

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 10 December 2012 at the Ballymena Campus.

Present Mrs K Collins, (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands, (Director), Mr S Davidson and Mrs G McConnell.

In Attendance Mrs B Crotty, Mrs C Moore and Mr J Hunter.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

31.1 Health and Safety Presentation

The Committee received a presentation on Health and Safety from Mr Kyle Leckey, Health and Safety Coordinator. Mr Leckey highlighted a number of issues in the course of his presentation:

a) Management of Health and Safety. He indicated that the College had a duty in relation to the health and safety of its staff

b) Monitoring Systems. He referred to the various ways in which he monitored the efficacy of the Health and Safety provision mentioning in particular internal inspections, internal and external audits, meetings of the College Health and Safety Committee. He explained that he also made use of sickness absence reports, accident reports and customer complaints.

c) Accident Trends. He advised the Committee that there had been a steady reduction in the total reported accidents and incidents from 2009/2010 to 2011/2012. Most of the accidents were sustained by students as a result of slips/trips/falls, misconduct, seizure/faints and cuts. Staff accidents resulted from manual handling and slips/trips. He added that the number of claims had remained steady since 2007/2008 and he provided examples of claim settlements in 2010/2011 and 2011/2012. It was noted that CCTV had a critical role to play in the College's defence in respect of malicious claims

d) Staff Development. He drew attention to a number of staff developments such as the Chartis on-line training programme. He added that 14 members of staff had obtained Heart Start certificates. He also made reference to staff training in emergency evacuation particularly of disabled students. In response to a query he stated that 7 or 8 staff had been trained in First Aid for each campus. The length of the course, three days, had acted a barrier and restricted the numbers of volunteers.

f) Current Initiatives. He referred to several initiatives including the instigation of an asbestos management plan, the development of personal emergency evacuation plans and the establishment of a Cross Colleges H&S Forum. He made mention of a number of future initiatives such as lone working assessments, transport risk assessments and the College Fire Management Plan. Referring to lone working he explained that he was attempting to provide training for caretakers and duty managers, who would be on duty during evening classes.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Leckey for an informative presentation.

31.2 Apologies

An apology was received from Dr D Lennox.

31.3 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

31.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 14 November 2012, were approved.

31.5 Matters Arising

31.5.1 UK Border Agency (minute 30.10)

It was noted that the Agency had made a pre-licence visit to the College on 15 November 2012 to assess the College's Migrant Policy and to assess whether NRC has been compliant with the Tier 4 Sponsorship arrangements and other immigration related legislation. Following the visit UKBA had reinstated the College licence to sponsor international students.

31.5.2 Estate Issues (minutes 29.4.1 and 29.7)

The Committee (14 November 2012) noted that maintenance problems had been experienced at the Coleraine, Ballymoney and Newtownabbey Campuses. The Director of Finance and Corporate Development stated that the Committee would be kept informed as and when an exceptional maintenance outlay was incurred.

31.5.3 Any Other Matters Arising

There were no other matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

31.6 Chairperson's Communication

There were no Chairperson's communications.

31.7 Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence, which had been received since the last meeting:

a) The reissue by DEL of DAO (DFP) 12/08, dated 1 February 2010, drawing Accounting Officers' attention the need to ensure that all possible steps are taken by NICS departments and their agencies and their public bodies to pay suppliers as promptly as possible and to seek to meet the 10-day prompt payment commitment made in response to the current economic position. Mrs Moore, the Director of Finance and Corporate Development, stated that the College was currently working on a 30-day commitment. The KPI for the number of creditor days at 31 July 2012 was 14 days. To achieve the target set by the Department would require additional resource. It was proposed to continue as at present making payments as promptly as possible.

31.8 Monthly Management Accounts

The Committee noted the Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 31 October 2012. The Accounts indicate that the College has an historic cost surplus of £152k, which is £383k less than budget. The Bank Balance as at 31 October 2012 was £3.2 million and investments at the Ulster and First Trust Banks amounted to £2.5 million.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Development drew attention to the Financial KPIs as at 31 October 2012 and projected to 31 July 2013. The Chairperson observed that the staff costs as a percentage of total income KPI was currently 68% but was projected to rise to 73% at the year-end. This is because income tends to be front loaded but staffing costs are more regularly profiled throughout the year.

31.9 Estate Issues

The Committee received an update regarding estate issues. The Committee noted:

a) Larne Adult Education Centre. It was noted that there had been a launch of the new partnership on 7 December 2012. Mrs Moore said that minor adjustments had still to be made to the lease prior to signing.

b) Antrim Campus. Mrs Crotty, the Director of Planning and Customer Services, informed the Committee that the Land Disposal Committee would meet on 11 December 2012 and give consideration to the disposal of the Antrim Campus. She stated that Fold Housing had expressed an interest in a part of the Campus but despite letters from the College and the Land and Property Services, it had failed to provide clarification as to its intentions. Mrs Crotty suggested that it would be necessary for the Committee to decide on the way forward on receipt of information from Fold Housing.

c) Newtownabbey. Mrs Crotty advised the Committee that planning permission would enhance the price of the land at Station Road, Newtownabbey. The College had submitted a Business Case to DEL to acquire the services of consultants to assist in the process. She said that the Department had approved the Business Case and the College would be proceeding to appoint consultants.

d) Disposal of Joint Property at Portrush. Mrs Crotty reminded the Committee of the difficulty relating to the joint ownership of the unused premises at Portrush. NRC had requested NEELB to provide 'good copy' of the deeds but was still awaiting a response. **The Committee agreed that the Principal should write to the Chief Executive NEELB asking the Board to give greater priority to the disposal of the joint property.**

e) Outline Business Case. The Committee noted that a meeting between DEL, SIB and the College had taken place on 4 December 2012 to discuss the Schedule of Accommodation for the new build at Ballymena and Coleraine. The Schedule had been broadly well received but it was now necessary to amend the schedule following receipt of feedback and for ETI to scrutinize it to ascertain if the accommodation is fit for purpose and meets the curriculum needs.

f) Project Board. The Committee agreed that Mrs Gillian McConnell should be appointed as the Governing Body representative on the Outline Business Case Project Board.

31.10 Any Other Notified Business

There was no further notified business.

31.11 Next Meeting

The Chairperson reminded Members that the next meeting is scheduled for **Monday 4 February 2013** at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus commencing at 7.15 pm.