
MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY NINTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2021, COMMENCING 1700

PRESENT:

Mr G Finnegan, Governing Body Chair
Ms M Breslin (until item 89.11)
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 Ó Néill
Mr B Quinn (from 1738)
Mrs L Taggart

IN ATTENDANCE;

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director (until item 89.11)
Dr C O’Mullan, Head of Curriculum & Operations
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (joined during item 89.5)
Mrs C McWilliams, Boardroom Apprentice (until item 89.11)
Mr C Woods, Director of Corporate Governance & Transformation (for item 89.0 only)
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.

89.0 PRESENTATION – Mr C Woods, Director of Corporate Governance & Transformation

The Governing Body Chair welcomed Mr Woods, SRO for the Organisational Development and Transformation Programme (ODT). Mr Woods brought members through a Power Point presentation outlining the key highlights. The ODT programme brings together the DfE’s strategic policy agenda and organisation development agenda. It is designed around the 10X Economic Vision in support of the shared vision for the NI Economy. Mr Woods stated that delivery partners will play a critical role in the successful development of and transition to the future of DfE and the implementation of the 10X Vision.

A question and answer session followed. Members highlighted the need to drive and support skills/innovation and entrepreneurship which were considered fundamental to the 10X Economy. It was also noted that an integral part going forward was a need for an agile and real time data service between the Department (DfE) and its Arm Length Bodies.

It was agreed that when the new cohort of Governors have been appointed to the College it would be useful for a follow up session on the Programme/10X Vision to be delivered to the refreshed Board.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Woods for attending and presenting to the Board.

89.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Governing Body Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting had full attendance.

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

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

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Summary Register of Interests Report – November 2021

The updated Summary Register was noted with an amendment to Mr L Murphy's details and a new entry added for the Boardroom Apprentice, Ms C McWilliams.

89.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2021

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 5 October 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 5 October 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

89.3.1 Matters Arising

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

88.5 The Report on the work to encourage people with disabilities to apply for posts within the College was issued to members on 8 October 2021.

88.8 Mr C Woods attended the November 2021 Board meeting (Ref; 89.0).

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

89.4 EDUCATION COMMITTEE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 26 October 2021
Report 3	College Development Plan Progress Report 2020-2021
Report 4	Draft College Development Plan 2021-2022
Report 5	Compliments, Complaints and Assessment Appeals Annual Report 2020-2021

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 26 October 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 26 October 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, Mrs R Dougherty

The Committee Chair reported the Committee had received data on the Performance against Enrolment Targets as at 30 June 2021 for 2020/21. This data was showing full-time enrolments largely on target. Part-time enrolments were well down on target. The Essential Skills overall enrolments achieved 73% of target, mainly due to the impact of the COVID-19 circumstances. The work of staff within a challenging academic year with the COVID-19 pandemic was acknowledged.

Reporting on the delayed assessment data, there were 227 learners with delayed assessments. This was a result of the inability to complete work placement assessments for 2020/2021. Work continues to reduce this figure with a target date set for December 2021.

To date there has been 62 HLA enrolments against a projected target figure of 85. Uptake in the Traineeship programmes has been disappointing, however target enrolments for the Advanced Technical Award programmes have been very positive, exceeding each target area. There is a demand for the part-time, short term, upskilling intervention programmes. Committee members were updated on the new courses that are taking place in 2021/2022 and those courses that did not take place due to low recruitment. These offers and other unique offers will be reviewed and considered again for the 2022/2023 academic year.

Continuing, the Committee Chair reported that the ETI review visit will take place in November 2021. The review will focus on the work undertaken to progress the development and implementation of the Curriculum Hubs in the FE Sector.

A review and revision of the structure has taken place within Community Education to reflect the roles and responsibilities. An enhanced induction process and an improved line management communication and support has been developed.

