

**THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL**

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MINUTES of the eighteenth meeting of the Communications Committee held at **11:00am on Wednesday 24 May 2006** at the Health Professions Council, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

Mr P Acres  
 Dr A van der Gaag (Chairman)  
 Mrs M Clark-Glass  
 Mrs R Levenson  
 Miss M MacKellar  
 Mr P McFadden (Vice-Chairman)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Miss S Butcher, Secretary to Committees  
 Mr M Guthrie, Policy Officer  
 Miss B Hart, Communications Officer  
 Miss T Leigh, Stakeholder Manager  
 Miss V Nash, Interim Communications Manager  
 Mr M Seale, Chief Executive

**Item 1.06/01 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting. Miss Hart was formally introduced to the Committee who had recently been recruited as a Communications Officer. Miss Leigh was also welcomed who was new in post as Stakeholder Manager.

**Item 2.06/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 3.1 An apology for absence was received from the following committee member; Ms Farrell.

**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 FEBRUARY 2006**

- 4.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the seventeenth meeting of the Communications Committee meeting be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman; subject to a correction at 4.06 so that it read ‘minutes of the Communications Committee held on Thursday 27 October 2005.’

**Item 5.06/05 MATTERS ARISING**

- 5.1 Item 8.5 – Matters Arising – Communications Strategy
- 5.1.1 The Committee noted that a revised communications strategy and work plan was on the agenda for their approval.
- 5.2 Item 9.3 – Matters Arising – MORI research
- 5.1.2 The Committee noted that the research undertaken by MORI to gauge the attitudes of the public to the HPC were currently being incorporated into the wider communications strategy.
- 5.3 Item 10.3 – Matters Arising – Customer Services
- 5.1.3 The Committee noted that the topic of customer services was to be discussed at the meeting today.
- 5.4 Item 11.3 – Matters Arising – Patient Public Involvement (PPI)
- 5.1.4 The Committee noted that the PPI meeting had taken place and a proposal for the continuation of this work was on the agenda for the members’ approval. The Chairman briefly summarised the actions that derived from this meeting:
- Define the model of PPI was most appropriate for a regulator,
  - Generate a list of what PPI related activities were taking place at HPC,
  - Identify what other regulators are doing in this respect,
  - Identify who ‘the public’ is in relation to the HPC, as this would have a bearing on any future PPI strategy.
- 5.5 Item 13.3 – Matters Arising – Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- 5.1.5 The Committee noted that the two CPD documents had been reviewed by the plain English campaign and their recommended changes incorporated. The long document was to be crystal marked and would shortly be sent to Council for ratification via e-mail. A smaller document called ‘Your Guide to our Standards for Continuing Professional Development’ had

been sent to Council via email for ratification. Both CPD documents would be put on the HPC website imminently.

5.6 Item 3.11 – Matters Arising – ETC Strategy Meeting

5.1.6 The Committee noted that at the recent Education and Training Committee strategy meeting it was recommended that the Communications Committee reviewed the following issues:

- to review the relationships with current stakeholders and ascertain how to improve relationships,
- to review and consider HPC's support for currently regulated and newly regulated professions (for example by using HPC's Partners).

5.1.7 The meetings which were held between the professional bodies, the President and the Chief Executive were identified as a way in which relationships with key stakeholders could be further improved. It was suggested that a timetable of meetings could be drawn up between the HPC and the professional bodies and briefings for these meetings prepared by the communications team. This would formalise procedures and enable the meetings to be integrated into the wider communications work plan.

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

6.1 The Chairman reported that it was Mrs Levenson's last meeting as a member of the Communications Committee, as she was due to step down from Council as of July 2006. The Committee thanked Mrs Levenson for her hard work and contribution to the Committee as a whole.

6.2 The Chairman reported that interviews for the Director of Communications post had been held. 19 applications were received in total, 9 applications were short listed and 5 applicants from that shortlist were selected for interview. The post had been successfully recruited for, unfortunately, the individual selected turned down the offer. Interviews had been re-arranged and scheduled to take place this Friday. 5 applicants would be interviewed and had been selected from the original applications received. The Chairman thanked the interim Communications Director for her hard work during this period and the support she was providing to her team.

