
MINUTES OF THE NINETY FIRST MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2022, COMMENCING 1700

PRESENT:

Mr G Killeen, Governing Body Vice Chair (acting in the capacity of Chair)
Ms M Breslin (until item 91.11)
Mr P Canavan (from 1805)
Mrs D Creevy
Mrs R Dougherty
Mrs S Fisher
Mr S Gillespie
Mrs M Gormley
Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive
Mr S McGregor
Mrs J McKeever
Prof M Ó Néill
Mr B Quinn
Mrs C Shongo
Mr P Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE;

Mr P McKeown, Finance Director (until item 91.11)
Dr C O'Mullan, Head of Curriculum & Operations (until 91.11)
Ms S Kelly, HR Manager (joined during item 91.6)
Mrs C McWilliams, Boardroom Apprentice (until item 91.11)
Mrs É Doherty, Governance Secretary

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

91.1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES

The Governing Body Vice Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended a warm welcome to the newly appointed Governors. Apologies were received from Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services.

The Governing Body Vice Chair stated that following the untimely and sad passing of the Governing Body Chair, Mr Gerard Finnegan (RIP) he was now acting in the Chair's capacity. Mr Finnegan had been a member of the Board since 2011. He had made a significant contribution and impact on the College. He was a kind and compassionate individual with a strong work ethic and a passion for education, the City and region. He will be sorely missed by his colleagues, the Sector and the wider community. The Board respectively held a minute's silence in memory of Mr Finnegan and to others who had recently passed away.

91.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/ DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS/ REGISTER OF INTERESTS SUMMARY/

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

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Summary Register of Interests Report – February 2022

The updated Summary Register was noted which included the entries for the newly appointed Governors; Mrs D Creevy, Mrs S Fisher, Mrs M Gormley, Mrs J McKeever, Mrs C Shongo and Mr P Thompson.

91.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2021➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 10 November 2021

The Draft Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 10 November 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

Report 1 Matters Arising

The Governing Body Vice Chair brought members through the agreed actions from the November 2021 Board meeting –

89.0 It was agreed that an invite be extended to Mr C Woods, ODT to present to the refreshed Board – this will take place at a future Board meeting.

89.4 Education Committee – Further discussion to take place at the Board on the College Development Plan

The Governing Body Vice Chair then invited Mr S Gillespie, Committee Chair to report on the business of the recent Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

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

Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report

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

Report 3 Risk Management Policy January 2022 (clean copy)

Report 3.1 Risk Management Policy (with tracked changes)

Report 4 Report To Those Charged with Governance - final

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 8 February 2022

The Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 8 February 2022 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 Committee Chair reported there were no Direct Award Contracts.

The Risk Management Policy was reviewed. A few minor changes had been made to the Policy. The role of Risk Management Champion had been removed from the Policy and some of the associated duties incorporated into the role of the Risk Management Group.

The College's general risk appetite level is classified as 'cautious'. Going forward the risk appetite will be considered when reviewing each risk on the Risk Register.

Mr A Mulcahy, Head of Finance is now a member of the Risk Management Group.

A risk management software package is currently being considered.

Members were content to approve the Risk Management Policy

PROPOSED, Mr S Gillespie

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

The Internal Auditor presented the Internal Audit Report 2021/22 to the Committee. This confirmed that the Audit Plan was on target. The Internal Audit Review on Procurement and Contract Management received a satisfactory assurance rating with three, low priority management actions.

The Review on Safeguarding received a satisfactory assurance rating with one, low priority action related to outstanding Safeguarding training. The Data Protection Policies and Procedures GDPR review was a factual report. No level of assurance was awarded. There were four, low level findings as a result of this review.

The External Auditor presented the Final Report to Those Charged With Governance 2020/21, this included one adjustment from the Draft Report issued to the Committee/Governing Body in November 2021. This adjustment did not impact the clean audit opinion.

The Governing Body Vice Chair thanked Mr Gillespie. Due to technical issues the Education Committee Chair requested for his report be taken later into the Agenda. The Governing Body Vice Chair agreed to this and invited Mrs R Dougherty, Chair of the Resources Committee to present her report next to the Board.

91.6 RESOURCES COMMITTEE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

- Report 1 Committee Chair's Summary Report
- Report 2 Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 9 February 2022
- Report 3 Management Accounts for 6 Months to 31 January 2022
- Report 4 Fees & Charges Policy 2022/23

Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 9 February 2022

The Draft Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 9 February 2022 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED, Mr S McGregor

SECONDED, Mrs R Dougherty

The Committee Chair stated that at Committee the Finance Director reported on the Tenders Issued Report. Assurance was received that the process for managing the tenders was diligent.

