

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on  
Wednesday 17 September 2025 at 2.00 pm via MS Teams

**Present:** Kieran McCormick (Chair)  
Linda Kelly, Chief Executive  
Eilidh McGregor  
Nirmala Bhogal  
Sharon McRoberts  
Brenda Kelly  
Karen Diamond  
Katrin Lehmann

**Apologies:** Bronagh Scott  
Janine Stockdale  
Siobhán Caslin  
Gary Mitchell  
Ciara Scannell

**In Attendance:** Jill Jackson, Head of Corporate Services  
Cathy McCusker, Senior Professional Officer

**Secretariat:** Heather Mallon, Council Secretary

## **1.0 Welcome and Apologies**

Mr McCormick advised that he was chairing the meeting in the absence of Bronagh Scott, who had taken unwell. Apologies were also noted from Siobhán Caslin, Ciara Scannell, Janine Stockdale and Gary Mitchell. Chair welcomed those in attendance to the meeting. As the meeting was being held by Teams he set out some meeting etiquette.

## **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.

Ms McRoberts asked what was being done to encourage members of the public to attend meetings. Ms Jackson advised that upcoming dates are posted on the website and announcements are made on social media ahead of Council meetings. She said that she intended to consult the Senior Communications Officer on the matter now that she had returned

to work. Chief Executive advised that she had been promoting attendance at Council meetings at the various leadership programmes she had been attending and was happy to promote with the Schools of Nursing at the various universities. Ms Jackson suggested that Senior Professional Officers could build mention of the meetings into their presentations.

Ms McRoberts was of the view that there may be actions Council members could take as part of their role. Chair said that the Ambition to Success students who had attended the March meeting had feedback to him that they had found it interesting. A new cohort were about to commence this programme and he would be encouraging them to attend also. Ms McRoberts stated that there was a need to promote NIPEC among future leaders.

It was generally considered that social media could be used to further promote attendance of the public at meetings once the appropriate training had been acquired. Ms Jackson undertook to speak to the Senior Communications Officer in this regard, although thought that it was unlikely that any training would take place ahead of the New Year.

**Action:** *Ms Jackson to speak to Senior Communications Officer with regard to encouraging members of the public to attend Council meetings and the provision of social media training.*

## **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 Register of Council Members' Activity**

Chair thanked those members who had submitted their updates for the Activity Register. He stressed that it was important that Council members submit their returns when requested so that all activities were evidenced and captured.

Members noted the Register.

## **2.4 Update on Senior Executive Pay**

Chair understood that the Remuneration Committee had met in August, however, discussion on this will be deferred to the next meeting in the absence of Ms Scott, the Committee Chair.

## **2.5 Review of Committee Membership / renaming of Committee**

Chair was aware that the need for a review of Committee membership had been discussed at the recent workshop and Ms Scott had subsequently asked members let her know their preferences for the Committee they would like to sit on. Chair requested that any outstanding preferences be submitted to Ms Scott as soon as possible to allow her time to review the responses. The matter will be revisited at the next meeting.

While the Council await the recruitment of new members, Chair proposed that the membership of the Professional & Business Committee be temporarily decreased from five to four members. Mrs Bhogal, Chair of the Professional & Business Committee, was agreeable to this proposal and members granted their approval.

Chair wished to remind members of the etiquette around attendance at Council and Committee meetings. This is a key element of the public appointment and is reported on annually and audited in the NIPEC Governance Statement. He added that, if a member cannot attend a meeting, they should contact the Chair and Mrs Mallon at their earliest convenience so quoracy can be checked to ensure meetings can proceed in line with good governance.

Mrs McRoberts enquired if it was possible to opt members into certain meetings to ensure quoracy was maintained. Referring to the Code of Accountability, Ms Jackson advised that it was not possible for a member of the Remuneration Committee to sit on the Audit & Risk Committee and vice versa, however, it may be a possibility for the Professional & Business Committee. It was not generally considered to be an ideal scenario given the amount of reading involved. Ms Jackson stressed that current situation was only temporary until the Council were back up to full membership, at which time Committee membership would be reviewed again.

Chair reported that the Professional & Business Committee had discussed the renaming of the Committee at their last meeting and are proposing that it be changed to "Professional Business Committee" to clarify that the Committee's primary focus is on professional business and not corporate business, which is the remit of the Audit & Risk Committee. Members approved the change of name.

