

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday, 9th March 2022 at 2.00 pm via Zoom.

Present: Ms B Scott, Chair
Mrs C McCusker, Interim Chief Executive
Mrs C Rice
Mr K McCormick
Ms K Diamond
Ms S Caslin
Ms E McIlveen

In attendance: Mrs L Kelly, Interim Chief Nursing Officer
Ms J Jackson, Head of Corporate Services

Secretariat: Mrs J Hall, Associate Corporate Services Manager

1.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs L Houlihan and Mrs B Kelly Murnion.

2.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

2.1 Welcome

Ms Scott welcomed the new Council Members of the NIPEC Council to their first meeting and thanked Mrs Rice and Mrs Houlihan for agreeing to extend their terms of office and remain on NIPEC Council.

Ms Scott thanked Mrs McCusker for stepping into the role of Interim Chief Executive following the retirement of the former Chief Executive, Mrs McLernon, and welcomed Mrs L Kelly, Interim Chief Nursing Officer, who will take up the post of NIPEC's Chief Executive on Monday, 14th March.

Ms Scott invited Council Members to introduce themselves.

Ms Scott advised that today's meeting was being held via Zoom in order to meet current government guidance, but added it would be the intention to hold the next Council meeting in June/July in person. This would be a very important meeting with the primary purpose of signing off the Annual Report and Accounts for 2021-22, the timescales for which are set down by the Department of Health in partnership with the NI Audit Office with limited flexibility with dates. Ms Scott stated it would be vital the meeting was quorate and asked for a full attendance.

Following discussion, it was proposed the next meeting would be on Wednesday, 6th July at 2pm. Council Members were advised that an Audit and Risk Committee meeting may be needed prior to the full Council meeting and those Council Members would need to be available for that.

It was agreed an email would be forwarded to all Council Members confirming these arrangements.

ACTION:

Ms J Jackson to arrange for dates of meetings to be issued to all Council members for 2022-23.

- 2.2 It was noted that no members of the public were in attendance at the online meeting. Ms McIlveen suggested sharing the date/time of future Council meetings on Twitter prior to each meeting as this may encourage members of the public to attend.

ACTION:

Ms J Jackson to ensure that future Council meetings should be published on NIPEC'S website and social media.

- 2.3 Conflicts of Interest

Council Members were asked if there were any Conflicts of Interest. Individual members advised of roles in other organisations, however, it was noted that there were no Conflicts of Interest from any of the Council Members in today's business.

Council Members were reminded to complete and return their Declaration of Interests forms to Ms J Jackson as soon as possible as these needed to be included in the Annual Report and Accounts for 2021/22.

ACTION:

Council Members to complete and submit Declaration of Interest Forms to Ms Jackson.

- 2.4 NIPEC Council Membership Terms – Summary Sheet

Ms Scott referred Council Members to a copy of the summary sheet which had previously been circulated, and reiterated her thanks to Mrs Rice and Mrs Houlihan for agreeing to extend their terms of office and remain on NIPEC Council. Ms Scott advised that whilst the Council is quorate, 8 vacancies remained, three lay and five professional, and that she had raised the need for further recruitment of Council Members with the Public Appointments Unit via NIPEC's Sponsor Branch. Ms Scott added that she had also raised the lack of diversity (gender and ethnicity) of the Council with the Public Appointments Unit and asked them to address this in subsequent recruitment campaigns.

Whilst further recruitment is not possible until after the Assembly elections in May 2022, Ms Scott advised she would write to the Sponsor Branch following the elections to ensure recruitment of additional NIPEC Council Members was prioritised by the Public Appointments Unit.

ACTION:

Ms Scott to write again to the Public Appointments Unit after the election to ask that they prioritise recruitment of NIPEC's Council vacancies.

2.5 Nominations for Membership and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Ms Scott advised Council Members that the role and terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Committee are outlined within NIPEC's Standing Orders which had been shared with members in their Induction Packs. However, a summary document had been prepared by Ms Jackson and Ms Scott asked Ms Jackson to summarise functions of the Committee for Council members.

Turning to membership of the Audit and Risk Committee, Ms Scott advised this comprised of 4 Council Members appointed by the Council, with 2 Council Members needing to be present for meetings to be quorate. Ms Scott added that the Chair of NIPEC Council is not normally a member of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Ms Scott advised that Expressions of Interest had been issued to all members in relation to the Audit and Risk Committee and that she had received a number of responses.

