Public business

**Strategic Planning**

**Purpose**
To note and comment upon the proposed strategic planning approach for the next three to five years.

**Recommendation**

The Council is asked:

To note and comment upon the proposed strategic planning approach for the next three to five years.

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1. In its pre-launch phase the Council agreed a Vision and Strategy document. Members of the executive have been working to finalise proposals for the business plan for 2011-2012. Discussions about business planning have highlighted the need to ensure that business planning decisions are shaped by the most up to date thinking about the overall aims and strategic objectives, as set by the Council. The current Vision and Strategy document was created in the context of the preparations for launch of the new regulatory body, and thinking has moved on considerably, both internally and externally, since then.

1.2. Council has a statutory duty to publish:

“a strategic plan for the Council in respect of such number of years as the Council determines”

Council will need to approve the first statutory strategic plan in September 2011 to meet the timetable agreed with the Privy Council. In the meantime, an
updated confirmation of the Council’s strategic thinking will be most useful, not least in providing the context for finalising the 2011-2012 business plan.

1.3. The attached document sets out the current status of GPhC strategic thinking, drawing on the Council’s most recent discussions and reflections, and outlines the direction of travel for the next three to five years. The attached document is marked “Draft” and is for the Council’s discussion.

1.4. The newest material in the Appendix is the section *Our strategic approach to regulation* (pages 5-6). Our starting points are the vision and values, and the three core themes which have previously been agreed by Council. The newer thinking can be found in the section setting out a proactive approach to regulation, and the notion of using the “regulatory cycle” to shape our planning focus. This material is an attempt to synthesise and reflect back to Council, for validation or correction, what we have understood to be the direction of recent strategic discussions.

1.5. The key components of the business plan for 2011-2012 are summarised in the Appendix, and particularly in the section *Planning to deliver on the Council’s strategic aims: the immediate planning horizon*. Following today’s discussion, the intention is for the business plan for 2011-2012 to come back to Council for finalisation at the earliest opportunity in 2011.

2.0 **Equality and diversity implications**

2.1. There are not considered to be any equality and diversity implications arising from the provision of this paper. However it is accepted that as our strategic objectives are developed the Equality and Diversity implications of each will need to be closely considered.

3.0 **Communications implications**

3.1. Delivering effective regulation is of interest to both patients and registrants. It is a fundamental assumption of our strategic planning that we must engage and communicate fully with all our stakeholders not only in the development of standards and policies, but also in relation to strategy development itself.

3.2. Subject to Council’s discussion and direction, the intention would be to use the attached document, as improved in the light of Council’s reaction to it, as the basis for external engagement to generate views, evidence and advice from stakeholders about the direction of the Council’s thinking.
4.0 Resource implications

4.1. There are not considered to be any resource implications arising from the provision of this paper. However one of the purposes of developing a strategic plan is to highlight the areas in which resources are to be allocated and to develop financial models and budgets which enable the strategic objectives to be attained whilst ensuring the Council remains financially sustainable.

5.0 Risk implications

5.1. Failure to plan for the future could compromise the GPhC’s ability to cope with external environmental issues and thus its ability to regulate effectively for the benefit of patients, the public and registrants.

Recommendation

The Council is asked:

To note and comment upon the proposed strategic planning approach for the next three to five years.

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General Pharmaceutical Council
Strategic Planning 2011/12 –2016/17

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Introduction
The General Pharmaceutical Council has now been operational since September 27th 2010. The Council and its staff, working with the Department of Health England, the Devolved Administrations and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, have successfully planned and implemented a transition process to establish and launch the new regulator for pharmacy.

The Council in its pre-operational form put in place a number of policies and rules which were necessary for it to take on the powers and responsibilities conferred on the GPhC by the Pharmacy Order 2010. Many of these that were based on previous arrangements were knowingly adopted on an interim basis with the understanding that they would be reviewed once the Council had established itself.

