

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on  
Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 2.00 pm in Room 1.7, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor,  
James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA

Present: Kieran McCormick (Chair)  
Janine Stockdale  
Gary Mitchell (Via Teams)  
Karen Diamond  
Siobhán Caslin (Via Teams)  
Ciara Scannell (Via Teams)  
Emma McIlveen (Via Teams)  
Eilidh McGregor  
Amit Bhagwat (Via Teams)  
Nirmala Bhogal  
Katrin Lehmann  
Sharon McRoberts (Via Teams)  
Linda Kelly, Chief Executive

In attendance: Jill Jackson, Head of Corporate Services  
Gary Cousins, Senior Professional Officer  
Tina Mills, Chief Executive PA  
Biji Jose, Ethnic Diversity Professional Officer BHSC  
Deepthi Roshan, Ethnic Diversity Professional Officer SHSCT  
Amanda Malone, Ethnic Diversity Professional Officer SEHSCT  
Jonah Atos, Ethnic Diversity Professional Officer WHSCT

Apologies: Brenda Kelly  
Sara Haller, Boardroom Apprentice

Secretariat: Jill Jackson, Head of Corporate Services

## **1.0 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies had been sent from Brenda Kelly.

## **2.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

### **2.1 Welcome members of the Public**

Chair noted that no members of the public were present.

### **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 Dates for Council Meetings/Workshops 2024**

The Chair asked members if they had received the email with the proposed dates for 2024 and confirmed that these had also been uploaded onto Decision Time under the Resources section, Council Folder.

Chair asked members if they were content to approve the reduction of the number of workshops from four to two, the reason being that with the new Committee being established there was a full programme for 2024. He also acknowledged that for some members it was challenging to attend a workshop and Council meeting in one day however it would also prove difficult to secure an additional two dates.

*Members approved the proposed workshop dates of June and December for 2024.*

### **2.4 Topics for Council Workshops 2024**

Chair asked members to suggest any topics for the two workshops in June and December 2024. Following attendance at a workshop facilitated by Amit Bhagwat in November 2023 which he had found very informative and interesting, Chair proposed that Council accept Amit's proposal to present a workshop on Empathy & Inclusion in Professional Life in June 2024. Members were happy to approve this proposal and it was agreed that Ms Jackson would contact Mx Bhagwat nearer the time to make the arrangements.

**ACTION:** Ms Jackson to liaise with Mx Bhagwat to organise the June 2024 Council workshop.

Further discussion ensued regarding a topic for the December workshop. A number of members suggested it would be beneficial to hold a refresher On Board workshop which would focus on the governance, legal and financial aspects of their responsibilities. This proposal was approved.

**ACTION:** Ms Jackson to liaise with the relevant parties to agree the content of the December 2024 Council workshop.

### **2.5 NIPEC Conference**

Mr McCormick took the opportunity to thank all staff and Council members who had contributed to the conference which everyone agreed had been a great success. Mrs L Kelly referenced her Report, tabled under item 6.2, which contained some of the feedback from the conference. All agreed that this had been overwhelmingly positive and Chair asked that Council's thanks be noted in the minutes.

## **2.6 Register of Council Members Activity**

The Chair thanked Council members for submitting their quarterly updates to Ms Jackson.

*Council members noted the Register of Council members activity.*

## **2.7 Update on Council Members' On Board Training**

Chair thanked all members for completed their training and noted that as part of the appointments process, this should be confirmed to the DoH Public Appointments' Unit.

**ACTION:** Ms Jackson to confirm with PAU that all On Board training was completed by 2023 members.

## **2.8 Update on Chair's Leave of Absence**

Chair updated members on Ms Scott's progress and indicated that there was no firm date for her return. However, he planned to meet up with her before Christmas and agreed to keep members informed.

## **2.9 Permanent Secretary's Attendance at NIPEC Council meeting**

Mr McCormick asked members to note that Mr May had sent his apologies for the meeting today and that a date would be rescheduled for his attendance in 2024.

## **3.0 Minutes of Previous Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Chair asked if members had read the minutes and were happy to approve. Ms Caslin requested an amendment to the record of her attendance at the September 2023 meeting which was in person rather than via Teams as per the minutes. Subject to this amendment being made, Council members approved the minutes from the previous Council meeting on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

## **4.0 Matters Arising**

Ms Jackson gave an update in relation to the matters arising as outlined in the Action Plan and advised that Mrs McEaney had sourced Business Continuity training for Council members and senior staff. Proposed dates were in March 2024 and Ms Jackson confirmed that these would be shared with members to agree a final date.

Ms Jackson sought further guidance on the Information Governance training required for Council members. Following discussion, it was agreed that a good starting point would be for members to have access to the new e-learning platform in order that they could complete the IG training there. Once members had been granted access and completed the training then further thought could be given as to whether additional training was required and Ms Jackson agreed to add this as an action to be reviewed in June 2024.