Ms Caslin, Ms McIlveen and Mr McCormick all expressed an interest in being a member of the Audit and Risk Committee, however none felt that they had the appropriate experience to take on Chair of the Committee. In addition, Ms Diamond requested she shadow a few meetings before deciding to join as a full member. It was also agreed to appoint a deputy Chair of the Committee at a later date.

Following discussion, Mrs Rice, a former deputy chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, agreed to take on the role of Chair of the Committee for the remaining time of her term of office. Chair welcomed this approach as it would offer a transition from the old committee to the new and provide some stability and continuity. Ms Scott also confirmed that she would raise with Sponsor Branch the need to secure a Council member with audit and risk experience when recruiting further members to the Council.

It was agreed by Council that the membership of the Audit & Risk Committee would be Mrs Rice, Ms Caslin, Ms McIlveen and Mr McCormick. It was also noted that members were required to attend the Effective Audit and Risk Committee training and that this would be organised within the next few months.

ACTION:

Ms Scott to discuss with Sponsor Branch the appointment of a Council member with Audit and Risk Committee experience.

Effective Audit and Risk Committee training to be organised for the four members.

2.6 Nomination of a Deputy Chair of Council

Following discussion, it was proposed that the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee should also be Deputy Chair of Council as they would have a good overview of governance and risk in the organisation. Ms Rice agreed in principle however, it was agreed to communicate with members not present today prior to any decision being made.

ACTION:

Ms Scott to discuss the proposal of Mrs Rice being Deputy Chair with the two members not present and seek their thoughts and/or agreement.

2.7 Remuneration Committee Membership

Ms Scott advised Council Members that the Remuneration Committee will comprise the remaining members of the Council i.e. those not on the Audit and Risk Committee. These were confirmed as Ms Scott (Chair), Ms Diamond, Mrs Houlihan and Mrs Kelly Murnion.

2.8 Board Governance Self-Assessment Document

Ms Scott referred Council Members to the Self-Assessment document previously circulated; she explained that the document mainly reflected activities from the term of office of the previous Chair and Council members. Ms Scott explained that completion of this document was not formally requested by the Department of Health but that they did expect ALBs to complete it in line with good practice. Following discussion, the document was approved and it was agreed Council Members will consider their assessment for 2022/23 at workshops held during the year.

ACTION:

Council to hold a workshop to focus on completion of the Board Governance self-assessment for 2022-23. Ms J Jackson to arrange a suitable date.

2.9 On Board Training Progress

Ms Scott advised that Council Members should attend On Board training within the first 6 months of their term of office. She requested that all members who have not already done so send availability to Ms Jackson or Mrs Meleady as soon as possible so a place can be confirmed.

ACTION:

Council members to confirm attendance at On Board Training within 6 months of commencing their term of office i.e. by end June 2022.

2.10 Register of Members' Activity

Ms Scott advised Council Members that a record of activity will be forwarded to them prior to each Council meeting for completion. She added that this

was good governance and information received would be reflected in NIPEC's Annual Report.

ACTION:

Council members to forward any activities to be inserted into the Register of Members' Activity before each Council meeting. Ms J Jackson to issue template and reminder in advance of each meeting.

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on the 24th November 2021 (NIPEC/4/2021) for consideration and approval.

Ms Scott advised Council Members that a copy of the Minutes of the virtual meeting held on the 24th November 2021 (NIPEC/4/2021) had been reviewed and approved by the previous Chair and Chief Executive. Mrs Rice advised she had been in attendance at that meeting and was happy to approve these.

In response to a query from Ms Caslin, the process for drafting/approving minutes was confirmed by Ms Jackson, who advised a draft was normally shared with herself, the Chief Executive and Chair for comment/amendment prior to being issued to Council Members with their papers for discussion, amendment and approval at the following meeting.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 Matters Arising from previous meetings were detailed in an updated Action Plan that was previously circulated.

In response to a query from Mrs Kelly regarding the online portfolio and email issued to registered users of this site, Ms Jackson advised that whilst NIPEC does not ask for confirmation of receipt of the email or if information has been downloaded from the site, reminders will be sent out to registered users in the period leading up to the closure of the site.

Mrs Rice acknowledged the challenge this issue had brought and thanked Mrs Jackson for her work on resolving this.

5.0 CORRESPONDENCE

- 5.1 Email dated 28th January 2022 received regarding DoH follow up action from ALB EU Exit Forum 26/01/22 – Letter from Cathy Harrison to HSC Chief Executives regarding NIMAR. This had previously been circulated.
- 5.2 Letter SUB-0121-2022 dated 27th January 2022 received from Minister Robin Swann regarding Rebuilding HSC Services This had previously been circulated.
- 5.3 Letter dated 25th January 2022 received from Co-Chairs of the IC Design Group regarding Closure of the HSCB – transferring of Committees of the Board pertaining to the Functions of the Directorate of Integrated Care to the Department of Health. This had previously been circulated.