Putting all these arrangements in place in a limited time frame and with finite resources presented a considerable challenge and required a great deal of work on the part of Council and its staff. Our success in launching the new regulatory body has involved the adoption of a pragmatic “safety first” approach supported by a rigorous project planning methodology. This pragmatic approach included the TUPE transfer of staff, the acceptance that, in the interests of stability, existing premises and systems would be used and that certain corporate services would continue to be provided on a shared services basis.

The Council also produced and agreed an initial Vision and Strategy statement, which has been the guiding document to which the organisation has been working through the transition and into its current phase of establishing itself. With the launch of the organisation behind us, and GPhC regulation in operation on a daily basis, we now have the opportunity – and the need – to set out a clear direction of travel for the organisation over the next period of years.
Vision and values
The Council in the early days of its existence produced a Vision and Strategy paper. We have a vision to secure the confidence of patients, the public and pharmacy professionals by being a healthcare regulator that demonstrates effectiveness and efficiency and supports innovation in delivering its functions. We will ensure that our values are at the heart of everything we do and as a regulator we will endeavour to:
   a) be focussed on improvement
   b) be responsive to change
   c) develop policies that are inclusive
   d) be independent and fair
   e) demonstrate respect for others
   f) be proportionate.

This vision and the accompanying values will continue to inform our future planning.

Our strategic approach to regulation
For the first two years of the strategy there were three themes identified:
   a) Delivering effective regulation
   b) Establishing ourselves
   c) Developing our future programme.

Having successfully achieved the transition and with projects in place or in development to address these objectives it is appropriate now to update the vision and develop new strategic objectives around which the Council’s strategy – and business plan - for the next five years can be constructed.

The GPhC intends to be proactive in the development of standards and policies, so that regulation adds value. In doing so we will engage fully with all our stakeholders, which will include patients, the public, registrants, professional bodies, representative bodies, employers, and others. On behalf of patients and the public, we will work to ensure that standards in pharmacy are both maintained and improved. We do not see ourselves as choosing between assurance of standards and standards improvement; our work serves both aims. The main focus of our work and planning varies according to where we are in the regulatory cycle:-

The regulatory cycle

- Set and communicate standards
- Seek assurance that standards are being maintained
- Foster and promote improvement
- Review evidence of impact of standards and learning from their implementation
The learning from the regulatory cycle and from the day to day delivery of our core process inform each other. Our five year plan will therefore address this cycle by including a time line for each stage of the cycle for all important standard areas.

- Set and communicate standards
- Seek assurance that standards are being maintained
- Foster and promote improvement
- Review evidence of impact
- Re-set and communicate standards

Core regulatory processes
- Accreditation of courses and qualifications
- Maintaining the pharmacy register
- Inspecting registered pharmacy premises
- Ongoing assurance of registrants’ fitness to practise

We recognise the leadership roles of professional bodies in raising standards, and we will work with them in the development of new standards. We also understand that professional regulation, legal requirements and the regulation of systems and organisations interact dynamically in pharmacy and healthcare more widely. We will work positively with other bodies with related responsibilities, to ensure that these interfaces are managed efficiently whilst maintaining safety for patients and the public.

Alongside our standards-setting work, as a regulator we wish to be both efficient and effective and to have the confidence of the public, registrants and other stakeholders. The formulation of objectives for such ambitions will also need to be included in our strategic plan and many of these will translate into operational plans which address our resilience, efficiency and effectiveness. We will set objectives for the corporate functions and services which will enable the organisation to deliver on all its responsibilities.

At the current stage of planning we have a number of projects in formulation which address these points. Over the course of the next two years these will be further developed but in the immediate planning horizon of the budget year we will concentrate on resilience and efficiency whilst ensuring that we continue to provide assurance through our regulatory responsibilities.

Planning to deliver on the Council’s strategic aims: the immediate planning horizon

1. Developing our organisation

The overall structure that has been established internally has given us a resilient and flexible platform on which to build. This will be adjusted as we move forward and seek to improve our efficiency and effectiveness.
As we do so, we will seek to ensure that all aspects of our standards development work (including education and training standards) are coordinated, and the thinking is joined up with our broader policy development and communication activities.

