

THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL

THE HEALTH COMMITTEE

Notes of the third meeting of the Health Committee held at 11.00am on 29 October 2003 in Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU.

Present: Miss M Crawford (*Chairman*)
Miss A Foster
Professor D E Waller

In attendance: Mr M J Seale (*Chief Executive & Registrar*)
Mr G L Milch (*Secretary to the Committee*)

Item 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received from Dr van der Gaag, Professor Hazell, Mrs McGartland, Dr Old, Mrs Stark,

As the meeting was inquorate but the agenda did not require the Committee to make formal decisions, the Chairman, with the support of the other Committee members present, determined that the meeting should proceed.

The Chairman noted that Professor Sir John Lilleyman had resigned from the Council on 17 September 2003 due to pressure of other work and noted with regret that Miss Foster had similarly been obliged to tender her resignation with effect from 31 December 2003. Miss Foster was thanked for her contribution to the Committee's work.

The meeting was informed that it was not yet known when the Council would know when new lay members might be appointed.

The Chairman reported that she had discussed membership of the Committee and the fact that this was the second inquorate meeting with the Chief Executive. They had agreed that the situation might be resolved through an invitation to all current Council members for two to join the Committee. It might be necessary to advertise separately for a registered medical practitioner to be a Committee member (*Schedule 1, Part II, paragraph 19(1) of the Health Professions Order 2001 refers.*)

Item 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was agreed to follow the agenda.

Item 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST QUORATE MEETING

As the meeting was inquorate, it was not possible to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2003.

Item 4. NOTES OF THE INQUORATE MEETING

As the meeting was inquorate, it was not possible to receive the notes of the meeting held on 16 July 2003.

Item 5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Health Rules

The meeting received the final printed version of The Health Professions Council (Health Committee)(Procedure) Rules Order of Council 2003; The Health Professions Council (Practice Committees)(Constitution) Rules Order of Council 2003; The Health Professions Council (Functions of Assessors) Rules Order of Council 2003 and The Health Professions Council (Screeners) Rules Order of Council 2003.

5.2 Appointment of Partners

The meeting noted that the appointed medical assessors are to be invited to become lay partners. As there was no guarantee of being required with any regularity, if at all, it was reported that medical assessors would be appointed as circumstances necessitated by an approach to the appropriate Royal College. It was noted that this was a tried and tested system used by other regulators where medical assessment of registrants was required.

Item 6. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

The meeting note that, at the Council meeting on 17 September, it had been announced that all statutory and non-statutory committees had to put forward nominees for the post of Chairman and, where wanted, Deputy Chairman for selection and appointment by the Council. (*The Health Professions Council (Practice Committees)(Constitution) Rules Order of Council 2003 – Article 4 refers*)

As the meeting was inquorate, it was agreed that nominees for Chairman be sought by using electronic mail. If there were to be agreement on a nominee, Council would then be so informed at its meeting on 11 December 2003. Miss Crawford informed the meeting that she would be willing to stand¹. It was suggested that the appointment of a Deputy Chairman should wait until the next quorate meeting.

¹ Subsequent to the meeting all members were contacted by electronic mail and all those who replied (a majority) nominated Miss Crawford.

Item 7. PROCESS REVIEW

The meeting noted the letter of 30 June 2003 from the Chief Executive concerning a process review of the Committee's activities to date.

The Chairman considered that she had given a broad overview at the last Council meeting (8 October 2003). Her principal concern was the misunderstanding over what constituted 'health' of a registrant.

It was hoped that a fruitful meeting between the three chairmen of the Practice Committees might be arranged in the near future.

The Chief Executive advised the meeting that he hoped that it might be possible to arrange an open meeting in the New Year to discuss all the issues over disability and health including learning disabilities, illness during studies, the use of interpreters and how these impacted on the role of the HPC. Consideration would be given to inviting some key stakeholders to make brief presentations.

The meeting was informed that programme leaders would be invited to meetings to discuss their discretion to admit students who presented 'problems'.

There was a suggestion that the Nursing & Midwifery Council might be approached to determine whether observers were permitted to attend hearings of its Health panels as part of the learning process.

Item 8. SELF-NOTIFICATION BY REGISTRANTS

The meeting discussed procedures to be followed when registrants themselves notified the Council of a debilitating or deteriorating condition from which they were suffering as required in the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics.

The meeting received the Council's solicitor's advice.

It was agreed that the Secretary would draft a letter to be sent to those registrants who did inform the Council of their circumstances and that the draft should be cleared by the Council's solicitor. Once a clear position was established it was considered helpful to put the information on the HPC's website in the form of a frequently asked question as guidance for registrants.

Item 9. CONFIRMATION OF PROCESS

The meeting discussed the procedures for panels and chairmanship and noted the Guidance Notes that had been presented at the Council 'Awayday' (9 October 2003) and the feedback form devised by the Director of Legal Services.

The meeting considered that questions 4 and 6 should have included room to make comments. Some of the guidance was not sufficiently clear as to its target readership. It was thought that each panel meeting should have a printed list of the possible sanctions always to hand. Once finalised the guidance should be put on the HPC's website through the Communications Committee; professional associations and trade unions needed the knowledge to be able to guide their members through the HPC's procedures.

Item 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

Item 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held at **11.00am on Wednesday 28 January 2004.**

CHAIRMAN