6.3 The Committee noted that Ms Farrell had attended a Patient Public Involvement group meeting in place of the Chairman. This was held on 5 April 2006 and a report was due to be submitted.

**Action: CF (as soon as possible)**

- 6.4 The Committee noted that, as part of the Joint Regulators PPI Strategy, a seminar on regulation in relation to 'hard to reach' groups was to be held at HPC on Friday 22 September 2006. The objective was to look at best practise in how to access hard to reach groups and raise the level of understanding of their needs across all of the 9 healthcare regulatory bodies. Representatives from the voluntary sector would be invited to discuss their experiences and inform the debate on best practice.

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

- 7.1 The Committee noted that the report had already been reviewed by Council at their meeting held in May. The interim Director of Communications was happy to take questions on any points that members required further clarification on.
- 7.2 The Committee debated the appropriate placement of the customer services function within the organisation. The Chairman had not taken this issue to the Chairman's meeting for further discussion, as it was not a decision making body and it was not felt to be an appropriate forum. In addition, there had been a number of staff changes since the last meeting of the Committee, which would impact on the operational side of customer services. For example, Miss Hart had been performing two roles both as Customer Services manager and Communications Officer, but she had recently been recruited to the role of Communications Officer on a permanent basis. It was also envisaged that Mr Houghton, recently recruited as Registration Manager, would take on some of the customer service responsibilities. It was therefore proposed that customer services would come under the control of the Operations Department.
- 7.4 The Committee agreed that whilst the Finance and Resources Committee should oversee the operational aspects of the customer services function, the Communications Committee should retain a monitoring role in relation to communication related issues. The reports generated by the customer services database were identified as a potential way in which the Committee could remain informed on key areas that may need to be addressed from a communications perspective. The Committee agreed that a report on Customer Services would be a standing agenda item at each of the Communications Committee meetings to provide an update on these matters.

**Action: SB (by 27 October 2006 (subject to when the Customer Services Manager is recruited)).**

- 7.5 The Committee discussed the HPC listening events that were held in all

four home countries and what level of involvement registrant and lay Council members had in the arrangements made. The Committee noted that venues for listening events were decided at least 1 year in advance and visited by HPC staff so to ensure that they met HPC's requirements. All Council members were routinely contacted at least 3-6 months prior to notify them of the event and to ascertain if they wished to participate. The Council members' input was very much valued. Mrs Clark-Glass reported that she was now able to attend the Northern Ireland listening event on Thursday 13 June 2006.

#### **Item 8.06/08 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND WORKPLAN**

- 8.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Interim Communications Director, Miss Nash.
- 8.2 The Communications strategy had been amended since the previous meeting and the Committee was asked to review and approve this version. The previous document had been produced under time constraints and therefore required various revisions. The document had now been divided into two sections; the strategy, which applied to the department's long term aims to be achieved in the next 1-2 years and the work plan, which focused on the objectives to be met in the next 12 months. The strategy and work plan also placed more focus upon the integration of the PPI objectives, which had not been addressed in the earlier draft strategy.
- 8.3 The Committee noted that part of the work plan was for HPC to seek representation at public affair events. Attendance at one party conference was so far scheduled into the plan. HPC's initial success at such an event would be assessed and then extended if proven to be a useful exercise. The Committee noted that MPs were often not aware of the HPC and its role. Such an event would therefore serve to promote the organisations' chief objectives and aims.
- 8.4 The Committee debated how the HPC was going to monitor the results of the proposed media campaign to 7000 care homes across the UK. The campaign aimed to increase the level of understanding about the work of HPC and would be carried out in liaison with the charity, Help the Aged. Market research was identified as a possible method to assess the level of impact made as a result of the campaign. The targeted distribution of posters and leaflets was agreed to be a cost effective way of advertising HPC.
- 8.5 The Committee approved the strategy and work plan for an interim period subject to amendments discussed. By approving the document the Committee were providing a steer to the Communications team on the immediate direction of their work. This would enable Council to review

the strategy and work plan at their meeting in July and would aid further discussion at the Council Away Day in October. Once the document had been revised it would be presented for the Committee's approval at their meeting in October. Guidance on the re-structuring of the strategy was welcomed and should be fed back as soon as possible to the interim Director of Communications.

