

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 17 JUNE 2009

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND (GTCS)

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To seek Cabinet approval to submit a response on behalf of East Ayrshire Educational Services on the future status of The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The GTCS was the first Teaching Council in the United Kingdom and one of the first teaching Councils in the world. It was established by the Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965 ('The 1965 Act') following concerns about the fact that unqualified teachers were working in Scottish schools. In continuing to ensure that an effective and well trained teaching profession is in place in Scottish schools, the GTCS makes a crucial contribution to the education of Scotland's children.

The GTCS has three principal aims:

- to contribute to the development of a world-class educational system in Scotland;
 - to maintain and to enhance professional standards in schools and colleges in collaboration with partners; and
 - to be recognised as an advocate for the teaching profession.
- 2.2** Currently, the GTCS is classed as an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). This means that while it is not a Government Department, it is still part of the structure of Government in Scotland and is sponsored by the Schools' Directorate. In January 2008, the First Minister announced that the GTCS would be established as a "self-regulating, profession-led body, along the lines of the General Medical Council". The option to move away from being an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body to a fully independent body provides an opportunity to consider the responsibilities of the GTCS and the way in which these responsibilities are delivered. The consultation exercise seeks views on a range of options relating to the functions of the GTCS within the context described and the way in which these functions should be undertaken.

2.3 The Scottish Government has invited responses to the consultation by 26 June 2009.

2.4 The Principal Officer, Quality Improvement, convened a group to review the consultation paper and to formulate a response. The following personnel were involved in the review: Head Teacher, Quality Improvement Officer, CPD Co-ordinator.

The draft version of this document was copied to the secretary of the Professional Associations for comment prior to completion. The Professional Associations formulated their own response and this was reported to the review group.

3. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

3.1 The response to the consultation from East Ayrshire Educational Services is attached to this Cabinet Report as Appendix 1.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An independent GTCS would continue to monitor professional standards of teachers in contributing to Promoting Lifelong Learning.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) approve the response to the consultation on the future status of GTCS
- ii) otherwise, note the contents of the report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
KMck/KMcK
21 May 2009

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Towards an Independent General Teaching Council for Scotland – Consultation on the Future Status of GTCS: Scottish Government 2009

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017 or Kenneth McKinlay, Principal, Quality Improvement, Tel: (01563) 555650.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

Kenneth McKinlay, Principal, Quality Improvement

APPENDIX 1

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE STATUS OF GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND (GTCS)

East Ayrshire Council Educational Services welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the future status of GTCS. Teachers were invited to contribute to this response and this is the outcome of their deliberations.

The consultation document rightly highlights the trust and respect in which GTCS is held, both by those directly involved in the delivery of teaching as well as by Scottish Ministers, as a regulator with a good track record in ensuring that teachers working in Scotland's schools conform to high standards. The move to independence is an endorsement of the good work undertaken by the GTCS over the past 44 years.

Chapter 2: Functions of an independent General Teaching Council for Scotland

Section 2.2 – Responsibility for the Teaching Standards

Q1: Would it be appropriate for the GTCS to be given a more explicit responsibility in relation to the Teaching Standards?

Yes. The role of the GTCS as guardian of the Teaching Standards is essential for quality and continuity within the profession. It is essential that the GTCS should work in partnership with a range of players, including the Scottish Government, as no individual agency should be allowed to have undue influence over the Teaching Standards. The ability of the GTCS and Scottish Government, together with local authorities and professional associations, to recommend adaptation of the Teaching Standard to reflect changing national priorities should be measured and jointly agreed to avoid unnecessary changes in response to short term pressures, for example, international comparisons of educational systems and performance.

Section 2.3 – Entry Requirements to and Approval of Courses of Initial Teacher Education

Q2: Should the GTCS assume responsibility for setting entry requirements to Courses of Initial Teacher Education?

Yes. This, however, should be set within the context of close partnership working with HM Inspectorate of Education and the Education Faculties of Universities. In the same way as GTCS should be the guardian of the Teaching Standards an entry standard to Initial Teacher Education should also be the responsibility of GTCS. As is stated in the report the Government has never failed to approve Initial Teacher Courses accredited by GTCS. This would therefore formalise present and existing good practice.

Q3: Should the GTCS assume responsibility for the approval of Initial Teacher Education courses?

Yes. As is stated in the report the Government has never failed to approve Initial Teacher Courses accredited by GTCS. It is appropriate that the GTCS should set the Standard and approve the courses.

Section 2.4 – Continuing Professional Development

Q4: Do you think the GTCS should expand its role to into CPD? If so, what do you think this role should consist of?

GTCS' role within CPD should focus on setting standards and gatekeeping and accrediting existing and emerging frameworks and programmes. Any GTCS involvement and CPD should be in partnership with Learning Teaching Scotland, GLOW, HMIE, the National CPD Team and Trade Union Learning Representatives. Ultimately, CPD is owned by the individual teacher. GTCS role should be to facilitate personal and professional development and not control it.

Chapter 3: Governance of an independent General Teaching Council for Scotland

Section 3.2 – Size of Council

Q5: What do you think is the most appropriate size for an independent Council?

GTCS should operate as a strategic, responsive and flexible driver for education in Scotland and not just as a representative body of a small section in Scottish education nominated by their peers. It should be small enough to anticipate and lead change in the profession without losing appropriate representation. Teachers should remain as a majority on the Council. A maximum of 39 would be a realistic size for the Council.

Section 3.3 – Composition of Council

Q6: How best can we ensure that the public interest is well represented on an independent Council? In answering this question stakeholders may wish to consider factors such as the composition, appointments process and definition of lay member which could all play a role in ensuring the public interest is well represented.

There is a range of organisations that already very effectively represent parents, young people, the business community and wider stakeholders in education across councils. These include, for example, Parent Councils, Student Forums, Chamber of Commerce and Community Planning Partnerships. Individuals nominated or elected by such groupings would ensure the public interest is represented within the suggested size, above, of the Council.

Q7: In terms of models the independent Council could adopt, do you prefer Model 1 or Model 2, a variant of either model, the status quo, or something completely different?

Model 1

Under this model, registered teachers would continue to be elected to Council. However, the proportion of Council members that are currently appointed by named organisations would be replaced by a system through which these members would be appointed on the basis of their skills, through an independent process, possibly administered by Council under a duty to follow current best practice and overseen by an independent adjudicator.

Model 2

Under this model the current framework by which teachers are elected by their peers and organisations appoint individuals to Council would be replaced by a system under which all Council members are appointed. This model is therefore similar to the one adopted by other regulatory bodies and would give the GTCS a very similar governance structure to its contemporaries.

Model 1 is the preferred model as it presently works effectively and avoids any ambiguity in defining what constitutes 'appointments'.

Q8: In considering the composition of the current Council, do you think that there are groups missing from whose input the Council would benefit?

The consultation document recognises that parents, young people and the business community are currently not represented. They should have some form of representation.

Section 3.4 – Other relevant issues

Q9: Do you have any comments relating to the issues raised in this section?

An independent GTCS requires to be open, transparent and publicly accountable though the Scottish Parliament and publish an annual report. Similarly, an independent, self-financing GTCS should have control over its own finances which should be independently audited.

Q10: Do you believe the length of time individuals should be allowed to serve on Council should be capped?

Yes. The model described for the General Medical Council of two terms of four years within a period of twenty years would appear appropriate. However, to ensure greater continuity of experience this should be raised to three terms of four years within the same timescale.