

**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE
GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
HELD ON TUESDAY, 16th DECEMBER 2003, AT
THE STORMONT HOTEL, UPPER NEWTOWNARDS RD, BELFAST**

Present:

Mr John Colgan	Mr Ray McGuigan
Mrs Frances Donnelly	Mrs Sally McKee
Mr Richard Egan	Mr David Oldfield
Mr Eddie Ferguson	Mr Alistair Orr
Ms Maria Graham	Mrs Thea Patton
Mrs Teresa Graham	Rev Dr Derek Poots
Dr Desmond Hamilton	Dr Robert Rodgers (Chair)
Mr Tony Lappin	Mr Peter Scott
Mr Alan Longman	Mr Philip Sheerin
Mr Paddy McAllister	Mrs Grace Trimble

In Attendance:

- Mr Eddie McArdle (Registrar)
- Ms Myra Pearson (GTC Scotland)
- Mr Barney Ball (Policy & Registration Manager)
- Mrs Yvonne McCool (Corporate Services Manager)
- Ms Geraldine Garnett-Frizelle (Minute Secretary)

Apologies:

- Mr Ivan Arbuthnot
- Mrs Jeannette Chapman (Vice-Chair)
- Ms Monica Cummings
- Mrs Mary Devine
- Professor John Gardener
- Mr Patrick Kinney
- Mr Dominic McElholm
- Mr Ian McInnes
- Mrs La'Verne Montgomery
- Dr Marie Murphy
- Ms Aedín Ní Ghadhra
- Mr Gordon Topping
- Very Reverend John Walsh

Apologies were noted.

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chair welcomed members to the sixth meeting of Council and introduced Ms Myra Pearson, Deputy Registrar of the General Teaching Council for Scotland and welcomed her to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Council Meeting of 25th September 2003 (GTC/03/Min5)

The Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

4.5 Declaration of Interests Forms

The Chair thanked those members who had already completed and returned their Declaration of Interests Forms and asked that the remaining forms be returned as soon as possible.

7 Outreach Strategy (GTC5/03/P1)

The Chair informed members that steps had been taken to engage a PR company. The Corporate Services Manager told members that an advertisement had been placed asking for tenders for PR services and that six companies had submitted bids. Based on the criteria specified, Morrow Communications had been chosen and an initial meeting to discuss the way forward arranged. The Corporate Services Manager also informed members that, although at this point it was difficult to know exactly how much PR services would cost as a detailed PR Strategy had yet to be discussed with Morrow, a sum of £25,000 had been set aside in the budget for this purpose.

10 Code of Professional Values and Practice (GTC5/03/P3)

The Chair informed members that the Code had been placed on the GTCNI website, together with an online questionnaire. All schools had then been circulated with a flyer, reminding them of the importance of responding to this consultation. However, there had been a poor response to date and it had been decided that it would be necessary to undertake a postal consultation.

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 The Chair updated members on events since the last Council meeting. He informed them that the Registrar had been interviewed for the Belfast Telegraph and that an interesting article had subsequently been published regarding the aims of the Council.

4.2 The Chair also informed members that he and Officers of the Council had met with education Spokespeople from some of the main political parties including the SDLP, the UUP and the Women's Coalition Party. A meeting had also been arranged for the New Year with a representative of the DUP and that a date was being sought for a meeting with Sinn Fein. He felt that these meetings had been informative and worthwhile in establishing contacts within the political parties and raising the profile of the Council and awareness about its work.

4.3 The Chair told members that a meeting had recently taken place of the Chairs and Chief Executives of the General Teaching Councils of England, Scotland and Wales. The meeting had been wide-ranging in its discussions, covering CPD, the disciplinary function of a General Teaching Council, the initial training of teachers, the role of teaching assistants, the registration fee and the promotion of the profession to the wider public. Although the group had no decision-making powers, the Chair felt it had been an extremely useful meeting for the exchange of ideas.

- 4.4 The Chair informed members that he and the Registrar had been invited to attend a meeting of Association of Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards.

5. Officers' Business

- 5.1 The Registrar informed members that a meeting had been arranged for early January with Representatives of the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) – in the main Bursars and Principals – to discuss issues regarding registration for teachers employed in the Voluntary Grammar Sector. These teachers' details are not available via the Department of Education and it will therefore be necessary to perform a separate data capture. The meeting will allow Officers of Council to discuss with representatives of the GBA the best way of taking this forward.
- 5.2 The Registrar reported that a number of Council members had taken up the invitation to attend the North of England Education Conference in January as representatives of GTCNI. He also let members know that a number of one day attendance places were still available and that members should inform one of the Officers as soon as possible should they wish to avail of this opportunity.
- 5.3 The Registrar gave a short presentation to members on the Working Groups to be set up to look at the two review areas (CPD and Teacher Competences). He informed members that the first meeting of the Working Groups would take place in February 2004. Members expressed concern that the membership of the groups reflected the breadth of the profession. The Registrar confirmed that four or five serving teachers would be members of each groups, representing the nursery, primary and post-primary sectors.

6. Review of Public Administration (GTC6/03/P1)

The Registrar introduced this paper and noted the uncertainties surrounding the present review given the absence of a local administration. He further reflected on the scope of the review and posited that, to be complete, the review should have embraced all aspects of administration including the Civil Service Departments.

Turning to the specifics of the paper, the Registrar drew attention to the Statement of Guiding Principles. Having reviewed these he reflected in some detail on the concept of Equity and Spatial Dimension.

Following a consideration of the paper the Council endorsed the paper and agreed that it should be submitted as the GTCNI response.