Mrs McRoberts asked if there are Terms of Reference for all Committees and if so, how often they are reviewed and shared with Council. Ms Jackson confirmed that there are Terms of References for each Committee and that they are included in the Standing Orders as Appendices. The Standing Orders are

reviewed every 12 to 18 months and brought to Council for approval. Ms Jackson planned to update the Standing Orders once a final decision was made on Committee membership. Once these have been updated Ms Jackson will bring them to Council for ratification.

**Action:** Any outstanding Committee preferences to be submitted to Ms Scott as soon as possible.

**Action:** Ms Jackson/Mrs Mallon to amend the relevant Terms of Reference and Standing Orders to reflect the decisions made at today's meeting.

## **2.6 Next Steps from Council Workshop of 3 September 2025**

Chair was aware that the preferred skills mix for new Council members had been identified at the recent workshop and that Ms Scott intended to pull these together for submission to the Department ahead of the recruitment exercise.

As already discussed, Chair said that a further workshop is to be arranged around the use of social media in the New Year.

Chair understood that Mrs Mallon was to pull together the notes from Mrs McGregor's session on the development of an elevator pitch to allow the extraction of any themes. Mrs McGregor confirmed that she had received these from Mrs Mallon and would review.

**Action:** Mrs McGregor to review the notes from the elevator pitch session and Mrs Mallon to then circulate to Council members.

## **2.7 Dates for 2026: Council Meetings and next Workshop**

Chair advised that the proposed dates for Council meetings for 2026 are as follows: -

- Wednesday 11 March 2026
- Wednesday 1 July 2026
- Wednesday 16 September 2026
- Wednesday 2 December 2026

All meetings to commence at 2.00 pm.

Council members agreed the proposed dates and Chair asked Mrs Mallon to circulate.

There was discussion on the timing of a further workshop in 2026. It was generally agreed that September would be the preferred month.

***Action:** Mrs Mallon to circulate details of meetings to Council members.*

## **2.8 Update on recruitment of new Chair/interim arrangements**

Chair was pleased to report that the CNO had officially offered him the role of Interim Chair of NIPEC and that he had confirmed his acceptance of the arrangement. He advised that Ms Scott will step down as Chair of NIPEC at the end of her four-year term on Friday 5 December. Chair said that it is anticipated that this interim arrangement may be required for a period of around four to six months while the recruitment process for a new Chair is underway.

Chair advised that an Interim Chair is required for Audit & Risk while he fulfils the role of NIPEC Chair. He encouraged any member interested in taking up this responsibility to inform Ms Scott. A final decision on an Interim Chair for Audit & Risk will be ratified at the December Council meeting.

***Action:** Members interested in taking on the role of Interim Chair of Audit & Risk Committee to advise Ms Scott.*

## **2.9 Update on NIPEC Conference – 2 December 2025**

Chair advised that NIPEC's Conference is due to be held on Tuesday 2 December 2025 in Craigavon Civic Centre. The Health Minister has already accepted an invitation to attend and Jason Leitch, former National Clinical Director for the Scottish Government and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement has been invited to speak. Chair encouraged members to hold the date and endeavour to attend this event if at all possible. From past experience, Chair said that the Conference is well attended and often oversubscribed. He was of the view that Mr Leitch was a fantastic speaker and would be a great addition to the Conference line up.

## **2.10 Congratulations to Dr Gary Mitchell**

Chair was delighted to report that Dr Gary Mitchell had become a Fellow of the European Academy of Nursing Science. Unfortunately, Dr Mitchell had been unable to attend today's meeting but Chair wished to convey his congratulations to him on this prestigious and well-deserved achievement.

### **3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025 had been circulated for approval. Chair asked if members had read the minutes and were happy to approve.

The 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 open items on the Action Plan. Ms Jackson advised that the first open item related to the records for the Muckamore Inquiry which remained unchanged from the last meeting.

Ms Jackson informed members that she had closed the item in relation to encouraging members of the public to attend future meetings as a social media training workshop is included in the Council Action Plan and as already discussed, planned for the New Year.

Regarding the NMC registration check, Ms Jackson advised that she was still waiting on some dates of birth being sent to her to allow her to verify registrations via the NMC website. There was discussion on the necessity of providing the dates of birth but as a full employer's check required to be completed, it was generally accepted that it was necessary. Ms Jackson assured members that only the Chief Executive and herself will have access to these details.

