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**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2021, COMMENCING 1700**

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**PRESENT:**

Mr G Finnegan, Governing Body Chair  
Ms M Breslin (until item 85.12)  
Mr P Canavan  
Mrs R Dougherty (until item 85.10)  
Mr D Ferns  
Mr S Gillespie  
Dr N Hand  
Mr G Killeen  
Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive  
Mr S McGregor  
Mr M O’Kane  
Prof M O’Neill  
Mr B Quinn  
Mrs L Taggart

**IN ATTENDANCE;**

Mr P McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement (until item 85.12)  
Dr C O’Mullan, Head of Curriculum & Operations (until item 85.12)  
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (from item 85.7)  
Mr F Tuffy, Technology Innovation Manager – for presentation item 85.0  
Mrs C McGovern, Boardroom Apprentice  
Mrs É Doherty, Governance Secretary

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Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic all members and attendees were joining the meeting remotely via video conference.

**85.0 PRESENTATION**

The Governing Body Chair welcomed Mr F Tuffy, Technology Innovation Manager of the Business Support Centre (BSC). Mr Tuffy provided members with an overview of the journey of travel of the Business Support Centre in their work supporting businesses with developing skills, fostering innovation and driving applied research.

The Business Support Centre has grown significantly since 2015. The range of supports available to businesses include the InnovateUs programme, Innovation Vouchers and KTP (Knowledge Transfer Partnership) projects. The BSC has supported 190 businesses and over 470 employees from lockdown. Over 220 jobs have been created in the past three years through the various Assured Skills Academies.

The COVID pandemic has brought its own challenges. The Department (DfE) provided funds (£300K) to deliver courses in a number of skill priority areas, delivered through a blended learning approach. A Kick Start software course was also delivered in partnership with Derry City & Strabane District Council.

Mr Tuffy concluded that the Business Support Centre hopes to sustain and maintain its work, to continue to invest in staff, to build on the existing Innovation Centres and create additional centres and continue to link with its strategic partners in the City & Growth deals.

A question and answer session followed with many favourable and supportive comments from members. The Governing Body Chair paid tribute to Mr Tuffy and the Business Support Centre Team, under the leadership of the Principal and the Director of Finance and Economic Engagement for the significant growth in this area and in receiving among other awards, the prestigious 'Best Economic Engagement Award' in the UK at the Times Educational Supplement FE Awards 2020.

*Mr Tuffy left the meeting at this juncture.*

### **85.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Governing Body Chair then opened the main business of the meeting; he welcomed everyone and extended a special welcome to Mrs L Taggart who was returning from a short leave of absence.

The Board had full attendance.

### **85.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Governor, Mrs R Dougherty declared a conflict of interest with item 85.10. There was no declarations of any other business.

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

Report 1 Summary Register of Interests Report – February 2021

The Governing Body Chair referred to the updated Summary Register of Interests Report that included a new entry for Mr D Ferns, Student Governor and updated entries to his own details.

### **85.3 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting Held on 11 November 2020**

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

Report 1 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting Held on 11 November 2020

Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Special Governing Body Meeting Held on 16 December 2020 (Part 1)

Report 3 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting Held on 22 January 2021

#### **Report 1 Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting Held on 11 November 2020**

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 11 November 2020 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 S Gillespie

#### **85.3.1 Matters Arising**

The Governing Body Chair brought members through the agreed actions from the November 2020 Board meeting – all matters had been closed off.

**Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Special Governing Body Meeting Held on 16 December 2020 (Part 1)**

The Draft Minutes of the Special Governing Body meeting held on 16 December 2020 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED;** Mr G Killeen

**SECONDED;** Mrs R Dougherty

**Report 2.2 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the Draft Minutes of the Special Governing Body Meeting held on 16 December 2020 (Part 1)

**85.4 STRATEGY DAY – Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting Held on 22 January 2021 – Strategy Day**

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 22 January 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED;** Mr M O’Kane

**SECONDED;** Mr P Canavan

**Report 85.4.1 Matters Arising**

The Governing Body Chair stated he would discuss matters arising from the Strategy Day under the Governing Body Chair’s Business later into the Agenda (item 85.9). He then invited Mr S Gillespie, Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee to present his Committee Report.

