

**MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE
GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
HELD ON TUESDAY, 24th JUNE 2003, AT
THE EUROPA HOTEL, GT VICTORIA ST, BELFAST**

Present:	Mr Ivan Arbuthnot	Mr Ray McGuigan
	Mrs Jeannette Chapman	Mr Ian McInnes
	Mrs Mary Devine	Mrs Sally McKee
	Mrs Frances Donnelly	Mrs La'Verne Montgomery
	Mr Richard Egan	Dr Marie Murphy
	Mr Eddie Ferguson	Mr David Oldfield
	Professor John Gardener	Mr Alistair Orr
	Ms Maria Graham	Mrs Thea Patton
	Mrs Teresa Graham	Reverend Dr Derek Poots
	Mr Alan Longman	Dr Robert Rodgers
	Mr Paddy McAllister	Mr Peter Scott
	Mr Dominic McElholm	Mr Philip Sheerin
	Mrs Grace Trimble	

In Attendance:	Mr Eddie McArdle (Registrar)	Mrs Yvonne McCool
	Mr Barney Ball	
	Ms Geraldine Garnett-Frizelle (Minute Secretary)	

Apologies:	Mr John Colgan
	Ms Monica Cummings
	Dr Desmond Hamilton
	Mr Tony Lappin
	Mr Patrick Kinney
	Ms Aedín Ní Ghadhra
	Mr Gordon Topping
	Very Reverend John Walsh

Apologies were noted.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Having welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the GTCNI, the Chair thanked them for their attendance at the photo session and thanked the Council Officers for their work in organising the event. The Chair then welcomed the newly elected Nursery Representative, Mrs Grace Trimble, to her first Council Meeting and welcomed back Mrs Donnelly and extended Council's congratulations to her. Finally, he introduced Mr Barney Ball, the new Policy and Registration Manager, to members.

2. Minutes of the Council Meeting of 25th March 2003 (GTC/03/M3)

The Minutes were approved subject to an amendment to the Attendance List where Dr Poots had been included twice.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 NI Teachers' Health & Wellbeing Survey 2001 (GTC3/03/P1)

The Chair informed members that, as agreed at the last Council Meeting, he had written to the Health & Wellbeing Implementation Group regarding GTCNI's membership. He asked the Registrar to outline their response. The Registrar explained that the Chair had written to Mrs Helen McClenaghan, the Chair of the Implementation Group regarding this matter and that he and the Chair had subsequently met with her. She had suggested that the Chair submit a formal request to Mr John Miskelly as Chair of Management Side requesting that the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland be included within the group. The letter was sent in May and a response received shortly thereafter, in which the request was refused. However, the Chair informed Members that Mr Miskelly had offered to liaise and consult with GTCNI and that this offer would be taken up.

3.2 Scheme for Payment of Travel and Expenses for Council Members (GTC3/03/P5)

The Registrar informed members that, as requested, this paper had been referred back to the General Purposes and Finance Committee for further consideration. He asked that, with Council's agreement, the matters be discussed under the GP & F Minutes. Members agreed.

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 The Chair said that part of his role, and indeed that of each member of the Council, was to bring the Council to the attention of a wider audience. He informed members that in this capacity he had attended a number of meetings and conferences; these included the Ulster Teachers Union Conference; the ATL Annual Dinner, as well as reciprocal visits with the Chairman and officers of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (who occupy a similar position to GTCNI being recently established) and an informal meeting with representatives of all the teaching unions. In addition to the above, the Chair, Registrar and the Chair of Policy Committee will be attending a meeting on 26th June 2003 with Christine Jendoubi and other members of the Department of Education to discuss, amongst other things, CPD and the Way Forward. The Chair will report back to Council at its next meeting in September.

4.2 The Chair informed members that he had been invited to be a member of the Post-Primary Review Body, in an independent capacity, although his affiliation to the GTCNI had been noted.