Ms Jackson also referenced the Draft Hybrid Working Policy and confirmed that a

second survey had been carried out amongst staff with very positive responses in favour of continued Hybrid Working. She explained there was still discussion to be had as to whether the two days in the office should be set or remain flexible and the Health & Wellbeing Group would establish some focus groups with staff to agree a way forward. Members welcomed the update and following discussion it was agreed that the final draft of the Hybrid Working Policy should be presented to the March 2024 Council meeting for approval.

Ms Jackson asked if members had any questions on the categorisation of the actions. No further questions were asked and members noted the progress to date.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Ms Jackson to seek access to the new e-learning platform for Councilmembers.
- Review of IG training requirements to be included in the June 2024 Council agenda
- Final draft of Hybrid Working Policy to be presented to Council in March 2024 for approval

### **5.0 Correspondence**

**5.1** Correspondence from Permanent Secretary re Guidance on Roles and Responsibilities: Change or Withdrawal of Services (August 2023)

**5.2** Fraud Matters Newsletter November 2023 (***Circulated for Noting***)

*Council members noted the correspondence.*

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

#### **6.1 Fiona Bradley presentation – In-House Training Review**

Ms Bradley summarised the aims of the review which was to seek the range, type, volume and delivery methods of in-house nursing and midwifery education activities and the quality assurance processes that are in place across HSC Trusts. She advised Council that the work in itself had identified the need for a lot of further work in order to align with the Elaine Maxwell report (2022) which recommended that to achieve Value for Money, post registration education needs to meet at least one of three key objectives:

1. Continuous Professional development to maintain current services;
2. Post registration education to maintain a professional work Environment and retain experienced staff; and
3. Post registration education necessary for reconfiguring service delivery and the introduction of new practices.

Ms Bradley confirmed that this initial review would almost certainly lead to further work for NIPEC including the development of a Matrix for post registration education and consideration of standardisation across HSC organisations and how this could be achieved.

*Chair and members thanked Ms Bradley for the very informative presentation.*

## **6.2 Chief Executives Report**

Mrs L Kelly referenced the report which contained some of the key highlights of her work and NIPEC's priorities since the last Council meeting. She confirmed that she had attended the NIPEC Ground Clearing meeting on the previous day and discussed with CNO her priorities for 2024 and how NIPEC can support these. Mrs L Kelly advised that CNO had asked officials to create an overarching framework for the implementation of her vision and that these would be allocated to respective organisations including NIPEC. Mrs Kelly also confirmed that she had been invited by CNO to join the Strategic NMC four country meeting with the aim of aligning professional strategies.

Mrs Kelly also referenced the evaluations from the Communities of Practice event, NICON and NIPEC conferences and members agreed that the feedback was very positive.

Mr McCormick commended the team on very successful engagement events and welcomed the opportunity to review the evaluations.

*Council members noted the Chief Executives report.*

## **6.3 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2023-24 – Business Plan objectives progress Monitoring Report from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Mrs L Kelly referenced a copy of the report which had been circulated and focussed on the four objectives Rag rated Red and Amber, explaining the reasons behind the delays in these. These were largely delayed due to reasons beyond NIPEC's control and Mrs Kelly was able to confirm that one of the Ambers was now in progress (Review of the NI Epad) as an Associate had been secured to take forward the work.

*Council members thanked Mrs Kelly for the update and noted the Report.*

## **6.4 Consultation Activity Report**

The Chief Executive referenced consultation 514 and confirmed that this response, which was co-ordinated by NIPEC on behalf of CNO, had been submitted on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

*Council members noted the consultation activity report.*

## **6.5 Draft Hybrid Working Policy**

This item was discussed under agenda item 4, Matters Arising.

## **7.0 Corporate Control and Finance**

### **7.1 Reports from Standing Committees:**

#### **7.1.2 Confirmed Minutes of the A&R Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

Members noted that these had been approved at the Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

#### **7.1.3 Unconfirmed Minutes of the A&R Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

Council members noted the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

#### **7.1.4 Unconfirmed Minutes of the Professional & Business Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Council members noted the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

### **7.2 Financial Summary of expenditure 2023-24, Month 07**

Ms Jackson gave an update on the financial position at Month 7. Members noted that NIPEC was showing an expected full year surplus position of £70k for the year and enquired what action had been taken to address this and bring the organisation back into a breakeven position.

Ms Jackson explained that the slippage was largely due to delays in appointing permanent posts and lower than anticipated uptake from Associates to support projects. She confirmed that she had met with Sponsor Branch officials to discuss the projected surplus and asked them to approach DoH Finance to discuss a retraction of £45k. Ms Jackson confirmed that this offer had been accepted since the papers were issued and a revised allocation letter had been received by NIPEC confirming the reduction in funds.

