

**Professor Amanda Howe MA MD Med FRCGP
Honorary Secretary of Council**

To: Faculty Honorary Secretaries
Copy to: Faculty Honorary Chairmen
Members of Council
Council/CEC Staff

8 March 2010

Dear Colleagues

Greetings for the spring (slow start but very welcome!) Following the second meeting of Council in the current College year, I am writing to let you know about some key areas and Council decisions from 26 February.

Accommodation Review

The Hon. Treasurer updated Trustees on the latest position regarding potential moves. Discussions on this matter are continuing.

Draft Budget and Annual Subscriptions 2010-2011

The Honorary Treasurer, Dr Colin Hunter, introduced the draft budget for the next financial year. With the establishment of the Trustee Board, we have taken a slightly different approach than in previous years. As you will be aware, the budget setting process goes through various stages at management level, culminating in refinements being made at Senior Management Team and Officer level. The budget is directly linked to the strategic plan to ensure it links with the College's objectives. The budget was then considered in great detail by the Trustee Board and Council Executive Committee (CEC). Council was given a condensed version of the full budget document with the recommendations of both the Trustee Board and CEC.

Colin Hunter noted that this had been a challenging budget round. The Council and Trustee Board had agreed to set a limit of a maximum 2% increase on membership subscriptions, 1% increase in locum and loss of earnings rates and 0.75% - 1% uplift on the overall staff budget. Overall, Directors were asked to attain efficiency savings of 2%.

Council approved the budget and specifically agreed that the subscription levels for a full subscription rate be raised to £460 for those paying by annual direct debit, £465 for those paying by quarterly direct debit and £470 for those paying by cheque or credit card. Council also approved a deficit budget for 2010/11. As from 1st April, locum fees will be increased by 1% from £389 per day to £393 per day, and from £183 per half-day to £185 per half-day. Loss of earnings payments (assessors only) will be increased by 1% to £393 consistent with the revised locum rates above. Sessional costs will also to be increased by 1%. Other claimable expenses costs (accommodation, travel, subsistence) remain at present rates.

Costing of the nMRCGP

Although the details are confidential at the moment, Council considered a paper from Colin Hunter on why a deficit had occurred with the nMRCGP assessment this year, and what steps are being taken to rectify this position in 2010/11. The outcome of an extensive re-costing exercise commenced in November 2009, the outcome of which has reported to Council. Colin Hunter will present the paper and its findings to the next Associates in Training Committee in April and an uplift in the examination fee is being proposed from August 2010. A further exercise to review the costings will take place in November 2010.

Review of the Fellowship Fee

Colin Hunter put forward proposals on behalf of the Fellowship Committee to change the one-off fee for Fellowship from its current level of £750 to £620. This was being proposed to encourage further uptake for Fellowship and to address members' concerns. It was recognised that the fee reduction alone was unlikely to have a significant impact on the numbers applying for Fellowship, and the Fellowship Committee are currently considering a range of options, which will be brought to the Council meeting in June. Council noted that the proposal will have only a small impact on the budget. Council agreed to the proposal and the fee of £620 would be backdated from November 2009.

Strategic Review – draft Strategy Document

A further draft of the strategy document, mapping out the College's Vision, Purpose and Values alongside draft Priority Goals was considered. Council agreed the Vision, Purpose and Values, document, and provided some helpful comments and suggested amendments, especially around the Priority Goals. The final proposals for the Priority Goals will be brought back to June Council for approval.

RCGP Election Manifesto

With a general election imminent, Council debated the content of the College's election manifesto. This has been drawn up following a workshop by CEC and further refinement by College staff. Council were asked for their feedback on the draft and many helpful refinements were suggested. We will be revising the manifesto in light of Council's comments. We plan to publish the manifesto online in early March, with a small number of printed copies available from mid-March.

Code of Conduct

Following Council's discussions at the September meeting, a revised version of the Code of Conduct was brought back for approval. The introduction of a Code received Council support in September, but we were asked to consider some issues and clarify certain aspects, especially the process for investigating complaints.

