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**MINUTES OF THE NINETY SIXTH 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)  
Ms M Breslin  
Mr P Canavan  
Mrs D Creevy  
Mrs S Fisher  
Mr L Murphy (Principal & Chief Executive)  
Mr B O'Neill  
Mr P Thompson  
Ms V Toland

**REMOTE ATTENDANCE - GOVERNORS**

Mrs M Gormley  
Mr B Quinn  
Mrs C Shongo (until 1903)  
Mr F Smyth

**IN ATTENDANCE;**

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director  
Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards  
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (joined during item 96.4)  
Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

**REMOTE ATTENDANCE - ATTENDEES**

Mrs G Moss (until item 96.7)

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**96.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  
Mrs C Shongo gave prior notice that she may have to leave the meeting early.  
Apologies were received from Mr S Gillespie, Mr K Kennedy and Prof M Ó'Neil.

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

There was no conflict of interest declarations. The Secretary of the Governing Body requested an item to be taken under Any Other Business in relation to the Student Governor Election. The Chair was content to take this item later under 96.9.

**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1      Summary Register of Interests Report – November 2022

The updated Summary Register Report was noted. This included amended entries for Mr L Murphy who has been appointed a member of the Londonderry Chamber of

Commerce Board. Governor, Mrs C Shongo has recently been promoted to Corporate Business Lead, Strategic Planning & Performance Group, Department of Health. Mr B O'Neill advised of changes to his entry. **The Report will be updated with Mr O'Neill's changes and provided to the next meeting.**

### 96.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2022

#### ➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 5 October 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 D Creevy

#### **Report 1 Matters Arising**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair stated that she was happy to send a note of thanks to the Head of Department and lecturers who assisted the students who received the recent bursaries from Amazon and JP McManus.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair then then invited Mrs D Creevy, Committee Chair to report on the business of the Resources Committee meeting.

### 96.4 RESOURCES COMMITTEE

#### ➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

##### **FINANCE**

Report 1 Summary Report

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 7 November 2022

Report 3 Management Accounts for 2 Months to 30 September 2022

Report 4 Budget Update 2022/23

Report 5 Bad Debt Write-off Report

Report 6 Management Statement/Financial Memorandum Oct 2018

Report 7 Fees & Charges Policy 2023/24

##### **STAFFING**

Report 8 Health & Wellbeing Brochure Semester 1 2022/23 (link)

##### **CLIENT SERVICES**

Report 9 Equality Report

Report 10 Data Protection/Compliance Report

**Report 2** The draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 7 November 2022 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**, Mrs D Creevy

The Committee Chair reported that in Committee the Finance Director notified the Governors that after some considerable time the Contractor, OHMG of the Springtown Redevelopment Project has corresponded with JCP (Quantity Surveyors) regarding floor and wall finishes. The Finance Director noted the receipt of recent legal advice regarding the current position with the Contractor. He also noted that the contract with ICT had come to an end. Options available to the College were discussed.

The Project Board will be reconvened. Mr B Quinn, Governor kindly offered to represent the Governing Body on the Project Board. Further updates will come through the Resources Committee and Board.

The Committee were apprised on the Strabane City Deal Project with additional options under review and re-costings taking place. The Finance Director is now a member of the Project Board of the Causeway Coast & Glens Growth Deal. The proposed lease extension with Limavady Cricket & Rugby Club is currently being reviewed.

The Financial Statements were approved with an adjustment relating to the revaluation of Land and Buildings. The Draft Report To Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) has been issued to the Audit and Risk Committee – NIAO will issue an unqualified audit report.

The Finance Director notified the Board of a recent point raised by the NIAO regarding the revaluation of land and buildings following the Resources Committee meeting and further detail will be provided under the Audit & Risk Committee report (96.5).

**Report 4** The updated Budget 2022/23 was showing an Historical Deficit of £3.99m for the year to 31 July 2023. The Finance Director noted a number of changes from the Budget presented in September 2022. He also noted that the College hoped to balance the books for the fiscal year to March 2023 if funds noted in the DfE letter dated 14 September 2022 are secured and confirmed.