In relation to a possible move from X social media platform, Ms Jackson said that she would be linking in with the Senior Communications Officer now she had returned to work. Chair was of the view that this was an operational matter and proposed that this item be closed on the Action Plan. Chief Executive assured members that Council will be kept updated on any developments.

By way of an update on Decision Time, Ms Jackson reported that she had finally received the invoice for payment for 2025-26 which will cover NIPEC until 14 January 2026. She has asked for a meeting with ITS to check if SharePoint could be a potential option for hosting NIPEC's Council papers and will prepare an options paper for the December Council meeting.

The item on Committee membership had been discussed under Item 2.5 of the Agenda.

Council approved the updated Action Plan

**Action:** *Those members who have not already done so, to send Ms Jackson a note of their date of birth.*

**Action:** *Ms Jackson to prepare an options paper on software platforms for Board papers for the December meeting.*

## **5.0 Correspondence**

**5.1 Press Release - Paul Rees MBE to continue leading the NMC as permanent Chief Executive and Registrar (For noting)**

**5.2 10-year Health Plan - NICON - July 2025 (For noting)**

**5.3 FA 04 2025 - Innovative Action Business Email Compromise (For noting)**

Council members noted the previously circulated correspondence.

## **6.0 Operational Performance and Service Improvement**

Chair invited the Chief Executive to take members through this section of the Agenda.

**6.1 Presentation on Career Pathway for Critical Care by Cathy McCusker, Senior Professional Officer**

Mrs McCusker shared a PowerPoint presentation on the Career Pathway for Critical Care Nursing in Northern Ireland. She advised that this pathway had been launched by the CNO at the Paediatric Critical Care Society Conference on 11 September 2025.

Mrs McCusker explained that this pathway fits in with the strategic direction mapped out by the CNO in relation to the development of three core pathways for clinical practice, operational management and education and research. The pathway is aligned to the Skills for Health levels of practice, although there are only eight levels of practice in the Northern Ireland career pathways for nursing and midwifery (2-9). The core roles in the pathway are supported by four Pillars of Practice.

Mrs McCusker advised that work on the career pathway for critical care was commissioned by the CNO in 2022 and a project steering group was established. There followed a period which saw the establishment of writing groups to develop the core roles agreed for the pathway comprising competencies, education requirements and where relevant job descriptions.

On the request of the CNO, a benchmarking exercise took place with 17 comparable sites across the United Kingdom, which provided some useful insights and further evidence of the need for the enhanced/specialist nurse role new career pathway. Mrs McCusker drew attention to a graphic which set out the various roles in the pathway and the levels of practice they are aligned to. All career pathways will be completed in a similar way going forward.

In relation to the next steps, Mrs McCusker stated that NIPEC is a member of the Shaping the Future Career & Leadership Development Sub-Group which is responsible, on behalf of CNO, for supporting the effective implementation of the pathway by assisting in the standardising of the process and roles as well as supporting the workforce to ensure patients were receiving quality care, commencing with the Senior Staff Nurse role; Level of Practice 6 (Band 6). Mrs McCusker asked members if they had any questions or comments to make.

Chair thanked Mrs McCusker for her presentation, which was clear and easy to follow. He said that he would have liked to see the inclusion of ICU for Psychiatry. Mrs McCusker advised that this career pathway related to physical care. The career pathway for Mental Health Nurses currently in development should include psychiatric critical care units. In response to a query from Mrs Bhogal, Mrs McCusker confirmed that levels of practice did not equate to Agenda for Change pay bands. She added, however, that nursing staff seemed to have a clearer understanding of levels of practice and it was important that nursing staff were working to the level of practice they were employed at.

Chief Executive reported that, upon presentation of the career model, Directors of Nursing had expressed concern about possible job re-evaluations and had subsequently requested a meeting with HR colleagues. It was generally expected, however, that staff would build their level of skill and knowledge up over time to enable them to apply for the next band up. Ms McRoberts asked if additional funding would be provided to allow for jobs being re-evaluated as a higher banding and Mrs L Kelly replied that the onus would be on individual Trusts to seek extra funding.

In response to a query from Ms McRoberts, Mrs McCusker advised that the pathway had not yet been shared with the comparable sites across the United Kingdom who had been involved in the benchmarking exercise, except for those who had attended the Paediatric Critical Care Society Conference.

