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**MINUTES OF THE NINETY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE BOARDROOM, STRAND ROAD CAMPUS, COMMENCING 1705**

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**PRESENT:**

Mrs J McKeever (Governing Body Temporary Chair)  
Mr P Canavan  
Mrs D Creevy  
Mrs M Gormley (from 1804)  
Mr S Gillespie  
Mr L Murphy (Principal & Chief Executive)  
Mr B O'Neill  
Mrs C Shongo  
Ms V Toland

**REMOTE ATTENDANCE – GOVERNORS**

Mrs M Gormley (partial remote attendance)  
Ms M Breslin  
Mr B Quinn  
Mr F Smyth  
Prof M Ó Néill

**IN ATTENDANCE;**

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director  
Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards  
Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

**REMOTE ATTENDANCE - ATTENDEES**

Ms G Moss (joined during item 98.6)  
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (joined during item 98.7)

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**98.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Mr K Kennedy, Mrs S Fisher, Mr P Thompson and Ms A Donnell.

**98.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/ DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS/REGISTER OF INTEREST SUMMARY**

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

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Summary Register of Interests Report – March 2023

The updated Summary Register Report was noted. This included a new entry for Ms A Donnell, Student Governor and amended entries for Mrs S Fisher, Mrs J McKeever and Mr B O'Neill.

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**98.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 16 November 2022

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 Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

**98.3.1 Matters Arising**

**96.2** The entry in respect to Governor, Mr B O'Neill's Register of Interest has been updated (Report 98.2, Report 1)

**96.5 Traineeship and Apprenticeship Management System (TAMS)** - The Principals' Group have elevated this issue to the appropriate level. Ms M Breslin, Staff Governor and Compliance and Admissions Manager reported that the issues remain with the system. Manual workarounds continue which adds to staff resource. There is a significant amount of funding outstanding from the Department (DfE), approximately £780K. The Finance Director reported that the College has increased the cash request via the monthly cash draw down process. Appropriate accruals have been made in the Management Accounts.

**96.7** The Governing Body Chair communicated with Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services to thank the team in organising the HE and Access Graduation event in October 2022.

**98.4 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2023****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 20 January 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**, Mr B O'Neill

**98.4.1 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from this meeting.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair then then invited Mr P Canavan, Committee Chair to report on the business of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

## 98.5 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 28 February 2023
Report 3	Proposed Amendments to the Articles and Instrument of Government
Report 3.1	Articles of Government – November 2019
Report 3.2	Instrument of Government – June 2020
Report 4	Conflict of Interest Policy – January 2023
Report 5	Report To Those Charged With Governance Final – December 2022

#### **Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 28 February 2023**

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

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Ms M Breslin

#### **Report 3 Proposed Amendments to the Articles and Instrument of Government**

The Committee Chair reported that the Articles and Instrument of Government were being presented for approval. The Department (DfE) had previously approved temporary changes to the documents to support continuity of the Committees/Board during the period that no public appointments were made. As the Board is now at full complement the temporary changes require to be reversed.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs J McKeever

#### **Report 4 Conflict of Interest Policy – January 2023**

The Finance Director reported that following a recent internal audit review one of the recommendations was to extend to middle management the requirement to complete the Register of Interest form (Ref 7.1). The College is content to implement the recommendation. Members were content to approve the revised Policy.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

A Risk Workshop will be scheduled for May 2023 for Committee members. Fraud Risk Assessments have been developed across the College, initially in four areas. All the risks in the four areas were rated low due the robust controls in place. The assessments will progress over time to include non-financial areas.

Risk Register - Risk 7, Failure to Maintain Financial Stability - red risk. Notification of budget cuts for 2023/24. Even a modest percentage drop on the baseline budget will make it extremely difficult to balance the budget in year. Tribal data within the Sector

should be considered by the Department (DfE) in the calculation and distribution of these budget cuts. Cyber Security has been added to the Risk Register as a red risk.

The Internal Auditor presented four Internal Audit Review Reports to the Committee on Repairs & Maintenance, Key Financial Controls, Business Development & Employability Arrangements. These audits received satisfactory assurance ratings with a total of four low and one medium priority actions. The Lost Learning-review was a sectoral review. It was a factual report with no assurance ratings. There were no management actions.

#### **Report 5 Report To Those Charged With Governance Final – December 2022**

The External Auditor presented the Final Report To Those Charged With Governance to the Committee. The Financial Statements for 2021/22 had been certified with an unqualified audit opinion, without modification on 30 November 2022. No issues were identified during the audit requiring recommendations to be made. The Audit Certificate had been inserted into the Report.

Correspondence was received from the NIAO relating to key changes to the International Standards on Auditing (UK) with the introduction of ISA 315. The revised standards will require extra resources from the NIAO. It is anticipated this will result in increased audit fees estimating to be in the region of between 10-20%.