**85.5 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

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| Report 1 | Committee Chair’s Summary Report                               |
| Report 2 | Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 8 February 2021 |
| Report 3 | Report To Those Charged With Governance – Final Report         |
| Report 4 | Annual Report & Financial Statements for Year End 31 July 2020 |

The Committee Chair highlighted key items within the Committee meeting;

The Director of Finance & Economic Engagement reported that there was no Direct Award Contracts. The Prompt Payment figure for the 30 days to 31 January 2021 was 93% and for the year to date was 94%. The Internal Auditor presented two review reports to the Committee. The Internal Audit Progress Report 2020/21 was progressing as per the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21. The Review on Cyber Security received a satisfactory assurance opinion with four medium priority actions. The Audit Review on Complaints & Appeals received a satisfactory assurance opinion with four low priority actions.

At the Committee meeting the External Auditor reported on the delay in closing off the 2019/20 Financial Statements and Accounts for Year End 31 July 2020 to allow these to be laid before the NI Assembly. Concern was expressed at the Committee

meeting on the delay with this matter. However, since the Committee meeting the C&AG certified the Annual Report & Financial Statements on 10 February 2021. The Committee were notified that the fraud matter previously reported to the Committee (Sept 2020) has been closed. The College are dealing with another matter that may lead to a Fraud Notification Form being submitted to the Department (DfE).

**Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 8 February 2021**

The Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 8 February 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED;** Mr S Gillespie

**SECONDED;** Ms M Breslin

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr Gillespie for his report and invited Mr M O’Kane, Committee Chair of the Education Committee to present his report.

**85.6 EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Committee Chair’s Summary Report
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 10 February 2021
- Report 3 Quality Reports
- Report 3.1 Interim Self Evaluation Report 2019/20 and Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21

**Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 10 February 2021**

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 10 February 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED;** Mr M O’Kane

**SECONDED;** Mr G Killeen

The Committee Chair provided a summary of the matters discussed at the Committee meeting which included an update on the CDP Progress Report against Targets. This was showing part-time FE and HLA’s below target. Part-time enrolments were showing 29% below target, impacted by the COVID pandemic restrictions. It was noted that HLA’s had achieved 66 enrolments against a target of 69. Essential Skills enrolments target is on track.

Retention (94%), Achievement (87%) and Success (80%) targets for 2019/20 were all above 2018/19 rates.

The Head of Curriculum & Operations reported concerns with outstanding decisions from the Awarding Organisations on the mitigations in relation to the work based learning elements of the curriculum, in particular TFS and APPNI programmes. Due to the continued restrictions being placed upon the Sector, some students may not achieve their qualifications prior to the end of this academic year.

A FE Forum has been established to specifically consider new curriculum provision for 2021/22. The Committee Chair reported on the development of the Traineeship provision (available through Sector Colleges) which is a significant curriculum development for the FE Sector as part of an ongoing initial reform of qualifications. Planning is underway to commence delivery in September 2021 for Level 2 qualifications in a number of professional and technical areas. The Traineeship creates a clear pathway of progression to allow participants to progress to an Apprenticeship at Level 3 or alternatively to FE at Level 3 and then to the Higher Education options. Mr G Killeen, through his membership of the Education & Skills Delivery Partnership Group will bring this item to the Group's attention for further discussion and awareness.

The Committee Chair referred to Mr Tuffy's earlier presentation (item 85.0) and noted that the Education Committee will receive regular reports on the work of the Business Support Centre.

The Principal suggested it would be useful to begin a process to plan a North West annual innovation conference to showcase the work of the various educational institutions.

#### **Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 10 February 2021**

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 10 February 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED;** Mr M O'Kane

**SECONDED;** Mr S McGregor

#### **Report 3.1 Interim Self Evaluation Report 2019/20 and Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21**

The Governing Body Chair added that he would now sign off the Report that the Board had received and reviewed the full submission (Report 3.1) and were content with same.

**PROPOSED;** Mr M O'Kane

**SECONDED;** Mr G Killeen

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mr O'Kane for his report. He then invited Mrs R Dougherty, Chair of the Resources Committee to present her report.

