**Minutes of the 78th meeting of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.**

**Wednesday, 9th June 2021 at 10.30am – meeting conducted via Zoom**

**Present:**

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| Brendan Morgan, Chair | Julian Morgan (JM) |
| Siobhan McElhinney, Vice-Chair | Maria Mullally (MM) |
| Dr David Baxter (DB) | Catriona Mullan (CM) |
| Raymond Beggs (RB) | Susan Parlour (SP) |
| John Kelly (JK) | Cliodhna Scott-Wills (CSW) |
| Shaunagh Lambe (SL) | John Wilkinson (JW) |
| Emma Loughridge (EL) | Mary-Lou Winchborne (MLW) |
| Catherine McBride (CMcB) | John Unsworth (JU) |
| Lisa Magennis (LM) | Sonia McGowan (SMcG) |

**In attendance:** Sam Gallaher (CEO) Gerry Devlin (SEO)

Alison Chambers, DE (AC) Alan Boyd, DE (AB) Lesley Dickson (LD) Elizabeth Lorimer (Notetaker)

Donal Laverty (DL)

**Apologies:** Martin Cromie (MC) Dr Martin Hagan (MH)

Keith Smith (KS)

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| **1. Welcome and Apologies**  The Chair welcomed Council Members, representatives from DE and DL to the meeting.  Apologies were noted to be from Martin Cromie, Dr Martin Hagan, Sonia McGowan and Keith Smith.  The Chair advised that a number of items on the agenda were for ratification only and proposed to work through the agenda until 12noon, after which time, Item 19 (Chair’s Business and correspondence) would be discussed as a priority. If time then permitted, standing orders would resume. |  |
| **2. Declarations of Interest**  The Chair asked if there were any Declarations of Interest for the meeting. None were declared. |  |
| **3. Minutes from previous Council Meetings:**   * Draft Minutes of Council Meeting of 10 December 2020 (GTC-20-75-MIN) * Draft In Committee Meeting of 10 December 2020 (GTC-20-75-MIN) * Draft In Committee Meeting of 10 March 2021 (GTC-21-26-MIN) * Draft Minutes of Council Meeting of 26 March 2021 (GTC-21-76-MIN)   Minor amendments were noted regarding Council Meeting minutes of 10 December 2020 and would be updated accordingly by LD.  A question was raised regarding the process for preparing, approving and circulating minutes and why minutes were not circulated to Council in a timely manner. The CEO confirmed the process endorsed in 2020 by Council, that draft minutes were checked for accuracy by the CEO and sent to the Chair for issue to Council. The CEO advised that Council needed to decide how minutes should be done and suggested re-circulating the paper which was approved to allow a further discussion by Council.  The Vice-Chair proposed that, for good governance and as practiced by the Education Committee, meetings should be recorded which would ensure openness and honesty.  RB referred to paper regarding minute-taking which was agreed by Council in March 2020 which stated that an independent notetaker should take minutes at meetings, except for ‘In Committee’ meetings where a Member should take the minutes. Minutes should be circulated to Members within 7 working days and be as concise and anonymous as possible. RG suggested minutes should then be approved/agreed online so that this item would not become a prolonged discussion at meetings.  MLW advised that Council needed to decide if minutes should be short and concise or detailed, and questioned why Members were discussing historical minutes. A recommendation should be agreed and applied today.  JU suggested implementing the agreed protocol and if that was not feasible then the matter needed to be reviewed. JU added that it was not appropriate to record meetings for an arm’s length body such as GTCNI.  The Chair asked if the issue related more to the timing of circulation of minutes and changes made to minutes that Members were not aware of.  RB said this issue had been ongoing since December 2018. While acknowledging RB’s point regarding the delay in issuing minutes to Members; JU pointed out that Members had the opportunity to make amendments to minutes before they were adopted.  The Chair advised it would be preferable for draft minutes to come to the CEO and the Chair simultaneously for review and to make superficial changes before being issued to Council more rapidly for approval.  The CEO commented that minutes should be a summary, anonymised and salient and not as detailed as they had been, and the Notetaker should be guided accordingly. The CEO said he took exception to the suggestion that minutes were in any way manipulated and Council needed to decide on the process.  The Vice-Chair pointed out that due to inaccuracies in minutes in 2018, it had been agreed that minutes should be verbatim. The Vice-Chair suggested the meeting should now move on to the business on the agenda.  The CEO agreed that the meeting should move on, but stated that verbatim minutes were never agreed to.  JW commented that this discussion was again taking up too much time and stated that protocol needed to be established. He suggested that a summary of discussion should be noted and that the Effectiveness Review should cover this issue.  JU commented that this discussion was systematic of issues within Council and reiterated that in March 2020, a protocol had been agreed which should be implemented. If that needed to be reviewed, a vote should now be taken, otherwise a previous decision was being disregarded.  It was noted by the Chair that there was no record of the agreed protocol.  The CEO therefore suggested he and the Chair should prepare a paper for Council to decide how to move forward. Council agreed to submit suggested changes to the minutes in question before having them approved, to allow the meeting to proceed to the next item on the agenda. | GTC-21-78-A01 |
