

Northern Regional College

Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 22 February 2017 at the Farm Lodge, Ballymena Campus commencing at 5.00pm

Present Mr R Jay (Chair), Cllr B Hutchinson, Dr K McCambridge, Mr B McCluggage, Mr K Nelson, Prof T Scott (Principal).

In Attendance Mr A Ballantine, (item 32.10) Mr C Fairless (items 32.10/32.11), Ms L Firth, (up to item 32.10), Mr M Higgins, Ms T Millar (item 32.10), Mr V Taggart (up to item 32.10)
Mrs C Robinson (Secretary)

The Principal advised that Jonathan Hannah, Student President, had stepped down from his position as Student Governor and the Vice President, Gus Grusas had been invited to represent the student body at this meeting. The Department would be advised of the change and would be asked to formally appoint Mr Grusas who had agreed to undertake the Governor role.

The Chair welcomed the student representative to the meeting. Members and attendees were introduced.

With the agreement of members the agenda was adjusted to permit staff presentations to be taken earlier in the meeting. Following the Chair's Communications (item 32.5) the order of business would be items 32.7, 32.9, 32.10, 32.11, 32.8 and 32.6.

32.1 Apologies

Dr S Brankin and Prof M McKinney.

32.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

32.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the last meeting held on 9 November 2016.

32.4 Matters Arising

31.4 The Chair requested an update on the Student Survey. Ms Firth reported that 1068 responses had been received and a draft report was being prepared. She highlighted that the software used for the survey would allow benchmarking against local Colleges and other UK institutions.

31.6 ii The Chair sought information on the current position with regard to the Lecturers into Industry Pilot.

Prof Scott reminded members that the programme had been suspended by the Department and there was uncertainty if a budget would be available to proceed with the programme. She advised that as this was one of the College's targets Mr Hewitt continued to work on identifying options for shorter vocational experiences and discussions were scheduled with staff and unions during March to consider. Prof Scott was hopeful that some 'pilot staff placements' would be in place during the summer term, and the Department would be advised accordingly.

32.5 Chair's Communications

None.

32.7 Strategic Improvement Plan

i) KPI Update Report

Mr Higgins spoke to the updated report on KPI 1 noting the College's current (5,730) and predicted year end (5,634) FLU position. He stated that additionality in social media and CAD initiatives were being introduced to increase the year end FLU further (5,672) along with retention measures. Mr Higgins highlighted all Colleges were reporting FLU figures below target.

Prof Scott referred to a recent meeting with Beverley Harrison and College Principals where the sector wide trend for enrolments and the FLU had been discussed. She reported that NRC had raised the issue of increasing vocational provision within post primary schools with the DfE and that Ms Harrison had confirmed the FE Division was taking forward a piece of work with DE to identify trends in education of 14-19 year olds. Prof Scott also identified further challenges with provision through private training organisation including the different cost base presenting challenges to compete in some geographical areas and having a knock on to College enrolment. At present the visibility of provision/planned provision by other providers was not uniformly available. Prof Scott indicated that a number of changes were planned in the area of private training by the Department and it was hoped that DfE planned reforms would improve the challenges facing FE Colleges

Members acknowledged the impact on FLU funding, the action taken by management to address issues and discussed the implications of the current NI Assembly situation. Cllr Hutchinson suggested that discussions with NIO Minister, Lord Dunlop might be useful.

Action: It was agreed that he would be invited to visit the College.

In addition, the Committee considered engagement with community groups. Prof Scott advised that the College had two dedicated Community Outreach Officers who continued work within the community organisations. The benefits of a previously funded Learner Access programme and the gaps resulting on the decision to discontinue the programme were noted.

In conclusion Mr Higgins clarified the impact retention rates had on funding. He reported that retention figures were marginally above the SIP target and mechanisms were in place to support students and ensure the figures for year-end are maintained.

The Committee noted the significant focus placed on retention and congratulated management on the improvement.

ii) Additionality and Retention Plan

The Committee noted the plan for additionality and retention which had been discussed outlined during the discussion of KPI 1.

