

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2003, AT  
GTCNI, ALBANY HOUSE, GT VICTORIA ST, BELFAST**

**Present:**

Mr Ivan Arbuthnot	Mr Dominic McElholm
Mrs Jeannette Chapman	Mr John Colgan
Ms Monica Cummings	Mrs Sally McKee
Mrs Mary E Devine	Mr Paddy McAllister
Ms Aedin Ni Ghadhra	Mr Eddie Ferguson
Mr David Oldfield	Mrs Teresa Graham
Mr Alistair Orr	Dr Desmond Hamilton
Mrs Thea Patton	Mr Patrick Kinney
Rev Dr Derek Poots	Mr Tony Lappin
Mr Philip Sheerin	Mr Alan Longman
Very Rev John Walsh	Mr Peter Scott
Mrs La'Verne Montgomery	Dr Bob Rodgers (Chair)
Professor John Gardner	

Mr SI Gordon  
(Managing Inspector for Higher & Further Education, DENI)

**In Attendance:** Mr Eddie McArdle (Registrar)  
Miss Beth McMaw (Minute Secretary)

**1. Welcome and Introduction**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and made a particular welcome to Mr SI Gordon.

**Apologies:** Ms Marie Graham  
Mr Ray McGuigan  
Mr Gordon Topping  
Mrs Frances Donnelly  
Dr Marie Murphy  
Mr Richard Egan  
Mr Ian McInnes

The Chair informed members of Dr Murphy's recent bereavement and indicated that the Registrar would, on behalf of Council extend sympathy to Dr Murphy.

## **2. Minutes of the Council Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> October 2002 (GTC/02/M1)**

The Minutes were approved by the Council without amendment.

## **3. Matters Arising**

### **3.1 Election of Vice-Chair**

The Registrar advised Council that the election of Vice-Chair will be by Single Transferable Vote; all members will have received their ballot papers. Mr Terry Patterson from the Electoral Office was commended to Council to oversee the election procedures and had agreed to do so and will meet at GTCNI offices on February 10<sup>th</sup> for this purpose.

### **3.2 Election of Nursery Representative**

The Registrar advised that in keeping with the commitment given at the last Council he had sought clarification as to the legal position vis a vis co-option from within the Nursery Sector. He also outlined the consultation process initiated within that sector to ascertain the levels of interest.

### **3.3 CCEA Response**

The Registrar advised Council that the CCEA Response had been issued as an Officers' Response.

## **4. Chairman's Business**

The Chair informed members of the recent death of Dr Murphy's Uncle and on behalf of the Council expressed his sympathy. The Registrar undertook to convey these sentiments to Dr Murphy.

The Chair also thanked members for the expressions of concern and support he had received during the period of his wife's hospitalisation and convalescence. He also congratulated Mrs Montgomery on the birth of her son, Sam.

### **4.1 Meeting of Five Nations (GTC)**

The Chair apprised members of the meeting in Cardiff with representation from N. Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England. The main thrust of discussion had been in the areas of Professional Development and Disciplinary issues.

Amongst the issues discussed were Continuing Professional Development and the approaches in each of the jurisdictions. The Chair noted the main discussion points namely:

- Funding for CPD
- Diversity of approaches across a spectrum from the use of subject panels to the granting of bursaries to individuals and to schools.
- The need for career profiling.
- The linkages between performance management and Continuing Professional Development.

Within the realms of Disciplinary issues, discussion centred around the issue of definition of culpability and the need for uniformity across all jurisdictions. In addition the difference in responsibilities was explored – i.e. some including GTCE have a remit which embraces competence. This is not the case for GTCNI.

#### **4.2 GTCNI: A Personal Perspective from the Chairperson**

The Chair took the opportunity to reflect on the issues that might impact on the Council either as a source of unity or dissent. With regard to the latter he reflected on:

- The diversity of backgrounds, sectors and interests
- The personalities and temperament of individuals
- The pressures from without
- Geographical location

Whilst recognising the potential of the above to engender an element of disunity the Chair noted that there were many factors which would inevitably bring a measure of cohesion including:

- Shared hopes for the profession
- The fact that all are now in “learning mode”
- The opportunity afforded us to create something valuable and new
- The desire of all to serve the best interests of children

The Chair then considered the role of GTCNI and its priorities and in doing so noted that GTCNI is not about:

- Supplementing or duplicating the work of Professional Institutions
- Advancing sectional interests
- Accepting dictation from outside
- A rubber stamp body
- Primarily a disciplinary body

Having reflected on the above the Chair set out the priorities of GTCNI:

- Getting to know and respect each other
- Be effective communicators
- Striking a balance between the mechanics and expressing professional opinions
- Making us known
- Attracting support and interest of teachers

- Establishing and maintaining an efficient and accurate database

In conclusion the Chair proposed that in the conducting of Council business, members should use Christian names and this was agreed.

Prior to the discussion of item 5 on the Agenda, Registrar's Business, Mr Colgan thanked the Chair for his insightful reflections on the role and future of the Council those sentiments were whole heartedly endorsed by members.

## **5. Registrar's Business**

Expenses: The Registrar advised members that all claims for expenses incurred must be accompanied by receipts. He noted that GPFC would consider a scheme for GTCNI at its meeting of January 25<sup>th</sup>. Until the Council had an agreed scheme rates for travel and subsistence would be paid using Civil Service Rates.