4.3 After having discussed the issue with officers of the Council, the Chair informed members that expense forms should be handed in at each Council session.

4.4 The Chair informed members that Council would be looking again at Standing Orders in the next meeting in September and he therefore requested that any suggestions for additions or amendments should be forwarded to the Registrar by the end of August.

4.5 Members were informed that included with their papers was a Declaration of Interests Form which should be completed and returned to the Registrar as soon as possible.

5. Officer's Business

5.1 The Registrar informed members that he, too, had attended a number of meetings and conference on behalf of Council, both as a guest and as a participant; these included the NASUWT Conference, the launch of the Chief Inspector's Report at Stormont, the PQH

Graduation Ceremony held in Lisburn and the launch of the North of England Education Conference. Members were given information regarding the conference and informed that, should they require any further information, Mr Eddie Ferguson was the Co-ordinator for the conference and they could consult with him.

- 5.2 The Corporate Services Manager updated members on progress with the GTCNI website. Three companies had expressed interest in the project and submitted tenders. These had been considered by Council Officers and discussions with the Department of Education are ongoing before final approval. It was planned to launch the website at the next full Council Meeting on 25th September 2003 at the Stormont Hotel. The Minister had been invited but it was not clear yet whether she would be attending.

6. Election of Nursery Representative Update

The Registrar informed members that the election had been held with Mr Terry Patterson acting as the Independent Scrutineer. The results had been published in the three provincial newspapers, as required by the scheme, and also brought formally to Council. Overall there had been a good turnout of the electorate.

7. Independent Inquiry Update

The Registrar informed members that following discussion at the Policy Committee meeting, the representatives of Council had met with the Independent Inquiry Body. It was felt that, as a result of this meeting, the Inquiry Body now had a clear understanding of the role of the GTCNI as a professional body and its particular concerns in regard to CPD. The Registrar recounted pertinent aspects of the exchange between the Council's delegates and the Inquiry Body, and dwelt on the potential tension that might emerge as the Inquiry Body sought to address immediate needs arising from its brief which may impact on GTCNI and its perception of its role in regard to CPD. The Registrar also noted that the Inquiry Body clearly recognised both the professionalism and commitment of teachers in Northern Ireland and said that this was to be welcomed as was their recognition of the significant role to be played by the Council in further promoting the profession.

8. Code of Practice (GTC4/03/P1) and Financial Memorandum and Propriety and Audit in the Public Sector (Tabled)

The Corporate Services Manager introduced these papers and outlined for members their particular responsibilities in both: collectively as a Council and individually. She noted that the Code of Practice for Council Members was predicated upon the Nolan Principles as set out in Appendix 1 to the document. Having outlined for members the basis of the code Mrs Mc Cool addressed the issue of audit and offered an outline of best practice in respect of Audit Committee functioning.

The Chair then invited members to comment on the documents. In the ensuing discussion members addressed a range of issues. Amongst the issues raised was the need for Council to secure a commitment for additional funding for the next financial year which would effectively "clawback" funding surrendered in the last fiscal year.

Concern was also expressed that, as yet, the profession had scant knowledge of the Council and it was suggested that the Council might establish a PR sub-committee to consider this

issue. It was then agreed that the Registrar would prepare an outreach strategy for submission to the next Council.

In addition to the above concern was voiced at the potential tension that might arise from the Council's commitment to transparency as set out in the Code of Practice for Council Members and the need for confidentiality in regard to the Council's regulatory functions. The Registrar assured members that the two were not incompatible and that the notion of transparency related to processes and not to individual cases. Discussion on this topic embraced other aspects of the Council's disciplinary role and the Registrar informed members that the disciplinary processes had not yet been drawn up. The Chair informed members that he and the Policy and Registration Manager would shortly be attending the Nursing Council Disciplinary Hearings as a fact finding exercise and would report back to Council at the next meeting.

