

HEARING AID COUNCIL

Minutes of the Strategy Executive Committee
Held in Open Session at 70 St Mary Axe, London EC3A 8BD

on Thursday 10th January 2008

PRESENT: Huw Vaughan Thomas (Committee Chair)
Michael Bishop
Peter Ormerod
Prof Norma Brook

APOLOGIES: Chris Hughes

IN ATTENDANCE: Sandra Verkuyten Chief Executive Officer
Chris O'Leary Director of Policy and Communications
Justin Parfitt Director of Resources
Stuart Holland Modernisation and Transfer Manager
Sarah Cottis Executive Assistant (minute taker)
Mark Georgevic Member of the Council

1. MOTION TO MOVE TO OPEN SESSION

1.1 The Chair opened the public session of the Committee meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES

2.1 The Chair received apologies from Chris Hughes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

3.1 No interests were declared other than those on the register of interest.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the Strategy Executive Committee meeting held 18th October 2007 were approved.

4.2 The minutes of the Strategy Executive Committee Meeting (SEC) held in on 18th October 2007 were signed as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 There were no matters arising not covered in the agenda.

6. UPDATE ON ABOLITION TIMETABLE

6.1 The Chief Executive and Registrar (CEO) gave a verbal report on the current transfer situation. The CEO reported that the Hearing Aid Council (HAC) had not been consulted or asked to contribute to the recent debate regarding Audiological Services in the House of Lords. It was confirmed that copies of the transcript will be obtained and distributed to members Action

6.2 The CEO reported that the HAC had received responses from both the Minister and Permanent Secretary following the letters sent to them at the request of SEC's and reported they confirmed the final date for the HAC was expected to be 31st March 2009. It was reported the route the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) were planning to use to abolish the HAC will be a Legislative Reform Order (LRO). The CEO reported the various risks of an LRO and confirmed that a meeting is being arranged between the lawyers of BERR, HAC, Department of Health (DH) and the Health Professions Council (HPC) to arrange a timetable for all to work towards.

6.3 The Director of Policy and Communications (DoPC) advised the committee that the Executive Team had given BERR a comprehensive list of any issues that may affect the legislative process.

6.4 A member asked if the Executive Team had a process to protect the HAC staff.

6.5 The CEO reported that the issue of staff retention was on the risk register and the executive team were working with BERR and the HPC to help staff find future careers after the HAC has been abolished. It was also reported the Operations Manager is working with all the staff to improve work skills and competency to help them move forward in their careers.

- 6.6 The SEC noted that the HAC was still on plan to end 31st March 2009, but the legislative timetable needed to be confirmed by BERR.
- 6.7 The DoPC reported that the HAC could help BERR in getting the LRO passed by maintaining a good public appearance and by maintaining relations with the consumer groups such as RNID. It was also reported that the professional body needed to help by arguing why the abolition of the HAC would be good for the industry and consumers.
- 6.8 The DoPC outlined the alternative plan for the HAC if the LRO is not passed, this was modernise to regulate.
- 7. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE**
- 7.1 The DoPC gave a verbal report on the changes to the Standards of Competence (SOC) that would need to occur to allow people on the Foundation Degree to register with the Council.
- 7.2 The SEC agreed to the changes the DoPC presented and requested he Agreed sought authority from BERR to make the changes. Action
- 7.3 The Chair presented the various options of when to end the exams and the last date for the HAC to accept notified trainees
- 7.4 The CEO presented the various resources and costs that would be required to continue to the 2008 (2) exams. It was also reported that it might be possible to have a Higher Education Institute (HEI) to sign off the log books after the HAC has been abolished.
- 7.5 Following lengthy discussion of alternative options and consideration of Agreed their practicality the SEC agreed to run the 2008 (1) exams as they are currently set out, then the 2008 (2) exams to run with a partial practical re-sit and a theory re-sit, the SEC noted that this may raise the exam fee for the 2008 (2) exams. The HAC will be able to accept notified trainees up to 31st March 2008. The executive team were to look into the possibility of a HEI to sign off the logbooks. This decision will be presented to Council to ratify. Action
- 7.6 DoPC to write to the Training Companies informing them of the last date notified trainees can be registered with the HAC. Action
- 7.7 DoPC to establish the cost implication of the above decision, what the new exam fees will be and the impact on the retention fee. Action
- 8 LEGAL COSTS**
- 8.1 This issue had been considered by both the IC and SEC previously.
- 8.2 The CEO reported that not all cases were investigated and if other methods such as contacting the company directly could be used, they were.
- 8.3 The DoPC reported the various ways the HAC could reduce legal costs by:
 - Reduce the number of complaints
 - Reduce the type of complaints investigated
 - Reduce the number of complaints investigated by reducing the risk threshold, however this will open the HAC to a possible Judicial Review.
Encourage industry to deal with complaints through the companies and the professional bodies.

8.4 Agreed The SEC agreed that a reduction in the type or number of complaints investigated would undermine HAC's credibility as a regulatory authority and was therefore unacceptable.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The date of the next meeting of the committee is the 13th March 2008.

10. EXEMPT SESSION

10.1 The Chairman moved the session to an exempt session

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Signed

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Date

Action list from the meeting of the Strategy Executive Committee 10.01.08

ITEM	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE
6.1	The Chief Executive and Registrar (CEO) gave a verbal report on the current transfer situation. The CEO reported that the Hearing Aid Council (HAC) had not been consulted or asked to contribute to the recent debate regarding Audiological Services in the House of Lords. It was confirmed that copies of the transcript will be obtained and distributed to members	Modernisation & Transfer Manager	ASAP
7.2	The SEC agreed to the changes the DoPC presented and requested he sought authority from BERR to make the changes.	Director of Policy & Communications	ASAP
7.5	Following lengthy discussion of alternative options and consideration of their practicality the SEC agreed to run the 2008 (1) exams as they are currently set out, then the 2008 (2) exams to run with a partial practical re-sit and a theory re-sit, the SEC noted that this may raise the exam fee for the 2008 (2) exams. The HAC will be able to accept notified trainees up to 31 st March 2008. The executive team were to look into the possibility of a HEI to sign off the logbooks. This decision will be presented to Council to ratify.	Modernisation & Transfer Manager	ASAP
7.6	DoPC to write to the Training Companies informing them of the last date notified trainees can be registered with the HAC.	Director of Policy & Communications	ASAP
7.7	DoPC to establish the cost implication of the above decision, what the new exam fees will be and the impact on the retention fee.	Director of Policy & Communications	ASAP

Agreements from the meeting of the Strategy Executive Committee 10.01.08

ITEM	DECISIONS AGREED
7.2	The SEC agreed to the changes the DoPC presented and requested he sought authority from BERR to make the changes.
7.5	The SEC agreed to run the 2008 (1) exams as they are currently set out, then the 2008 (2) exams to run with a partial practical re-sit and a theory re-sit, the SEC noted that this may raise the exam fee for the 2008 (2) exams. The HAC will be able to accept notified trainees up to 31 st March 2008. The executive team were to look into the possibility of a HEI to sign off the logbooks. This decision will be presented to Council to ratify.
8.4	The SEC agreed that a reduction in the type or number of complaints investigated would undermine HAC's credibility as a regulatory authority and was therefore unacceptable.