



Northern Ireland Social Care Council
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Social Care Council Board Meeting
Unconfirmed Minutes
10.00a.m on Wednesday 7th December 2022
Via Zoom videoconference

Present:

Paul Martin (CHAIR)
Sarah Browne, Board Member
Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member
Gerard Guckian, Board Member
Brenda Maitland, Board Member
Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member
Catherine McPhillips, Board Member

In Attendance:

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council
Rita Lewtas, Head of Communication & Strategic Engagement
Declan McAllister, Director of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council
Marian O'Rourke, Director of Regulation & Standards, 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): None

Apologies: David Hayes, Board Member
Anne O'Reilly, Board Member
Catherine Maguire, Head of Workforce Development, Social Care Council

Formalities

Item	Agenda	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	

1.2	Apologies were received from Board members David Hayes and Anne O'Reilly and also from Catherine Maguire, Head of Workforce Development.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest	
3.	Board Minutes – Papers A approval	
3.1	<i>Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 12th October 2022</i>	
3.1.1	The minutes of 12 th October 2022 were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record.	
3.2	<i>Action List</i>	
3.2.1	See Annex I for action list review, and new actions arising out of the meeting of 7 th December 2022 (and previous meetings).	
4.	Matters Arising	
4.1	The Chair advised that an invitation to attend a future Board meeting would be extended to the Permanent Secretary and Chief Social Work Officer once the recruitment exercise to appoint the Grade 3 position was completed.	
4.2	The Chair and Chief Executive attended General Medical Council (GMC) N.I. Advisory Forum on 25 th October. Discussion took place with medical and regulation colleagues around the importance of a working together to address the shortage within the health and social care workforce and the challenges ahead.	
4.3	The Chair and Chief Executive attended a meeting of social work and social care workforce regulators on 3 rd November hosted by Chair of Social Work England, Lord Patel.	
4.4	Authorisation to share the final draft of the Board Skills Audit report prepared by David Nicholl will be subject to the outcome of a meeting with the Permanent Secretary on 13 December. Subject to approval, a copy of the report will be circulated for Board member feedback and consideration on the best way to take forward key recommendations.	
4.5	The Chair advised that Stephen Mathews OBE is in post as interim Chair of the Patient Client Council (PCC) and a joint meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks.	
Business Briefings		
5	Chief Executive's Report – Paper C for information	
5.1	The Chief Executive provided an overview of her report, with the following key activity highlights during the period October and November 2022: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifications had been received from both Unison and NIPSA of planned industrial action short of strike from 5 - 	

	<p>12th December. Since the CEO report was circulated, the unions have confirmed industrial action is planned for 12th December and will revert to action short of strike from 13 – 19th December. The Senior Leadership team have met and agreed that the potential impact of the industrial action should not be significant. The Director of Registration & Corporate Services will manage phone line cover with the Registration Manager and team leaders to minimise disruption to business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Care Council was shortlisted for a European Social Services award in the Workforce Support category for the Professional in Practise framework. Although the organisation was unsuccessful on this occasion, the Director of Regulation & Standards represented the organisation at the in-person event and was able to collect the previous year’s award for Best Team in the Development of the Digital Learning Resources during COVID. The Social Care Council was also shortlisted for an Investors in People (IiP) award for Best Flexible Working Policy and was represented at the event by the Head of Business Support. Although unsuccessful, the Chief Executive of IiP particularly acknowledged the nomination as the Social Care Council was the only public sector organisation shortlisted. <p>The Chief Executive reported that notification has been received from the Chief Executive of the Patient Client Council to confirm her retirement date of 30th April 2023. The recruitment exercise for the post has been commenced with a closing date of 23rd December.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Chief Executive’s Report.</i></p>	
6.	Progress on Office Accommodation Transition to James House - Paper C - Declan	
6.1	<p>The Director of Registration & Corporate Services spoke to Paper C and highlighted the following key matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The James House transition project is on track and the moving date is confirmed as 6th February 2023. 2. The Council is represented in licence negotiations by BSO DLS and three of the four issues listed in the report have been positively resolved with the fourth item accepted by the Dept. of Health on behalf of all ALB’s as part of the licence 3. The Senior Leadership Team will complete a walkthrough of James House on 17th January and will receive a Condition report as part of this review. Subject to the outcome of this the licence agreement will be signed. 	