### **5.1 Teachers Well Being Survey**

The Registrar informed Council that he had represented GTCNI at the official launch of this document and that the document would feature as a substantive item at the next Council Meeting.

### **5.2 Letter from IITCP Secretary**

The Registrar advised members that the closing date for submissions was January 31<sup>st</sup> which could, however, be extended slightly.

He asked Council to reflect on how GTCNI might best respond. After some preliminary discussion it was agreed that the matter be addressed at item 7.

## **6. Standing Orders (GTC.2/03/P.1)**

The Registrar introduced this item and noted that the document was an attempt to address the issues raised at the last Council Meeting and he thanked members for their helpful submissions.

The Chair proposed that the Standing Orders should now be accepted as a basis for operation to be reviewed during the "school year" and any amendments brought to the Policy Committee before submission to Council in the Autumn.

## **7. Continued Professional Development (GTC.2/03/P.2) [Refers to (GTC.1/02/P.4) from first meeting]**

The Registrar introduced the topic and offered a summary of the main factors impacting on the provision of CPD, such as the pace of reform.

Mrs Chapman commented that the issue had been the subject of detailed discussion at the Policy Committee. She noted the difficulties arising from amongst other things:

- Geographical isolation
- The preponderance of small schools
- The need to provide for variety of interests and needs

In the general discussion that followed members expressed support for the concept of a structured programme of Professional Development bridging the early years of professional life and the programmes associated with PQH. However, it was felt that the paper, as it stood, offered little specificity and should be considered as “initial thinking” to be taken forward by the GTCNI.

Mrs Chapman in concluding the discussion on the issues suggested that the Council through the Policy Committee should:

- Establish a set of Guiding Principles in respect of CPD.
- Consult with the Teaching Profession on these principles and the perceived needs of teachers.
- Engage proactively with all partners within the Education Service to explore both options and structures.

Mrs Chapman’s proposal was accepted by the Council. Members were assured at this point that attendance at the Policy Committee was open to all Council Members under the present Standing Orders.

## **8. Special Educational Needs (GTC.2/03/P.3) GTC.2/03/P.3 (a)**

The Registrar introduced this paper and brought to the attention of members a tabled paper to be treated as an appendix to that paper.

He outlined the background to the tabled paper namely that the Council had received an advance copy on January 20<sup>th</sup> of a “Best Value” report on Special Needs compiled on behalf of the Education & Library Boards and the tabled appendix was a digest of core issues and would serve as supporting data in the Council’s substantive response.

Members thanked the Registrar for preparing the appendix within such a restricted timeframe.

Mrs Chapman outlined for members some of the points that had arisen when the issue was discussed within the Policy Committee, amongst them being:

- The need for a joint strategy between Education, Health and Social Services.
- The need for appropriate training of classroom assistants and other support agents.
- The management difficulties arising from the policy of integration particularly where this so created an influx of support personnel.

- The need for advice to parents and teachers to be more specific and transparent.

The issue of funding featured prominently with members expressing concern that the on-going programme of integration was not being resourced. Mr McElholm noted that the ELB's were under consistent pressure in respect of the funding of special needs and noted the figures cited in Appendix 1 of the document.

The Registrar in agreeing with Mr McElholm's comments noted that the ELB's were in an invidious position of providing a "demand led" service within a "cash limited" budget.

The proposal was put to and agreed by the Council that the Registrar would incorporate the amendments suggested by the Policy Committee and that the paper be adopted as the Council's response.

## **9. Recruitment Update**

The Registrar advised the Council that there was no Ratification process in place. However, proposed to Council the appointment of Mr Barnaby Ball to the position of Policy & Registration Manager, with Ms Nuala O'Donnell as a reserve candidate.

Ratification was approved.

The Registrar further proposed that as the Council would not be meeting until March and as there are 3 other positions at interview stage, that the Council gives the Chair the authority to ratify these posts.

Proposal was approved.

## **10. Registration System: Procurement (GTC.2/03/P.4) Xansa Presentation [GTC.2/03/P.4(a)]**

Mr Scott, Chair of Registration outlined the Registration options and explained that after much discussion it was felt that Xansa, subject further exploration, was the most suitable option under the circumstances. He outlined that XANSA was known to be a reliable source and that the cost would be lower and the system could be up and running more quickly given that they already have a thorough knowledge of the work of GTC.

Mr Ferguson, Chair of GPF commented that the GPF committee agreed Xansa was the right option.

The Chair proposed Xansa be accepted subject to clarification re start up and recurrent costs.

Proposal approved.

**11. Reports from Council Committees:**

**11.1 General Purposes & Finance Committee (GPFC/03/Min.1)**

Mr Ferguson (Chair of GPF Committee) advised Council that there had been two meetings of the GPF committee which have been dominated by Registration and Procurement. He also reported that the committee was confident that DENI will provide adequate funding.

The minutes were agreed by Council.

**11.2 Policy Committee (PC/03/Min.1)**

Mrs Chapman (Chair of Policy Committee) advised Council that there had been two meetings of the Policy Committee. Both meetings discussed CPD and SEN.

The minutes were agreed by Council.

**11.3 Registration Committee (RC/03/Min.1)**

Mr Scott (Chair of Registration Committee) advised Council that the content of the Registration Committee meetings had already been discussed in the generality of the Meetings this far.

The minutes were agreed by Council.

**12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Date of next Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

**13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Signature.....Date.....**