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Northern Ireland Social Care Council

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**Social Care Council Board Meeting**

**Confirmed Minutes**

**10.00a.m on Wednesday 12th October 2022**

**Via Zoom videoconference**

**Present:**

Paul Martin (CHAIR)

Sarah Browne, Board Member

Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member

Gerard Guckian, Board Member

David Hayes, Board Member

Brenda Maitland, Board Member

Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member

Catherine McPhillips, Board Member

Anne O’Reilly, Board Member

Lee Wilson, Board Member

**In Attendance:**

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council

Declan McAllister, Dir. of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council

Marian O’Rourke, Director of Regulation & Standards, Social Care Council

Catherine Maguire, Interim Head of Workforce Development, Social Care Council

Helen McVicker, Head of Fitness to Practise, Social Care Council

Sandra Stranaghan, Head of Business Services, Social Care Council

Hollie Bishop, Business Support, Social Care Council

Maureen Martin, Business Support, Social Care Council

**Observer(s):**

Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer

Public attendance – 1 observer

**Apologies:** None

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| **Formalities** | | | |
| **Item** | **Agenda** | | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Welcome and Apologies** | |  |
| 1.1 | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting had been originally proposed as hybrid however due to the majority preference it had been converted to a virtual meeting only.  The Chair welcomed a meeting observer who had joined under the public attendance scheme. | |  |
| 1.2 | The Chair formally welcomed Rita Lewtas to the first Board meeting since the commencement of her appointment as Head of Communication and Strategic Engagement. | |  |
| 1.2 | No apologies were received. | |  |
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| **2.** | **Declarations of Interest** | |  |
| 2.1 | There were no Declarations of Interest | |  |
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| **3.** | **Board Minutes – Papers A & B for approval** | |  |
| 3.1 | *Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 29th June* *2022 and the Extraordinary meeting of 8th July 2022* | |  |
| 3.1.1 | The minutes of 29th June 2022 and the Extraordinary meeting of 8th July 2022 were taken as read and approved by the Board as a true and accurate record. | |  |
| 3.2 | *Action List* | |  |
| 3.2.1 | See Annex I for action list review, and new actions arising out of the meeting of 12th October 2022 (and previous meetings). | |  |
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| **4.** | **Matters Arising** | |  |
| 4.1 | There were no matters arisings for consideration. | |  |
| **Business Briefings** | | | |
| **5.** | **Chair’s Business** | |  |
| *5.1* | The Chair reported the following activity since the last meeting on 29th June 2022:   * Congratulations were extended to Marian O’Rourke on her permanent appointment to Director of Regulation & Standards * Sean Holland is in the process of taking up a new position in the Department of Justice. The Chair confirmed that a letter of appreciation would be sent to Mr Holland on behalf of the Board to thank him for his support. Aine Morrison has taken up the post as Chief Social Worker Officer (CSWO). The Government Liaison Officer agreed to check on availability for the CSWO to attend the December Board meeting. **ACTION** * The Public Appointments Unit have confirmed a three-month appointment extension for Board members Anne O’Reilly, Brenda Maitland, Catherine McPhillips and Lee Wilson. The Chair noted that the Board Strategic session on 16th November 2022 will mark the end of the term of office for Lee Wilson. * Receipt of the Board Skills Audit report is expected from David Nicholl within the next few days and will be shared once it is available. A date will be arranged for the Board and officials to convene to review and agree a plan to take forward any recommendations. The Chair reiterated that the Non - Executive Director recruitment exercise could not be conducted until the Board Skills Audit report and recommendations have been reviewed as agreed with the Department of Health. * Meetings held with the Chief Executives and Chairs of the Safeguarding Board NI and RQIA. * The Chair and Chief Executive were invited to join a NIGALA Board meeting on 8th September. A thank you letter received from the Chair of NIGALA had recommended regular meetings going forward to share a common agenda. It was agreed that regular interface opportunities with other Arms’ Length Bodies would also be useful. * As the Department of Health has reinstated pre-COVID governance arrangements, an Accountability meeting with the Permanent Secretary has been arranged for the Chair and Chief Executive for 22nd November. * The Chief Executive will update members on the introductory meeting with the new Permanent Secretary on 6th October under the Chief Executive’s report agenda item. * Officials were congratulated on the successful delivery of the Council’s 21st birthday lunch event on 29th September which had been attended by Board members, staff and guest speaker, Sean Holland and marked a major milestone for the organisation. | | **GLO** |