*Council members noted the Month 7 financial position.*

### **7.3 Corporate Risk Register 2023-24, Version 6**

Ms Jackson presented the Corporate Risk Register and summarised the changes that had been made for Council review. Dr Bhogal referenced Risk 3 (Business Continuity Planning) and proposed that a further mitigation to be included in the Controls would be the fact that two Senior Professional Officers are nominated for most professional projects, one to take the lead and one to shadow. This meant that should the lead be unavailable, the person shadowing could assume responsibility for the project.

*Council members approved the proposed change and the amended version of the Corporate Risk Register.*

#### **7.4 KPI's 2023-24**

Ms Jackson asked members to note progress to date on the KPIs, all of which were currently Green with the exception of the breakeven position which was designated Red – see item 7.2. However, as confirmation of the retraction has since been received the RAG rating would reduce to Amber.

*Council members noted the paper.*

#### **7.5 Review of Digital Support for NIPEC Meetings**

Ms Jackson asked members if they had received the options paper and asked if anyone needed to seek clarification on any aspects of it. As no further questions were forthcoming, Mr McCormick asked members to share their experience of the current system and give their opinion on the way forward.

Dr Bhogal stated that she liked Decision Time as having everything in one place was very useful. She did raise the issue of the cost which she deemed to be high however as it was procured via a Crown Commercial framework, it was assumed that it was compliant with relevant IG and security standards and offered a compliant procurement route, in her opinion the system fulfilled Council's requirements.

This opinion was endorsed by Ms Davidson who also liked Decision Time and found it easy to navigate although she did suggest that further training in the system may be useful to improve performance. Ms McGregor highlighted that Options 1 and 2 could potentially be more expensive than Option 3 and Mx Bhagwat offered his preference for Option 2 which would suit his personal circumstances. Chair however pointed out that this could present logistical difficulties given that Mx Bhagwat resides in England.

Chair asked members to vote for the Options presented and the outcome of the vote was as follows:

Option 1: No votes

Option 2: One vote

Option 3: Unanimous vote to renew the Decision Time licenses

Option 4: No votes

*Council members approved Option 3 and Ms Jackson agreed to proceed to purchase licences.*

## **7.6 Draft Partnership Agreement**

Ms Jackson updated members on progress with the document and confirmed that a final draft version had been agreed between NIPEC and Sponsor Branch officials in November 2023. She confirmed that Sponsor Branch had agreed at the meeting with NIPEC on 5<sup>th</sup> December that Council could proceed to approve this version at the meeting today pending its return from the DoH Governance Unit and DoF.

Ms Jackson asked if there were any further queries on the document and if Council were happy to approve it.

*Members approved the document.*

## **7.7 NIPEC Policies**

### **7.7.1 Complaints' Policy**

### **7.7.2 Clear Desk and Screen Policy**

Ms Jackson asked if members had any queries on either of the policies and if Council were happy to approve both.

*Council approved the policies.*

## **7.8 NIPEC's Business Continuity Plan**

Ms Jackson asked members to note that this remains a live document and is updated when required however it is presented at least annually to Council for approval. She reminded members that Business Continuity is a risk on the Corporate Risk Register and that one of the actions remains outstanding i.e. clarification to be received from BSO as to how they will contact key NIPEC staff in the event of a cyber security breach of HSC systems.

*Members approved the current version of the Business Continuity Plan.*

## **7.9 Legal Case**

Council members were informed of a legal claim for damages against NIPEC which is ongoing. This relates to a former employee of the Colleges of Nursing which were once hosted by the National Board for Nursing NI, NIPEC's predecessor.

Ms Jackson confirmed that NIPEC are being supported by the Directorate of Legal Services in BSO with the claim.

Members noted the information and it was agreed that further updates would be shared with Council as the case progresses.



## **8.0 Safety and Quality**

### **8.1 DoH Covid-19 Public Inquiry Group**

Mrs Kelly confirmed to members that she had submitted a signed witness statement to the Inquiry concerning NIPEC's support to DoH and other HSC organisations during the pandemic.

*Council members noted the update on the DoH Covid-19 Public Inquiry Group.*

## **9.0 Any Other Business**

Two items were raised under A.O.B by the Chair:

- **Board Effectiveness Review:** Mr McCormick thanked members for their participation in the review. He confirmed that NIPEC had not received the final report to date however the outcome would be presented to Audit & Risk Committee in due course.
- **Appointment of Deputy Chair:** Chair confirmed that he would consider the appointment of a Deputy following receipt of the above report.

The Chair concluded business and confirmed that the next public meeting of the Council will take place on **13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 2.00pm.**