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**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIRST MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS, COMMENCING 1700**

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**PRESENT:**

Prof M Ó Néill (Governing Body Temporary Chair)  
Ms M Breslin  
Mr P Canavan  
Mrs D Creevy  
Mrs S Fisher  
Mr S Gillespie  
Mrs M Gormley  
Mr K Kennedy  
Mrs J McKeever  
Mr L Murphy (Principal & Chief Executive)-out of meeting from 1756 - 1817  
Mr B O'Neill  
Mr B Quinn  
Mrs C Shongo  
Mr F Smyth (from 1712)  
Mr P Thompson  
Ms V Toland

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

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**101.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  
The meeting had full attendance. The Principal gave advance notice that he would be leaving the meeting for a brief time to join a CEF meeting.

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

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

**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Register of Interest Summary Report – June 2023

Mrs M Gormley noted an amendment to her entry. An amendment has been made to the Report in respect to Mrs D Creevy's employment details.

**101.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2023****➤ 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 Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

**10.3.1 MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

There were no matters arising.

**101.4 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – Mr P Canavan, Committee Chair****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Summary Report of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2023

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2023

Report 3 Risk Management Group Report 2, 2022/23

Report 3.1 Corporate Risk Register – May 2023

Report 4 Fraud Policy (Including Anti-Fraud) December 2022

**Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 23 May 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**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Ms M Breslin

The Committee Chair reported that following an expression of interest exercise, Mrs C Shongo will take over the role as Committee Chair from 1 July 2023.

The Committee went through the Self-Assessment Exercise. The Committee considered it was performing effectively. Actions were noted, mainly in the ESG area and these will be followed up.

**Report 3 Risk Management Group Report 2, 2022/23**

The College Corporate Risk Register currently has nine risks.

Risk 3, 'Compliance with Work Based Learning Regulations & Procedures' – the Department (DfE) have assigned new personnel to support with managing the challenges associated with TAMS. The Department (DfE) have placed arrangements with Colleges to claim output related funding. There are still some challenges and ongoing concerns however meetings and communications with the Department (DfE) are working well. The Sector has strongly communicated to the Department (DfE) that the system needs to be fully functional before the next academic year.

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Ms M Breslin updated the Board that an audit request in this area was received from the Department (DfE), however due to the current issues with the TAMS the College requested that this audit be rescheduled to September 2023. The Department agreed to this.

Risk 7 'Failure to Maintain Financial Stability' – the Residual scoring on this risk has been increased to reflect the financial position in the current year.

Risk 9 'COVID 19' – title has been updated to 'Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic' and the scoring has been reduced.

The Finance Director agreed to raise the matter at the Risk Management Group and with senior colleagues in respect to placing 'staffing issues' particularly the challenges in recruiting staff on the Risk Register. The Principal notified the Board that in relation to the pay rises/one off consolidated payment for lecturing staff, this risk will be elevated and highlighted to the Department (DfE).

The outstanding matter from Internal Audit 2018/19 (Grant Thornton) is now complete. Matters outstanding from the Internal Audit Review on Safeguarding 2021/22 (RSM) are now complete. The outstanding matters from Internal Audit Reviews 2022/23 (RSM) are mainly complete.

The College received a report of 257 data matches for the National Fraud Initiative 2022/23 exercise. No new issues were identified by the matches.

### **Report 3.1 Corporate Risk Register – May 2023**

The Risk Register was now presented in its new format, (4Risk). Further modifications will take place to refine the content.

The Internal Auditor presented two Internal Audit Review Reports to the Committee. The Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Requirements: Fraud, Whistleblowing and Bribery review received a satisfactory assurance rating with five low priority findings. The Business Continuity Planning & Disaster Recovery review received a satisfactory Assurance rating with one medium priority and three low priority findings. The medium priority finding relates to the critical system testing of JANEHR. This is not contractual obligation of the supplier. It was agreed that management will consult with Sector colleagues through the HR Working Group to arrange a DR Testing Plan for JANEHR.

The External Auditor presented the Audit Strategy 2022/23. This included the key messages, materiality thresholds and the presumed significant audit risks. The actions required of the Audit & Risk Committee were highlighted. The Audit Fee is estimated at £34K. The increased fees are reflected in the changes to the financial reporting standard. NIAO will not charge the College for the work required on behalf of the Department (DfE) on the Accounts as at 31 March 2023. Other risk factor areas identified were management override of controls due to fraud and risk of fraud in revenue recognition. The audit team and timetable were noted.

**Report 4 Fraud Policy (Including Anti-Fraud) December 2022****PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan**SECONDED**, Mrs M Gormley*Mr F Smyth joined the meeting during this item.*

The Committee Chair thanked Mr Canavan for his report.