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| **6.** | **Chief Executive’s Report – Paper C for information** | |  |
| *6.1* | Further to the reference in the previous agenda item to regular meeting opportunities with other ALBs, the Chief Executive confirmed that quarterly Chief Executive of ALBs meetings are scheduled and consideration will be given on how to take forward more interface opportunities with RQIA and NIGALA.  The Chief Executive provided an overview of the Chief Executive Report, with the following key activity highlights for the period mid - June to 30th September 2022:   * The Social Care Council has been shortlisted for the European Social Services Awards under the Workforce Support category for the Professional in Practice framework. The voting link is now open for the European Social Services Awards (ESSA) and will be shared with Board members: **ACTION** * Investors in People Award – the Social Care Council has been shortlisted for best Flexible Working Policy. This award focuses on the process of engagement with staff in developing the policy. * Successful delivery of 21st birthday event on 29th September which was marked with staff, the Chair and several Board members. * Introductory meeting with the Permanent Secretary and the Executive team on 6th October. The visit demonstrated that the Permanent Secretary has a good understanding of the role of the Council. He focussed his discussion on the development of leadership and management within the HSC system, and discussed his vision going forward with the key focus on efficiency, productivity and quality. The Chair will issue a formal invitation to the Permanent Secretary to meet with the Board at his earliest convenience. **ACTION** * An in person NICON conference is scheduled on 19th and 20th October at La Mon House Hotel. The Social Care Council has worked with NICON to maintain a focus on social care and is supporting: * Parallel session on social care with Sean Holland, Mathew Taylor CEO of NHS Confederation and Camille Oung from the Nuffield trust * Breakfast session on Children’s and Young People’s services * Social Care Council meeting with invited Directors of Adult Social Care from the HSC Trusts.   The Board commended the achievement in reducing the use of agency staff and the consolidation of the interim posts in view of the current recruitment challenges particularly around administration function.  **The Board noted the Chief Executive’s Report** | | **Business Support**  **Chair** |
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| **7.** | **Overview of the Emergency Register Survey during COVID – 19 – Paper D for information** | |  |
| *7.1* | To support the recruitment of temporary workers responding to the Department of Health COVID19 Workforce Appeal, the Social Care Council introduced short-term amendments to the processes for workforce registration in April 2020 and the setting up of the emergency register. These temporary arrangements, were in place until the end of September 2020.  In order to learn more about the people who joined the workforce in these very unusual circumstances, the Social Care Council sent a follow-up survey to all of the 3,327 Emergency Registrants in April 2022, asking them to describe their motivations for responding to the Workforce Appeal; to share their experiences of registering at that time; and to provide an insight into their decisions to leave or remain in this area of work.  The response rate to the survey was 6% and the following key issues highlighted from the Survey and Response Analysis:   * 41.16% of respondents were not working when they joined social care and ‘Others’ included wanting to gain relevant work experience, transitioning from being an unpaid carer and furlough. * Feedback from respondents illustrates that more than half of those who joined the workforce during the pandemic welcomed the opportunity to carry out a worthwhile role. * A number of returners had extensive experience and recognised the need to support front line services during the pandemic. * Job satisfaction and knowing that the people they provide services for are among the top motivators for remaining in social care. Public recognition for the role was viewed less positively. * Work-life balance was commented on as a negative factor for social care. Terms and conditions were flagged by some respondents, along with references to inequity in terms of holiday entitlements, rates of pay and reimbursement for travel. Uncertainty about contracted hours and permanency were also reported as negative points related to social care. * The difficulty of the role was referenced by some respondents and this was linked to the need to be paid appropriately for what is being asked of this workforce in terms of complexity and workload.     It was agreed that the low rate of survey response should not invalidate the data as it reflects key messages from across the social care sector. The *Health and Social Care Workers’ Quality of Working Life and Coping While Working During the Covid-19 Pandemic UK Study* has recently issued its fifth report. The data collected allied with this survey should also strengthen parallel key messages around pay and conditions and value for the role.  These two surveys will be reviewed by the Leaders in Social Care Partnership and key themes triangulated as part of the influencing and system leadership role.  The Government Liaison Officer agreed with the importance of the triangulation of data and confirmed support to facilitate engagement with the Reform of Adult Social Care and Social Care Workforce Strategy teams led by the Office of Social Services with the overarching aim to improve standards and provide a better service for service users.  ***The Board noted the Overview of the Emergency Register Survey during COVID- 19*** | |  |
