

Council Meeting

9:30am on Wednesday 1st July 2009
Botanical Gardens
Westbourne Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 3TR



Ref 18/08-09 Item 11 Public agenda

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Council Effectiveness

1.0 Purpose of the paper

This paper offers Council the opportunity to debate the outcome of the 2009 Council effectiveness survey sent to all Members on 27th May by the Council Secretary.

2.0 Summary

This is the second Council effectiveness survey, that has been informed by the deliberations of the Audit Committee in response to an internal audit report submitted at its December meeting on the 2008 process. The Audit Committee and the Internal Auditors were particularly keen that all Members complete this questionnaire as part of 'good governance'. Returns have been received from 30 out of 62 Members which is a slight improvement on the 2008 position (25 returns) and the Audit Committee recommend that there be a break out session at the July Council meeting to achieve greater buy in to the process. In light of the discussion scheduled for October Council around governance and looking forward towards 2012 it is recommended the issues raised in this paper be remitted to the Corporate Governance 2012 programme board (of which the Chair of Council is the lead member) and reported back to Council via the Executive Committee.

3.0 Recommendations

Council is recommended

- to note the results and key messages that have emerged from the Council effectiveness survey as set out in Appendix 1
- agree that the issues raised in this paper be remitted to the Corporate Governance 2012 programme board (of which the Chair of Council is the lead member) and reported back to Council via the Executive Committee in progressing this strand of the *Teaching in 2012 programme*.

4.0 Detail

In 2008 the GTC conducted a governance self assurance review in which Council, its service Committees and the then newly formed Executive Committee evaluated their performance against the principles of good governance. The purpose of the review was to consider the operational effectiveness of current governance arrangements. The outcomes of the review were noted by Council in July 2008 and reflected on by the Executive Committee at their September 2008 meeting. There has been a significant turnover of Members on the Council following the 2008 election and nomination processes

The December 2008 Audit Committee received a report from the internal auditors reflecting on the 2008 governance self assurance exercise and noted aspects of good practice, namely the Committee self evaluation process and the frameworks used to evaluate the governance arrangements which covered the majority of good governance requirements and also that the analysis of outcomes was reported in a transparent way.

The internal audit report was concerned that less than half of Council Members completed the questionnaire and believed there should be an opportunity at full Council to ensure greater participation. In terms of specific subject areas the internal audit report noted the following two key opportunities to enhance the assessment framework. Firstly, a question around the extent to which stakeholder concerns influence the decision making process at Committee and Council level which would allow the Council to reflect on the transparency and probity of the decision making process; secondly, the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council and the Executive Committee in understanding and overseeing the aims and objectives of the organisation as a whole. A comment as to comparisons with the 2008 returns is included in Appendix 1 together with a sample of comments from Members who participated in the exercise.

In terms of the service Committees; following discussion with the respective Chairs, their preference was for their Committees to consider this on a bi-annual basis. The Executive Committee conducted an in depth questionnaire of their activity at the end of the first two years of its operation and the outcomes were considered at their June 2009 meeting and the key messages are set out in the report to Council separately on the agenda. It may be appropriate for Council to have reference to these points in the discussion of this paper.

The Executive Committee self effectiveness questionnaire had regard to best practice as found in other professional regulatory bodies but it would be fair to say that the GTC isn't lagging behind in this area of governance albeit continued refinements to this process should take place. The 2009 Council Effectiveness Questionnaire was updated to make reference to stakeholder views vis a vis decision making as well as to considering the Council's aims as a whole. The rest of the questionnaire was largely based on the 2008 model albeit reduced to avoid repetition in some areas.

The Audit Committee are keen to explore every mechanism to achieve greater Member engagement in the self assessment process and options such as external facilitation, structured interviews/workshops will be revisited in the next internal audit review.

5.0 Financial and procurement implications

The questionnaires have not incurred additional cost beyond staff and Member time.

Appendix 1

GTC Council Effectiveness 2009

When completing the questionnaire if you find you are unable to offer a full answer then you could use one of the following responses – Fully / Mostly / Partially / Not at all or Yes / No

1. Council's remit:

a) Does the role of Council itself, combined with the Executive Committee, provide an effective basis for the strategic governance and accountability of the GTC?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
14	9	4	2	1	0

Issues / Comments:

- No – it is far too big for effective governance
- Partially. But evidently Members aren't always aware of what the organisation is doing in their name
- Adequate but hard to see how much more we could do given meeting agendas - and no point in having sub-committees and then replicating the work at Council
- Not sure that the current arrangements give all members the same standard of access to the decision making processes

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

b) Is the current governance structure effective in enabling Council to fulfil its remit?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
14	5	3	6	2	0

