

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 2.00 pm in the Meeting Room, 4th Floor, James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA

- Present:** Bronagh Scott (Chair)
Linda Kelly, Chief Executive
Kieran McCormick
Brenda Kelly
Eilidh McGregor
Nirmala Bhogal (via Teams)
Sharon McRoberts
Gary Mitchell
Janine Stockdale
Ciara Scannell
- Apologies:** Katrin Lehmann
Karen Diamond
Siobhán Caslin
- Did Not Attend:** Emma McIlveen
- In Attendance:** Jill Jackson, Head of Corporate Services
Lisa McEneaney, Business Manager
Carole McKenna, Senior Professional Officer
- Secretariat:** Heather Mallon, Council Secretary

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Katrin Lehmann, Karen Diamond and Siobhán Caslin.

2.0 Chair's Business

2.1 Welcome to any Members of the Public

Chair noted that no members of the public were in attendance at today's meeting. She would be keen to explore ways to encourage members of the public/non-Council members to attend future meetings.

Action: *Members to consider how best to encourage members of the public to attend future meetings.*

2.2 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.

2.3 Feedback from Accountability Meeting in October 2024

Chair advised that she had attended the end of Year 2023/24 Accountability Meeting on 9 October 2024 (delayed from July 2024) with the Permanent Secretary, Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Executive in attendance. Chair reported that the Permanent Secretary was content that NIPEC remains on track with its key business objectives and that no significant issues had been identified that would cause him concern.

Chief Executive advised that the question of AHPs coming under the NIPEC umbrella had been raised and Tim Johnston from the CNO's office is to review the relevant legislation to see if it is possible in the first instance, however, the Chief Executive wanted to be careful not to start conversations around the matter too early. Chair advised that she would discuss with the CNO in the New Year.

Chair advised that the Permanent Secretary would continue to meet with NIPEC Chair on an annual basis and was content that any new issues arising outside of this could be dealt with by exception reporting.

A Ground Clearing Meeting with Departmental Sponsor team had then been held on 7 November 2024 to prepare for the 2024/25 midyear accountability review. This was attended by the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Services. There were no issues of concern and the mid year planned review with the Permanent Secretary and Chair was consequently stepped down.

2.4 Invite to Minister and CNO to visit NIPEC

Chair informed members that discussions had taken place regarding extending invitations to both Minister Nesbitt and the CNO to visit NIPEC, with it being the only ALB dedicated to nurses and midwives within the HSC. Such a visit would afford NIPEC's Council to have a conversation with the Minister and CNO about the work of NIPEC. Ms Jackson had composed a letter of invitation to this effect. It was hoped that any such visit would take place in late February 2025, subject to the Minister's availability.

Chair requested that members give some thought to which of NIPEC's projects, linked to significant policy issues, should be showcased on the day and how best to do this. The timing of the visit would coincide with the launch of the NIPEC Business Plan for 2025/26. Chair stated that this had been a good year for achievement with the launch of the Equity of Access Report and the publication of Professor Renfrew's Report.

Chair advised that Council members would be notified of the date once this had been finalised and encouraged them to attend if possible.

Action: *Members to consider which of NIPEC's projects, linked to significant policy issues, should be showcased at the Minister's visit.*

2.5 Updated Council Development Plan (*Circulated for approval*)

Chair enquired if members had read the draft Development Plan, updated subsequent to the recent Council Development Day and if there were any questions. There were no questions and so Chair invited Ms Jackson to run through the decisions to be made.

In relation to Action 1(a), Ms Jackson asked Council to agree a final number of Council meetings and workshops for the year. Chair advised that the appraisals had reflected the desire from a number of Council members to have more opportunities to engage with each other face to face. After discussion it was agreed that four Council meetings per year were sufficient. With regard to workshops, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to hold these on days separate from Council meetings. It was further agreed that three workshops would suffice in addition to one development day. In response to a query from Mrs McRoberts, Chair confirmed that Council Members were required to attend 70% of Council meetings, whereas workshops were optional. Mr McCormick added that the Chair would address any concerns regarding attendance directly with the member concerned.

With regard to Action 2(e), Ms Jackson enquired how often members wished to have the Council Development Plan presented to Council for update. It was agreed that once a year would be sufficient, however, any developments outside of this could be brought to a meeting if required.

