

**MINUTES OF THE 17TH MEETING OF THE GENERAL TEACHING
COUNCIL FOR N.I., HELD ON THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2006, AT
STORMONT HOTEL, BELFAST**

Present:	Eddie Ferguson Ivan Arbuthnot Rosemary Barton Dr Leslie Caul Jeanette Chapman John Colgan Monica Cummings Malachy Doherty Frances Donnelly Richard Egan Maria Graham Teresa Graham Miriam Karp Tony Lappin	Paddy McAllister Dominic McElholm Sally McKee Dr Wilfred Mulryne Dr Marie Murphy Aedín Ní Ghadra David Oldfield Allistair Orr Thea Patton Dr Derek Poots OBE Peter Scott Philip Sheerin Gordon Topping Grace Trimble
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In Attendance: **Eddie McArdle (Registrar, GTCNI)
Yvonne McCool (Corporate Services Manager, GTCNI)
Barnaby Ball (Policy & Registration Manager, GTCNI)
Gerry Devlin (Senior Education Officer, GTCNI)
Carol McLaughlin (Minute Secretary)
Dr Bob Rodgers (Past Chairman of GTCNI Council)
Hayden Llewellyn (GTC Wales)
Avril Barker (GTC Scotland)
Aine Lawlor (GTC Ireland)
Michael Kane & Richard Nugent (Pricewaterhouse Coopers)
for Agenda Item 6**

Apologies:	Mary Elizabeth Devine Patrick Kinney Ray McGuigan	La'Verne Montgomery Rev John Walsh
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1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

2. COUNCIL MINUTES (GTC/06/Min16)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved; subject to amendment, Dr Leslie Caul was present, (proposed by Tony Lappin and seconded by Teresa Graham).

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed Hayden Llewellyn of GTC Wales, Avril Barker of GTC Scotland and Aine Lawlor of GTC Ireland to the Council meeting.

5. OFFICERS' BUSINESS

The Registrar informed members the Xchange Conference was very successful, GTCNI sponsored 40 teachers to attend.

6. PwC (Pricewaterhouse Coopers) INTERIM REPORT (PRESENTATION AND UPDATE)

The Chair welcomed Michael Kane and Richard Nugent of Pricewaterhouse Coopers to the meeting and Michael gave a presentation on the progress of the teacher survey. GTCNI commissioned Pricewaterhouse Coopers to undertake a survey of 3,000 teachers in Northern Ireland covering the following professional areas:

- Pupil Behaviour
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD)
- Curriculum Development
- The Status of the Teaching Profession
- Information and Communication Technology
- Policy Initiatives in Education.

The survey has 62 questions which is split up into 8 sections and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey was distributed on 25th May 2006 and the final report should be complete by Autumn 2006.

7. REGISTRATION AND "PROFESSIONAL SUITABILITY" – A DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGISTRATION AND VETTING (GTC17/06/P1)

The Policy and Registration Manager highlighted the key issues of this paper. Since January 2006, the Council has been engaged in a critical evaluation of the relationship between its registration processes and the vetting responsibilities of the Department and the employing authorities/employers. Through its registration processes the Council determines who is able to be employed as a teacher in Northern Ireland's grant-aided schools; a determination, which heretofore has been made by other parties. Now, the determination of who should enter the teaching profession resides, absolutely and appropriately, with the Council. But as the awareness of the Council's registration processes grows there is a need for a re-examination of roles and remits.

When making a determination of whether or not a person should work as a teacher three sequential questions need to be considered:

1. The 'paramount' question and the concept of 'eligibility': is this person a fit and proper person to be working with children (vulnerable adults) in Northern Ireland? To date this question has been asked and answered by the Department of Education. In the short and medium term this question will continue to be asked and answered by the Department. In the long term, this question will be asked and answered by an external, independent, UK wide vetting agency which is to be established in response to the Richard Report's recommendations.
2. The 'professional' question and the concept of 'professional suitability': is this person a fit and proper person to be a member of the teaching profession in Northern Ireland? This is the question that the Council must ask and answer. Determining professional suitability by conducting vetting or background checking has not been part of the Council's initial registration process to date. In assessing professional suitability, the Council should consider:
 - whether the applicant has been convicted of a criminal offence which is relevant to registration with the Council;
 - whether the applicant is the subject of disciplinary action by another professional regulator which is relevant to registration with the Council; and
 - any other information which may come to the attention of the Council which may be relevant to registration.
3. The 'personnel' question and the concept of 'employability': is this person a fit and proper person to be employed in a particular school? This is the question that is asked and answered by employing authorities/employers.