The Code of Conduct will cover all the Officers, Council Members, all College members who sit on Committees and Boards that report to Council and those College members who are invited to represent the College by the Chairman or Honorary Secretary. Following consideration of the amended version of the Code, Council approved it, with one small amendment to the areas to be declared in the Declaration of Interest form. The Code will be appended to the Standing Orders.

Constitutional changes

Following on from establishing the Code, Council also approved the proposals for amending the Ordinances of the College. The Ordinances are part of the Charter and any changes have to be approved by a General Meeting. Once approved we then have to submit them for approval by the Privy Council.

There are two main amendments to the Ordinances. The first proposes that the power to remove or suspend a Council Member be moved from a General Meeting to the Council itself. The Code of Conduct will clarify the grounds for removal of Council members. The other proposal is to increase the number of honorary fellows who can be appointed in any one year from eight to twelve. We are also seeking to have the number of honorary fellows placed in the Bye-Laws of the College, as this provision is currently in the Ordinances, and we do not want to have to seek the Privy Council's permission each time we vary the number.

Council were also asked to approve some amendments to the Bye-Laws and the Standing Orders, which are necessary to tie in with the Ordinances changes mentioned above. The one other aspect of the changes being proposed is to have a clear role description for Council Members. This was also agreed by Council. The role description will be included in the Standing Orders.

Council Review

I brought a paper to Council that gave an update on the work, so far, of the Council Review Group. I drew attention to the other programmes of work that are also currently under way and inter-relate with the review of Council. These include the current pilot of the Trustee Board, the Faculty Review, the College's Digital strategy and also the impact that the move from Princes Gate will have.

Consultation will be the next phase, and I am planning to seek the views of all the stakeholders, especially faculties. This will take place over the next couple of months and I will be reporting back to Council in June.

Report of the Chair of the Trustee Board

The Chair of the Trustee Board, Professor Mike Pringle, presented his report to Council. This informed Council of the issues and areas covered by the Trustee Board since the last Council meeting.

Mike Pringle also informed Council that, following an interview process, Dr Brian Keighley had been recommended as the Chair of the Audit Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Trustee Board. Council formally approved Brian Keighley's appointment.

We are also seeking a College member to sit on the Audit Committee and an advert has been placed in the current RCGP News. If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested, then please contact John Cheong, jcheong@rcgp.org.uk for more details. Nominations for this position close on **19 March**. We would be particularly interested to hear from any faculty treasurers who may wish to put themselves forward.

Vacancies on College Board and Committees

I would just like to remind you of some vacancies we have. The Patient Partnership Group (PPG) has a vacancy for the **Medical Vice-Chair** post. This needs to be filled by a Council member and the closing date for applications is **26 March**. Please contact John Cheong, jcheong@rcgp.org.uk or Antony Chuter, Chair of the PPG

There are also two Council member vacancies on the International Committee. Again, the closing date is **26 March**. Further details can be obtained from Lara Craig lcraig@rcgp.org.uk

I would also like to give Council members advance notice of the elections for our next two Vice-Chairs of Council. Nominations for these posts will open on **12 April** and close at noon on **12 May**. These dates have been moved back to allow sufficient time for the Chair-elect to be involved in defining the areas of responsibility to be undertaken by the two Vice-Chairs. For further information about these roles and the election process please contact John Cheong at jcheong@rcgp.org.uk

Provision of training in the use of Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)

You will recall that Dr Mary Selby and Dr Kamila Hawthorne brought a motion to the November Council meeting. Dr Selby was asked to set up a working group to explore in more detail the issues surrounding training in LARC. The Working Group's report was discussed by Council.

The College will be making a senior level approach to the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare to discuss joint working, with possible links to the ePortfolio and Revalidation process for certification and accreditation. The College will also proceed with developing its own training module in this area and both the Postgraduate Training Board and the Professional Development Board will provide additional input.

The work will be taken forward by Professor Nigel Sparrow and Drs Selby and Hawthorne. The President, Dr Iona Heath, will be keeping an overview on how these developments progress.