Ms Jackson advised that Actions 3(a), 3(b) and 4(a) related to the development of a Council Engagement Strategy, the creation of elevator pitches and the revision of NIPEC's vision and mission statement. Ms Jackson proposed that these actions be considered for workshop topics and those present concurred.

There was discussion on Action 5(a) and the need for an independent secretariat and it was agreed that this action could be removed from the Development Plan.

In relation to Action 5(c) and the possibility of relaunching the NIPEC Recognition Awards, Chief Executive was of view that the staff were not particularly keen. Much work had been done in the past year with regard to improving staff morale and it was felt that this was more beneficial. It was agreed that this action could be removed from the Plan.

Council members approved the Council Development Plan 2024/26 subsequent to the revisions agreed at this afternoon's meeting being made. Chair thanked Ms Jackson for her work on the Development Plan.

In addition to the discussion on the Development Plan actions, Chair wished to provide some clarification in relation to Action 1(b) on members' participation in specific NIPEC project working groups. This issue had been raised by several members during their annual appraisals and at the Development Day held in June at the Leadership Centre. It had subsequently been agreed that the Chief Executive and Ms Jackson would give this issue some consideration from a governance perspective and discuss the process going forward with the Chair.

Chair explained that the Code of Accountability clearly sets out the individual responsibilities of Chair, Council members and the Chief Executive and that, regarding the Register of Interests, the Code states that "Council must include direct or indirect pecuniary interests which members of the public might reasonably think could influence board members' judgement]". Chair advised that, at recent Professional & Business Committee meetings, there had been discussions around the recording of 'special interests' to support the decision around participation of Council members in NIPEC working groups.

Chair was mindful of the need for her to ensure that Council's role of oversight and holding to account is maintained and kept separate from members becoming involved in operational matters, therefore Chair proposed that Council adopt a case by case analysis when a Council member wants to or is approached to become involved in a specific working group. The Council member concerned should first approach the Chair to state the purpose of their involvement and the desired outcomes of their involvement. Chair would then discuss these with the Chief Executive.

Chair added that on occasion staff may require a view from Council members. In this instance, the Chief Executive would approach Chair for support and agree a process to extend an offer out to Council members. Senior staff will be advised by the Chief Executive of this new process and of the need to bring any approach from a Council member to the Chief Executive for discussion with the Chair.

Chair asked members if they had any questions or comments on this new process. Ms Stockdale welcomed the clarification the process provided as the only Lead Midwife for Education in Northern Ireland. Chief Executive was of the view that it would be beneficial to have the openness and transparency afforded by this new process as NIPEC were eager to make the most of the knowledge and expertise of Council members whilst remaining within the required governance. Chief Executive was keen to stress that she would not want Council members to shy away from sharing their knowledge and expertise.

Ms B Kelly said that she would welcome a process to protect against accusations of undue influence. Ms Jackson was of the view that it was important that any member's involvement was by exception and that explanations for the rationale behind it be included in the Project Initiation Document, Declaration of Interests or any working group notes etc. Mr McCormick agreed that this would provide protection from both an operational and a governance point of view. Mrs Bhogal felt that, as a general rule, if a member found themselves getting involved in operational decisions, they had overstepped.

Action: Chair to have the new process drafted up and circulated to Council members.

Action: Ms Jackson to update the Council Development Plan.

2.6 Dates/Topics for Council Workshops 2025

Chair stated that she felt this morning's workshop had been very well received. Mrs McGregor agreed that it had been well managed, with the speakers clear on their topics and what they were trying to achieve.

Chair reported that a number of possible topics had come out of the appraisals, in addition to the topics agreed under Item 2.5. Chair was of the view that a couple of well managed, slightly longer workshops may be sufficient. Mr McCormick concurred with this view if taken in conjunction with one development day.

Chair advised that a diary hold had been issued for a workshop to be held on 9 April 2024 from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm on the Quality Strategy. A further topic could be added nearer the time if necessary. Those present confirmed that this date was suitable for them, with the exception of Mrs Stockdale and this was noted.

Further workshop dates for the remainder of the year would be agreed in due course.

Action: *Mrs Mallon to share related papers from this morning's workshop.*

2.7 Register of Council Members Activity

Chair thanked those who had submitted their updates for the Register. She stressed that the onus was on Council members to submit their returns when requested as it was crucial that all activities were evidenced and captured.

