

A meeting of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board was held on Monday 27 July 2020 at 4:30pm at Dunamaise Arts Centre, Portlaoise.

PRESENT

Cllr Willie Aird

Cllr John Carroll

Cllr Clare Claffey

Ms Mary Cotter-Bracken.

Mr Dave Cullen

Ms Evelyn Dunne

Cllr Caroline Dwane-Stanley

Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald

Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick

Cllr Padraig Fleming

Cllr John King

Cllr Robert McDermott

Mr John Mollin

Mr Frank Smith

Mr Niall Tully

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive

Ms Marie Bracken, Director OSD

Ms Jean Keating, Corporate Governance

The Vice-Chairperson Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald chaired the meeting in the absence of Chairperson Cllr Neil Feighery.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Neil Feighery (Chairperson), Ms Maura Brophy, Ms Molly Buckley, Mr Shane Flesk, Cllr Mary Sweeney and Cllr Frank Moran.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS LOETB MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on 25 May 2020 were circulated to members. Members approved the minutes and they were signed by the Chairperson.

Proposed: Frank Smith Seconded: John Carroll

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 82 students have completed same.

A discussion took place regarding the return to school and school transport. The CE confirmed that the Department of Education and Skills are releasing a document this evening on the return to school which should give clarity on how matters will proceed.

Risk Management

The Risk Register was updated to reflect the goals, priorities and performance indicators set out in the Service Plan 2020 and was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee at their meeting on 13 July. Members of the Audit and Risk Committee approved the Risk Register and recommended same to the Board.

Members adopted the Risk Register.

Proposed: Frank Smith Seconded: Willie Aird

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

All schools operated a Calculated Grade System for Leaving Certificate candidates; Leaving Certificate results have been delayed until September.

All schools operated a Third Year student assessment model to substitute for the traditional Junior Certificate. There will be no Junior Certificate State examination results this year.

Dunamase College has grown substantially and is moving to a second building, Portlaoise FER Centre, Tower Hill. The Laois Music Centre will accommodate FET provision displaced from the Tower Hill site.

Further Education and Training

Inclusion Support Network

In conjunction with the introduction of the Inclusion pillar to the FET structure, an Inclusion Support Network (ISN) will be established in 2020. This network will comprise of a representative from each of our FET Centres and Services, someone who is working face to face with our learners and will act as an advocate for those experiencing barriers accessing courses and encountering obstacles to their learning.

The ISN will champion inclusiveness in our centres by promoting best practice in accessibility. This will be achieved through peer support and by sharing ideas and solutions to challenges being experienced by our learners. The ISN advocates will meet formally twice each year and communicate with each other on an ongoing basis.

LOETB will support and upskill the advocates through the provision of a Digital Badge in Universal Design Learning enabling them to become an Inclusion Facilitator. Each advocate will then be in a position to support colleagues who wish to complete the Digital Badge in future iterations. It is anticipated that the members of the ISN will begin this training in September.

LOETB Climate Change Agenda

LOETB is supporting some of the primary industries (for example, construction, agriculture,

utilities) that have central roles in the climate change agenda, pursuing the reduction of waste and energy consumption among other essential commitments.

We are offering a range of Lean programmes to Micro SMEs operating in both Manufacturing and Construction settings. A recent addition to Leading Remote Teams is Agile and Lean Project Management and it is planned to introduce this green approach to project management across other relevant sectors.

LOETB has been promoting the development of *Retrofitting skills* as part of our Just Transition provision with Bord Na Mona employees. We are expanding this provision to include NZEB programmes for those currently employed in construction and introducing Retrofit Skills, in partnership with local employers, for new entrants to the sector, beginning with a proposed pilot in Birr.

The potential of agriculture to positively impact on climate change is recognised by LOETB and a new partnership has been developed with Teagasc and Gurteen Agricultural College that has developed a *Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture*. The initial focus is on Bord Na Móna workers (Seasonal and Casual primarily) with the potential to expand across the region's strong agricultural sector that is also exploring the potential of Bio-fuel production locally, also in partnership with Gurteen College.

LOETB has agreed a *Peatland Rehabilitation Traineeship* that Bord Na Móna offers to all Peat Energy operatives who are have not received voluntary redundancy (over 200 workers currently). The alternative enterprise most likely to succeed for Bord Na Móna is the commercial herb business. LOETB is providing a Business Development Support programme for this project and is expanding it to include other Micro SME's engaged in the medicinal and pharma herb-producing sector.