6.0 OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

6.1 Chief Executive's Report

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

- NIPEC COVID-19 Response – highlighting flexibility within NIPEC's Business Plan; Standard Operating Procedures developed to support new working arrangements and staff working from home; weekly update to Chair and CNO.
- Key areas of work within four statutory areas of NIPEC work, i.e. Practice, Education, Professional Development and Advice and Guidance – this included an update on Digital Capabilities Framework, NMC Post Registration Education Standards, Future Nurse Future Midwife, Review of Non-NMC approved Education Programmes, Enabling Professionalism 2022, and District Nursing Career Pathway.
- Website and Social Media Activity.

Ms Scott thanked Mrs McCusker for her report, which showed NIPEC had continued to be busy as well as supporting colleagues during Covid-19. Ms Scott advised Council Members that a workshop would be held in the coming months to look at the work of NIPEC in more depth but opened the floor for any comments and/or questions at this stage.

In response to query regarding the decrease in website activity, Mrs McCusker replied this may be due to a reduction in workforce, however less face to face engagement with registrants and visibility within the HSC system during Covid-19 could also be a factor.

In response to a query regarding involvement in NIPEC work, Mrs McCusker advised that the level and specialism of registrants involved could vary depending on the subject or theme of the workstream or project. Mrs McCusker added that a paper on the future methods of engagement and communication with registrants and the wider HSC system would be coming to Council for discussion at a later date.

It was noted that a workshop would be organised with Council members to look at and discuss the role of members in the work of NIPEC.

It was agreed to forward a copy of the Chief Executive's full report to Council Members.

ACTIONS:

Paper on the future methods of engagement and communication with registrants and the wider HSC system to be presented by Mrs McCusker to either June or September Council for discussion.

Ms J Jackson and Ms B Scott to arrange a workshop with Council members and the Senior Team to discuss the role of members in the work of NIPEC.

Mrs McCusker to circulate a copy of the Chief Executive's full report to Council Members.

6.2 Consultation Activity Report

A copy of the above Report had previously been circulated. Council Members noted the consultations listed, those NIPEC had responded to and those which officers were in the process of drafting a response to.

7.0 CORPORATE CONTROL & FINANCE

7.1 Head of Corporate Services Report

A copy of the Head of Corporate Services Report had been previously circulated.

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

7.2 Report from Standing Committee

7.2.1 A copy of the Unconfirmed Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee Meeting (A&R/4/2021) held on the 12th October 2021 had previously been circulated for noting. Mrs Rice confirmed she was in attendance and had read and agreed with the content of the minutes.

7.3 Financial Management Summary

7.3.1 Financial Summary of Expenditure – Month 10

A copy of the Financial Summary for Month 10 had been previously circulated.

Ms J Jackson advised Council Members that NIPEC receives its funding from the Department of Health with the opening allocation for 2021-22 being just over £1.3m. NIPEC's financial management services are provided via an annual Service Level Agreement with the Business Services Organisation's Finance Directorate, with support from two Business Partners, both qualified accountants.

In addition to its annual allocation, NIPEC had received two further non-recurring allocations of £108k and £138k to support the completion of the Future Nurse Future Midwife project and Safe Staffing initiative respectively.

Like all ALBs, NIPEC is required to submit a monthly Financial Monitoring Report (FMR) to the Department of Health, which at Month 10 projected an end of year surplus of £19k. Ms Jackson advised Council Members that NIPEC is permitted a surplus or deficit of no more than £20k, which, if not met, may result in NIPEC receiving 'qualified' accounts. However, some planned expenditure has been actioned, which, along with a recharge of pay arrears, will result in an expected Month 11 position to be well within the financial breakeven limit.

In response to a query from Ms Caslin regarding retractions to the Department of Health, Ms Jackson advised that the return of allocated funds due to unforeseen circumstances needs to be done in a timely manner and in consultation with the Department of Health. Normally this would be required at mid-year Monitoring in November however the DoH may retract further amounts between January and March although there is a higher risk at this stage of the financial year that they may be unable to accommodate such requests.

7.4 Corporate Risk Register 2021-22, Version 9

A copy of the Corporate Risk Register, Version 9, had been previously circulated.

Ms J Jackson advised Council Members the Risk Register is updated by Business Team and presented to the Audit and Risk Committee and Council at every meeting.

