
MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY NINTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD VIA REMOTE ATTENDANCE ON 30 APRIL 2020, COMMENCING 1705

PRESENT:

Mr G Finnegan, Governing Body Chair
Mr P Canavan
Mrs R Dougherty
Dr N Hand
Mr E Kelly
Mr G Killeen
Mr A Magee
Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive
Mr S McGregor
Mr M O’Kane
Dr M O’Neill
Mr B Quinn (from 1709)
Mrs L Taggart (until 1811)

IN ATTENDANCE;

Mr P McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement
Mrs É Doherty, Governance Secretary

79.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Governing Body Chair welcomed everyone and extended a warm welcome to Mr A Magee who was returning to the Board following a short absence. Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic all members and attendees were joining the meeting remotely via video conference. Apologies were received from Mr S Gillespie.

79.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS/REGISTER OF INTEREST

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**
Register of Interests – April 2020

There was no conflict of interest declarations and no declarations of any other business. The Governing Body Chair referred to the updated Register of Interest which included additional employment details in respect to Mr Magee. The Governing Body Chair added that there is a potential conflict of interest in Mr Magee’s new employment. The same potential conflict exists for another Governor, Mrs R Dougherty. (Ref Instrument of Government, Part IV, 11c). Discussions are ongoing with the Department on the best way to manage these circumstances.

**79.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON
27 FEBRUARY 2020****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 27 February 2020

The Draft Minutes were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting.

PROPOSED; Mr P Canavan

SECONDED; Mr E Kelly

**79.3.1 MATTERS ARISING – Governing Body Meeting held on 27 February 2020
November 2019**

78.6 The presentation by the Director of Finance & Economic Engagement has been postponed until face to face meetings resume in the College. The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement added he will initially take this through the Resources Committee.

78.7 Update on the Tribal VFM Action Plan progressed through the Education Committee on 7 April 2020 and is included in the meeting papers (Ref; 79.4, Report 3).

78.8 Strategy Day Action Plan included in papers, (Ref 79.7, Report 1).

The Governing Body Chair then invited Mr M O’Kane, Committee Chair to report on behalf of the Education Committee.

79.4 EDUCATION COMMITTEE**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Committee Chair’s Summary Report

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 7 April 2020

Report 3 Tribal VFM Action Plan

The Committee Chair reported that the main focus on the recent Education Committee meeting was on the range of critical issues relating to the curriculum and the impact on students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Course delivery is being managed through various online platforms although concerns were highlighted in relation to students from Quintile 1 who may have challenges accessing the digital learning platforms. The Department (DfE) have established a working group to assist in progressing student qualifications for 2019/20. Concerns exist in relation to the apprenticeship programmes and the impact the current crisis will have on these going forward.

Positive news reported included that the online applications are continuing with webinars taking place to support the marketing of courses. Online support for students continues in the areas of finance, welfare, learning support and counselling

and the Safeguarding Team continue to monitor students at risk. College support services for staff also continues with access to online resources.

The Economy Minister and the Health Minister have praised the Colleges and Universities for their invaluable contribution in the fight against COVID-19. The College through the Business Support Centre, Strand Road Campus and the Product Design Centre, Greystone Campus have produced face guards. PPE stock in campuses have also been passed to those in need.

The Committee Chair reported that some activities have been postponed due to the current circumstances included the ETI planned sector evaluations to several of the six Colleges of Level 3 provision; the Transition of Young People into careers (14-19) Project and the submission date of the Draft College Development Plan 2020/21.

The Principal reported on the Tribal VFM Action Plan update which was progressing well. College retention rates had exceeded the target rate for 93% as at March 2020, the current retention rate was 94.7%.

The Draft Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 7 April 2020 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Draft Minutes.

PROPOSED; Mr M O’Kane
SECONDED; Mr S McGregor

The Governing Body Chair stated the College had dealt remarkably well in the current circumstances and paid tribute to the Principal, Management Team and staff for their commitment in navigating through what is uncertain times.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr O’Kane for his report.

79.5 RESOURCES COMMITTEE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy & Procedures, January 2020
Report 2 Estates Update Report

The Governing Body Chair stated there was no Resources Committee meeting since the last Governing Body meeting however a few items were added to the Agenda that required the Board’s attention. The Governing Body Chair invited Mrs R Dougherty, Committee Chair to present the Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy & Procedures.