7. Corporate Plan (GTC6/03/P2)

The Registrar introduced this item commenting that initial approval had been sought from the Council's Committees (at their meetings in late November and early December) for the content of the Corporate Plan and approval had been given. This had been necessary as it was intended to distribute the plan at the NEEC Conference to be held in Belfast's Waterfront Hotel in early January.

Members commented positively on the design and content of the plan and confirmed the decisions made by the Committees to proceed to print.

8. Funding – Registration Fee. Guiding Principles and Costings (GTC6/03/P3)

The Corporate Services Manager outlined the Council's budgetary requirements for the 2004/05 financial year and the guiding principles underpinning the proposed figures. She highlighted key areas of the expenditure that made up the budget and indicated that the level of the registration fee will be determined by the number of teachers entitled to register. As there is still a degree of uncertainty over the exact number of teachers who will register, the Corporate Services Manager gave details regarding the range which the registration fee is likely to fall within. After some discussion the Council approved the budget figures.

9. GTCNI Publication Scheme (GTC6/03/P4)

The Corporate Services Manager informed members that the Council is required, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, to develop a Publications Scheme for submission to the Information Commissioner before 31st December 2003 and to be implemented before 29th February 2004. The purpose of the Scheme is to establish a culture of openness and transparency for those providing information in public bodies. She indicated that the Scheme is a guide to the types of information which the Council will publish, the form in which it will be published and the exemptions provided under the Data Protection Act. The Corporate Services Manager outlined the Council's draft Scheme and the Council agreed to approve the same.

10. GTCNI Registration Update (GTC6/03/P5)

The Policy and Registration Manager talked members through paper GTC5/03/P5. This provided an update of procurement activity since the Council last met in September. Xansa's response to the GTCNI's Statement of Service Requirements (SOSR) had been deemed, by the Project Board, as unlikely to represent value for money, and an open-tender process had been initiated in October. The result of this process had been to select Miller Technology Limited (MTL) as the contractor to develop the registration database application and to provide ongoing support and maintenance.

MTL's solution was based on an Oracle platform, and an MTL system was already being used by GTC Scotland. Members acknowledged the significant progress made and noted favourably the considerable savings that had been achieved in terms of initial development and ongoing support service costs.

11. Proposals for a Revised Core Syllabus in RE (GTC6/03/P6)

The Registrar introduced this paper and indicated that because of timing, the paper had been submitted on an interim basis as a Committee Response.

The Registrar outlined the rationale adopted in considering the proposals, namely its “Fitness for Purpose” and the maintenance of the integrity of the profession. In reflecting on the proposals the Council reflected on the need for what was deemed “structured socialisation into the world of education” and agreed that the proposals resonated with that notion.

Attention was drawn to the ongoing CCEA Review (to be considered by the Council at this meeting) and members expressed concern at the diversity of planning formats. After further discussion, Council endorsed the Committee’s response.

12. Proposals for Curriculum & Assessment at Key Stage 3 (GTC6/03/P7)

In introducing this paper the Registrar noted that in considering the paper consideration had been given to how the proposals gelled with the core mission of GTCNI, namely “the building of professional communities” and secondly how it addressed the needs of children and young people in an ever-changing environment.

He then outlined the structure of the paper and considered in some detail the proposals and, in particular, the issues of Knowledge and Skills, and Assessment. With regard to this the Council applauded the enhanced flexibility afforded the profession and signalled its rejection of any suggestion that the profession had, in former years, not sought adequately to address pupil needs.

With regard to the issue of assessment, concern was expressed that one assessment regime was expected to meet the needs of five differing audiences. Reflecting on the potential of IT to support the assessment processes, members expressed some reservations and cautioned that any new regime should await not just the development of such a computerised facility, but also the completion of appropriate training.

In conclusion, the Council expressed their concerns regarding funding and training and stated their belief that without appropriate arrangements in respect of these issues, the proposals could possibly founder. Council endorsed the paper.

13. Committee Minutes

13.1 Audit Committee (AC2/03/Min2)

Mrs Graham informed members that a Risk Management Strategy for the Council had been placed before the Committee at its last meeting and that, following discussion, it had been decided that it would be beneficial for training in Risk Management to be provided for both officers of the Council and members. The Corporate Services Manager had undertaken to arrange a half day training programme and this was to be scheduled to take place after the next Council Meeting.

13.2 General Purposes & Finance (GP&FC/03/Min7)

At this juncture Dr Rodgers vacated the Chair and left the meeting, as did the Registrar. Mr Ferguson was asked to present the minutes of the seventh General Purposes and Finance Committee. Arising from the minutes, discussion ensued on both the Chairman’s Allowance and the Registrar’s salary. Members were informed that, following the last Council meeting, the Corporate Services Manager had written to the Department of Education regarding the issue of the Registrar’s salary, but as yet no response had been received. It was agreed that a

further letter be sent, signed by the Chair of the General Purposes and Finance Committee, expressing Council's concern at this lack of response.

13.3 Policy Committee (PC/03/Min7)

The Chair of Policy informed members that there were a number of ongoing issues being looked at by the Committee including Continuing Professional Development and the Code of Professional Values and Practice.

13.4 Registration Committee (RC/03/Min4)

The Chair of Registration informed members that work was ongoing to develop the database as previously reported by the Policy and Registration Manager in the paper presented to Council (GTC6/03/P5).

14. Any Other Business

There was no other business to be discussed. Members expressed thanks to Officers for their work over the preceding months, as well as the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees.

15. Venue, Date and Time for Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 24th March 2004 at 10:00 am and members will be informed of the venue nearer the time.

Signed..... Date.....