Excellent customer service in the delivery of regulatory services will be at the centre of our interface with the public, registrants and other stakeholders. This is likely to involve significant changes to ways of working and the use of relevant technology. We see a radical shift in our approach to customer service as

- an essential driver for improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of our operations, and
- critical to our reputation and credibility with those we regulate, and the public we serve.

2. Dealing with the fitness to practise legacy

We must address the legacy case load we have inherited. This is critical to our being able to provide effective assurance of the fitness to practise of those registrants about whom issues have been raised, and to taking appropriate action where necessary in cases in which fitness to practise is impaired. This objective requires us to look at all aspects of our fitness to practise policies and processes. In particular we need to improve the case management software which is overly complex and not used as effectively as we need it to be. We will address this objective through a multi-disciplinary project team and by working to increase the level of internal and external transparency and accountability. This project will feed into the ongoing work we need to do with our own GPhC caseload in the medium and longer terms.

3. Registration

The maintenance of an accurate and up to date register is core to our regulatory responsibilities. The introduction of the rolling register is a driver of change, which will require us to look closely at the systems we use to manage the register and support our customer services. Immediate priorities include implementing the end of the transitional period for pharmacy technician registration, ensuring good communications to support this key milestone in pharmacy. To facilitate the efficient processing of applications to join the register we will look at the best time to introduce, for example, more on line functionality which, by allowing registrants to update their details, will free up staff resources to provide a better level of customer service.

4. Development of Standards

The education standards plus new accreditation procedures recently approved for consultation by Council will, subject to consultation, be implemented in time for the new university year in September 2011. These standards will enable the GPhC to uphold standards through inspection and monitoring of education and training, using the powers granted under the Pharmacy Order. In parallel, we will during 2011 engage and consult widely on our project to develop a wholly new approach to standards and regulation for pharmacy business at registered pharmacies.

5. Review interim policies

The interim policies pragmatically adopted by the Council will need to be reviewed during 2011. Where identified as appropriate new policies may need to be developed. All other interim policies will also need to be reviewed e.g. the starting point for fees for Pharmacy Technicians and Premises. These will have an impact on budgets and thus resources throughout the planning cycle. This programme of work will encompass establishing new appointment and governance arrangements for our statutory committees.
Planning to deliver on the Council's strategic aims: future direction of travel

We are actively looking beyond the immediate planning horizon, to develop our future plans in a strategic way, with the regulatory cycle and our proactive approach in mind. We will continue to develop and deliver a strategically focused communication and engagement programme to support our objectives. We will develop a more structured approach to horizon-scanning, which we see as essential to our aim of operating the regulatory cycle proactively – rather than solving yesterday's problems.

Developing a new IT strategy to provide flexibility and resilience to our operating activities is essential to ensure we become an effective and efficient regulator. The introduction of these new systems will be planned around our move to new premises which we expect to occur within the next two to three years.

We will continue to review standards and policy as part of our ongoing regulatory review cycle, making good on our commitment to evaluate the impact of our work, and to the application of that learning with the aim of improving standards.

We will review our organisational structure to ensure it continues to adapt to our evolving needs.

We will review our cost base with a view to ensuring we are as cost effective as possible. This will include all alternatives including outsourcing and working with others where appropriate. We will look in particular at the cost of regulation for each of the sectors we regulate and adjust our fees as appropriate. Throughout this review we will of course ensure that our finances are stable and sustainable, so that the organisation is resilient.

Potential changes in the structure and funding of pharmacy education and training in England, together with future changes to the commissioning of pharmacy services in England, Wales and Scotland will require our close attention, as will our evolving understanding of the public health role of pharmacy. We will need to engage actively with the Scottish Parliament and Government, and the Welsh Assembly and Welsh Assembly Government; we will develop strategies and mechanisms to ensure we are capable of doing so effectively.