The Committee Chair explained that a working group (DfE) with input from the Sector had produced a draft policy framework. This framework outlined the essential elements required for safeguarding policies and practices in the College to ensure compliance with legislation with best practice. The Head of Learner Services had drafted the College Policy within this draft framework. The Policy has been approved

by the Leadership and Management Team and now required Governing Body approval. The Committee Chair highlighted the key elements of the comprehensive Policy & Procedures. Members were content to adopt the Policy.

PROPOSED; Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED; Mrs L Taggart

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Dougherty for her report and invited Mr P McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement to provide members with an update on the Springtown redevelopment project.

The Director reported that the ICT is forecasting a projected final account of £6.617m (net), an increase of approximately £248k from the original tender price. Budget cover if required will be allocated by the Department (DfE). There is a significant gap between the contractor's financial assessment and that of the ICT. There is currently a gap of approximate £1.2m (net), between Compensation Events identified by O'Hare and McGovern and those assessed by the ICT. On the basis of the final account being £6.617m the ICT is forecasting this gap to close to about £600k. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the contractor ceased all work on site as of 3 April 2020, however practical and contractual completion has been achieved. A number of snagging items and completion of external works remain outstanding. The Department have been kept fully briefed throughout the project.

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr McKeown for his update report and invited the Principal to present his report next.

79.6 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT/BUSINESS

The Principal reported that this has been a challenging period but the College has worked hard to meet the challenges. A complex challenge specific to the FE Sector is the closing of qualifications for the 2019/20 academic year, in particular the Work Based Learning courses/programmes that have licence to practice implications. As previously mentioned the Task and Finish Group that has been set up by the Department (DfE) will produce a paper with recommendations to the Minister. Planning is taking place for any phased return in respect to both operational and strategic recovery.

The Governing Body Chair thanked the Principal for the update provided and for leading the College during these unprecedented times and for staff in stepping up to meet the challenges.

The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement reported that the College had received the 2020-21 budget letter issued by the Department. He stated that the Department had been successful in obtaining resources to fund the Sector pressures of £24.9m. Some budget lines are for one year only are not base lined at this stage.

Mrs L Taggart left the meeting during this item.

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

Report 1 Strategy Day Action Plan Update
Report 3 Chair's Business

➤ VERBAL REPORTS

Report 2 Boardroom Apprenticeship Programme

The Governing Body Chair referred members to the Strategy Day Action Plan and discussed the areas for improvement. Regular updates will come to the Board.

The Governing Body Chair reported on the correspondence received in respect to the Boardroom Apprenticeship Programme for 2020 that stated the programme had been put on hold due to the current crisis.

Members noted the Governing Body Chair's diary and ongoing work since the last Board meeting.

79.8 CORRESPONDENCE

The Governing Body Chair referred to the invite sent to the Director of FE to join the June 2020 Board meeting, members were in agreement that even if the restrictions are still in place due to the coronavirus an invite to join the meeting via video conference should be extended to the Director.

The Governing Body Chair updated members on other incoming/outgoing correspondence since the last meeting.

79.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Student Governor wished to update members on the current situation on the work of the NUS-USI (National Union of Students -Union of Students in Ireland) in relation to issues on housing/accommodation concerns that students were experiencing during the current crisis. The Governing Body Chair thanked the Student Governor for his update.

No Audit & Risk Committee meeting had taken place since the last Governing Body meeting however the Director of Finance & Economic Engagement provided an update on the situation regarding the Internal Audit provision.

As per the Internal Audit Annual Plan 2019/20 the Internal Audit Service was due to present one further review in June 2020 together with the Follow Up Review. The Follow Up Review can be managed remotely and reported to the Audit & Risk Committee at their June 2020 meeting. The Internal Auditor (Grant Thornton) reported in correspondence to the Sector, that considering the results of all reviews during the period 2019/20 that the final review will not take place. This will allow the Internal Audit Service to issue the Annual Assurance Report on a timely basis to Colleges.

The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement notified members that the Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr S Gillespie and the Principal were content with this arrangement. Members were also content with this arrangement.

The Governing Body Chair brought this part of the meeting to an end, he thanked everyone for their attendance and requested those not required for the remaining items to leave the room at this juncture.

The meeting ended at 1830 and went into private session.

79.10 Date of next meeting: 23 June 2020

SIGNED: _____ **Governing Body Chair**
Mr G Finnegan

DATE: 23 June 2020

APPROVED