
MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY SEVENTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON 23 JUNE 2021, COMMENCING 1700

PRESENT:

Mr G Finnegan, Governing Body Chair
Ms M Breslin (until item 87.12)
Mr P Canavan (from 1717)
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 (until item 87.12)

IN ATTENDANCE;

Mr P McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement (until item 87.12)
Dr C O’Mullan, Head of Curriculum & Operations (until item 87.12)
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (from 1752)
Mrs K Moore, Head of Quality Enhancement (presentation item only 87.0)
Mrs C McGovern, Boardroom Apprentice (until item 87.12)
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.

87.0 PRESENTATION

The Governing Body Chair welcomed Mrs K Moore, Head of Quality Enhancement. He took the opportunity to formally congratulate Mrs Moore on receiving a MBE for her services to Education, for her contribution to the College and for her dedication and support to students. He added the College is proud that her work has been recognised.

Mrs Moore brought members through a Power Point presentation on the COVID situation including the timeline of the Lateral Flow Testing and the Asymptomatic Testing setting (ATS) pilot based in Springtown Campus. Various teams within the College; Marketing, TELS and the MIS Teams are supporting the COVID Team in their work. A question and answer session followed. The Head of Curriculum & Operations reported that for curriculum planning delivery for September 2021 the College is assuming a situation similar to last September with a model of blending learning and they await guidance from the Department (DfE).

The Governing Body Chair acknowledged the work of the COVID Team.

Mrs Karen Moore left the meeting at this juncture. Mr P Canavan joined the meeting during this item.

87.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Governing Body Chair formally welcomed everyone. The meeting had full attendance. Prof M O'Neill gave advance notice he would be leaving the meeting for a short time.

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

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

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Summary Register of Interests Report – June 2021

The Governing Body Chair referred to the updated Summary Register of Interests Report that included an updated entry for Mr S McGregor and himself. Mr P Canavan noted that some of his details in the Report were incorrect. It was agreed that the Governance Secretary to look into this matter.

87.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2021

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on
27 April 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 27 April 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; Prof M O'Neill

87.3.1 Matters Arising

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

86.5 A civic reception was held in the Guildhall to mark Mr Burke's long service to the College.

- Prof M O'Neill reported that there were no plans for the University of Ulster Magee to run the marketing campaign, 'The World is at Home – Study in N Ireland' at present, however the University of Ulster Magee will keep in mind the College's interest going forward.

86.8 The video link was shared with Governors on 20 May 2021 on the redeveloped Springtown Campus.

The Governing Body wished to congratulate Mrs R Dougherty on the birth of her first granddaughter.

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

87.4 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 26 May 2021
Report 3	Risk Management Group Report 2, 2020/21

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 26 May 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 26 May 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; Mr G Killeen

The Committee Chair reported that members completed the annual self-assessment exercise. The Committee considered it was performing effectively. There was a discussion at Committee as to whether the title of the Whistle Blowing Policy had negative or dated connotations. A title such as 'Freedom to Speak Openly Policy' or 'Raising Concerns Policy' was considered more neutral. It was agreed to check the Sector position.

The Risk Management Group Report had been reviewed in February 2021. Risk 9, 'Covid-19' remains an area for concern and specific attention had been paid to this risk. Risk 5, 'The quality of curriculum delivery not meeting required benchmarks', the inherent risk increased – the impact score being changed from 2 to 3. Risk 6, 'Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery', is being given additional scrutiny based on the risk to cyber security. This will require additional work and possibly resources. The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement added a piece of work would be undertaken in the next academic year to review the Risk Management Model.

Two Audit Reviews were received by the Committee. These were Human Resources and Student Engagement. Both reviews received satisfactory levels of assurance. The Draft Internal Audit Report & Opinion 2020/21 stated there was a satisfactory system of governance, risk management and control within the College.

At the Committee meeting the External Auditor briefed members on an overview of the upcoming audit. One item of correspondence went through the Committee from the Department (DfE) referring to the COVID-19 student disruption funding and the audit requirements for this year.