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| **8.** | **Subcommittee Updates** | |  |
| *8.1* | *Draft unconfirmed Minutes of Participation Partnership meeting of 27th September* | |  |
| 8.1.1 | The outgoing Participation Partnership Chair thanked Partnership vice chairs, Anne Mallon and Gerard McWilliams for managing the previous meeting in her absence. Board member Sarah Browne has now succeeded as Partnership Chair.  It was reported that due to current personal challenges, several Partnership members have taken the decision to stand down.  A speaker from the IMPACT Assembly had attended the last meeting to hear feedback from members on their experience of attending the Assembly.  The new participation Partnership Chair and the Board Chair thanked the outgoing Chair for her support and commitment to the Partnership as a representative of the voice of service users and carers.  Board approval was sought for the Participation Partnership Terms of Reference.  ***The Board formally approved the Participation Partnership Terms of Reference*** | |  |
| *8.2* | *Professional in Practise (PiP)Committee update - verbal* | |  |
| 8.2.1 | The role of Committee chair has been formally transferred and acknowledgement was given to the outgoing Chair for her dedication and contribution to the Committee over the previous 4 years. The new Chair of the Professional in Practise Committee gave members a verbal update.   * Professional in Practise awards - 164 social workers received awards across a number of areas of the framework at a virtual awards ceremony on 28th September. The activity of the Communications team on social media to promote the awards and the positive aspects of social work was recognised. Members were encouraged to vote for the PiP Awards framework ESSA nomination. * Credit Accumulation Route -a workshop took place at the end of 21st September and a paper will be presented at the next PiP meeting on 23rd November for consideration. | |  |
| *8.3* | *Registrants’ Forum review – verbal update* | |  |
| 8.3.1 | The Director of Regulation & Standards gave a verbal update on the review of the Registrants’ Forum.  It had been agreed at the last Registrants’ forum meeting to step down the formal forum and a project is in place to review what engagement with registrants should look like moving forward. The Department of Health (DoH) were also informed of the decision as the forum had been initially established under DoH directive. The DoH have agreed that the Social Care Council should take forward work to agree the best format for registrant engagement.  The previous Board Apprentice and Participation Partnership chair have agreed to voluntarily participate in the piece of work and attended an initial workshop with the Head of Communication & Strategic Engagement, Engagement Officer and members of the forum acting as a steering group to consider registrant engagement using a design approach.  Work has also commenced to map out the extensive range of stakeholders and existing engagement activity.  A date is to be set to review work to date and agree next steps including direct engagement with registrants.The Board will be kept updated on progress. | |  |
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| **Business Matters** | | | |
| **9.** | **Quarter 2. Business Performance Report to 31st August 2022 – Paper F for information** | |  |
| *9.1* | The Director of Registration and Corporate Services noted a minor error in the summary section of the report which should include a third KPI on Management of Financial Resource which has been increased to an amber RAG status. A forecasted deficit of £131k is highlighted and plans are in place to ensure breakeven is achieved.  The following key highlights were reported:   * A separate high-level risk has been identified around BSO HR recruitment due to the level of monitoring and resource dedication this requires. * Staff absence was reduced significantly in August to 1.01%. with a small number of sickness absences related to COVID or normal seasonal illnesses however this has had no impact on business delivery. * Agile working pilot – the pilot has been extended to early October to facilitate staff feedback. The Senior Leadership team have directly engaged with individual teams on Agile working, the impact on business and home life and the move to James House. Over 50% of staff are working an average of 2 days on site. * Engagement and comms activity is reflected in report including direct email campaigns to support Careers promotion, job opportunities in the Council