Ms Jackson updated Council Members on the following risks:

- **Risk 1: Failure to achieve financial breakeven target**
Ms Jackson advised of a typo on the Register which should read a projected end of year position of £19k at Month 10. Ms Jackson advised this risk had been raised from Medium to High due to how close the projected end of year position is to the target of £20k – however, it was anticipated this could be reduced again at Month 11. Ms Jackson also advised the Department of Health have indicated their agreement to a further retraction and is awaiting an allocation letter to confirm this.
- **Risk 2: Achievement of Business Plan Objectives**
Ms Jackson advised the likelihood score has been escalated to Possible to reflect the financial position.
- **Risk 3: Appointment of Council Members**
Ms Jackson advised this risk had been escalated to Extreme at the previous Council meeting. However as new members have since been appointed, the risk had been reduced to High, and it is proposed this will remain into 2022-23 financial year to reflect feedback from the Public Appointments Unit noted earlier. Ms Jackson added the risk description may need to be reworded to reflect the issue around quoracy for meetings. This will be considered at the forthcoming Audit and Risk Committee
- **Risk 7: Business Continuity Plan**
Ms Jackson advised an annual review of NIPEC's Business Continuity Plan is scheduled for April 2022 and will be presented to Council at its June or September meeting for ratification.
- **Risk 9: Compliance with Accessibility Legislation**
Ms Jackson advised of progress with the addition of the Cookies Plug and the site does contain Accessibility and Privacy Statements. Ms

Jackson added that further progress has been delayed due to capacity issues within BSO ITS and NIPEC, however, it is hoped an options paper awaited from the HSC Leadership Centre will provide solutions to some of the outstanding issues.

- **Risk 13: Delay in move to James House**

It was noted a separate paper has been circulated for discussion at agenda item 7.8, which highlights some of the key issues and options to mitigate these. In light of these issues, Ms Jackson advised Council Members that the impact has been raised to Major, which had elevated the overall risk score from Medium to High.

7.5 KPIs 2021-22

A copy of the above report was previously circulated.

Ms J Jackson drew Council Members to the Absence figure which has decreased significantly and is just outside of the Green rating. However, Ms Jackson stated that due to the small number of staff, one absence period has a major impact, and with one member of staff currently off it is expected this will be at Amber at year end.

7.6 NIPEC IT and the Websites Audit

Ms Jackson advised members that following an audit of NIPEC's IT/Website arrangements in 2021, that NIPEC had received a 'limited assurance' from Internal Audit; the key findings from the audit were linked to governance and procurement issues and NIPEC senior team were currently working through the recommendations of the report with the support of HSC Leadership Centre IT Consultants.

Ms J Jackson advised Council Members that NIPEC currently has three websites, its main site plus the Careers Website and Online Portfolio. She advised that NIPEC Council had decided in September 2021 to stand down the Online Portfolio and that work was underway to decommission the site including communication with key stakeholders.

Ms Jackson confirmed there was no intention to stand down the Careers Website, however, an options paper awaited from the HSC Leadership Centre IT team will include proposals on how this site could be managed and hosted in the future. Ms Jackson added that once received this paper will be considered by NIPEC's Business Team and a full update provided to Council.

7.7 NIPEC Corporate Services Organisational Structure

Ms J Jackson referred members to her report which provided an outline of the reason and processes behind the review of the corporate team. She advised that progress was being made with the recruitment of the Band 7 replacement post well underway.

Ms Jackson added that the remaining two posts to be filled need job descriptions to be drafted and matched, which she will take forward with her senior colleagues and agreed to keep Council updated with progress.

7.8 NIPEC Accommodation – James House Project – Options Paper

Ms J Jackson referred Council Members to an Options Paper previously circulated, which provides the background and progress update of the planned accommodation move by NIPEC to James House in June 2022.

Ms Jackson advised NIPEC have been notified of a potential delay due to one contractor going into liquidation although a revised indicative date for moving has not yet been confirmed. In light of this, the following options are under consideration should the move date be delayed beyond the end of NIPEC's current lease in Centre House of 31st August:

- Option 1 – seek a further extension of the Centre House lease beyond 31st August;
- Option 2 – continue home working arrangements until James House is ready for occupancy;
- Option 3 – seek alternative accommodation in HSC.

Following discussion, Council Members agreed Option 2 to be the most viable option, although a final decision will not be made until NIPEC receive final confirmation of a move date from the Department of Finance Project Team who are overseeing the James House project.

Council Members were also appraised of ongoing engagement between the HSC Department of Legal Services and the Department of Finance solicitors to seek clarification of a number of issues regarding the new lease for James House. Two outstanding issues remain, namely, the possible introduction of a commercial rent at year 5, and the fact there is no ability to terminate the licence within the initial 5-year period.