The Governing Body Chair wished to acknowledge the very positive work taking place with particular mention to the Internal Audit, Student Engagement Review Report that received a satisfactory rating with no recommendations noted.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Gillespie and invited Mr O’Kane, Education Committee Chair to present his report to members.

87.5 EDUCATION COMMITTEE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

- Report 1 Committee Chair’s Summary Report
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 9 June 2021

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 9 June 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 9 June 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 that members welcomed Ms G Moss, Head of Learner Services who provided a video on the activities of Student Services. A Power Point presentation was also provided on an overview on the work of the Learner Services team including the highlights of the year and the work of the various teams; Safeguarding, Student Union/Health & Wellbeing, Learning Link, Student Finance, Library/Learning Centres and the Careers Academy.

The Student Welfare and Students Union Team won the Welfare Campaign of the Year award for supporting students during COVID at the United Student of Ireland Student Achievement Awards 2021. ETI recognised the work accomplished in Safeguarding in sharing a best practice video. The College had also achieved the Quality Standard in Carer’s Support (QSCS). The College has been the first educational provider to introduce Elemental, a social prescribing platform. The Sector were now looking to adopt this provision.

The Committee Chair reported on the Curriculum Policy that had been revisited and updated and reflects the College’s approach to the development and delivery of the curriculum portfolio. The Curriculum Plan 2021-24 sets out the key priorities influencing the development of a holistic curriculum portfolio. In respect to new curriculum development the College is participating in the Sector curriculum reform in Level 2. An additional Level 3, Advanced Vocational Technical Award is planned for September 2021. There are some proposed new and innovative curriculum development planned across the Campuses, subject to enrolments. Enrolments will be reviewed at the end of August/early September. To maximise recruitment a targeted marketing programme is planned. A new cross-College Marketing Working Group has been established. The Principal serves on this Group and a focus will be to promote recruitment in the coming months.

An extensive Staffing Resourcing Plan has also taken place to ensure that appropriately skilled staff are recruited. In respect to the 2020/21 enrolment targets the College achieved 93% of the overall enrolment target.

College attendance rates are currently 83% for full time and 84% for part time students. The retention rates at 1 June 2021 was 85% for full time students and 92% for part time students.

At the Committee it was highlighted there had been a significant reduction in the number of students who were affected by delayed qualifications for 2020/21 as a result of the COVID pandemic, potential learners in delay were now showing 377.

The Sub Committee were currently collating information on how the curriculum teams can support those learners who have been impacted by 'lost learning' during the COVID pandemic. The Department (DfE) will provide additional funding for this provision. The Head of Curriculum & Operations provided further detail on the development of the Lost Learning Sector Bid to the Department (DfE).

The key items within the Business Support Centre Report included the work to support people affected by COVID and the continued delivery of the Assured Skills Academies.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr O'Kane and invited Mrs R Dougherty to present the Resources Committee report to members.

87.6 RESOURCES COMMITTEE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 14 June 2021
Report 3	Committee's Terms of Reference
Report 4	Summary of Proposed Changes to the Terms of Reference
Report 5	Draft Estates Strategy
Report 6	Management Accounts for 10 Months to 31 May 2021
Report 7	Budget 2021/22
Report 8	Procurement Contract Items £100K and Over
Report 9	Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021 -2024
Report 10	People Strategic Framework September 2021- August 2024
Report 11	Safeguarding Report

Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 June 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 14 June 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 B Quinn

The Committee Chair referred to the Draft Estates Strategy which provides a framework for the modernization and refurbishment of the College's estates for the period up to 2031. It was noted that new build options were not considered, with the exception of the proposed Strabane development within the City Deal Project.

Mr B Quinn was thanked for his contribution in providing feedback on the draft.

Approval of the Draft Estates Strategy

PROPOSED; Ms M Breslin

SECONDED; Mr B Quinn

In relation to the Springtown Redevelopment Project. An End of Defects Certificate will be issued shortly. There has been no recent correspondence with the Contractor OHMG. The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement stated that the College has not overpaid the Contractor.

