

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 2.00 pm via Zoom.

- Present: Professor C Curran, OBE, Chair  
Mrs A McLernon, OBE, Chief Executive  
Mrs A Baxendale, Deputy Chair  
Mrs C Rice  
Mrs L Houlihan  
Mr P Davidson  
Dr V Tohani
- In attendance: Ms J Jackson, Head of Corporate Services  
Mrs C McCusker, Senior Professional Officer  
Mrs C McKenna, Senior Professional Officer
- Secretariat: Mrs D Meleady, PA to Chair and Chief Executive

## **1.0 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Ms D O'Donnell, Mrs D Oktar-Campbell, Professor C McArdle

## **2.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

- 2.1 It was noted that no members of the public attended the online meeting.
- 2.2 Conflicts of Interest

Council Members were asked if there were any Conflicts of Interest. It was noted that there were no Conflicts of Interest from any of the Council Members. Professor Curran did declare an interest that would be discussed at agenda item 8.4.

- 2.3 NIPEC Council Membership Terms – Summary Sheet had previously been circulated for information.

Professor Curran advised Council Members that an email had been received this morning regarding the extension to the Terms of Appointment of the Non-Executive Members of NIPEC. It was noted that letters and Minutes of Appointment were being drafted and would be issued in due course. Professor Curran thanked Council Members for agreeing to extend their Terms of Office. It was also noted that new Council posts were currently being advertised.

- 2.4 It was noted that Professor Curran's response to the Duty of Candour Consultation had previously been circulated for information. Professor Curran thanked Mrs A Reed for leading and preparing the response.
- 2.5 Professor Curran thanked Council Members for their attendance at the workshop prior to the meeting to discuss NIPEC's response to the Department of Health Consultation on the Integrated Care System Northern Ireland Draft Framework.
- 2.6 Professor Curran informed Council Members that she met with NIPEC staff on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to inform them of Mrs McLernon's retirement.

Professor Curran also thanked everyone who took part in the NIPEC Annual Awards Ceremony which was held prior to the meeting. She thanked those who nominated members of staff and also congratulated the winners of the three Awards. These were as follows:

- **NIPEC Award for Innovation and/or Leadership** went to Ms Jill Jackson, Head of Corporate Services
- **NIPEC Award for Promotion of Health and Social Wellbeing** went to Ms Fiona Bradley, (Chair), Mrs Muriel Lockhart, Miss Lheanna Kent, Mrs Deirdre Meleady – members of the 'The Health and Social Wellbeing Committee'
- **NIPEC Award for Outstanding Contribution** went to Mrs Julie Edgar

The winners in each of the three categories received a trophy which shall be kept in NIPEC, and in addition each winner received an individual award of a Quaich as a keepsake.

Letters were sent on behalf of the NIPEC Council by Professor Carol Curran, Chair, congratulating the winners on their achievements. Letters were also sent out to those who received a nomination for an award as Council Members felt they should be made aware of this.

It was agreed to bring forward agenda items 8.3 NIPEC Online Portfolio and 8.4 Proposal for a NIPEC AEI Award to the three Universities. Professor Curran invited Mrs C McKenna and Ms J Jackson to start their presentation on the Online Portfolio.

Mrs McKenna gave a brief update on the background of an IT/Websites Audit that had been carried out and the recommendations that were proposed from the findings. As a result of the Audit, a review of the current websites was being undertaken and one of the first areas under review was the future of the Online Portfolio. Ms McKenna took Council Members through the recommendations, which were:

- Option 1 Maintain the Status Quo – maintain the site which was being hosted on a BSO server. This option would mean that NIPEC would need to work with BSO ITS to ensure that the site met legislative and statutory requirements and also the third-party supplier to put in place security and privacy arrangements highlighted in the audit. This would incur further costs for NIPEC as well as ongoing costs to maintain the site.

Mrs McKenna outlined the advantages and disadvantages of this option, along with key risks which included a potential security breach of the site which would be reportable to the Information Commissioners Office.

- Option 2 Take down the Online Portfolio – this option would require that registrants be advised that access to the Online Portfolio would only be available for an agreed period of time, after which, data would be archived in line with the DoH Good Management Good Records retention schedules.