| **4. Matters Arising**  In the interests of time, the Chair suggested setting aside this item to move on to the next item on the agenda. This was agreed by Council. |  |
| **5. SEN Consultation – GTCNI response** (GTC-21-78-P01)  The SEO conveyed thanks to LM and JM for their assistance in preparing the response and advised that ratification was being sought from Council to inform the DE of the Council’s response. Council approved the response without further discussion. | For noting |
| **6. Reserves Policy** (GTC-21-78-P02)  The CEO advised the Reserves Policy had been previously discussed at Council and approved in principle. However, it had since gone back to the F&GP Committee for approval and was being re-tabled for Council approval as per standing orders.  The CEO advised that the Policy related to the principles of managing Reserves and explained the Restricted Reserves classification. Regulations required that Reserves of £250K were held for unexpected regulatory expenditure with Restricted Reserves being held for investment in the new IT system. A provision was required for office accommodation and Pension Liability which had increased from £500K in 2018/2019 to over £1m in 2020 with a further rise due this year. In summary the Reserves Policy set out general principles about how Council replenished and managed resources and these could amended by Council to suit particular needs if and when required.  The Policy was unanimously approved by Council without further discussion. | For noting |
| **7. Business Planning - 2020/2021 out-turn and 2021/2022 Plan**  (GTC-21-78-P03)  The CEO advised that papers relating to the 2020/21 out-turn had been circulated for information and had been tabled at relevant Committees. Draft papers relating to 2021/22 Business Plan had also been tabled through Committees and shared with DE. The CEO asked if there were any questions.  Section 6.11 highlighting that Council had agreed that the Council Effectiveness Review was likely to be approved but with a delay was noted.  Following a query as to whether the recommendation of the ARAC Committee had been implemented, the CEO advised he would check and re-circulate the report.  The Chair agreed that the paper should be re-circulated with amendments and Council could then approve via correspondence. This was agreed by Council. | GTC-21-78-A02 |
| **8. Information Governance** (GTC-21-78-P04)  The CEO advised the document was a Project Initiation Document paper outlining five areas of a programme of work required to overhaul information management and governance. The second document was a Scheme of Publication, which the CEO and the SEO prepared, that set out what GTCNI would routinely publish..  The SEO advised the review had followed the Information Commissioner’s guidance and had been discussed at F&GP Committee. It required ratification at Council and would be kept under review with changes to be approved via Committee and Council.  The Chair recommended approval of both documents to allow the engagement of Information Management expertise to proceed.  This was unanimously approved by Council without further discussion. | For noting |
| **9. Council Effectiveness Review**  The CEO referred to papers circulated which outlined the details of the Review and included a questionnaire for completion and return by Members. Papers circulated provided an update and required approval by Council.  The Chair asked Members, if they had not already done so, to submit completed questionnaires. A brief meeting could subsequently be arranged with Members. When this exercise was completed, the CEO and Chair would prepare a report to be tabled at the next Council meeting which would help to inform further training development requirements. | GTC-21-78-A03  GTC-221-78-A04 |
| **10. 2019/2020 Annual Report and Accounts and RTCWWG**  (GTC-21-78-P05-07)  The CEO advised that draft 2019/2020 Annual Report, Accounts and RTCWWG had been reviewed by F&GP and approved by ARAC Committees and now needed to be adopted and passed by Council..  The Chair commented that the report was fairly standard and provided the basis of where Council stood.  There were no further questions or opposition from Members and the reports were proposed and seconded as below:  **2019/2020 Annual Report and Accounts**  Proposed JW  Seconded SP  **RTCWWG**  Proposed JU  Seconded CM |  |
| **11. 2020/2021 Financial out-turn and 2021/2022 Budget allocation**  (GTC-21-78-P08-09)  The CEO outlined high level figures and advised that draft 2020/2021 Accounts were being finalised and covered the out-turn to position as at 31 March. The report would be tabled at next Council, having been approved at F&GP Committee in May.  *The Chair handed over to the Vice-Chair and temporarily left the meeting at 11.34am.*  When asked about the deficit in the budget and reduced numbers of Registrations in the past year, the CEO responded that it was not unusual to record a projected deficit which would be managed within Council. . The CEO added that finances would be kept under review and adjusted as required. Regarding the reduction in Registrations, this was explained by the exceptional circumstances caused by the pandemic.  *The Chair returned to the meeting at 11.40am.*  To allay concerns raised by Members, AC advised that DE would continue to monitor finances closely with the CEO.  Members unanimously approved the 2020/2021 Financial out-turn and 2021/2022 Budget allocation by a show of hands. | For noting |