**101.5 EDUCATION COMMITTEE – Prof M Ó Néill, Committee Chair****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Summary Report of the Education Committee Meeting held on 6 June 2023
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 6 June 2023
- Report 3 Strabane Curriculum Plan – Briefing Note
- Report 3.1 Strabane Curriculum Plan
- Report 3.2 Curriculum Offer and FTE – link
- Report 4 Safeguarding

**Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 6 June 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**, Mr P Canavan**SECONDED**, Mr P Thompson

The Governing Body Chair reported on the key items from the Committee meeting. Following an expression of interest Mrs J McKeever will take on the role as Committee Chair from 1 July 2023.

The overall College retention rate is currently at 91%. Target is 90%. An amended bid for 400 MaSN was submitted to the Department (DfE) on 3 May 2023. This was an uplift on 2022/23 to reflect the three new OU courses being offered in 2023/24. A decision was made to withdraw a number of courses on offer for 2023/24 to streamline the College offer.

**Report 3 Strabane Curriculum Plan – Briefing Note****Report 3.1 Strabane Curriculum Plan****Report 3.2 Curriculum Offer and FTE – link**

Dr C O’Mullan provided the Board with details on the Strabane Curriculum Plan for the new campus at Strabane. The plan supports the holistic College Outline Business Case (OBC) and is required to be submitted by mid-July 2023 as part of the Derry City & Strabane District Council, City Deal Strabane Town Centre Regeneration Project.

The Curriculum Plan is underpinned by the principles identified in the ‘Skills for a 10x Economy – Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland ‘ with courses focusing on the Identified skill needs for Strabane and the three key pillars namely Inclusion, Innovation and Sustainability.

The actual estate footprint is known to be approximately 2,000msq. One of the final pieces of work is the consideration of a requirement for a specialist science laboratory and whether this can be facilitated within the footprint and to adjust the target enrolments accordingly. There is also an opportunity for the Health Trust to relocate to the existing Campus if the project is approved.

The Principal reported on the limitations of the existing resources in Strabane Campus. The challenge is to sustain and improve the enrolments in Strabane and to look at new programmes which will have minimal accommodation change and expenditure.

**Members were content to approve the Draft Strabane Curriculum Plan as part of the OBC.**

**PROPOSED**, Mr F Smyth

**SECONDED**, Mr P Canavan

#### **Report 4 Safeguarding**

Members noted the report.

In concluding, Mrs J McKeever wished to update the Board on the work of the Sector Task & Finish Group. Meetings continue to review the CDP process, remap, and provide sectoral input as to how they can meet the aims of both 10x Economy and 10x Skills Strategy. An update will be brought through the Committee at the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs McKeever and Dr C O’Mullan for their reporting and invited Mrs D Creevy and Mr B Quinn to report on the business of the Resources Committee.

### **101.6 RESOURCES COMMITTEE – Mrs D Creevy, Committee Chair**

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

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| Report 1 | Summary Report of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2023 |
| Report 2 | Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2023  |
| Report 3 | Management Accounts for 10 Months to 31 May 2023                       |
| Report 4 | Budget 2023/24   |
| Report 5 | Procurement Contract Items Suggested Spend Items £100K and Over        |
| Report 7 | Digital Strategy 2023-24   |

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Report 8	Review of Committee's Terms of Reference
Report 8.1	Proposed Amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference
Report 9	Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024 and Action Plan Review Year 2, 2022-23
Report 10	Equality Report
Report 11	Data Protection/Compliance Report

**Report 2      Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on  
13 June 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**, Mr B Quinn

**SECONDED**, Mr B O'Neill

The Committee Chair reported that the provision of outsourced catering has been withdrawn. Management has reviewed the requirement and the decision to bring in-house was finalised on 24 May 2023. Staff will be transferred across in August/September 2023 through the TUPE process (Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment).

In relation to the Springtown Redevelopment Project, OHMG have not yet initiated the adjudication process. OHMG submitted to JCP an Application for Payment on 26 April 2023. JCP on behalf of NWRC have replied to OHMG on this matter referencing that the contract is now expired.

Sector building insurance premiums are likely to increase. The possibility of self-insurance has been raised with the Department (DfE).

The Prompt payment figure for the 30 days to 31 May 2023 was 96 % and for the year to date was 95%. The target is 95%.

**Report 3      Management Accounts for 10 Months to 31 May 2023**

The Finance Director reported he had no major concerns with the Management Accounts.

**Report 4      Budget 2023/24**

The Finance Director reported that since the Resources Committee meeting on 13 June 2023 the College has received £696K for Traineeship and Advanced Technical Award funding for 2023/24. This will result in an updated Draft Budget Allocation from DfE confirming a DEL Resources of £30.4m. This still represents a challenging budget with cost savings of £1.4m.

Due to budgetary challenges the Estates team will be focusing primarily on response and planned maintenance. Discussion took place in meeting on how this will impact going forward. Data on the Tribal Benchmarking and Cost Savings Exercise from the 2019/20 and 2021/22 financial years was provided to Committee.