Members also asked about the timetable for GTCNI to become self-financing. The Registrar reported that it was expected that the Council would become self-funding in 2004, but a number of issues need to be resolved in order for this to happen not least of which was the procurement of a registration database and the setting of a fee. The Corporate Services Manager indicated that work was underway to develop a profile of expenditure to facilitate the identification of costs and subsequently the level of fees. In regard to the issue of "clawback" the Chair suggested that the Five Nations meeting, to be held in Belfast in December, would be an appropriate body to exert pressure in this regard.

The Chair then asked if he had members' approval for the Code of Practice to be adopted. Having been duly proposed and seconded the code was adopted by Council.

9. OECD Paper: Country Background Report for Northern Ireland (GTC4/03/P2)

The Registrar presented this paper to members and gave them some background details. It had been presented, together with a number of other papers, at the "Teacher Education in a Climate of Change" Conference in Limavady. It was part of a piece of research which had been commissioned to look at recruitment and retention of teachers and he stressed that, although the research was interesting, the data was by no means definitive in terms of number of teachers or unemployment amongst young teachers as there appeared to be major inconsistencies in the data presented.

The Chair thanked the Registrar and suggested that this was an area which should have a major input from GTCNI.

10. Registration Database Procurement Update (GTC4/03/P3)

The Policy and Registration Manager presented this paper to members. He drew their attention to the flowchart outlining our current position and showing steps remaining to be taken. Officers are expecting a costed proposal to be submitted in August and a meeting of the Project Board (chaired by Mr Scott) will be called at that time. If there are no major problems with the proposal, then it may be possible to get the project off-the-ground by early September.

The Chair thanked the Policy and Registration Manager for his update and also Mr Scott, for agreeing to Chair the Project Board.

11. CPD: The Way Forward (GTC4/03/P4)

The Registrar presented this paper to Council and gave the background to the CPD Consultation Exercise. He drew members' attention in particular to Annex A and Annex B. He took Annex B first and outlined how a NITEP Project Board could be established to take forward CPD proposals, and how it would be integrated with existing GTCNI structures. Members agreed that the proposed arrangements would allow the issue of CPD to be progressed.

The Registrar returned to Annex A and explained he had amended this Annex (a copy of the revised version had been circulated to members during the meeting), and added an extra column to allow members to comment on each of the principles, and the questions raised about them and indeed to raise more questions if appropriate. He requested that members complete the forms and return them as soon as possible (by 15th July 2003) and undertook to bring a summation of observations received to the next Council meeting.

12. Committee Minutes

The Chair of Council asked the Chairs of each Committee to present their minutes.

12.1. Audit (AC/03/Min1)

The Chair informed members that most of the issues had been covered during the course of this meeting.

12.2. General Purposes & Finance (GP&FC/03/Min5)

The Chair of GP&F also said that much of the material covered during the course of the Council meeting had been covered in his minutes. He drew members' attention to Item 4 on the minutes concerning travel and subsistence payments to members. This paper had been referred back to Committee from Council for further consideration but had now been adopted using the standard rates for travel.

Following the submission of the GPFC minutes the question of members holding two posts within the Council was raised the Chair of Council suggested that this issue should be considered by the Policy Committee and brought to the next meeting of the full Council.

12.3. Policy (PC/03/Min3, PC/03/Min4 and PC/03/Min5)

The Chair of Policy informed members that there were a number of ongoing issues being looked at by the Committee including the present teacher competences and the issue of demographics. She also informed Council that the Committee were exploring the potential for GTCNI to engage, as part of the e-learning partnership, in an action research project linking ICT with special needs.

12.4. Registration (RC/03/Min3)

The Chair informed members that he had written to Ron Armstrong in the Department of Education regarding the signing of the assignment contract and asking him to give assurances on a number of issues. No response has been received as yet.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business to be discussed.

14. Venue, Date and Time for Next Meeting

The next meeting is to coincide with the launch of the Website and will take place in the Stormont Hotel on Thursday, 25th September 2003 at 09:30 am.

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