and updates to service delivery and the Participation Partnership virtual engagement event and video * Delivery of new resources and continued delivery of lunchtime seminars * Move date to James House is 3/4 February 2023. The Executive team is satisfied with license arrangements and verbal confirmation has been received from the Department of Health that additional costs arising from the delayed move to James House will be funded by a non-recurrent allocation and a Capital Business Case is required to be submitted * The report reflects continued reporting of business activity across all functions including Fitness to Practise and the development work by the Workforce Development team. **The Professional in Practise virtual awards video to be shared with the Board. ACTION**   The Head of Fitness to Practise confirmed that going forward remote hearings will be mainly in place which is the default position of the other U.K regulators. Registrant requests for a face to face hearing will be facilitated by the Social Care Council.  As the Social Care Council is taking a more evidence-based approach to Committee Hearings, the Centre for Effective Services (CES) has been engaged to carry out a survey to gather information on the experience of all participants in hearings; registrants, Committee panel members, legal team.  The feedback on hearings to date is positive however more complex cases may require in person hearings so it is likely there may be a recommendation for a hybrid approach.  ***The Board noted the Business Performance Report to 31st August 2022*** | | **Head of Comms & Strategic Engagement** |
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| **10.** | **Financial Performance Report to 31st August – Paper G for approval** | |  |
|  | The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the Financial Performance report to 31st August. The following key highlights were noted:   * The current financial position shows a surplus at the end of August of £52,469 * Pay is overspent by £4k YTD at month 5 * Non-pay under spent by £9k YTD at month 5 * A meeting with DOH Finance is planned for 13 October on income and expenditure and to discuss the challenges around the toxicity of fee income * An internal appointment has been made to Fitness to Practise case management post * Notification has been received from the Department of Health of potential capital funding for the Social Care Council app   ***The Board approved the Financial Performance report to 31st August*** | |  |
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| **Governance** | |  |  |
| **11.** | **Audit & Risk Assurance** | |  |
| *11.1* | *Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) draft unconfirmed minutes of 5th October 2022 -* | |  |
| 11.1.1 | The Director of Registration & Corporate Services advised that the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee unconfirmed minutes would be deferred for approval at the next Board meeting. This decision was made as the minutes were reviewed as part of an Extraordinary one item ARAC meeting convened on 11th October to review and approve the revised Report to Those Charged with Governance. | |  |
| *11.2* | *Report to Those Charged with Governance – Paper I for approval* | |  |
| 11.2.1 | The Report to Those Charged with Governance was presented in conjunction with agenda item 11.3 - Annual Report and Accounts for approval.  The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) reminded Board members that the Annual Report and Accounts had been approved at the Extraordinary Board meeting on 8th July. The receipt of the Report of Those Charged with Governance had been delayed until the evening of 5th October due to the appointment of a new Comptroller and Auditor General. A request had been received to defer the ARAC meeting to allow more time for consideration of the report and the Chair agreed to convene a one item Extraordinary meeting of this Committee on 11th October where the report was reviewed and approved.  Board approval was sought for the Report to Those Charged with Governance and no notes of concern had been highlighted by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.  The Chair thanked ARAC members and officials for their patience in resolving the issue of deferred registration fees.  The ARAC Chair thanked the Executive team and retiring members for their contribution to the Committee.  ***The Board formally approved the Report to those Charged with Governance*** | |  |
| *11.3* | *Annual Report and Accounts – Paper J* | |  |
| 11.3.1 | The Annual report and Accounts were considered in conjunction with Paper I at item 11.1.  ***The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts*** | |  |
| 11.4 | *Risk Progress Report – Paper K for approval* | |  |
