

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 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  
Ms D O'Donnell  
Mr P Davidson  
Dr V Tohani

In attendance: Ms J Jackson, Head of Corporate Services

Secretariat: Mrs D Meleady, PA to Chair and Chief Executive

## 1.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs D Oktar-Campbell, Ms L Kelly, Interim Chief Nursing Officer.

## 2.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

2.1 It was noted that no members of the public attended the online meeting.

2.2 Professor Curran thanked Council Members for their attendance at this morning's workshop and indicated that the discussion would be useful in setting up a Framework for the way forward for the new NIPEC Council when developing the new Corporate and Business Plans.

2.3 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.

2.4 NIPEC Council Membership Terms

A copy of the summary sheet had previously been circulated for information.

Professor Curran updated Council Members regarding the situation of the new NIPEC Council Membership.

It was noted that a new Chair had been appointed but to date no public announcement had been made.

Interviews were still ongoing for new Council Members and Professor Curran advised that she had been lobbying Sponsor Branch and the Interim CNO proposing that an extension of the tenureship of some of the existing Professional and Lay Members may be required for a further few months to ensure sure that NIPEC Council remains quorate. Professor Curran indicated to Council Members that she may be approaching them in regard to further extending their memberships subject to Departmental approval and members' agreement.

Mrs McLernon, indicated that she had received correspondence from Mrs J Keyes, Sponsorship Branch, stating that she would be recommending extension periods for several current members to the Public Appointments Unit.

Professor Curran confirmed that she would keep Council Members updated on progress.

#### 2.5 Appointment of new Chief Executive.

Professor Curran advised Council Members that the recruitment of a new Chief Executive had been successful and that Ms Linda Kelly had been offered the post. Members noted however that Ms Kelly was currently standing in as Interim Chief Nursing Officer and therefore no start date with NIPEC had been confirmed. Chair and Chief Executive reassured Council Members that a contingency plan would be in place for January 2022 to ensure that NIPEC had an Accounting Officer in place and that Mrs McLernon would be willing to remain as an Associate for a short period to support Ms Kelly.

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

#### 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (NIPEC/3/2021) for consideration.

A copy of the Minutes of the virtual meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (NIPEC/3/2021) 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 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### **4.0 MATTERS ARISING**

#### 4.1 Detailed in an updated Action Plan that was previously circulated.

## **5.0 CORRESPONDENCE**

- 5.1 It was noted that a letter SUB-0735-2021 dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services. This has previously been circulated.
- 5.2 It was noted that a letter SUB-1108-2021 dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.3 It was noted that a letter SUB-1129-2021 dated 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.4 It was noted that a letter SUB-1161-2021 dated 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.5 It was noted that a letter SUB-1177-2021 dated 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.6 It was noted that a letter SUB-1210-2021 dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 had been received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services. This had previously been circulated.

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

### **6.1 Chief Executive's 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:

- NIPEC Workplan – now includes a number of COVID-19 pandemic related objectives aligned to objectives of the NIPEC Business Plan.
- Review of Post registration Education Commissioning Arrangements in Northern Ireland – Ms A McLernon provided information to the Independent Reviewer who is leading this work.
- Future Nurse Future Midwife Project – This Project is completed and a draft report will go to the Chief Nursing Officer.
- Professionalism – Mrs A Reed will continue to complete this piece of work and a Launch is planned for May 2022.
- Management of Violence and Aggression (MOVA) – Mrs A Reed liaised with HR Leads and Directors regarding data ahead for work to commence next year.

Professor Curran thanked Mrs McLernon for her report.

### **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

Ms J Jackson, Head of Corporate Services Report provided a verbal update of the key issues affecting corporate services since the September 2021 Council meeting

### 7.2 Report from Standing Committee:

7.2.1 A copy of the Confirmed Minutes of A&R Meeting A&R/3/2021 held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 had previously been circulated.

7.2.2 A copy of the Unconfirmed Minutes of the A&R Meeting A&R/4/2021 held on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 had previously been circulated.

Ms Jackson drew Council Members' attention to the preparation of a Mid-Year Assurance Statement for NIPEC which was approved by the Audit & Risk Committee at their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October and had subsequently been submitted to the DoH Governance Unit and Sponsor Branch on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021. A copy of the final version of the Report To Those Charged with Governance had been presented at the meeting by the NIAO. NIPEC received an unqualified certificate without modification and no adjustments were required.

### 7.3 Financial Management Summary

#### 7.3.1 Financial Summary of Expenditure

A copy of the Financial Summary for Month 7 was circulated via late mailing.

