**POLICY, REGISTRATION AND REGULATION COMMITTEE**

**22 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10.30AM**

**BY ZOOM**

**Present:** J Morgan (Chair), B Morgan (BM), S McElhinney (SMcE)

**In attendance**: G Devlin (SEO), P Moore (DE), L Dickson (PA)

**Apologies:** M Hagan (MH), M Mullally (MM), S Gallaher (CEO)

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

None

**3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

BM highlighted at Section 4 of Matters Arising the statement which indicated that the volume of work with the cross border professional body is relatively small and it would not be worthwhile putting in a mutual understanding agreement. The SEO explained the legal issues around Brexit, advising that there were no real problems with South to North applications as these are being processed as Rest of World and these are expedited promptly. The complications always related to North to South applications and he suggested that officers from both jurisdictions should meet to take stock although this would be difficult at the moment because of work pressures. BM asked to have sight of the correspondence from TCI as this is a regulatory matter and may be expedited and asked to know what matters were involved. The SEO advised he had not seen the communication and BM indicated that the High Court had indicated this went to GTC. SEO to ask Registrar for update.

An amendment was put forward regarding that it was unlikely to need a service level agreement. The SEO advised that the overall agreement used to be based on EU Directive and that North/South Ministers had asked both Councils to come together to streamline the application process. The meeting was held and agreement reached. Brexit has caused some difficulties and the Registrar may need to take this up with his TCI counterpart. TCI had to treat the North and UK as rest of world. Members discussed the initial application fee for rest of world to reflect costs.

Sound problem

The Chair enquired if we no longer keep statistics from RoI and the SEO advised we do and it is covered in a later paper. He outlined the assessment process and said the fee needs to be set regarding the extent of assessments carried out and the need to be fair.

BM indicated Page 2 advising that MLW had made a proposal on registration for those with non UK qualifications and that ROW Applications/Issues should be a standing item on the agenda.

Proposed: BM Seconded: JM

**4. Matters Arising**

SMcE asked that a meeting should be held with officers of TCI. The SEO agreed and added that we have many informal contacts and added that the CEOs from the 4 nations met twice a year.

BM said that an urgent review of initial application fees was needed by Council. The Chair enquired what fees the other jurisdictions charge for Rest of World. The SEO indicated that TCIs fees are quite high as they use teacher assessment and the nature of the subject is also assessed. The issue has always been the N/S movement and a whole area of work is required on this.

At Page 3 on Registration System Update. BM enquired if the Business Case had been approved by the end of June and if the PM had taken up post. The SEO said that the BC had been approved and the PM was in post. BM discussed the cost of the PM and the SEO said she was employed through an open tender process. BM noted it was important to stress the limited number of registration officers and they have not been able to assist the PM. The SEO advised the PM was preparing documents and working with CPD but the critical point was that she needed an experienced registration officer to help with procurement and because of staff shortages we do not have enough capacity to provide assistance. F&GP and ARAC need to take note of this. The internal trawl date had been extended but there had been no uptake. BM enquired if it could be advertised internally at a higher post but the SEO said DE approval would be needed. BM said the risk needed to be mitigated and that temporary staff coming in would need to be trained. The Chair enquired why staffing was at crisis level. The SEO indicated that there has been no Registration Manager in post for 18 months. BM asked for an explanation of the staff situation.

SEO – Sound problem

The SEO advised that training a temporary registration officer would take several months and would deflect the 2 SROs from their jobs. The SROs and registration team are under extreme pressure and we have lost a temporary Registration Officer. At present 1 SRO is off sick and 1 Registration Officer is off sick. The Chair said she thought this was crisis point. BM said that the fact that the RM had not been replaced was critical and when staff are off the stress goes on the staff who are left. The Chair voiced concerns on the health of the staff. The SEO had been overseeing the work of the Registration Team but that a Registration Manager is needed and the Chair asked what efforts had been made to recruit a RM. BM said it was part of the restructure and said this was an operational matter for the Registrar and SMT. Normally the Registrar would work with Headstogether and then put to the HR committee to rectify and then DE would check. The SEO added that appointments are made through a process and the Council should check the organization has enough staff to cover its responsibilities. The Chair added that the Council had a duty of care to staff. BM indicated that the HR Committee did not know of staff shortages. The SEO indicated that Zara Dunseith had handed in her resignation. The Chair asked if efforts had been made to replace the finance staff who had left and the SEO said he thought the Registrar was trying agencies. BM highlighted staff figures and said this was critical and the SEO indicated he had informed the Registrar that this would be regarded as a critical incident. BM enquired how the organization would be able to fulfill registrations until Christmas. The SEO said the burden is quite extensive. BM asked the SEO to urgently write a report on Registration and said this needed to be registered as a risk and the Chair agreed. BM indicated that the Council needed to be made aware especially as this problem relates to the health of the staff. SMcE said it was on the risk register but needed to be escalated and if any meeting were unsuitable for the SEO they could be changed. The SEO indicated that this would be his last PRRC. The SEO was asked to get exact staffing figures and provide to BM. The SEO outlined the present sickness in the Registration Team and the Chair asked if there is an issue or if the workload is too much. The SEO reiterated that the RM needs replaced and that morale within the organization is bad. The SEO thanked the TET team for their support during the recent media reporting.