Issues / Comments

- No – weak area is Council's ability to scrutinise Executive Committee
- No, too much "consultation" interest group, etc, too little governance
- Yes, though there is obvious uncertainty as to whether that remit will be the same in a few months' time
- Partially – I am sorry to see the reduced time now available for member development associated with the Council
- Partially - there are some weakness which are being addressed
- No. Could do with an extra couple of meetings each year.
- No – 64 Members is too unwieldy

N.B The percentage of No/Not at all has risen

c) Are Members appropriately and sufficiently informed as to decisions taken by Committees through the regular feedback papers, extranet availability and other measures, including the new e-bulletin?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
18	6	4	1	1	0

Issues / Comments

- The information is available – the problem is with having time to access it.
- As well as can be given the current structure
- If they make the effort. There should be more emails to Members flagging up what to look for and where
- My feeling is that this year Council has not been sufficiently in the loop
- Yes, although I have discovered that it is hard to follow some decisions that were made at committee level.
- System and structure seem appropriate

N.B More favourable return than in 2008

d) Is there appropriate scrutiny by Council of Executive Committee decisions? If not, how can this be improved?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
9	4	6	7	3	1

Issues / Comments

- No, need to change structure to proper governance
- I believe so...as long as there is scope for council members to question...maybe we need to encourage members to think of responding between meetings as since council meetings are very spread out
- Depends on the effectiveness of the Audit Committee
- No – generally members accept the recommendations without much challenge. This can only be improved by greater involvement in the issues and more discussion prior to decision making.
- Council members sometimes do not realise the full implications of Executive decisions – allocate more time for feedback and discussion on EC decisions
- More time for member development would help
- Yes. Every opportunity is given for Member questions both prior to Council meetings and during the meeting itself
- Mostly....greater opportunities in the debating chamber would give a clearer steer from Council Members to Exec prior to the decision making process.
- More regular communication required here, speedier reports

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

2. Specific responsibilities:

2a) Do Members consider that the information and reporting provided on each of these responsibilities to be comprehensive and sufficiently detailed to provide a sound basis for effective decision making?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
19	6	2	1	1	1

Issues / Comments

- As with any Council, the main problem is not so much what information Members receive as how far they take it in
- Areas for improvement are risk management and the appropriate monitoring of the corporate plan.
- Mostly, but opportunities to seek more must remain with Council
- Yes, but the problem is with 3 meetings a year there is too much to digest. Thus, things might be glossed over because the volume of paperwork hinders us being sufficiently informed to discuss properly.
- Could be more detailed

N.B More favourable return than in 2008

2b) Do Members consider the aims and objectives of the GTC as a whole when making decisions?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
14	10	5	1	0	0

Issues / Comments

- Yes – though some Members may be influenced by other factors
- Only if paper brings this to Council's attention
- Yes especially the public interest concern in my experience
- Some members sound to be representing lobby groups and ignoring aim and objectives; members need to get to point of symbiosis.
- Yes as part of accepted remit, though there are naturally other considerations too
- Possibly some members do; others may find conflict with current aims and objectives.

A number of Members commented that some Members seem to have different agendas to that of the GTC

N.B New Question for 2009

2c) Does the reporting of strategic risks and of risks within specific service areas enable Members to be assured that these risks are effectively managed?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
21	3	1	2	3	0

Issues / Comments

- Yes although it can be a bit laboured at times and then it may be that people don't take them as seriously
- Yes – this is strength of the GTC
- Yes but whether Members understand risk management sufficiently is another question
- This item is rarely given sufficient time; it is often rushed at Council meetings
- I think that we get as much reporting as we generally need or could cope with.
- Not on its own

N.B More favourable return than in 2008

2d) Is the reporting to Council by the Audit Committee sufficient to enable all Members to take assurance in respect of risk, internal control and governance policies and practices?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
20	6	1	0	2	1

Issues / Comments

- As with any Council, the main problem is not so much what information Members receive as how far they take it in
- Seems to have been a strength

N.B More favourable return than in 2008

2e) Is the Chief Executive's report to Council effective in drawing to Members' attention key issues?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
22	4	1	2	1	0

Comments / Issues

- Because of the length of time between Council meetings the Chief Executive needs to inform Members on a regular basis (monthly?) of key developments
- Agenda timetables are often too crowded for detailed consideration

There was a split between a preference for oral reports and written reports, a number of Members find the oral report very helpful.