LOETB is also working with Bord Na Móna and the peatland communities to explore Green Tourism opportunities and a Bicycle Mechanic programme.

This year, approximately 400 FET learners will participate in these courses.

Cooperation in delivery of QQI programmes between LOETB and Community Providers in the region

LOETB is currently exploring the development of a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Community and Voluntary groups for the cooperative provision of further education and training opportunities in the region.

While some of the providers may have historical QA agreements in place with QQI, this MOU would mean that those groups would be able to offer a greater variety of FET programmes at appropriate levels, in line with national standards, once agreed with LOETB.

LOETB, as the provider, will have overall responsibility for the quality assurance of all FET programmes provided, while the community and voluntary providers will have local responsibility for implementation of quality assurance procedures. By signing the MOU, we can ensure greater consistency of provision and standards.

HSE Infection Prevention and Control Programme statistics update

82 students have completed Infection Prevention and Control assessments and have been submitted for certification in the Level 5 module. A survey was sent to participants on the programmes 75% of respondents are currently in employment.

Organisational Support and Development

Finance

<u>Budgets</u>

Ongoing monthly monitoring of all school and centre budgets is being carried out.

Summary Finances

Summary of finances to end of June 2020

Summary of Workings to End June 2020									
ITEM	Opening Grant Cash Balance	Adjust- ment to Openin g Balance	Receipts	Payments	Closing Grant Cash Balance	% of Overall Total			
Main Scheme Pay Grant	(40,477)		9,631,544	(13,387,498	(3,796,431	-63%			
Main Scheme ONP Grant	555,700		5,561,767	(1,174,839)	4,942,628	83%			
Associated Main Scheme Grants	656,925		843,339	(336,105)	1,164,159	19%			
Capital Schedule	1,203,841		1,758,151	(1,636,175)	1,325,817	22%			
Further Education & Training	537,650		14,478,510	(13,006,493	2,009,667	34%			
Youth Affairs	2,445		216,436	(202,085)	16,796	0%			
Agency	353,353		499,684	(519,444)	333,593	6%			
Self-Financing	295,434		358,841	(663,512)	(9,237)	0%			
Third Party Funds	0		6,146	(5,406)	740	0%			
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Bank Overdraft

Totals

Letter of Offer has issued.

3,564,871

Creditor Payments

1,390 invoices, amounting to €2,274,278.07, were paid in the second quarter of 2020.

Of these, 74.75% were paid within 15 days of receipt of invoices, and a further 24.46% were paid within 30 days.

33,354,418 | 30,931,557 | 5,987,732

16 Purchase Orders for €20,000 or above, totalling €1,173,357.32 inclusive of VAT, were paid in the second quarter of 2020.

Audit
The C&AG audit has been taking place remotely for the last four weeks and is near completion.

Finance Shared Services

LOETB has been selected to work with CMETB on a pilot project for a move to Sun Financial \$ystems.

Chairmans

Human Resources

Recruitment for 2020/2021

The following staff appointments have been made in June & July:

45 Teacher posts

Principal: Coláiste Naomh Cormac & St Fergal's College

FET Managers: Banagher & Mountmellick FET Centres

1 X Home School Liaison Officer: Portlaoise College

1 X Community Training Officer

1 X Grade V FET

7 X Caretakers FET Centres

1 X Director of Schools

Personnel Changes

Gerry Quinn has been appointed Principal at St. Fergal's College, Rathdowney following the retirement of Dominic McEvoy.

Brian Kehoe has been appointed as Principal at Oaklands Community College, Edenderry (moving from Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac)

Ken Crann has been appointed as Principal at Coláiste Naomh Cormac, Kilcormac.

Mr Paul Fields, Director of Schools has moved to ETBI on a two-year secondment and

Ms Linda Tynan has been appointed as Director of Schools to cover the secondment.

Advertised posts and interviews to be held

Assistant Principal Officer (Corporate Services)

Adult Educator FET

Youthreach Resource Person

Teaching posts

Bus Escort Panel

Grade III Admin Staff

Caretakers

CSCS Instructor - Mount Lucas

We are continuing with the WebEx video conference interviews and have also introduced face to face interviews.

Pensions

Pension Description			
Members Retired/Pensions issued	3		
Widow/Widower Pensions issued			
Members applied to retire by Nov 2020			
Total Estimated Pensions issued by end of Nov 2020:	13		

Updating service on our new Core system for members aged 60+, total number is 76 to be updated. We have written to 10 ETBs for previous service to be transferred over to LOETB.