Following a review of financial processes, the Department (DfE) corresponded with the College stating that an audit will take place to 31 March 2023. Currently the College Accounts are audited annually for year end 31 July. Concerns were expressed that no audit strategy had been presented to the College outlining the strategy/materiality levels/fees/reporting framework etc. The Departmental representative in attendance at the Audit & Risk Committee meeting agreed to enquire into these matters.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair thanked Mr P Canavan and invited Prof M Ó Néill, Committee Chair to report on the business of the Education Committee meeting.

### **98.6 EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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

- Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report
- Report 1.2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 29 November 2022
- Report 2 Compliments, Complaints and Assessment Appeals Annual Report 2021/22
- Report 3 Committee Chair's Summary Report
- Report 3.1 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 22 February 2023
- Report 4 FE Sector Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Report 5 Safeguarding Report

**Report 1.2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 29 November 2022**

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

**PROPOSED**, Prof M Ó Néill

**SECONDED**, Mr P Canavan

At the November Committee meeting members were presented with the Curriculum Planning Cycle which had been developed for the curriculum teams to assist with the management and monitoring of curriculum planning throughout the academic year. The College has received approval as a Partner Institution of The Open University. The official launch took place on 12 December 2022. The College can now offer/develop additional HE curriculum accredited by the Open University.

In response to a Governor's query the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards provided the Board with information on the KPI's on Retention, Achievement and Success. Against the Sector the College is sitting mid-sector. At the Education Committee, November 2022 meeting the impact and consequences of COVID-19 on the retention of learners was discussed. Sector challenges emanating from the post COVID landscape within Essential Skills was reported on. An Essential Skills Achievement Strategy has been developed to support improved outcomes.

Members of the Honourable Irish Society attended the Springtown Campus to launch the Traineeships Scholarship fund.

The Draft Whole College Self Evaluation Report 2022-2024 & Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2022-2024 had progressed through the November 2022 Committee meeting. With the impact of COVID-19 and the significant decline in retention, the College deemed the overall effectiveness to be 'Good'. The outcomes for learners will be an important area for improvement. Due to the timelines the Reports progressed to the remaining Board members for their review/comments and subsequent approvals were sought.

**Report 3.1 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 22 February 2023****Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 22 February 2023**

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

**PROPOSED**, Prof M Ó Néill

**SECONDED**, Mr P Canavan

**Report 4 FE Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy – February 2023**

**PROPOSED**, Prof M Ó Néill

**SECONDED**, Mr P Canavan

The Committee Chair highlighted the key points from the February 2023 Committee meeting. This included a presentation from the Entrepreneur in Residence and the Project Based Learning Mentor/Coordinator on support for students to drive entrepreneurship as a career pathway and inspire first steps into business.

Full-time attendance currently stands at 83.2% and part-time attendance at 86.3%. Overall, College retention is 96.65% for full-time provision and 98.26% for part-time provision. Ms V Toland, Staff Governor and HE Curriculum Lead Quality Enhancement, has been nominated to join the Steering Group for the DfE, 10X Conference in Higher Education to be held in Stranmillis College on 24 in March 2023.

Verbal feedback received from the ETI in relation to the submission of the Whole College SER, the overall outcome was graded A, satisfactory assurance rating. A summary of College curriculum events and competitions was provided. Three students were successful to join the Study USA 2023/24 programme. The Curriculum Policy has been reviewed and strengthened to align with the 10X Economic Policy.

It was noted that the Higher Education Report 2022/23 was considered at the February 2023 Committee meeting and the Committee were content to recommend the report to the Governing Body. This Report, along with other information e.g., minutes of the Academic Standards Committee provides evidence that the College is managing quality assurance and quality improvement in HE.

Due to the timelines, the Annual Quality Assurance Statement that accompanies the report was sent to the remaining Board members on 24 February 2023. Approval was sought and received from Governors.

#### **Report 5      Safeguarding Report**

Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services provided the Board with an update on Safeguarding. Referrals for support continue with an increase of fifty-three students from the same point last year. The FE Sector is working to become involved in Operation Encompass, a partnership between PSNI and schools and FE Colleges in supporting children and vulnerable adults who are victims of domestic abuse. This has already proved to be a positive partnership.

Mr P Thompson, Governor completed Designated Safeguarding Officer training in February. This was facilitated through NSPCC.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair thanked Prof M Ó Néill and Ms G Moss and invited Mrs D Creevy, Committee Chair to report on the business of the Resources Committee meeting.

