



A meeting of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board was held on Monday 25 May 2020 at 4:30 pm via a telephone conference facility.

PRESENT

Cllr Neil Feighery (Chairperson)

Cllr Willie Aird

Ms Maura Brophy

Ms Molly Buckley

Cllr John Carroll

Cllr Clare Claffey

Mr Dave Cullen

Ms Evelyn Dunne

Cllr Caroline Dwane-Stanley

Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald

Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick

Cllr Padraig Fleming

Cllr Robert McDermott

Mr John Mollin

Mr Frank Smith

Cllr Mary Sweeney

Mr Niall Tully

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive

Ms Marie Bracken, Director OSD

Ms Jean Keating, Corporate Governance

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Shane Flesk and Ms Mary Cotter-Bracken.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS LOETB MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on 30 March 2020 were circulated to members. Members approved the minutes and they were signed by the Chairperson.

Proposed: Molly Buckley

Seconded: Maura Brophy

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

A member asked how many participants have completed the Infection Prevention and Control course to date. The CE confirmed that over one hundred and twenty students had enrolled on the programme and advised that he would provide an update on completion after the meeting.

A member asked if there is any update on QQI assessments and examinations. The CE confirmed that the initial focus is on CAO but that a protocol had been agreed with QQI nationally to manage completion of the remaining exams and assessments.

4. GOVERNANCE

Risk Management

The CE informed members that the Risk Register is currently being updated to reflect the goals, priorities and performance indicators set out in the Service Plan 2020 and will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee at their meeting in July.

Conflict of Interest

As per Schedule 3, Paragraph 10, Section 3 of the (ETB) Act 2013 and the Agenda Notice, no conflicts of interest were declared.

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The CE presented the following report to members.

Schools

Leaving Certificate

A new calculated grades system will operate in our schools for 2020. This involves teachers estimating percentage marks for students, based on a teacher's professional judgement. Students will then be ranked within their own class, by their teacher. An oversight group within each subject, called the Subject Alignment Group will then discuss the rankings. The Department of Education and Skills will consider the results for each school against a comparison of Leaving Cert results for that school, over the past few years. Students are expected to receive grades by mid/late August. Principals have been fully appraised of the new arrangements and are working with staff on the new system

Junior Cycle

No State Certificate this year. Schools will issue a Junior Certificate Summer Report. This will capture learning over the past couple of years and grades will be awarded by the teacher concerned. All schools are including assessments such as work over past couple of years, house exams, end of year assessment for 3rd. year.

Years: 1/2/4/5

Summer reports will issue as normal. Schools/teachers are sensitive around issues such as students having difficulty accessing virtual learning opportunities, while schools have been closed. This concern will be factored into all assessments and results. Discussions beginning about how schools will adapt to social distance rules in September, when schools reopen.

Appointments

Online interviews for subject teachers are beginning to take place. Mr. Brian Kehoe (Principal at Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac) has been appointed as Principal at Oaklands Community College, Edenderry. Advertisements currently in place to appoint Principals at St Fergal's College, Rathdowney and at Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac.

Further Education and Training

Maintaining current Teaching and Learning

FET Senior Management worked with Centre/Service Managers and staff to ensure learners continued to receive the learning supports they required to enable them to complete coursework

and assignments. To date, the FET Service has maintained a learner engagement figure of almost 80%.

Additional on-line learning/literacy supports were provided for all learners to increase their capacity to engage with teachers remotely. The FET Inclusion team provided workshops and a helpline for parents to support children and young adults in working remotely with teachers.

Our Apprenticeship team provided a helpline for our current apprentices and maintained contact with employers and apprentices weekly providing information and support.

The QA Support Service worked with all teaching staff to devise alternative assessments to enable completion of courses. For example, over 50 on-line exams (monitored) were held to support learners to complete courses that lead to CAO application.

