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**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2021, COMMENCING 1700**

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**PRESENT:**

Mr G Finnegan, Governing Body Chair  
Ms M Breslin (until item 88.10)  
Mr P Canavan  
Mrs R Dougherty  
Mr S Gillespie  
Dr N Hand  
Mr G Killeen  
Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive  
Mr S McGregor  
Mr M O’Kane  
Prof M O’Neill  
Mr B Quinn  
Mrs L Taggart

**IN ATTENDANCE;**

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director (until item 88.10)  
Dr C O’Mullan, Head of Curriculum & Operations  
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager  
Mrs C McWilliams, Boardroom Apprentice (until item 88.10)  
Mrs É Doherty, Governance Secretary

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Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic all members and attendees were joining the meeting remotely via video conference.

**88.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Governing Body Chair formally welcomed everyone and extended a warm welcome to Mrs C Williams who had joined the Board under the Boardroom Apprentice Programme for 2021/22. The Governing Body Chair added that the Boardroom Apprenticeship Programme is both a learning experience for the Apprentice and the Host Board.

**88.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/REGISTER OF INTERESTS SUMMARY/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no declarations of any other business.

**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Summary Register of Interests Report – September 2021

The Governance Secretary reported on an additional entry that was received since the Board papers were released. This related to the Principal who now serves on the Board of City Deal. The Report will be amended accordingly and provided as a Paper for the next Governing Body meeting.

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The Governing Body Chair wished to thank and congratulate the Principal for taking on this important role.

### **88.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2021**

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on  
23 June 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 23 June 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mr S Gillespie

#### **88.3.1 Matters Arising**

The Governing Body Chair brought members through the agreed actions from the June 2021 Board meeting –

**87.6** HR provided a report to the Resources Committee meeting on 20 September 2021 which focused on a piece of work to encourage individuals with disabilities to apply for posts within the College. The College will also work towards a Charter Mark to demonstrate our commitment in this area. Further details will be provided under item 88.5.

- The link to the microsite within the Queen's University website to signpost potential students towards options at the six regional FE Colleges was sent to Governors on 4 October 2021.

The Governing Body Chair then invited Mr S Gillespie, Committee Chair to report on the business of the recent Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

### **88.4 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Committee Chair's Summary Report  
Report 2      Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2021  
Report 3      Committee's Terms of Reference

#### **Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2021**

The Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 14 September 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED**, Mr S Gillespie

**SECONDED**; Ms M Breslin

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**Report 3 Committee's Terms of Reference – reviewed with no changes**  
**PROPOSED**, Mr G Killeen  
**SECONDED**, Mr S Gillespie

The Committee Chair reported on the key items that were discussed at the September Committee meeting. The Committee agreed to rename the Whistle Blowing Policy to the 'Raising Concerns Policy'.

The Internal Audit recommendations relating to the cyber-security review had all been actioned. The Annual Report & Accounts Year Ended 31 July 2021 were presented to the Committee. These were in draft form. The final draft will be submitted to the Board at their November 2021 meeting.

Continuing, the Committee Chair reported that there were no Direct Award Contracts. Prompt Payment figure for 30 days to 31 August 2021 was 97% and for the year ending 31 July 2021 was 95%.

The Risk Management Report 2021/22 (1) was due with the Committee/Board at their November 2021 meeting. Details on the proposed new risk model will be included within this paper.

The Committee received a copy of the NIAO National Fraud Initiative Self-Assessment Checklist and a summary of the completed exercise for 2020-2021. The College is a member of this biennial exercise to assist in the prevention and detection of fraud. The exercise identified 207 data matches. Following an investigation, no issues were noted.

An additional five days were added to the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22. This was to facilitate a Departmental (DfE) request for an additional internal audit review to take place in respect to the COVID-19 Student Disruption Funding Scheme.

The Annual Internal Audit Report & Opinion – Year Ended 31 July 2021 was presented to the Committee, it was noted that there were no further changes from the draft Report presented to the Committee in May 2021. The report stated that overall, there is a satisfactory system of governance, risk management and control within the College.

