
MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY SIXTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON 27 APRIL 2021, COMMENCING 1700

PRESENT:

Mr G Finnegan, Governing Body Chair
Ms M Breslin (until item 86.9)
Mr P Canavan
Mrs R Dougherty
Mr D Ferns
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 (from 1725)
Mr B Quinn

IN ATTENDANCE;

Mr P McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement (until item 86.9)
Dr C O’Mullan, Head of Curriculum & Operations (until item 86.9)
Ms G Moss, Head of Learner Services (left during item 86.6)
Mrs É Doherty, Governance Secretary

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

86.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Governing Body Chair welcomed everyone. Apologies were received post meeting from Mrs L Taggart and Mrs C McGovern.

86.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/REGISTER OF INTERESTS SUMMARY/ DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governor, Mrs R Dougherty declared a conflict of interest with item 86.9. There were no declarations of any other business.

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Summary Register of Interests Report – April 2021

The Governing Body Chair referred to the updated Summary Register of Interests Report that included an updated entry for Mr P Canavan. He reminded members to ensure their details are kept up to date and to contact the Governance Secretary with any amendments.

86.3 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 23 February 2021**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

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

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

PROPOSED; Dr N Hand

SECONDED; Mr P Canavan

86.3.1 Matters Arising

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

85.7 The amended definition of an ‘International Student’ as *laid down by the Department for the Economy as per Circular FE 14/12 “Further Education Residency* as included within the Fees & Charges Policy 2021/22 was made available to members.

85.8 A letter of thanks has been drafted on behalf of the Board to thank SSE Airtricity for their valued contribution to those students who received scholarships.

85.9 The Governing Body Chair stated the Draft Statement of Intent would be discussed further into the Agenda item 86.6, Report 2.

The Governing Body Chair then invited Mr M O’Kane, Committee Chair to report on the business of the recent Education Committee meeting.

86.4 EDUCATION COMMITTEE**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Committee Chair’s Summary Report

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 14 April 2021

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 14 April 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 10 February 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED; Mr M O’Kane

SECONDED; Mr P Canavan

The Committee Chair reported on the key matters from the Committee meeting. Enrolments for the Sector for the last five years had reduced for all colleges over the period. A contributing factor for the College is the reduction in the population of the 15-24 year olds in the Derry City & Strabane District and in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council areas. Concerns exist as well in the lack of a 14-19 year policy and the

increasing aging population projected from 2018 to 2028 that has resulted in the flattening of population growth across both council areas.

In terms of enrolments on full-time, Higher Education 2019/20 the College is the second largest provider of full-time, Higher Education across the Sector. However, there continues to be a drift downwards on previous years. Part-time enrolments for the Sector for 2019/20 were showing the College lowest ranking, partly due to the COVID pandemic.

Data on performance by subject area for 2019/20 showed the College ranked first in the Sector in Education and Training, second in the subject areas of Science and Mathematics; Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies; Construction, Planning and the Built Environment. Work continues to improve retention rates that were showing as of 31 March 2021, full-time at 88% and part-time at 94%.

The Committee Chair noted that where the College had terminated attendance due to students not attending, albeit remotely, due to the COVID pandemic these figures were in line with previous years.

Proposals for new HLA courses for 2021/22 in the subject areas in Business & Enterprise, Electrical Electronic Engineering and General Engineering have been submitted to the Department (DfE) with projected enrolments of 84, an increase on current HLA's which was showing 69.

The Committee Chair added that the Essential Skills Working Group continues their efforts to re-engage students to achieve their qualifications and to planning for the academic year 2021/22. Work continues for the Operational Recovery Group Sub Committee (Teaching, Learning and Student Committee). Learners and staff are permitted on-site to undertake examinations and assessments in line with relevant government issued industry and workplace restrictions and guidance for occupational settings. It is hoped that the next phase of the pathway will permit a significantly larger number of learners on site.

Discussion took place on the potential of delayed qualifications for 2020/21 and the potential costs associated with these delays. The College has estimated that 1073 qualifications may be delayed into 2021/22. Some of these being qualifications that were originally scheduled to complete in 2019/20. The figure stated includes a significant number of qualifications within industry related part-time courses. The Head of Curriculum added that the curriculum areas of Hair & Beauty and Hospitality resumed this week and plans are in place for assessments to take place. These matters are continually being reviewed.

Updates at the Committee meeting were provided on the work of the Business Support Centre. The Department (DfE) has agreed that financial support for local businesses will continue to help the apprenticeship system respond to the impact of the COVID crisis. The College has launched a Graduate Software Testers Programme in the Causeway Coast & Glens Council area. The Assured Skills Academies continue and the Welding Academy in Springtown will complete shortly with potential for further welding academies to take place. In line with the College being the lead hub for Health & Social Care, discussions are currently taking place on an apprenticeship programme in Nursing Assistant.

In concluding his report, the Committee Chair reported that the final version of the Revised Centre Assessment Policy had been shared with the full Board and duly approved.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr O’Kane and invited the Principal to present his report to members.