Governors were content to approve the Budget 2022/23

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mr L Murphy

**Report 5** The Bad Debt write-off (£19,121.25) list included one debt totalling £2,500 that will require DfE approval. **It was agreed going forward that the individual names will be removed from the Report.**

**PROPOSED**, Mrs J McKeever

**SECONDED**, Mr P Canavan

**Report 6** Management Statement/Financial Memorandum Oct 2018

The Management Statement/Financial Memorandum Oct 2018 is provided annually to the Board. There have been no changes to the document in the last year. Work continues with the Partnership Agreement. A Sector group has been established and the Governing Body Temporary Chair is a member of that group. The Department (DfE) hopes to finalise the Partnership Agreement by 31 March 2023.

**Report 7** Fees & Charges Policy 2023/24

No changes were proposed to the existing 2022/23 fees.

**PROPOSED**, Mrs J McKeever

**SECONDED**, Mr P Canavan

In concluding the finance matters the Committee Chair reported that prompt payment for the 30 days to 31 October 2022 was 97% and year to date (August to October) was 96%.

Progressing to the HR matters the Committee Chair reported that from 9 September 2022 to 24 October 2022 there were 28 recruitment exercises carried out. There are 59 'live' posts currently going through the recruitment and selection process. Recruitment challenges continue across the College with several positions been readvertised. Work continues to extend the reach of advertisements. The Board discussed how to best manage the issue of talent acquisition within the restraints of a public body and the opportunities of upskilling existing staff. **It was agreed that the matter may be discussed further at the Strategy Day.**

In terms of absence rates, the overall Lost Time Rate for September 2022 was 2.83%, a decrease on last year which was 4.54%. Bereavement was the most common reason for absence in September 2022, showing 18.3%. Benchmarking data was provided for the Sector Absence Figures for August 2021- July 2022. The College was showing 2.80%. The Sector average was 3.55%.

The Committee received the HR Services Annual Report, September 2021 – August 2022, key areas of work during this period included; work supporting staff and students with a safe resumption to the College following changes on the COVID guidance from the Northern Ireland Executive. This followed the rollout of a Hybrid Working Framework. A curriculum rebalancing exercise took place which included a number of high level appointments. Work continues on the Curriculum Resourcing Plan with 40 academic staff appointed during 2021-22 academic year. Digital Transformation continues with the development and implementation of a new HR Hub, a Self-Service Portal for staff and further developments with the JANE system.

The completion of the staff mandatory training modules had increased on the January 2022 rates. The data excludes Part Time Lecturers. HR will focus on the SENDO module for November 2022 to try and improve on the current rates. The Annual Conference took place on 3 November 2022 on the theme 'Hope Matters'.

Eight new applicants are currently undertaking the Clinton Institute's Emerging Leaders Programme at Queen University.

**Report 8** Health & Wellbeing Brochure Semester 1 2022/23 ([link](#))  
Recent events included the Action Cancer 'Big Bus' at the Strabane Campus and MOT Health checks carried out at the Strand Road and Limavady Campuses.

#### **CLIENT SERVICES**

Report 9 Equality Report

Report 10 Data Protection/Compliance Report

The Committee Chair updated members on the key points from the reports provided. Nine further awareness days were promoted on the College's staff portal. The College's Equality Working Group have agreed a new process for the nomination for a charity for the year. The College has agreed to renew its membership with AccessAble. The College is working towards meeting the Race At Work Charter.

The Head of Client Services updated members on the Equality & Good Relations Progress Report that presented to the Governing Body in September 2022, The Equality Commission has acknowledged the valuable work. The staff will continue working on the Action Plan in their commitment and promotion of equality.

In terms of the Data Protection/Compliance Update, from 1 August 2022 to 21 October 2022 there were a total of six Information Rights Requests made under The UK GDPR and Freedom of Information Act 2000. Since August 2022 there were no personal data related incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's Office. During the last year a Records Management Policy was rolled out.

