
MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRD MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE BOARDROOM, NORTHLAND BUILDING, STRAND ROAD CAMPUS, COMMENCING 1700

PRESENT:

Prof M Ó Néill (Governing Body Temporary Chair)
Ms M Breslin
Mr P Clancy
Mrs D Creevy – joined remotely from 1711
Mrs S Fisher – joined remotely
Mr S Gillespie
Mrs M Gormley – joined remotely
Mrs J McKeever – joined remotely
Mrs S McMahon – joined remotely
Mr L Murphy (Principal & Chief Executive)
Mr B O'Neill
Mrs C Shongo
Mr F Smyth – joined remotely
Mr P Thompson
Ms V Toland

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director
Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards
Mrs S Kelly, HR Manager – joined remotely for part of the meeting
Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services – joined remotely for part of the meeting
Mrs C O'Reilly, Boardroom Apprentice
Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

103.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Governing Body Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. For the benefit of Mrs C O'Reilly, Boardroom Apprentice who was attending her first Board meeting under the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme the Governing Body Chair requested a round of self-introductions to take place.
Apologies were received from Mr K Kennedy post meeting.

103.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no conflict of interest declarations. There were no declarations of any other business.

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Register of Interest Summary Report – September 2023

The Governing Body Secretary reported that Governors had reviewed and updated their Conflict of Interest declarations during the summer break. New entries have been added for new members/attendees; Mr P Clancy, Mrs S McMahon and Mrs C O'Reilly.

103.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 27 JUNE 2023**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED, Mrs C Shongo

SECONDED, Mr B O'Neill

REPORT 1 MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report

101.7 As agreed the Governing Body Chair had sent correspondence to Mr Doran, Principal & CE of Southern Regional College to wish him well on his retirement.

101.8 The appointment for a Governor for oversight of HE is in progress. Mr B O'Neill is now the Governor representative on the Springtown Project Board.

101.10 Premature Retirement Compensation Scheme DE Circular 1999/30 (superseded by Circulars 2006/03 and 2010/14) – The Finance Director provided the Board with background to this scheme. The Circular is still current for the scheme however the Finance Director is not aware of anyone who has applied it since 2008. It was noted that reports by both the NI Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee were critical of the use of this scheme. Voluntary Exit Schemes appear to have superseded this scheme.

The Finance Director reported he was happy to meet the individual staff member who raised this query.

103.4 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – Mrs C Shongo, Committee Chair**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 12 September 2023

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting

Report 3 Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference

Report 4 Internal Audit Plan & Charter 2023/24

Report 5 Report to the Audit & Risk Committee

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 12 September 2023

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED, Ms V Toland

SECONDED, Mrs S McMahan

Report 3 Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference

The Board agreed the amendments to Section 2.1 and Section 2.2 in relation to Membership/roles of the Committee.

PROPOSED, Mrs M Gormley

SECONDED, Ms V Toland

Report 4 Internal Audit Plan & Charter 2023/24

The Board were content to approve.

PROPOSED, Mrs M Gormley

SECONDED, Mrs M Breslin

The Committee Chair reported on the key highlights from the Committee meeting. Mr G McCole, IT Services Manager provided the Committee with a comprehensive insight into the College's cybersecurity activity and enhancements. Activity planned for 2023/24 included Azure Sentinel Review; MFA expansion; AppLocker and Cyber Essentials accreditation.

Report 5 Report to the Audit & Risk Committee

The Committee received updates following the most recent Risk Register review undertaken by the College Risk Management Group. The Risk Matrix has been updated from 3x3 (multiplication) to a 5x5 (addition). Proposed changes included:

- COR 0001 - Title change (Impact on performance /availability of Info systems relating to 3rd party hosting / connections);
- COR0003 - Non-compliance with work-based learning regulations and procedures will be removed once the issues with TAMS are resolved;
- COR0006 - BCP/Disaster Recovery is currently under review (with potential to include with the Cyber Security risk);
- COR0009 - relating to Covid19 pandemic will be removed;
- COR0011/COR0012 -Two new risks added to the Risk Register, Impact of Industrial Action and Staffing (Impact of recruitment, retention, pay levels and sickness).

