

Summary minutes of the meeting of the Medical Council held in person on the 7th March 2023 in the Chartered Accountants House, Dublin 2.

MEMBERS PRESENT – 7th March 2023

Dr Suzanne Crowe (President)
Ms Vicky Blomfield
Ms Teresa Bulfin
Ms Marie Culliton
Dr Mary Davoren
Mr Ian Drennan
Mr John Gleeson
Mr Paul Harkin
Ms Jill Long

Dr Michael McGloin
Dr Aoife Mullally
Mr John Murray
Dr Margaret O’Riordan
Mr Jim O’Sullivan
Prof Mary O’Sullivan
Mr Ronan Quirke
Prof Edna Roche

APOLOGIES

Dr Thomas Crotty (Vice-President)
Dr Anthony Breslin
Prof John Hyland

Dr Orla Kelly
Mr Bill Maher
Prof Joe McMenamin

In attendance - In Person

Mr Leo Kearns (CEO)
Ms Mairead Britton Doyle (Director of Fitness to Practise)
Ms Jantze Cotter (Director of Professional Competence & Research)
Ms Ann Curran (Head of Registration)
Ms Julie Dineen (Solicitor, Complaints & Investigations) – Attended virtually
Ms Jan Fitzpatrick (Corporate Governance & Council Manager)
Ms Aoife Fitzsimons (Head of Quality Improvement, E&T)
Ms Gillian Foy (Corporate Governance & Council Executive)
Ms Roseanne Fox (Head of Finance)
Mr Alan Gallagher (Head of Communications)
Ms Magda Grejć (ICT Systems Administrator)
Ms Joanna Holly (Director of Corporate Services and Planning)
Mr William Kennedy (Director of Regulation, Solicitor)
Ms Katie Mulroy (Director of Investigations & Complaints; Solicitor)
Ms Úna O’Rourke (Director of Education & Training)
Ms Lorna Purcell (Head of Corporate Governance & Secretary to Council)
Mr Colm Reddan (Solicitor, Regulation) – Attended virtually
Ms Fiona Redmond (Chief Risk Officer and Governance & Compliance Manager)
Mr Michael Ryan (Corporate Governance & Council Executive)
Ms Caren Shanley (Senior Solicitor, Complaints & Investigations) – Attended virtually
Ms Mellisa Tierney (Corporate Governance & Council Executive)
Mr Kevin Walsh (Solicitor, Complaints & Investigations) – Attended virtually

Note – all references to ‘the Act’ shall be construed as references to the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 unless otherwise stated

Training

Mr Barry Fagan, Fieldfisher, and Mr Eoghan O’Sullivan BL provided a training session to Council on the issue of Publication as it relates to Council’s Regulatory functions.

The President, on behalf of Council, thanked Mr Fagan and Mr O’Sullivan for their informative and comprehensive presentation.

CEO Report

The CEO gave a high-level overview to Council of the CEO’s report.

Council was informed that there were a number of high – level items to note, including the Business Plan and Budget for 2023, which were approved by Council in February 2023. Council was updated on the status of the Organisation Design Project.

The CEO welcomed Ms Mairead Britton Doyle as the new head of Fitness to Practice.

The President commended Ms Mulroy and Ms Britton Doyle on the information provided in the CEO report giving Council a clear picture of the progress of complaints through the systems. Ms Britton Doyle then provided Council with a brief overview of her plan to achieve the targets set out for Inquiries for the remainder of the year.

Ms Curran, Head of Registration, also provided information to Council on Registrations targets regarding processing times for applications. Following a query raised, Ms Curran agreed to provide Council with further information on the EU Regulations regarding registration processing times.

Council noted the remainder of this report.

Update re Ukrainian doctors

This matter was presented to Council by Mr Gallagher. Council was advised that following the increase in Ukrainian doctors and patients coming to Ireland, there has been engagement with the Department of Health to gather and a multistakeholder group has been formed.

Council was informed the main hurdle Ukrainian doctors faced was the English language barrier and the Dept of Health has arranged bespoke training for Ukrainian doctors and dentists. Further to this the PRES 2 exam will be hosted in Dublin to allow doctors and dentists to gain the necessary (qualifications) to obtain registration. There will also be observerships and Supervised posts ongoing and available to doctors and dentists from the Ukraine along with dramatically reduced registration fees.

Fee amendment for refugee doctors

This matter was presented to Council by Mr Gallagher.

Council was presented with a proposal to waive the €410 application fee and reduce first registration fee to €5 for doctors who came to Ireland as refugees.

Council approved the fee amendment.

Corporate Governance Report – December 2022

Governance Update

Ms Purcell, Secretary to Council, provided the Council with an update on the Council Changeover. The elections for 6 Council members will close on 21st March when the newly elected members will be announced. Elections are not being held for two specialties, Pathology & Radiology and Public Health Medicine and these positions will be treated as casual vacancies to be filled once the current term of Council has ended. Ms Purcell also updated Council on the status of the nominated positions.

Ms Purcell then updated Council on the casual vacancies that have arisen in respect of the membership previously held by Prof Paul Finucane (Royal College of Physicians (RCPI) nominee) and Prof Marina Lynch (Royal Irish Academy nominee). The President thanked Prof Finucane and Prof Lynch for their work on Council and wished them well for the future.

Council noted the remainder of the Corporate Governance Report.

