
Communications Committee

Minutes of the 28th meeting of the Communications Committee held as follows:-

Date: Thursday 18 February 2010

Time: 11:00 am

Venue: Room J, Health Professions Council, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU

Present: Mrs S Drayton (Chair)
Mrs P Blackburn
Ms J Drown
Ms M MacKellar
Professor D Waller

In attendance:
Mr C Bendall, Secretary to the Committee
Ms J Ladds, Director of Communications

Item 1.10/1 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Dr A Midha, Dr Anna van der Gaag (Chair of Council) and the Chief Executive and Registrar.

Item 2.10/2 Approval of agenda

- 2.1 The Committee approved the agenda, subject to considering two items under item 13 (any other business):
- Communications Department draft budget 2010-11 headline figures; and
 - start time for committee meetings

Item 3.10/3 Declarations of members' interests

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

Item 4.10/4 Minutes of the Communications Committee meeting of 5 November 2009 (report ref: CC 1/10)

- 4.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the 27th meeting of the Communications Committee should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Item 5.10/5 Notes of Communications Committee strategy workshop of 5 November 2009 (report ref: CC 2/10)

- 5.1 It was agreed that the notes of the Communications Committee strategy workshop of 5 November 2009 should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Item 6.10/6 Matters arising (report ref: CC 3/10)

- 6.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive, summarising actions which had been agreed at the last meeting.
- 6.2 The Committee noted the actions list as agreed at the last meeting.

Item 7.10/7 Director of Communications report

- 7.1 The Committee received a verbal report from the Director of Communications.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that Ms Nina Blunck, Public Affairs and Stakeholder Manager, had left HPC for a more senior role at another organisation. The Committee thanked Ms Blunck for her work at HPC and wished her well for the future.

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7.3 The Committee noted that Mr Mark Potter, Continuing Professional Development Communications Manager, was currently on a sabbatical and would return to work shortly.

Item 8.10/8 Communications department progress report 2009-10: Fourth quarter (report ref: CC 4/10)

8.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive. The Committee agreed that it should receive and consider the paper, rather than approve it.

8.2 The Committee noted that the layout of the paper had been changed so that it provided a top level summary of progress made on the activities detailed in the workplan and how these achieved the objectives set out in the communications strategy.

8.3 In discussion, the following activities were highlighted:

- distributing the publications 'Guidance on health and character' and 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students'. The Committee noted that programme leaders of all HPC approved programmes had been notified of the publications and there had been a good response, with many requests for copies, particularly for the student publication. The Committee suggested that the Executive should consider promoting the publications to professional bodies, in order to help reach clinical placement providers. The Committee noted that the Executive would also consider how to develop HPC's engagement with students;
- new professions: for counsellors and psychotherapists, monitoring media and online coverage and responding where necessary, development of the HPC blog, and attendance at relevant conferences/speaking engagements; preparations for the regulation of hearing aid dispensers including registrants, employer and public facing work;
- promoting the concept of 'registered with the HPC', including development of a logo for registrants to use;
- continuing to participate in patient and public involvement (PPI) activities through participation in the joint UK health regulators PPI group. The Committee noted that the Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland was now statutorily required to be involved in PPI activities and the Executive would consider whether HPC could be involved;

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- ensuring GPs and referrers were informed about the HPC, including research by GfK Healthcare, which had been reported to the Executive in December 2009. Further activities were planned for the second quarter of 2010-11 based on the findings of the research;
- organising listening events across the country. Events had been held in Exeter and Truro in February 2010 and events were planned for Shrewsbury and Swansea in March 2010. Dates and venues were being planned for future listening events. The Committee noted that, due to the popularity of the events, the format would be reviewed; and
- providing communications for the registration renewals process, including feeding information on renewals into ongoing communications with registrants and professional bodies. The Committee noted that, as online renewals developed, there would be increased opportunities to develop online communications with registrants.

- 8.4 The Committee noted that HPC had attended some party conferences in the home countries. The Committee noted that there were currently power-sharing arrangements in Northern Ireland and a coalition in the Welsh Assembly Government. The Committee agreed that, where there was more than one party in power, the Executive should consider how to engage equitably with political parties.
- 8.5 The Committee noted that there had been recent coverage about a court case, relating to serious harm caused by a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine. The Committee noted that, in 2008, HPC had recommended to the Secretary of State for Health that medical herbalists, acupuncturists and Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners should be regulated by HPC. The Committee noted that there were delays between a recommendation by HPC that a profession should be regulated and a government decision. The Committee noted that this could increase the risk of harm to the public and could also be frustrating for the professions concerned.
- 8.6 Some members felt that the recent coverage could be used by HPC as an opportunity to promote its previous recommendations on the regulation of certain professions and its public protection role.
- 8.7 Some members of the Committee expressed a view that HPC should be more proactive in lobbying the government in connection with its recommendations for extending regulation to other professions. Other members noted that this would be a significant change in HPC's approach and that the Council should consider this further.