Advantages and disadvantages were again discussed by Council members including minimisation of the risk of loss of data/data breach/cyber-attack. Potential risks of this option were reputational damage for NIPEC if they removed access to the site however members were advised that other alternatives were available with individuals having greater and more flexible access to IT and to storage of personal data than in 2006.

Council Members noted that Business Team had approved Option 2 at their meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Council Members also agreed this as the way forward as retaining the site was not business critical and no longer required to support registrants or essential to the professional work of NIPEC. The risks and potential future maintenance costs outweighed the benefits. Members requested that a letter be sent to the Chief Nursing Officer indicating that this was happening.

**Action:**

**Letter to be issued to the Chief Nursing Officer advising of Council's decision to stand down the Online Portfolio.**

Professor Curran invited Mrs C McCusker to present on Agenda Item 8.4 the Proposal of an NIPEC Award to the three Universities to which Professor Curran declared an interest.

Mrs McCusker took Council Members through her paper which proposed that to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NIPEC in 2022, an Annual NIPEC Award to recognise the promotion of high standards of education should be inaugurated. It was noted that there would be no monetary gifts but that a Trophy and keepsake would be sponsored by NIPEC for the winners.

Council unanimously approved this Proposal (with the abstention of Chair due to a declared interest via Ulster University) as it would also raise the awareness and profile of NIPEC.

### **3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (NIPEC/2/2021) for consideration.

A copy of the Minutes of the virtual meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (NIPEC/2/2021) had been previously circulated for consideration. Professor Curran asked Council Members if they had any matters of accuracy of which there were none.

Council Members accepted and agreed the Minutes from the virtual meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

#### **4.0 MATTERS ARISING**

- 4.1 Detailed in updated Action Plan (*Circulated*)

#### **5.0 CORRESPONDENCE**

- 5.1 It was noted that a letter SUB-0735-2021 dated 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 had been received from Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.2 It was noted that a letter SUB-0771-2021 dated 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This has previously been circulated.
- 5.3 It was noted that a letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021 had been received from Professor Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer regarding EU Settlement Scheme – Access to Healthcare for EU, EEA AND SWISS CITIZENS Resident in NI by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.4 It was noted that a letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021 had been received from Christine Collins, MBE, Chair of RQIA regarding Publication of the Nicholl Report 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.5 It was noted that a letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021 had been received from Professor Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer regarding Fully Vaccinated H&SC Staff told to self-isolate as a close Contact may be permitted to attend work in exceptional circumstances. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.6 It was noted that a letter SUB-0929-2021 dated 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.7 It was noted that a letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 had been received from Mr Andrew Dawson, Director of Quality, Safety and Improvement, DoH, regarding Issue of Regional Look back Review Policy and Guidance (HSC SQSD 06/21) This had previously been circulated.

#### **6.0 OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT**

- 6.1 Chief Executives Report

A copy of the Chief Executive's Report had previously been circulated via late mailing.

Mrs McLernon updated Council Members on her report noting the following:

- Business Plan for 2021/2022 provides scope of flexibility to assist the Chief Nursing Officer with any pressures on the health system. NIPEC would be able to stand down normal objectives should this become necessary. As and from the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Covid Sitrep meetings have started up again.

- Recording Care – this project for NIPEC is to end on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and this has been agreed with the support of Professor Curran. There will be a high-level overview Report produced and a handover of archived work. Thanks was given to Mrs A Reed who has been very central to this work and Council Members asked for a letter of thanks be sent to her.

#### **ACTION**

**Letter of thanks to be sent to Mrs A Reed for her excellent work regarding the Recording Care Project.**

- FNFM Project – Final Programme Board meeting is taking place in November 2021. Thank you letter to be sent to Mrs F Cannon in respect of her leadership on this project.

#### **ACTION:**

**Letter of thanks to be sent to Mrs F Cannon for her leadership on this project after the final FNFM Programme Board meeting.**

- Delivering Care Funding – still waiting on confirmation regarding recurrent funding for the two Band 8a Posts. Ms J Jackson to link with the Department of Health (item 7.3.1 below refers). Mrs L Houlihan indicated that it would be difficult for people to apply if the posts are not permanent.
- Activity on the NIPEC Website is lower than previous years as traffic to the website would have been high due to the FNFM and CNO platforms.
- H&SWB Committee continue to keep staff in touch and were delighted to hear they won an Award.

