

PHECC Council Meeting Minutes
21 January 2021
Via Videoconference

Present:

Jacqueline Burke (Chair Designate)

Apologies:

Thomas Keane

William Merriman

Videoconference:

Aidan O'Brien

Conor Deasy

David Menzies

Dennis Keeley

Don Brennan

Fiona McDaid

Hillery Collins

Jason van der Velde

Jimmy Jordan

Mick Molloy

Niamh Collins

Patrick Fleming

Tess O'Donovan

In attendance:

Richard Lodge, PHECC Director

Con Foley, Council Secretary (VC)

Barry O'Sullivan, Deputy Director/Registrar (VC)

Brendan Cawley, PHECC Manager

Pauline Dempsey, PHECC Manager

Ricky Ellis, PHECC Manager

Karen O'Neill, Council Administrator

1.0. Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed all attending, including Mr. Don Brennan, attending a Council meeting for the first time. She also welcomed Ms. Pauline Dempsey on her return to PHECC after a five-year secondment to the Department of Health.

The Chair indicated that an orientation/induction session for all members would take place in February or March, either at the scheduled meeting or on a separate date.

1.1. Correspondence

Correspondence from the Minister of Health, acknowledging receipt of the Chair's Confidential Report for 2018, and the OCAG Engagement Letter for 2020, as included in Council papers, was noted.

It was noted that the Audit fee had increased three-fold over the past five years to €18,150. It was unclear however, given the statutory position, how this could be negotiated.

1.2. Council Appointments

The Chair has been in communication with Eoin Dunleavy in the DoH regarding two impending appointments to Council in February/March. The appointment of a person "appointed on the nomination of a body recognised by the Minister as being representative of emergency medical technicians" is also awaited.

1.3. Committee TOR update

A review of current Committee Terms of Reference [TOR] is progressing and will include a review by the IPA. The TORs have a generic set of TORs common to all Committees followed by a small number of dedicated TORs specific for that Committee. These generic TORs were "adopted in principle" by Council at their meeting on 11th July 2019. The Chair will continue her engagement with the Chairs of Council Committees to expedite finalisation of the TORs prior to bringing them to Council for approval in March.

The Chair provided all with an update on relevant matters discussed at the first IPA Governance Forum event of 2021. As 2021 Council meeting dates had been chosen so as not to conflict with such events, Council members were encouraged to attend same.

Conor Deasy joined the meeting.

2.0. Minutes & Matters Arising

2.1 Draft Minutes 17 & 24 December 2020*

There being no changes proposed to the minutes of the Council meeting of 17 December and the Emergency Council meeting of 24 December, Council passed the following resolutions;

Resolution: That Council approve the minutes of the Council meeting of 17 December 2020.

Proposed: Jimmy Jordan **Seconded:** Dennis Keeley

Carried without dissent

Resolution: That Council approve the minutes of the Emergency Council meeting of 24 December 2020.

Proposed: Jason van der Velde **Seconded:** Patrick Fleming

Carried without dissent

2.2. Matters Arising

2.2.1 There were no matters arising other than items already on the agenda.

3.0 Directors Report

3.1 Directors Report to Council

3.1.1. Covid-19 General Arrangements

The Executive continue to modify the return to work, working remotely, in the office protocols and the deployment of staff in response to the most recent restrictions. Staff were thanked for their continued flexibility and I.T systems continue to prove resilient. The importance of staff health and mindfulness in the coming period was acknowledged.

3.1.2. Covid-19 Crewing Model

The situation remains whereby no requests have been received from CPG providers to move from the current minimum crewing level standard.

12 March 2020 Resolution for reference

Whilst understanding that the normal minimum standard for emergency ambulance staffing is two Paramedics, PHECC accepts that in the event of Government declaration of a National Crisis and of being unable to maintain normal standards there would remain a minimum standard of one PHECC registrant to provide patient care in an emergency ambulance. Such a significant departure from normal standards shall be limited to the duration of the National Crisis.

3.1.3. Staff Recruitment Update

Details of recent appointments were provided; Ricky Ellis as Accreditation Manager, Brendan Cawley as Information & Examinations Manager and Ray Carney as Clinical Manager. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, Pauline Dempsey has returned to her substantive post of Education Manager, following five years secondment to the Department of Health.