The Draft College Development Plan for 2021/2022 (CDP) was presented to the Committee. The Plan for 2021/2022 was again this year an operational recovery plan adjusting to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDP included details of the enrolment targets agreed. Overall, 84% of the full-time enrolment target and 51% of part-time enrolment targets had been achieved as at 12 October 2021. This figure is reflective of the Sector. The current trend shows a decline in full-time FE and HE across the Sector. The Curriculum Management Teams continue to review the position and action plans are in place.

The Head of Curriculum & Operations stated that a key aspect for the Department (DfE) going forward will be to monitor the College's recruitment and performance on the new provisions.

The Principal highlighted the Regional Operating Context – Challenges sections within the College Development Plan (pages 9 – 23) and suggested it would be useful for members to reflect further on this section with further discussion to take place at the Strategy Day.

Draft College Development Plan 2021-2022

PROPOSED, Mr M O'Kane

SECONDED, Mr P Canavan

Key items within the Business Support Centre Report presented to the Committee noted that the College is a partner on the Smart Nano NI Project with an investment in an Industry 4.0 training facility in Springtown Campus. Funding was received from the Department (DfE) for the 'Skill-UP Flexible Skills Fund' to deliver and develop new programmes and to support people affected by COVID.

Committee members had noted the annual report on Compliments, Complaints and Assessment Appeals 2020/21 and referenced the increase in compliments received. The majority of compliments identified the very good support for staff and students.

The Governance Secretary reported that the Student Governor, Mr Deaglán Ferns had been duly elected. The Department (DfE) are currently preparing to issue the Minute of Appointment. For planning purposes, a request was made, subject to receipt of the Minute of Appointment that Mr Ferns serves on the Education Committee for the remainder of this academic year.

PROPOSED, Mr M O'Kane

SECONDED, Mr P Canavan

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr O'Kane and invited Mrs R Dougherty, Committee Chair to report on the business of the recent Resources Committee meeting.

89.5 RESOURCES COMMITTEE

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 1 November 2021
Report 3	Management Accounts for 2 Months to 30 September 2021
Report 4	Budget Update 2021/22
Report 5	Bad Debt Write-Off
Report 6	Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (Oct 2018)
Report 7	Draft Annual Report & Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2021
Report 8	Maydown Campus
Report 8.1	HR Services Annual Report 2020-2021
Report 9	Safeguarding Report
Report 9.1	Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy
Report 10	Equality Report
Report 11	Data Protection/Compliance Annual Report

Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 1 November 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 1 November 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 reported on the recent business of the Resources Committee. The Finance Director reported to the Committee that the disputes in relation to the final account for the Springtown Redevelopment Project remain unresolved. The recommendation to follow legal advice and monitor the situation continues.

The Committee noted the Business Support Centre successful bid for funding under the DfE, Economic Recovery Action Plan (ERAP). This funding must be used by March 2022. Moving forward DfE has asked for projections for the next five years rather than annual bids. This will facilitate more effective planning.

The Annual Report & Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2021 were presented and approved at the Committee and then progressed to the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 2 November 2021 (Ref 89.6). An adjustment was made following the Audit relating to the revaluation of buildings.

The Budget for 2021/2022, approved in June 2021 is now showing a positive variance of £1.00m resulting in a historical deficit of £3.26m. The Finance Director explained to the Committee the reasons for this which included a reduction in the MaSN, resulting in reduction in the HE Fee Income, reductions in VEP and TFS/AppNI income. The Finance Director indicated that the drop in Fee Income will be, to some degree offset by ERAP and the Flexible Skills Funding streams. Staff costs are reduced whilst Teaching & Training Direct Costs are higher than projected. This was due to an anticipated hybrid model of delivery rather than the full return to College. In contrast premises and IT costs are down. The NDPB return for the financial year to 31 March 2022 was showing that the College is currently forecasting an easement position.

The Prompt Payment figure for 30 days to September 2021 was 96% and for the year to date was 97%.