2.8 Meeting with CEO November 2024 to complete mid-year review of progress on Objectives

Chair reported that she had met with the Chief Executive in November to complete the mid-year review of the progress of her objectives. She was pleased to report that progress was on track and that, following the end of year review, these would be brought to the Remuneration Committee whereupon new objectives for the year ahead could be agreed.

2.9 Attendance at Bengoa Conference October 2024

Chair informed members that the Minister had held a conference with Professor Bengoa in October in order to kick start the public conversation around public health reform. Chair had previously been on the panel with Professor Bengoa during his review and had found Professor Bengoa to be very engaging and a privilege to work with. Chief Executive said that the conference had provided the opportunity to look back at the work already underway and refocus the public commitment to go forward. Chief Executive thought that the progress made in relation to pharmacy was particularly impressive.

2.10 Attendance at Chairs meeting on 19th November 2024 – presentation on ICSs

Chair advised that she had attended a meeting with other HSC Chairs and Departmental officials for an update on the approach to Integrated Care Systems. NICON had shared the notes of this meeting and Chair undertook to circulate these to members by way of update. Chair felt it was important that Council were kept updated and aware of what was going on in the wider health service and therefore expressed the intention to invite someone from the Department to a future workshop to provide Council with an update on the current status and to explore how best to influence discussions. Chief Executive suggested Martina Moore or one of her team for this.

***Action:** Chair to have meeting notes circulated to Council members.*

2.11 Council Social Event – January 2025

After discussion, those present agreed that Friday 31 January 2025 was the preferred date for a meal out. This is a social event to be paid for individually by those who attend.

***Action:** Mrs Mallon to book Flame Restaurant for 6.00 pm and to circulate final details once these have been confirmed.*

2.12 Christmas Quiz 19th December 2024

Chair advised that the NIPEC Christmas Jumper Day and quiz would be held at 12 noon on 19 December 2024 and that an invitation had been extended to Council members. NIPEC were supporting the NI Children's Hospice with this event.

***Action:** Mrs Mallon to circulate the details and then Council members to advise if they are able to come and join in the festivities.*

3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2024 had been circulated for approval. Chair asked if members had read the minutes and were happy to approve.

Previous minutes were approved.

4.0 Matters Arising

4.1 Updated Action Plan (*Circulated for approval*)

Chair invited Ms Jackson to take members through the Action Plan. Ms Jackson advised that the first two open items were included in today's agenda. With regard to printing expenditure, the required member of staff had been off on sick leave, however, this figure should be available for the March meeting. It had been proposed that this figure be used as a measurement for sustainability.

Council approved the updated Action Plan

5.0 Correspondence

5.1 Correspondence from HSCQI dated 16 October 2024 - New Appointment – Domenica Gilroy, Interim Lead for Health and Social Care Quality Improvement (HSCQI) (*Circulated for noting*)

5.2 Correspondence from Permanent Secretary, DoH dated 23 October 2024 - Domestic Abuse E-Learning (*Circulated for noting*)

5.3 BSO Procurement Regulations 2024 (*Circulated for noting*)

5.4 Correspondence from PRONI dated 22 October 2024 - Records of Interest to the Truth Recovery Programme (*Circulated for noting*)

5.5 Correspondence from Permanent Secretary, DoH dated 24 October 2024 – HSCQI Transfer to RQIA (*Circulated for noting*)

5.6 Registrant identity fraud – information from the NMC (*Circulated for noting*)

5.7 Correspondence from Permanent Secretary, DoH dated 11 November 2024 - Strategic Review of Senior Executive Posts within Health and Social Care (*Circulated for noting*)

5.8 International Fraud Awareness week newsletter (*Circulated for noting*)

Council members noted the previously circulated correspondence.

6.0 Operational Performance and Service Improvement

6.1 Presentation: Collective Leadership Framework for Nursing & Midwifery – Dr Carole McKenna, SPO (*Circulated for noting*)

Chair welcomed Dr Carole McKenna, Senior Professional Officer to the meeting. Dr McKenna shared a PowerPoint presentation on the Collective Leadership Framework for Nursing & Midwifery and proceeded to take the Council through the key aspects.

Dr McKenna reported that, in order to support its key functions, NIPEC have been engaging with stakeholders to maximise opportunities to develop professional practice; leading regional projects that support safe, effective, person-centred care and services; developing and disseminating best practice; and developing tools and resources to support nurses and midwives in the application of relevant legislation. NIPEC also facilitates the translation and implementation of strategic policy into practice in relation to nursing and midwifery and this Collective Leadership Framework is a good example of this.