Two Direct Award contracts were issued relating to the Springtown Redevelopment Project. Prompt payments for August 2023 was 95%; giving a year to date of 95%. In Committee, the Internal Auditor, RSM provided a comprehensive insight into the Annual Internal Audit Report and Opinion for the year to 31 July 2023. Six reviews were completed during 2022/23, of which one was an advisory review. Internal audit has provided the Governing Body with satisfactory assurance, raising twelve low priority and two medium priority issues, with ten of the twelve 'low' priority issues relating to policies and/or procedures. The contract with RSM has been extended for one additional period. (There is also an increase in daily fee from £398 to £425).

NIAO outlined that it hoped to conclude its audit of the College accounts to 31 March 2023 by week commencing 18 September 2023 and that it would then commence the audit for the year to 31 July 2023.

The Finance Director provided the Board with information on a recent matter that may present a risk to the College going forward relating to the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) building material concerns. The Department (DfE) have requested feedback from the Sector on the College buildings that may have been constructed using RAAC.

The Committee Chair thanked Mrs Shongo for her report and invited Mrs Creevy to report on the recent Resources Committee meeting.

103.5 RESOURCES COMMITTEE – Mrs D Creevy, Committee Chair**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS - Finance papers**

- Report 1 Committee Chair’s Summary Report of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 September 2023
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting
- Report 3 Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 July 2023
- Report 4 Budget 2023/24
- Report 5 Fees & Charges Policy 2023-2024 – amendment

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 September 2023

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED, Mrs D Creevy

SECONDED, Mrs S Fisher

Report 5 Fees & Charges Policy 2023-2024 – amendment

Proposed amendment to fees in relation to EU national students who have lived in the ROI for at least three calendar years and have not applied for ROI citizenship, in these cases home fees may be applied.

PROPOSED, Mrs D Creevy

SECONDED, Mrs S Fisher

The Committee Chair reported that several tenders awarded related to the catering function which was transferred on 1 September 2023 from OCS to in-house. The College is still awaiting a response from queries on the May 2023 invoice received from OCS. Invoices have since been received from OCS for the months of June, July and August 2023. The amounts within each invoice are significant and are in most cases much higher than the same periods in 2022. The College are querying these.

In respect to the Springtown Redevelopment Project matter, an adjudication has taken place. The Adjudicator ruled that the contractor OHMG had not provided sufficient evidence to support their claim. Disappointingly the Adjudicator’s fee was split 50/50 between both parties. A Notice of Dissatisfaction was subsequently received by the College whereby OHMG enquired if the College wished to engage in dialogue, stating that if they did not receive a positive response within 7 days, they would serve the Notice of Arbitration upon the College. The College is currently taking legal advice on this matter.

The Food Project proposal as part of the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal has been split in two. The Foodovation Centre proposal will involve a refurbishment project at the Limavady Main Street Campus. This is now progressing to OBC stage. The second element, the food grade incubation facility will now be merged with the Business Innovation and Incubation Hub Project.

Additional funding has been received under InnovateUs (£14K), Skills Focus (DfE) (£130K), Skill-Up (£70K) in June 2023, (£150K) in August 2023.

Report 3 Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 July 2023

In Committee the Finance Director reported that the Annual Report & Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the Accounts Direction and relevant accounting standards. The figures are much in line with the projections reported at the Resources Committee and Board meetings throughout the year. Staff Costs - this figure has been impacted by the actuarial assumptions used in the valuation of the NILGOSC FRS pension adjustments for support staff. £727k was charged to staff cost in 2022/23 whereas £2.88m was charged in 2021/22. The NILGOSC Pension scheme is showing a surplus of £3.4m as at 31 July 2023.

The Statement of Financial Position for the Year Ended 31 July 2023 was showing, an estimated Holiday Pay Provision of £988K. This relates to backdated holiday pay (pre 2020) on overtime payments. The sector and their legal advisors continue to monitor the PSNI v Agnew case. The Department (DfE) has approved the Business Case to pay 2020/21. The Business Case for 2021/22 and 2022/23 must be submitted to the Department (DfE).

