

GUILD OF HEALTHCARE PHARMACISTS-AMICUS

Notes of the General Meeting held on 28th April 2007 at the Hilton Metropole, Brighton

The National Professional Committee (NPC) Chair, (formerly President) Anthony Oxley, opened the meeting. He explained the format of the meeting and items to be discussed.

There was then a minute silence in memory of David Samways, a former Council member, who died recently.

The Chair then asked for issues that members would like to be discussed.

1. Annual Report 2006

Copies were circulated at the meeting. The Chair explained that the report should have been sent out in advance of the meeting with a covering letter from the Chair explaining the format of the general meeting. The report is in two sections, the report for the first quarter, setting out the final activities of the old Council, and the report for the remainder of the year, setting out the activities of the new NPC.

NPC Chair's Report

Anthony explained that there are still three vacancies on the NPC, one of which is for a primary care representative. Although efforts have been made to fill this post through a separate request for nominations in a hard mailing to all members, and requesting a volunteer through the newsletter, these have not been successful. The other vacancies are for the London and Yorkshire regional representatives.

He went on to explain the election timings and the process for electing NPC officers. The term of office of all NPC members finishes at the end of December 2007. At that time all the regional member seats are up for election. For election of officers, at the November NPC meeting, the outgoing NPC will nominate/elect the officers designate. At the February meeting of the incoming NPC they can either ratify these nominations or reject them.

Anthony also explained that since March, the post of National Officer, Professional Policy and Practice, previously occupied by Karen Reay, had been lost from the health sector. Karen has moved into the finance department. Anthony has written a strong letter to Kevin Coyne protesting about this and about the lack of consultation. In response to a query he explained that other groups within the health sector, especially the Community practitioners and Health Visitors Association, for whom the post was the post of "Director", had also protested about this loss.

Professional Secretary Report

A query was raised as to whether a delegation was to be sent to the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) General Assembly in June. The

professional secretary responded that a written business case had been submitted to Amicus some time ago and a response was awaited.

Treasurer's Report

Simon, Mynes, treasurer, formally thanked Jim Bannerman, the previous treasurer, for his work.

Education and Development

A query was raised about the current number Guild awards. Richard Cattell, acting Chair of Education and Development, responded that there are now only the special interest group awards which are still running successfully. Support for the other awards, now withdrawn by the sponsors, had been waning and very few applications received.

A query was raised about the position with the Health and Social Care National Leadership Network (NLN) proposed Emerging Leaders Network, for which the Guild had made a nomination. The proposal for the network had subsequently been withdrawn. The professional secretary suggested the enquirer get in touch with Beth Taylor, pharmacy member of the NLN, for the latest position.

International Report

Tony West, chair of the International Committee, stated that the membership fees for EAHP are being paid by Amicus. He confirmed that the Guild would be sending a delegation to the EAHP General Assembly in Tallinn this year.

He reported that a member of the EAHP board had resigned, and that with the appointment of the Chief Executive, he was hopeful that the organisation would improve.

Communications Report

Vilma Gilis, communications officer, reported that there will be a 2 page Guild newsletter within "Hospital Pharmacist" four times a year. The first of these will appear in the June edition.

She also reported that the Guild web site is to be upgraded.

2. Draft Guild Byelaws

These were circulated at the meeting. They had been on the web site for about 10 days. The Chair expressed thanks to Don Page for writing the original draft and explained that the byelaws have to be in line with the Amicus rule book. The draft prior to this had been sent to members with experience of writing byelaws for comment.

There was discussion on various points within the document. It was agreed that the ratification process would be:

Members to send in comments by the end of May
Comments to be collated and draft amended as appropriate
“Final” draft to be sent as hard copy to members when the next hard copy mailing is sent out, at the worst case at the start of the election process for the new NPC members in November, when there will be a call for nominations from the membership for the NPC regional and specialist seats.

3. Unsocial Hours Payments

The Chair explained that the principle of unsocial hours does not affect members very much with respect to their regular working week, unless their weekend working was part of their 37.5 hours. The most frequent situation for such a payment for pharmacists would be bank holidays, when the amount paid would fall considerably. This is likely to become a service issue. The Guild has flagged this up as a potential problem to the four UK health department Chief Pharmacists and to the Joint Staffs Committee. The deadline for implementation of October 2007 is likely to be put back, as agreement is unlikely in time for this.

4. On-call

There have been no discussions at all on on-call/emergency duty commitment. The current payment of approximately £2600 pa is likely to fall considerably depending on how frequently individuals within a local system are on-call. This potentially poses a huge threat to service provision and has also been flagged up to the four UK health department Chief Pharmacists and within Amicus. It is expected that the deadline for implementation of October 2008 will be extended in view of the lack of discussions.

5. Professional Leadership

The separation of the functions of regulation and leadership/representation, currently carried out by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, as set out in the government white paper “Trust, Assurance and Safety-the Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century” was discussed. The Chair stated that the NPC were broadly supportive of the formation of a body akin to a royal college (barc) and to the “blank sheet of paper” approach to its formation. The Guild had sent a representative to all meetings to which it had been invited, had discussed the position with the United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association Committee on 26th April, and had set aside the July practice and education committee meetings to discuss this in more depth.

Ian Simpson, Chief Executive of the College of Pharmacy Practice, described the meeting he had called of specialist pharmacy interest groups from hospital and primary care including the Guild, at which an agreement was reached to support the formation of a barc using the “clean sheet approach”. The agreement subsequently became known as the “Waterloo” agreement and had been reported in the Pharmaceutical Journal. It was confirmed by the Vice Chair, Richard Cattell, who had attended the meeting, that there was a large amount of consensus around the formation of the barc.

The chair noted that if a barc is formed the Guild function may change, with less emphasis on professional issues, but maintaining the individual representation function for members. For some issues around the formation of a barc, such as whether technicians should be included, it is probably too early to decide.

A point was made that the future was potentially financially worrying if the professional function diminished, as the Guild would probably attract fewer members, with the attendant reduction in finances, and that perhaps the Guild should consider at some stage whether they should stay in Amicus.

6. Union Merger

It was noted that Amicus is balloting its members on the proposed merger with the TGWU. The NPC are not supportive of the merger as it is seen as, yet again, a potential threat to Guild autonomy. The Chair confirmed that the NPC will be taking positive steps to maintain and promote the Guild function within the health sector.

The Chair thanked members for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm.

Jean Curtis
Professional Secretary
21.9.07