Dr McKenna wished to highlight that, although the Framework was primarily developed for nursing and midwifery, it could also be applied to any role within the HSC system.

In terms of the strategic drivers for the development of this Framework, Dr McKenna explained that the Health and Wellbeing 2026 document “Delivering Together” highlighted the need for a major transformation of services, stating that this would require a new approach to collective and system leadership; a Collective Leadership Strategy to provide a framework for creating the desired collective leadership culture; and the establishment of a Nursing and Midwifery Task Group.

Dr McKenna advised that in 2023 the CNO had outlined her five-year vision for nursing and midwifery which was drawn from and guided by this Nursing and Midwifery Task Group. The CNO consequently asked NIPEC to develop a leadership framework to strengthen the professional leadership of nurses and midwives at every level and that this framework support investment in leadership training and development and enhance the culture of collective leadership across HSC.

Dr McKenna continued that NIPEC set about looking at what was already out there and taking a project management approach to the work, convened a task and finish group, chaired by Myra Weir, Associate from the HSC Leadership Centre, to have oversight of the process. The vision involved creating a culture which values acts of leadership from all staff, regardless of hierarchy, experience, location or discipline. It is one in which all nurses and midwives strive for continuous improvement, are enabled to be innovative and take some risks along the way. A small working group was set up to map and align the Framework to other relevant frameworks, priorities and tools to prevent duplication.

Dr McKenna advised that the design of the actual Framework document itself builds on the four key components of collective leadership as identified in the Strategy and the agreed, associated outcomes and enablers sit around these. The document is colour coded, making it easier to read. The Framework recognises that not everyone will want to be a leader but encourages and enables anyone with expertise in a particular task or situation to take responsibility when there is a need.

The conceptual diagram can be used to help apply the Framework in practice to develop collective leadership capabilities and explore key behaviours and attributes. An assessment tool has been designed to allow individuals to assess and identify their own required learning and development needs against the capabilities relative to their role. Its use can be built into supervision and appraisals.

The practice outcomes diagram demonstrates the four components and their associated enablers, as well as how they relate to the overarching outcomes of explore, evolve and transform. The Framework has been designed to link in with other important professional and workforce processes and activities including values based recruitment, appraisals, supervision, revalidation, formal leadership development for example in order to avoid duplication.

In terms of next steps, Dr McKenna advised that NIPEC have outlined a number of key recommendations in the Collective Leadership Report. These include eight recommendations for the Department of Health, 12 recommendations for employer organisations and three overarching recommendations for education provider organisations.

Dr McKenna reported that the Framework was launched by the Health Minister at the CNO Conference on 19 September. Dr McKenna was of the view that the next phase should be the establishment of a regional group to help build will amongst the HSC and to ensure that all component parts of the system move at same time.

In summary, Dr McKenna said that the ambition was for all nurses and midwives to contribute to creating a health and social care leadership community in which everyone will take responsibility for developing a competent and confident workforce to deliver high quality, continually improving, compassionate care and support. The Framework has also been produced in a practical, small pocket-sized booklet that staff could refer to during their work shifts. This also should help promote the culture of collective leadership being part of everyone's role and not just something for use in a formal setting.

Dr McKenna asked members if they had any questions on the Framework. Mrs Bhogal thought that the Framework was a wonderful initiative and liked the idea of the pocket booklet. Chief Executive reported that there had been great feedback so far from people within the system. She added that the Framework helped to reinforce the principals of the Collective Leadership Strategy which had set out high level principals but had not been further developed. This Framework, however, facilitates staff in thinking about what collective leadership means for them and considering how their current behaviour sits with these values.

Mrs B Kelly stated that she found the document to be very accessible and felt that it allowed nurses to better articulate their skills. She was of the view that it would be beneficial to get it built into the recruitment process to ensure the principals were imbedded from the get go. Mrs B Kelly applauded the Framework as piece of work and said that she intended to take it forward in her own work. Mr McCormick commended the organisation for the production of a fantastic resource. He found it to be a very relatable document and said that the language used ensured it suited HSC staff working at all levels. Mr McCormick was of the view that it would be very transferrable to the independent sector also.

Chair thanked Dr McKenna for her informative presentation and Dr McKenna left the meeting at this point.

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

The Chair invited the Chief Executive to take the Council through the next section of the agenda.