Ms Lehmann enquired as to what would entice someone away from a clinical role to operate at level 9 if there was no financial benefit. Mrs McCusker advised that currently there were no Consultant Nurse roles in Critical Care in Northern Ireland but it was agreed that it should form part of the pathway in line with the Guidelines for the Provision of Intensive Care Services. Ms Lehmann asked if this crossed into other areas of nursing and Mrs McCusker confirmed that it does. Mrs L Kelly added that the development of this pathway would benefit the core pathways by making the levels clearer.

Mrs B Kelly queried if the issue of levels versus bandings should be highlighted in some way. Mrs McCusker advised that this had been included initially but had been removed as the regional job descriptions for the roles have all been matched. Chair was disappointed to note that there were no Consultant Nurses in Critical Care. Ms Diamond complimented Mrs McCusker on a great presentation.

Chair thanked Mrs McCusker for her informative presentation and Mrs McCusker left the meeting at this point.

**Action:** Mrs Mallon to circulate Mrs McCusker's presentation to Council members.

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

Chief Executive referred to her report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and those present confirmed they had read same. This report highlights some of the key aspects of the Chief Executive's work and NIPEC's priorities since the last Council meeting.

Mrs L Kelly reported that she had attended the CNO Conference on 10 September with NIPEC Chair and some of the NIPEC team and this had been an excellent event. NIPEC hosted a couple of breakout sessions on the Quality Excellence Framework and the Career and Development Framework, which had been well received.

Chief Executive advised that she had attended the Ulster University's School of Nursing and Paramedic Science 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner along with NIPEC Chair on 28 August, which they had both thoroughly enjoyed.

With regard to the CNO Business update, Mrs L Kelly said that the work on delegation remained very complex. A workshop was to be held tomorrow, 18 September, at the Dunsilly Hotel, at which the Task & Finish Group would be in attendance as well as a couple of service users, who would be sharing their stories.

An ECG Strategic Meeting was held with the Directors of Nursing on 2 September to consider the priorities for 2026-2027. This was followed by a workshop which included the universities, RCN and RCM. This had been a very constructive day.

In relation to the NMC, Mrs L Kelly informed members that Paul Rees has been appointed as the new Chief Executive and has given his full commitment to working with Northern Ireland. His plans include appointing a Director to represent Northern Ireland. Statistics were now coming through to the Department. Mrs Kelly was of the view that these developments will see more opportunities coming NIPEC's way. In response to a query from Chair, Mrs L Kelly confirmed that there were no plans for an NMC office in Northern Ireland. With regard to advance practice principles, the NMC were requesting early adopter sites. NIPEC's Dr Carole McKenna is taking this forward for Northern Ireland.

Chief Executive reported that the Senior Team had some very comprehensive discussions around recruitment and are planning to recruit two Band 7 permanent posts. The job descriptions are currently under development in preparation for the HR matching process. It is anticipated that the posts will not be filled until the New Year. In the meantime, the funding previously anticipated for the earlier recruitment of posts will be invested in associate roles to support/lead ongoing priority objectives as outlined in the Work Plan. Extra monies may be sought for a post to support the Senior Communications Officer's role, who is to transfer into the Corporate Team.

Chief Executive asked if members had any questions or comments to make on her Report. Chair was of the opinion that this planned new staffing structure will allow better succession planning as it was less top heavy. Ms McRoberts queried how the Band 7 posts were being promoted outside of the advert to ensure sufficient candidates applied. Mrs L Kelly advised that the posts were not yet at that stage but would be posted on the HSCNI Jobs site as was the usual practice managed by BSO. The team would give some thought as to how best to promote these posts further. Ms McRoberts felt that the recruitment drive for these roles would provide a real opportunity to promote NIPEC.

Chief Executive advised that two staff sessions have been arranged for 28 October and 11 November with a view to preparing the NIPEC Business Plan for 2026/27.

Mrs L Kelly reported that she had attended a 1-1 meeting with a Korn Ferry consultant on 21 August. A brief on NIPEC's function

and structure, essential criteria and job description have been submitted to Korn Ferry as required and the outcome of the review is awaited.

Chair thanked Chief Executive for the presentation of her Report and Council members noted same.

### **6.3 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2025-26 Q2 – Monitoring Report from 1 April to 31 August 2025 – Chief Executive**

Referring to the Professional Work Plan previously circulated, Chief Executive advised that two new projects have commenced since the last meeting on the Future Nurse Future Midwife website and the Principles for Advanced Practice in Northern Ireland. One project has not progressed on the assessment scale around Communities of Practice to support improvement priorities, although scoping is ongoing.