Supporting the National FET response to Covid19

The LOETB FET Skills team (and the QA Support Service) acted as the lead provider on the following national projects:

- *Infection Prevention & Control*. This on-line programme was designed by LOETB to support the national HSE call to support the healthcare sector. To date, over 130 learners have participated on the programme.
- *Remote Working*. LOETB, Grow Remote, SOLAS and the IDA have come together to provide on-line programmes for employees who are working remotely and company managers who are now leading remote teams. To date, over 100 learners are participating on these programmes. The 'Lead' programme is also being modified for LOETB middle management. LOETB are working closely with SOLAS in the pilot phase with a view to expanding this programme nationally.

Rathdowney

LOETB is currently exploring the feasibility of establishing a FET Centre in Rathdowney. This centre would expand FET services into the southwest of the county.

FET Provision 2020/2021

The FET Service is developing a plan for provision in the new Academic Year in light of the challenges presented by Covid19. This plan will include:

- Extended opening hours for FET Centres
- Blended Learning training for all teaching staff and learners
- IT (hardware) supports for the most disadvantaged learners
- Establishing online teaching and learning supports
- Additional online guidance support for learners
- New modes of delivery and assessment (modularised)
- Developing cross-organisational programmes with IT Carlow and Athlone IT (allowing for ease of progression)
- Broadening services for employers and employees in the region.

Organisational Support and Development

Finance

Budgets

Ongoing monthly monitoring of all school and centre budgets is being carried out. In addition, a review of receipts and expenditure being undertaken to identify savings, increased costs and reduced income in light of Covid19.

Finances

Summary of finances to end of April 2020 distributed for information.

SOLAS Funding

SOLAS has advised that the approved funding for 2020 is €28,313,000.

Bank Overdraft

AIB has advised that due to Covid19 there will be a delay in the issuing of the Letter of Offer for continuance of the bank overdraft facility. They have advised that it will issue before the end date of the current facility, providing continuity of the service.

Apprentices

Apprenticeship Learner Payments are now being processed by Shared Services Payroll. This function has transferred in order to comply with Revenue directive that appropriate revenue deductions be taken from these payments. LOETB provides the necessary information for processing and reimburses Shared Services the costs.

Creditor Payments

2,517 invoices, amounting to €3,137,522.91, were paid in the first quarter of 2020.

Of these, 64% were paid within 15 days of receipt of invoices, and a further 35.50% were paid within 30 days.

23 Purchase Orders for €20,000 or above, totalling €1,326,177.41 inclusive of VAT, were paid in the first quarter of 2020.

Human Resources

Recruitment for 2020/2021

Due to the Covid19 restrictions we have introduced video conference interviews which will be carried out using Cisco Webex software. This system has been recommended by our IT Department. Our Selection Board and ETB members have undertaken online training sessions and we have held our first interviews through this system.

The following appointments have been made in May

- Grade III Clerical Officer posts – FET Centres
- Principal, Oakland’s Community College

Post advertised and interviews to be held

- Principal, St Fergal’s College, Rathdowney
- Principal, Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac
- FET Centre Manager – Banagher
- FET Centre Manager – Mountmellick
- Community Training Officer
- Caretaking posts
- Admin posts (Grade 5)

Teaching Posts

- We have advertised 41 teaching posts to date, and these are being shortlisted and interviews being scheduled and held.

Pensions

- Two employees have retired.
- Two spouses’ pensions processed.

- Currently we have 6 notifications of impending retirements between August and October.
- Compiling Pensionable Service and preparing for entry into the Core System for employees aged 60+.
- Preparing SPSPS Benefit Statements for Full Time Employees to be issued in June.
- NSSO Data Cleanse has commenced.

Payroll/Personnel

Salaries paid in April and May 2020 as follows:

03/04/2020	€ 953,023.71	815 employees
17/04/2020	€1,023,764.30	837 employees
01/05/2020	€885,286.48	779 employees
15/05/2020	€938,744.97	788 employees

- Staff have commenced work on digital personnel files for academic year 2020/2021 and preparing personnel file to digitalise.
- All HR staff have completed the TUSLA Child Protection Course and have received their certificates.

Capital Projects and Buildings Works

Mount Lucas Training Centre

Works currently ongoing, due for completion September/October 2020.