The Chief Executive stated that her report had been circulated prior to the meeting and those present confirmed that they had read same. This report highlighted some of the key aspects of the Chief Executive's work and NIPEC's priorities. Chief Executive wished to draw particular attention to the subject of delegation of healthcare/nursing interventions. She advised that the subject had generated significant attention regionally and it was likely that NIPEC would continue to be involved under the leadership of the CNO's Office.

Chief Executive reported that the matter had been the subject of a recent UTV documentary 'Up Close' which had raised questions with the Department of Health, who subsequently have been looking into the associated legislative and governance issues. A task and finish group had been set up, of which the first meeting had been held in late November to discuss how best to approach the matter.

Chief Executive advised that the NMC Code currently states that nurses remain accountable for ongoing monitoring of outcomes of delegated care and the NMC have been working on producing supplementary information around delegation and accountability. She highlighted that the issue is most apparent when a young person transitions from Children's Services to Adult Services as the range of services available are very different and also services can differ from Trust to Trust. It was clear that a lot of work was required and it may even be that a change in legislation is needed.

Chief Executive explained that historically the regulations related to nurses delegating to nursing assistants that were in their direct line of sight but the model has changed significantly over the years with the employment of third party organisations employing domiciliary care workers. In addition, people are living with more complex interventions in the community. Chief Executive advised that there were some good models in operation in England, employing the likes of a matron, who is a nurse, to oversee all delegated tasks.

Chief Executive asked Council members if they had any questions. Council members had no questions and noted the Chief Executive's report.

6.3 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2024-25 – Business Plan objectives progress Monitoring Report from 1 April to 30 November 2024 - Chief Executive (*Circulated for noting*)

Chief Executive advised that the Work Plan had been circulated in two formats; the original Word format and the new Excel format. The Excel document had been compiled by Gary Cousins, Senior Professional Officer with a view to streamlining the data captured and to present it in a more transparent way to better provide the assurances required. This version was still very much a work in progress and was starting to come together, however, the project weighting and assessment scale were still not quite right. It had been colour coded against the Statutory Functions and a section had been added for work that NIPEC was not committed to but could undertake if there was capacity. The Word document still incorporated the RAG rating but the plan was to get one template up and running for the 2025/26 year.

Chief Executive reported that both versions of the Work Plan had been presented at the recent Professional & Business Committee meeting and some helpful feedback had been provided. She hoped to be in a position to give a presentation on the new Work Plan for 2025/26 at the next Council meeting, by which time it was hoped that it would be up and running.

Chief Executive enquired if members had any comments or questions. Mr McCormick noted that the scoping of delegated care work was included in the Work Plan but was conscious of the considerable amount of work yet to be done around this topic. Chief Executive advised that the funds were available to support the work but that an additional member of staff with the right skills would be required. The associate list had been exhausted and so NIPEC may reach out to the Leadership Centre. Chief Executive said that ultimately the Department would have oversight of the work but there was a real opportunity for NIPEC to have an impact on strengthening the process and systems in place. Chair stated that the Work Plan clearly demonstrated the huge amount of work NIPEC undertook for such a small organisation.

Council members noted the updated NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2024-25 – Business Plan objectives progress Monitoring Report from 1 April to 30 November 2024.

6.4 Consultation Activity Report (*Circulated for noting*)

Council Members noted the Consultation Activity Report.

6.5 Draft Confirmation and Monitoring of Professional Registration Status Policy (*Circulated for approval*)

Chief Executive enquired if members had read the draft Confirmation and Monitoring of Professional Registration Status Policy previously circulated and they confirmed that they had.

Chief Executive explained that the Policy sets out the new process for monitoring the registration and revalidation status of all registrant staff and Council members and clearly sets out the arrangements for any lapsed registration. The policy also details the responsibilities of corporate staff involved in the process and the maintenance of a database for holding the details. Ms Jackson added that Council can be assured that, given the personal sensitive nature of the information, it would be held in an electronic folder with strictly restricted access to the Chief Executive, her PA and to herself, as Head of Corporate Services.

Chief Executive asked if members had any questions or comments on the Policy. Mrs Stockdale thought that it was a straightforward and clear document and Chair concurred with this view. In response to a query from Mr McCormick, Ms Jackson confirmed that pin numbers would need to be provided. Chair welcomed the updated policy and agreed that it was important to have robust processes in place.

Council members approved the Confirmation and Monitoring of Professional Registration Status Policy.