Comfort break 11.40 to 11.50

The SEO to write paper on the implications for the organization and staff welfare. The situation was highlighted as a critical risk.

SMcE added that the staffing figures were provided on paper 21-20-02, however BM said that these needed updated and the SEO would provide details. The Chair thanked DE for their assistance during the media crisis.

**5. PRRC Paper on the DBS Issue**  PRRC/21/20/01

The SEO advised this had already been covered and the DBS issue has been temporarily resolved for over the summer months. He said that DBS had been obliging and helpful and outlined the process completed by DBS and said it would be good to get a long term solution. He indicated that a service level agreement may be needed and directed members to the figures provided. He indicated that there would be an update at the next PRRC meeting once a more permanent solution is in place.

6. Registration Update Activity PRRC/21/20/02

The SEO outlined the paper which was prepared by Janet McStravick at the request of the Department. He directed members to the Digest of Statistics which provides figures up to last week. He advised there is a cohort of approx. 2,000 teachers to be invoiced in Oct/Nov. These are already registered teachers. He indicated figures should be available for the next PRRC. He provided details on gender and age and members discussed the classification of teachers by gender and were informed that what we hold in our database is set out in the Regulations of 2004 and we must comply. Members discussed the shortage of female principals and there is a need to know about under representation. The Chair enquired if there was anything the Council could do to promote women going for these positions. The SEO outlined the Council’s staffing capacity and said it could do if more staff were available and we are constrained by resources. The Chair added that a team of educationalists is needed to push this forward. The SEO added that our principal purpose is to promote teacher professionalism and outlined past seminars, termtalk, bursaries and professional development and this needs to be rebuilt. BM enquired who wrote the paper and asked that at the bullet point he objected to ‘unfounded allegations’ and voted to strike the line out. Paper to be amended. The SEO indicated that some phonecalls were quite abusive.

At Bullet Point 4 BM advised that the Registrar had put the paper to the HR Committee suggesting payment as at present staff are getting time in lieu for overtime worked. There is no facility to pay staff. The HR Committee proposed staff be offered payment at the standard rate. To be recommended to Council. The Chair suggested that for Saturdays there could be standard pay plus time in lieu. BM indicated this would need to be addressed ad this was a short term solution for August and September. The SEO said he was grateful for the update and said the gesture would be appreciated and the Chair agreed. BM said it would need Council approval. The Chair asked if members were content with removing the last sentence in bullet point 1. PA to make amendents.

At Bullet Point 5 B said he was concerned about the IT Project. The SEO explained that the matter had been resolved quickly. BM said there were a number of issues NISTR, emails and also invoices. The Chair asked to remove the line and it should say issues were quickly addressed. BM asked for thanks to be passed to Tracey McCavigan. The Chair advised that in future stats could be used to inform Council of any issues arising. The SEO highlighted the absence of a Communications Officer and Graphic Designer who used to help with the Digest. It was noted that staff were nervous regarding the future of the GTC. PM cleared up that the review taking place is not a DE review but is being done by an independent company. BM added that the review was commissioned by the Minister and carried out by an independent reviewer.

**7. Registration Systems Update**  PRRC/21/20/03

The SEO took both papers provided together and gave an update on the system. He added that the PM was working 3 days a week and that a resource is needed to work with her. Council needs to keep an eye on the time line of the project. BM enquired if the risks associated were outlined in red and the SEO said these risks need to be carefully monitored a major rebuilding exercise is required as a matter of urgency.

**8. Regulation Update**  PRRC/21/20/04

The SEO provided an update on the paper provided by the CEO, advising that no new regulation referrals have been received within 5 months. The screening panel is being prepared. The SEO has been dealing with one complaint and this had been cleared. It had related to a conduct issue between employers and a teacher and the Ombudsman found in our favour. BM advised that the employer was not going to take any action. The SEO indicated this was a sensitive matter.

