

PHECC Council Meeting Minutes
23 March 2023
PHECC Office, Naas & Video Conference



Present:

Alison Smith
David Menzies
Fiona McDaid
Tomás Barry

Apologies:

Jacqueline Burke (Chairperson)
Aidan O'Brien
Conor Deasy
Hillery Collins

Video Conference:

Jason van der Velde (Acting Chair)
Dennis Keeley
Jimmy Jordan
Martin O'Reilly
Niamh Collins
Patrick Fleming
Tess O'Donovan
William Merriman

In attendance:

Con Foley, Council Secretary
Richard Lodge, PHECC Director
Brendan Cawley, PHECC Manager
Pauline Dempsey, PHECC Manager (VC)
Ray Carney, PHECC Manager
Ricky Ellis, PHECC Manager
Karen O'Neill, Council Administrator
Brian Dunne, Chair FRACC

1. Closed Session

Brian Dunne joined Council for the closed session.

The Director updated Council on the progress of the review being conducted by E-Y into the management and payments of the PHECC Assessor Panel.

Matters regarding PHECC's role in response to reports of cases of historic abuse by CPG providers were also raised. It was important that PHECC acknowledge and respond to such reports.

Following the closed session Ray Carney, Ricky Ellis, Brendan Cawley and Karen O'Neill joined the meeting.

2. Open & Welcome

The Vice-Chair expressed the heartfelt deep condolences of Council to the Chair, Jacqueline Burke on the sudden and untimely death of her husband, Martin. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

The Vice-Chair, who will act as Chair until the return Dr. Burke, welcomed all to the meeting, noting apologies received. A special welcome was extended to Mr. Jimmy Jordan on his return to Council meetings.

3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

No issues of conflicts of interest had been notified to the Secretary or Chair in regard to any item on today's Agenda.

Tess O'Donovan departed the meeting for a period.

4. FRACC Report

4.1. FRACC Update

The Chair of FRACC provided Council with an update on the following:

Financial Update: Management Accounts to end February have not indicated any significant variances from budget. The Letter of Determination has been received and at €2.951m, is an increase of some €364,000 over 2022. Consequently, the 2023 Business Plan remains a work in progress and is scheduled for review at the May FRACC meeting.

OCAG Management Letter: The Management letter has been received from the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General [OCAG] for 2021 and has been accepted by FRACC together with Management's response to same.

Internal Audit: The 2022 Internal Audit has been completed resulting in a Limited assurance level for Registration & Renewals and a Satisfactory assurance level for Payroll. The recommendations of the report will be implemented by the Executive and continuously monitored by FRACC, forming part of the Directors report to FRACC for the remainder of the year. The internal audit plan for 2023 has been agreed and will address the following areas: Governance Practices; Risk Management, Information Security; Pensions; Travel & Subsistence.

Assessor Panels Deep Dive: A verbal report has been delivered to FRACC by the Director and Council has been informed of indicative outcomes. FRACC have considered these in terms of risk, cash-flow, and their future impact on PHECC and share the potential financial and operational concerns arising as a consequence.

It was agreed that the audit reports referenced above will be shared with Council in summary in the papers/minutes and of future Council papers.

Risk Register: High-risk items were presented to Council, noting the significant increase in risk rating from 9 (medium) to 20 (high) for risk no. 4, related to assessor panels and the potential related taxation liability.

Though the absence of CPC at Paramedic and Advanced Paramedic levels is currently on the Risk Register, originally at level 12, but reduced to level 9 (medium risk). It was agreed to review the risk rating to consider if this should be a high-risk item. The matter of PHECC's ability to produce underpinning evidence with regard to CPGs was also raised as a potential risk.

4.2. Draft 2022 Financial Statements

Having been reviewed and approved by FRACC at their meeting on 14 March, Council approved the draft financial statements via the following resolution. The financial statements, once signed by the Vice-Chair, will be submitted to OCAG and the Department of Health.

Resolution: That Council approves the draft Financial Statements for year ending 31 December 2022 as presented in Council papers.

Proposed: Tomás Barry Secoded: Fiona McDaid

Carried without dissent

4.3. FRACC Annual Report to Council 2022

The 2022 FRACC Annual Report, which, inter alia, provides assurances to Council that the systems of internal control are operating effectively, was laid before Council and approved.

Resolution: That Council approves the 2022 FRACC Annual Report to Council as included in Council papers.

Proposed: Niamh Collins Secoded: Tomás Barry

Carried without dissent

Brian Dunne departed the meeting.

5. Chairs Business

5.1. Correspondence

No correspondence had been received, however the matter of clarification of instructor requirements will be dealt with later in the Agenda, under item 10.1.