86.5 PRINCIPAL’S BUSINESS

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Principal’s Report
Supplementary Report	Lateral Flow Testing for Staff and Students

The Principal continued reporting on the safe resumption of onsite delivery. From 19 April 2021 students will be able to attend on site to complete training and assessments that are an essential and unavoidable part of their courses. A potential pilot with the Department (DfE) and the Department of Health & Social Care for asymptomatic lateral testing will commence for students and staff to progress the safe resumption of onsite delivery in May 2021. Discussion took place on the best way to manage this through home or on-site testing. The College/Sector current position is to have students and staff to manage this through home testing.

The Principal reported that the Principals’ Group had recently met with the Permanent Secretary to discuss how the Sector can maximise opportunities and develop new approaches to the delivery of tertiary education in Northern Ireland and how FE and HE work with business and industry to meet the skills need in NI. Another meeting is planned.

A Task and Finish Group has been established within the College to consider the option of becoming an OU Centre to increase the HE offer at the College. Meetings with the Universities have already taken place. The Principal stated the 2021/22 MaSN bid was submitted to the Department (DfE). The College put forward a projected MaSN of 584. The Principal was pleased to report that a Level 3 welding student has been shortlisted in the Apprentice of the Year category in the Departments Apprenticeships Award 2021. The Principal also wished to note the retirement of a long serving member of staff, Mr Gerry Burke who had completed 40 years’ service as a lecturer in fabrication and welding with the College. **It was suggested that the Board recognise this significant milestone.**

Prof M O’Neill referred to the ‘Study in N Ireland’ marketing campaign that the University of Ulster Magee ran last year and suggested it might be worthwhile to promote this earlier this year. **Prof M O’Neill agreed to follow up on this.**

Prof M O’Neill joined the meeting during this item.

The Governing Body Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

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

Report 1	The NI College of the Future Report
Report 2	Draft Statement of Intent & Action Plan
Report 3	Boardroom Apprentice Programme 2021/22
Report 4	Membership/Meetings – verbal report

The Governing Body Chair referred to the NI College of the Future Report that was launched in March 2021. The Northern Ireland Report is the fourth and final of the nations-specific reports, having already published reports for England, Scotland and Wales. The report, for information does not propose any fundamental change rather it looks to ways in which the Sector can capitalise on the considerable strengths and responding to challenges facing Northern Ireland.

Following the out workings from the Strategy Day, the Governing Body Chair read out to members the draft Statement of Intent. Members were in favour with this and it was agreed that a piece of work now follow by the Executive Team on gathering information and data on the existing provisions/services that already exists within the College and build on that.

To support this Ms G Moss, Head of Learner Services provided a presentation on the various streams of activity in relation to the Widening Access Programmes 2020/21 HE, the work of the Community Hub project in Strabane, Inspire Employability Programme. A Governor asked that following the successful Roadshows that took place within the Foyleside Shopping Centre it may be useful to continue with this visibility and have a space within the Centre to continue with this work.

Ms G Moss left the meeting at this juncture.

Moving on the Governing Body Chair referred to the Boardroom Apprentice Programme 2021/22 and stated the Board should continue with their commitment with this. Members agreed with this.

The Governing Body Chair noted that the Department will be running a five College members Competition in early June 2021. As this process will take approximately six months to complete the Department propose to seek the agreement of the Minister to make further extensions to individuals' terms of appointment. For the members that this relates to, the Governing Body Chair stated he would be grateful that members would consider a further extension to support the continuity in the functioning of the Governing Body.

The Governing Body Chair also noted the forthcoming retirement of the Director of Further Education, (DFE) Ms B Harrison and wished her well.

In concluding his report, the Governing Body Chair stated that as we start a safe resumption of on-site delivery it might be possible to hold a hybrid meeting in June with some members attending our Limavady Campus and others remotely.

86.7 CORRESPONDENCE**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Correspondence from Ms K Clarke to Mr G Finnegan & Mr L Murphy
Report 2 Correspondence from Ms K Clarke to Mr G Finnegan & Mr L Murphy

The Governing Body Chair stated that the above correspondence would be discussed under Reserved Business. He then invited Mr P McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement to present his report.

86.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Springtown Redevelopment Project Update Report

The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement noted a correction in his report (the total number of formal correspondences between both the College and OHMG is 13). The Director reported that the dispute resolution with the main Contractor OHMG continues. OHMG appointed an independent Quantity Survey to undertake a re-measurement of the project. This was to be completed in March 2021. To date this has not been completed, a reminder letter has been sent.

Recent correspondence was received on 23 April 2021 from RPP. This is currently with the College legal advisors.

The Principal agreed that a video of the redeveloped Springtown Campus site and will be shared with members.

86.9 RESERVED BUSINESS

There was no any other business and the Governing Body Chair thanked everyone for joining. The meeting closed at 1830.

Date of next meeting: 23 June 2021

Signed: _____ **Governing Body Chair**
Mr G Finnegan

Date: 23 June 2021