| **12. 2020/2021 Governance Statement (draft)** (GTC-21-78-P10)  The CEO advised that the third version of the draft Governance Statement had been circulated to Members for information prior to the meeting. The Statement would be included with the draft Accounts for audit purposes and incorporated into the 20/2021 Annual Report and Accounts.  When asked for an example of how GTCNI engaged and developed ownership of the teaching profession, the CEO advised that there had been a Twitter account and. Learning Leaders and Leaders competency had been developed and it was planned to progress a Code of Professional Conduct. The CEO added that it was planned that GTCNI would be more visible in engaging with the profession, for example, to have the capacity to email each Registrant through a new database. It is proposed to employ a communications resource to work with the professional development resource on plans to engage with the profession. Development work is needed in this area and work is ongoing. Engagement continues with sister organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and ROI; however, focus in the last 2½ years has been predominantly on Learning Leaders and teacher professional learning policy.  The SEO added that in the past, when GTCNI had more resources, it had conducted Bursary Programmes and it had published ‘Term Top’ three times per year. A wide range of Policy Seminars had been held and a Code of Values and Professional Practice had been developed. In 2007, 27 competencies had been issued, all translated into Irish. In 2010, a Survey was carried out in collaboration with other bodies, which arranged Annual Lectures and Accreditation Programmes. All this work required a resourced Educationalist and the SEO was the only one.  *JU left the meeting at 12 noon.*  Members agreed that further engagement and development was required in this area.  The CEO and SEO explained that the ONS had categorised the organisation as a NDPB in 2012 which imposed constrictions and certain bureaucracy on Operations that incurred a significant yearly cost. This was not likely to change in the short term, but it would be an aspiration of GTCNI to have the NDPB status removed at some point in the future.  The Chair noted the concern of the Vice-Chair regarding Project Income for the year.  Council were informed that concerns had been raised at the ARAC Committee about comments made by the HR Committee on the impact Covid had in carrying out its duties. RB agreed to send these concerns in writing to the CEO for his consideration.  The CEO explained that the Governance Statement was a ‘living’ document that will be amended and changed until the 2021 Annual Report and Accounts were approved next year. It would also reflect NIPSA correspondence and would note the eight resignations from Council.  The Chair asked Council to approve the Governance Statement on the basis of the changes discussed at the ARAC Committee. The Statement was approved by all Members, except RB who opposed it. It was proposed and seconded as below:  Proposed MM  Seconded JM  ***Meeting was adjourned from 12.22pm to 12.37pm.*** | GTC-221-78-A05 |
| As advised by the Chair at the start of the meeting, standing orders were set aside to discuss Item 19.  **19. Chair’s Business and Correspondence**   * **Minister’s Review of GTCNI** – the Chair advised that a preliminary review was being undertaken by DL who would complete a report by June/July. The Chair asked Members to complete the questionnaire and arrange a slot to meet with the review team. * **Data Breach** – The Chair advised this item would be discussed “In Committee” and asked the SEO and LD to leave the meeting. Details of this discussion were captured under a separate Confidential Minute.   Time did not permit the remaining items on the agenda to be discussed and the Chair advised he would endeavour to conduct the remainder of business on the agenda via correspondence with the CEO.  The Chair thanked Members for their input and closed the meeting at 1.36pm.   * **Independent Investigation into breaches in Nolan Principles** * **(NI) Assembly Education Committee** * **GTCNI resignations and withdrawals** * **Legal advice for Chair and Vice-Chair of Council** * **DE response to Council motion (KS) of 26 March 2021 meeting**   Time did not permit the discussion of the above items. | (Action GTC-21-78-A03 refers) |
| **13. Report of Chair of ARAC** (GTC-21-78-P11)  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **14. Annual Report of Internal Audit and Audit Plan 2021/2022**  (GTC-21-78-P12-13)  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **15. Internal Audit Reports** (GTC-21-78-P14a-c)  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **16. Corporate Risk Register** (GTC-21-78-P15)  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **17. Staff Handbook – Phase 1 HR Policies** (GTC-21-78-P16)  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **18. Minutes of Sub-Committees**  - ARAC Committee GTC-21-78-P17a-b  - F&GP Committee GTC-21-78-P18a-b  - HR Committee GTC-21-78-P19  - PRRC Committee GTC-21-78-P20a-c  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **20. Motions outstanding from previous meeting** (GTC-21-78-P21)  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **21. AOB**  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **22. Date of next meeting**  Time did not permit the discussion of this item. |  |
| **Signed………………………………………. Dated…………………………** |  |

