

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Monday, 1st July 2024 at 2.00 pm in Room 1.7 James House, 1st Floor, James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA

Present: Bronagh Scott (Chair)
Kieran McCormick (Deputy Chair)
Linda Kelly, Chief Executive
Brenda Kelly
Eilidh McGregor
Siobhán Caslin
Nirmala Bhogal
Katrín Lehmann
Karen Diamond
Sharon McRoberts
Ciara Scannell (Via Teams)
Gary Mitchell
Peter May (Permanent Secretary DoH)
Tim Johnston (DoH)

In attendance: Jill Jackson, Head of Corporate Services
Gary Cousins, Senior Professional Officer

Secretariat: Muriel Lockhart, Corporate Services Officer

1.0 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Emma McIlveen and Janine Stockdale.

2.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

2.1 Chair welcomed and introduced Mr May, DoH Permanent Secretary and Mr Johnston, DoH to the meeting. Members noted that Mr Johnston was NIPEC's Sponsor Branch representative in DoH. Chair requested that members introduce themselves before asking Mr May if he would like to speak to members.

Mr May thanked Chair and the members for their invitation to the Council meeting. He stated that it was a good opportunity to see and hear about the work which NIPEC was delivering on behalf of the Department and the nursing workforce in NI. He also congratulated NIPEC on their significant achievement of the silver standard of the Investors in People (IIP) award. Mr May asked members if they had any questions they wished to ask him.

Ms McRoberts stated that the budget was a concern for NIPEC Council as it would almost certainly impact on the work which NIPEC had planned for the year ahead. Mr May acknowledged that the budget for 2024-25 was extremely restricted and that the Minister had several options before him regarding opening allocations and potential reductions in the funding for each of the HSC ALBs with the best-case scenario being a flat cash budget award.

Ms Diamond asked if there had been any progress in achieving additional funding for the implementation of the DoH Mental Health Strategy. Mr May indicated that given the current financial restrictions facing the Department, it was unlikely that there would be an increase in that investment.

Chair thanked Mr May for his comments.

Chair thanked Mr McCormick very sincerely for stepping in as Interim Chair during her absence. Chair also thanked Ms Caslin for stepping in as Interim Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee during this time.

2.2 Chair advised that no members of the public were in attendance at today's meeting.

2.3 Chair asked Mrs L Kelly to present the Regional Learning Disability Network report.

Mrs L Kelly informed members that in 2020-21, the previous Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) had commissioned a review of learning disability nursing. In September 2022, the current CNO had commissioned NIPEC to establish a Regional Strategic Workforce Development Group (hereafter referred to as the Development Group) to rapidly build on the DoH Review and previous reports and consider a new regional model for learning disability nurses. Mrs L Kelly informed members that she had co-chaired this development group and that they had now produced a report following eighteen months of work across several organisations.

Mrs L Kelly shared a power point presentation with members highlighting the underpinning principles of the new RNLD model, based on four Pillars of Practice. She confirmed that moving forward there were thirty recommendations which were in line with the CNO's vision for the future of the profession in Northern Ireland.

Chair acknowledged the work in producing the report which in her view had been long overdue. Ms McRoberts noted that it was a very aspirational report and asked how funding constraints would impact on the implementation of the recommendations. She also enquired how Northern Ireland compared with the rest of the United Kingdom in attracting applicants to learning disability nursing and whether a timeframe for the recommendations had been proposed.

Mrs L Kelly advised that an infrastructure needed to be built first of all to create the conditions for the model to work however work would continue in the background regardless of the funding constraints. She also reported that Northern Ireland was struggling to attract applicants in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom and it would now be up to CNO to decide whether she endorses the recommendations and appropriate timescales.

Mrs McRoberts and Ms Diamond both agreed that it was a significant piece of work and looking at the recommendations, some would be easier to implement than others.

Chair concluded the conversation by welcoming the report which would support improvements in this area and thanked Mrs L Kelly for her informative presentation.

2.4 Council Members - Conflicts of Interest

Members did not declare any conflicts of interest in relation to the agenda items to be discussed at today's Council meeting

2.5 Workshop: Boardroom Leadership Programme and 2024-25 Action Plan

Chair thanked the members who had attended the workshop on 12th June 2024 at the HSC Leadership Centre. Chair reported that it was a very successful day and that the notes from the session had been shared with the members by HSCLC on 24th June 2024. In order to complete the Council development plan for 2024-25, Chair proposed that a further workshop be held in later October or early November 2024. Members agreed with this proposal.