**Members were content to approve the Budget 2023/24 subject to the assumptions for lecturers pay rises for September 2021, 2022 and 2023.**

**PROPOSED**, Mrs D Creevy

**SECONDED**, Mrs J McKeever

**Report 5 Procurement Contract Items Suggested Spend Items £100K and Over**

**PROPOSED**, Mr B O'Neill

**SECONDED**, Mrs D Creevy

**Report 6 Investment Policy – January 2023**

The Investment Policy was discussed at Committee. It was noted the College currently does not have any investments. The College Current bank account does attract interest as show in the Management Accounts.

**Report 8 Review of Committee's Terms of Reference**

**Report 8.1 Proposed Amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference**

**PROPOSED**, Mr B Quinn

**SECONDED**, Mr B O'Neill

*Mr Murphy left the meeting during this item.*

Mrs D Creevy , Committee Chair then invited Mr B Quinn to report on the business in relation to Staffing matters.

Points to note in the Committee meeting included that a discussion took place on considering an extension to the IIP. It was agreed in Committee that the Senior Leadership Team review this matter and bring a decision back to Committee.

**Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021/24 & Action Plan Year Review, Year 2, 2022/23**

The College is progressing through the Strategy. Work continues in the four key areas for better physical and psychological wealth, better work, better relationships and better specialist support.

Absence data due to ill health, Teaching Staff for May 2023 was 3.05% down on April 2023 which was 3.68%. Higher levels of sickness were reported for Support Staff at 4.26% for May 2023, an increase in April 2023 which was 3.61%. The most common reason for absence from September 2022 to May 2023 continues to be stress (personal) 19.3%, followed by mental health 10.1%. The Committee noted their concern on the high level of absence due to personal stress – a report will be prepared for the next Committee meeting on this matter.

The HR Manager in Committee reported applicant numbers continue to be a challenge in recruiting posts across the Colleges. The use of social media to engage applicants is becoming important.

In Committee the HR Manager reported on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment Review 2022/23 together with the Fair Employment Monitoring Return as at 01/01/23. The headline figures were consistent on previous years. This was showing an under-presentation of employees from the Protestant community (20%). There were 77% from the Roman Catholic Community and 3% were non-determined. Sixty percent of employees were female and 40% male. Affirmative action programmes continue to help address the imbalance in the applicant makeup and workforce. The College works closely with the Equality Commission.

#### **Report 10 Equality Report**

A new partnership with the North West Migrants' Forum (NWMF) has been developed. The College has agreed to support them in a range of awareness raising initiatives over the new few months/years.

The College has agreed to work towards accreditation to be a College of Sanctuary. A College of Sanctuary is a college that has undergone improvement in practices to support refugees and people seeking asylum and help raise awareness among students, staff and the wider community.

#### **Report 11 Data Protection/Compliance Report**

A total of nineteen Information Rights Requests made under UK GDPR and Freedom of Information Act 2000 were made from August 2022 to May 2023.

*Mr Murphy re-joined the meeting at this juncture.*

### **101.7 PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS – Mr L Murphy**

The Principal reported on the recent strategic meetings he had attended across the Sector and with external stakeholders. He has taken over as Chair of the Principals' Group. He notified the Board that Mr B Doran, Principal & Chief Executive, Southern Regional College is due to retire.

Ms V Toland, Staff Governor representative expressed the appreciation of the work of the Principal and management in their support in resolving the lecturers' pay dispute. Ms V Toland highlighted the disappointment and low morale of the academic staff that approval was not received from the Department (DfE) for the one off consolidated payment. Staff had suspended the marking and grading of assessments on the expectation that this payment was going to be made in June 2023.

The Principal added that the Business Case was not approved by the Department (DfE) without agreement on a wider pay deal for 2021/22 and 2022/23. The College management remain committed in finding a resolution.

**It was agreed that the Governing Body Chair write to Mr Doran on behalf of the Board to wish him well in his retirement.**



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

- The Governing Body Chair stated that a few Board positions will be available shortly, the role as Governor with oversight of HE and the role for a Governor representative on the Springtown Project Board. Governors were also asked to give some consideration to serving on another Committee.

**Expressions of interest will be forwarded to relevant members for the above positions.**

- The Governing Body Chair wished to remind Governors to complete their Self-Assessment questionnaire that came directly from the Department (DfE). The questionnaire closes on 30 June 2023.
- Governor Assessments for 2022/23 will also take place over the summer period.

**101.9 SCHEDULE OF BOARD MEETINGS 2023/24**

Members noted the schedule.

**101.10 CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence was received from Mrs M Donald, UCU Representative with a request to meet the Principal and Governing Body Chair. This meeting was facilitated on 26 June 2023.

Ms V Toland reported on correspondence she had received from a staff member on the pension enhancement scheme.

**It was agreed that the Finance Director check if this scheme is still current.**

The Governing Body Chair also noted that correspondence was received through the Principal from staff on the outcome of the lecturers pay dispute that was previously reported on.

**101.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no any other business.

**101.12 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately**

The Governing Body Chair brought the meeting to a close at 1856. He thanked everyone and wished them a restful summer break. Reserved Business followed.

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

Signed:   
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**Prof M Ó Néill, Committee Chair**

**Date: 26 September 2023**