Clonaslee College

Additional accommodation, science room and prep area; planning permission received. Tenders for contractors will be uploaded to e-tenders in early June.

Oaklands Community College, Edenderry

Surveys postponed due to Covid19 and due to recommence following consultation with the Design Team.

Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara

Surveys postponed due to Covid19. A proposal for a new building on a site acquired by Offaly County Council has been submitted to DES.

Portlaoise College and Portlaoise Institute

Extension including ASD Unit; site visit organised Friday 22 May and Monday 25 May for prospective Design Team services. Closing date for receipt of tenders 5 June 2020

Tullamore College

Completion works ongoing. Tenders for acoustics will be sought following completion of roof works.

Dunamase College and Tower Hill

Works to Tower Hill; the architect visited Tower Hill on Friday 22 May. Tenders for contractors and planning permission will be sought at the beginning of June.

Portlaoise Information Centre

Report received from McCarthy O'Hora Architects regarding the design of Lyster Square building. It is planned to tender in early June.

Tullamore FET Centre, Axis Business Park

Tenders for consultant received 20 May. Evaluation of tenders will be completed by Friday 29 May.

Procurement

General Printed Matter (Excluding diaries, journals and yearbooks)

Tenders completed. Five members on the framework. Valid from 1 March 2020 to 28 February 2021 (with an option to extend the contract for two 1-year extensions).

Electrical Goods (White Goods and Small Appliances)

DID Electrical successful tenderer and on the OGP framework with effect from April 2020.

Cleaning Materials and Paper Products

BUNZL Ireland Ltd successful tenderer on the OGP Framework with effect from May 2020

Electricity

Electric Ireland Ltd successful tenderer and on the OGP Framework with effect from May 2020

Stationery

Stakelum Office Supplies successful tenderer with effect from 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2021 (with the option to extend of a further 6 months subject to a maximum of 2 such extensions).

Class Materials Woodwork

Three responses received. Evaluation to take place over the next two weeks.

Class Materials Metalwork

Three responses received. Evaluation to take place over the next two weeks.

Lease and Plant Machinery, Mount Lucas

Two responses received. Evaluation to take place over the next two weeks.

ICT Training

Tara 365 Training Ltd successful tenderer with effect from 26 June 2020 to 25 June 2021 (with an option to extend the term for a period of 12 months with a maximum of 3 such extensions).

School Books for Post Primary Schools

Evaluation carried out on 11 May 2020. Evaluation results to be sent to EPS for final evaluation.

ICT

Ongoing work with Office 365 for teachers and students within the schools and centres
Bulk purchase of laptops for schools which has been delivered and configured but still waiting on laptop bags so cannot roll out.

We are examining ways to deliver education for the next academic year.

Surveys carried out to deliver secure Wi-Fi to FET students in all sites.

We are compiling a list of ICT requirements and devising a roll out plan for the following projects:

- Dunamase College move
- Portlaoise FET Centre move
- Third unit for Midlands Skills Centre
- New Birr FET Centre site
- New offices in Lyster Square Portlaoise
- New building for Mount Lucas

Corporate Services

Freedom of Information

Freedom of information requests are ongoing and are being answered within the required time frames. Currently, an appeal is with the Office of the Information Commission and we are awaiting the outcome.

Data Protection

No data breaches have been reported to-date in 2020. The following policies have now been placed on SharePoint for all staff:

- Data Protection
- CCTV
- Data Breaches

Health and Safety

A new Safety Statement has been adopted by LOETB and is being rolled out to each School and Further Education Centre. Training will be provided to School Principals and Centre Managers.

All OSD staff are working remotely at home in line with government guidelines.

A Health and Safety Audit has commenced and is being conducted by Health and Safety Consultants, Peninsula. This audit is on hold at present due to the schools and centres being closed.

Risk Management

A new Corporate Risk Register is currently being drafted to incorporate the Service Plan for 2020.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Unit for ETBs (IAU-ETB) is in the process of carrying out audits in the area of procurement. They are also carrying out a review of previous audits in the area of receipts, adult literacy, community education, staff and teacher allocations, procurement at Mount Lucas and specialist training providers (STPs). The internal audit is due to commence on 25 May.

