

## Communications Committee

**Public minutes of the 29th meeting of the Communications Committee held as follows:-**

**Date:** Wednesday 23 June 2010

**Time:** 10:30 am

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

**Present:** Mrs S Drayton (Chair)  
Ms J Drown  
Ms M MacKellar (item 1-part of item 14 inclusive)  
Dr A Midha  
Professor D Waller

**In attendance:**

Mr C Bendall, Secretary to the Committee  
Ms E Gayle, Media and Public Relations Manager (items 11-14 inclusive)  
Mr M Guthrie, Director of Policy and Standards (items 5-14 inclusive)  
Ms J Ladds, Director of Communications  
Mr M Potter, Stakeholder Communications Manager  
Dr A van der Gaag, Council Chair

### **Item 1.10/15 Apologies for absence**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mrs P Blackburn and the Chief Executive and Registrar.

### **Item 2.10/16 Approval of agenda**

- 2.1 The Committee approved the agenda.

### **Item 3.10/17 Declarations of members' interests**

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

### **Item 4.10/18 Minutes of the Communications Committee meeting of 18 February 2010 (report ref: CC 9/10)**

- 4.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the 28th meeting of the Communications Committee should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### **Item 5.10/19 Matters arising (report ref: CC 10/10)**

- 5.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive, summarising actions which had been agreed at the last meeting.
- 5.2 The Committee noted the actions list as agreed at the last meeting.
- 5.3 The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 18 February 2010, it had discussed whether further action could be taken in connection with influencing government decision-making on regulation of professions which HPC had previously recommended for regulation. The Director of Communications had spoken to both the Chair of Council and the Chief Executive and Registrar, who felt that initial discussions at the Council's strategy workshop in February 2010 had been useful. However, the Chair of Council would consider further discussions at future workshops.
- 5.4 The Committee noted that the new coalition government had not yet announced its position on regulation of additional professions. The Committee noted that HPC had written to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health (who was responsible for professional regulation) to request a meeting. A reply had not yet been received, but HPC would continue to engage with the government.
- 5.5 The Committee noted that the publications 'Guidance on health and character' and 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' had been sent to professional bodies.

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## Item 6.10/20 Director of Communications report

- 6.1 The Committee received a verbal report from the Director of Communications.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that, with effect from 26 April 2010, the structure of the Communications Department had been changed. The new structure included four officer roles to directly support the manager roles in the team, with the managers reporting to the Director of Communications. The changes would enable the Department to manage its work more effectively.
- 6.3 The Committee noted that Mr Potter had been appointed as Stakeholder Communications Manager, with a new employee due to start work as Communications Officer (Stakeholders) on 28 June 2010. A new Personal Assistant/Team Administrator post in the Policy and Standards Department would also provide support to the Communications Department, to be filled by a new employee due to start work on 5 July 2010.

## Item 7.10/21 Communications progress report 2010-11: First quarter (report ref: CC 11/10)

- 7.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive, summarising progress made in April-early June 2010.
- 7.2 In discussion, the following activities were highlighted:
- the launch and promotion of the 'registered with the HPC' concept to registrants and the public and ensuring continued access and usage. The Committee noted that, since 12 May 2010, 220 registrants in several professions had downloaded the new logo. The Committee noted that registrants were required to agree to a set of terms and conditions for usage of the logo. The Executive would review the level of usage in approximately six months;
  - ensuring GPs and referrers were informed about HPC. Campaign planning had been completed and the campaign was being implemented. This would be HPC's first online campaign, with the main activity through Doctors.net, a website which would give access to over 173,000 primary and secondary care doctors. HPC would also run an online advertising campaign and use other electronic communications such as newsletters;
  - ensuring Parliamentarians were informed and aware of HPC's work and role in healthcare regulation. The Committee noted that HPC had arranged Health Hotel fringe events at the three main political party conferences;
  - communicating HPC's work and activities in the professional press. The Committee noted that HPC had received media

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coverage in April and May in several professional journals, on subjects such as Continuing Professional Development and fitness to practise as well as registration renewals;

- making enhancements to the HPC Check website, which was linked to the Net Regulate registration system and required support from the external contractor which maintained Net Regulate;

7.3 The Committee noted that, due to the general economic situation, resources available for HPC's work might be more restricted in the next financial year. The Committee noted that it could discuss the impact on communications at its strategy workshop on 4 November 2010.

**Item 8.10/22 Communications workplan 2010-11 (report ref: CC 12/10)**

- 8.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.
- 8.2 The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 18 February 2010, it had approved the draft communications strategy 2007-11 and the draft communications workplan 2010-11. The Committee had also agreed that the Executive should develop suitable measures for inclusion in the workplan. The Committee noted that the paper included measures for each activity in the workplan. These measures would be further developed in the workplan for 2011-12.
- 8.3 The Committee agreed that the measures would help the Committee and the Executive to assess whether HPC was promoting its role in protecting the public.
- 8.4 The Committee noted that the workplan included a section on further objectives for communications work in 2011-12, although these would be subject to review in the light of developments. The Committee noted that HPC already worked to communicate in the four nations, including the regions of England. It was suggested that any references to the four nations should also mention the regions of England.
- 8.5 The Committee noted that the workplan should be considered alongside the HPC's strategic intent, which in turn informed the communications strategy. The Committee noted that the communications strategy would be refined over time, to further articulate its links with the strategic intent. The Committee noted that it was due to discuss the strategy at its workshop on 4 November 2010.