The paper concluded that it is of vital importance for the future work and credibility of the Council that the 'professional' question is asked and answered by the Council, and that other interested parties acknowledge that it is legitimate and appropriate for the Council to do so. Before moving forward with incorporating 'professional suitability' criteria within the Council's initial registration processes, the Council's disciplinary powers will need to be in place, and in addition a resource implication audit will need to be undertaken.

Members indicated they considered the concept of 'professional suitability' to be important and noted the papers conclusions.

8. LEGAL ADVICE ON UNSATISFACTORY TEACHERS (SEE CURRENT PROCEDURES AS ANNEX ONE TO THIS PAPER (GTC17/06/P2))

The Senior Education Officer took members through the legal advice on procedures for dealing with Principals, Teachers and Vice Principals whose work is unsatisfactory and discussed the implications for GTCNI. Cleaver Fulton Rankin made the following key comments:

- The legal procedures appear to be fair and reasonable however, they could be improved.
- A combination of informal judgement and objective evidence should be the benchmark in cases of incompetence.

- A three step approach should be used when dealing with cases relating to competences:
 1. The employer should carry out a careful appraisal of the employee's performance and discuss his criticisms with the employee;
 2. The employer should warn the employee of the consequences of there being no improvement;
 3. The employer should give the employee a reasonable opportunity to improve.

9. DISCIPLINARY RULES (GTC17/06P3)

The Policy and Registration Manager presented to the Council the final draft of its Disciplinary Procedure Rules and sought approval for them. He informed members the Rules have been amended following initial feedback from Council members, GTCNI's Solicitors, other General Teaching Councils and Teacher Unions.

The Disciplinary Rules were approved (proposed by Teresa Graham and seconded by Maria Graham).

The Registrar gave an update on progress with the making of the necessary Disciplinary Regulations by the Department. Unfortunately, the Department had received advice to the effect that there was a 'deficiency' in the 1998 Order, and that new primary powers needed to be sought in order to make necessary Disciplinary Regulations. The Registrar wrote to the Permanent Secretary and received feedback on 22nd June 2006. The Registrar identified milestones to date and members agreed that Officers should urgently contact the Department to clarify the situation.

10. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2005/06 (GTC17/06/P4)

The Registrar introduced the Annual Report and Accounts and commented that teachers face increasing demands generated by initiatives and legislative change, whilst working in an environment characterised by uncertainty and a lack of job security. He emphasised that the profession is willing to embrace change when it is seen as meaningful, considered, resourced and deliverable. The Council has sought to develop policies in order that the profession might respond meaningfully to the change agenda. The four main objectives GTCNI addressed in 2005/2006 include:

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

The Corporate Services Manager presented the Annual Accounts to Council members which included:

- statement of GTCNI's and Registrar's responsibilities,
- statement of Internal Control,
- income and expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2006.

Council thanked the Corporate Support Manager and the Finance and Administration Manager for their effort and hard work in producing this Report.

11. INCOME AND ESTIMATES 2006/2007 (GTC17/06/P5)

The Corporate Support Manager took members through the income and estimates figures. She stated that Council's income for the year plus interest from the High Yield Business Term Deposit Account was £1,177,770.42. The budget for 2006/2007 has been based on £1.1m which has been extrapolated from 2005/2006 and certain areas have been increased to allow for additional staff and increased organisational functions in terms of the Council's disciplinary functions. The budget for professional, legal and consultation fees proportionately similar to other GTCs. Capital Payments are similar to last year's budget.

Council thanked the Corporate Support Manager and the Finance and Administration manager for their effort and hard work in producing this Report.

12. EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR TRAVELLERS IN EDUCATION: TOWARDS A STRATEGY DRAFT OFFICER'S RESPONSE (GTC17/06/P6)

The Senior Education Officer presented this paper to Council. The teaching profession in Northern Ireland is committed to the highest standards of professional practice and the Council's Code of Values and Professional Practice articulates the core values of the profession.