For the benefit of new Governors, the Committee Chair provided some background to the Springtown Redevelopment Project. Issues continue with the Contractor in contesting the final account. The College continues to liaise with the legal and contractual advisors in respect to this matter. The Department (DfE) and CPD have been apprised on this matter.

Referencing discussions at the Special Governing Body meeting held on 14 December 2021 (Ref GB 90.8.1), in relation to the refurbishment space for an innovation Centre in the Springtown Campus, an approximate cost of £300K net was quoted for the building costs and approved by Board members. Since that date the cost was estimated to be £375K net and the most recent quote was £382K net. The Finance Director indicated that he was aiming to keep the building costs under £400K net. The Committee members were content with this.

In respect to the Springtown Redevelopment Project. The City Deal (Town Centre Regeneration Project in Strabane) is at OBC stage and the Growth Deal (Food Village Project, Causeway) is at SOC stage.

The Committee Chair reported that all targets within the Business Support Centre Update Report were met except for the Economy Recovery Action Plan (ERAP) targets that were unlikely to be met.

The Committee Chair and the Finance Director jointly reported on the approach that had been made by representatives from Limavady Cricket & Rugby Football Club. The Club currently have a lease agreement with the College for land owned by the College at Limavady, Main Street Campus. The Club wish to terminate this current lease which is due to expire in 2028. They now would like to enter a long term lease to develop this waste ground into playing pitches.

This matter will also be referred to the Department (DfE).

The Board was happy to support the Finance Director to further discussions with the Club on this matter.

PROPOSED, Mrs R Dougherty

SECONDED, Mr S McGregor

The most recent Management Accounts for the 6 Months to 31 January 2022 were provided to the Board (Report 3). The Finance Director reported that he had no major concerns, however energy (gas) costs have dramatically increased in recent months. The Finance Director has logged this concern with the Department (DfE) as a significant pressure going into 2022/23.

At the Committee meeting it was recorded that there had been no formal update on the Budget for 2022/23 however since then a budget letter has been received. This item will be taken under the Principal's Business later into the Agenda (Ref 91.7)

The Board was content to approve the Fees & Charges Policy 2022/23 – no changes to the fees/rates.

PROPOSED, Mr S McGregor

SECONDED, Mrs R Dougherty

In relation to the Staffing matters the Committee Chair reported that from 14 October 2021 to 21 January 2022, 46 recruitment exercises have been carried out. During this period there was a total of 56 new appointments, 28 permanent appointments and 28 temporary appointments. Seventeen employees had left the College since the last Committee meeting in November 2021. Most of these leavers were part-time lecturers who had not received an offer of work within a two-year period. It was highlighted at Committee that the number of applications had decreased since last year. Therefore, to assist getting the widest pool of applicants the College Recruitment Team have re-engaged with NI Jobs for a trial period of three months. Work is also taking place to promote a stronger College brand within the Get Got Job platform.

The Committee Chair reported that based on the advice provided in the Disability Confident Scheme and on good practice advised by the Equality Commission the College proposes to change the current procedure in recruiting people with disabilities. The guidance will state, '*applicants with a disability who meet all essential criteria for the post will automatically be offered an interview*'. If the criteria are enhanced to include desirable criteria, applicants with a disability who do not meet the desirable criteria will still be invited to attend for interview.

The Recruitment Team continue to work closely with the College Equality Officer and the RNIB to encourage individuals with a disability to apply for posts within the College.

It was noted at Committee that the percentage Lost Time Rate for Teaching Staff December 2021/22 was showing 7.15%, an increase on the December 2020/21 figure which was 2.89%. An increase in Support Staff for the same period was showing December 2021/22, 4.79% against December 2020/21, 2.29%. Personal

stress is highlighted as the main reason for absence. It was noted that a robust Occupational Health system is required to manage the increasing mental health issues contributing to staff absence. A number of mitigation actions are being progressed including the delivery of Mental Health First Aider training.

The HR Manager reported that a management review took place on the appraisal cycle for all staff and a refreshed appraisal cycle has been developed. For the benefit of new Governors, the HR Manager provided an overview on the key strategic pieces of work within the HR Department.

The Governing Body Vice Chair then returned to Agenda item 91.5, Education Committee and invited Prof M Ó Néill to present his report.

91.5 EDUCATION COMMITTEE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Committee Chair's Summary Report
Report 2	Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 26 January 2022
Report 3	Education Committee – Review of Terms of Reference
Report 3.1	Summary of Proposed Changes to the Committee's Terms of Reference
Report 4	Quality Improvement Report
Report 5	Safeguarding Report

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 26 January 2022

The Draft Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 26 January 2022 were taken as read and agreed were an accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to adopt the Minutes.