*Ms S Kelly, HR Manager joined the meeting during this item.*

The Governing Body Temporary Chair thanked Mrs D Creevy and invited Mr P Canavan to report to the Board on the recent business of the Audit & Risk Committee.

### **96.5 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

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

Report 1 Summary Report

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 8 November 2022

Report 3 Risk Management Group Report 1, 2022/23

Report 4 Report of the Audit & Risk Committee for the Financial Year 2021-22 to the Governing Body

Report 5 Annual Report & Financial Statements Year ended 31 July 2022

Report 6 NIAO Draft Report To Those Charged With Governance

Report 7 Student Council & Financial Statements to 31 July 2022

**Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 8 November 2022**

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** Risk Management Group Report 1, 2022/23

The Committee Chair reported that in relation to Risk 7, 'Failure to Maintain Financial Stability' the scoring of this risk has been reduced to a low risk to reflect the financial position in the current year. The Department are indicating that the Sector will have to make significant savings in 2023/24 and the scoring of the risk is likely to increase. Risk 3, 'Compliance with Work Based Learning Regulations and Procedures', currently a high risk given the current issues with the implementation of the Department's (DfE) Traineeship and Apprenticeship Management System (TAMS). This issue has impacted on a number of other risks on the register. Ms M Breslin, Compliance & Admissions Manager & Staff Governor provided further detail on how staff are managing these challenges and the workarounds put in place. The Department (DfE) has established a TAMS Operational Resolution Group to progress the Sector issues. Following members questions the Board wished to acknowledge and thank Ms Breslin and her team for the additional administrative burden placed on them in managing these issues.

**The Governing Body Temporary Chair expressed her disappointment in the matter and indicated she would be willing on behalf of the Board to correspond with the Department (DfE) if required.**

In the next review the Risk Management Group will consider Cyber Security as a standalone risk. It was agreed that the Board be involved in work relating to the risk appetite attached to the individual risks. The Committee Chair noted that Management had received training on the Risk Register process delivered by RSM UK, Risk Assurance Services. Members of the Committee had also received training facilitated by the Department (DfE) on Audit & Risk Training.

The Health & Safety Report was provided to Governors. The number of recorded accidents is in line with the pre-COVID statistics.

**Report 4** Report of the Audit & Risk Committee for the Financial Year 2021-22 to the Governing Body

The Board agreed to accept the Report subject to a potential amendment on the External Audit Section 6.5, depending on the advice to be received from the NIAO.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

**Report 5** Annual Report & Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2022

The Finance Director reported on an adjustment that was identified in the Draft Accounts. This related to the revaluation of assets. The net effect of adjustment on the statement of comprehensive net expenditure was £129K. Since the Committee meeting held on 8 November 2022 an item has been raised by the NIAO that relates to the Sector in the treatment of the irrecoverable VAT on the revaluation of assets. As there is an inconsistency in the Sector the NIAO will take guidance on the best way forward.

On that basis it was agreed that approval continue to be sought from the Board. If The NIAO advise of any adjustments (book entry) the Board will be kept fully informed. Members were content with this arrangement.

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

**Report 6** NIAO Draft Report To Those Charged With Governance

There were no uncorrected misstatements or irregular expenditure was identified during the audit process. Governors noted the report and the previous discussion that had taken place.

**Report 7** Student Council & Financial Statements to 31 July 2022

An independent auditor prepared the Accounts. The Accounts were showing a deficit (£1.6K).

**PROPOSED**, Mr P Canavan

**SECONDED**, Mrs C Shongo

**96.6 PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS**

The Principal updated members on the City Deal. Increases in construction costs have been highlighted as one of the main areas of concern regarding the delivery of City Deal Projects. The College has proposed alternative options for the new campus in Strabane. Options will be presented to the City Deal Board for final consideration and to finalise to OBC stage.

Congratulations was passed to Mr P McKeown, Finance Director, staff and students of the Limavady Campus who were the winners of the Next Generation Initiative Award at the Causeway Coast and Glens Chamber awards.

