

MINUTES OF THE 16TH MEETING OF THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR N.I., HELD ON THURSDAY 16TH MARCH 2006, AT THE ARMAGH CITY HOTEL, ARMAGH

Present:

Ivan Arbuthnot	Ray McGuigan
Leslie Caul	Sally McKee
Jeanette Chapman	Dr Wilfred Mulryne
Monica Cummings	Aedín Ní Ghadra
Frances Donnelly	David Oldfield
Eddie Ferguson	Allistair Orr
Miriam Karp	Thea Patton
Patrick Kinney	Peter Scott
Tony Lappin	Philip Sheerin
Paddy McAllister	Grace Trimble

In Attendance:

Eddie McArdle (Registrar, GTCNI)
Yvonne McCool (Corporate Services Manager, GTCNI)
Barnaby Ball (Policy & Registration Manager, GTCNI)
Gerry Devlin (Senior Education Officer, GTCNI)
Deirdre Lavery (Finance & Administration Officer, GTCNI)
Mark McLaughlin (PR Officer, GTCNI)
Carol McLaughlin (Minute Secretary)
Karen Blair (Cleaver, Fulton, Rankin Solicitors) for Agenda Item 1 & 2

Apologies:

Rosemary Barton	Dominic McElholm
John Colgan	La'Verne Montgomery
Mary Elizabeth Devine	Dr Marie Murphy
Malachy Doherty	Dr Derek Poots OBE
Richard Egan	Gordon Topping
Maria Graham	Rev John Walsh
Teresa Graham	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

2. COUNCIL MINUTES (GTC/05/Min14)

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the last meeting (proposed Allistair Orr and seconded by Ivan Arbuthnot).

3. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Charter for Education (GTC/05/Min15)

The Registrar informed members that negotiations are taking place with the Minister of Education to launch the Charter for Education on 22nd June 2006, which is the final meeting of the current Council.

(ii) Election Scheme (GTC/05/Min9)

The Registrar informed members the announcement of the results of election has been rescheduled to Wednesday 21st June 2006 due to the postal strike.

(iii) Teacher Survey (GTC/05/Min10)

The Registrar informed members the Teacher Survey is underway, and that a subgroup of the Policy Committee has agreed to act as a small research advisory/management group.

(iv) Bursary Project (GTC/05/Min11)

The Registrar informed members GTCNI have had a good response to the Pilot Bursary Project, at present 79 applications have been received.

4. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed the Corporate Support Officer, Carol McLaughlin to meeting. He also congratulated and thanked all GTCNI staff for the excellent arrangement for the First Annual Lecture, which was held on 14th March 2006 in the Great Hall, Queens.

5. OFFICERS' BUSINESS

There was no Officers' business.

6. VETTING & REGISTRATION (GTC16/06P1)

The Policy and Registration Manager introduced this paper and stated that in January 2006 the Education Minister, Ms Angela Smith, instructed the Department to undertake a review of current vetting arrangements. The Registration Committee agreed that this paper should be presented at full council. He confirmed that the paper attempts to set out how registration could enhance current arrangements. The Policy & Registration Manager then took members through all section of this report including:

- Registration Procedures
- Current Vetting Arrangements
- Relationship between Registration & Vetting

It is proposed that the Council should:

- Review and examine current vetting arrangements
- Assess the implications of new legislation and proposed changes to vetting; and
- Develop possible models of future relationships between registration and vetting.

To achieve this it is important the GTCNI examine the implications of:

- The implementation of Part V of the Police Act 1997.
- The implementation of the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003, which places responsibility on the Department of Education to maintain lists of those banned from working with children and vulnerable adults.
- The response made by statutory agencies to the recommendations contained in the Bichard Report.

Members confirmed that it was clearly appropriate for the Council to determine the suitability of a person to join and to remain part of the teaching profession in Northern Ireland. Members then discussed how and when background checks (CRO enhanced checks) might be conducted; and agreed that the Council should explore in more detail the implications, in particular the resource implications, of incorporating background checks within initial registration processes.

7. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES AND RULES (GTC16/06/P2)

The Chair welcomed Ms Karen Blair of Cleaver, Fulton, Rankin to the meeting, and the Policy & Registration Manager gave members a presentation on the proposed Disciplinary Procedures Rules. He put the Rules in context and explained that the Department would be making the required Regulations, which would give the Council the power to make its Rules. Members had an opportunity to examine in-depth each rule, and to seek clarification from the Council's Solicitor.

Members provided feedback on certain specific rules and in particular highlighted concerns that allegations, which might be frivolous or vexatious, should be dealt with in an appropriate way.

The Registrar commented that the Rules had been drafted to allow for an assessment to be made of the allegations, before a 'notice of investigation' was issued. Members asked that decisions at this stage should be made by the Registrar in association with the Chair of Council/Registration; the Policy and Registration Manager also agreed to amend Rule 9.2 accordingly.

Members also suggested that Officers of Council should arrange to meet with representatives of the Teachers Unions to discuss the Rules. The Registrar undertook to arrange these meetings as soon as possible.

It was agreed that the Rules should be amended to reflect feedback from Council and further legal advice, and would be discussed again by the Registration Committee in May and would then be placed before Council again in June for approval.

8. EDUCATION ORDER 2006 RESPONSE (GTC16/06P3)

In view of time taken to discuss Item 7, the Senior Education Officer briefly highlighted changes made to the Education Order 2006 and which had been agreed in the Policy Committee Meeting held on Friday 10th February 2006. However, members were asked to provide feedback directly to the Senior Education Officer, if deemed necessary.

9. OPERATIONAL PLAN (GTC16/06/P4)

The Registrar addressed this issue and explained targets, activities to meet targets and final output. Objectives include:

- To build a broad and dynamic “professional community” and enhance the status of teaching as a profession.
- To provide an independent and authoritative voice for the profession on matters pertaining to teaching.
- To promote and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and practice in collaboration with key partners.
- To develop effective and cost efficient structures, processes and systems to support the delivery of the Council’s objectives.

10. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2005/2006 (GTC16/06/P4)

The Corporate Support Manager took members through the income and expenditure figures up to 31st December 2005. She stated that GTCNI’s income plus interest from the High Yield Business Term Deposit Account was £1,156,883. While the expenditure was quite low for this period there were a number of projects still ongoing that would be committed and accrued for this financial year. The Annual Accounts for 2005 are to be presented to Council in June and will be included in the Annual Report. She also informed members that GTCNI have applied for compensation from the Post Office following the recent postal strike which had huge impact on Council Elections. Mr Tony Lappin thanked the Corporate Support Manager for all her hard work.

11. ANNUAL ESTIMATES 06/07 (GTC16/06P6)

The Corporate Support Manager addressed the issue of the Annual Estimates for the next financial year. The Budget for 06/07 had been extrapolated from the previous year’s spend and certain areas increased to allow for additional staff and increased organisational functions in terms of the Council’s disciplinary functions. The GTCNI are working on the basis of a core budget of some £1.1m although this would be confirmed after the fee payment meeting that would be held next month. The budget for professional, legal and consultation fees is similar to GTC England and GTC Wales. Capital Payments are similar to last year’s budget.

12. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(i) Audit Committee (AC/06/Min10)

Mrs Sally McKee presented the Audit Committee minutes to Council as an accurate record of the meeting.

(ii) General Purposes and Finance Committee (GP&FC/06/Min16)

The chair of the General Purpose & Finance Committee introduced the minutes informing members of developments including; the adoption of new Council policies and communication with NIPSA; recruitment; financial memorandum and the lease.

(iii) Registration Committee (RC/06/Min13)

Ms Thea Patton presented the Registration Committee minutes to Council as an accurate record of the meeting.

(iv) Policy Committee (PC/06/Min17)

The chair of the Policy Committee informed members that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting and focused on items such as the Research Repository and the CPD pilot programme.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked Dr Wilfred Mulryne for arranging with Methodist College for the provision of a Harpist, Miss Ciara McGlade, for our Annual Lecture.

14. VENUE, DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Stormont Hotel, Belfast is provisionally booked for 22nd June 2006.

Signed: _____ Date: _____