**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE F&GP COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON 30 APRIL 2021 AT 10.30AM**

**BY ZOOM**

**Present**: Keith Smith (Chair), Shaunagh Lambe (SL), Catherine McBride (CMcB), Brendan Morgan (BM)

**In Attendance**: Sam Gallaher (CEO), Majella Matthews (F&CM), Lesley Dickson (PA), Alan Boyd (DE)

**Apologies**: Sonia McGowan, Emma Loughridge, Graham Gault, Gerry Devlin, Donal Laverty

**1. Apologies**

The Chair noted apologies received.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting and 4. Matters Arising**

The Chair expressed his disappointment at not being able to receive the papers in hard copy. The CEO explained that the Council was still operating under government guidelines and are working remotely. He indicated that if working from home were to continue there would need to be investment in appropriate infrastructure for printing and there would have to be protocols and controls established.

SL requested that the amended minutes from the December meeting be circulated. The PA to arrange.

AB was asked if he had been able to find out if a PPE was needed for the extension of the HR Contract. He confirmed that an interim project evaluation was required and that this had been received. He added that DE are working through the Interim Report and so far it seems satisfactory. The Chair enquired if the business case for the HR Contract had gone to DE and the CEO advised it was being prepared and should be sent to DE over the summer months. Members discussed the length of the contract and options for extension. The CEO advised that CPD had advocated an extension if contract performance was satisfactory. Members discussed costs and the CEO indicated it would be prudent to extend the contract for 2021/22 with the aim of having a replacement in place for April 2022. The Chair questioned reports of poor performance and the CEO said that there was no evidence of this. Members discussed this and BM advised that the NIPSA survey had not been followed up. BM also added that a Business Case needs to be in place. The CEO said the NIPSA survey recorded a perception of staff but that Council had not expressed any dissatisfaction with the work of Headstogether. SL indicated that members had been vocal during meetings that the NIPSA survey was a red flag and this should have been addressed. The CEO advised the HR Committee are dealing with this. BM indicated that the Vice Chair Siobhan McElhinney had drawn up a TOR for an investigation on behalf of the HR Committee into staff concerns. SL asked for an update on the NIPSA Facilities and Recognition Agreement and the CEO advised that no response from NIPSA had been forthcoming. BM suggested that a letter should be written by the CEO and copied to himself and SMcE and said it was not good that the Union was not replying. The CEO highlighted the NIPSA recognition agreement which had been authorised in May 2018. . BM added that NIPSA will see from the CEO’s letter that Council are represented.

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Proposed: SL

Seconded: KS

**5. Financial Report** (F&GP/21/24/P01)

The F&CM took members through the Financial Report, highlighting the outturn for the 12 months to end March 2021. Members were advised that income was down by approximately £46k largely because of Covid and the effect of this on substitute teacher registration fees however it was highlighted that this was more than compensated for by savings on Salaries and Other expenditure totaling £250k. An outline of where the savings were generated was provided to members. .

BM enquired about the downturn in teacher registration and was advised that we assume it was because of Covid and resultant school closure.. He expressed concern that there could be a bottleneck if people were to re-register. It was explained how teachers could re-register again and that this was not the same process as first registration. BM asked if an analysis had been done on the registration figures. The CEO advised he had spoken to the SROs to see what detail could be obtained. He indicated that we should get an indication of fees income levels around end June when the invoicing process is completed. The CEO explained methods of contacting people and how they would be de-registered if they had not paid by October/November. BM asked when would be the busy time for Registration and the CEO advised it would be during the summer months.

The Chair enquired if the landlord had given the Council a rent holiday and the F&CM advised that we had received a credit for one month rent as well as a small credit on service charges.

The F&CM explained the issues that had recently arisen with the drafting of the 2020-21 Annual Report & Accounts in accordance with the DE Accounts Direction. It was explained that this was attributable to a delay in the delivery of the IAS19 Report by AON and NILGOSC.

She indicated that Internal Audit had completed most of their work for the year and had drafted most of the reports. The outcome for the current year was an Unacceptable internal audit assurance in respect of the operation of controls, risk management and governance.

SL enquired about the review into the paper to Council from ARAC and the F&CM reported this had been discussed at Council, a business case had been drafted and that SIB have agreed to complete the work. It was advised that since SIB is a public body this is not classified as external consultancy requiring Permanent Secretary approval.

The F&CM updated members on the Council’s cash balances and reserves, highlighting the very low interest rates of average 0.01% and the effect on the value of cash deposits held. BM thanked the F&CM and indicated that screen sharing documents was beneficial.

**6. Procurement and Contract Registers** (F&GP/21/24/P02)

The F&CM indicated this was covered in the Financial Report, that there was no change to the list from the last time this had been circulated and added that the supplier for Project Management services which had recently been procured would be coming on to the register.

SL asked for clarification regarding health services and the F&CM explained the use of Benenden. AB confirmed the outline nature of the service provided.

**7. 19-20 Annual Report and Accounts**

The F&CM indicated these had been previously provided and reviewed by the F&GP in May 2020 but had not been laid yet due to the effect of Covid 19 on NIAO’s audit timelines. It was highlighted that the Chair’s foreword has been provided and she advised that the only change to the Financial Statements was to the disclosure of website costs. It was explained that this asset had previously been catagorised under Plant and Equipment Fixed Assets, but is now re-classified as software and covered under Intangible Assets. In addition, it was advised that the Governance Statement has been updated and will continue to be revised as appropriate to the date of the laying of the accounts. It was agreed that the CEO would circulate a further version V3 of the Governance Statement to members. Members agreed to review the NIAO RTTCWG prior to adopting.