Professor Curran thanked Mrs McLernon and the staff of NIPEC for their continuous sterling work. Professor Curran gave thanks to Mrs McLernon for her continued leadership until a new Chief Executive is appointed.

## **6.2 Consultation Activity Report**

A copy of the above Report had previously been circulated. Council Members were invited to respond to any of the consultations listed.

## **7.0 CORPORATE CONTROL & FINANCE**

### **7.1 Head of Corporate Services Report**

A copy of the Head of Corporate Services Report which provided an update of the key issues affecting corporate services since the June 2021 Council meeting had previously been circulated.

## 7.2 Report from Standing Committee:

- 7.2.1 A copy of the Confirmed Minutes of A&R Meeting A&R/2/2021 held on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 had previously been circulated.
- 7.2.2 A copy of the Unconfirmed Minutes of the A&R Meeting A&R/3/2021 held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 had previously been circulated. It was noted that Mrs D Oktar Campbell was in the minutes twice as attending the meeting and sending apologies for the meeting. Ms J Jackson confirmed that the minutes would be changed to reflect her apology for the meeting.

### **Action:**

**Ms Jackson to amend the draft minutes before presentation to the October 2021 Audit and Risk Committee meeting.**

## 7.3 Financial Management Summary

### 7.3.1 Resource Budget Allocations 2021/22

It was noted that NIPEC received notification of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Allocation for 2021-22 on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 which had been circulated. This was a non-recurrent (assumed recurrent) Allocation of £138,416 in relation to the Safe Staffing – Delivering Care initiative (referenced by the CE in her report). This increased NIPEC's overall Allocation for 2021-22 to £1,584,431.

Ms Jackson advised that to date, NIPEC had been unable to proceed with the recruitment of two Band 8a posts due to the funding being non-recurrent. Although the Allocation letter stated that it is 'assumed recurrent' it would be a significant risk for NIPEC to proceed with the recruitment of permanent posts as if funding is not re-allocated in 2022-2023, NIPEC's core budget would not cover the costs of these posts on an ongoing basis.

Ms Jackson advised that she had approached DoH Finance to ask if any further assurance could be provided on the recurrent nature of the funding however this was not possible. Mrs A McLernon advised that she had written to NIPEC's Sponsor Branch to seek their help with the provision of further assurance.

### 7.3.2 Financial Summary of Expenditure – Month 4 (***Circulated***)

A copy of the above Summary for Month 4 had been previously circulated.

It was noted that this Report showed the financial position of NIPEC as of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021. NIPEC was projecting a year end surplus position of £170k compared to June's surplus position of £38k. Ms Jackson explained that this was largely due to an underspend in the pay budget due to a number of vacancies, and a lower than estimated spend on Associate salaries for the 2021-22 financial year. The projected

underspend also was partly attributable to a lower than anticipated non-pay spend due to the ongoing home working position.

Ms Jackson confirmed that she was working with BSO Finance to re-profile the budget for the remainder of the year and that it would be likely that a retraction would be requested from DOH Finance.

#### 7.4 Corporate Risk Register 2021-22, Version: 5

A copy of the above Register Version 5 was circulated via late mailing.

Ms Jackson updated Council Members on the following risks:

- **Risk 3** the likelihood score had been lowered to reflect the acceptance of extensions to Council terms of office and the advertisement for new members;
- **Risk 13** it was noted that a new risk was added to reflect potential slippage in the timescale for the move to James House and NIPEC's Centre House lease ending in August 2022. Ms Jackson advised that this risk is mitigated in part due to the fact that Covid-19 working from home has proved successful and could be an option in the event of any slippage in timescales. She also confirmed that the James House Project Group was still indicating a June 2022 move date.
- Members discussed the addition of a new risk to capture the retirement of Mrs McLernon and the issues that may be caused by any delay in the appointment of a new Chief Executive. Council were assured that Professor Curran and Mrs McLernon have contingency plans in place should an issue arise.