Ms Jackson reminded Council Members that at the last Council meeting in September 2021, she had alerted members to a projected yearend projected surplus of £170k. Since then, the projected underspend had increased significantly with Month 5 projecting an underspend of £287k at yearend. This was largely attributed to underspend on the Pay budget both due to turnover of staff and lack of availability of Associates. Therefore to address this Ms Jackson confirmed that NIPEC had requested a retraction of £286k in line with Departmental advice. The request had been submitted to Sponsor Branch and approved in principle and NIPEC was awaiting a revised Allocation Letter from DoH Finance.

Ms Jackson went on to confirm that following the submission of the Month 7 FMR which was indicating a further year end surplus of £120k, an additional retraction had been requested bringing the total retraction for the year to £406k. This amount included the entire Safe Staffing allocation as while the recruitment of the two fixed term Band

8a posts had commenced and interviews were scheduled for December, it was unlikely that NIPEC would appoint within the current financial year.

Council Members were asked to note that there still remains uncertainty regarding the breakeven position for the full year due to the lack of clarity over when the new Chief Executive would commence. Ms Jackson explained that NIPEC had budgeted salary costs for January until March 2022 however any slippage could put the Organisation at risk of achieving the breakeven position of £20k. This had been mitigated in part by Sponsor Branch notifying DoH Finance of the position and receiving an indication that a further small retraction in January would be considered should the need arise.

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

A copy of the above Register Version 7 was circulated via late mailing.

Ms Jackson updated Council Members on the following risks:

- Risk 1: Breakeven Position  
This risk remains at Medium classification however, based on the discussion at 7.3.1 there may be a case for raising it to High. It was agreed by Council Members that this risk remain at Medium but that it should be kept under review.
- Risk 3: Council Membership –  
Ms Jackson alerted members to this risk which was currently sitting at High however, given the lack of appointments and the ending of current Council Members' terms, she asked members to consider whether they wanted to raise it further. Dr Tohani proposed that the risk be escalated to Extreme and Council members agreed.

#### **ACTION:**

**Ms J Jackson to escalate Risk 3 to Extreme.**

- Risks 8 and 9: Online Portfolio/Careers Website  
Council Members noted that due to the long-term absence of a key member of ITS staff there has been no further progress on either of these risks. A further update would be discussed at agenda item 7.6.
- Risk 11: Insufficient Support from HR  
Ms Jackson advised Council Members' that the BSO had engaged PA Consulting to carry out an independent review of BSO Service Level Agreements including the HR SLA. All Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) had been offered the opportunity to give feedback to the representative at the ALB Forum in November 2021 and it was hoped that the subsequent report or its findings would be shared with BSO customers.

- Risk 14: Delay in appointment of Chief Executive – Council Members noted a new risk had been added after discussion at the September Council meeting. The delay of a start date for the new Chief Executive remains an issue for the Organisation as no arrangements are in place for an Accounting Officer after December 2021 however, this was being taken forward by Chair and the Chief Executive as discussed under agenda item 2.5.

#### 7.5 KPIs 2021-22

A copy of the above report was previously circulated.

Council Members noted the following updates with regards to KPIs.

- Payment of invoices were on target to achieve full compliance by yearend;
- Absence was sitting at Amber but the monthly figure had started to decrease from September and it was hoped that NIPEC would achieve the target by yearend.

#### 7.6 NIPEC IT and the Websites Audit

Ms J Jackson gave Council Members the following verbal update.

Council Members noted that an IT sub group had been established to take forward the necessary steps to address the internal audit recommendations. Membership includes NIPEC staff, both professional and corporate, and two representatives from HSC Leadership Centre IT team. Ms Jackson advised that the HSCLC staff are currently preparing an options' paper regarding future arrangements for hosting and maintaining the NIPEC Careers website. This report was scheduled for sharing with the NIPEC Business Team meeting in December 2021.

Following the decision at the September Council Meeting to step down the Online Portfolio, NIPEC met with the current 3rd party Provider and advised them of this decision. Draft correspondence had been prepared to issue to senior nursing staff throughout the HSC and voluntary/private sectors and following the issue of that, individual emails would be sent to all users of the site advising them of the closure and guiding them on how to download their personal information. Ms Jackson confirmed that it had originally been intended to step the site down at the end March 2022 however, this may be put back to April to ensure sufficient notice was given. Notices will also be posted on the main NIPEC website and the Online Portfolio.

Ms Jackson also informed members that she had sought advice from DoH Information Branch on the retention of the records once the site has closed. It was noted that NIPEC may not have a legal entitlement to retain the

information and it may be required to be deleted however, DPO and Legal advice shall be taken to inform a final decision.

**ACTION:**

**Ms Jackson to seek legal and DPO advice on retention of the records on the Online Portfolio and prepare a briefing paper for Business Team Meeting and Council.**

7.7 NIPEC Corporate Services Organisational Structure

Ms J Jackson gave Council Members the following verbal update:

Ms Jackson advised the Members that a draft job description/personnel specification for a Band 7 post had been prepared and forwarded to BSO HR for evaluation. Once approved recruitment for the post shall commence.