Committee Appointment Duration

This matter was presented to Council by Ms Purcell. Council was advised of the proposed amendment to the Committee Members' Terms of Appointment, to bring them all in line to reflect the Council term of office and to standardise the appointments.

Council was requested to approve:

- the revised duration of appointment to all Committees,
- the revised duration of the appointment of Chairs in line with the duration of Committee terms,
- the continued terms of appointment for ARC, and
- supporting the Executive in exploring changes around the process followed for Committee recruitment.

Council approved the amendments to the Committee Appointments.

Health Committee Membership

Ms Long withdrew for the duration of this item.

Council was advised that, following the approval of temporary membership of Ms Jill Long to the Health Committee to replace Prof Marina Lynch, Prof Lynch has now formally resigned from Council. Council was requested to extend Ms Long's appointment to the Health Committee to the end of her term on Council on 31st May 2026.

Council approved the extension of Ms Long's appointment.

Ms Long then re-joined the meeting

Protected Disclosures – Update

This matter was presented to Council by Ms Redmond, Governance and Compliance Manager. Ms Redmond provided a brief introduction to the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022. Key changes in the Act including, who the Act applies to, reporting channels and timelines along with non-compliance penalties were highlighted to Council. An update on the actions taken to date and planned, were also provided to Council.

Risk Report from the CRO

This matter was presented by Ms Redmond, Chief Risk Officer, who informed Council of new, upgraded, and closed risks. One new risk has been added to the Corporate Governance register, while five risks have been closed. Four risk registers have been selected for an in-depth review, ICT, Procurement, HR and FTP. The Information Governance register has been separated out from the Corporate Governance register to reflect the change in team structure. A new register for Legislative Affairs will also be created in quarter two.

Two risks within ICT have seen a rating increase due to a technical issue identified during standard security tests and the relevant Information Governance risks were also reviewed however, no rating changed was required. Three HR risks have been reduced from red to amber. This reduction is a result of the ongoing recruitment project. Red risks in Procurement and ICT are expected to see a similar reduction in quarter two as new staff are appointed and complete their orientation.

Work is ongoing to upload the Business Plan to Decision Time. Once uploaded, activities will be linked to the relevant risks, thus providing a clearer picture as to what activities and projects are addressing the key risks to the Medical Council.

Council approved the Risk Register Report. Council thanked Ms Redmond for her detailed presentation and work to date.

Committee Reports

Audit & Risk Committee

Report of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 22nd February 2023

The report of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 22nd February 2023 was presented to Council.

Mr Drennan advised Council that under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the following is required on an annual basis:

- Acknowledge its responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated
- Confirm that it has in place procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and internal control procedures
- Confirm that an annual review of control effectiveness has been conducted, and

- Provide detail of any significant control issues

Council approved the report of the ARC, including the decision to authorise the President to provide relevant confirmation of the above in a statement which will be published together with audited financial statements.

Council then noted the remainder of the Audit and Risk Committee Report.

Annual Review of the Effectiveness on Internal Controls

A high-level review on the Effectiveness of Internal Controls was presented to Council.

The objective of this review is to provide the ARC with assurance as regards to the effectiveness of a sample of internal controls in place at the Medical Council during 2022.

The report included Approach and Methodology, Ratings Classification, Assessment and Detailed Findings. The report also outlined the Lead Responsible Person for each department and a Timeframe for Action.

This report was noted by Council

Final draft standards for Quality Assuring Medical Education and Training in Ireland

Council was asked to approve the new standards and criteria for quality assuring medical education and training in Ireland ("the standards"). Ms Fitzsimons introduced this matter and colleagues from Cardiff University, Julie Brown and Alison Bullock, were in attendance to present the report of the recent public consultation.

The report outlined data collected from clinicians/medical experts and patients/patient representative groups, along with members of the public. Based on the feedback received, Cardiff University edited the standards and criteria, these edits, also found in the appended documents, were agreed and finalised by the project team. The standards were endorsed by the Education and Training Committee (ETC) in January 2023. Council was informed that the next steps are to:

- Engage the services of an external agent to support a Council-led project to develop guidelines to support implementation of the new standards and criteria.
- Engage with stakeholders to inform them of new standards and criteria for medical education and training.
- Develop a suite of sector-specific guidelines to support implementation of new standards at each stage of the continuum. These guidelines will be developed in close consultation with key stakeholders to assist them with interpretation and application of the new standards

It was noted the new standards and criteria cannot come into effect until the guidelines are developed. Medical Schools, Clinical Training Sites and Postgraduate Training Bodies will continue to be monitored under the existing medical education and training standards, until the new guidelines and quality assurance model have been developed.

Council approved the new standards and criteria for quality assuring medical education and training in Ireland.

Terms of Reference for the Education and Training Committee

Council was requested to approve the draft revised Terms of Reference for the Education and Training Committee when the new term begins on 1st June 2023. Ms O'Rourke explained the key changes to the existing Terms of Reference which did not change existing delegated decision-making powers, but included a significant reduction in the size of the committee and a set of key knowledge, skills and experience collectively required of its members.

Council approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Education and Training Committee.

Health Committee

The report of the Health Committee meeting held on 1st March 2023 was presented to Council.

Council approved the report of Health Committee.

Any Other Business

Council agreed for Dr McGloin to take the Chair for the Regulatory meeting in the absence of the President and Vice President.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3.30pm.