Report 4 Budget Update 2023/24

At the Board meeting the Finance Director confirmed that the College had since received communication from the Department (DfE) confirming the budget 2023/24. This including the additional funding reported at the June 2023 Board meeting. The Department (DfE) have also requested the Sector to accrue a 5% to budget which will include timed served increments and estimated pay rises for lecturers. Ms V Toland, Academic Staff Governor reported that staff were disappointed on the 1% pay rise they had received and strike action is ongoing for the scheduled dates.

The Committee received a report on the College Insurance Cover 2023/24. The premium has decreased for 2023/24 to £215k from £225K in 2022. Property premium has increased. Liability premiums have decreased.

STAFFING REPORTS

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report S1 Human Resources Business Plan 2023/24

Report S2 Staff Development Programme Semester 1 2023/24

In reporting on staffing matters the Committee Chair apprised members that from 27/05/2023 to 07/09/2023 a total of 7 recruitment exercises were carried through to appointment. Currently there are 32 'live' posts going through the recruitment and selection process. Recruitment challenges continue in specific areas. Work continues with the HR digital transformation project to create efficiencies and remove the need for duplicated manual processes.

In this academic year 2023/2024 to date the College have processed 19 staff Access NI applications. These mainly relate to the TUPE transfer of staff from OCS to in-house.

Lost time rate due to sickness absence were showing 2.51% for August 2023 for teaching staff and 4.65% for support staff. Personal stress was the main reason for absence at 18% from September 2022 to August 2023. The HR Manager provided the Committee with information on the various supports available in supporting staff in this particular area.

To date, 380 Appraisals have been completed (78%), 39 are due for completion (8%) and 75 (15%) are outstanding. HR will support managers who have outstanding appraisals to complete these over the next few months.

During the 2022/23 academic year, 709 staff members (88.9%) attended at least one staff development activity throughout the academic year. Of the 709 staff members, 55% were academic staff and 45% were support staff.

Report S1 Human Resources Business Plan 2023/24

The Committee Chair referred to the HR Business Plan 2023/24 which sets out the key strategic and operational priorities as set out within the People Strategic Framework and the Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy. For the academic year 2023/24 HR will focus on the areas of Health & Wellbeing, Employee Engagement and Digital Transformation.

Report S2 Staff Development Programme Semester 1 2023-24

Members noted the vast array of training events for both support and academic staff in the College.

CLIENT SERVICES REPORTS

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report C1 Equality & Good Relations Progress Report (Section 75) April 2022 – March 2023
- Report C2 Equality Report
- Report C3 Data Protection/Compliance Update

Report C1 Equality & Good Relations Progress Report (Section 75) April 2022 – March 2023

The Report has progressed to the Equality Commission. The report outlines the valuable work of staff on the College's commitment to its equality scheme and to the promotion of equality.

PROPOSED, Mr B O'Neill

SECONDED, Mrs D Creevy

Report C2 Equality Report

The report includes the proposed Schedule of Awareness days for 2023/24. Having undertaken EFDNI's Disability Positive Accreditation, which focuses on employment-related disability good practice, the College was successful in obtaining AAA

accreditation. The College initiated links with the Strabane Ethnic Community Association who is the College's charity for the Strabane area.

Report C3 Data Protection/Compliance Update

For the period of academic year 2022-23, there were a total of 19 information rights requests made under UK GDPR and Freedom of Information Act 2000. This is a decrease of 11 for the same period 2021/22.

From 1 September 2022 to end August 2023 there were no personal data related incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). There have been a total of 16 potential data incidents recorded on the Data Incident Register. This is a decrease of 6 from 22 incidents during the same period during 2021/22.

The Head of Client Services reported on the recent high profile data breaches. Key areas of action to ensure compliance with legislation are planned for 2023/24 to raise staff awareness and monitor safe working practice.

Ms S Kelly and Ms G Moss joined the meeting during this item.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs D Creevy for her report and invited Mrs J McKeever to present her Education Committee Report to the Board.