In respect to the City Deal, the College is preparing the Outline Business Case in relation to the Strabane town centre regeneration project. A positive meeting took place with a delegation of Limavady Councillors on the Food Village proposal in the Limavady area. The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement and Mr McGregor, Governor attended this meeting.

The targets for 2021/21 (for year-end 31/03/21) were achieved for Innovation Projects and the various Skills programmes, with the exception of HLA enrolments. These were down on target for year one. Total HLA enrolments in 2020/21 were 65. A KTP project has been signed with Braidwater Group.

The Management Accounts for the 10 Months to 30 May 202, 1 were presented to the Board. The Director of Finance and Economic Engagement reported to the Committee that he had no major concerns with the Accounts. The NDPB Forecasting Return to 31 March 2021, was showing a DEL of £30.187m (including STS allocation of £666K). Actual spend for the year to 31 March 2021 was £29.878m leaving a balance against budget of £309K. £243K of this relates to a correction by (DfE) to the accounting treatment of the £500 COVID payments to full-time, HE students. The remainder relates to underspends on the charge to administer the student payments.

The indicative budget allocation for the year April 2021 – March 2022 is £28.4m. When the non-recurrent payments ie. the COVID related expenditure is deducted from the 2020/21 figure, the comparable figure reduces to £27.58m. As the Budget is prepared for the financial year to 31 July 2022, the Department (DfE) have advised that the College assume the notional allocation for the four-month period from April - July 2022 to be £10.4m.

In relation to Income, Education Contracts are down £488K. The Traineeship Programme income is within FE income. Tuition Fees; FE Income was significantly impacted by COVID this year but a rise is expected in 2021/22, hence the increase of £140K for 2021/22. It is expected part-time classes will run as the College resumes to normal business patterns.

Other Grant Income, European Projects is projected to be up £208K. It is expected some international travel will take place in 2021/22. It is expected revenues will increase in the catering facilities assuming students/staff return in some capacity to the College in September 2021.

In relation to Expenditure, Staff costs were up significantly by £2.2m, mainly relating to the refreshed, innovative curriculum provision and the resumption of part-time courses.

The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement stated that approval was required for the Budget based on the NDPB forecasting format for the year to July 2022 which was showing a pressure of £779K. The Director provided detail on the reconciliation of this pressure against the budgeted Historical Deficit of £4,273K. The £779K pressure is primarily related to COVID costs – no additional grant income has been included for these costs at this stage. The Budget does not at this stage include any Lost Learning funding as the bid is currently being developed.

Approval of Budget 2021/22

PROPOSED; Mr G Killeen

SECONDED; Mr P Canavan

The prompt payment figures for the 30 days to 31 May 2021 was 97% and for the year to date was 89%. Correspondence was received from Danske Bank regarding applying negative interest rates on deposits. There has been negotiation with the NICS Contract and these charges will not apply to the College at this time.

Following on, the Governing Body Chair welcomed the HR Manager who had joined the meeting for the Staffing matters.

Continuing on, the Committee Chair reported on the staffing matters. A total of 34 recruitment exercises and 40 new appointments have been carried out between 23/02/21 to 02/06/21. There have been two difficult to recruit posts. As already referenced in the Education Committee reporting (Ref 87.5), in partnership with the Head of Curriculum and Operations, a Staffing Resourcing Plan has been developed to meet curriculum needs for the academic year 2021/22. 156 Access NI Staff Applications have been processed for the academic year 2020/2021. The Learning and Teaching Team have undertaken 76 observations, (58 online).

Lost Time Absence rates for teaching staff in April 2021 had increased marginally at 3.61% against 2.71% for April 2020. Rates for Support staff for April 2021 had decreased slightly at 2.26% against 2.56% for 2020. The overall Lost Time Rate for April 2021 was 2.87%.

The HR Manager provided detail on the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which has been developed and has adopted the Work Well Model developed by the Business in the Community Model.

