

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 6 October 2021 in Farm Lodge, Ballymena, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mr K Nelson (Chair), Mrs I Allison (103.1-103.15), Mr K Chambers, Mr M Higgins, Dr P Graham, Mr W Hutchinson, Mr D Macauley, Mr W McCluggage (103.8-103.15), Mrs G McConnell, Mr T Montgomery

Via Teams: Ms A Dynes, Mrs M Hamilton, Ms Y Mallon, Mr I Murphy

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery, Ms J Small and Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

Presentation:

The Chair welcomed Ms Donna Blaney, Director of Further Education and Mr Colin Woods, Director of Corporate Governance & Transformation, who were in attendance to address the Governing Body on the DfE Organisational Development and Transformation project (ODT).

Ms Blaney welcomed the opportunity to speak to members on the new partnership approach being taken by the Department. She outlined the potential for growth of opportunities for young people through a positive approach and looked forward to future detailed discussion with partner bodies in developing this.

Mr Woods spoke to his presentation on ODT. He outlined the rationale for the change programme; the primary priority to ensure transformation of the Department over a 3-5 year timeframe; and the crucial role of collaboration with sponsor bodies in the development of the organisation's future strategic focus and operating model. He then responded to questions on ensuring coherence of focus across all bodies and realistic expectations in the short term.

Mr Higgins thanked Ms Blaney and Mr Woods for attending. He greeted with enthusiasm, the Department's change of focus from 'sponsorship' to 'partnership' and the opportunity for effective engagement with all partners.

The Chair confirmed the Governing Body's willingness to be fully engaged in the ODT process.

Mrs Allison joined the meeting.

103.1 Apologies

Apologies were recorded for Ms Close and Mr Wilkinson.

103.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

103.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

On his first meeting as Chair, Mr Nelson expressed the privilege he felt at having been appointed to the role and stated his passion for FE and the role the College plays in the sector.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2021 were agreed.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr Hutchinson

103.4 Matters Arising

Members were updated on the progress of the governor competition with interview currently underway. It is anticipated that new members would be in place early in 2022.

A presentation on the College of the Future would be incorporated into a Strategy event when the new members are in place.

An update by Mr Jim Woods, STS Project Director, was referred to the Resources Committee.

CPANI guidance on carrying out a skills and attributes audit had been circulated on 6 July 2021. Future meetings of GB would be carried out under blended provision, where possible, with Committee meetings taking place remotely.

103.5 Chair's Communication

Referring to the Principal appointment process, the Chair thanked members who had taken part on the recruitment panel and expressed appreciation for the work carried out. A further update would be provided as a 'reserved' matter at the end of the meeting.

The Chair gave a brief summary of governors' views from the annual assessment interview process and advised points will be incorporated into future meetings and engagements. He noted the clear commitment to FE and the vision and work of the College; the need to focus and engage; and the strong sense that the College was well provisioned. He highlighted that a key aspect of his role was to establish an effective working relationship with the Director of FE and reported positive interactions to date.

Related to his role as College representative on the College Employers Forum (CEF), the Chair the Chair had met with the Chairs of both the Chairs' and Principals' groups and participated in a number of CEF meetings.

Broad agreement had been expressed by members for meetings to be focussed around a 90-minute timeline, with extra time for reserved items where necessary. Members had also asked to rotate around campuses and requested a broader induction process with greater information on management structures.

Action: GB meetings to be held across all campuses. Information on management structures to be included in a broader induction process.

103.6 Correspondence

The CDP 2021/22 Commissioning memo was noted. Members heard that the draft submission had been made and response was awaited from the Department before making the final submission.

ETI notification letter and guidance document had been received confirming the date for evaluation of the Curriculum Hub as 3 and 4 November 2021.

The notification letter and Terms of Reference for the DfE ODT programme sponsorship review, were noted.

103.7 Principal's Report

The Principal's Report was taken as read. A number of key points were highlighted including: low level of requests for reviews against the TAG process; enrolments in line with last year but a concerning drop in HE enrolments; progress by the business engagement teams in attracting alternative income streams and working with local business; operational issues with the LMS now resolved, resulting in a more stable platform. Members also noted an update on the new build project with a Conditional Construction Notice issued for Coleraine and progress on a challenge to the award of contract for Ballymena.

Members' concerns on the hold-up to the new build programme were responded to by Mr Higgins, who outlined the difficulties leading to delays and the process for moving forward. He confirmed

the August 2023 opening date for the Coleraine build would not be achieved with completion rephased to later in 2023/24.

FE colleges' successful bid to join the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence was commended. Congratulations were extended to the 11 students who had qualified for the WorldSkills national finals.

Mr McCluggage joined the meeting

103.8 Education Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting on 15 September 2021 were noted.

Mrs Brown provided an update on enrolments at 6 October 2021, with a similar picture noted across the FE sector. Pressures from post primary schools and universities were identified as key issues.

Mr Macauley confirmed the impact of grade inflation on ES and noted 2021/22 as a recovery year, with the goal to rebuild slippage over the next couple of years.

Mrs McConnell provided an update on safeguarding engagements and the positive impact of Northern Plus. She commended the College on the achievement of the Autism NI Impact Award

Action: A report on the curriculum strategy would be considered at the November meeting.

103.9 Resources Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting on 23 June 2021 were noted.

103.10 Audit & Risk Committee

Mr McCluggage updated the Governing Body on the College's risk assessment along with actions implemented. Mr McCluggage confirmed satisfactory assurance received from internal audit and audit programme for 2021/22 agreed. Information assurance and risk register were reviewed by the Committee. with risk for New Build increased due to extension in timeframes.

The draft minutes of the meeting on 22 September 2021 were noted.

103.11 Curriculum Development Plan

Ms Small provided an update on the end-of-year report for the 2020/21 CDP with members noting broad achievement of targets in Report Card 1 Enrolments/Qualifications and Report Card 2 Employers. Some slippage in Report Card 3 Social Inclusion was acknowledged as a result of the inability to maximise delivery in the community, due to Covid-19.

Consideration was given to the draft CDP for 2021/22 at 28 September 2021, which had been aligned to the DfE 10X Skills Strategy and NI Covid Renewal and submitted to the Department on 24 October. Opportunities and challenges in the current year were reflected in the Report Cards, with targets for Social Inclusion revised to reflect the possibility of a continuing trend from 2020/21. Work on increasing opportunities for new partnerships was noted and additional income from online provision was welcomed.

Uncertainties facing the FE sector were discussed and would be considered at a future strategy session of Governing Body.

103.12 Finance Update

The Governing Body noted the College accounts to 31 July 2021 had been submitted for audit verification, with draft figures to be reviewed by Resources Committee on 13 October 2021. Mr Laverty advised on significant movements within the annual accounts and stated bids for additional

Covid-19 funding had been submitted to the Department. Further funding was secured for additional minor capital, which would feed into the 10-year capital strategy.

103.13 Any Other Business

None.

103.14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 24 November 2021 in Farm Lodge.

Mrs Brown, Ms Dynes, Mr Higgins, Mr Macauley, Mr Laverty and Ms Small withdrew from the meeting at 6.34pm.

Mr K Nelson



Chair

Date 24 November 2021

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary