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**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE BOARDROOM, NORTHLAND BUILDING COMMENCING 17:00**

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**PRESENT**

Prof M Ó' Néill, Governing Body Temporary Chair  
Mr P Clancy  
Mr B Dougherty  
Mrs M Gormley  
Dr K Kennedy  
Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive  
Mr B O'Neill  
Mr P Thompson  
Ms V Toland

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director  
Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards  
Mr M Cunningham, Senior Consultant/Project Manager ICS  
Mr B Close, Business Consultant ICS  
Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

**REMOTE ATTENDANCE**

Mrs C Shongo  
Mr F Smyth  
Ms S Kelly, Head of HR (from 18:14)  
Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services (from 17:36)

**APOLOGIES**

Mrs D Creevy  
Dr S Fisher  
Mrs S McMahon

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**115.1 WELCOME**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to Mr M Cunningham, Senior Consultant/Project Manager and Mr B Close, Business Consultant from Innovation & Consultancy Services (ICS) who were attending as observers as part of the external Board Effectiveness Review. A round of self-introductions took place.

Mr M Cunningham updated the Board on the progress of the Effectiveness Review. It is envisaged the Draft Report will be issued to the College at the end of March 2025 with the Sector Report available in June 2025.

**115.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr B Dougherty noted a conflict of interest within Report 115.11, Report 1 & 2. Mr Dougherty is CEO of NW Cultural Partnership at New Gate Arts. There were no items for any other business.

**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS****Report 1 Summary Register of Interests – March 2025**

The Summary Register of Interest Report was noted with an amendment to Mrs M Gormley's entry. In meeting, Mr P Clancy also noted he is now Business Development Partner with Ortus Energy.

- **Dr K Kennedy agreed to forward details to the Governing Body Secretary of a recent new appointment.**
- **The Summary Register of Interest will be updated accordingly.**

**115.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2024****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

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 Clancy

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

**Report 1 MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

**112.8, Report 6** The Draft Business Case for the Strand Road Sports Hall Refurbishment will be submitted to the Department (DfE) before the end of March 2025.

**112.7, Report 1** Correspondence was sent to Derry City & Strabane District Council on 6 December 2024 in relation to the publication of the Royal Irish Academy Government commissioned paper on Higher Education provision in Derry and the North West.

**115.4 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2024****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

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 B O'Neill

**SECONDED**, Mr P Thompson

**Report 1 MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

There were no matters arising from this meeting.

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**115.5 DRAFT NOTES FROM THE STRATEGY DAY HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2025****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

The Draft Notes of the Strategy Day meeting were taken as read.

**Report 1        MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

At the Strategy Day, it was agreed to include 'sustainability' within the College's objectives. The proposed new wording was shared with the Board, *'Our businesses by delivering skills and support that increase productivity, innovation and sustainability, driving long-term value while minimising our environmental impact'*.

The Board were content with this amendment.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Clancy

**SECONDED**, Mrs M Gormley

**115.6 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2025****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

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 Thompson

**SECONDED**, Ms V Toland

**Report 1        MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

There were no matters arising from this meeting.

**115.7 GOVERNING BODY TEMPORARY CHAIR'S BUSINESS – Prof M Ó' Néill**

Prof M Ó' Néill reported that he continues in his role as interim Chair of the Colleges Employers' Forum (CEF). All six colleges are now back working collegiately within CEF. A work plan is being developed. A Task and Finish group has been established around the constitution of CEF. A formal meeting was held with CEF and the Permanent Secretary, Mr I Snowdon and his Senior Team in February 2025.

The Chair, fellow Governors and College staff attended and presented at the Advancing Excellence - Showcasing Annual Conference on 6 March 2025.

*Due to technical issues experienced by attendees joining remotely the Governing Body Secretary left the room for a brief time.*

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**115.8 PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS – Mr L Murphy****➤ ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS****PowerPoint Presentation – Landscape 2025/2026**

The Principal highlighted the six key items within his presentation.

**1 Budget Settlement & Fiscal View - 2025/26 and beyond 2026 (3 year)**

It will be a tight settlement for 2025/26. 7.9% cuts to the sector budgets plus pay pressures on baselining the 2024/25 lecturer offer. The Principal stated he will keep the Governing Body informed as this progresses.

**2 Student Recruitment (Pressures & Competition)**

The Principal reported on the challenges in a competitive market with student recruitment. Work is taking place to encourage adult learners to return to programmes/apprenticeships.

**3 Policy & Assurance Framework/Partnership Agreement**

Conversations with the Department (DfE) continue to identify how systems can be improved. The Partnership Agreement will continue to be the overall governance framework within which the College operates.