### **85.7 RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

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

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| Report 1 | Committee Chair's Summary Report                               |
| Report 2 | Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 1 February 2021 |
| Report 3 | Management Accounts for 5 Months to 31 December 2020           |
| Report 4 | Fees & Charges Policy 2021/22                                  |
| Report 5 | Safeguarding Report  |

The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had received a presentation from Mr G Bradley, Estates Manager. The Estates Manager provided members with an update in relation to the Springtown Project; the dispute is still ongoing on the final account. OHMG, in conjunction with an external QS are undertaking a review of the project - (most recent figure from ICT to OHMG is 3% greater than original tender). Two compensation events (total value £48K) remain outstanding with no further correspondence from RPP. It was highlighted that the College does not have the funds to cover any overspend based on the OHMG figure for the project and discussions will have to take place with the Department (DfE).

Under the City Deal, the College is progressing an Outline Business Case for the Strabane Project. It has also made a presentation to Causeway Coast & Glens Council on a proposed Food Village under their Growth Deal. The final draft of the Estates Strategy will be completed by March 2021 and will be presented to the Governing Body.

In relation to the Management Accounts for the five months to 31 December 2020, Income, was showing a positive variance of £532K due to higher drawdown of the DfE Grant. Skills Focus and HLA income were under budget however, the budget figures are still expected to be met. VEP course fees will come close to budget. HE Income is showing a positive variance of £125K. Loss of income on part-time programmes will be partly compensated for through funds from the DfE Skills Intervention Programmes.

Expenditure - Staffing Costs were showing a favourable variance of £586K with anticipated absences due to Covid and illness not being as high as anticipated. This variance will be offset by additional expenditure in estates and IT. Challenges were noted in respect to the collection of student fees, it was agreed that a sensitive approach is needed for this year. The NDPB return was showing two additional allocations in December 2020, the total Delegated Expenditure Limit (DEL) has increased to £29.4m (including £1m for STS). The College is confident this will be spent or committed by 31 March 2021.

The Committee Chair reported on some updates on the budget since the Committee meeting held on 1 February 2021, these included a request by the Department to accrue £244k as an additional 1% pay accrual for lecturers from Sept 2019 to March 2021. £42k - Support Staff, Phase 2 pay award 2019/20. £41k – to cover the costs of additional courses with local schools that were put in place to ensure social distancing could be maintained. £75k – IT equipment. Regulations are currently being drafted by the Department for a proposed payment of £500 to all Full-time, HE students.

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

The Committee Chair wished to appraise the Board that she had recently met with the Safeguarding Team who are working towards the Quality Standard in Carer Support Accreditation (QSCS). This will provide opportunities for the College to review and improve best practice, provide greater consistency for young adult carers across the College and develop a sustainable approach to carer support. The Board welcomed this initiative.

Additionally the College has adopted Elemental's Digital Social Prescribing Platform, which will enhance student wellbeing and promote new ways of working using social prescribing.

In relation to staffing matters, highlights from the Committee meeting reported that 34 recruitment exercises have been carried out with no difficulty to recruit posts.

Twelve posts are currently going through the recruitment process. There have been 19 permanent, 15 temporary and 7 leavers within this period.

There was a reduction in teaching staff absences showing 2.89% for December 2020 against 5.59% for December 2019. Support staff absences have also reduced showing 2.29% for December 2020 against 4.59% for December 2019.

A Staff Wellbeing Programme for Semester 2 has been drafted. A Staff Wellbeing Strategy is currently being drafted based on the Business in the Community Working Well Model.

A total of 612 staff members attended events provided during the Inter-semester week Staff Development Programme. This represents 1090 training hours. There were 151 attendees at the Learning and Teaching Conference, which was a record attendance.

#### **Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting Held on 1 February 2021**

The Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 1 February 2021 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

**PROPOSED;** Mrs R Dougherty

**SECONDED;** Mr B Quinn

#### **Report 4 Fees & Charges Policy 2021/22**

Approval was sought from the Board for the amendments shown to the Fees & Charges Policy and pending receipt of the revised definition of an 'international student' within the Departments' (DfE) revised Circular, FE 14/12, 'Further Education Residency and Funding Requirements'.