Members thanked the CE for his comprehensive report and a discussion took place.

A number of members congratulated Mr Brian Kehoe on his new role as Principal at Oaklands Community College, Edenderry. It was noted that Mr Kehoe accomplished great work at Coláiste Naomh Cormac over the past five years and that LOETB was fortunate to have such a capable Principal take over at Oaklands Community College. Members also thanked Mr Richard Murphy, acting Principal, for all his hard work at the school for the last year.

A member asked the CE if there are any plans in place regarding the re-opening of schools (e.g. half days, week on week off, canteen facilities, lunchtimes etc.) and how will school transport operate in terms of social distancing. The CE confirmed it is too early to give a substantive opinion on the matter as we may continue to see changes in the various phases in the coming weeks; LOETB will await further instructions from the Dept. of Health and the Dept. of Education and Skills before progressing the matter.

A member asked if there is an update on the proposed FET Centre for Birr and will construction be delayed due to the current pandemic. The CE confirmed that as a direct consequence of the shut down on construction there will be a delay in the fit-out of the building. This will delay having use of the building and it could be late autumn before the new Centre is ready for

provision. In the meantime, the FET management team are planning provision for the Centre and engaging with local stakeholders.

A member asked if there is a timeline in place for staff returning to the office. The CE confirmed that the plan is to continue working remotely for the moment. Staff members are going into the office on occasion to complete necessary work. Staff are managing remotely working very well at present and we will continue to keep this matter under review.

The CE referred to the finance section of his report regarding the review of receipts and expenditure which is currently being undertaken to identify savings, increased costs and reduced income due to Covid19 and which will be reported back to the DES. The CE informed members that while certain savings will be made in terms of substitute teaching and light and heat, there will be a significant rise in costs of some programmes and items such as IT costs to support staff and students during the pandemic. These costs will outweigh any savings made and at present is it projected that this figure will be approximately €200,000. We will continue to monitor the situation.

6. FINANCE

Bank Overdraft

LOETB's overdraft facility, per sanction received from the DES, is due to expire in June 2020. At the March meeting of the Board members agreed in principle that the Board should borrow an amount of up to €4 million for the purposes of carrying out the Board's functions and for this overdraft facility to be put in place for one year. Marie Bracken informed members that normally at this stage we would have received the Letter of Offer from AIB for the Chairperson and the CE to sign, but there has been a delay in the issuing of the letter due to Covid19. AIB confirmed that we will have the letter by the end of May.

Members agreed that the Chairperson and CE sign the Letter of Offer once it is received.

Proposed: Catherine Fitzgerald

Seconded: Evelyn Dunne

7. CORRESPONDENCE

Item No	Correspondence From	Date / Ref No.	Details		
1.	Diarmaid Ó Mórdha, Rannóg Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla	23 April 2020	Scéim Teanga	Noted by members	
2.	Department of Education and Skills	CLO024/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Delay Phase: Arrangements for teachers and special needs assistants employed in recognised primary and post-primary schools	Noted by members	
3.	Department of Education and Skills	CLO025/2020	COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - Delay Phase: Arrangements for all staff other than Teachers and SNAs employed by Education and Training Boards	Noted by members	Chairmans Initials

4.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0027/2020	COVID-19: Temporary assignment arrangements for certain staff in the education and training sector	Noted by members
5.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0029/2020	Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs (Autism Spectrum Disorder)	Noted by members
6.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0031/2020	Grant Scheme for ICT Infrastructure – 2019/2020 School Year	Noted by members
7.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0032/2020	Grant Scheme for ICT Infrastructure – 2019/2020 School Year €10m funding to issue to primary and post-primary schools	Noted by members
8.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0033/2020	Revision of 2011 Entrant Teacher Salaries with effect from 1 March 2020 – Application of Additional Increments	Noted by members
9.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0034/2020	Revision of Application of Additional Increments awarded in relation to New Entrants under the Public Services Stability Agreement 2018 - 2020	Noted by members
10.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0035/2020	Prescribed Material for the Junior Cycle Examination in 2022 and Leaving Certificate Examination in 2022	Noted by members
11.	Department of Education and Skills	CL0036/2020	Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2020/2021 school year	Noted by members