Action: *Ms Jackson and Mrs Mallon to meet to agree the process around gathering the necessary information from members and issuing reminders on an annual basis for registration and every three years for revalidation.*

7.0 Corporate Control & Finance

Chair invited Ms Jackson to take members through this section.

7.1 Report from Standing Committees

7.1.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the A&R Meeting held on 8 October 2024 (*Circulated for noting*)

Council Members noted these minutes. Ms Jackson further requested that members note the approval of the Mid-Year Assurance statement, which had consequently been submitted to the Department of Health.

7.1.2 Confirmed Minutes of the Professional & Business Committee held on 6 September 2024 (*Circulated for noting*)

Ms Jackson advised that these minutes had been approved at the meeting of the Professional & Business Committee held on 29 November 2024. Council Members noted these minutes. The minutes of the 29 November meeting were currently in progress and would be available for the next meeting.

7.2 Finance

7.2.1 ALB Savings Scenario 2025-28 (*Circulated for noting*)

Ms Jackson reported that NIPEC had submitted a response which had been reviewed by Chair, Deputy Chair and Sponsor Branch. A draft budget had been prepared which did not allow for associate spend, catering, venue booking or travel. Ms Jackson was of the view that the best that could be hoped for was a flat cash allocation which would still present issues. If a 1% efficiency is required, by year 3 NIPEC would be projecting a surplus of £5252 with the same assumptions as previously mentioned. Ms Jackson undertook to keep Council updated, however, the opening allocation was not expected for 2025-26 until March 2025.

Council Members noted the update.

7.2.2 Financial Summary of Expenditure, Month 07 (*Circulated for noting*)

Ms Jackson reported that Month 7 showed a projected £53k surplus for the year, however, since then all ALBs had received correspondence from Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, Department of Health, asking for a review of their budgets to date to ascertain whether any savings could be offered in-year as a retraction to fund a pay award for HSC staff. NIPEC had already considered a retraction and offered to return £25k, which had subsequently been accepted.

Ms Jackson advised that the retraction had brought the projected surplus down to £28k, however, she had now prepared a first draft of Month 8 figures and these were projecting an increased surplus of £40k. This increased surplus was due to slippage in pay which could be attributed to associates and ethnic diversity officers not working the hours expected, failure to appoint an agency member of staff to backfill a corporate post and potential savings on the staff who were currently on long-term sick leave. Ms Jackson said that unfortunately no more associates were available at this time but an approach had been made to the Leadership Centre. Consideration was also being given to the acquisition of more promotional materials.

Ms Jackson asked if members had any questions or comments on the financial summary. Mr McCormick advised that he had recently attended an Audit & Risk Chairs' meeting, chaired by the Chair of the Department of Health's Board, at which Brigitte Worth had been in attendance. The prospect of a 1% efficiency saving and the notion of ALBs helping to close the pay rise gap had not been well received. It was clear that next year would be even more challenging.

In response to a query from Mrs McGregor in relation to the breakdown of bank costs showing as £115,661 on page 6, Ms Jackson clarified that this was not a deficit but an overspend against the original budget for bank staff. This figure related to associate spend which could not be budgeted for but could only be funded by way of slippage. Ms Jackson assured members that the Department would not permit an organisation to project a deficit value. A lengthy discussion took place and Chair requested that Ms Jackson review and provide a more detailed explanation of the issue to Council members. It was, however, noted by Chair that the budget has been managed in accordance with Departmental guidelines and is accurate as presented.

Mrs McGregor said that she had found the addition of the comments' column at this morning's training really useful and asked if consideration could be given to adding this detail in future.

In response to a question from Mrs Bhogal, Ms Jackson clarified that the figures were drawn in from a much larger, central spreadsheet and were rounded up.

Action: Ms Jackson to link in with Kate McStravick in order to provide members with a more detailed explanation regarding bank costs.

7.3 Corporate Risk Register 2024-25, Version 4 (Circulated for approval)

Ms Jackson referred to the Corporate Risk Register circulated prior to the meeting and asked if everyone had read the document and had any questions.

Council members approved the Corporate Risk Register.

7.4 KPIs 2024-25 (Circulated for noting)

Ms Jackson noted that KPIs had been discussed in depth at the morning's workshop. With reference to the KPI Activity document previously circulated, Ms Jackson reported that everything was currently on target. She highlighted the absence figure increase, which worked out cumulative for the year as 4.36%. This increase was due to two long term absences within the corporate team. These absences have put immense pressure on what is a small team and Mrs McEaney was working closely with HR to manage this situation.