The Principal was pleased to report that the College has been approved as a partner institution of the Open University. The accreditation allows the College to submit programmes of Higher Education for approval as validated awards of The Open University.

Reporting on the Review of the FE Delivery Model. The Department (DfE) are looking at costs, outputs and new FE Delivery Model(s). The Department (DfE) state there is no predetermined outcome from the Review. The DfE have organized Innovation Workshops for November and December 2022. This will allow the Sector Chairs and Principals to present. Senior College representatives will also attend for some of these sessions. The Governing Body Temporary Chair stated this can be seen as an opportunity to have an engaged discussion and create new opportunities.

**It was agreed that an invite be extended for a DfE representative to attend the Strategy Day in January 2023 to update the Board on this process.**

In concluding the Principal invited the Finance Director to update members on the Budget for 2023/24. The Finance Director reported that the Department (DfE) had requested the Sector to look at savings in 2023/24 of £12m. The Finance Director considered that this figure should be shared between the individual colleges based on the size of each College and final statistics produced through the FE Review benchmarking exercise should be considered.

*Ms G Moss left the meeting at this juncture.*

## **96.7 GOVERNING BODY TEMPORARY CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

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

Report 1      Governing Body Self -Assessments 2021/22  
Report 2      Strategy Day – verbal report

The Governing Body Self-Assessments 2021/22 included the responses of six new appointees that joined as Governors in January 2022. Key points noted there was an increase in attendance at Committee meetings (93.7%) compared to last year (92.7%), with attendance at the highest level recorded and the highest across the Sector. Average attendance across the Sector was 90.9%.

Attendance at Governing Body meetings however decreased (84.2%) compared to last year (95.6%) with attendance lowest across the Sector. Average attendance across the Sector was 88.8%.

Comments on the key themes included that it would take time for the recently appointed Governors to settle in and to get an understanding of the workings of the Board. Further training opportunities would also be welcome.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair noted that the Strategy Day will take place on 20 January 2023. For the benefit of recently appointed Governors some operational presentations will take place.

The Governing Body Temporary Chair wished to acknowledge and thank the work of the staff involved in organising the recent HE and Access Graduation in October 2022.  
**The Governing Body Temporary Chair will send out communication on this.**

## **96.8 CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence to note.



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**96.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS****Report 1.1 Draft College Development Plan 2022-23**

The Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards reported that housekeeping continues on data management to provide assurances in an effective and efficient manner. The curriculum planning for 2023/24 has commenced. HE applications for 2023/24 have already opened. With the College now a partner institution of the Open University it is hoped the College can offer a new range of full-time, HE courses. The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards thanked the Heads of Department and Ms V Toland, HE Curriculum, Lead (Staff Governor) for their contributions and time afforded to this piece of work. In terms of quality, the Whole College Self Evaluation Report and the Quality Improvement Plan are currently being drafted and will be presented at the next Education Committee meeting.

In relation to the Draft College Development Plan 2022-23, this is waiting DfE approval. This version has been updated following feedback from the Department (DfE) with updated targets. Targets in relation to Magilligan (HMP) are also included. Governors were referred to the planned activity for 2022/23 as a useful reference document.

- Ms V Toland, Staff Governor reported that staff wish to thank the College/Board for the offer of funded fellowship scholarships.
- Three Level 3 Students have been awarded scholarships from the Ulster University Community Widening Access and Participation.
- The Secretary of the Governing Body reported that the election for a Student Governor recently took place. Pending receipt from the Department (DfE) of the formal Minute of Appointment, a request was made to approve Ms A Donnell to serve on the Education Committee.  
**PROPOSED**, Mrs J McKeever  
**SECONDED**, Mr B O'Neill
- **In anticipation of the Strategy Day, Mr F Smyth requested some strategic, preliminary information specific to the Education piece be provided to Governors prior to the Strategy Day.**

The Governing Body Temporary Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting ended at 1935 and went into private session.

**96.10 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately.**

**Date of next meeting:** 20 January 2023

Signed:

  
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Governing Body Temporary Chair

Date: 8 March 2023

APPROVED