| 11.4.1 | The Director of Registration & Corporate Services confirmed that the Risk Progress report had been presented at a previous Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and that the Risk Management Committee had reviewed the controls and actions against the risks on the risk register. The key risks were highlighted   1. COVID Risk Assessment- to remain on register during the winter months and for review in January 2023. 2. Move to James House –discussed at earlier agenda item. The risk may be decreased on receipt of written confirmation of the additional non-recurrent funding allocation and that the Department of Finance have issued a letter of acknowledgement to ALBs to recognise the impact of the delay and advise that any requests for funding would be favourably considered. 3. Recruitment – additional risk. BSO has commissioned Deloitte to complete an independent review of the recruitment system due to the reports of poor service across the HSC. The outcome of the review and an action plan is awaited. 4. The overall Fitness to Practise risk assessment is still sitting as a high risk due to the IMPACT assessment event though the LIKELIHOOD assessment has been reduced. 5. Cost of living crisis in relation to service users and registrants has been added under Horizon Scanning   ***The Board approved the Risk Progress report*** | |  |
| 11.5 | *Audit & Risk Assurance Terms of Reference* | |  |
| 11.5.1 | The ARAC Committee Chair advised the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference had been reviewed and Board approval was sought for the following proposed amendment to Paragraph 3.  Insertion of:  *The Committee may with approval of the Board*     * *co-opt additional members for a period not exceeding a year to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience;* * *procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the organisation, subject to budgets agreed by the Board*   The Chief Executive confirmed that the Board should have oversight of any additional expenditure.  ***The Board approved adoption of the amendments to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference.*** | |  |
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| **12.** | **Mid -Year Assurance Statement - Paper M for approval** | |  |
| *12.1* | The Chief Executive presented the Mid-Year Assurance Statement for Board approval. Two areas of divergence were identified and overall assurance was confirmed as set out in the statement:   * The implications of the delayed accommodation move to James House.   A further short-term lease was secured in current premises until the work at James House is completed. The organisation has escalated the financial deficit to its Sponsor Body and the Department of Finance who have overall responsibility and management for the Belfast Optimisation Project   * The work completed to improve the calculation of deferred income following the audit completed at year end last year.     The Audit & Risk Assurance Committee has undertaken extensive debate and agreed that a reference to the calculation of deferred registration income should be included in the Assurance Statement. It was highlighted that the Northern Ireland Audit Office has given an unqualified statement of approval on the accounts.  ***The Board endorsed the Mid - year Assurance Statement*** | |  |
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| **Closing Formalities** | | | |
| **13.** | **Any other Business** | |  |
| *13.1* | Get Well card to be sent on behalf of the Board and Executive team to Carolyn Ewart, BASW. | | **Business Support** |
| *13.2* | Leaders in Social Care Partnership update:  The Committee Chair gave a brief update on the Leaders in Social Care Partnership:   * the last Leaders in Social Care Partnership meeting had been postponed * A Leaders in Social Care ‘think tank’ had taken place on 7th October with employers. The key areas of focus include workforce commissioning and the value of the workforce. Discussion took place on how the partnership can add value to broader system issues. It was noted that discussion around leadership and management in the sector aligns with the Permanent Secretary’s agenda and the commitment of the Council to partnership and collaboration should be highlighted. * The CEO has been asked by NICON to be a representative on the HSC Improvement and Transformation Advisory Board, led by the DOH, reflecting the voice of social care within the NICON membership. This reflects the significant leadership role of the Council to influence and support the agenda on social care workforce, commissioning and sustainability. | |  |
| **14.** | **Dates of next meetings – for information** | |  |
| 1*4.1* | * Board Strategic Session - Wednesday 16th November * Board Meeting - Wednesday 7th December | |  |

Approved by: Paul Martin, Chair

Signature: 

Date of approval: 7th December 2022

**ANNEX 1 – ACTION LIST**

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| **ITEM** | ***NEW ACTIONS- 12th October 2022*** | **OWNER** | **PROGRESS** |
| *4.1* | *Availability of new CSWO, Aine Morrison to be confirmed for attendance at December Board meeting* | ***GLO*** | ***Closed*** |
| *5.1.* | *Voting link for the European Social Services Awards (ESSA) to be shared with Board members ( PiP Framework shortlisted)* | ***Business Support*** | ***Completed 13.10.22*** |
| *6.1* | *A formal invitation to meet with the Board to be sent to the Permanent Secretary’s office* | ***Chair*** | ***Closed*** |
| *9.1* | *The Professional in Practise virtual awards video to be shared with the Board* | ***Comms*** | ***Closed*** |
| *12.1* | *Get Well card to be sent on behalf of the Board and Executive team to Carolyn Ewart, BASW* | ***Business Support*** | ***Completed*** |