

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 12 May 2021 via Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mr B McGahan (Chair), Mrs I Allison, Mr K Chambers, Ms A Close, Ms A Dynes, Dr P Graham, Mrs M Hamilton, Ms Y Mallon, Dr K McCambridge, Mr W McCluggage, Mrs G McConnell, Mr T Montgomery, Mr I Murphy, Prof T Scott and Mr G Wilkinson

In Attendance: Mr Clem Athanasiou, DfE (101.3), Mrs C Brown, Mr M Higgins, Ms J Small
Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

101.1 Apologies

Mr Hutchinson.

101.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

101.3 Presentation

The Chair welcomed Mr Clem Athanasiou, Deputy Director Apprenticeships, Careers & Vocation Education Division, who was in attendance to present the DfE 'Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland' on Apprenticeships.

5.07pm Mrs McConnell joined the meeting.

5.10pm Ms Close joined the meeting

Mr Athanasiou expanded on the key themes in his presentation and highlighted a number of associated points including:

- Funding for the Economic Recovery Action Plan (ERAP) was limited to 12 months.
- Work on policy and modelling on opportunities for all age apprentices was underway, with an announcement on plans expected within the coming months.
- Case studies in England provide a strong message of demand for skills which are under represented in the public sector.
- The importance of discussion at the highest strategic level on how, given the drop in upcoming private sector opportunities, the public sector can support apprenticeships.

In relation to the impact of Covid-19 on learners and apprentices, Mr Athanasiou acknowledged the work of the College in providing new and innovative approaches to learning and supporting the health of students.

During a Q&A session, Mr Athanasiou responded to members' questions and indicated interest in exploring a number of points further with College representatives including:

- The possibility of expanding provision of the cyber security training scheme operated in BMC across interested colleges.
- The opportunity to be involved in public sector pilot schemes for skills and training; and to streamline administration and align with statutory oversight on compliance risk.

5.37pm Ms Mallon joined the meeting

The Chair noted both the Principal and members' enthusiasm to take up Mr Athanasiou's offer of further engagement and thanked him for his presentation.

5.42pm Mr Athanasiou left the meeting.

101.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2021 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr Murphy

101.5 Matters Arising

The Chair noted that information on online cyber security training had been circulated to members on 5 May 2021.

101.6 Chair's Communication

The Chair referred to his recent communication and recorded congratulations to Professor Scott on her appointment as Pro-Vice Chancellor at Ulster University.

The Chair also confirmed that the announcement of a new Chair was expected imminently, and they would lead the recruitment process for the post. Members would be kept updated on developments on the Chair position as information was received.

Members were informed that the recruitment of new governors was not now expected to begin until September, with a start date of December. In the interim, Mrs Allison and Mrs McConnell's term of appointment had been extended until 31 December 2021.

It was also noted that the Staff governor's current term of appointment would end on 31 July 2021 and a request for staff nominations would issue shortly.

ACTION: The Secretary to circulate to staff a request for nominations for the Staff Governor appointment.

The Chair reported that at the recent meeting of college Chairs with the Director of Further Education, the main topic was the College of the Future report. He proposed that discussion on the recommendations contained in the report would be useful material to consider at a GB workshop in the autumn.

ACTION: The College of the Future representation to be considered for inclusion at the next GB

workshop.

It was agreed that, subject to social distancing requirements and government restrictions, the meeting scheduled for 30 June would be held at the Newtownabbey campus.

Members heard that the timing of annual governor assessments would be advised shortly.

ACTION: The Secretary would contact governors to arrange appointments for individual meetings.

101.7 Correspondence

Mr Higgins referred members to the 2021/22 indicative resource allocation communication received from the Department and outlined a number of adjustments to the budget. The Resources Committee would review the information at its June meeting and note the final budget in September, when recruitment numbers were known.

Members noted that lateral flow device testing (LFD) had now been introduced to colleges, with kits available on site. Whilst voluntary, all visitors were being encouraged to take a test before attending on campus.

101.8 Entrepreneurship Hub

Minutes of the Special Education meeting on 21 April 2021 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr Murphy

Mrs Brown talked members through the summary report from the meeting. She highlighted work underway on induction activities for September and the level 4 qualification for staff as part of the continuing professional development (CPD) programme for 2021/22. Members were informed the College had been appointed lead college for the advanced technical pilot programme in business.

Mrs Allison thanked all who had attended the meeting for their input and involvement in discussion.

101.9 Principal's Report

The Principal updated members on strategic sector developments including work on the Advanced Technical qualification and the impact on curriculum planning in the FE sector, as a result of the delay on the 14-19 project. Members were advised that Ms Beverley Harrison was retiring in June and Mr Jim Wilkinson was also leaving to take up a grade 3 appointment in the Department of Health.

The Principal's report was taken as read. Prof Scott referred members to the updates on the new build project and the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) support which had previously been advised to the Resources Committee. Members were advised that the College's management conference would again take place in June and that the Permanent Secretary had agreed to be the keynote speaker. Date for the meeting to be confirmed.

Ms Small reported that current numbers of applications for full-time courses showed an increase against 2021/22 targets, with further information days to be held in May/ June. A high level of interest in level 3 provision was noted.

6.10pm Ms Close left the meeting.

101.10 Education Committee

Mrs Allison gave a verbal summary of the meeting on 5 May 2021, which was noted by members.

101.11 Resources Committee

Draft minutes of the Resources Committee meeting on 14 April 2021 were noted.

A proposal to invite the LMS Project Director to make a presentation to the Governing Body was agreed.

ACTION: The LMS Project Director would be invited to make a presentation to the Governing Body meeting on 30 June.

101.12 Budget Position Update

Mr Higgins presented the College financial update to 31 March 2021 with the College achieving budgeted spend levels. Members noted the revised allocation by the Department and that the College's emergency efficiency plan for 2020/21 had been achieved. Mr Higgins highlighted the additional in-year funding and Covid-19 funding which had been secured during the year, whilst noting the staffing pressure remained outside of the base-line budget.

The Governing Body were informed on the opening indicative allocation for 2021/22, that new Covid-19 bids had now been placed by all colleges, and that capital bids had been placed by the College for a 10-year investment strategy.

Mr Higgins confirmed that the Department were comfortable to cover all liabilities to the College. He outlined steps put in place to ensure there would be no recurrence of the deficit in WBL in the next academic year.

Members considered information on the planned refurbishment of the Magherafelt and Newtownabbey campuses as the next stage of the investment strategy. They noted that no major capital commitments were proposed until the Coleraine and Ballymena new builds had been delivered.

101.13 CDP Progress Report

Ms Small gave a summary of the CDP Progress Report to 31 March 2021, which had been submitted to DfE on 16 April. She outlined the sector wide data issues which had impacted on Report Card 3 and measures being taken to address same.

Members noted information on the results of the restructured business engagement strategy, a full report on which would be made to the June meeting.

The Principal thanked Ms Small, Mr Fairless and the team, for the progress made on business engagement.

ACTION: Report on business engagement to come to the meeting on 30 June 2021.

101.14 Any Other Business

Applications for career break by two lecturers, which had been approved by the Heads of Department and by the Principal, were agreed.

The Governing Body noted that changes had been made to Standing Orders at sections 22/23, to reflect changes in policy names.

101.15 Date of Next Meeting

30 June 2021 in Newtownabbey campus.

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 6.38pm



Mr B McGahan _____

Date 30 June 2021

(Chair)



Mrs K Wallace _____

(Secretary)