32.9 Whole College SER

i) SER/QIP document

The Committee noted GB members had access to the report which had been posted on Minutepad. The Chair welcomed the improved presentation and noted it was well structured and easy to follow and welcomed the alignment of the QIP to the Strategic Improvement Plan.

ii) ETI Scrutiny Inspection

Mr Taggart provided an update on the forthcoming ETI inspection which would commence on 27 February 2017. He advised that the inspection would include scrutiny of SER/QIP and a full inspection of Youth Training and Apprenticeship Pilot Programmes. Notification from ETI had been circulated under correspondence.

In response to members' questions he outlined the reporting process and assured the Committee that although the work based learning programme may be a potential risk, he was confident that appropriate preparation had been undertaken and there was sufficient

supporting evidence available. He noted that a number of legacy issues were identified in 2016 in relation to TfS provision and Management had a plan progressing to deal with these issues.

Prof Scott confirmed that Mr Taggart would be taking the lead for liaison with the inspection team. She was content with the preparation and was hopeful of a similar or improved result on previous scrutiny visit. It was noted that 3 senior managers have been out of sickness leave in the recent period and along with on-going audit activity, senior management and SLT were extremely stretched..

iii) **Safeguarding Proforma**

Ms Firth provided an update on the Safeguarding Policy and the evaluation of safeguarding arrangements. She advised that the evaluation proforma was more detailed than previous but on completion had confirmed relevant arrangements were in place. One exception had been the circulation of an annual report on safeguarding to the Governing Body. Mr Higgins confirmed that the Board had received a presentation from Mr S McCartney, staff member responsible for safeguarding, in January 2016.

Action: The Committee agreed that an interim report would be circulated to members at the next Governing Body meeting.

Prof Scott drew attention to online training which staff had been required to complete. The training had also been made available on a discretionary basis to GB members. Members present noted they were content to complete the training.

Action: Prof Scott to follow up on training for GB members.

The Committee noted the Safeguarding Policy circulated and the Chair as designated Governor responsible for safeguarding signed off the evaluation return.

Ms Firth and Mr Taggart left the meeting.

Mr Ballantyne, Mrs Millar and Mr Fairless joined the meeting (6.15pm).

32.10 Presentation Update on HE Provision

Mr Ballantyne provided a comprehensive summary of HE provision which included an overview of full and part time courses across campuses; statistics on enrolment/retention for 15/16 and 16/17; highlighted key factors influencing intake numbers and identified actions to improve enrolment for the coming year.

Mr Ballantyne spoke about the new operating model for quality assessment, what it involved; and highlighted awarding bodies and the QA processes for providers. He drew attention to the remit for the internal Higher Education Forum and outlined changes introduced in the curriculum planning process. Mrs Millar advised there was also an external forum and a staff student consultative committee.

The Committee noted additional information provided by Prof Scott and Mr Ballantyne in response to members' comments on the new computing provision, the over prediction on year two progression, the merits of foundation degrees/HLAs and the reduction in part time HE provision.

Action: Following discussion it was agreed that SLT would consider how to engage with the Department on HLA/foundation degree provision and report back to the Committee on the Curriculum planning in relation to HE.

Mr McCluggage left the meeting. (7pm)

The Chair noted and signed off on the QA process and undertook to brief the Governing Body on current HE provision.

Mr Ballantyne, Mrs Millar and Mr Grusas left the meeting (7.10pm).

32.11 Marketing and Communication Strategy

Mr Fairless delivered a high level presentation on the Marketing and Communication Strategy which outlined the direction travelled to date. He referred to the strategic objectives, priorities, operational/tactical plans and the alignment to other strategic documents. He outlined the strategic aims and engaged in discussion with members on digitising marketing, understanding/reaching audiences, social media, display advertising, search marketing, maintaining contact and marketing integration.

Cllr Hutchinson acknowledged there had been significant and fundamental change in this area at the College and commended Mr Fairless on the improvements and progress.