Action: Ms Jackson to liaise with HSCLC to agree a date for the next Workshop in Autumn 2024.

2.6 Chairs' Meeting with Health Minister Robin Swann, May 2024: Budget Overview

Chair reported that she had attended the above meeting with other ALBs' Chairs and the message coming out of this meeting was that we were in very difficult times regarding funding.

2.7 Council Members' appraisals 2023-24

Chair thanked the members who had submitted their appraisals and asked for any outstanding ones to be sent to her in order that these could be completed.

Members noted that Ms Jackson had been in contact to organise face to face meetings to discuss and sign off the appraisals. Chair asked if anyone had not a confirmed date to please email Ms Jackson and confirm a date.

2.8 Council Training – Business Continuity Planning

Chair confirmed that there had been a very successful training day on 7th March 2024 which a number of Council members were able to attend. It was agreed that a new Business Continuity Plan would be developed, incorporating the learning from March's session, and presented to Council for approval in either December 2024 or March 2025.

2.9 NICON Communications on Decision Time

Members noted that Ms Jackson had opened a NICON folder in the Resources section of Decision Time.

2.10 Register of Council Members Activity (*Circulated for noting*)

Chair thanked the members who had submitted their updates.

Members noted that a new register for 2024-25 had been created with the previous register saved in NIPEC's network.

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th March 2024 (*Circulated for approval*)

Chair asked if members had read the minutes and were happy to approve.

Ms McGregor noted that the last sentence of paragraph 6.6 of the minutes appeared to be unfinished and it was agreed that Ms Jackson would complete this.

Subject to this change, Council members approved the minutes from the previous Council meeting on Wednesday 13th March 2024.

Action: Ms Jackson to complete paragraph 6.6 of the March 2024 Council minutes.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

Chair asked Ms Jackson to take Members through the Action Plan.

4.1 Detailed in updated Action Plan (*Circulated for approval*)

Ms Jackson gave an update in relation to the matters arising as outlined in the Action Plan and advised that NIPEC had not as yet received their opening allocation but that an extraordinary Council meeting would be convened if further efficiencies were required.

Members approved Ms Jackson's suggestion for a member of the BSO Finance team to present at the council workshop in December 2024.

Members agreed that together with their access to HSC e-learning programmes, the IG training requirements were sufficient and that this action could be marked as complete.

5.0 CORRESPONDENCE

- 5.1** Letter to Permanent Secretaries, May 2024, from Treasury Officer of Accounts: Governance and Accountability Issues (*Circulated for noting*)
- 5.2** Permanent Secretary letter to CEs/Chairs of ALBs, May 2024: Election Guidance (*circulated on 28 May 2024 to Council members*)
- 5.3** Fraud Alert: FA 03 2024: Attempted Mandate Fraud and cyber related security incident (*Circulated for noting*)
- 5.4** BSO Regional Counter Fraud: End of Year Report 2023-24 (*Circulated for noting*)

Council members noted the correspondence.

6.0 OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

14.55 Chair welcomed Mr G Cousins, Senior Professional Officer, to the meeting.

6.1 Presentation on Draft Performance Management Dashboard by Gary Cousins, Senior Professional Officer

Mr Cousins shared a power point presentation on the draft Performance Management Dashboard with members. He asked members to note that the aim of the document was to combine previous versions discussed at the Professional & Business Committee into this latest version. He advised that NIPEC had researched the purchase of an online dashboard but it had proved to be too expensive.

Mr Cousins took members through the presentation which included the following:

- A Red RAG overview included an explanation for the delay. These delays were largely due to reliance on stakeholder involvement and this was difficult at times to secure due to pressures on the system;
- The 2024-25 Workplan with a list of further projects that may be initiated if commissioned and subject to available capacity;
- Definition of the RAG rating;
- Dashboard overview;
- Pre-project weighting guidance;
- Pre-project weighting tool;
- A delivery model.