#### 7.5 KPIs 2021-22

A copy of the above report was previously circulated.

It was noted that the Absence figure was sitting at Amber which was due to a member of staff being off on sick leave due to surgery. Ms Jackson advised that she expected this figure to balance out over the remainder of the year subject to no further unscheduled absence.

Members were also asked to note that the Staff Appraisal figure had achieved a 91% compliance which was within target.

#### 7.6 NIPEC Equality Annual Progress Report 2020–2021 (***Circulated, For Consideration and Approval***)

A copy of the above Annual Progress Report for 2020-2021 had previously been circulated for consideration and approval this meeting.

Council Members noted that a draft version of the above Report had been submitted to the Equality Commission by 31<sup>st</sup> August with a caveat that

NIPEC would submit a final version following consideration and approval by Council. Council Members agreed the Report which they noted was very comprehensive.

#### 7.7 NIPEC Draft Business Plan 2021/22

It was noted that a copy of the draft Business Plan for 2021-22 had previously been circulated to Council for approval. The report was then submitted to Sponsor Branch for objectives to be prioritised and discussions had been ongoing between NIPEC Senior Officers and the Department to finalise the Plan. Mrs McLernon would further update Council Members at agenda item 8.1.

#### 7.8 NIPEC IT and the Websites Audit

At the June 2021 Council meeting, Ms Jackson had updated Members on the ongoing Internal Audit of NIPEC's IT and Website Management. She reminded them that the scope of the audit was to consider areas such as clarity over roles and responsibilities, security and infrastructure, and compliance with legal/good practice guidance on website management in respect of the three NIPEC websites.

A final report had been agreed in July 2021 and had provided a Limited Level of Assurance. Limited assurance was provided on the basis that there were some weaknesses in the governance and management of the websites and key findings included the following:

- No formal risk assessment of the data held on the sites had taken place which meant that NIPEC has limited assurance that all appropriate mitigations to minimise the risks to individuals are in place;
- Two of NIPEC's websites were developed and are supported by an external provider which can present risks around compliant procurement routes. Internal Audit have recommended a review of the Organisation's approach to website support/management and the associated costs;
- There are a number of areas where the NIPEC websites are not complying with regulations and/or good practice on website management – specifically security, servers, accessibility, cookies, disclaimers and privacy notices.

Ms Jackson confirmed that work has commenced to take forward the recommendations and progress on these will be reported to the Audit & Risk Committee on an ongoing basis. Council Members commended NIPEC for recognising the potential risks and commissioning the Audit and Dr Tohani thanked Ms Jackson for all her hard work.

#### 7.9 NIPEC Corporate Services Organisational Structure

Ms Jackson had updated Members at the June Council meeting on progress with the review of the Corporate Team structure. Following receipt of a



Report of the Internal Scoping Exercise, the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Services presented a paper to the Senior Management Team setting out a proposed new structure; in line with HR advice, the paper was also shared with NIPEC Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee for comment and the Corporate Team in June 2021. No further comments or issues were received on the proposals.

Ms Jackson advised that the next steps are to cost out the new structure to ensure that it is affordable within the current corporate team budget and subject to the outcome of that exercise, to proceed with recruitment of posts. Members agreed that this was all the more pressing following Mrs Janet Hall, Corporate Services Manager, deciding to retire in December 2021.

**Action:**

**Ms Jackson to prepare costings for consideration and agreement by Mrs McLernon to proceed with implementing the new corporate structure.**

#### 7.10 Update on Review of Policies

Ms Jackson gave the Council Members an update on the review of Policies. Progress to date was as follows:

- **40** have been/are in the process of being approved;
- **2 ICT policies** are outstanding for completion of review and approval by Council;
- **2** former policies have been archived and incorporated into the Standing Orders (*Declaration of Interests Policy and Guidance to Staff on the Acceptance of External Gifts, Hospitality and Awards*); and
- **1** With Council for approval.

Ms Jackson asked members if they were happy to agree a return to business as usual with the process of approving policies by the Business Team and then those approved being presented to the relevant Committee.