PROPOSED, Prof M Ó Néill

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

Prof M Ó Néill reported that following his appointment as Chair to the Committee he wished to record his thanks to the previous Chair, Mr M O'Kane for his commitment to the Committee. Prof Ó Néill chaired his first Education Committee meeting of 26 January 2022. At that meeting the Committee's Terms of Reference were reviewed and now presented to the Board for approval.

Committee's Terms of Reference – with proposed amendments (Report 3.1)

PROPOSED, Prof M Ó Néill

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

The Committee Chair highlighted positive news that the Skills for Life and Work Programme (APPNI) had exceeded targets. The enrolment vs targets for the College largely reflects the picture across the Sector with full-time FE and HE below target.

Prof Ó Néill had also joined the recent annual Learning and Teaching Conference, 'Education for Sustainable Development'.

The Committee had received a progress Report on Magilligan Prison. A Deputy Regional Head of Programmes had been appointed. The Principal added that College staff have not been permitted onsite since the College Christmas closure. This has resulted in difficulties and limitations in providing remote learning at Magilligan. Work continues to help alleviate these issues. In answer to a Governor's query the Head of Curriculum & Operation Services provided further information into the contract between the Department of Justice in delivering the curriculum programmes.

The Safeguarding Report (Report 5) was discussed at Committee and it was highlighted that anxiety and depression continue to be the most common referral to the Safeguarding Team for additional support. A recent Internal Audit Review took place in December 2021 on Safeguarding. The Report will progress through the Committee.

The Quality Improvement Return (Report 4) had been provided to the Committee. The Report had noted the need to meet targets. The disruption caused by the COVID pandemic had a negative impact on achievement rates for 2020/21. Recommendations were noted that the success and achievement rates improve.

In conclusion, for the benefit of new Governors Dr C O'Mullan provided an overview on the key priority areas within the Education Committee.

The Governing Body Vice Chair thanked Prof M Ó Néill and invited Mr L Murphy, Principal & Chief Executive to present his report.

91.7 PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Principal's Report

The Principal provided an overview of his report including updates on the COVID situation, Strategic projects including the City Deal, Strabane Canal Basin and the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal – proposed Food Village, the Succeed North West and the Cross-Border Tertiary Education Cluster.

The Principal referred to an update from the Department (DfE) on the Draft Budget for April 2022 to March 2023, with a reduction of funding (net of STS spend) of approximately £2.2m on last year. Challenges going forward include the pressures related to increased energy costs and pay pressures for both lecturing and support staff. The Finance Director added that there were additional concerns on the likely reduction of funds through the Business Support Centre for skills and innovation and pressures on the funds in relation to the Prison contract.

The Governing Body Vice Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

91.8 GOVERNING BODY VICE CHAIR'S BUSINESS

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 2	GB Self-Assessment Summary Report 2020/21
Report 2.1	GB Self-Assessment Full Report 2020/21
Report 3	Governing Body – April Meeting
Report 4	Committee Membership Summary

The Governance Secretary referred to the Governing Body Self-Assessment Summary Report (Report 2) and the full Report for 2020/21 (Report 2.1). Highlights from the report showed there was a 92.9% response rate to the survey which was the same as in 2019/20. This was above the sector response rate at 88%.

Attendance at the Governing Body and Committee meetings for 2020/21 was above the Sector average. This was showing a great improvement as the College had the lowest attendance across the Sector from 2015/16. The Governing Body Vice Chair added that it was evident that remote attendance had helped the attendance figures.

Out of the five key themes, the views expressed in three themes were more positive or equal to the 2019/20 results. Members were encouraged to go over the Reports again. If members had any further comments on the Report or feedback to the Department (DfE) members were asked to pass these through to the Governance Secretary.

The Committee Membership Summary was for information and assistance for the new members (Report 4).

91.9 CORRESPONDENCE

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Correspondence from SWC
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The Governance Secretary noted the letter of sympathy from the South West College on the recent passing of our Governing Body Chair, Mr G Finnegan (RIP).

The Principal then reported on the correspondence Governors received on 28 January 2022 in respect to the change management arrangements with South West College.

91.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business to discuss.

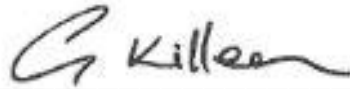
91.11 RESERVED BUSINESS – taken separately

The Governing Body Vice Chair thanked everyone for joining the meeting and brought the meeting to a close at 1840.

Ms M Breslin, Mr P McKeown, Dr C O Mullan and Ms C McWilliams left the meeting at this juncture.

Date of next meeting: tbc

Signed; _____



Mr G Killeen, Vice Chair, Acting in the Capacity of Chair

Date; 23 February 2022

APPROVED