NIAO had issued a revised timetable however it was noted that receipt of the RTTCWG Report will be issued as a late paper for the November 2021 Committee meeting. This will also delay the completion of the Audit & Risk Annual Report to the Governing Body which is completed by the Governance Secretary and signed off by the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee. The Governance Secretary advised this will also be issued as a late paper.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Gillespie and the Audit & Risk Committee for their work. He then invited the Mrs R Dougherty to present the Resources Committee report to members.

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**88.5 RESOURCES COMMITTEE****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 20 September 2021
Report 3	Draft Annual Report & Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2021
Report 4	Equality & Good Relations Progress Report (Section 75) April 2020-March 2021
Report 5	Safeguarding Report
Report 6	Data Protection/Compliance Annual Report

**Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 20 September 2021**

The Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 20 September 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED**, Mrs R Dougherty

**SECONDED**, Mr S McGregor

Equality & Good Relations Progress Report (Section 75) April 2020-March 2021

**PROPOSED**, Mrs R Dougherty

**SECONDED**, Mr M O'Kane

The Governing Body Chair and the Principal & Chief Executive will now sign off on this Report and it will be forwarded to the Equality Commission.

The Committee Chair initially reported on the key finance items discussed at the recent Resources Committee meeting. This included reporting that the final account for the Springtown Refurbishment Project has not been agreed. RPP have confirmed that a dispute exists in respect to a Compensation Event to the value of £3.5K for their additional time spent. It was agreed to continue to review the Springtown Project through the Committee and Governing Body and to continue to liaise with the College legal and contractual advisors.

The College is preparing the Outline Business Case for the Strabane City Deal. The proposed Food Village Project in the Limavady Area has been shortlisted within the Causeway Coast & Glens Growth Deal and has moved to the Strategic Outline Case stage. Meetings have been held with the DfE, Minister Lyons, Staff from CAFRE (College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise) and a virtual meeting with staff from the new BIA Innovator Campus project due to open in Athenry, Co Galway. A key focus on this will be continued partnership working.

The disposal process of the Maydown site has now been initiated in conjunction with the Department (DfE).

The Draft Annual Report & Accounts Year Ended 31 July 2021 were brought through the Committee. PwC on behalf of the NIAO commenced the Audit of the Financial Statements and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 July 2021 on 27 September 2021.

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The Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 July 2021 was showing a surplus of £2.6m. An update was provided on the Statement of Financial Position as at 31 July 2021 which was showing the Holiday Pay Provision (Working Time Regulations) reduced on last year's figure. This was actioned following legal advice. The Bad Debt provision in respect to Student Fee Income has been increased due to circumstances relating to the current pandemic. Approval to write-off this debt will be sought from the Board at their November 2021 meeting.

The Finance Director reported to the Board that the Department (DfE) had since secured cover for the DEL Resource shortfall of £410K which was reported in the NDPB Forecasting Return to 31 March 2022 at the Resources Committee meeting on 20 September 2021.

Members reviewed the analysis of insurance premium for 2021/22. The Sector premium had increased by 17.3% from £1,187K to £1,393K. The increase for the College premium for 2021/22 against 2020/21 was 13.6%. The Business Case for the Sector covers a five-year period from 2021 and may require to be refreshed or an addendum added should the costs exceed the approved figure within the Business Case. An invite has been extended to Marsh to attend the upcoming NIFON meeting for further discussion.

In commencing her report on HR matters the Committee Chair informed the Board on the sad passing of Mr Seamus Donnelly a part-time lecturer. The Committee/Board wished to record their sympathy to the family.

It was reported at the Committee meeting that from 3 June 2021 to 31 August 2021, 33 recruitment exercises have been carried out. Thirty new appointments were made and 16 employees had left the College within this period. The percentage Lost Time Rate for staff for August 2021 was 2.37%. The incidence of staff absence related to mental health was discussed and noted – the data will be further explored to look at context in terms of the spectrum of mental health and the work and personal factors.

In reference to Staff Development the College is currently working towards achieving a Workplace Charter on domestic violence.