We have also started to review service for members aged 55+ where total number is 94.

We have applied pension increases to all LOETB retirees who are currently in receipt of Annual Pension Payment (264 retirees). In July we have applied additional 2019 Pension increases (1/1/2019 and 1/9/2019) for 19 retirees as requested by FEMPI data cleanse team.

Payroll figures from 29 May 2020 to 24 July 2020 are as follows:

29-May	942,027.68	791
12-Jun	933,725.43	805
26-Jun	980,468.70	826
10-Jul	1,004,792.46	713
24-Jul	876,019.81	711

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.

Consultants preparing Tender Documentation. All statutory approvals Planning, Fire, Disability in place. Tenders for contractors will be uploaded to e-tenders in early August.

Surveys - Topographical and Geogtechnical are currently ongoing on site.

Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara

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

Portlaoise College and Portlaoise Institute

Currently in the process of appointing design team. Standstill period ended on 22 July 2020. Letters of acceptance will issue to Design Team.

Tullamore College

Completion works ongoing. Tenders for acoustics have been evaluated and letter of acceptance has been issued. Works will commence in August.

<u>Dunamase College and Tower Hill</u>

Works to Tower Hill currently on Etenders with response date of 7 August 2020.

Portlaoise Information Centre

Report received from McCarthy O'Hora Architects regarding the design of Lyster Square building. Consultants currently preparing Tender documentation.

Tullamore FET Centre, Axis Business Park

Onsultant preparing the drawings and plans for the Centre.

<u>Toilet Refurbishment Banagher FET Centre</u> – Tenders from Consultants have been evaluated and letters of intent and regret have issued.

St Brendans NS Birr and Scoil Phroinsiais NS Clara – currently working on the projects regarding the appointment of Design Team

Barnashrone NS Mountmellick – currently working on the project to appoint Consultant for this project.

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

Rlectric 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

\$trahan Timber successful Tenderer. The Framework Contract takes effect from 06/07/2020 to 05/07/2021 with the option to extend the term for a period or periods of up to twelve (12) months with a maximum of three (3) such extensions.

Class Materials Metalwork

CSS Ltd successful Tenderer. The Framework Contract takes effect from 06/07/2020 to 05/07/2021 with the option to extend the term for a period or periods of up to twelve (12) months with a maximum of three (3) such extensions.

Lease and Plant Machinery, Mount Lucas

Three responses received. Currently in standstill period - end standstill period 24th July 2020.

ICT Maintenance and Support

Tender currently on Etenders – responses due 14 August 2020.

School Books for Post Primary Schools

Book Haven Ltd successful Tenderer. The Contract will be issued for a term of one (1) year ("the Term") in accordance with the RFT starting on 18 June 2020 to 17 June 2021. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to extend the term for a period(s) up to twelve (12) months. The term will not exceed 2 (two) years.

Personal Protective Equipment & Workwear/First Aid and Life Jackets – new Framework with PG – MJ Scannell/Charles Hughes/Sioen successful Tenderers 29/06/2020 to 28/06/2023

<u>Loose Furniture Framework</u> – 6 responses received – currently being assessed.

ICT

Schools

Schools laptops have been rolled out.

Computers for new Dunamase College DCG room delivered.

Wireless Bridge installation week starting 27 July between Dunamase College and Portlaoise FET to bring school broadband to the building.

FET

New broadband connections ordered for FET student wifi.

New firewalls for student wifi ready to install.

Wireless bridge installation week starting 27 July between Portlaoise FET and School of music to improve broadband speed at Laois Music Centre.

Majority of IT equipment removed from Portlaoise FET Centre.

A new computer classroom will be setup in LOETB Centre of Excellence to support FET provision and link with IT Carlow.

300 laptops ordered for FET centres

TVs ordered for all FET sites for use as information screens.

Admin office

Desk locations in both HR and Finance offices in Portlaoise have been altered to comply with COVID19 guidance.

Corporate Services

Freedom of Information

Freedom of information requests are ongoing and are being answered within the required time frames.

Data Protection

One data breach was reported in June 2020. It was deemed to be a low risk and an incident report form was filled out.

Health and Safety

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

A Safe Check 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 because of COVID 19.

Risk Management

An updated Corporate Risk Register was developed to incorporate the Service Plan for 2020 and was approved by the A & R Committee at its last meeting on 13 July, 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 commenced on 25 May and is ongoing.