The Director agreed to follow up with HR to ensure that all applicants who applied for said roles initially have been notified of the outcome of their application.

3.1.4. DoH Quarterly Review Meeting

A synopsis of the DoH quarterly meeting on 17 December was provided; the main issues being legislative change particularly FTP related, cross-border working and communications. Discussion regarding our 2021 Letter of Determination is expected to take place over the coming months. It was clarified that the registration fee element of the UCD AP Programme should not impact said determination, as this was approved by Council annually via a grant and was never part of the DoH allocation.

3.1.5. Fitness to Practise [FTP] Procedural Review

Council was informed that Ursula Byrne, retired Director of Regulation NMBI has agreed to act as Chair for the review of PHECC FTP policies and procedures. It was agreed that the review could also make recommendations on what future legislation could look like. The Director is currently in discussions regarding the TORs and membership of the group, noting that Shane Mooney and Mick Molloy have previously volunteered to be part of said group.

Mick Molloy joined the meeting.

3.1.6. PHECC Website Update

The first phase of updating the PHECC website is near completion; the next stage being a more substantive review of the entire structure and function of same. Council members were reminded to submit a photo and a short bio about themselves to the Director's PA, for inclusion on the updated website.

3.1.7. Covid-19 Temporary Register

The Director provided Council with an update on recent discussions with Department of Health officials in relation to the PHECC COVID-19 Temporary Register. Council, at their meeting of 17 December 2020 had decided that, in line with other regulators, the PHECC COVID-19 Temporary Register would cease on 31 December 2020. The Minister of Health signed S.I. 689 of 2020, extending the temporary register for the other regulators to 30 June 2021 and as a result the Council agreed that, in line with other regulators, PHECC's temporary register be extended also to 30th June 2021. Legal advice will be sought on the preferred method of reactivating the Register.

3.1.8. COVID-19 Vaccination CPGs*

Minutes of the two Emergency Decision Making Group [EDMG] meetings of 05 and 14 January, at which the Comirnaty [Pfizer BioNTech] and Moderna vaccine CPGs were approved, as included in Council papers were noted. To obviate the need for further such meetings, Council passed the following resolution;

Resolution: That Council delegate to MAC the authority to create and establish new Covid-19 vaccination CPGs as required, recognising that MAC may elect to delegate this authority to an Emergency sub-group of MAC. Such CPGs will be presented to Council for ratification at the first available opportunity.

Proposed: Hillery Collins

Seconded: Jason van der Velde

Carried without dissent

All those involved in the process were commended on the rate at which the vaccination CPGs were produced and subsequently approved. The Medical Advisory Committee have determined that each new vaccine will have its own CPG based on the original template developed for the Comirnaty vaccine.

DoH officials have indicated that as new COVID-19 vaccines become available, the Minister will sign a simple S.I. adding each vaccine to the list of approved medications on the Eight and Twelfth Schedules, as contained in the original S.I. 698 of 2020.

3.1.9. PHECC Governance Review

Referring to Recommendation 1 of the IPA Governance Report it was agreed that the IPA repeat their paper-based survey of Council members, the results of which will advise the most appropriate channels for progressing said recommendation and will be reflected to Council in a future presentation by the IPA. The Director is also engaging with the IPA in relation to a number of governance related matters, including the review of the Conflicts of Interest policy, Committee TORs, governance, induction training for Council and the recruitment of a Secretary to Council.

3.1.10. Availability of PHECC Registrants to Assist with Covid-19 Vaccinations

Recent communication with the DoH, detailing the possible availability of a cohort of appropriately trained PHECC registrants outside of the two main statutory providers qualified to administer the COVID vaccine, has resulted in positive conversations with HSE Workforce Planning in relation PHECC Practitioners and Licensed CPG Providers involvement in the vaccination rollout programme. Authorisation from PHECC Licensed CPG Providers for PHECC to continue discussions on their behalf with the relevant section of the HSE has been received. The appropriate contact details will be provided to both parties.

Council members were reminded of the commercially sensitive nature of related information in Council papers and requested to ensure it remains confidential.

It has been highlighted to the Professional Medicine Regulation Unit of the DoH that S.I. 698 of 2020 does not reference “registered” when detailing PHECC practitioner levels, as it does with other professions, and is an issue for inclusion in the revision of PHECC’s legislative mandate.