The Education and Training Inspector's (ETI) Report "Survey of Provision for the Inclusion of Traveller Children into Mainstream Education in Northern Ireland May/June 2004". This report concluded:

"The findings of this report indicate that provision for Traveller children across the five ELB's is effective and given appropriate priority within the strategic planning of the ELB's and the allocation of central funding. There is a need to ensure that the improvements in provision and the developing and positive outcomes for Traveller children in terms of engaging with education, improving their attendance and developing a more long-term appreciation of the benefits of remaining in school, are maintained and enhanced. This report seeks to provide some guidance on the additional developments necessary to help ensure that Traveller children, the culture and their potential contribution to our society are recognised and valued" (ETI 2004).

In conclusion the Council recommends the following way forward:

- Policy development should be contextualised with the Council's Charter for Education.
- Policy Development should be evidentially based including that from comparative analysis.
- The ETI Report should be regarded as a benchmark for current practice and for developing strategies for improvement.

- The policy development in this area is set in a social and cultural context and the legalistic levers to initiate policy should be subject to the empirical testing as to their fitness for purposes.
- Resources should be targeted according to need and be sufficient to achieve policy objectives.
- Dissemination of current good practice and the continuing professional development of teachers must be a priority. Particularly that which encourages an equality perspective in terms of teaching and learning. The Citizenship element to the revised curriculum might be an appropriate vehicle in promoting such an objective.
- All policy interventions should be tested against the Department of Education's research findings, reducing the Bureaucratic on Schools 2002.

13. DRAFT RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER FROM PROFESSOR BAIN (GTCNI17/06/P7)

Due to time restrictions the Registrar briefly highlighted GTCNI's draft response to Professor Bain's Consultation Paper. The purpose of Professor Bain's paper is to provide a basis for an open discussion that will play a constructive and essential part in examining issues, considering views and perspectives, and exploring possibilities for action to plan and develop a system of schools that serves the people of Northern Ireland and its communities well and represents a good use of public funds. In welcoming this review GTCNI is confident that the education service does indeed share a common understanding of the purpose and significance of education and is committed to providing a world class education for the young people of Northern Ireland. Equally GTCNI recognise that a time of financial constraint and demographic downturn they must ensure that resources are marshalled effectively and that their planning processes are structured and coherent. What must not be forgotten is the reality that change is implemented by people and care must be taken to inform, empower and co-join the profession in the processes of renewal. Members agreed that an emergency meeting should be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss this paper further, inviting Chair's of Committees and any other interested Council members.

14. NEW COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP - UPDATE

The Registrar presented Council with an update of new Council Members. There are three remaining vacancies on the Council; two for the Secondary Education category and one for the Nursery Education category. Nominations are currently open, closing on 17th July 2006 and the deadline for the return of ballots is 15th September 2006. The Department of Education member is still to be appointed. The first meeting of the new Council will take place in October 2006.

15. SUMMARY BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVITIES BEING UNDERTAKEN IN PHASE ONE OF THE PILOT BURSARY SCHEME

For information.

16. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(i) Audit Committee (AC/06/Min11)

Ms Teresa Graham presented the Audit Committee minutes to Council as an accurate record of the meeting. She thanked the Corporate Services Manager and the Finance & Administration Officer for all their help and assistance.

(ii) General Purposes and Finance Committee (GP&FC/06/Min17)

Mr Allistair Orr informed members that the minutes of the General Purpose & Finance Committee meeting were an accurate record of the meeting. The Chair of the General Purpose and Finance Committee also thanked the Corporate Support Manager and the Finance and Administration Manager for all their help and support.

(iii) Registration Committee (RC/06/Min14)

Mr Peter Scott presented the Registration Committee minutes to Council as an accurate record of the meeting. He thanked all GTCNI Officers especially the Policy and Registration Manager.

(iv) Policy Committee (PC/06/Min18)

The chair of the Policy Committee informed members that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. She thanked all GTCNI Officers especially the Senior Education Officer.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked all Council members especially Chairs of Committees for all their hard work and dedication over the past three years. He thanked Jeanette Chapman for her hard work as Vice Chair and presented her with a gift. He gave a special thanks to the Registrar who has done a wonderful job. He expressed his deepest gratitude to Bob Rodgers who was a wonderful Chair for the first two years of Council. Bob Rodgers thanked Council for inviting him along and presented Chair of Council with a gift.

14. VENUE, DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

This was the last Council meeting for this term.

Signed: _____ Date: _____