Approval was then sought from the Board for the following;

Budget 2021/22 – Update

PROPOSED, Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED, Mr S McGregor

Bad Debt Write-Off - Individual debts totalling £12,786.92 this figure includes three individual debts of £2k and over. Approval will be required from the Department (DfE) for this amount £7.5K

PROPOSED, Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED, Mr B Quinn

Maydown Campus – the Maydown site was offered to the public sector through LPS. An expression of interest was received but subsequently withdrawn therefore the Maydown site will now be advertised on the open market. Members were content to approve this.

PROPOSED, Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED, Mr B Quinn

The Committee Chair then reported on the Staffing matters discussed at the Resources Committee meeting held on 1 November 2021. The key items from this meeting reported that 29 recruitment exercises and 32 new appointments have been completed since the last Committee meeting. Sixteen staff have left the College in this period.

The Intention to Recruit forms and Approval to Recruit process for part-time lecturers have been reviewed and digitised to improve efficiency.

The percentage of lost time rate for Teaching staff has increased by over 1% in comparison to this period last year and the rate for Support staff has increased by almost 2%. The need to monitor this was discussed in Committee.

The College was nominated this year for the Inspire Workplace Wellbeing Awards in two categories: Excellence in Education Sector and Promoting a Positive Wellbeing Culture. The Committee wished to congratulate the HR Team in this achievement.

The HR Annual Report detailed the work of the HR Department for the period 2020/2021 - key items included the completion of return to work COVID questionnaires for all staff to identify any anxieties about coming back into the workplace; the development of resources to Support staff while they were working from home; a focus on rebuilding the HR team with a review of roles and the appointment of new staff; the development of a HR Strategic Framework; a renewed focus on health and wellbeing to promote resilience and good mental health.

Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy – changes to the Policy were made following advice from the Safeguarding Sectors Working Group, a NSPCC update and the addition of the Safeguarding circulars links were included to the appendix.

PROPOSED, Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED, Mr S McGregor

The Governing Body Chair and Principal thanked the Committee Chair and the HR Manager for their reports and wished to record the Board's appreciation on the great work/achievements during the year as detailed in the HR Services Annual Report.

89.6 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 2 November 2021
- Report 3 Risk Management Group Report 1, 2020/21
- Report 4 NIAO Draft Report To Those Charged with Governance
- Report 5 Report of the Audit & Risk Committee for the Financial Year 2020-2021 to the Governing Body
- Report 6 Draft Annual Report & Financial Statements Year ended 31 July 2021
- Report 7 Student Council & Financial Statements to 31 July 2021
- Report 8 Policies
- Report 8.1 Fraud Policy June 2021
- Report 8.1.1. Summary of Changes made to the Fraud Policy
- Report 8.2 Bribery Policy June 2021
- Report 8.3 Gifts, Benefactions & Donations Policy September 2021

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 2 November 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

The Committee Chair referred to the Risk Management Group Report 1, 2021/2022. The scoring of the risks had remained the same since last reported to the Committee in May 2021. Ongoing challenges continue around the impact of reduced enrolment numbers. There has been a substantial drop in full-time FE and HE enrolments over recent years. In relation to Risk 7, 'Failure to Maintain Financial Stability' the Finance Director reported to the Committee that whilst student numbers have substantially reduced over recent years the budget has not. There is a likelihood that grant income may reduce in the coming years. Work is ongoing with the Internal Auditor to develop a risk appetite approach that can be integrated into the College Risk Management process. A Sector workshop has been arranged for 16 November 2021 on Risk Management.

In reporting on health and safety matters during 2020/2021, 34 accidents/incidents were reported. This is a reduction on last year's total of 74. These results reflect the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances when College operations were impacted. The

College did record 3 serious injuries 2 of which were reported under the requirements of the RIDDOR regulations.

The Committee Chair requested approval for the following;

Report of the Audit & Risk Committee Report for the Financial Year 2020-21 to the Governing Body

PROPOSED, Mr S Gillespie

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

The Student Council Report & Financial Statements to 31 July 2021. The Accounts were prepared by an independent auditor.

PROPOSED, Mr S Gillespie

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

College Policies that had recently been reviewed and updated.