Those present noted the KPI Activity document.

7.5 NIPEC Policies:

- 7.5.1 Draft Information Governance Policy**
- 7.5.2 Draft Right to Raise a Concern Policy (Whistleblowing)**
- 7.5.3 Draft Equality and Human Rights Screening Policy**
- 7.5.4 Draft Data Protection Impact Assessment Policy**
- 7.5.5 Draft Performance Management Framework**

Ms Jackson referred to the updated policies previously circulated and advised that a paragraph on Council members' development had been added to the Performance Management Framework arising from a discussion at the recent Professional & Business Committee. It had also been suggested that an appendix be added to reflect the Committee structure and this will be included in due course.

Ms Jackson asked Council Members if they had any questions. In relation to the Right to Raise a Concern Policy, Chair noted that a Council champion was required and asked if anyone would be interested in taking on the role. Mrs McGregor put herself forward for the role and Mrs B Kelly offered her support if required as she had experience of fulfilling this role for another organisation.

Council Members approved the updated policies.

Action: Ms Jackson to add Mrs McGregor's name as champion to the Right to Raise a Concern Policy.

7.6 NIPEC's Business Continuity Plan 2024 (Circulated for approval)

Ms Jackson welcomed Lisa McEaney, Business Manager to the meeting. Ms Jackson advised that Mrs McEaney had put a lot of work into developing NIPEC's new Business Continuity Plan and was in attendance to seek approval of same.

Mrs McEaney advised that, like all HSC organisations, NIPEC is required to have a Business Continuity Plan in place to ensure that they can continue to deliver an appropriate level of service in the event of a disruption. The plan outlines the processes and actions required to be undertaken in the event of a disruption. The plan is a live document that is required to be reviewed at least annually and then presented to Council.

Mrs McEaney stated that training had been provided to Council members and staff in March 2024 and a review of the Plan took place following this. Further training was provided to the Head of Corporate Services and Business Manager in October 2024.

Mrs McEaney ran through the main changes to the Plan, which included clarity on aim, objective and scope of the plan; reprioritisation of risks and strengthening of mitigating actions; clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Services, Senior Team as well as the role of Council. Mrs McEaney had included the Chief Executive's rota and staff working hours to further clarify who is in charge/working at any given time. A Post Incident Evaluation; cost recovery analysis; and updated key contact list had also been included.

Mrs McEneaney reported that BSO had recently undertaken an audit of NIPEC's business continuity arrangements and concluded that there was a lack of clarity on how BSO would contact NIPEC in the event of a cyber incident and vice versa and were of the view that NIPEC do not receive adequate assurances from BSO in relation to the robustness of the business continuity arrangements. A meeting had subsequently taken place between the Head of Corporate Services and the Assistant Director of Strategic Performance, BSO in November 2024 to clarify these issues. BSO have undertaken to provide more clarity on these issues and a follow-up meeting will take place in due course. This clarity will be incorporated into the Business Continuity Plan.

Mrs McEneaney advised that a desktop test would be undertaken in February 2025 and the results reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. The results of the desktop test, along with the updated Plan, will be presented to Council at the March 2025 meeting.

Mrs McEneaney asked if anyone had any questions or comments to make on the Plan. Chair wished to recognise the huge amount of work that had gone into the development of the Plan. She suggested that it would be a good idea to get some Council members involved in the desktop test. Mr McCormick advised that he had completed a small amount of work with Mrs McEneaney in relation to the Plan and that he was very impressed with how it had taken shape. Mrs McGregor informed Mrs McEneaney of a PA change and Mrs McEneaney undertook to update the contact list accordingly. Chair thanked Mrs McEneaney for her presentation of the Business Continuity Plan.

The Business Continuity Plan was approved by Council members.

8.0 Safety and Quality

8.1 DoH Covid-19 Public Inquiry Group

Chair invited Ms Jackson to provide the Council with her update on the Covid-19 Public Inquiry Group. Ms Jackson reported she had no further update to provide at present. An update was due to be issued by the Department of Health later in the month.

9.0 Any Other Business

There was no further business discussed. The Chair concluded business and thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting. Chair requested that members stay behind for a short briefing on a confidential matter.

10.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next public meeting date of NIPEC Council is **26 March 2025 at 2.00pm** and will be held **in Room 1.7, First Floor, James House.**