In response to a query from Mrs Kelly, Ms Jackson advised NIPEC have been asked to provide the Department of Health with their current lease expenditure, and the fact that NIPEC will only be paying a nominal fee plus facilities management costs for the first 5 years of the new lease, this may be reflected in future budgetary allocations.

7.9 NIPEC Draft Policies – Social Media Policy and Menopause Policy

Draft Policies - Social Media and Menopause– and a cover sheet for both providing members with the background and a summary of equality screening were previously circulated.

Ms Jackson advised both policies are based on BSO/Regional policies and that BSO HR represent NIPEC and other ALBs at the regional Joint Negotiating Forum with staff side organisations.

Following discussion, both Policies were approved by Council Members present.

8.0 SAFETY AND QUALITY

8.1 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2021/2022 – Business Plan objectives Progress - Monitoring Report to 1st March 2022

A copy of the above Monitoring Report was previously circulated.

Mrs C McCusker took Council Members through the report, who noted a number of projects had been completed and the remaining were on target with no Amber or Red listings.

Ms Scott and Mrs Kelly agreed to discuss the draft standards for Nursing/Midwifery Assistant roles and the possible link to current workforce challenges and vacancies.

In response to a query from Mr McCormick regarding Career Pathways, Mrs McCusker advised that the PHA will be taking forward the development of further Pathways using NIPEC's guidance framework and linking with NIPEC to ensure that guidance is being followed and standards met.

9.0 CHIEF NURSING OFFICER UPDATE

Mrs L Kelly, Interim Chief Nursing Officer, provided Council Members with an update as follows:

- Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Review – engagement has continued through Covid-19 and a report is being finalised for submission to the Minister
- Nursing and Midwifery Task Group Report – Co-Chairs have been appointed for the three Strategic Theme Groups, terms of reference for each group have been drafted and work to scope priorities, resources needed, etc. has commenced. Nursing and Midwifery Strategy for NI now timely.
- Enabling Professionalism 2022 – 'Here for Life' launch on 12th May 2022
- Student Training Programme – proposals to Minister to confirm places for 2022/23
- Safe Staffing - commitment of £60m for safe staffing over 5 years given by NI Executive in 2020 - £25m allocated in 2022/23
- Launch of Workforce Plan Strategy
- Vacancies – retention plan due to go to Minister, business case for international recruitment funding with Department of Health for consideration/approval
- Post-Registration Nursing and Midwifery Education – increase to £10.4m in 2021/22, review of Post-Registration commissioning report due in April 2022
- Enhancing Clinical Care Framework – delays due to Covid-19, to extend project by 12 months
- Review of Intermediate Care
- Health Child, Healthy Future – health reviews for pre-school children
- Immunisations – challenges in delivering flu vaccination programme to wider cohort of the population
- Nurses for Health Equality Report
- Continuity of Midwifery Care/Carer – programme of work established

- Midwifery Care / Review of Maternity and Neo-Natal Services – preparatory work ongoing
- Commissioning of Abortion Services
- Quality and Safety across Maternity Services

Mrs Kelly proposed seeking feedback from Council Members at one of the planned workshops on the future presentation of this information and update from the CNO.

10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Programme of Future Workshops – for discussion and noting

- 10.1.1 Nichol Report
- 10.1.2 Statement of Strategic Intent
- 10.1.3 Standing Orders

Ms Scott referred to the above topics for future workshops, adding that further discussion will be needed by Council Members on how they wished to receive and discuss information from NIPEC Officers, and if and when extraordinary meetings may be required. Ms Scott added that Council Members will be called upon in future to attend events, participate in working groups.

10.2 Ms Scott thanked the former Chair, Council Members and Chief Executive and reiterated her appreciation to Mrs Rice and Mrs Houlihan for agreeing to extend their terms of office and remain on NIPEC Council. Ms Scott asked for a vote of thanks to Mrs McCusker for agreeing to act as Interim Chief Executive, and to Ms Jackson, for her support to her since she took up the post of NIPEC Chair.

Mrs Kelly expressed her appreciation and look forward to joining NIPEC as Chief Executive.

11.0 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

As discussed within Chair's Business at the start of the meeting, it has been agreed to hold the next meeting at 2pm on Wednesday, 6th July 2022.

It was noted this meeting has to be quorate for the approving and signing off of the NIPEC Annual Report and Accounts for 2021-22.

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday, 9th March 2022 at 2.00 pm via Zoom.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

There was no confidential business for discussion.