COVID 19

LOETB has a working group in place. Currently the group has prepared a Response Plan, guidance for employees on return to work, Return To Work forms, Contact Tracing and Induction Training. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and signage has been ordered and protective screens will be installed in our offices the week commencing 27 July 2020.

Administrative staff have been working between home and the offices on a phased basis and our plan is for a full return to work on 4 August 2020.

A discussion took place on the CE's report.

Members welcomed all staff who have been appointed to new posts. Members asked the CE to convey their best wishes to Paul Fields on his new role in ETBI. A member asked the CE to send a letter to outgoing Principal at St. Fergal's College Rathdowney, Mr Dominic McEvoy, thanking him for his contribution to the school.

A member asked the CE for an update on the new site for Dunamase College. The CE confirmed that the site has been acquired and the funds are being transferred from our solicitors at present. The Service Level Agreement is currently being finalised by The Building Unit and the Design Team will be appointed in the coming weeks.

A member asked the CE if LOETB is funding the cost of Covid19 equipment or if the DES is providing funding. The CE confirmed that it is a combination of both; the Department of Education and SOLAS has issued some funding for COVID-related expenditure such as ICT devices and has also managed the procurement of PPE centrally.

6. FINANCE

Bank Overdraft

LOETB's overdraft facility, per sanction received from the DES, expired 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. The Letter of Offer from AIB was received on 18 June for the Chairperson and the CE to sign.

Members approved that the Chairperson and CE sign the Letter of Offer.

Proposed: Willie Aird

Seconded: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

7. CORRESPONDENCE

Item No	Correspondence From	Date / Ref No.	Details	
1.	Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	25 May 2020	Governing Body, Institute of Technology Carlow	Noted by members
2.	ETBI	27 May 2020	Resignation of General Secretary of ETBI	Noted by members
3.	ETBI	8 June 2020	Postponement of ETBI Annual Conference 2020	Noted by members
4.	Eversheds	April 2020 issued June 2020	Legal Opinion on ETB Legislation	Noted by members
5.	Department of Education and Skills	Circular Letter 0037/2020	Implementation of Calculated Grades Model for Leaving Certificate 2020	Noted by members
6.	Department of Education and Skills	Circular Letter 0039/2020	Calculated Grades Aides 2020	Noted by members
7.	Department of Education and Skills	Department of Circular Letter Arrangements for Inspection and		Noted by members
8.	Department of Education and Skills Circular Letter oo43/2020 Scheme for Leave of Absence following Assault for Staff other than Teachers and Special Needs Assistants in Education and Training Board Workplaces		Noted by members	

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

The following minutes of the committees of the Board were circulated to members prior to the meeting. Members approved the minutes as follows:

Audit and Risk Committee, 27 March 2020

Proposed: Evelyn Dunne Seconded: John Carroll

Finance Committee, 27 March 2020

Proposed: Clare Claffey Seconded: John Carroll

Tullamore College, 13 November 2019, 29 January 2020, 26 February 2020,

15 May 2020

Proposed: John Mollin

Seconded: Robert McDermott

Clonaslee College, 12 September 2019, 6 February 2020

Proposed: Evelyn Dunne Seconded: Willie Aird

Portlaoise College, 11 February 2020

Proposed: Willie Aird Seconded: Evelyn Dunne

9. CONFIRMATION OF BOM MEMBERSHIPS

The CE received nomination for the following BOM Memberships:

Dunamase College, An Foras Patrúnachta nominees

Dominic Ó Braonáin,

Proposed: Caroline Dwane-Stanley Seconded: Mary Cotter-Bracken

Melinda Uí Nialláin

Proposed: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

Seconded: Dave Cullen

Crios Hickson

Proposed: John King Seconded: Frank Smith

Clonaslee College, BOM nominees

Fr O'Reilly

Proposed: Mary Cotter-Bracken

Seconded: Niall Tully

Bernadette Dunne Proposed: Niall Tully

Seconded: Padraig Fleming

Birr OEC, BOM nominees

Sandra Nolan

Proposed: Clare Claffey

Seconded: Mary Cotter-Bracken

Ming Loughnane

Proposed: Clare Claffey Seconded: John Carroll

Peter Kerrigan

Proposed: John Carroll Seconded: Clare Claffey

Fionn O'Carroll

Proposed: John Carroll

Seconded: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara

LOETB Nominee Vivienne Keenan

Proposed: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

Seconded: John Mollin

BOM Nominee Michelle McKeon

Proposed: Evelyn Dunne

Seconded: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

10. LA SANTA UNION BUILDINGS, BANAGHER

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The CE informed members that he has been approached by auctioneers acting on behalf of interested parties who have expressed an interest in developing the La Santa Union Buildings in Banagher which are owned by LOETB. The buildings are currently unused (bar one section at the back of the buildings which is being used by Banagher Scouts). LOETB are insuring and maintaining the buildings at present. The option of demolishing the buildings was explored but it was not feasible as the buildings are on a register of buildings of architectural interest. The CE confirmed that the buildings are of no value to LOETB for educational purposes.