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8.6 The Committee approved the Communications workplan for 2010-11.

**Action: JL (ongoing to March 2011)**

8.7 The Committee thanked the Director of Communications and the Communications department for amending the workplan to include measures.

**Item 9.10/23 Informing parliamentarians and related stakeholders about HPC's public protection role (report ref: CC 13/10)**

9.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.

9.2 The Committee noted that, following the discussion at its meeting on 18 February 2010, the Executive had prepared a summary of the work undertaken to inform parliamentarians and related stakeholders about HPC's public protection role.

9.3 The Committee noted the following points:

- HPC undertook daily monitoring of activities across government in Westminster and the devolved administrations. This was managed through Dods Monitoring. The Executive had reviewed and further refined this monitoring and was also researching monitoring tools and resources for further engagement with the European Parliament;
- for the past two years, HPC had attended and exhibited at the Scottish National Party, Democratic Unionist Party and the Welsh Labour Party conferences. The Executive was evaluating participation in these events and looking at opportunities to develop involvement, for example attending these conferences as a delegate and participating in fringe events;
- the Executive was undertaking research to develop work with the Health Committees. This included exploring the potential for participation and/or attendance at Health Committees in the devolved administrations and the European Parliament; and
- Bircham Dyson Bell (BDB), parliamentary agents, provided high-level support and advice on stakeholder activities. As well as ad hoc advice, the Executive met BDB at least once a year to review activities. BDB also provided a detailed analysis of the political landscape and the ways in which HPC could most effectively participate.

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- 9.4 The Committee noted that HPC had a mini-site within ePolitix.com, an online resource which was designed to provide parliamentarians and policy-makers with relevant information so they could make informed decisions. The Committee also noted that HPC would be represented at a reception for parliamentary researchers in July 2010, as researchers were involved in casework and correspondence on behalf of MPs. The reception would also be attended by several other healthcare regulators. In addition, HPC would be represented at an event on End of Life Care, to be held at the Scottish Parliament.
- 9.5 A member suggested that the Executive should explore whether the General Medical Council would be willing to include an article about HPC in its publications, in order to raise awareness of HPC among doctors.
- 9.6 The Committee discussed whether it would be appropriate for HPC to be pro-active and make contact with the newly appointed Health Select Committee at Westminster. The Committee noted that BDB had advised that this would not be appropriate at this stage. The Committee agreed that the Executive should review the situation with advice from BDB.

**Item 10.10/24 Annual review of actions taken in 2009-2010 (report ref: CC 14/10)**

- 10.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that the Council strategy day in February 2010 had discussed issues around extending professional and occupational regulation.
- 10.3 The Committee noted the paper.

**Item 11.10/25 Expectations of complainants workplan (report ref: CC 15/10)**

- 11.1 The Committee received a paper for information from the Executive.
- 11.2 The Committee noted that, in October 2007, HPC had commissioned a scoping exercise on existing research on complaints mechanisms. The report had identified an area for further research, around the expectations of complainants when they made a complaint to a regulatory body. This recommendation had been endorsed by the fitness to practise committees in February 2009. In June 2009, the Executive had issued a research brief and had commissioned Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute to undertake that research.
- 11.3 The Committee noted that the research had been considered by the Fitness to Practise Committee, which had approved a workplan to progress suggested recommendations. The Fitness to Practise Department was implementing the workplan.

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## Item 12.10/26 Any other business

12.1 There was no other business.

## Item 13.10/27 Date and time of next meeting

13.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be held at 11.00 am on Thursday 4 November 2010. The Committee noted that Ms MacKellar would be unable to attend that meeting.

13.2 Subsequent meetings would be held at 11.00 am on:  
Thursday 17 February 2011  
Wednesday 22 June 2011  
Thursday 8 November 2011

## Resolution

The Committee agreed to adopt the following resolution:

'The Committee hereby resolves that the remainder of the meeting shall be held in private, because the matters being discussed relate to one or more of the following;

- (1) information relating to a registrant, former registrant or applicant for registration;
- (2) information relating to an employee or officer holder, former employee or applicant for any post or office;
- (3) the terms of, or expenditure under, a tender or contract for the purchase or supply of goods or services or the acquisition or disposal of property;
- (4) negotiations or consultation concerning labour relations between the Council and its employees;
- (5) any issue relating to legal proceedings which are being contemplated or instituted by or against the Committee or the Council;
- (6) action being taken to prevent or detect crime or to prosecute offenders;
- (7) the source of information given to the Committee in confidence; or
- (8) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Committee's or Council's functions.'

## Summary of those matters considered whilst the public were excluded

## Item 14.10/28 Communications workplan in relation to aspirant groups and professions outside regulation (report ref: CC 16/10)

The Committee discussed a workplan in relation to aspirant groups and professions outside regulation.

**Chair  
Date**

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