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

2f) Does the standard reporting of the overview of the latest financial and performance delivery provide sufficient information to inform and assure Council Members in these respects?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
24	3	1	1	0	1

Comments / Issues

- No – a governance body should be able to see forecasts and budgets and effectiveness of delivery and not just be told “the Executive reviews it”
- Generally yes, but the absence of projected outturns for the year is a significant omission.
- I’m in my first year of Council. I read all the documents and normally understand them. However, I don’t know the titles of the documents so can’t answer this.
- Yes, questions can always be asked on issues

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

2g) Does the Council receive comprehensive and reliable information about the views of stakeholders which are used in decision making?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
13	4	6	5	2	0

Comments / Issues:

- An Executive Member might be better placed to answer that than I am; I suspect not always.
- Mostly – difficult to answer. I’m not sure how one judges it to be “comprehensive and reliable”
- No, outcomes of surveys are not always shared with Council members
- In so far as I can judge; this issue is how it resolves conflicting views
- It gets all the points that stakeholders want to raise. They are all at the meeting and able to give their points of view.
- I assume so, although schools are often unaware of developments in Council
- Partially, I still think that Council does not receive and take notice fully of the views of all teachers.
- Partially – not always sure of the differences between various stakeholders

N.B New Question for 2009

3. Skills, experience and abilities within Council

3a) Does Council have an appropriate mix of skills, experience and abilities to fulfil its responsibilities?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
17	2	2	4	3	2

Comments / Issues

- No – too many people on it for the wrong reasons
- Mostly – only I have found that some Members have rather limited experience
- Sometimes I feel that rather like a school GB, it would be good if Council membership deliberately included people for the law and accountancy expertise.
- Yes. I like the way that some Council Members are excellent at acting as critical friends, challenging any ‘groupthink’..... I do sometimes worry about the amount of trade union reps on the council (through election and representing their union). I think that teaching trade unions should have a strong voice on Council, just don't know if we have quite got the balance right. I also wonder if we have enough practicing teachers on the Council. We should aim to reflect our constituency (i.e. teachers) as well as possible. What proportion of the teaching profession is under 35? What proportion of teacher members are? What proportion of the teaching profession re from BME backgrounds? What proportion of teacher members are? The same questions apply for other areas of equality (e.g. women, disability, sexuality etc etc...) although we may do slightly more favourably on this area.
- I really don't know without taking time out to study the full Council membership to see if we might be missing out on any skills, experience and abilities. I have only attempted to find the “more than half” who are teachers. There are heads, former teachers, supply teachers, retired teachers and teachers on sabbaticals but I couldn't find a clear 51+%
- Any skills thought to be lacking can be filled through the public appointments process
- No, the Council does not have enough younger teachers and younger lay members.
- I would hope this is the case. However we have no control over elected members and can only assess their skills etc after election

N.B less favourable return than last year

3b) Are there sufficient opportunities for Members to apply their particular skills and specialist knowledge?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
8	5	6	9	1	1

Comments / Issues

- If Members are on a Committee – but what about Members who aren't on a Committee?
- Partially

- I think so, but I am on a committee....may not be the same for those who are not
- This is dependent on a voting system for committee places.
- Not yet. Skills/knowledge of Council members who are not Committee members are not sufficiently deployed
- There should be, but an understandable preference for teachers to take the Chairs of all committees including Audit, does mean that specialist knowledge is not utilised to its fullest extent
- Partially – I’m not sure if the mechanisms to capture these qualities are working or know about
- No, most council members are not involved in committee work and do not have the opportunity to be involved fully in GTC work.
- Yes, if they wish to go into the lions den and make points at Council. The onus I think is probably on them to put themselves forward with their skills.
- Partially – I have disappeared with the policy groups’ demise and do feel disenfranchised to some extent
- Not always, I do not feel as though any particular effort has been made to make use of my ongoing experience as a practising class teacher. Apart from the initial questionnaire where we were asked to outline particular skills and specialist knowledge, no further mention has been made of it. Perhaps more could be?
- Partially (but not rigorous in being matched to Members’ skills and experience)

N.B less favourable return than last year

3c) Are there sufficient opportunities for informal contributions to the issues that need to be determined at Council level?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don’t Know	No Answer
5	3	5	12	5	0

Comments / Issues

- Chairs and Vice Chairs, the CEX and Directors are always accessible
- Yes, but it takes at least a year to get to know relevant officers
- I cannot identify mechanism for this other than informal conversation with lead officer?
- No, more break out sessions and opportunity for extended debate would aid the democratic process... even though this might extend meetings beyond the target finishing time or interrupt the planned agenda.
- Greater time allowance would ensure this. Members are always rushed for time
- Not really – this needs looking at

N.B less favourable return than last year

Ctd..

3d) Are the Member induction and continuing development processes suitable and effective to enable Members to make an effective contribution to Council work?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
19	4	2	2	0	3

Comments / Issues

- Adequate but could still be better
- I would prefer more member development
- Very good induction this year
- No; the induction on equalities was poor; and has not been addressed.