Publication of a video produced in relation to PHECC’s support of the vaccination programme will take place following the meeting. The benefits of this mechanism in communicating messages to a wider audience, such as the launch of the PHECC Strategic Plan, were acknowledged and progression of a tender for the creation of further similar productions was agreed.

Council took a short recess.

3.1.11. PHECC Certification – COVID

Acknowledging the exceptional and unprecedented times we are in and considering that current restrictions are likely to be in place for some time, a further review of the period whereby certificates are recognised was proposed. Following consideration of same, noting that certificates are not being extended, an extension date of 31 July 2021 was agreed for recertification at responder level but may be reviewed beforehand if concerns arise.

The distinction between responder and practitioner certification was noted. Council agreed that a decision on the relaxation of a requirement for PHECC registered practitioners to hold an in-date CFR-A certificate will be deferred to the February Council meeting to allow for legal advice to be sought on the matter, in advance of further consideration of same.

3.1.12. Information Technology Update

A transition from current systems to SharePoint, resulting in greater flexibility in how Council papers are accessed going forward, will begin imminently. Tablets for newest Council members have been sourced and will be distributed in due course.

3.2. Delegated Decisions of the Director

The report, as included in Council papers, was noted. It is too soon to tell if the recent increase in applications will be maintained.

4.0. Clinical Matters

4.1. COVID-19 Vaccination CPGs

Following approval of the minutes of the Emergency Decision Making Group of 05 and 14 January, as included in Council papers, Council passed the subsequent resolution;

Resolution: That Council ratify the outcomes of the Emergency Decision Making Group minutes of 05 and 14 January 2021.

Proposed: Hillery Collins **Seconded:** Fiona McDaid

Carried without dissent

David Menzies departed the meeting.

5.0. Education

5.1. Examination Update

Council supported the examination schedule, as included in Council papers. Assurances were provided that any move to remote proctoring of examinations will ensure that software utilised applies the necessary safeguards to prevent recording of same. It was agreed that the Risk Register be revised to reflect that no outbreaks at examinations have occurred.

5.2. Education Awards Update

An update on education awards, as included in Council papers, was noted.

Council took a short recess.

6.0. Governance & Finance

6.1. Financial Outcome First Cut to 31st December 2020

The Secretary to Council provided a first look at the year-end financial outcomes and responded to questions on same. It was clarified that the deficit shown is a revenue deficit rather than a cash flow deficit and may change as the Annual Accounts are finalised.

6.2. Conflict of Interest Policy Review Update

Council members were informed that considerable progress has been made by the Conflict-of-Interest Policy Review Sub-Group of the C&AC and a draft policy document will be considered at a meeting of the C&AC imminently. The policy is expected to be laid before Council for approval at their March meeting.

6.3. Audit, External and Internal Update

The OCAG Audit of 2019 is now complete and as outlined earlier in the meeting under item 1.1, the Letter of Engagement for 2020 is to hand. This will be considered at the forthcoming C&AC meeting, as will the Internal Audit Report for 2020 which is also nearing completion.

6.4. C&AC Annual Report 2020 Update

The C&AC Annual Report for 2020 is at draft stage presently and will be considered at the upcoming C&AC meeting on 03 February. The report will be laid before Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

7.0. Register

7.1. Register Report

The Register Report, as included in Council papers, was noted.

8.0. AOB

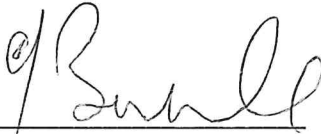
The Chair referenced the appearances of Conor Deasy and Mick Molloy in media interviews connected with the pandemic and used that opportunity to thank all frontline staff for their continuing efforts.

Membership of Council Committees was discussed. This and related matters such as limits to terms in office, recruitment and approval of membership by Council will be dealt with in the context of the ongoing review of Committee TORs. All were reminded that, as per Council resolution, Committees will continue in their current format until 31 March 2021.

Election of a Vice-Chair will take place at the March Council meeting assuming all new Council members are in place by then.

The meeting concluded at 12.50pm.

Signed:



Jacqueline Burke
Chairperson

Date:



11th March 2021