

---

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS, COMMENCING 17:30**

---

**PRESENT:**

Prof M Ó' Néill, Governing Body Temporary Chair

Ms M Breslin

Mr P Clancy

Mrs D Creevy

Dr S Fisher

Mrs M Gormley

Mrs J McKeever (joined remotely at 19:04)

Mrs S McMahan

Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive

Mr B O'Neill

Mr F Smyth (joined remotely)

Mr P Thompson (joined remotely)

Ms V Toland (joined remotely)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director

Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards

Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (from 18:30)

Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services

Mrs C O'Reilly, Boardroom Apprentice (joined remotely until item 108.15)

Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

---

**108.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Mrs C Shongo. Mrs J McKeever gave prior notice that she would be joining the meeting late.

**108.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Summary Register of Interests – April 2024

Members noted the updated report. Mr L Murphy reported that he is now a member of the Ulster University's Magee Campus Expansion Taskforce. The Register of Interest will be updated accordingly.

**108.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 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**, Dr S Fisher

**SECONDED**, Mrs D Creevy

**REPORT 1      MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

**104.10** Dr O'Mullan as agreed, had replied directly to Governor, Ms V Toland on her query regarding the vacant post for the Strabane Campus Manager.

**108.4 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 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**, Ms M Breslin

**SECONDED**, Mr B O'Neill

**REPORT 1      MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

- **105.5** Expressions of interest were sent out to relevant members of the Education Committee. Mr Paul Clancy will take up this role when the current Committee Chair leaves in June 2024.
- Ms F Moran, Sustainability Champion was invited to the Strategy Day on 19 January 2024.

**108.5 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY DAY MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2024****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

The Draft Minutes of the Strategy Day 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**, Dr S Fisher

**REPORT 1      MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

This matter will be taken at 108.7, Report 1.

---

**108.6 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON  
12 FEBRUARY 2024****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

The Draft Minutes of the Special 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**, Mr B O'Neill

**REPORT 1 MATTERS ARISING – Verbal Report**

There were no matters arising.

**108.7 GOVERNING BODY TEMPORARY CHAIR'S BUSINESS – Prof M Ó'Neil**

The Governing Body Chair noted the appointment of Mr Ian Snowden to the position of Permanent Secretary for the Department for the Economy.

**Report 1 Follow up discussion on the Strategy Day**

The Governing Body Chair noted the comments received from two Governors Mr Clancy and Mr Thompson following the Strategy Day.

Mr Thompson noted the requirement for a situation analysis for the College and Sector and for a Strategic Action Plan with short, medium and long-term Interventions for sustainability and growth. Mr Smyth added the challenge ahead is the need to look at a more radical approach in terms of strategy.

Mr Clancy comments acknowledged the commitment and dedication of the North West Regional College team, the unique student experience and staff being such a critical part of this success.

The Principal highlighted the importance of an Economy Minister recently been appointed and the resumption of the assembly.

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

The Principal reported that his time has been significantly absorbed (particularly as Chair of the Principals' Group) dealing with a number of sector matters including, CEF, VSS, ASOS/Lecturer's pay offer. The Principal has attended a number of meetings with DfE, Principals' and unions (as a member of the LNC Subcommittee) in a bid to resolve matters in relation to the Lecturers' pay award. Dr C O'Mullan is leading the Workload Committee in relation to this piece of work.

The Sector Principals attended a further FE Review Workshop on 22 February 2024.

The Principal and colleagues attended a meeting with the Chief Executive, Derry City and Strabane District Council to discuss the Digital Innovation Hub element of the Smart Derry Strabane City Deal Programme.

Following his appointment to serve on the of Ulster University's Magee Campus Expansion Taskforce the Principal attended the first meeting in Magee Campus.

The Principal has also attended several meetings in his role as Chair of the Principal's Group. More recently, the Committee for the Economy has formally invited representatives of the Principals' Group to provide an oral and written, public, in-person briefing at the Economy Committee on 17 April 2024.

The Finance Manager reported that to date there still is no budget confirmed for 2024/25.