**98.7 RESOURCES COMMITTEE****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS****FINANCE**

- Report 1 Summary Report
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 21 February 2023
- Report 3 NWRC & Limavady Cricket and Rugby Football Club – Deed of Variation and Extension to Lease
- Report 4 Management Accounts for 6 Months to 31 January 2023
- Report 5 Budget Update 2023/24 – verbal update

**STAFFING**

- Report 6 Health & Wellbeing Brochure Semester 2, 2022/23

**CLIENT SERVICES**

- Report 7 Equality Report
- Report 8 Data Protection/Compliance Report

**Report 2** The Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 21 February 2023 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED**, Mrs D Creevy

**SECONDED**, Mr L Murphy

**Report 3** NWRC & Limavady Cricket and Rugby Football Club – Deed of Variation and Extension to Lease

**PROPOSED**, Mrs D Creevy

**SECONDED**, Mr B O'Neill

The Committee Chair reported that the Estates Manager provided the Committee with an update on the Estates Strategy. A Business Case is currently being prepared in relation to the refurbishment of the Sports Hall and external cladding of the Strand Building. The Estates Manager is progressing a number of actions to help reduce energy costs. The Estates Strategy will be updated to reflect relevant aspects of the DfE Energy Strategy. In respect to the Springtown Redevelopment Project OHMG are still issuing cost information. They have stated they may refer the matter to adjudication. The College are working with CPD in reappointing the consultants. The College continues to take advice from CPD and the College Solicitors.

The Finance Director highlighted issues with accounting data received by OCS (Catering contractor). This is currently being reviewed by the Head of Finance and the Estates Manager. Reference was made to pay rises currently being accrued and the likelihood of agreement. It was noted that the Budget 2023/24 was not confirmed but commentary from DfE indicates that cuts will be 'severe'. It was noted that

efficiency information prepared by Tribal as part of the FE Review should be considered when looking at College cuts in 2023/24.

Prompt Payment figure for 30 days to 31 January 2023 was 94% and for the year to date was 94%.

In relation to the HR matters the Committee were apprised that the reaccreditation of the IIP Standard is due in May 2023. Due to the current budgetary challenges a suggestion was made to consider an extension for another year.

Twenty eight recruitment exercises were carried out from 1 November 2022 to 9 February 2023. Fifty three live posts are currently going through the recruitment and selection process. Recruitment challenges continue in certain areas.

Absence due to ill health, Teaching Staff for January 2023 was showing 3.21% down on last year at 6.65%. For Support Staff for January 2023 was showing 5.10% up on last year at 4.73%. The most common reason for absence from September 2022 to January 2023 was stress (personal) 13.8% followed by mental health 12.2%.

The HR digitisation project work for Learning and Development is now complete. This now allows access to more up to date information/data.

Eighty-nine percent of staff have completed the five mandatory training units. A new Cyber Security mandatory training module has been developed.

A new Management Report/Dashboard is available for appraisals. For February 2023 there were 44.5% appraisals complete, 50.5% due this month and 4.5% outstanding across the College.

The College will host its first Festival of Education on 3 June 2023 in the Guildhall. A Staff Development Day for Magilligan Campus took place on 12 January 2023.

The Head of Client Services updated the Committee on Equality and Data Protection/Compliance. Since the beginning of November 2022, six further equality awareness days/months were promoted on the College's staff portal/email. Forthcoming events include LGBT plus History Month. Work on the collaborations with the Sector Learning and Development Forum continued with progress on a Student Equality training module to be rolled out during future inductions.

The DAC for AccessAble has now been completed for a further five years.

The Clear Desk Policy has been reviewed and extended to include 'Clean Screen'. This is also requirement as part of a Statement of Applicability piece between IT Services and Compliance.

From 1 August 2022 to 23 January 2023 there were a total of fourteen rights requests under UK GDPR and Freedom of Information Act 2000. During this date there were no personal data related incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair thanked Mrs D Creevy, Committee Chair and invited Mr L Murphy, Principal and CE to report to the Board.



**98.8 PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS – verbal report**

The Principal and Chief Executive reported that he attended the launch of the Independent Review of Invest NI. The College fed into the consultation as a key stakeholder in the North West.

The Principal referred to the communication dated 13 February 2023 from the Interim Permanent Secretary (DfE), noting that the FE review had been placed on hold. Even without reductions, inflation alone will present a significant challenge and time is required to focus on the budgetary challenges ahead. The College has commenced scenario planning.

The Board were alerted to the action short of a strike by College UCU members that commenced on 21 February 2023. Impacts of this action include the electronic registers may not be marked. Staff Governor, Ms V Toland, Governor noted the academic staff's dissatisfaction on the pay rise issues.

The Principal apprised the Board of the various Departmental (DfE), sector and regional meetings/College events.

The Principal thanked Ms D Blaney, DfE for her support to the College and to wished her well on her forthcoming retirement. Congratulations was also extended to Mr G Killeen, previous Acting Chair and Governor on receipt of an MBE in the New Year Honours.

**98.9 GOVERNING BODY TEMPORARY CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Governing Body Chair had no other business to discuss.

**98.10 CORRESPONDENCE**


There was no correspondence to note other than the correspondence already referred to in item 98.5, Report 5 and 98.8.

**98.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting ended at 1900 and went into private session.

**98.12 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately**

**Date of next meeting:** 26 April 2023

**Signed;**   
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**Governing Body Temporary Chair**

**Date:** 24 May 2023