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- 8.8 The Committee acknowledged that the Council had already discussed the new professions process and its policy role in 'influencing the agenda' at a recent strategy workshop, but it was suggested that this could be a topic for further discussion at a future strategy workshop.
- 8.9 The Committee agreed to recommend that the Council should consider whether further action could be taken in connection with influencing government decision-making on the regulation of those professions it had previously recommended for regulation.

Action: JL to discuss with the Chair of Council the most appropriate way for Council to take this forward (by 23 June 2010)

Item 9.10/9 Draft communications strategy 2007-11 and draft workplan 2010-11 (report ref: CC 5/10)

- 9.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.
- 9.2 The Committee considered the draft communications strategy and agreed to the following amendments:
- the section on 'visions and values' should be the second section of the strategy; and
 - the section on 'implementing the communications strategy' should be revised to reflect the terms of reference of the Communications Committee, subject to Council's agreement of the revisions recommended at paragraph 11.3.
- 9.3 The Committee considered the draft communications workplan. In discussion, the following points were highlighted:
- local case studies were used for some HPC campaigns, but these were prepared by HPC in order to ensure that communication was accurate and consistent;
 - HPC would continue to communicate with relevant parliamentarians, the devolved administrations and the Health Select Committee when appropriate; and
 - public and registrant information campaigns about the regulation of new professions were usually timed to take place after the relevant legislation had been approved by the Privy Council.
- 9.4 The Committee agreed that the Executive should develop suitable measures for inclusion in the workplan, such as the number of hits on the

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HPC website and the number of attendees at listening events. The Committee agreed that a paper providing details of the measures should be provided to its next meeting.

Action: JL (by 23 June 2010)

- 9.5 Subject to the amendment agreed at paragraph 9.4, the Committee approved the draft communications strategy 2007-11 and the draft communications workplan 2010-11.

Action: JL (ongoing to March 2011)

Item 10.10/10 Patient and Public Involvement statement of intent (report ref: CC 6/10)

- 10.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that the paper contained a draft statement of intent, to outline HPC's commitment to patient and public involvement activities and to provide a top level summary of the range of activities undertaken by HPC.
- 10.3 Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the statement of intent should identify HPC's representatives on the joint regulators' patient and public involvement forum and should state that HPC would take cognisance of the differences between the four nations.
- 10.4 Subject to the amendments agreed at paragraph 10.3, the Committee agreed to approve the patient and public involvement statement of intent.

Action: JL (by 23 June 2010)

Item 11.10/11 Communications Committee terms of reference (report ref: CC 7/10)

- 11.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.
- 11.2 The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 5 November 2009, it had asked the Executive to clarify two points in its terms of reference. The paper proposed revised wording.
- 11.3 The Committee recommended to the Council that points 2 and 3 of its terms of reference should be amended to read as follows:

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‘2. consider the communications strategy in the light of ongoing developments and advise the Council on the communications strategy as appropriate;

3. advise the Council on its priorities in relation to the Committee’s strategies;’

Action: CB (by 25 March 2010)

Item 12.10/12 ‘Older, wiser, be healthwise’ campaign summary report (report ref: CC 8/10)

- 12.1 The Committee received a paper from the Executive. The Committee agreed that it should receive and consider the paper, rather than note it.
- 12.2 The Committee noted work on a campaign in 2008 and 2009 to raise awareness of HPC amongst older people and those who care for them. The idea for the campaign had come about following opinion polling which showed low awareness amongst this group. The campaign had been further developed after the HPC had commissioned research amongst older people aged 70 and over.
- 12.3 The Committee agreed that the campaign had been an excellent piece of work, which had helped to raise awareness of the importance of checking that professionals were registered with HPC.
- 12.4 The Committee noted that elements of the campaign would be continued in the Communications Department’s work and that the Executive would also explore how to reach other ‘hard to reach’ audiences. The Committee noted that lessons learnt from the campaign would be considered when planning similar campaigns in the future.

Item 13.10/13 Any other business

- 13.1 The Committee received a tabled paper for information outlining the headline figures for the draft Communications Department budget for 2010-11. The Committee noted the composition of the draft budget and noted that some other departments’ budgets included expenditure which related to communications work.
- 13.2 The Committee discussed whether its meetings should continue to be held at 11.00 am. The Committee noted that the majority of members found the current start time to be more convenient and agreed that the start time should remain at 11.00 am, although it would be kept under review.

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Item 14.10/14 Date and time of next meeting

14.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be held at 11.00 am on Wednesday 23 June 2010.

14.2 Subsequent meetings would be held at 11.00 am on:

- Thursday 4 November 2010
- Thursday 17 February 2011
- Wednesday 22 June 2011
- Thursday 8 November 2011

Chair
Date

Unconfirmed

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