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## Communications Committee

**Minutes of the 33rd meeting of the Communications Committee held as follows:-**

**Date:** Tuesday 8 November 2011

**Time:** 11:00 am

**Venue:** The Council Chamber, Health Professions Council, Park House, 184  
Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU

**Present:** Sheila Drayton (Chair)  
Julia Drown  
Morag MacKellar  
Arun Midha  
Joy Tweed  
Diane Waller

**In attendance:**

Colin Bendall, Secretary to the Committee  
Ebony Gayle, Media and Public Relations Manager  
Tony Glazier, Web Manager  
Richard Kennett, Council Member (observer)  
Jacqueline Ladds, Director of Communications  
Sarah Oliver, PA to the Director of Policy and Standards/PA to the Director of  
Communications  
Tracey Samuel-Smith, Education Manager  
Charlotte Urwin, Policy Manager

**Item 1.11/31 Nomination of Committee Chair (report ref: CC 18/11)**

- 1.1 The Committee was invited to nominate a Chair to preside at any meeting of the Committee. Arun Midha proposed Sheila Drayton as Chair and this was seconded by Joy Tweed. There were no other nominations. The Committee nominated Sheila Drayton as Chair.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked the Committee for its support. The Chair welcomed Richard Kennett and Tracey Samuel-Smith as observers to the meeting.

**Item 2.11/32 Apologies for absence**

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from the Chair of Council and the Chief Executive and Registrar.

**Item 3.11/33 Approval of agenda**

- 3.1 The Committee approved the agenda.

**Item 4.11/34 Declarations of members' interests**

- 4.1 Members had no interests to declare in connection with the items on the agenda.

**Item 5.11/35 Minutes of the Communications Committee meeting of 22 June 2011 (report ref: CC 19/11)**

- 5.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the 32nd meeting of the Communications Committee should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**Item 6.11/36 Matters arising (report ref: CC 20/11)**

- 6.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive.
- 6.2 The Committee noted the actions list as agreed at the last meeting.
- 6.3 The Committee noted that some members felt that the paper on service user engagement (item 10) did not address the action point of making the register more accessible to service users. The Committee agreed that this issue could be discussed at item 10 and in the strategy workshop after the meeting.

**Item 7.11/37 Director of Communications report**

- 7.1 The Committee received a verbal report from the Director of Communications.

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2011-10-28	a	COM	MIN	Minutes Communications Committee 8 November 2011	Final DD: None	Public RD: None

7.2 The Committee noted that the Director of Communications would report the Department's work under item 8.

**Item 8.11/38 Communications department progress report (report ref: CC 21/11)**

8.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive, giving a progress report against the activities and objectives in the Communications Department workplan for 2011-12.

8.2 In discussion, the following activities were highlighted:

- work to support the Registration department during the renewals process for several professions, including meeting professional bodies and arranging articles in professional journals and on social media;
- Meet the HPC events in Canterbury, Lerwick and Kirkwall, which had all received very positive feedback. The Committee noted that the Department was considering whether future events could include a discussion on the issue of professionalism;
- attending several conferences, including an event on regulation in Scotland;
- research to inform communications around the grandparenting process for practitioner psychologists;
- completing distribution of public information material to GP surgeries' waiting rooms. Data on pick-up rates would be available in the near future;
- a radio campaign with the Football Association (FA) to publicise the protected title of physiotherapist. The Director of Fitness to Practise and a spokesperson for the FA had conducted 11 radio interviews, which had been syndicated to approximately 95 radio stations and 140 websites. The estimated potential audience was 30 million people;
- providing information and briefings to Parliamentarians, including a briefing on the provisions of the Health and Social Care Bill which affected HPC;
- employer events in Liverpool, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Belfast;
- improvements to the HPC website, which were due to be implemented in December 2011 and March 2012.

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- 8.3 The Committee noted that some members felt that HPC should be more proactive in lobbying the Government on issues around voluntary registration. The Committee noted that it was current government policy that professions should be voluntarily registered and that extension of statutory regulation would only be considered where there was a compelling case of the basis of a risk to public safety. The Council had not yet made final decisions in this area. The Committee noted that members could express their views on voluntary registration during Council meetings and Council strategy sessions.
- 8.4 The Committee noted that HPC had previously recommended that several professions should be statutorily regulated. Some members felt that these professions were confused about the current position as they still aspired to statutory regulation. Some members felt that HPC should be more proactive in communicating the situation to the professions and to Government. The Committee agreed to discuss the possibility of a more proactive approach to communications as part of its strategy workshop that afternoon.
- 8.5 The Committee agreed that the report was very helpful and demonstrated wide-ranging work by the Executive.