**4 City Deals**

A formal Project Board has been established in relation to the new Campus in Strabane as part of the DCSDC City Deal.

Causeway Coast & Glens – Growth Deal – it is hoped to have a final draft of the OBC for the proposed Foodovation and Skills Centre by April 2025.

Early conversations are taking place with the Council and the University of Ulster in relation to the potential of a shared digital innovation space. This is at early stages.

**5 Workforce Development** – the Principal reported it will be challenging fiscal landscape. Again, the need to attract talent to the sector.**6 The Student** - in conclusion the Principal reminded the Board on the importance of the student and supporting them through their journey with the College. The meeting then opened for comments and discussion.

*Ms Moss joined the meeting during this item.*

**115.9 GOVERNING BODY SECRETARY'S BUSINESS****Report 1 Staff Governor Election – verbal report**

The Governing Body Secretary updated the Board on the Staff Governor Election. The nominations close on 13 March 2025. If an election is necessary this is scheduled for 1 April 2025.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Doherty and invited Mrs Shongo to present her report to the Board on the business of the recent Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

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**115.10 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – Mrs C Shongo, Committee Chair****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Special Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 9 December 2024
Report 3	Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 25 February 2025
Report 4	Report to the Audit & Risk Committee
Report 5	Risk Management Policy – January 2025
Report 6	NAIO Final Report To Those Charged With Governance

The Committee Chair apprised the Board of the business of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

**Report 2      Draft Minutes of the Special Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 9 December 2024**

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

**PROPOSED**, Mrs C Shongo

**SECONDED**, Mr V Toland

**Report 3      Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 25 February 2025**

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

**PROPOSED**, Mrs M Gormley

**SECONDED**, Ms V Toland

**Report 5      Risk Management Policy – January 2025**

The Board were content to approve.

**PROPOSED**, Mr F Smyth

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Shongo and invited Mr Clancy to present his report to the Board on the business of the Education Committee meeting.

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**115.11 EDUCATION COMMITTEE – Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report of the Education Committee Meeting held on 12 February 2025
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting
- Report 3 Safeguarding Report
- Report 3.1 Safeguarding Care & Welfare Policy & Procedures – December 2024
- Report 4 Sustainability & Social Responsibility Report

**Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 12 February 2025**

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**, Mr B Dougherty

**SECONDED**, Mr B O'Neill

An agreed action from the Committee meeting was to recommend the Board to consider commissioning a piece of work in capturing data in relation to the social value element for learners. The Board were in agreement with this.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Clancy

**SECONDED**, Mr F Smyth

The Committee Chair reported that a presentation was provided to the Committee by Mrs K Moore, Head of Quality & Performance. The Committee were apprised on the new structure for the Department of Quality and Performance. One of the key priorities will be to refresh the College Digital Strategy to align with the Government's key priorities. Updates were provided to the Committee on the ETI Evaluations, Progress Boards, and Performance Reviews for the academic year. A progress update on the WCQIP 2024/25 Action Plan was presented.

The Committee Chair and Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services attended a meeting with Mr Dougherty (Governor) at New Gate Arts on 8 January 2025.

The Committee Chair attended the ETI feedback meeting on Traineeships on 16 January 2025. Positive feedback, with minor areas for improvement identified (numeracy success rates and retention in two-year programmes).

The 2024/25 CDP (Curriculum Development Plan) was approved by DfE on 10 January 2025. The latest CDP Progress Report was submitted to DfE on 18 December 2024.

The key statistics were noted; retention rate as of 5 February 2025: 93.34%. Full-time attendance: 85.11%; Part-time attendance: 88.73%. In terms of Sector performance, the College performance in Retention, Achievement and Success rates has shown a slight improvement. The College is ranked joint 3rd in the sector with a

success rate of 78%. There is focus on increasing part-time enrolments to meet 2024/25 targets.

The College and DCSDC were shortlisted for the NI Apprenticeship of the Year Award (Public Sector Employer in Partnership with a Training Provider Award).

Acknowledgements for the SSE Scholarships (8th year) and the Honourable Irish Society Scholarships were noted.

The College continues working towards achieving White Ribbon NI accreditation as part of the Government's strategy to end violence against women and girls. In Committee it was agreed for training to be delivered by White Ribbon NI to the full Board.