**8. Draft NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance** (F&GP/21/24/P03)

The F&CM took members through this and highlighted the relevant table of immaterial mis-statements to members. She enquired if F&GP wanted to adjust the Accounts to reflect these and provided by way of further information, an outline of how they had arisen. . BM asked if there was a second version of the Accounts with any further changes between now and the date of laying. The CEO said the AR&A would be updated with changes to the Governance Statement, including comments from the Department and he would circulate this to members. The F&CM recommended that the Accounts not be adjusted as they were minor and immaterial and should be recommended to ARAC and Council.

Proposed: CMcB

Seconded: BM

**9. 20-21 Accounts Direction** (F&GP/21/24/P04)

The F&CM advised that the AR&A 2020-21 are in draft form but without the pension information within the Staff Report. The issues with the AON IAS19 Reports had been highlighted earlier in the meeting and this could have a significant impact on the AR&As. She indicated that per the Accounts Direction from DE/DoF the 7 May was the deadline for submission of the draft Accounts but that the pension information may not arrive in time to meet this deadline. She explained that both DE and NIAO had been consulted and that it had been agreed that the Accounts for 2020-21 would be submitted in their current draft state with a covering note to highlight the incomplete information.

The CEO indicated that the 2019-20 Governance Statement is complete and changes have been made to the 2020-21 Statement.

The Chair indicated a further meeting of the F&GP could be arranged if necessary to clear the AR&A.

**11. Draft Governance Statement**  (F&GP/21/24/P05)

The CEO indicated that members had been provided with a copy of V2. He stated that V3 will be circulated for information. BM provided an amendment to Page 8. SL enquired about members non -attendance at meetings and it was agreed that it would be a good idea to write to relevant members to see if they planned to return.

**12. Business Planning 2020-21-Q4 Monitoring Return** (F&GP/21/24/P06)

The CEO shared the document indicating the 18 planned workstreams. He advised 8 workstreams had been completed, 3 partly, 2 likely to be achieved but with some delay and 5 were not achieved. CMcB enquired about those not achieved and the CEO took members through these providing an explanation.

**13. Corporate Risk Register** (F&GP/21/24/P07)

The CEO shared this document, indicating that the 10 corporate risks were unlikely to change and would be discussed at ARAC. He said he would like to streamline the Register and would need to take account of recommendations from the review of Council which should come out later in the year. He added that actions needed to be taken to mitigate the risks and indicated that Items 8 and 9 which referred to the Councils IT infrastructure should change when addressed. BM also advised that there some risks which we have no control over.

*SL left the meeting at 12.30*

**14. Registration Systems Project Board**  (F&GP/21/24/P08)

The CEO updated members on the current situation. He advised that the supplier contract for the provision of project management is being finalised and the cost is less than that envisaged in the Business Case. He voiced his concern that we will not be in a position to fully implement the new system by 31 March 2022 and said he thought it would be January or February 2022 before work could be commenced. He added that work over the next 4 months is crucial. The F&CM advised of an outstanding query about a warranty period and said she would aim to get a mobilization meeting scheduled. AB indicated that the Department were working through this business case for the new system as quickly as possible and that the investment with BCS is paying dividends. The CEO discussed contingency planning in relation to the existing system.

The Chair told the meeting that he had raised issues during the March Council meeting (through a motion) and that Alan Boyd had assured him that he would have answers to the questions raised through the motion which he would bring to the next F&GP Committee meeting (April).  The Chair said that he wanted to refer to the Council draft minutes because he believed that Alan's assurances would be included in it.  He then asked why were the draft Council minutes not available to members a month after the meeting.  The Registrar told the meeting that he had been working with Elizabeth Lorimer from PA2day to 'reword' the draft minutes because Elizabeth didn't understand some of the concepts relating to the registration system approval.  The Registrar told the meeting that he would forward the draft minutes to the Chair for approval before being sent out to members.

**15. Chairs and CEOs expenses and hospitality** (F&GP/21/24/P09)

The F&CM referred to the paper and advised that there had only been a small reimbursement of expenses to the Chair and a small contribution to a leaving gift for the CEO of GTCS.

**16. Complaints**

The CEO advised that an ICO complaint had been addressed and a further ICO complaint received and was being considered. A complaint under the regulatory function had been received and was being addressed. The investigation into the data breach is ongoing and a report is being finalized.

**17. Policies**

The CEO advised he had received no comments on these documents which were included in the Agenda of the last meeting. He asked if the documents could be endorsed as he was keen to get these progressed. BM proposed a summary for each paper. The CEO said that the cover sheets should provide this information.

**18. Training Dates**

The CEO committed to arranging a specific session on the Risk Register once updated. He indicated that he had been looking at training options for Board Members and that there is a half day workshop on 21 May and 25 June on finance for Board members which members could consider. The CEO agreed to circulate information.

**19. AOB**

**Accommodation**

The CEO advised the lease is up at the end of March 2022 and indicated a survey had been taken from staff regarding working from home and this would be taken into consideration in planning any return to office working and future accommodation requirements. The Chair asked if accommodation could be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

**20. Date of next meeting**

TBA – but there may be a meeting on the 2020-21 Annual report & Accounts prior to the next scheduled F&GP Meeting.