**Item 9.11/39 Review of consultation methodology and analysis (report ref: CC 22/11)**

- 9.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that, under the Health Professions Order 2001, HPC was required to consult before setting standards and guidance. The consultation process had last been reviewed in 2008. The Executive had identified examples of good practice in other regulators' consultations. The Executive had also considered ways to improve the consultation process as HPC regulated further professions. The process was one way in which HPC communicated with service users.
- 9.3 In discussion, the following points were made:
- the Executive was exploring the possibility of communicating with registrants by bulk e-mail, including distributing consultation documents by e-mail;
  - most consultation proposals did not specifically affect the home countries, but the Executive would consider whether future consultations should include specific questions about impact on the home countries, where appropriate; and

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- some responses to consultations included comments about other issues. The Executive either responded to the comments or recorded them for use in future consultations. For example, comments made on the standards of conduct, performance and ethics had been recorded for the next review of those standards.

9.4 The Committee agreed the recommendations in the paper to improve the consultation process.

**Action: CU (ongoing to March 2012)**

**Item 10.11/40 Service user engagement – update and review (report ref: CC 23/11)**

- 10.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence had published a report on regulators’ Patient and Public Engagement activities. The paper set out HPC’s work in this area and drew conclusions on work to be undertaken in the 2012-13 financial year.
- 10.3 The Committee noted that the Executive had previously considered whether HPC should establish a reference group, but had felt that it was more appropriate to establish focus groups for particular campaigns, such as the Older People Campaign. This helped to ensure that the group was focussed on particular issues. The Committee agreed that reference groups were not always the most effective way of conducting Public and Patient Engagement. In discussion, it was agreed that, in order to ensure an easily accessible overall view of user group activity, it would be useful for the Executive to summarise all activities, in order to demonstrate that there was not an absence of involvement.
- 10.4 The Committee noted that the Executive planned to develop a toolkit on service user engagement for employees. The Committee noted that the Executive had reviewed a toolkit prepared by the General Medical Council.

**Item 11.11/41 Transfer of regulatory functions from General Social Care Council to HPC – Progress report on communications plan (report ref: CC 24/11)**

- 11.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive.
- 11.2 The Committee noted that the Department of Health had issued a news release that the General Social Care Council (GSCC) would close on 31 July 2012. HPC’s register of social workers in England was expected to open on 1 August 2012.

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- 11.3 The Committee noted that the Health and Social Care Bill was currently in Committee stage in the House of Lords. HPC had provided a briefing to peers on the bill.
- 11.4 The Committee noted that meetings had been held with a range of stakeholder organisations since June 2011. In addition, there had been a number of events, including a joint GSCC/HPC stand at the National Children and Adult Services conference.
- 11.5 The Committee noted that future communications activity would include work on student registration, registration fees and the passage of the Health and Social Care Bill.

**Item 12.11/42 Developing our e-communications activities – an update (report ref: CC 25/11)**

- 12.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive.
- 12.2 The Committee noted that, in November 2010, it had received a paper on HPC’s approach to social media. In June 2011, it had received a presentation on progress to date.
- 12.3 The Committee noted that a large proportion of the population in the UK had internet access and checked their e-mail several times a day. Mobile phone usage on social media was increasing. E-communications represented an opportunity to provide modern, cost-effective and transparent communications. It also provided a medium to quickly respond to incorrect information posted by other users.
- 12.4 The Committee noted that the workplan in this area included a facility for people to make comments on the HPC’s Facebook page and the HPC blog; to review the online format of HPC In Focus (the electronic newsletter); devise an e-communications strategy for HPC; and begin to develop outline business cases which would enable research and scoping work to build a new website and provide for bulk e-mail
- 12.5 The Committee noted that not all households had internet access and some parts of the UK had limited access to broadband. The Committee noted that e-communications would be additional methods of communication and would not replace traditional communication methods.
- 12.6 The Committee thanked the Executive for the paper.

**Item 13.11/43 Any other business**

- 13.1 There was no other business. The Committee noted that the meeting would be followed by a strategy workshop.

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**Item 14.11/44 Date and time of next meeting**

14.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be held at 11.00 am on Thursday 23 February 2012.

14.2 Subsequent meetings would be held at 11.00 am on:

Wednesday 13 June 2012  
Tuesday 6 November 2012

**Chair**

**Date**

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