Regarding the Review of Decision the SEO said he had posted documents to the Chair, MM and SL (Shaunagh Lambe). He added that he thinks it will be highly legalistic and legal advice would be needed and has emailed the Registrar to let him know. He said that a review of decision is a normal point of practice within the organization. BM enquired why a registration issue is in a regulation paper and said he thought it should have been in a registration paper. The SEO indicated that he needed to stand back as he oversees the review of decision panel. BM said he thought this was in the wrong paper. The Registrar is to sign off costs as the SEO is unable to do this.

**9. Corporate Risk Register** PRRC/21/20/05

This paper was provided for information at this stage as it had been discussed at ARAC. BM said every Committee has to consider its own risk and this has to be a Standing Item. The SEO indicated that some risks had already been covered earlier in the meeting. BM discussed the stewardship of resources and asked if this should be F&GP and also at point 6. Number 10 had already been dealt with when the SEO had outlined the interim arrangement and said if this was solidified then the risk would disappear. BM said that point 9 was out of the Committees control. Members discussed the work of the Project Board and were advised that Keith Smith sits on this Board as F&GP would look after expenditure. BM indicated that 5, 8, 9 and 11 would be related to PRRC and these have been dealt with earlier. SMcE asked the Chair to make sure the risks were noted. The Chair enquired about the delay in procuring the system and SMcE indicated that Council members were concerned with these delays. BM added that DE/DOF have stipulated there are to be no more DACs as the Council had has more of these than they should have and said there is time pressure on the Registration Team. The Chair asked if anyone came forward with a solution to help the Registration Team. SEO said a highly qualified RM is needed as soon as possible. The Chair questioned the delay and the SEO advised this was an HR issue. BM indicated there were no deliberations on recruitment and a RM is needed as the SEO had been keeping oversight but was now retiring. The Chair voiced her concern for the Registration Team and BM asked that the Committee note points 8 and 9 with concern and staff compliment would feed into these risks. The Chair highlighted the urgency of this matter. BM asked the SEO to produce a paper as a priority issue and the SEO advised he could not do this until he has spoken to the Registrar. BM said DE would also need to be alerted to the risk. SMcE said the Chair of HR and the Chair of ARAC should be emailed and this should be highlighted at Council.

**10. NIAO Value for Money Review and Reports** PRRC/21/20/06

The SEO outlined the report and BM enquired if there were any points the Committee needed to be aware of. The SEO indicated not that he could see. He advised that NIAO have received updates from Majella Matthews prior to her leaving. BM enquired who would produce financial reports and was informed that after Zara Dunseith left there would be no finance members of staff. The Chair enquired who would check for evidence that there have been attempts to recruit staff and was advised that the Registrar has the responsibility to oversee the operation of Council staff. Members said that Council needs to seek assurance that Council has the staff to oversee its function and the Chair advised the need to look for solutions urgently. She also asked when pay grades were last reviewed. The SEO said he was unsure and advised that staff are on the NJC payscales. BM also added that GTC mail is dealt with by ZD and dealing with the handling of this is a priority. Members discussed the impact of staffing across the business. SMcE added that some actions may come out of the Ministerial Review. BM enquired what colour the risk for the registration process should be and the SEO replied that it is amber but could turn to red very quickly.

SMcE left the meeting at 1.25

BM advised members that the meeting was no longer quorate and the SEO indicated that this was only essential if decisions were being made.

**11. Any Other Business**

The Chair spoke of PRRC resignations and thanked members for their contribution over the years. BM asked what steps had been taken to replace Lisa Magennis. SEO said he would check the next person on the list and has sent LM an email to thank her.

The Chair thanked attendees and also the SEO for all the work he has done for the PRRC.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

9 November 2021

**ACTION POINTS**

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

SEO to ask Registrar for update on N/S applications.

**4. Matters Arising**

SMcE asked for a meeting with officers of TCI regarding applications.

SEO to write a paper on the implications for the organisation and staff welfare concerning staff shortages.

**5. PRRC Paper on DBS Issue**

The SEO indicated that there would be an update at the next PRRC meeting once a more permanent solution is in place.

**6. Registration Update Activity**

BM indicated that at bullet point 1, he objected to ‘unfounded allegations’ and voted to strike the line out. PA to make amendents.

9**. Corporate Risk Register**

Staffing shortages and replacement of RM. BM said DE would also need to be alerted to the risk. SMcE said the Chair of HR and the Chair of ARAC should be emailed and this should be highlighted at Council.