Mr Cousins confirmed that going forward, two nominated senior professional officers would review the dashboard on a timeline to be agreed by Mrs L Kelly and the Professional and Business Committee. The document would be tested for the remainder of 2024-25 and adjustments made to improve the current model where appropriate. Mr Cousins stated that this document would offer Council members a better oversight and assurance on the progress of NIPEC's professional objectives.

Chair thanked Mr Cousins for his comprehensive presentation.

6.2 Chief Executive's Report (*Circulated for noting*)

The Chief Executive stated that she assumed members had read her report which contained some of the key highlights of her work and NIPEC's priorities since the last Council meeting.

Council members noted the Chief Executives report

6.3 NIPEC Final Professional Work Plan 2023-24 –Monitoring Report from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 (*Circulated for noting*)

Mrs L Kelly advised that this was the closing off of the 2023-24 NIPEC Work Plan with thirty-one objectives achieved and ten being carried forward to the 2024-25 work plan. Members noted that this had been discussed at the Professional and Business committee at their meeting on 7th June 2024. As there were no questions, members noted the Report.

6.4 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2024-25 Q1 –Monitoring Report from 1st April to 30th June 2024 (*Circulated for consideration*)

Mrs L Kelly reported that this was a very full work plan for 2024-25 and had been endorsed by DoH. Mrs L Kelly confirmed that forty-one of the objectives were on target and that seven had not yet commenced.

6.5 A copy of the Consultation Activity Report (*Circulated for noting*)

The Chief Executive provided an update on the consultation activity report.

Council Members noted the Consultation Activity Report.

15.15pm Mr P May left the meeting.

7.0 CORPORATE CONTROL & FINANCE

7.1 Reports from Standing Committees:

7.1.2 Confirmed minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 13th February 2024 (*Circulated for Noting*)

Ms Jackson confirmed that these minutes were approved at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 21st May 2024.

7.1.3 Unconfirmed minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 21st May 2024 (*Circulated for Noting*)

Members noted receipt of the above unconfirmed minutes. Ms Jackson confirmed that these had been approved at the Committee meeting on 26th June 2024.

7.1.4 Confirmed minutes of the Professional & Business Committee Meeting held on 16th February 2024 (*Circulated for Noting*)

Ms Jackson confirmed that these minutes were approved at the Professional and Business committee meeting held on 7th June 2024.

7.2 Finance

7.2.1 NIPEC's Opening Allocation 2024-25

Ms Jackson informed members that to date NIPEC had not received a confirmed allocation but however had received a verbal assurance that we would receive a "flat cash" allocation, the same as the opening allocation for 2023-24. NIPEC would also receive monies to cover the 2023-24 Agenda for Change pay rise of 5% which was paid to staff in June 2024.

7.2.2 Financial Summary of Expenditure, Month 02 (*Late mailing*)

Members were advised that NIPEC had assumed for this report that it would receive a flat cash allocation together with sufficient monies to cover the 5% pay uplift for those staff on Agenda for Change terms and conditions.

Members noted that at Month 02 (May 2024) NIPEC was projecting a yearend surplus of £38,000 with our breakeven position of £20,000 or under. This was largely due to slippage in two posts which would be filled in July/August.

Members also noted from the report that NIPEC had a number of unexpected costs in Month 02, e.g. higher rates, backpay and higher than expected Associate costs for April and May 2024.

Ms Jackson assured the members that NIPEC would adhere strictly to what had been budgeted for the year, pending the receipt of a confirmed allocation. Ms Jackson reiterated that the financial situation would be extremely difficult for NIPEC in 2024-25 with very little flexibility in the budget. She advised that requests had been made for several Associates to be brought in to enhance capacity in the delivery of objectives and that NIPEC would be better placed to decide on the affordability of these requests after Months 03 and 04.

Members noted the update.

7.3 Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 (*Circulated for Approval*)

Chair asked the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee, Mr McCormick, to present this item to Council.

Mr McCormick advised that the document had been presented to the Audit & Risk Committee at their meeting on 26th June 2024 together with a draft copy of the NI Audit Office's '*Report to those charged with Governance*' (RTTCWG) and both had been approved by the members. In the draft RTTCWG, there was one "priority three" recommendation. A Priority three was classified as an issue of a more minor nature which represents good practice and the subject of this one related to the signing off of an employment contract.