Revalidation

Professor Mike Pringle, the College's lead on Revalidation gave an update to Council on current developments. He informed Council that the third version of the Revalidation Guide was now up on the College's website. Council was also informed that the GMC had given outline approval in January to the College's submission and statement on supporting evidence for revalidation.

Clinical Innovation and Research Centre (CIRC): Clinical Priorities

The Chair of CIRC, Professor Nigel Mathers will be coming to the end of his term office at the end of March, so he took the opportunity to outline for Council the successes and achievements of CIRC over the past two years. I am sure you will want to join with me in thanking Nigel for leading the work in developing CIRC. His successor will be formally announced at CEC on 14 April.

Council were also asked to approve the following CIRC clinical priorities for 2011 – 2013. They will be: Primary Care Provision to Socially Excluded Groups; Obesity Prevention and Management; Chronic Pain; and Domestic Violence.

Review of Specialty Training in the UK

Steve Field briefed Council on the outcome of the College's submission on extending training for General Practice. The final report was submitted to the Department of Health in January, and we were asked to present the report to the Medical Programme Board (MPB). We have received a disappointing response from the MPB explaining that they felt unable to support the case for extended GP training, as the educational case had not been made sufficiently. We are still awaiting a formal response from the Department.

The College is hopeful that we can still achieve an extended training programme in future and views this as a first step. We believe we can use the report as the basis for a continued campaign for change. The report and the feedback we have received about it has been discussed by CEC and PTB, and the Chairman has had helpful discussions with the Chair of COGPED and the GPC. We propose establishing a new Group, chaired by a prominent doctor, to include patients, COGPED, BMA and NHS Employers. It is the intention that this Group should have a non-GP Chair, as we feel this would provide a helpful external view and assist us in framing the arguments in a way that will be most convincing to all audiences.

RCGP accreditation of educational products

The Chair of the Professional Development Board, Professor Nigel Sparrow brought a paper to Council to propose the College develops and applies a process for accrediting new and currently available RCGP educational products with immediate effect. The aim will be to broaden the application of the process to include non-RCGP products following the successful evaluation and enhancement of the process being used internally. Council were happy to approve.

RCGP and Swine Flu

The College's Pandemic lead, Dr Maureen Baker, presented a final summary report on the College's response to the H1N1 flu pandemic. Now that the National Pandemic Service has been stood down, it is an opportune time to look at the contribution the College made to the planning and operational aspects of the pandemic response. The paper covers the workload impact of the pandemic and central policy decisions. It also considers the safety, efficacy and communication issues relating to the response.

Council supported the proposals that the College continue to contribute to primary care preparedness, in anticipation of future flu pandemics or other public health emergencies. The College will also maintain a continuing relationship with the central agencies for the purpose of disseminating key public health messages to GPs. We will be circulating the report to all our members, and this will be tied in with a Flu Pandemic Summit due to take place on 18 March.

NHS Organ Donation Programme – Appointment of a Lead Clinician

The Chair of the Committee on Medical Ethics, Professor Martin Marshall, reported that the Department of Health was seeking a College Lead Clinician for the NHS Donation Programme. Council supported this post, which will be fully funded by the Department, and requested that nominations be sought from the College membership. Details of the post will be posted on the College website shortly, but if you are interested in the role, or know of someone who may have particular expertise in this area, then please contact John Cheong at jcheong@rcgp.org.uk for more information.

Dates of Council Meetings

I would like to remind you of the Council dates for the remainder of the year and some other significant dates for your diary.

Council dates 2010

Saturday 12 June 2010, starting at 9.00 a.m.

Friday 10 September 2010, starting at 10.00 a.m.

Spring General Meeting.

Friday 14 May 2010

Annual General Meeting

Friday 19 November 2010. (Please note that this date is provisional at the moment.)

Another date for your diary is the next RCGP Annual National Primary Care Conference, which will be held in Harrogate from 7 to 9 October 2010. Discounts are available for a limited time for advance bookings.

If you require any further information on these or any other issues discussed at Council, then please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Professor Amanda Howe MA MD Med FRCGP
Honorary Secretary of Council