	<p>4. The Head of Business Support is leading the Accommodation group to manage the transition to James House around furniture, records management and IT /office equipment.</p> <p>5. The lease for Millennium House ends on 25th February 2023 and BSO DLS have recommended that a formal notice should be issued to the landlord to advise of leave date dilapidation costs will then be agreed with the landlord as part of the exit process. The anticipated dilapidation cost is £114k and £138k has been accrued in the accounts to allow scope if costs are higher than anticipated.</p> <p>6. The Licence agreement for James House has been scrutinised by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. ACTION: To ensure the all of the building licensees re not indemnified, the ARAC Chair recommended the following insertion of <i>'by the licensees 'at the end of the sentence ' for the use of the building premises ...'</i> at point 4.14.2 on page 18 of the licence agreement.</p> <p>7. 1 parking space only has been allocated and first availability will be allocated to visitors with disabilities or mobility challenges. The project team is negotiating an increase to 4 parking spaces.</p> <p>8. Walking tours for groups of staff and Board members will be arranged for January 2023.</p> <p><i>The Board noted Progress report on Office Accommodation Transition to James House</i></p>	DoR&CS
<p>7.</p>	<p>Social Work Education and Training Regulation report - Paper D</p>	
<p>7.1</p>	<p>The Director of Regulation & Standards spoke to the Social Work Education and Training Regulation report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The timing of the report has been changed to this stage of the year to avoid clashing with production of the Annual Report • The Northern Ireland Social Work Degree Partnership will be able to provide data and details of trends around the degree application process which should give insight into the reasons for 20% decrease in intake. It was highlighted that this year's intake target was met and included applications via the Open University • The report template can be developed annually and will provide assurance to the Board that the Social Care Council continues to deliver on statutory functions • The report may be a useful tool for employers in the promotion of social work 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Communications team were responsible for the design and accessibility aspects of the report. The report will be published on the Social Care Council website. <p>The Board commended the format and content of the report as user friendly and well laid out with useful context and narrative.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Social Work Education and Training Regulation report.</i></p>	
Governance		
8.	<i>Update and unconfirmed minutes of Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting of 5th & 11th October-Papers E & F for approval</i>	
8.1.	<p>The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee updated members on the meetings of 5th and 11th October and highlighted the following key points:</p> <p>The issue of the deferred income treatment was discussed at the meeting on 5th October and although the decision was approved in principle, it was agreed to defer this item and reconvene an Extraordinary meeting for full consideration. This would allow Committee members an opportunity to read the Report to Those Charged with Governance. Remaining agenda items were considered including a review of Terms of Reference and committee skills mix. The Terms of Reference were approved to include reference to the power of the Board to co-opt financial expertise as needed until final Board appointments are made by the Public Appointments Unit.</p> <p>The Committee reconvened on 11th October to examine the calculation of deferred income issue. It was noted the Senior Leadership team had been kept apprised of and approved the decision-making process around deferred income management. The Board was assured that significant consultation had taken place with external auditors and with the N.I. Audit Office. Both had tested and approved the technical treatment of the deferred income which had arisen due to the impact of COVID and an in-year change of external auditors.</p> <p>At the Extraordinary meeting, the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee had significant discussion on the agenda item at the end of which, members approved the RTTCWG and an extended note 4.3 to the accounts for recommendation to the Board. An approved quote from Board member Lee Wilson was inserted on his behalf.</p>	

	<i>The Board approved the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes of 5th October and Extraordinary meeting of 11th October.</i>	
9.	<i>Equality & Disability Action Plans – Paper G for approval</i>	
9.1	<p>The Head of Business Support advised that the Action Plans require board approval it is a regional reporting document.</p> <p>Engagement on the 5-year review of the Equality & Disability Action Plans has commenced with an initial session completed by the Equality Unit and the Senior Leadership team.</p> <p>The following highlights were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff continue to Disability Awareness training via e learning route • Recommendation on Section 75 data on Staff Monitoring remains outstanding • Continued promotion of the Tapestry network • A number of health awareness sessions have been hosted for staff • The Social Care Council successfully participated in a Disability Placement scheme. <p>A number of actions remain ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a protocol to support service users and carers to attend and participate in events. It was noted that it may be useful to consult with the Participation Partnership as they have recently hosted several service user and carer engagement events which were well attended. • Further gender identity training to be arranged which will be based on broader public data. <p>Discussion took place and the following actions were agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standing Orders to be updated to include Equality training for Board members; 2. Accessibility to the Tapestry Network for Participation Partnership members to be explored with the Equality Unit. <p><i>The Board approved the Equality and Disability Action Plans</i></p>	Head of Business Support
Business Matters		
10.	Draft Strategic Plan and Engagement Plan- Paper H for approval	
10.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services thanked members for their engagement and colleagues for collating significant Board feedback into the latest draft.	