#### 108.9 GOVERNING BODY SECRETARY'S BUSINESS- Mrs É Doherty

##### ➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Report 1 | Partnership Agreement - Articles of Government                                 |
| Report 2 | Partnership Agreement - Guide for Governors of NI, FE Colleges<br>March 2024   |
| Report 3 | Partnership Agreement - Terms and Conditions of Appointment -<br>verbal update |
| Report 4 | Partnership Agreement - External Board Effectiveness Review                    |

#### **Report 1 Partnership Agreement - Articles of Government**

The Governing Body Secretary referred to Reports 1,2 and 3 that relate to the new Partnership Agreement that came into effect on 1 February 2024. The Partnership Agreement replaces the Management Statement/Financial Memorandum. Report 1, relates to the Articles of Government which contained references to the Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (MS/FM) which have been replaced with 'Partnership Agreement'. The amendments are within pages 2 and 15. Members agreed with the changes.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Clancy

**SECONDED**, Mrs D Creevy

#### **Report 2 Partnership Agreement - Guide for Governors of NI, FE Colleges, March 2024**

The Guide has been revised. As well as amending references to MS/FM some updates have been made to Appendix 1 to reflect the current strategic position.

#### **Report 3 Partnership Agreement - Terms and Conditions of Appointment - verbal update**

Governors were notified that any references within their own Terms and Conditions of Appointment to the Financial Memorandum should now read 'Partnership Agreement'.

Changes were also made to FE05/12 Circular, Knowledge, Skills and Competences of Governing Body members.

A review is required of our Governing Body Code of Conduct – this will progress through the Resources Committee and to the Governing Body in June 2024.

#### **Report 4 Partnership Agreement - External Board Effectiveness Review**

Correspondence was received from the Department (DfE) on 3 April 2024 stating it is a requirement of the Partnership Agreement for each Governing Body to undertake an external review. This review must be completed by December 2024. A common Terms of Reference will be drafted by the Sector Chairs and a single external provider will be procured to undertake the review.

### **108.10 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE – Mrs M Gormley, Committee Vice Chair**

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

- Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 27 February 2024
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting
- Report 3 Report to the Audit & Risk Committee
- Report 3.1 College Insurance
- Report 4 NIAO Report To Those Charged with Governance 2022/23 -final

#### **Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 27 February 2024**

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 S McMahon

**SECONDED**, Ms M Breslin

#### **Report 3 Report to the Audit & Risk Committee**

The Committee Vice Chair referred to the ten corporate risks, outlining the three severe risks; Impact of Reduced Enrolment Numbers, Failure to Maintain Financial Stability and the Impact of Industrial Action. There was one high risk titled Cyber Security followed by five medium and one low risk.

#### **Report 3.1 College Insurance**

The Finance Director updated the Board on the College insurance matter. With the need to revisit the Business Case process earlier than anticipated due to increased premiums, it was an opportunity to consider self-insurance options. The Finance Director brought Governors through the options/costs being considered within the FE Insurance Business Case.

Following discussions, it was agreed to take further time on this matter. In the interim to purchase full insurance for 2024/25 year. This will require an addendum to the 2021 approved Business Case. The additional time will give the Sector an opportunity to agree the preferred option and progress the Business Case that will come into effect for the 2025/26 year. A Governor recommended the College also obtain an independent report from an insurance expert.

**Report 4 NIAO Draft Report To Those Charged with Governance 2022/23 - final**

The final report outlined one Priority 3 rating recommendation. This related to asset depreciation rates which management will review prior to end of March 2024, in conjunction with the sector.

The Committee Vice Chair reported that other business conducted within the Committee meeting included the receipt of the Internal Audit Reviews on Admissions and Learning & Development. Both reviews received satisfactory assurances. Upcoming audits confirmed for 2024 include: Cyber Security, Part-time Lecturer Payments and Health & Safety.

NWRC and SRC attended a workshop with RSM Head of Sustainability to explore sustainability and ESG. Work is underway to review structure and resources required to ensure compliance.

The NIFRS completed an audit and all recommendations have been successfully implemented. An AccessNI Audit was carried out on 21 November 2023 by DoJ. No issues were identified.

A Business Case is currently being prepared by SWC to permit colleges to commence the payment of holiday pay (excess/overtime) to staff.

The College have established an Artificial Intelligence Group to develop and implement plans for effective, ethical and responsible AI use.

Specialised consultants, Tetra Tech, completed a survey on NWRC buildings and confirmed no traces of RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete), were identified.

In November 2023, DfE completed a compliance monitoring closure inspection of Skills For Life and Work, (SFLAW) and Training for Success (TFS), finding a 0% error rate on over 400 administrative compliance tests performed. An excellent result for NWRC. The Committee formally congratulated the team on their excellent achievement.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Gormley for providing the report to the Committee and invited Mr Clancy to report on the business of the Education Committee.