Chief Executive reported that, although there are no midwifery specific projects on the Work Plan at present, there are two on the list due to commence in the near future relating to the midwifery training matrix and midwifery KPIs.

The Phase of Delivery dashboard is showing significantly less projects at phase 1 this quarter but there has been a big increase in projects at phase 3. Project weighting has reduced in some projects as these are now at the report writing stage meaning less meetings and resources are required. The Project Assessment Scale dashboard shows that projects are progressing, with less at phase 2 and more at phases 3, 4, and 5 which is as expected. Chief Executive confirmed that the Work Plan had been presented at the recent Professional & Business Committee meeting for scrutiny.

Chair was aware of the tremendous effort that had been put into the development of this new look Work Plan and found it much easier to follow. He asked that his commendations be passed on to Mr Cousins and all those involved in the development of this new Work Plan. Ms Bhogal reiterated that Mr Cousins had done a fantastic job on the development of the Work Plan, which now provided a much more dynamic view. The Professional & Business Committee had been assured by the content. Ms Diamond commented that the Work Plan looked fantastic and was easy to navigate.

Council members approved the Professional Work Plan.

**6.4 Copy of the Consultation Activity Report (Circulated for noting)**

Chief Executive advised that a number of consultations had been received since the last meeting and these had all been allocated to an appropriate SPO for processing. There was nothing of significance to report at this stage.

Council members noted the Consultation Activity Report.

**7.0 Corporate Control & Finance**

Chair invited Ms Jackson to take members through this section of the Agenda.

**7.1 Report from Standing Committees**

**7.1.1 Draft minutes of the A&R Meeting held on 24 June 2025 (Circulated for noting)**

**7.1.2 Confirmed minutes of the P&BC Meeting held on 6 March 2025 (Circulated for noting)**

**7.1.3 Confirmed minutes of the P&BC Meeting held on 24 June 2025 (Circulated for noting)**

Mrs Bhogal, Chair of the Professional & Business Committee reported that a further meeting had been held on 4 September and a number of issues had been identified for highlighting to Council. She advised that most of these had already been covered at today's meeting but that they had been around the need for NIPEC to further develop a succession plan, the increasing work being undertaken by NIPEC in relation to midwifery and the requirement to review the composition of Committees. Mrs Bhogal noted that the notes from the elevator pitch session at the recent workshop were now with Ms McGregor for review and said that the Professional & Business Committee would be keen to take this work forward.

**7.1.4 Draft minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 6 August (Verbal update)**

Deferred to next meeting.

Members noted the minutes.

## 7.2 Finance

### 7.2.1 Financial Summary of Expenditure, Month 4 (Circulated for noting)

Ms Jackson reported that at present there was a projected yearend surplus of £73k, which is largely due to slippage from the three full-time staff moving to part-time working.

Ms Jackson advised that she had just completed the Financial Summary for Month 5 and there is not much difference as little went through in August, however, she was now planning a more in-depth review of the mid-year position and of the forecast yearend expenditure to provide a better idea of where the organisation is likely to be sitting. Overall Ms Jackson was content with the current position. She asked if members had any questions or comments on the financial summary.

Chair asked if there was concern around the projected surplus cash and if the senior team had ideas on how it will be spent. Ms Jackson explained that there is nothing built in yet for the two new Band 7 roles, which were unlikely to be filled until February/March 2026. In the meantime, an extra associate and colleague from the Leadership Centre would be brought in to support the work on Mental Health. Ms Jackson said that the surplus is not a huge amount.

Ms Lehmann enquired if consideration has been given to offering out Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the Band 7 roles or even secondments. She added that it could be a leap for someone moving from a clinical role and it would give people an idea if they were suited to it. Ms Jackson explained that it was not possible to use EOIs between organisations and that the recruitment process for secondments took the same length of time as for permanent posts. She added that often funding for temporary staff was withdrawn as an initial step when significant financial savings were required. Ms Jackson advised that the plan is to build up a bank list from the recruitment drive, adding that the Leadership Centre had increased their rates significantly which may make them less affordable to NIPEC in the future. Mrs L Kelly assured members that the senior team were always exploring opportunities to access more funding.

Council members noted the update.

### **7.2.2 Budget overview for upcoming years (Verbal update)**

Ms Jackson reported that at present there is no indication as to what the budget for upcoming years may look like. As previously discussed, this is part of the rationale behind the senior team's decision to appoint to permanent posts rather than secondments/ temporary posts.