The CE asked members for their opinion on how to progress the matter. A discussion took place and members agreed to put the buildings on the market. The CE informed members that there is a process to go through with the Office of Public Works and the Land Development Agency prior to any consideration of sale. He also confirmed that members would have the opportunity to review the matter prior to approving any potential sale agreement.

Proposed: Clare Claffey Seconded: Frank Smith

11. NOMINATION TO THE BOARD OF LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

The CE received a letter from Caroline Myers, Co-ordinator at Laois Sports Partnership, requesting LOETB to nominate a member to their Board of Directors. Niall Tully was nominated to the Board of Laois Sports Partnership.

Proposed: Willie Aird

Seconded: Catherine Fitzgerald

12. ANNUAL REPORT 2019, CHAIRPERSONS COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

Marie Bracken informed members that the DES requested the following changes to the Annual Report 2019;

- 1. Inclusion of the dates of the Board meetings and members attendance at same Pages 6 & 7
- 2. Inclusion of a paragraph on Risk Management Page 8

Members approved the amendment.

Proposed: John King

Seconded: Robert McDermott

The DES also asked for one change to the Chairperson's Comprehensive Report to the Minister:

Inclusion of the Statement on Internal Control (SIC) as Appendix 1 Members approved the amendment.

Proposed: Willie Aird

Seconded: Mary Cotter Bracken

13. OVERSIGHT AGREEMENT

nute Book

Members received a copy of the Oversight Agreement between the DES and LOETB. The purpose of the oversight agreement is:

- to set out the terms of the relationship between the DES and LOETB
- to provide clarity on the strategic and operational aspects of the organisations' relationship
- to provide a basis and framework for the delivery of high-quality services and to set in place the parameters and timeframe within which certain services will be delivered by LOETB
- to establish structured arrangements for communications, reporting and liaison, accountability and governance
- to facilitate improved communication, engagement and co-operation between the DES and LOETB

Members noted the Oversight Agreement.

14. LEASES

Marie Bracken informed members that the following leases require approval;

Lease of building from Laois County Council for Laois Music Centre (period of three years)

Proposed: Willie Aird

Seconded: Catherine Fitzgerald

Lease of woodwork room on the La Santa Union Banagher site for use by Banagher Scouts for one year at €365pa

Proposed: Clare Claffey Seconded: John Carroll

Lease of an additional 409 square units for hospitality programmes at Birr FET Centre (same terms and conditions as original lease)

Proposed: John Carroll Seconded: Clare Claffey

Lease of conference room and canteen/kitchen for Tullamore FET Centre at Castle Buildings,

Tullamore

Proposed: Eddie Fitzpatrick

Seconded: Caroline Dwane-Stanley

15. LICENCE, RATHDOWNEY NATIONAL SCHOOL

The CE informed members that LOETB has secured a 4-year licence agreement at €7,500 per year for the former Rathdowney National School. There are three buildings on the site, all in good condition. The toilets will need to be upgraded to adult toilet facilities and the rooms painted. The building will be used for the provision of part time FET and community education courses. Members welcomed this news.

16. SECTION 29 APPEAL HEARINGS

Members noted the outcome of a section 29 Appeal Hearings which took place on 16 July

17. VOTES OF SYMPATHY

A vote of sympathy was passed to:

- Claire Bermingham, staff member at Head Office, on the passing of her father
- Jen Tonge, staff member at the Admin Offices Tullamore, on the passing of her mother

VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS 18.

A vote of congratulations was passed to the following:

LOETB staff and teachers for all their work during the pandemic including the new marking scheme for students and all the paperwork that was involved in grading results

io. AOB

The CE informed members that the school Admissions Policies will be ratified at their school BOM meetings in August and will come to the Board for approval at the September Board meeting.

21. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board will take place on Monday 7 September 2020 at 4.30pm in Tullamore. A venue will be confirmed closer to the time in keeping with the government guidelines on Covid19.

Signed: <u>Val 1a</u> Date: <u>28/7/26</u>

Chairperson

Chairmans