103.6 EDUCATION COMMITTEE – Mrs J McKeever, Committee Chair

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Summary Report of the Education Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2023

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2023

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED, Mr P Thompson

SECONDED, Ms M Breslin

The Committee Chair reported the Committee welcomed new members to the September 2023 meeting. For the benefit of new Committee members Dr C O'Mullan provided context to her role and that of the Curriculum Leadership Team (CLT). This included a combination of strategic vision and operational good housekeeping to develop, deliver and ensure a high quality of education, training and skills.

Full time enrolment data presented in Committee showed a comparison of actual vs the November data lift of 2022. For full-time provision as at 15 September 2023 compared with November 2022 data reflects a positive picture in Level 1, 3 and levels 4 – 6 all with increased enrolments. Some full time enrolments still need to be processed and that there was always a reduction in full-time numbers from the

1 September to the 1 November as a result of student withdrawals. The ongoing action short of a strike has had an impact on inputting enrolment data on the EBS system. A number of workarounds have been put in place to prioritise this. The one week strike action commenced on 18 September 2023. Individual strike days are also planned over the coming weeks. A decision was made to deliver classes by remote learning during the week 18 to 22 September 2023. This approach will be reviewed for the individual planned strike action days.

The Committee were informed of the work being undertaken in collating performance data for the year 2022/23. The details on the performance of College KPIs and the progress of work to collate the Whole College Self Evaluation/Quality Improvement Report will be provided at a later date in line with the College Quality Improvement calendar.

The Committee were apprised on the SOLAS Project, a state agency that oversees the building of a world class Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland, developing skills to fuel Ireland's future. SOLAS funding has been confirmed for the College to deliver in Strabane Campus a number of intensive apprenticeship training programmes.

The Curriculum Policy progressed through the Committee meeting. Highlights were noted; the extensive range of types of provision and funding streams; the key documents underpinning the Policy include the 10X Economy: NI Decade of Innovation Strategy. The College will continue to develop a curriculum portfolio aligned to the three pillars of the Strategy.

In conclusion the Committee Chair noted that a CDP commissioning letter had not yet been issued by the Department (DfE). The Committee Chair as a member of the Sector Task and Finish Group advised that a draft of the revised CDP should be available mid-October 2023. The new format of the CDP will focus on how the College will reflect on the 10X Economy: NI Decade of Innovation Strategy.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs McKeever for her report and invited Mr L Murphy to present his report to the Board.

103.7 PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS – Mr L Murphy

The Principal provided the Board with some context on the current strike action and the impacts and risks of same. The Principal added he respects the right of staff to take industrial action. The Principal stressed College management remain committed in finding a resolution however the Department (DfE) need to progress solutions to this matter. Ms V Toland, Academic Staff Governor reported that the decision to take strike action was not taken lightly.

A Pre-Consultation letter has been forwarded to relevant unions on the Reform to Save Scheme. A Sector Business Case for the funding of the scheme is currently being drafted and is required to be submitted for approval to the Department (DfE). A comprehensive consultation process will commence.

The Principal updated members on other strategic work taking place including updates on the City Deal, Cross-Border work and the Strategic Alliance Group (SAG) and the FE Review. A welcome back meeting for staff was held on 7 September 2023.

The Principal noted the passing of Mr Marc Geagan, (RIP) Associate Lecturer who had unexpectedly passed away. A condolence note has been sent to his family.

For the benefit of new Board members Mrs J McKeever, Chair of the Education Committee provided an updated on the work of the Strategic Alliance Group relating to the FE Review. Following a meeting in August 2023 to date no feedback has been received from the Director of FE (DfE) on the future direction of this Group.

103.8 GOVERNING BODY TEMPORARY CHAIR'S BUSINESS

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Review of Standing Orders September 2023

The Standing Orders were due for review. No amendments were proposed.

PROPOSED, Mrs C Shongo

SECONDED, Mr S Gillespie

103.9 CORRESPONDENCE

It was noted that any correspondence to note was already covered in previous agenda items.

103.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business.

103.11 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately

The Governing Body Chair brought the meeting to a close. Reserved Business followed.

Date of next meeting: 21 November 2023

Signed: _____

M Ó Néill
Prof M Ó Néill, Committee Chair

Date: 21 November 2023

APPROVED