The extent of PHECC's role/responsibilities as a Regulator in the context of declarations of instances of historical abuse or other criminality, and in terms of investigation, was discussed. The importance of PHECC's regulation of organisations involving children volunteering for that organisation was discussed, including situations where no complaints have been made.

The Director provided a brief update on PHECC's position compared to other regulators and confirmed that PHECC's legal advisors are at present examining PHECC's handling of a previously notified complaint.

It was agreed that the matter will be brought to a future Council meeting, where legal update on PHECC's role and responsibilities will be provided for consideration in advance. The Director, as Chair of the Health & Social Care Regulators Forum, will raise the topic for discussion at a future forum meeting.

The matter of complaint handling will also be included as a specific agenda item in the coming months, at which time the Quality & Safety Committee will have developed a draft Complaints Policy for Council consideration.

Pauline Dempsey joined the meeting during the above discussion.

Council took a short recess.

5.2. Legislative Update

Council was provided with an update on the recent positive meeting with the DoH, attended by the Chair and Director, at which the significance of PHECC's legislative inadequacies was recognised. The issue will be progressed by the DoH and follow-up meetings will be arranged. In moving forward, it was noted that PHECC's overall role and responsibilities will be reviewed, with the appropriateness of First Aid Response [FAR] remaining under the remit of PHECC being reviewed. It was agreed by Council that a further request for a meeting with the Minister of Health would be worthwhile.

6. Minutes & Matters Arising

6.1. Draft Minutes 16 February 2023

The draft minutes of the February Council meeting were approved.

Resolution: That Council approves the draft minutes as an accurate record of the 16 February 2023 Council meeting.

Proposed: William Merriman **Seconded:** Alison Smith

Carried without dissent

6.2. Matters Arising

A timeframe for appointment of a Grade VII Project Manager in the Education department to manage the agreed transition of Paramedic Education to degree level will be addressed under the Directors Report.

7. Directors Report

7.1.1 COVID-19 Arrangements

There were no further developments to report.

7.1.2 HR Review – Staffing Structure

A review of the implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 HR Review has taken place, resulting in an update to the original proposed staffing structure approved by Council and submitted to the DoH. The Director provided an overview of the updated structure, noting the separation of the roles of Deputy Director, Registrar, Finance Manager and HR Manager. It was clarified that at present, of these, only the position of Deputy Director, which is currently advertised, has been sanctioned.

The three new Grade VII posts, Project Manager - Education, Project Manager - Clinical and Research Officer as discussed by Council at their Strategy Event in December, have been incorporated into the proposed staffing structure. These posts, along with a resubmission of previously requested posts, will be submitted to the DoH for sanction. The recruitment mechanism for said posts has yet to be determined. Council approved the new posts, subject to budgetary restraints and DoH sanction. The importance, and prioritisation, of all three posts was noted by Council.

The Director has repeatedly stressed to the DoH that from a corporate perspective, PHECC are not currently adequately structured or resourced to be able to discharge their obligations as a regulator, in a compliant manner.

Tess O'Donovan returned to the meeting during the above discussion.

7.1.3 Staff Recruitment Update

Council was notified that the position of Deputy Director has been advertised and the position of Finance Officer will be advertised shortly. The position of Registrar/Head of Registration will be advertised upon approval from the DoH.

The post of the Secretary to the Board will be tendered as an independent contractor through an open tender process.

7.1.4 Meeting with the DoH Medicines Unit

A very positive meeting has taken place with the Medicines Unit, with the Director, members of MAC, including the PHECC Pharmacist Advisor, in attendance. Issues related to Seventh Schedule medications were discussed and a requirement for a robust CPC system for paramedics was stressed as being essential, in regard to possible future paramedic prescribing.

Further updates will be provided as future meetings occur.

7.1.5 PHECC Audits

Earlier inputs from the Chair of FRACC were referenced in this regard noting that the “Deep Dive” audit has been conducted and the potential tax liability for PHECC together with challenges for the management of the Assessor Panels. The matter will be included as a future Council agenda item once the final report has been received.

7.1.6 2023 Determination – Budgets & Business Plan

The 2023 Letter of Determination has been received and, accordingly, the Budget will be prepared. First indications would suggest a deficit of €70,000 which further suggests that no new projects can be addressed in 2023 and others will need to be postponed to 2024 in order to achieve the required “break-even” position.

7.1.7 Initial Legislation Meeting with the Department of Health

This positive meeting was reported earlier under point 5.2.

7.1.8 Request for Attendance at Overseas Conference*

A foreign travel request for two MAC Sub-Committee members to attend and participate in the international Round Table on Community Paramedicine in Nottingham on 23/24 May next was

supported and approved. A resulting report will be provided to MAC and Council following the event.