**PROPOSED;** Mrs R Dougherty

**SECONDED;** Mr S McGregor

#### **Report 5.1 Draft FE Sector, Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy Covid-19 Addendum**

Approval was requested for the amendment to the Policy which now included the advice from the Public Health Agency (PHA) and other relevant authorities in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**PROPOSED;** Mrs R Dougherty

**SECONDED;** Mr B Quinn

The Governing Body Chair thanked Mrs Dougherty and Ms S Kelly for their report.

### **85.8 PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS**

The Principal was delighted to report that as one of the four delivery partners he will be signing the Heads of Terms for the City Deal on 24 February 2021. The delivery partners are Derry City & Strabane District Council, Ulster University, Western Health

& Social Care Trust, C-TRIC and North West Regional College. Within the proposed projects for Strabane, subject to Business Case approval by the Department (DfE) the College will endeavor to deliver a new purpose built campus on the site. The Principal wished to record his thanks to Chief Executive Mr John Kelpie and his Council team for leading this important piece of strategic work for the City and region.

- A new 5 year Service Level Agreement will be signed off with the NIPS for curriculum provision at HMP Magilligan. Some new curriculum offers will be available to participants.
- SSE Airtricity have issued bursaries to some of our STEM students under the SSE Airtricity Scholarship Fund which helps finance Higher Education study. It was highlighted that the Scholarship Programme has a huge, positive impact on the life of the students.

**It was agreed that the Board formally write to thank SSE Airtricity for their valued contribution to these students.**

The Governing Body Chair thanked the Principal, Mrs K Moore and her team for the ongoing work relating to the Covid pandemic.

## 85.9 GOVERNING BODY CHAIR'S BUSINESS

### ➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	GB Self Assessment Summary Report 2019/20
Report 1.1	DfE GB Self Assessment Full Report 2019/20
Report 2	Skills Matrix
Report 3	Strategy Day – Output Paper
Report 4	Membership – verbal report

The Governing Body Chair thanked all members who participated in the Self-Assessment Exercise for 2019/20. Attendance had increased for both Governing Body and Committee meetings for 2019/20, despite this both figures are below the Sector average for 2019/20. For the views expressed on the five separate themes in relation to Personal Performance, GB Performance, GB Procedures and Composition, GB Committees, Training & Induction all results were more positive than for 2018/19. The Governing Body Chair thanked the Board for helping deliver these positive results.

The Governing Body Chair referred to Report 3, the Output Paper from the Strategy Day. One of the actions from the Strategy Day was to draft a strategic statement of intent, with a priority to be an enhanced focus on engagement with those who are economically inactive. This draft statement will be brought to the next Board meeting together with an Action Plan which will be prepared by the Senior Leadership Team.

In continuing his report, the Governing Body Chair wished to acknowledge and thank Governors; Dr N Hand, Mr G Killeen and Mr S McGregor who had kindly agreed to extensions to their current terms of office. Mrs R Dougherty had also kindly agreed to be nominated as a mentor on CPANI, Public Board Mentoring Scheme for graduate students from Queens University Belfast and the University of Ulster Business School.



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**85.10 CORRESPONDENCE****➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Correspondence from Minister D Dodds to Mr L Murphy, Jan 2021  
Report 2 Correspondence from Ms K Clarke to Mr G Finnegan & Mr L Murphy  
Report 3 Correspondence from Ms K Clarke to Minister D Dodds Feb 2021

The Governing Body Chair referred to the first item of correspondence from Minister D Dodds to Mr L Murphy to offer her sincere thanks and appreciation for the work the College has undertaken to introduce a range of skills interventions to support those individuals impacted by Covid-19.

*Mrs R Dougherty left the meeting at this juncture.*

The other items of correspondence (Reports 2, 3) were discussed under Reserved Business (85.12). The Principal offered to brief Staff Governor, Mrs L Taggart on this matter post meeting.

**85.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no any other business to discuss.

**85.12 RESERVED BUSINESS**

There was no any other business and the Governing Body Chair thanked everyone for joining. The meeting closed at 1840.

**Date of next meeting:** 27 April 2021

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ **Governing Body Chair**  
**Mr G Finnegan**

**Date:** 27 April 2021