### **Report 3 Safeguarding Report**

#### **Report 3.1 Safeguarding Care & Welfare Policy & Procedures – December 2024**

The Board noted the Reports. It was highlighted the significant increase of 38 referrals to the Safeguarding Team compared to September to January 2024/25. Anxiety continues to be the most common reason for referrals. The extensive work of the Safeguarding Team was acknowledged.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Clancy and invited Mr B O'Neill to present his report to the Board on the business of the Resources Committee meeting.

## **115.12 RESOURCES COMMITTEE – Mr B O'Neill, Committee Member**

### ➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS - Finance papers**

- Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report of the Resources Committee Meetings
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Special Resources Committee Meeting held on 9 December 2024
- Report 3 Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 February 2025
- Report 4 Management Accounts for the 6 Months to 31 January 2025
- Report 5 Budget Update 2025/26 – verbal update
- Report 5.1 DfE Correspondence DEL Resource Draft Budget Allocation 2025/26
- Report 6 Business Support Centre Update
- Report S1 Staff Development Programme Semester 2, 2024/25
- Report S2 Health & Wellbeing Brochure Semester 2, 2024/25
- Report C1 Equality Report
- Report C2 Data Protection/Compliance Update

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**Report 2      Draft Minutes of the Special Resources Committee Meeting held on  
9 December 2024**

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

**PROPOSED**, Mr B O'Neill

**SECONDED**, Mr P Thompson

**Report 3      Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on  
18 February 2025**

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

**PROPOSED**, Mr B O'Neill

**SECONDED**, Mr P Thompson

**Report 4      Management Accounts for the 6 Months to 31 January 2025**

In Committee the Finance Director reported he had no concerns to the Accounts for 31 March 2025 which will report a breakeven position. In Committee the Finance Director provided data for teaching costs per student full-time equivalent (FTE). Teaching costs (FTE) have increased by 20% in 2024 against 2023. This mainly relates to the staff pay rise and the drop in student numbers. It will be challenging to increase enrolments within the proposed financial landscape.

The outstanding matters with the previous catering contractor (OCS) have now been resolved.

**Report 5      Budget Update 2025/26 – verbal update****Report 5.1      DfE Correspondence February 2025 – Resource DEL Draft Budget  
2025/26**

The financial outlook for 2025/26 appears to be challenging as indicated in the DfE Correspondence (Report 5.1). The FE Sector reduction in budget is £18.02m for 2025/26. The potential reductions are estimated to fall within the £2.2m – £2.9m range and will have a profound impact on the College.

**Report 6      Business Support Centre Update**

Targets have been achieved or on track to achieve by 31 March 2025.

**Report S1      Staff Development Programme Semester 2, 2024,25**

From September 2024, 210 Staff development applications have been received to date.

In relation to sickness data the Lost Time Rate overall for 2024/25 was showing 4.91%, (Academic staff 3.87%, Support staff 4.52%). The main reasons for absence were hospital/post operative (14%), musculoskeletal (12.4%) and grief reaction (12%). The overall days lost due to absence from August to December 2024 was 2955 days.



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**Report S2 Health & Wellbeing Brochure Semester 2, 2024/25**

Members noted the Report.

*Ms S Kelly, Head of HR joined the meeting at this juncture.*

**Report C1 Equality Report**

The Acting Committee Chair noted the key items within the Equality Report. The Equality Commission provided a positive response to the Section 75 Annual Progress Report 2023/24. Details on inclusion work, workplacements, AccessAble and good realations work were noted.

**Report C2 Data Protection/Compliance Update**

The Acting Committee Chair referred to the items within the Report.

It was noted that the FE Sector Retention & Disposal Schedule has now been completed. The FE & NWRC Complaints & Compliments Policies and the Public Information Guidelines have been updated for LMT approval.

A discussion took place in meeting on the streamlining of assurance and mandatory reporting requirements

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr O'Neill for reporting on behalf of the Committee Chair.

**115.13 CORRESPONDENCE**

Other than correspondence reported during the meeting a letter was received from Ms L Watson on behalf of Mr I Snowden, DfE Permanent Secretary to confirm the appointment of the new Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald. Members had received a copy of this correspondence via email from the Governing Body Secretary on 5 February 2025.

Correspondence was received on 5 February 2025 for the Governing Body Chair from Mr P McKavanagh Communities NI. The Governing Body Chair provided detail to the Board on this matter.

**115.14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**


There was no any other business declared earlier in the meeting.

**115.15 RESERVED BUSINESS**

Taken separately.

**Date of Next Meeting;** 18 June 2025

The Governing Body Chair closed this part of the meeting at 18:28 and thanked those who were required to leave.

Signed   
Prof M Ó'Neil, Governing Body Chair

Date 18 June 2025

APPROVED