Resolution: That Council approves the foreign travel request for two MAC Sub-Committee members to attend and participate in the Round Table on Community Paramedicine in Nottingham on 23/24 May 2023.

Proposed: Fiona McDaid

Seconded: Patrick Fleming

Carried without dissent.

7.1.9 Dublin City Council FOI – Report Received

As requested, the Director, under the Freedom of Information Act (2014), obtained a copy of the report 'Review of Arrangements for the Provision of the Emergency Ambulance Service in the Dublin Region' (September 2016). The report had been included in this month's Council papers for information. The content of the report, with regard to patient safety, will be considered by both the Quality & Safety Committee and MAC, and ultimately a feed-back report to Council. It was agreed that other relevant reports would be formally requested in writing from the Chief Fire Officer of Dublin Fire Brigade [DFB] for consideration from a regulatory perspective.

7.1.10 Appeal Hearing

An appeal into a Delegated Decision of the Director, in relation to a request for Recognition of Professional Qualifications obtained outside the State, will take place on 29th March 2023.

7.1.11 News/Articles of Interest

Articles published in the national press regarding PHECC's role, including matters raised in Dáil Éireann, had been included in Council papers for information purposes.

Jimmy Jordan departed the meeting during Agenda Item 7.0.

7.2. Delegated Decisions of the Director

The report as included in Council papers, was noted, including Annual Responder Certification reports.

8.0. Examination Report

8.1. Development of an Examinations Sub-Committee*

At their meeting on 09 March last, the Education & Training Committee recommended to Council the establishment of an Examinations Sub-Committee. Proposals for Membership and Terms of Reference were brought for Council approval. This development was welcomed by Council which commented upon changes in educational philosophy, the need to consider broader expertise and issues in the higher education field, changes in methods of assessment, issues of clinical placement, the timeliness of this development taken with other initiatives. Some caution was suggested regarding Terms of Reference with regard to membership composition, as these might change and require review as the Sub-Committee develops into its new role. Council approved the recommendation via the following resolution, and requested that the discussion at Council be relayed to the committee.

Resolution: That Council approves the establishment of an Examinations Sub-Committee as per the draft terms of reference and membership outlined in Council papers.

Proposed: David Menzies

Seconded: Tomás Barry

Carried without dissent

8.2. Paramedic Exam Standard Review

While the Paramedic Exam Standard has been substantially completed, this will require review and will lead to the development of an updated Paramedic Exam Standard for 2023 and beyond.

With the approval for the Examination Sub-Committee by Council, this review will be a priority for the Sub-Committee at their first meeting in April hopefully.

9.0. Research Report

9.1. Research Committee Update & Recommendations*

An update was provided to Council on the first of two Research Projects completed by Monash University. The scoping review of the first, A Review of Existing Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Research in Ireland from 2000 to 2022, has concluded, resulting in a very comprehensive document and associated research database with detailed and quality information which will inform the PHECC research agenda going forward.

The Research Committee now recommend to Council that this is now published in an open peer review. Discussion led to two Council Resolutions as follows:

Recommendation: That Council approves that co-authorship be agreed in advance of publication.
Proposed: Fiona McDaid **Seconded:** Alison Smith
Carried without dissent

Recommendation: That Council approves that future academic work funded by PHECC would make provision for PHECC as co-authors of same.
Proposed: Tomás Barry **Seconded:** David Menzies
Carried without dissent

The Research Committee also recommends that PHECC invest in an annual process to further develop/update the research publication database, currently completed from 2000-2022. Council accepted this recommendation also as the cost of doing this is low, once the initial task is undertaken and can be met out of the Research Committee's existing budget.

Recommendation: That Council approves the Research Committee recommendation that that PHECC invest in an annual process to further develop/update the research publication database.
Proposed: Fiona McDaid **Seconded:** David Menzies
Carried without dissent

With regard to the second project, Strategy Development for the Research Committee, the Research Committee recommend to Council that a rapid consultation with stakeholders take place (other than paramedic professionals), given that the Delphi Study has been completed by Monash in March 2023, the research identified and the outcomes from the earlier HRB event day. It will now be important to gather views from other stakeholders (HSE, Management, Hospitals etc.). Council supported this recommendation and passed the following resolution.

Resolution: That Council approves the recommendation of the Research Committee to commission a rapid consultation exercise with stakeholders other than paramedicine professionals [EMTs, Ps, Aps]
Proposed: Tomás Barry **Seconded:** Niamh Collins
Carried without dissent

Other updates were provided on PhD Funding Bursary (in collaboration with Sphere), a possible PHECC research event in November 2023, which will depend on budgetary capacity in 2023. It was suggested that the first be prioritised.