8. DRAFT POLICIES FOR ADOPTION

The following policies were circulated to members prior to the meeting. Members approved the policies as follows:

LOETB Policies

Communications Policy
 Proposed: Caroline Dwane-Stanley
 Seconded: Maura Brophy

School Policies

Clonaslee College, Code of Conduct
 Proposed: Molly Buckley
 Seconded: John Carroll

School Admissions Policy

The Chairperson informed members that ETBI has devised a template for school Admissions policies that must be introduced for the new school year in response to legislation. The Admissions policies for all schools will be brought before the Board for confirmation at its next meeting.

9. CONFIRMATION OF BOM NOMINEES, COLÁISTE NAOMH CORMAC

The CE received correspondence from Brian Kehoe, Principal at Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac, confirming that the BOM Nominees to the Board of Management are as follows:

- Padraig Keane, Nick Lalor and Carol Nolan

Members confirmed the nominations.

Proposed: John Carroll
 Seconded: Claire Claffey

10. RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD RE PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Marie Bracken informed members that Section 3.4 of the Code of Practice for the Governance of ETB's states that the Board should, in a Board resolution, lay down formal procedures whereby Board members, in the furtherance of their duties, may take independent professional advice, if necessary, at the reasonable expense of the ETB where they judge it necessary to discharge their responsibilities as Board members. The Board should have in place a procedure for recording the concerns of Board members that cannot be resolved, expressed at a board meeting, in the minutes.

Members approved the resolution.

Proposed: Evelyn Dunne
 Seconded: Padraig Fleming

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11. REVIEW OF SERVICE PLAN

Marie Bracken informed members that the DES requested LOETB to include the following information in the Service Plan 2020:

Major Capital Projects *(included as item 7 in the Service Plan 2020)*

In 2020 LOETB will be commencing the following major Capital Projects:

Oaklands Community College, Edenderry

A new school on a green field site to accommodate 1,000 pupils. The DES have designated this project at complexity level 3(7) with a notional capital value of €20,600,000 plus VAT. The Design Team have been appointed and work is underway to design, tender for Contractor and commence the process of building the school.

Major Extension – Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa Clara

A 3,812m² extension is to commence to include a PE Hall and two SNU Classrooms. Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa will accommodate 350 pupils when the project is complete. The Design Team have been appointed and work is underway to design, tender for Contractor and commence the process of building the school.

Chairman:
Initials

Dunamase College

Temporary Accommodation: A Design Team has been appointed to refurbish the Tower Hill Centre in order to accommodate the increased enrolment for the 2020/2021 school year. These works will cost approx. €868,685.00 ex VAT.

LOETB has also acquired a greenfield site for a new school for Dunamase College. The school will be designed to accommodate 1000 pupils. In 2020 LOETB will be appointing a Design Team with a view to commencing work on this major project.

Members approved the amendment to the Service Plan 2020.

Proposed: Frank Smith
 Seconded: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

12. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

Marie Bracken informed members that there are two updates to the Standing Orders document as follows:

Communication channels in exceptional circumstances

The Standing Orders only provide for the physical attendance of members at meetings. However, in exceptional circumstances (e.g. the Coronavirus pandemic) other communication channels (e.g. telephone/video conferencing) will be used for meetings. A secure telephone conference facility has been set up by LOETB for such circumstances.

Professional Advice

The Board may take independent professional advice, if necessary, at the reasonable expense of the ETB where they judge it necessary to discharge their responsibilities as Board members.

Members approved the update to the Standing Orders document.

Proposed: Catherine Fitzgerald
 Seconded: Evelyn Dunne

13. LANGUAGE BURSARIES

The CE informed members that the Board has a reserved function in terms of scholarships and bursaries. A list of language bursary allocations for 2020 was circulated to members prior to the meeting with a total cost of €31,500.