Approval for the Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021 -2024

PROPOSED; Mr P Canavan

SECONDED; Mr M O’Kane

Following on, the Committee Chair updated members on the Project Based Learning Awards held in April 2021, with 16 projects pitched to a judging panel. Post event, one of the judges emailed the College commending the work of the staff and students stating the quality of the entries were outstanding. A suggestion was made for the PBL Team to present at a Governing Body meeting in the next academic year. The Learning and Teaching team have been shortlisted in the FE Team of the Year category in the 2021 Pearson Awards. Mandatory training has been moved to the Canvas platform and an awareness-raising programme is scheduled for June 2021 to ensure staff are aware of the importance of completing this training.

The HR Services Report 2019/20 was referred to which highlighted the key outcomes for that period. Despite the COVID circumstances, the College retained its IIP Status following a reaccreditation process. Recruitment exercises continued using online platforms. A significant amount of work was placed in providing guidance to staff on managing the COVID situation.

The People Strategic Framework was presented to members which sets out the key areas of work over the next three years, based on five themes.

Approval of the People Strategic Framework September 2021- August 2024

PROPOSED; Ms M Breslin

SECONDED; Dr N Hand

The HR Manager reported on the Equal Opportunities Report 2021 together with the Fair Employment Monitoring Return (January 2021). The key findings from the return were consistent on previous years showing an under-representation of employees from the Protestant Community. There was an increase in appointees from the Protestant Community and a decrease in the Roman Catholic Community in this period. Affirmative action programmes continues to help address the imbalance in the applicant makeup and the workforce. The Principal suggested it may be useful to focus on a piece of work to encourage individuals with disabilities to apply for posts within the College and to work towards a Charter Mark to demonstrate our commitment in this area. Mr M O’Kane stated he welcomed this suggestion and would be willing to offer support.

The Committee Chair wished to acknowledge the Safeguarding Team in achieving the Carers Federation Quality Standard in Carer Support Accreditation.

Approval of the revised Terms of Reference

PROPOSED; Mr B Quinn

SECONDED; Mr G Killeen

Approval of the Procurement Contract Items £100K and over

PROPOSED; Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED; Mr M O’Kane

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

87.7 PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Principal's Report

The key items within the report included the launch of the 'FE for Me Campaign', a Sector project to promote the unique offer of Further Education in NI. FE Colleges will have an important role in helping to rebuild the economy.

A Quality Improvement Plan will be collated to progress and monitor the areas for improvement following the unannounced inspection by HMIP at HMP Magilligan.

A new initiative has been developed in partnership between the six regional Colleges, Universities, and CAFRE. This portal hosted by Queens's University Belfast website will signpost individuals towards alternative options at the six regional FE Colleges.

The College will be submitting a bid for the 2021/22 Flexible Skills Fund as part of the Economy Recover Action Plan for NI.

In concluding his report the Principal wished to record best wishes to Ms B Harrison, FE Director of Further Education (DfE) on her pending retirement. He wished to acknowledge her support and commitment to the College. Ms Harrison recently visited Springtown Campus for a tour of the new facilities. The Governing Body Chair echoed the Principal's thanks and good wishes to Ms Harrison and thanked Mr Killeen for attending the event in Springtown on his behalf.

AGREED ACTION; The Principal to provide the link to the microsite to share with Governors.

The Governing Body Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

87.8 GOVERNING BODY CHAIR'S BUSINESS

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Review of Standing Orders

Report 2 Membership - verbal report

Review of Standing Orders – no changes made

PROPOSED; Mr G Finnegan

SECONDED; Mr P Canavan

The Governing Body wished to recognise and thank members; Mr G Killeen, Mr M O'Kane, Mr S McGregor and Dr N Hand for their agreement to further extensions to their individual terms of office and to Prof M O'Neill who agreed to serve for a second term of office.

87.9 DRAFT SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2021/22

- **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**
Draft Schedule of Meetings 2021/22

Members noted the Draft Schedule.

87.10 CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was received.

87.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Boardroom Apprentice programme was also completing shortly and Mrs C McGovern wished to thank the Board for providing her with a great experience.

87.12 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately

There was no any other business and the Governing Body Chair thanked everyone for joining. The meeting closed at 1845.

Date of next meeting: 5 October 2021

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

Date; 5 October 2021