Council also approved a request for attendance by 2-3 representatives at an EMS Research Conference in the UK in the amount of €700.

Resolution: That Council approves attendance at an EMS Research Conference in the UK in the amount of €700.
Proposed: Alison Smith **Seconded:** David Menzies
Carried without dissent

10.0. Education Report

10.1. Instructor Qualifications to Teach CFR + MLO Naloxone*

Current PHECC standards state that teaching CFR + MLO Naloxone training is restricted to those qualified at EFR Instructor level (minimum). PHECC have had multiple engagements with HSE Addiction Services through their Naloxone Project Lead, regarding accessibility for the administration of Naloxone. Recognising the difficulties arising for addiction services in delivering training to staff, service users and families, the Education & Training Committee recommended to Council an amendment to the current Education and Training Standard for CFR +MLO Naloxone (V2, 2022) to allow persons working/volunteering on behalf of addiction services and or homeless support services, with a CFR Instructor and a Naloxone provider certificate, teach the PHECC CFR Naloxone course. It was noted that the members agreed this was a pragmatic solution, but concerns remain about some of the organisations/groups not under PHECC governance.

Council considered the recommendation at length and passed the following resolution, in relation to HSE addiction services only:

Resolution: Persons working/volunteering on behalf of relevant HSE addiction support and related services can teach the PHECC CFR Naloxone course, provided they hold a PHECC CFR Instructor Certificate, a Naloxone provider certificate and have completed the appropriate HSE training.

Proposed: Tomás Barry **Seconded:** David Menzies

Carried without dissent

It was agreed to request the Education & Training Committee to consider implications of amending the current EFR Standard to permit EFR training to be delivered at minimum by an EFR qualified instructor. It was also suggested that any other third parties (*e.g. An Garda Síochána, RNLI, Coastguard*) encountering barriers, as a result of the current standard requirements, formally contact PHECC on the matter for consideration.

10.2. Paramedicine Education*

At their meeting on 09 March, the Education & Training Committee agreed that an individual be appointed to design and deliver a PHECC Educational Master Plan for Paramedicine in Ireland.

It was proposed that the earlier agreed staffing structure, which includes the relevant project lead resource to progress and deliver an education master plan, be progressed as a matter of urgency, subject to budgetary restraints.

10.3 Draft Education Standards & Competency Frameworks*

It was recommended that the recently developed draft Education Standards & Competency Frameworks at EMT, P and AP levels should not be published/implemented until such time as the education master plan is completed.

This recommendation was questioned, and it was suggested that only the Paramedic Standard could be implemented, given the potential magnitude of the change at EMT level and the uncertainty of the future of the AP level.

Given their importance, it was agreed that appropriate time for consideration by Council of each of the five education standards and competency frameworks be allocated for future Council meetings.

It was recommended that the delay in implementing the revised Education standards, will increase the Risk Rating of this item, which is already on the Risk Register.

11.0 Quality & Safety Report

11.1. Self-Assessment Guidance Video*

A self-assessment guidance video supporting PHECC Recognised CPG Service Providers to complete

the self-assessment process and prepare their submission for the recently updated GVF model has been produced. The video format was well received, is economical to produce, and will also be suitable for use in the QRF process with PHECC Recognised Institutions and Approved Training Institutions. Council both praised and supported this initiative.

11.2. Quality & Safety Committee Update

The QRF Evaluation Survey has been circulated to both Council and the Q&S Committee and has been issued to RI/ATI and posted to Twitter/Facebook. The QRF assessors have been consulted earlier within this process.

Council was updated on various items being presented at the May meeting of the Quality & Safety Committee which will be presented to Council thereafter. These include the complaints process, a cancellation policy related to the cancellation of agreed assessment dates, and an update to Council rules to accommodate the Cancellation Policy and recent changes to the Medical Director Standard.

12.0 Registration Report

In line with RUL007 PHECC Registration Rules, Council noted the addition of those individuals detailed in the Registration Report to the PHECC Register, as approved by the Director via delegated decision (Ref. POL049 Delegated Decision of the Director).

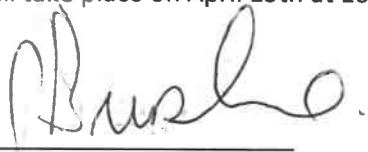
13.0 AOB & Close

The Vice-Chair thanked all for attending.

The meeting concluded at 14:10 approximately.

The next meeting will take place on April 13th at 10:00hrs.

Signed:



Dr Jacqueline Burke
Chairperson

Date: 13th April 2023