

**THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL**

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MINUTES of the sixteenth meeting of the Communications Committee held at **11:00am on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2006** at the Health Professions Council, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

Dr A van der Gaag (Chairman)  
 Mrs M Clark-Glass  
 Ms C Farrell  
 Mrs R Levenson  
 Miss M MacKellar  
 Mr P McFadden (Deputy-Chairman)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Professor N Brook, President  
 Miss S Butcher, Secretary to Committees  
 Mr C Middleton, Director of Communications  
 Ms P Richardson, Events Manager (part)  
 Ms N O'Sullivan, Secretary to Council (part)  
 Mr M Seale, Chief Executive  
 Ms R Tripp, Policy Manager (part)

**Item 1.06/01 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting.

**Item 2.06/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

3.1 An apology for absence was received from the following committee member; Mr P Acres.

**Item 3.06/03 APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

4.1 The Communications Committee approved the agenda.

**Item 4.06/04 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2005**

5.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the fifteenth meeting of the

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RD: None

Communications Committee meeting be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman subject to the removal of the last three sentences of minute 11.3 which related to auto text feedback that should have been removed when it was proof read.

#### **Item 5.06/05 MATTERS ARISING**

##### 5.1 Item 7.2 Consumer's Association

5.1.1 The Committee noted that Sarah Dawson, the previous Stakeholder Manager had met with Fiona Nichols from the Consumers Association in September 2005 and had contacted her for a follow-up meeting. This was yet to be established as Sarah had now left the organisation.

##### 5.2 Item 7.3 – HPC Microsite

5.2.1 The Committee noted that all Committee members had now reviewed the HPC microsite.

##### 5.3 Item 9.8 – Public Patient Involvement

5.3.1 The Committee noted that the public patient involvement strategy and budget was on the agenda for their discussion/approval.

##### 5.4 Items 11.4 and 11.5 – Customer Service Standards

5.4.1 The Committee noted that an updated and revised customer service standards was on the agenda for their discussion/approval.

#### **Item 6.06/06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

6.1 The Chairman reported her sadness at the news that the Director of Communications was leaving HPC and commended him for his immense contribution to the organisations work as a whole. The Committee wished him all the very best for the future. The vacancy would be recruited for both in PR Weekly and The Guardian as of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2006. The Committee noted that the President and the Chairman of the Communications Committee would be actively involved with the recruitment selection for this post.

6.2 The Chairman reported that she had recently met with the Communications team to discuss the strategy to be employed with its ongoing work. The Chairman also reported that she had received a number of comments from her own profession regarding the communication of the Mr. P Baker case. The clarity and detail that had been given by HPC had been welcomed. The Communications department had not received very many calls or letters regarding the affair.

**Item 7.06/07 DIRECTOR'S OF COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

- 7.1 The Committee received an update on the activities of the Communications department relating to both its current and future project plans.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the Communications department had recently been involved in a significant campaign to encourage the general public to check that their health professional was registered. The campaign had been very successful with advertising placed in many high profile publications and websites. The Chief Executive had additionally participated in local radio station broadcasts and articles were placed in the Manchester News which had captured a wide audience base. The Committee noted that more publications would have accepted HPC advertising had better case studies been produced and was a lesson to build upon in the future. The PR agency Lanson's who specialised in healthcare PR was utilised for this specific campaign. The Committee noted that it was not worthwhile to keep Lanson's on a permanent basis as they would require a retainer fee of £3,000 - £5,000 per month and was therefore a costly option. The company could rather be utilised on a need to have basis as of when campaigns were undertaken by the HPC which was roughly anticipated to occur 2-3 times per year.
- 7.3 The Committee noted that the Council members' section of the website was currently in its last phases of development. Council members' usernames and passwords would be issued shortly and launched together with their information pack.

**Item 8.06/08 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

- 8.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 8.2 The Communications Committee agreed that it needed to identify priority areas in the development of the short and long term strategies that it was to employ. The key objective of the communications strategy over the last 2-3 years had been concerned with promoting who the HPC was and what the organisation did. Having now successfully achieved this, the Committee considered whether the aim now was to continue with promoting the general public to check that their health professional was registered. The Committee noted that if this was one of its primary aims it needed to promote choice and value for money within the public arena and HPC's key stakeholder groups. The UK healthcare agenda was very much concerned with the promotion of patient choice at the point of delivery and therefore correlated well with HPC's communications strategy. The Committee noted the various mediums which could be utilised to promote

the campaign such as via the HPC microsite; [www.HPCheck.org](http://www.HPCheck.org) and the introduction of a dedicated campaign to target vulnerable groups such as elderly audiences. Women and physically active younger audiences were also identified as key user groups. Ensuring that the key messages of the campaign were fed back internally via Council members, employees and partners was also noted as a necessary requirement to ensure the successful achievement of the campaigns objectives.