An exercise took place in August 2021 on the online, mandatory training units outstanding for support staff, this continues to be monitored.

Referring to item 87.6 the Committee Chair and HR Manager reported further on the piece of work to encourage individuals with disabilities to apply for posts within the College. The College has several measures currently in place to encourage applicants with disabilities to apply for posts and to support applicants during the selection process. To further promote diversity and inclusion within the recruitment and selection process the College will work towards the Department of Work & Pensions, Disability Confident Employer Scheme. The College is also working towards the RNIB

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– Visibly Better Employer Quality Standard to become a more inclusive employer for people with sight loss.

Mr M O’Kane added that his organisation had already attained the Disability Confident Leader accreditation at Level 3 and he would be happy to support the College in this process.

**It was agreed that the Governance Secretary share the Report with the remaining Board members.**

In concluding her report the Committee Chair referred to the Internal Audit Review on HR and was pleased to report that all actions had now been completed.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs R Dougherty and the Committee and invited the Principal to present his report.

## **88.6 PRINCIPAL’S BUSINESS**

### **➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Principal’s Report

The Principal reported that the Draft College Development Plan had been submitted to the Department. This is a one-year Recovery Plan and the Plan will be presented to the Education Committee and Board in November 2021.

Full-time FE/HE enrolment numbers continue to be under pressure. The Principal highlighted that in 2019/20, 65% of the College enrolments were in Quintiles 1 and 2. ETI will be undertaking an independent review of the Sector to look at the various Curriculum Hubs. The Principal reported that the COVID Skills Programme has been renamed the Skill Up - The Flexible Skills Fund. The College have secured a budget of £400K (Skills Focus) to the end of March 2022. The Department (DfE) has also requested assistance in establishing a Development Project to provide courses and qualifications that will encourage development of skills specifically in the priority economic sectors.

As the Ulster University School of Medicine welcomed their first cohort of students to Magee the Principal referred to the correspondence received from Professor Paul Bartholomew, Vice Chancellor, Ulster University thanking the College for its support over the last five years.

The College is involved to become part of the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence initiative. This initiative will aim to raise standards in technical education and training at all levels across the Colleges with access to expertise and best practice from across the world.

Mr S Gillespie reported that an area of concern locally is in the hospitality/tourism sector. This sector is reporting that they continue to struggle with staffing issues as the impact of the COVID-19 has intensified recruitment concerns across the industry.

The Governing Body Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

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**88.7 GOVERNING BODY CHAIR'S BUSINESS****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Governor Assessments 2020/21 – verbal report  
Report 2 Draft Statement of Strategic Intent – verbal update

The Governing Body Chair reported that the Governor Assessments for 2020/21 were due shortly with the Department (DfE). A request for an extension to the deadline to the month end (October 2021) will be requested from the Department. The same format as last year will be used.

The Principal reported on the progress of work on the Draft Statement of Strategic Intent. A strategic priority for the Board will be an enhanced focus on engagement with and providing for those economically inactive. An Action Plan 2021/22 has been drafted. The Principal reported on the proposed actions and the associated timeline. A discussion ensued; members welcomed the College leading this opportunity. It was highlighted it will be a challenge and will require a lot of partnership work. This will be a regular agenda item going forward.

**88.8 CORRESPONDENCE**

The Governing Body Chair reported on correspondence received from the Department (DfE). As part of the Department's Organisational Development and Transformation Programme (ODT), a review will take place on the way in which the Department oversees and works with its Arm Length Bodies (ALB).

**The Governing Body Chair suggested that an invite be forwarded to Mr Colin Woods the ODT Programme SRO to the November 2021 Board meeting. Members were content with this.**

**88.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no any other business to discuss.

**88.10 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately**

There was no any other business and the Governing Body Chair thanked everyone for joining. The meeting closed at 1825.

*Ms M Breslin, Mrs L Taggart, Mr P McKeown and Ms C McWilliams left the meeting at this juncture.*

**Date of next meeting:** 10 November 2021

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Governing Body Chair**  
**Mr G Finnegan**

**Date:** 10 November 2021

APPROVED