**Action: PA asap/VN (Paul Acres to feed back his comments as soon as Possible).**

#### **Item 9.06/09 STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION PROPOSAL**

- 9.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Stakeholder Manager, Miss Leigh.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that the stakeholder proposal had been drafted to complement the communications strategy and work plan. The Committee agreed that it was the organisations that represented patients' interests who were one of HPC's stakeholders. This required clarification as the public in their entirety amounted to 60 million plus and was not therefore an easily quantifiable target.
- 9.4 The Committee noted that HPC's commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) related to the provision of Fair Trade tea and coffee at meetings, a commitment to recycling and ensuring that building works were carried out in ways which took account of environmental impact.
- 9.5 The Committee agreed that the final stakeholder strategy and work plan would be developed from the current proposal and presented at the meeting in October for members' approval. The word 'elderly' was to be replaced with 'older people' as this was the accepted terminology.

**Action: TL (by 27 October 2006)**

#### **Item 10.06/10 PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DISCUSSION PAPER**

- 10.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie. The paper was being presented by Mr Guthrie in place of Ms Tripp who was currently out of the office.
- 10.2 The need to incorporate public patient involvement (PPI) into the work undertaken by HPC was identified as a necessity. The paper illustrated PPI related work was already underway in this area and identified ways in which PPI work could be further expanded. The PPI work could also be fed back into the upcoming review of the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (SCPE).

- 10.3 The Committee agreed that further definition was required concerning the distinction between lay involvement in Council and Committee work, and PPI work. Clarification of the meaning of involvement of patients and public in the context of regulation needed to be made.
- 10.4 The Committee agreed to recommend to the President that the Council discussed PPI at its away day in October. The criteria by which PPI was to be defined needed further work. The evaluation of HPC's current PPI activities would be undertaken by the Stakeholder Manager and presented at the Committee's next meeting.

**Action: TL (by 27 October 2006)**

### **Item 11.06/11 STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY MARKET RESEARCH**

- 11.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie.
- 11.2 The Committee noted that a piece of qualitative research had been commissioned with health professionals from a variety of different settings and conducted by Opinion Leader Research (OLR). The feedback received had indicated that some registrants were not conversant with the SoPs and failed to recognise their importance in the progression of their career. Registrants recognised that the SoPs were a minimum standard for entry to the register. It was clearly of concern however if such registrants performed only at this level as the expectation was that they would strive to achieve standards that exceeded the base requirements.
- 11.3 The Committee noted that revisions had been made to the SoPs to emphasise their importance as a set of minimum standard criteria by which a health professional must operate and strive to exceed in, in the undertaking of their work. Additional ways in which the SoPs could be elevated into the registrants' consciousness were also identified. One of which was to stress their importance in the meetings held between the professional bodies, the President and the Chief Executive. The importance of the SoPs could also be amplified at the talks given by representatives of the HPC at universities across the U.K. The Committee recommended that the perception of the SoPs by health professionals was revisited and tracked once the revised SoPs had been published and distributed to all relevant stakeholders.

**Action: MG (ongoing)**

**Item 12.06/12 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PROPOSAL**

- 12.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for information from the Communications Officer, Miss Hart.
- 12.2 The Committee noted that HPC had commissioned the research group Mintel to conduct internal focus groups with employees. The research was undertaken to assess employee's attitudes about working at the HPC and to make recommendations for improvement based upon these findings. The final report had been summarised for the Committee, whilst the fuller version was to be sent to all employees via e-mail following the meeting.
- 12.3 The Committee noted the importance of commissioning an independent organisation such as Mintel to undertake this research. The recommendations which would come out of the work would need to be owned by the organisation as a whole. Recommendations which were driven by management would not be effectively implemented.
- 12.4 The Committee agreed that the context in which the research was undertaken needed to be included for everyone's information. 16 members of staff for example had been randomly selected to take part. The Committee noted that it was not viable to include every employee as this would place a burden upon departmental resources and time. The research findings would be further explored by employees in the form of a consultation to seek recommendations for improvements prior to the all staff summer BBQ. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to review the findings and recommendations at their next meeting in October.

**Action: BH (by 27 October 2006)**

**Item 13.06/13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 13.1 There was no other business.

**Item 14.06/14 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Communications Committee would be at 11:00am on Friday 27 October 2006.