	<p>Members were provided with an overview of the 12-week consultation plan and key consultees. Engagement methods will be agreed in the coming weeks and mapped out to align with scheduled events to maximise resources. Social media channels will also be used to pose three key questions and evaluate feedback:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you agree with our strategic priorities? 2. Is there anything missing? 3. Is there anything else you would want us to consider? <p>A draft Evaluation Strategy has been appended to outline how outcomes and impact will be evaluated against the five key strategic themes and presented to the Board.</p> <p>The pack includes a sample Strategic Plan with a design concept developed by the Comms team.</p> <p>It was agreed to consider the following recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix IV - Sample Design Page –to be replaced with mixed age graphic on page 11 (developing workforce capability section) • Consideration to be given to confining the wording in ‘<i>Our Purpose</i>’ section from ‘protecting the public’ to ‘protecting service users’. It was highlighted that current wording is based on universal language used across UK regulators <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and consultation to commence in early January 2023 • Sponsor Body approval to be sought before a final draft Strategic Plan will be brought to for Board approval at the meeting on 27th April 2023. <p><i>The Board approved the Draft Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Evaluation Plan</i></p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Financial Performance Report - Paper I for note</p>	
<p>11.1</p>	<p>The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the year to date position at the end of October 2022 which identified a £105k underspend, however this is related to ring fenced social care project funding which is yet to be issued.</p> <p>The Board members were alerted to the current forecasted year end deficit position of -£191k and the DORCS explained that this had increased from the previous month as £15k from the social care project funding had been allocated in error to the overall breakeven</p>	

	<p>position and additional costs for project delay on the registration system upgrade were now being incurred, however engagement is ongoing with the supplier to re-negotiate this cost as the delay was requested by the supplier and not the Social Care Council.</p> <p>The DORCS also identified the budget review and savings target letters issued by the Permanent Secretary and the Board were informed that the Social Care Council have requested that the £180k is not released by the DOH to cover the James House delay previously applied for in June 2022. A full review of the current financial accounts and budget position has identified £100k+ of savings from accruals that could be identified to support with the Dept of Health deficit position. The Sponsoring Unit has agreed that jointly this would be reviewed in January 2023 with the Dept of Finance at the DOH.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Financial Performance Report.</i></p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Month 7 Business Performance Report - Paper J for information</p>	
<p>12.1</p>	<p>The Director of Registration & Corporate Services and the Director of Regulation & Standards spoke to their functional areas of the Month 7 Business Performance report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 Green rag rated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and 3 Amber rated which are within tolerance thresholds. • Sickness absence levels dropped in November and this is related to colleagues on long term sickness returning to the workforce. • Virtual engagement has continued and lunchtime seminars remain well attended. • An increase of 400 registrants on the register recorded as of 7th December. • Fitness to Practise (FtP) referrals and Suitability Assessments continue to increase however the FtP team is stabilising as a replacement manager is in post and recently appointed Officers are in post and undergoing training. • The Workforce Development team have returned to external engagement activity and have hosted 2 successful Social Care Managers Forums and Social Care Workforce Strategy meetings. • Promotional campaigns around social care and social work and a strong social media presence is showing increased engagement. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Centre for Effective Services has been commissioned to pilot an evaluation on Fitness to Practise remote hearings and Case Management system. A report will be brought to the Board once completed. The appointment of the Fitness to Practise Case Management tender will be made before the Christmas break. <p><i>The Board noted the Month 7 Business Performance Report.</i></p>	
13.	Draft Agile Working Policy - Paper K for approval	
13.1	<p>The Head of Business Support advised that Board approval of the Draft Agile Working Policy was sought following favourable consideration by the Joint Negotiating Forum on 30 November. Subject to Board approval the Policy will be implemented from Tuesday 3 January 2023 and will be kept under review. The Policy has been equality screened and received positive feedback from the Equality Unit on the consultative approach taken to drafting the document.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Draft Agile Working Policy.</i></p>	
Subcommittee Updates		
14.1	<i>Draft unconfirmed Minutes of PiP Committee of 23rd November 2022 - Paper L for note</i>	
14.1.1	<p>The Chair of the Professional in Practise Committee noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit Accumulation Route (CAR) – a staged approach to the redesign work is ongoing with stakeholders make the route more accessible and effective. The new route is expected to be delivered within the next 18 months; Ulster University Joint Revalidation of the PiP framework is ongoing with partners and academia to ensure the development and delivery of programs are collectively approved. The Chief Executive and DoR&S attended a recent introductory meeting with the newly appointed Dean of Ulster University and established a positive relationship and understanding of the need for collaborative working. A Revalidation Workshop date will be arranged in January 2023. <p><i>The Board noted the draft Unconfirmed Minutes of PiP Committee of 23rd November 2022.</i></p>	
14.2	<i>Draft Unconfirmed minutes of Leaders in Social Care Partnership (LSCP) of 26th November 2022</i>	

