive issues were raised which merit further consideration by Council. Some of these issues are within the Council's remit and officers will undertake to address those issues. A number of issues relate to other education stakeholders and these will be raised with colleagues across the sector as appropriate.

It is proposed that a further paper be brought to the Policy, Registration and Regulation Committee on 10 May addressing the issues raised, with a view to bringing the final Conduct Rules to Council on 20 June 2017. This approach will provide the Council, the wider profession and key stakeholders with reassurance that the consultation responses have been taken seriously and, where necessary, amendments made to either the general approach to regulation and/or the Conduct Rules.

Members were informed that this approach will not stop the preparation for regulation in terms of putting the practical and process arrangements in place, and it is recommended that identification of members of the Regulation Panel and GTCNI staff to support regulation work proceeds in April / May, as discussed and agreed with the Policy, Registration and Regulation Committee on 20 Feb 2017.

Members were content with this approach.

#### The Appointment of a GTCNI Regulatory Panel (ii)

With regard to the Regulatory Panel, the Interim Chief Officer highlighted the application forms and said that there was a set of strict criteria to be met and that a panel of around 15 teaching and non teaching members would be sought. Members discussed the question on the application form seeking information on previous disciplinary actions, and agreed that it should be amended or removed.

The Senior Education Officer confirmed he would take advice on this to get the position clarified. Members agreed that the form should be brought back to the Policy, Registration and Regulation Committee for clearance.

#### Interim Regulatory Staffing (iii)

The Interim Chief Officer advised that it is necessary to put in place staffing arrangements to support the practical application of the Council's Conduct Rules. As an interim measure, it is proposed to identify two officers from GTCNI's team of six registration officers to carry out regulation duties. A selection process will be run, and the successful officers will be trained to undertake the relevant duties.

The interim staffing arrangements were:

Proposed: David Cargo  
Seconded: Rosemary Rainey

Members were in agreement.

## **6. GTCNI Business Targets Framework 2017/18**

**(GTC/17/58/02)**

The Interim Chief Officer spoke to this paper advising that DE has commissioned GTCNI's draft Business Plan for 2017/18. The Department has acknowledged that budgets have not yet been confirmed and the Programme for Government has not been published, but has requested that preparatory business planning work should be carried out on what should be 'living documents'.

Given the upcoming organisational review, the Department has agreed that GTCNI should produce a 'business targets framework' rather than a more detailed business plan. The Framework will be reviewed in six months.

The Interim Chief Officer advised Members that this draft carries forward the 2016/17 Interim Business Targets Framework agreed by Council in June 2016, and that each Committee has considered the GTCNI draft Business Targets Framework for 2017/18. The only committee to suggest an amendment to the draft was the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which suggested the inclusion of a target relating to exiting Special Measures. This has been amended at Item 7. She asked members if they agreed to submit this to the Department.

Carmel McCartan asked for an amendment to Item 4 which was agreed.

## **7. Finance Update**

**(GTC/17/58/03)**

The Finance and Contracts Manager spoke to this paper and asked Members to note the Income and Expenditure Report and Statement of Financial Position at 31 January 2017. Members were advised that the Council submitted its revised resource requirement to DE in December 2016 as part of the January Monitoring Round process and the Income and Expenditure included as part of this paper is reported against this most recent approved forecast.

She advised that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) has concluded its audit fieldwork on the 2015-16 Financial Statements. However, due to uncertainty relating to the Charity Commission for NI's determination on GTCNI's charitable status the Audit Office has not finalised the overall AR&A for 2015-16. The Council has continued to work to resolve these issues with both HMRC and the Charity Commission, but a letter of determination from the Commission has not yet been forthcoming. The Council has received DE approval to commission professional advice to help conclude outstanding matters.

Internal audit has finalised its report on Procurement and Contracts management (including assurances in relation to expenditure). They have been commissioned to complete a further internal audit review to assess of the Council's recently established corporate governance and risk management frameworks and, where appropriate, to assess the implementation of recommendations made in ASM's previous reviews of corporate governance arrangements and procurement and contract management. The review will form part of the fieldwork for their overall assurance statement for the financial year ending 31 March 2017.

Members were informed that a considerable effort continues to be expended to bring a range of procurements and contracts in line. Approval has been received from DE to renew the lease on Albany House, and to move to IT Assist for the provision of IT support and maintenance services.

Members were asked to note the Finance Report and agree any actions arising.

Clive Bowles thanked Majella Matthews for her very comprehensive report and hard work.

The Interim Chief Officer advised that DE has provided key reporting dates for the draft 2016/17 Annual Report and Accounts and that the ARA and F&GP Committees may have to be re-scheduled to consider papers within the Department's deadline.

Members discussed the difficulty in achieving quorum in a number of committees.

David Cargo assured members that the ARAC were happy with the Finance Report. He updated members on the latest draft of the 2015/16 Governance Statement which has been agreed by the ARAC. He suggested that discussions should be held with NIAO regarding finalisation of the 2015/16 Annual Report in the absence of a letter of determination from the Charity Commission. Members discussed this option and agreed that officers should hold a discussion with NIAO with a view to finalising these accounts as soon as possible. Members noted the Finance Report.