Chair also confirmed that the proposed audit opinion was "*that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) will certify the 2023/24 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion, without modification.*"

Mr McCormick then asked if members had any questions and if they were happy to approve the Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24.

Members noted that after approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, the Chair and Chief Executive would sign them and they would be sent to NIAO for certification. NIAO would advise when certification had taken place and they would lay the document before the Assembly before the end of July 2024 in line with the DoH timetable.

Council members approved NIPEC's Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 together with the draft Report to those charged with Governance.

7.4 Chair of A&R Committee's Annual Report on Activity and Assurance for 2023-24 (*Circulated for Approval*)

Mr McCormick advised members that as part of the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference, an annual report of activity was submitted to Council for consideration and approval. This paper highlighted the activities carried out by the Committee throughout 2023-24. Mr McCormick also formally acknowledged Ms Caslin's role as Interim Chair of the Committee while he was Deputy Chair of Council and thanked Ms Caslin for her excellent management of the Committee during that time. As no questions were received the members approved the Annual Report.

7.5 Corporate Risk Register 2024-25, Version 2 (*Circulated for approval*)

Ms Jackson asked members to note the escalation in the scoring of Risks One and Two as discussed at the Council meeting in March 2024. Ms Jackson advised members that the Corporate Risk Register had been approved twice by NIPEC's Business Team and also by the Audit and Risk Committee in May and June 2024.

Ms McGregor raised an issue with Risk 6 and the wording of the heading which was inconsistent across the two pages.

Pending the amendment to the register, members approved Version 2.

Action: Ms Jackson to amend Risk 6 heading on the Corporate Risk Register to ensure consistency.

7.6 Draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 (*Verbal update*)

Ms Jackson confirmed that Sponsor Branch had ratified the Draft Corporate Plan approved by Council in March 2024 and the document would now be published on NIPEC's website.

7.7 Draft Business Plan 2024-25 (*Verbal update*)

Ms Jackson confirmed that Sponsor Branch had ratified the Draft Business Plan 2024-25 approved by Council in March 2024 and the document would now be published on NIPEC's website.

7.8 Equality Annual Progress Report 2023-24 (*Verbal update*)

Ms Jackson advised that this report is due to be submitted to the Equality Commission (EOC) by 31st August 2024. The report will be presented to Business Team and Council in September 2024 for ratification and any update provided to EOC following that.

7.9 NIPEC Policies:

7.9.1 Standing Orders (*Circulated for approval*)

In addition to the change recommended by Internal Audit and explained in the cover sheet, Ms Jackson advised that she had made one change to the issued document, being the replacement of the term MSFM to Partnership Agreement.

Members approved the new version of the Standing Orders.

7.9.2 Fraud Policy and Response Plan (*Circulated for approval*)

Ms Jackson explained that the content of the policy had been revised and was now in line with BSO's regional Fraud Policy and Response Plan. The policy and response plan set out very clearly NIPEC's position on fraud, key responsibilities and avenues for reporting fraud.

Members approved the updated version of the policy.

7.9.3 Extension of Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse (*Circulated for approval*)

Ms Jackson asked members if they were content to approve the extension of this policy for a further year, pending a regional review of the document scheduled for late 2024.

Members approved the extension.

7.9.4 NIPEC Quality Strategy 2024-28 (*Circulated for noting*)

Members noted that this was the final version of the original document approved by Council in March 2024. One further amendment had been included in the driver diagram “Make the best use of Resources” where a change idea to demonstrate our contribution to planet health had been added.

Members approved the Strategy.

8.0 SAFETY AND QUALITY

8.1 DoH Covid-19 Public Inquiry Group (*Verbal update*)

Ms Jackson updated members on the above Inquiry. Following the submission of a formal statement by NIPEC to the Inquiry in November 2023, the Chief Executive had been asked to review proposed redactions suggested by the Inquiry to the statement and associated documents.

Ms Jackson advised that these were minor and largely concerned redaction of names and signatures from documents and NIPEC confirmed agreement with the Inquiry’s solicitors. These documents will most likely be published on the Inquiry website for public view.

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

10.0 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair concluded business and asked the Chief Executive and those who were not members of Council to leave in order that the Confidential session could be held.

Mrs L Kelly, Mr Johnston and Ms Jackson left the meeting.

The next public meeting date of NIPEC Council is 18th September 2024 at 2pm.