With reference to item 7.10 of the Agenda, Ms Jackson advised that the Circular sets out the following:-

- Provision/acceptance of hospitality in the public sector;
- When and to whom;
- Scale of hospitality;
- Process for authorising hospitality;
- Accountability and management of offering hospitality;
- Hospitality should not be extended at internal meetings, staff functions or events;
- Current financial climate cannot support expenditure on non-essential hospitality; and
- HMRC rules.

Ms Jackson advised that she had read through the Circular and sought advice from Internal Audit, who have agreed that NIPEC need to have a documented procedure in place for all staff to follow in relation to catering. If NIPEC are to continue to provide catering, there will be a need to factor in the administration around it as a business case and other information will have to be provided before it can be signed off and approved. It will also be necessary to review the current Register and Standing Orders, which Ms Jackson undertook to bring back to Council at the December 2025 meeting.

Ms Jackson was of the view that the contents of the Circular demonstrate the difficult financial situation. Ms B Kelly enquired as to what the projected savings of these measures was. Ms Jackson advised that the savings from NIPEC will be minimal and will be worked out on a meeting by meeting basis but was of the view that the optics had to be considered also. Chief Executive believed that these measures were coming from the Permanent Secretary's Systems Financial Management Group. Chair enquired if there would be an impact on promotional materials also given the

apparent increase in financial scrutiny and Ms Jackson assured him that the team would be taking a sensible approach to all these type of considerations.

Council members noted the update.

### **7.3 Corporate Risk Register 2025-26, Version 3 (Circulated for approval)**

Ms Jackson referred to the Corporate Risk Register previously circulated and advised that it had been reviewed and approved by Business Team at their September meeting. She asked members to note the introduction of Entra ID Password Protection which will provide another assurance. Ms Jackson asked if members had any questions or comments on the Register. Chair was of the view that Risk 3 was coming to the end of its life and undertook to raise at the next Audit & Risk Committee. Ms Jackson welcomed that proposal.

In relation to the Assurance Framework, Ms Jackson reported that she had now received a draft framework for review which sets out NIPEC's assurance framework inclusive of the 3 lines of defence assurance model. There has been a further development in relation to the 3 lines of defence model with a new Orange Book issued by the Treasury and so that will need to be referenced. Ms Jackson planned to get the first draft to the Audit & Risk Committee in October for review and then review the template for the Corporate Risk Register to reflect the 3 lines model to bring to Council in December.

Council members approved the Risk Register.

### **7.4 KPIs 2025-26 (Circulated for noting)**

Ms Jackson referred to the KPI Activity Report circulated prior to the meeting. She made members aware of the higher than average percentage of staff absences and advised that this had been largely down to the long-term absence of one staff member who had now returned to work.

Members noted the contents of the report.

### **7.5 Equality Annual Progress Report 2024-25 (Circulated for approval)**

Referring to the Equality Annual Progress Report previously circulated, Ms Jackson advised that this was a statutory requirement which had to be submitted annually to the Equality Commission NI outlining the progress of NIPEC's 5-year Equality and Disability Action Plan. The deadline for submission was 31

August and so the Report had already been submitted in draft form with the caveat that confirmation would be sent once Council granted their approval. The Report had previously been presented to and approved at a recent Business Team meeting. Ms Jackson asked if members had any comments to make and Ms McRoberts pointed out a minor typographical error for correction. She commented that otherwise the Report read very well.

Members approved the Report subject to the minor correction being made.

**Action:** Ms Jackson to amend Report as highlighted.

**7.6 Equality Commission for NI: Legal paper on the meanings of 'sex', 'men', 'women' and 'gender reassignment' in equality and allied legislation in Northern Ireland – June 2025 (Circulated for noting)**

Ms Jackson asked Council to note the legal paper on the meanings of 'sex', 'men', 'women' and 'gender reassignment' in equality and allied legislation as a means of highlighting some of the activity that is ongoing in this area. She undertook to keep Council up to date on any further developments on the Northern Irish position.

Council members noted the update.

**7.7 NIPEC Policies: (Circulated for approval)**

**7.7.1 Supporting Performance Policy**

Ms Jackson advised that this policy was updated by BSO in 2024 and replaces the previous Capability and Competency Policy. With the exception of paragraph 58, this policy is an exact replica of the regional version. Given the size of NIPEC, advice was sought from HR on the constitution of appeals panels as there may be occasions when relevant staff are not able to be sourced from within the organisation. HR proposed the wording contained in paragraph 58. Ms McRoberts enquired as to where NIPEC received their occupational health support from and Ms Jackson advised that this was provided by the Belfast Trust via an SLA with BSO.