**ACTIONS REGISTER**

**New Actions**

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| Action No. | Item | Details | Owner | Timescale | Status |
| GTC-21-78-A01 | Draft minutes | CEO and Chair to prepare a paper for Council to decide on protocol for minutes. Members to submit suggested changes to minutes in question before being approved. | CEO/Chair  All | immediate | Open |
| GTC-21-78-A02 | Business Planning | The CEO to re-circulate paper with amendments. Council to approve via correspondence. | CEO  All | immediate | Open |
| GTC-21-78-A03 | Council Effectiveness Review | The Chair asked Members to complete questionnaire and submit returns ahead of arranging a brief discussion, if not already done so. | All | immediate | Open |
| GTC-21-78-A04 | Council Effectiveness Review | CEO and Chair to prepare a report to be tabled at the next Committee when returns had been received by Members. | Chair  CEO | immediate | Open |
| GTC-21-78-A05 | 2020/21 Draft Governance Statement | RB to send in writing to the CEO details of concerns raised re the impact of Covid on HR Committee operations for consideration. | RB | immediate | Open |

**Actions carried forward**

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| Action No. | Item | Details | Owner | Timescale | Status | |
| GTC-20-74-A03 | Training | All Members to consider and advise on areas of training required. Then a proposed programme to be arranged to deliver training in November, December and January on identified key areas. | All  CEO | November | Open | |
| GTC-20-75-A01 | Declarations of Interest | Council to submit Declaration of Interest yearly return to Secretariat’s office. | All | December | Open | |
| GTC-21-77-A01 | B/Case for new Registration system project | AC/AB to arrange for answers for the four questions to DE in KS’s Motion to be available ahead of the next F&GP Committee meeting. | AC/AB | Immediate | Open | |
| GTC-21-77-A02 | B/Case for new Registration system project | RB to prepare paper for discussion at next Council meeting outlining details to meet standard running costs of new system. | RB | 3 months | | Open |
| GTC-21-77-A03 | Professional Regulation Paper | CEO to amend paper GTC-21-77-P02 to refer to PRRC Committee. | CEO | immediate | | Open |
| GTC-21-77-A04 | Professional Regulation Paper | CEO to consider improving way of presenting papers at Council to help business to progress in a more efficient manner. | CEO | 3 months | | Open |

**Closed Actions**

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