Prof Scott stated that the development of Communications/Marketing/Social Media had been one of the 78 actions arising from the report that was incorporated within the Strategic Improvement Plan and noted SLT's frustration that, despite the major developments in relation to extensive progress and transformational progress (as proposed in the SIP) the approach for reviewing progress focused on checking inputs rather than reviewing outputs and outcomes. Members noted Prof Scott's concern.

In response to Cllr Hutchinson, Prof Scott advised there would be bi-annual reporting on Communication and Marketing outcomes. Prof Scott also reported that the development of a CRM system to improve data monitoring and interpretation was currently underway and the College had notified the Department of the trial of Microsoft dynamics.

The Committee welcomed periodic update reports and agreed that Mr Fairless should present to the Committee twice yearly. The Committee noted that following the restructuring marketing and communication was now a designated senior management role along with the SLT delegation to the VP BD&T. The Committee noted the developments and new approach.

The Chair thanked Mr Fairless for the informative overview and commended his work.

Mr Fairless left the meeting (8pm).

32.8 Curriculum Planning

i) Curriculum Plan

Prof Scott reported on the revised approach to curriculum planning. She drew attention to a tabled document which outlined the various stages in the development of the curriculum for 2017/18. Prof Scott indicated that the planning process had taken account of external factors, the views of staff, students, employers, DfE, ETI and had been subjected to CMT, SLT and Peer reviews. She noted that while the revised approach had brought the planning process forward it was necessary for the curriculum planning process to be driven by data and trend analysis. A specialist advisor with a strong curriculum background had been assigned to support the VP and CMT in this task. It was noted that while improvements had been introduced in the current year the approach, timing and transparency of decisions in relation to curriculum provision was being further reviewed.

Mr Higgins referred to the Department's Provisional Allocation Target Profile letter and the FLU Enrolment Profile for 2017/18 circulated under item 32.6, and provided details on the new method used for calculating the funding allocation. He highlighted the increased FLU figure on which the 2017/18 budget would be based and outlined how this had been determined. Mr Higgins advised that the Department had requested the completed return by Friday 24 February 2017. He also reported no significant change to HE figures and marginal increases within FE.

The Committee considered the projections to be submitted to the Department and information circulated along with the verbal update provided by Prof Scott and Mr Higgins. It was noted that any subsequent changes to the figures would be reported back to the Education Committee. The extract relating to projections on student numbers would also be presented to the Resources Committee.

Mr Higgins responded to the Chair's enquiry about a narrative to give members a clear and full understanding of the process, stating that the Curriculum Plan and College Development Plan would provide relevant supporting information.

The provisional allocation FLU figures for 2017/18 were approved by the Committee on behalf of the Governing Body.

The Committee noted Dr McCambridge's comments supporting the changes to the curriculum planning process.

ii) Student Experience Strategy

Prof Scott advised that the draft Student Experience Strategy had subsequently been revised following comments from SLT and advised members the version was a working draft. The members provided comments on student success, reports to parents etc.

Ms Firth to clarify issues.

Action: A request for further feedback/approval would be circulated to members electronically.

32.6 Correspondence

The Committee noted that correspondence received since the last meeting had been addressed within other items on the agenda.

Reference was made to the NRC WBL notification letter providing detail on the forthcoming coming inspection by ETI.

32.12 Health Check Issue 5

Mr Higgins drew attention to the year end document circulated and indicated that a revised version had been forwarded by the Department earlier in the day. The updated version would be posted on Minutepad and would be circulated to other committees and GB for consideration.

Committee members noted the issue 5 Health Check document.

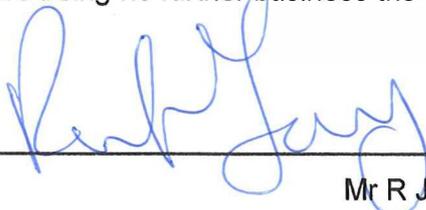
32.13 Any Other Business

None.

32.14 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would be held at 4.00pm on Wednesday, 24 May 2017 at Farm Lodge, Ballymena Campus.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8.45pm.



Mr R Jay (Chair)

Date 24/5/17
24 May 2017



Mrs C Robinson (Secretary)