---

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

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report of the Education Committee Meeting held on 26 March 2024
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting
Report 3	Committee's Terms of Reference
Report 3.1	Proposed Amendments to the Terms of Reference
Report 4	College Curriculum Plan 2023/26
Report 5	Complaints, Compliments and Assessment Appeals Annual Report 2022-23
Report 6	Safeguarding Report
Report 6.1	Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy & Procedures

**Report 2      Draft Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting held on 26 March 2024**

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting were taken as read. It was noted that Mr B O'Neill's name was omitted from the attendance record. With this amendment it was agreed the Minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Clancy

**SECONDED**, Dr S Fisher

**Report 3      Committee's Terms of Reference****Report 3.1      Proposed Amendments to the Terms of Reference**

Proposed Amendments to the Terms of Reference - The amendments had no material changes; they related to the 'duties' section and an amendment to a job title. (Reports 3, 3.1)

The Board were content to approve the amendments.

**PROPOSED**, Mr B O'Neill

**SECONDED**, Mrs M Gormley

**Report 4      College Curriculum Plan 2023/26**

The College retention rate to 20 March 2024 was 94.76%. The target is 90%.

Attendance rates to 20 March 2024 for full-time was 84.88% and part-time 88.46%.

As at 20 March 2024 there were 747 outstanding outcomes in relation to the non-reporting of student results by teaching staff as a result of the action short of a strike. Contingency plans are in place.

---

**Report 5      Complaints, Compliments and Assessment Appeals Annual Report 2022-23**

The number of compliments had decreased by 69.81% from the previous year. This may have been due to the Quality Manager being on long-term sick leave. Informal complaints have increased by 53.85% on the previous year.

Academic Assessment Appeals increased by 60% on the previous years (8 -5).

**Report 6      Safeguarding Report**

The Safeguarding Team received 377 referrals for support from September 2023 to March 2024. As a result of the promotion of the Safeguarding Team, at induction 95 students had self-referred for support. Anxiety continues to be the most common reason for referrals. It has been noted that students are presenting with more than one mental health condition.

An Access NI Registered Body Audit was carried out on 21 November 2023. Positive feedback was received from Access NI and no recommendations were received.

**Report 6.1      Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy & Procedures**

The Changes (Appendix 4) relate to additional wording to include Operation Encompass and Digital Safety and changes to the disclosure of criminal history procedure.

Mr Clancy reported on other business that was covered within Committee. This included the Internal Audit Review on Admissions. This received a satisfactory assurance. There were no findings identified and Mr Clancy listed some examples of good practice that were identified during the audit. The Incoming Committee Chair thanked Ms Breslin and her team.

It was noted that following the Minister for the Economy's statement on the intended focus and priorities the format for the 2024/25 CDP may change to align with these priorities.

A series of performance reviews 2022/23 by Department and Curriculum Area were undertaken by the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards and the Head of Quality Enhancement. The KPI's on retention rates for 2022/23 showed 88%. The target is 90%. Achievement rate was 85% and success rate was 74%. The success rates are below the 80% target. Work continues to improve this figure. Following an analysis of the 2022/23 performance it was noted that a review of the full-time provision at Level 3 and Level 5 showed a steady and concerning attrition between years 1 and years 2 in a significant number of courses. Resources will be engaged in this area to try and promote retention and achievement.

The Committee received updates on the Health & Social Care Hub, Skills Competitions, Business Support Centre and received the Widening Access ad Participation Plan 2024/25 -2026/27.

*Mr McKeown left the meeting for a short time during this item (18:40-18:46).  
Ms S Kelly joined the meeting during this item.*

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Clancy and invited Mrs Creevy to present her report to the Board.

## 108.12 RESOURCES COMMITTEE – Mrs D Creevy, Committee Chair

### ➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2024
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting
Report 3	Management Accounts for the 7 Months to 29 January 2024
Report 4	Budget 2024/25 – verbal update
Report 5	Partnership Agreement DfE and NWRC
Report S1	Health & Wellbeing Brochure, Semester 2 - link
Report S2	Staff Development Programme Semester 2, 2023/24
Report C1	Equality Report
Report C2	Data Protection/Compliance Update

### **Report 2      Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2024**

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

The Committee Chair reported on matters discussed in Committee. In relation to the tenders issued, the in-house canteen facilities came into operation on 1 September 2023. Initial setting up costs and the fourteen strike days have impacted income. Despite improvements there is a loss of approximately £30K+ for the first term. In relation to the outstanding invoices from OCS, communications have been received from a debt collection agency regarding these invoices. The College has sent several letters direct to OCS with no response to date.