Members approved the Policy.

### **7.7.2 Introduction of Entra ID Password Protection (for noting)**

Ms Jackson advised that this type of assurance would normally fall within the remit of the Audit & Risk Committee, however, she was of the view that it was useful to give Council an update on the development of the different types of assurances from time to time. She was of the opinion that this was a good development. All staff have been made aware of the new system and it is now included in the assurance section of the Corporate Risk Register.

Council members noted the update.

### **7.8 Update on Decision Time (Verbal update)**

Ms Jackson reported that, after some assistance from PaLs, the new owners of Decision Time, Advanced Solutions, had now invoiced NIPEC up to January 2026 and have accepted that the contract allows a one-year extension. She said that consideration of the position going forward was required and undertook to prepare an options paper for the December 2025 Council meeting. Ms Jackson had a meeting arranged with ITS for later in the month to explore SharePoint as one possibility. There was general discussion on the suitability of SharePoint and other possible alternatives. Chair thought that the year's extension would allow time for all options to be considered.

***Action:** Ms Jackson to prepare an options paper for the December Council Meeting.*

### **7.9 Business Continuity Assurances**

#### **7.9.1 BSO Digital Customer Assurance Report 2024-25 (Circulated for noting)**

Ms Jackson referred to the BSO Digital Customer Assurance Report previously circulated and advised that it provides a comprehensive overview of the significant advancements, challenges and strategic initiatives undertaken by BSO's Directorate of Digital Operations and is a good means of providing some further assurance to Council.

Ms Jackson highlighted some of the key areas of the Report that members may find to be of particular interest. Under Governance there was an IA recommendation around cyber security and the establishment of a Cyber Security Oversight Group. The SLA overview provides

information in relation to the ISO 20000 audit and KPIs for NIPEC's Infrastructure and Business Services. Other KPIs are referenced such as incident resolution, service desk and there is a section on service incidents.

Mrs Jackson thought that the Report provided a good idea of the breadth of services BSO provided. She suggested that Council may wish to consider inviting someone from BSO to a future workshop to provide further insight into this. Chair agreed that this was a good idea for a workshop later in the New Year.

Members noted the Report.

#### **7.10 Guidance on the Acceptance and Provision of Gifts and Hospitality (Circulated for noting)**

Ms Jackson advised that this item had already been covered under Item 7.7.2.

Members noted the Guidance.

### **8.0 Safety and Quality**

#### **8.1 Draft Annual Quality Report 2024-25 (Circulated for noting)**

Chair invited Chief Executive to provide an update on the Annual Quality Report previously circulated. Mrs L Kelly explained that the Annual Quality Report is a requirement for all health and care organisations set out in the NI Quality Strategy and is required to be submitted to the Department of Health by World Quality Day on 13 November. This year's Quality Report had been crafted more around the Quality Strategy. Mrs L Kelly asked if members had any comments on the Report. Ms McRoberts said that it was an excellent report. A few minor suggestions were made and Mrs L Kelly undertook to pass these on to Mrs Carson, Senior Professional Officer.

Chair thanked Chief Executive for providing an update on the Report which he believed showcased NIPEC's work in this area very well.

Members noted the Report.

#### **8.2 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 that there had been no further developments since the last meeting.

## **9.0 Any Other Business**

Chair wished to alert members to the possibility of a nurses strike around November time as a result of the 2025-2026 Agenda for Change pay award not having been implemented in Northern Ireland. The RCN have given the Executive a deadline of the end of September to agree to pay this award and on this occasion, have ruled out derogation.

Chief Executive advised that a strike could impact NIPEC as some of the staff were members of the RCN. She assured members that, as before, the organisation would try and work round it. Chair said that Ms Scott may decide to call an extraordinary Council meeting if there is concern that the strike will affect the delivery of the Work Plan. Chief Executive advised that the issue will be included on the CNO Business Meeting agenda and undertook to keep Council informed.

Chair concluded business and thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting. Chair requested that members stay behind for a short, confidential briefing.

## **10.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

The next public meeting date of NIPEC Council is **3 December 2025 at 2.00pm** and will be held **in Room 1.7, First Floor, James House.**