## **8. Communications Update (GTC/17/58/04)**

The Interim Chief Officer spoke to this paper updating members on the need for GTCNI to engage with key stakeholders but primarily teachers in 2017.

Members noted that it is clear from informal feedback, reflected in discussions at the recent round of Committee meetings that GTCNI has suffered from the lack of proactive communications activities. This has resulted in a poor understanding and indeed confusion about the Council's role over the last number of years. The responses to the Regulation Consultation clearly evidence this outcome.

The Interim Chief Officer advised that whilst the Council is not in a position to develop a communications strategy until after the DE Review reports, it is proposed that officers proceed with a short burst of low cost, targeted communications activities, to begin to address the lack of awareness and understanding about our role. .

This activity will centre on a short online information guide to GTCNI's functions, supported by a social media strategy.

The Interim Chief Officer highlighted the key activities for short-term communication.

Members agreed this paper.

## **9. Public Access to GTCNI Meetings (GTC/17/58/05)**

The Chief Interim Officer spoke to this paper updating members on facilitation of public access to GTCNI meetings, which was prompted by a query from a member of Council. She reminded members that GTCNI's Standing Orders provide for Council meetings to be held in public (SO9) and indicated that little public interest has been expressed in attending GTCNI meetings in the past. However, if members of the public were to turn up and ask to observe, officers would be happy to facilitate them, within the safe capacity of the venue of the meeting.

The Chief Interim Officer advised members that upon reviewing GTCNI's website, it is apparent that the Council is not operating a means through which to make members of the public aware of the date of its next meeting. It is therefore proposed that GTCNI's website is amended to include the date and venue of the next scheduled Council meeting in the section 'The Council / Schedule of Meetings and Minutes' section.

Members discussed and asked about a risk assessment of the venues and also the provision of guidelines for members of the public.

The Interim Chief Officer agreed to draft a paper on guidelines for the public and members agreed this paper.

## **10. Approval of Qualifications for the purposes of Registration (GTC/17/58/06)**

The Senior Education Officer highlighted the amendment to the Qualification Rules advising that GTCNI, as the competent authority, has always been in compliance with the EU Directive, however, as a matter of UK law, the Council must now grant 'partial access' to the profession to EU citizens holding Special Education Needs (SEN) Teacher Qualifications.

The practical outworking of this is that EU applicants holding a SEN qualification will be registered in a way to ensure that they cannot be employed as teachers in a grant-aided school in Northern Ireland, however, they may be able to seek employment in some SEN contexts for example, SEN withdrawal groups. Again they will not be able to be employed as teachers in special schools as they will only have 'partial access' to the profession and will not hold full teaching qualification. It is not anticipated that the Council will receive many (if any) applications of this type. If applications of this type are received they will be assessed in the normal way and if approved, 'partial access' granted.

However, it will be made clear to the applicant and any prospective employer that 'partial access' does not bestow full registration and the individual cannot be employed as a teacher in a grant-aided school in N. Ireland.

Members discussed the cost for partial access and endorsed this paper.

## **11. Committee Updates**

### Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

David Cargo took members through this paper adding that Charitable Status should be added to the Risk Register and suggested that the agenda for Council meetings should be organised in line with Committee business. Louise O'Prey agreed.

### Human Resources Committee

Louise O'Prey highlighted this paper and advised that a team building day for Council members and staff had been proposed.

Carmel McCartan enquired about staff sickness levels. The Interim Chief Officer advised that a paper on this issue is being provided to the next meeting of the HR Committee.

### Policy, Regulation and Registration Committee

Paul O'Doherty spoke to this paper highlighting the strong engagement of committee members on the issue of teacher competences and the importance of GTCNI's collaboration with others on the issue.

Gordon White advised members that he had attended a meeting of the Department's oversight group for the Learning Leaders Strategy and that he would keep members informed of each meeting.

### Finance and General Purposes Committee

Clive Bowles advised that the work of F&GP had been covered earlier in the meeting and added that he agreed with David Cargo regarding the organisation of the agenda for future Council meetings.

**12. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of GTCNI (GTC/17/58/07)**

The Interim Chief Officer asked members to agree a term of office for the incoming Chair and Vice-Chair.

Carmel McCartan said that continuity and skills were of the utmost importance.

Council agreed that the incoming Chair and Vice-Chair should be elected for the full term of Council.

Proposed: Louise O'Prey  
Seconded: Gordon White

Chair

The Interim Chief Officer reminded members of the responsibilities of the Chair.

Louise O'Prey proposed that David Canning be voted as Chair  
This was seconded by Carmel McCartan.

There were no other proposals.

There was a unanimous show of hands.

Vice-Chair

Clive Bowles proposed that Paul O'Doherty be voted as Vice-Chair.  
This was seconded by Gordon White.

There were no other proposals.

These elections were ratified as unanimous by members.

**13. AOB**

The Chair advised that he was impressed with the volume of work by officers and proposed his thanks to the officers and staff.

**14. Date of next meeting – 20 June 2017**

**Signed..... Dated .....**