Members approved the allocations.

Proposed: Carline Dwane-Stanley
 Seconded: John Mollin

14. SECTION 29 APPEAL HEARINGS

Members noted the outcome of two section 29 Appeal Hearings which took place on 28 April and 22 May 2020.

15. SITE ACQUISITION FOR DUNAMASE COLLEGE

The CE informed members that members of the previous Board were appraised of developments regarding the site acquisition for the new school building for Dunamase College. In July 2019, Heads of Agreement was reached between the Dept. of Education and Skills and the landowners and then LOETB was asked to complete the conveyancing on the site. As part of this process LOETB reviewed the site plans and, following meetings with officials from Laois County Council and the Dept. of Education and Skills, amendments were agreed to improve traffic management and school access. In addition, the Dept. of Education and Skills had authorised the acquisition of an additional three acres adjacent to the school site for future use. All the documentation (including the contract and site map) is now in place and have been reviewed by our legal representative.

The Dept. of Education and Skills is finalising the Brief Formulation Report for the new development and, on receipt of same, LOETB will progress to appoint a Design Team for the project.

A discussion took place on the matter and the CE addressed all the issues raised. Members approved the site acquisition.

Proposed: Willie Aird

Seconded: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

16. LEASE OF BUILDING FOR MUSIC GENERATION AND LAOIS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Marie Bracken informed members that the lease for the building used by Music Generation and Laois of Music from the 1 July 2019 to the 30 June 2020 requires the Boards approval. Initially Laois County Council had proposed a licence agreement but subsequently decided on a lease agreement which requires Board approval.

Members approved the lease.

Proposed: Mary Sweeney

Seconded: Catherine Fitzgerald

17. SCHEDULE OF LICENCE AGREEMENTS

A schedule of all current licence agreements with LOETB was circulated to members for information. A member queried the process in place should a group not be able to meet the terms and conditions of the agreement due to the current pandemic. Marie Bracken confirmed that LOETB will meet with groups as required and review the terms and conditions should any issue arise given the exceptional circumstances.

18. VOTES OF SYMPATHY

A vote of sympathy was passed to:

- Cllr. Mary Sweeney, Board Member on the passing of her partner
- Edward McEvoy, Principal at Tullamore College, on the passing of his mother
- Gillian Miller, staff member at Dunamase College, on the passing of her father
- Louise Robbins, staff member at Oaklands Community College, on the passing of her father
- Claire Bermingham, staff member at Head Office, on the passing of her grandmother

19. VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS

A vote of congratulations was passed to the following:

- LOETB Board and staff members for their dedication and hard work during the current pandemic

20. AOB

Governing Body at the Institute of Technology, Carlow

The CE received correspondence from Eileen Curtis, CE at Kilkenny and Carlow ETB stating that the term of the current Governing Body of Institute of Technology Carlow expired on 31 March 2020. LOETB is requested to provide one nomination for appointment in respect of the ordinary members of the Governing Body of Institute of Technology Carlow as set out in subsection 4 of the Act. The appointment will also require the approval of the Minister of Education and Skills.

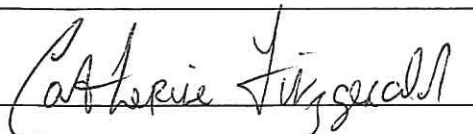
Nominee: Evelyn Dunne
 Proposed: Catherine Fitzgerald
 Seconded: Clare Claffey

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

A member raised an issue with the new allocation system for SNAs and its impact at Dunamase College. With the new system, existing schools retained their allocation of SNAs based on previous allocations but new schools such as Dunamase College were disadvantaged as a result. It was proposed that LOETB contact the DES regarding the matter. The CE confirmed that he previously made representations to the DES on the issue but would do so again expressing their concerns on the matter.

21. DATE & VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board will take place on Monday 27 July 2020 at 4.30pm. A venue will be confirmed closer to the time in keeping with the government guidelines on Covid19.

Signed: 

Chairperson

Date: 27-07-2020

Chairman:
Initials