Job descriptions/specifications were still required to be drafted for a new Band 6 post and a replacement Band 5 Communications Officer. Ms Jackson advised that it was intended to supplement the latter post with a Service Level Agreement with the Leadership Centre to offer more flexibility and assurance around the technical aspects of managing the websites.

7.8 Equality Screening of Policies

Ms J Jackson gave the following verbal update.

Council Members noted that the majority of the reviewed 40 policies have now been screened, there are just 3 policies left to be equality screened.

BSO Equality Unit advised NIPEC that they had stepped outside of the process by not equality screening these policies prior to approval. NIPEC acknowledged this and had advised the Equality Unit that this was not a normal practice of the organisation. However, given the size of the task and very limited capacity, screening was not always possible prior to approval. NIPEC officers had though risk assessed and prioritised the screenings with the majority of the policies adopted being copies of regional policies where screening had already been carried out and shared with NIPEC.

Council Members noted that in most cases especially the HR policies no changes were made so NIPEC assessed the risk of challenge as low and any implications from screenings had already been mitigated. However, in line with good practice and as already agreed by NIPEC Council, a cover sheet would be included when policies were being presented to include a summary of the screening findings when considering future policies for approval.

## 7.9 NIPEC Accommodation – James House Project

Ms J Jackson updated Council Members on the following:

A successful appointment of a temporary Project Officer has been made to co-ordinate and support the clearance of Centre House and the move to James House. Currently the Officer is completing an inventory of assets and drafting an action plan to be considered by the James House sub-group within NIPEC and actions will then be allocated. A rota shall be established for staff to clear their office space and this is planned to take place between January and February 2022. Then in March 2022 staff will clear the library, kitchen and other communal areas. Confidential disposal and digitalisation of information is also being looked at by the NIPEC sub-group and a meeting with PRONI will be set up to assess which documents should be transferred to them including Council and Committee papers.

The planned move is still on target to take place in June 2022 with the Department of Finance James House team drafting protocols for the move, guidance and information for staff, choosing furniture and branding and signage. Legal negotiations on the license are ongoing and currently correspondence from all the HSC ALBs and DoH are being considered by the Departmental Solicitors.

## 7.10 Draft Terms of Reference for Audit & Risk Committee

A copy of the above Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee had previously been circulated. Please see update below in reference to the above.

## 7.11 Draft Terms of Reference for Remuneration Committee

A copy of the above Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee had previously been circulated.

Council Members noted that both of these documents had been reviewed in line with the Board Effectiveness Internal Audit which took place in March 2021. It was noted that Internal Audit had asked that the responsibilities of the Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee be changed to state that the Committee should 'advise' the Council on the terms of the Chief Executive rather than 'determine' and this has been changed accordingly. Other changes provide some of the background as to why the Committees must be constituted and their roles and Ms Jackson advised that these had been benchmarked against other ALBs.

Ms Jackson proposed that both Terms of Reference be added into the Standing Orders as appendices which will ensure that they will automatically be reviewed along with the Standing Orders on a regular basis. Council Members agreed to this. Ms Jackson indicated that the Standing Orders and the Standing Financial Instructions be included on the agenda of the first



meeting of the new Council and included in induction packs for future Council Members.

Ms Jackson thanked Chair and Council Members for all their support given to her role as Head of Corporate Services. Chair and Council Members were grateful to Ms Jackson for all her hard work in undertaking her role. Dr V Tohani thanked Ms Jackson for all her support to him in his role of Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

## **8.0 SAFETY AND QUALITY**

### **8.1 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2021/2022 – Business Plan objectives progress. Monitoring Report to 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021.**

A copy of the above Work Plan had been circulated late mailing.

Council Members noted that there were no Amber or Red listings and that the recommended work was on target.

Chair thanked Mrs McLernon and her staff for their continued hard work.

## **9.0 CHIEF NURSING OFFICER UPDATE**

Apologies had been received from Mrs Linda Kelly, Interim Chief Nursing Officer for the meeting and a written update was provided. It was agreed that this update would be shared with Council Members via email after the meeting.

### **ACTION:**

**Mrs D Meleady to send out the Interim Chief Nursing Officer's report to Council Members.**

## **10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **10.1 Provisional Dates for Council Meetings 2022**

The following provisional dates have been put forward for Council Meetings in 2022:

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
June 2022 meeting to be arranged  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022

These are to be confirmed when the new Council has been established.

## **11.0 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

To be agreed.

As this was the last Council Meeting with the current established Council Members, Professor Curran took time to thank all the Council Members for their support over the years and that it had been a privilege and a joy to be Chair of NIPEC Council.

Mrs A McLernon thanked Chair and Council Members on behalf of staff for their hard work, loyalty and professionalism during their tenureship with NIPEC.

**NIPEC/4/2021**



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**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

There was no confidential business for discussion.