Council Members agreed with this model going forward.

#### 7.11 NIPEC Accommodation – James House Project

Ms Jackson confirmed her continuing attendance at the monthly Project meetings for the move to James House. She highlighted key current issues including:

- Ongoing negotiation of the draft Licenses between BSO Directorate of Legal Services on behalf of HSC ALBs, and Departmental Solicitors;
- Implementation of a NIPEC working group to manage the move including the clearance of the Centre House offices;

- Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Services to meet with the James House Project Team to discuss furniture, colour for soft furnishings and storage;
- Approval by Business Team of the appointment of a resource to assist in the organisation and co-ordination of the move and the clearance of Centre House;
- Ms Jackson liaising with DoF to appoint surveyors to carry out a survey to estimate dilapidation costs prior to negotiation with the Centre House landlord. It was noted that NIPEC have accrued some monies from the 2019-2020 financial year to cover these costs but further monies may be required.

A brief discussion took place around when staff did return to work in NIPEC offices what approach could be taken. Members enquired whether NIPEC would adopt a Hybrid approach which would involve a combination of office and home working. Council Members felt this was the sensible approach for the future and Mrs McLernon confirmed that consideration would be given to the various options in line with Government advice. As with previous decisions this will also involve staff engagement.

7.12 Council Members received a copy of the Counter Fraud Services end of year Report 2020/21 for information. This had previously been circulated.

#### 7.13 NIPEC Standing Orders

A copy of the NIPEC Standing Orders had previously been circulated. Ms Jackson advised Council Members that she had adopted a standardised template which was used by other HSC ALBs and had incorporated several new sections in the document including a Code of Conduct and Matters Reserved to Council and Delegated by Council.

Council Members felt that it would be beneficial for the new incoming Council to review these and it was agreed that they should be reviewed again in September 2022. Council Members thanked Ms Jackson and were happy to approve the updated NIPEC Standing Orders.

## 8.0 SAFETY AND QUALITY

8.1 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2020/21 – Business Plan objectives progress Monitoring Report to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

A copy of the above Work Plan had been circulated.

Council Members noted the following:

- Mrs McLernon met with Professor McArdle to finalise the priorities for professional work to go into the Business Plan.
- Mrs McLernon noted the Recording Care project will finish and move to the work being undertaken as part of the Encompass programme.

- NIPEC have been asked to scope the need for regulation of the Non-Regulated Workforce in the context of recent inquiries and reviews across the HSC. A background paper would be prepared for CNO. Mrs McLernon highlighted other changes to the Business objectives which were agreed by Council-final comments back to Mrs Deirdre Meleady by next week at which stage the Plan will be finally approved.

Review to look at a Review of Practice Education Teams. Professor Curran stated that it was good to see new objectives in the proposed Business Plan which is a testament to the agility of NIPEC.

## 8.2 NIPEC Annual Quality Report 2020/21

Council Members received a copy of the above Report and approved this. A copy of this will now be sent to the Department of Health and will be posted onto the NIPEC website on World Quality Day on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

## 8.3 NIPEC Online Portfolio

This was presented to Council at the start of the meeting.

## 8.4 Proposal for a NIPEC AEI Award to the three Universities

A copy of the Proposal was sent to Council for information and this was presented to them at the start of the meeting.

# 9.0 CHIEF NURSING OFFICER UPDATE

Apologies were received from Professor McArdle who was unable to attend the meeting due to another engagement. Professor McArdle provided a written update which would be sent to Council Members after the meeting for information. Council Members were reminded to keep this update confidential.

# 10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further Business.

# 11.0 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next public meeting of NIPEC Council will be on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 2.00 pm, venue to be agreed. Professor Curran felt that it might be feasible to look at holding the next Meeting and Workshop at an external venue, Council Members were content with this proposal.

A reminder to Council Members there will be a Council Business Plan Workshop on the morning of the meeting, details to be confirmed.

Professor Curran thanked Council Members and NIPEC staff again for their attendance at this mornings' workshop, award ceremony and Council Meeting.



Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 2.00 pm via zoom.

**CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA**

**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

There was no confidential business for discussion.