- 8.3 The Committee discussed the strategy and agreed that its principles and objectives should be given further consideration. The strategy as it was did not go far enough to incorporate PPI principles, nor did it make reference to the need for dialogue with stakeholders. It also needed to address the information needs of hard to reach groups such as people with sensory impairments, minority groups and individuals whose first language was not English. The Committee agreed that the strategy needed to be developed in tandem with the Public Patient Involvement (PPI) work.
- 8.4 The Committee agreed that it was a short term strategy for 2006-7 and not a 5 year strategy and therefore the goals set in this time should be achievable, relevant and feasible within the constraints of staff changes. The Committee agreed that the strategy was a portal on which to build the detail, and that the initial task was to capture the attention of the public. The Committee noted that the outcome of the Foster and Donaldson review would have implications for the promotion of public patient involvement as well as other aspects of the work of the Council and that working with the other regulators in the undertaking of this was necessary.
- 8.5 The Committee agreed that the strategy needed to be both engaging and informing and should be incorporated into the language utilised. Qualitative and quantitative measurements also needed to be defined. The Committee agreed that the strategy subject to amendments should be recommended for implementation over 1 year as it was at the beginning of its inception. The Strategy would be presented to Council for their discussion/approval at its next meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

**Action: VN**

**Item 9.06/09 SURVEY OF ATTITUDES TO THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL**

- 9.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that HPC had conducted an extensive quantitative research campaign last year via MORI who explored various areas of interest to the HPC such as the public experience of health professionals.

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The Committee considered other areas of strategy that may need to be explored further by MORI but on a qualitative basis.

- 9.3 The Committee approved the document and agreed that it would be re-visited at a later stage when then the overall communications strategy was finalised of which this was a part.

**Item 10.06/10 SERVICE STANDARDS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE FUTURE**

- 10.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that the Operations department was now responsible for the customer services function of the organisation. Because of this operational change the Committee discussed whether the ongoing monitoring of this function should now be removed from the Communications Committee remit. The change was activated by the increasing size of the organisation and the subsequent level of importance assigned to customer services as a whole. From a historical perspective the Director of Communications had put the customer services function in place.
- 10.3 The Committee debated the fact that from an operational perspective customer services sat well within the Finance and Resources Committee as it covered remuneration issues. However, the Committee also agreed that there were still aspects that needed to be fed back to the Communications Committee. The Committee therefore agreed that this issue was brought up as an agenda item for debate at the forthcoming Committee Chairmen meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006. Their feedback would be incorporated into a paper for the next Communications Committee meeting in May for discussion/approval and then subsequently taken for Council's approval in July.

**Action: VN**

**Item 11.06/11 PUBLIC PATIENT INVOLVEMENT – STRATEGY DISCUSSION**

- 11.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 11.2 The Committee noted that the framework for the implementation of the public patient involvement objectives had already been established. The work plan was still in a draft format and feedback was required to establish short and long term aims and principles. The Committee were in agreement that it needed to build upon the initiatives that it was already

doing well and by defining the purpose of the PPI work its function and delivery of service must be made visible. The PPI handbook developed by the Joint Regulators' PPI Group could be used to inform HPC's work on strategy but not undertaken in its entirety. Accessibility of documents and meaningful participation in work of the HPC were also areas of concern.

- 11.3 The Committee discussed the appropriateness of establishing a professional liaison group (PLG) so to ascertain HPC's objectives with PPI. The Committee agreed that in this instance a PLG was not the best way forward as it was often a lengthy process. Rather a work plan could be devised based upon the knowledge and expertise already contained within the Committee itself. The Committee agreed that a meeting should therefore take place on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2006 between the Policy Manager, Ms R Tripp and Ms V Nash, Interim Communications Director and two committee members with the most know-how in this area, Ms C Farrell and Mrs R Levenson. The meeting was to establish the way forward with this piece of work. A subsequent paper would be presented to the Committee for their approval in May 2006.

**Action: RT/VN**

#### **Item 12.06/12 STRATEGIC INTENT**

- 12.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 12.2 The Committee noted that the strategic intent had been revised significantly following its review by the statutory and non-statutory Committees. The revised strategic intent was on Council's agenda for its forthcoming meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2006.
- 12.3 The Committee noted the document and awaited the updated version when they met again at Council's meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

#### **Item 13.06/13 CPD COMMUNICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 13.2 The Committee noted that health professionals on the HPC register must shortly start gathering a portfolio of CPD evidence in order to meet the CPD standards. The Committee noted that the HR Directors Conference was the next big event which HPC would host a stand at and was agreed that the requirements of CPD could be further communicated here.
- 13.3 The Committee approved the plan subject to a more detailed plan to be

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produced by the Director of Communications and the Manager of CPD and Aspirant Groups to establish further insight into what needed to be accomplished.

**Action:** VN/CS

**Item 14.06/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

14.1 There was no other business.

**Item 15.06/15 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

15.1 The next meeting of the Communications Committee would be at 11:00am on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006.





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