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

4. Meetings and agendas:

4a) Are the agendas for the meetings appropriate to the remit of Council and are papers circulated within the agreed timetable so as to enable Members to read and consider them in good time before the meeting?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
26	4	0	0	0	0

Comments / Issues

- Fully to agendas , but partially to timing, since important papers are sometimes tabled at the Council meeting
- Fully – but it is unhelpful to have them arriving in different batches

N.B More favourable return than in 2008

4b) Are the meetings of an appropriate length to enable business to be completed effectively?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
19	6	1	3	1	0

Comments / Issues

- We are sometimes a little rushed (this comment was made twice)
- No meetings are too short. Discussions finish because of time rather than because the discussions have run their course.

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

4c) Are Members aware of the main cycle of business and what cyclical issues should be considered at Council and when?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
11	4	4	9	1	1

Comments / Issues

A number of Members commented on the lack of a forward plan / annual cycle of business, it was commented that a reminder would be useful.

N.B less favourable return than last year

4d) Does the nature of the meeting, its organisation and its Chairing provide sufficient opportunity for you to contribute on issues where you wish to make a contribution? If not, how could this be improved to better enable contributions?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
16	6	3	4	0	1

Comments / Issues

- Well chaired given unsuitability of body in the first place
- For me it does, but there are insufficient opportunities for Council members to contribute to formulation of public policy
- The Chairing is good and the meetings are organised in a business like way. Opportunities are afforded for members to contribute but in reality there are many members who never contribute and I believe this is because of time limitations and the fact that some members prefer a more intimate discussion forum where they feel less intimidated by the formality of the meeting. Those members who are used to formal debate are unintentionally advantaged
- More email opportunities/email groups to discuss. Make more use of technology rather than have to meet in person to discuss.
- No – A more open forum is needed
- No, the agenda is often rushed; giving little time to those who have not been involved in previous discussions.
- It works best when smaller round table discussion feeding back as Tottenham Court Road meeting! The entire gathering too often feels like a bear garden and repetitious remarks for the sake of being noted. However, I congratulate Judy on her Chairing; she improved meetings considerably
- Chair should be impartial. Yes he/she makes executive decisions but at the Council meetings chairs role is to facilitate debate rather than lead or direct it.
- NO - better time management could aid this process....start earlier, finish later, cut down the break times to ensure all items and issues get deserved air time.

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

Ctd.

5. In respect of papers for the meeting:

5a) Are the minutes sufficiently accurate and informative as to the record of the previous meeting

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
28	0	0	0	1	1

No comments / Issues

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

5b) Is the decision tracking facility a useful mechanism?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
27	0	0	0	1	2

No comments / Issues

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

5c) Do you have any comments on papers for meetings?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
13	0	0	16	0	1

Comments / Issues

- Excellent, if sometimes a little long
- Quality is constantly improving
- Generally, quality of papers is good. Some important ones are tabled, though.
- Send them all out together!!
- Yes. Please use as concise sentence structure and clear language.

N.B New question for 2009

5d) Are there aspects of the GTC's work which Members would welcome greater coverage upon at Council meetings, perhaps via informal session? – if so, what are they?

Yes / Fully	Mostly	Partially	No / Not at all	Don't Know	No Answer
15	0	0	11	1	3

- Regulation and regulatory strategy
- Policy strategy
- I think it depends on the issues...the code was a case in point where people had a lot they wanted to say. I wonder if there is scope for building in a space for flexible smaller group discussion on Council days?

- Policy positions and advice to the Secretary of State. Currently unless a member is part of the Policy and Research Committee their views are not sought
- More strategic discussion on major educational issues
- Public policy formulation for advice to Government and others –see above.
- I’m sure that understanding of Diversity and Equalities issues, Risk Management etc. training would benefit Members. The problem is that time at Council meetings is limited as is the time available for Members to leave their organisations to undertake training.
- Suggested training areas:
 - Improving the GTC’s image within the teaching profession
 - Advice to government negating aspects of education policy
 - Greater involvement of “Stakeholders”
 - Monitoring of corporate plans
 - More time to decisions made by EC
 - Risk management
 - Discussion of media reporting and communications strategy.
 - Opportunities to be introduced to more staff.
 - More informal and small group so that you get to know one another/more about individual’s professional role

N.B Similar percentages as in 2008

6. Other points:

Are there other issues that you would wish to comment upon in respect of the working of the Council for consideration as part of this review?

- I think we should keep the election process.
- Feedback from teacher members as to their views, opinions and direct questions to council.... as filtered say through the magazine.
- Feedback on the advocacy programme and its effectiveness nationwide....could this become an agenda item for one of the council meetings?
- The growing interest amongst ITT providers for advocacy work to be resourced