14.2.1	<p>The Chief Executive spoke to the paper in the absence of the Committee Chair. The following key highlights were noted:</p> <p>Work is ongoing to develop the partnership to take a more strategic and solution driven position on the core issues in social care and with the Department of Health. A small group of members developed a position paper which the Partnership is working to implement.</p> <p>Action: LSCP position paper to be shared with Board members</p> <p><i>The Board noted the draft Unconfirmed Minutes of Leaders in Social Care Partnership of 26th November 2022.</i></p>	Secretariat
14.3	<i>Registrants' Forum review – Paper N for note</i>	
14.3.1	<p>The Director of Regulation & Standards advised that the review paper provided gives an indication of the direction of travel for the Registrants' Forum and reflects the ongoing activity and engagement. A workshop is planned before Christmas and a planning meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of 7 December. Further face to face and virtual events are planned for next year.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Registrants' Forum review paper.</i></p>	
14.4	<i>Confirmed minutes of Participation Partnership meeting of 27th September and update on meeting of 29th November – for note</i>	
14.4.1	<p>The Chair of the Participation Partnership advised that due to personal circumstances several of the current members had had to step back for a period of time and recruitment for new members is ongoing. A new member has joined the Partnership after attending several meetings in an observer capacity.</p> <p>The Social Care Council has agreed to lead the IMPACT Assembly and several Participation Partnership members will join Professional Advisor, Mervyn Bothwell to review recruitment and retention in conjunction with other regulators over the next 4 months. Experience will be sought from employers and service users and the Board will be kept updated on progress.</p> <p>Feedback from the Partnership around consultation on the Strategic Plan reflected the view that a virtual event should be held to listen to service users' key areas of focus. It was suggested that a more diverse perspective on the Plan is needed rather than solely using a survey to consult with services users.</p> <p>Members were invited to attend an informal in person coffee morning at 11. 30a.m on 8 December hosted by the Participation Partnership at Millennium House.</p>	
Closing Formalities		
15.	Any other Business	

15.1	<i>Change of date- February Board Strategic Session</i>	
15.1.1	Action: A date canvas will be circulated for Board availability in March for a rescheduled date for the February Strategic session.	Secretariat
15.2	<i>Board members end of appointment</i>	
15.2.1	The Chair acknowledged the approaching end of appointment dates for Board members Brenda Maitland and Catherine McPhillips and thanked them on behalf of colleagues for their commitment and valuable contribution over their period of tenure.	

Approved by:

Signature:

Date of approval:

ANNEX 1 – ACTION LIST

ITEM	NEW ACTIONS - 7th December 2022	OWNER	PROGRESS
6.1. Point 6	Add insertion of ' by the licensees 'at the end of the sentence ' for the use of the building premises .. ' at point 4.14.2 of James House licence agreement	DOR&CS	Open
9.1a	Standing Orders to be updated to include Equality training for Board members	Head of Business Support	Open
9.1b	Accessibility to the Tapestry Network for Participation Partnership members to be explored with the Equality Unit	Head of Business Support	Open
14.2	LSCP Issues paper to be shared with Board members	Chief Executive	Completed