Reporting on Estate matters, funding has been received from the Department (DfE) for solar panels for Springtown Campus. The Finance Director updated the Board stating that works has since started in the installation of the solar panels.

In respect to the Causeway Growth Deal, the Growth Deal Executive Programme Board have reported that the target date for the Head of Terms agreement has been rescheduled from the date reported in Committee to 26 April 2024.

---

Funding worth £150K per College for 2024/25 has been received from the Gatsby Foundation.

**Report 3 Management Accounts for the 7 Months to 29 January 2024**

The Management Accounts for 5 Months to 31 December 2023 and 6 Months to 31 January 2024 were provided to the Committee meeting.

The January 2024 Accounts reported that VEP Income is down as a result of the Industrial Action. Some learning lost has been delivered which might reduce this negative variance. Staff Costs, teaching was down, mainly related to the impact of Industrial Action. Non-pay premises is £323K below budget. Forecasts reflects additional planned expenditure on IT and premises.

**Report 4 Budget 2024/25 – verbal update**

The College has not received any further update from the Department (DfE) on the Budget 2024/25.

**Report 5 Partnership Agreement DfE and NWRC**

The Partnership Agreement was signed off by the Governing Body Chair and Principal and approved by the Departmental Accounting Officer.

**Prompt Payment** – 30 days to 31 January 2024 was 96% and for the year to date was 95%. The target is 95%.

In relation to Staffing matters, in Committee it was reported that from 19 October 2023 to 23 January 2024 a total of 26 recruitment exercises were actioned. There are currently 27 'live' posts going through the recruitment and selection process. Applicant numbers continue to be a challenge in recruiting posts across the College. In this academic year 2023/24 to date the College have processed 80 staff applications.

AccessNI conducted a Compliance Audit in November 2023. The College were fully compliant with the Code of Practice and there were no recommendations from this Audit.

Sickness Absence - the highest percentage of absence noted was in relation to grief reaction (15.4%) followed by surgery (13.4%).

All mandatory training modules as at January 2024 had achieved 90% and above completion rates. The target for completion is 90%.

As part of the HR Digitisation Project new management dashboards for appraisals have been developed, 492 appraisals have been completed as at January 2024.

Seventy are due for completion and there were ten outstanding. Further efficiencies have also been made whereby staff can upload their qualifications within the Staff Self-Service Portal.

**Report C1 Equality Report**

The Mental Health Committee are working towards achieving the Pieta Amber Flag Initiative. This initiative recognises individual efforts to create healthy, inclusive environments that support the mental wellbeing of a range of organisations including Further Education.

The College has officially received confirmation that it has been successful in achieving RNIB's Visibility Better Employer Quality Standard.

The annual audit of College buildings by Accessible took place week commencing 20 November 2023. No report has been issued yet.

**Report C2 Data Protection/Compliance Update**

For the period 31 August 2023 to date there has been a total of fourteen information requests made under the UK GDPR and Freedom of Information Act 2000. There have been six data incidents recorded for this academic year. Four of these related to cyber security. Actions were taken forward with recommendations to Line Managers. As part of World Data Protection Day on 28 January 2024 a presentation aimed directly to students was published to identify and highlight relevant personal data protection issues.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Creevy for her report.

*Mrs Mc Keever joined the meeting during this item.*

**108.13 CORRESPONDENCE**

Other correspondence noted from the last Board meeting included;

- 11/12/23 Letter from Ms L Watson, DfE advising that the Partnership Agreement was approved by the Departmental Accounting Officer.
- 17/01/24 Correspondence from Ms M Donald, UCU regarding Strike Action. This was forwarded to Governors on 17 January 2024.
- 26/02/24 Correspondence from Ms L Watson, DfE on the Voluntary Severance Scheme. This was shared with Governors on 27 February 2024.
- 03/04/24 Correspondence from DfE regarding the External Board Effectiveness Reviews – this was referred to earlier in the meeting (Ref 108.9, Report 4).

**108.14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no any other business to discuss.

**108.15 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately**

The Governing Body Chair brought the meeting to a close at 19:16. Reserved Business followed.

**Date of next meeting:** 19 June 2024

Signed:   
Prof M Ó'Neil, Governing Body Temporary Chair

Date: 19 June 2024

APPROVED