- **Fraud Policy - updated**
- **Bribery Policy**
- **Gifts, Benefactions and Donations Policy – with agreed amendment referencing the Departments (DfE) delegated limits**

PROPOSED, Mr S Gillespie

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

Continuing, the Committee Chair reported the Committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22 which was on plan together with the completed review on the COVID-19 Student Funding Initiatives. This review received a satisfactory assurance rating with one low priority issue.

The External Auditors presented the Committee with the Draft Report To Those Charged With Governance 2020/21. The Audit process identified a book entry required to the Annual Report and Financial Statements in respect to the revaluation of fixed assets (£630K). It is proposed to issue an unqualified audit opinion. The Audit & Risk Committee reviewed the findings set out in the report, including the draft Letter of Representation and the Audit Certificate. The Committee also noted that no uncorrected misstatements were identified.

The Finance Director reported to the Board on the outstanding matters. The External Auditors (PwC) were still awaiting bank mandates confirmations. The External Auditor is also working on an amendment to the narrative within the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Sector regarding the pensions note. A further note may be added to the final RTTCWG on depreciation rates. The Finance Director considered that these matters should not prevent members from approving the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

The Governing Body Chair and Principal will sign off the Annual Report and Financial Statements once these issues have been finalised.

Members were content to recommend approval to the Governing Body of the Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2021.

PROPOSED, Mr S Gillespie

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

The Governing Body Chair on behalf of the Board wished to record appreciation to the Finance Team under the leadership of the Finance Director, Mr P McKeown and the Committee for their excellent work.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Gillespie and invited the Principal to present his report.

89.7 PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Principal's Report

The Principal provided an update on the Education Committee report (89.4) on the ETI review visit on the Curriculum Hubs. Verbal feedback from the review was positive and the written report will progress through the Education Committee together with a composite report on the Sector Hubs.

The Principal reported on his recent discussions on the City and Growth Deals with the Head of the NI Civil Service and a number of other key stakeholder from the North West.

The Governing Body Chair wished to acknowledge the significant invite from the Permanent Secretary to the Principal inviting him to join the newly established Interim Northern Ireland Skills Council representing the Tertiary Education Senior Leaders Group to oversee the implementation of the NI Skills Strategy.

The Principal reported on a recent event with the leaders of the Fin Tech and Further Education Sector to examine how both industries can work collaboratively to create the skills and talents required to build back a stronger economy in Northern Ireland. The Principal wished to thank Ms S Rodgers, Curriculum Manager and the HND/C Media students who filmed the proceedings.

The "Succeed North West" event took place in Belfast to showcase the North West's potential for investment, innovation and economic growth. College representatives attended this event.

In concluding, the Principal reported that the consultation process in respect to the realignment of Curriculum Departments completed on 5 November 2021. A report will be drafted and presented to a Special Resources Committee meeting and a Special Governing Body meeting to be held in December 2021.

The Governing Body Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

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

- Report 1 Governor Body Membership – verbal report
Report 2 Strategy Day – verbal report
Report 3 Governor Assessments 2020/21 – verbal report

The Governing Body Chair reported that it would be preferred to reschedule the Strategy Day planned for January 2022 to March 2022. This will allow time for the new cohort of Governors to be formally appointed and settle into their new roles. Due to this date change the Governing Body Chair noted that this would now be Mrs L Taggart's last Board meeting. The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Taggart's contribution and commitment in her role as the academic staff Governor to the Committees she served on and to the Board.

The Governing Body Chair reported that the Department (DfE) kindly agreed to an extension to submitting the Governor Assessments for 2020/21. These will be issued shortly to Governors.

89.9 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to note.

89.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

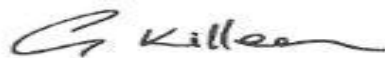
There was no any other business to discuss.

89.11 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately

The Governing Body Chair thanked everyone for joining the meeting and brought the meeting to a close.

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

Date of next meeting: tbc



Signed; _____
Mr G Killeen, Vice Chair, Acting in the Capacity of Chair

Date; 23 February 2022