

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 22 February 2022 on Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mr K Nelson (Chair), Mr A Chambers, Mr K Chambers, Mrs L Crilly, Dr P Graham, Mr M Higgins, Mr W Hutchinson, Ms Y Mallon, Mrs P Martin, Mr G McAllister, Mr D Macauley, Mr W McCluggage, Mrs D McIlwaine, Mr R McKernan, Mr L McSorley, Mr I Murphy, Mr S Shevlin, and Mr D Small

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Mr D Lavery (106.15), Mr S Lavery, Ms J Small and Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

106.1 Apologies

There were no apologies.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Mr Adam Chambers who had recently been appointed Student Governor. He also congratulated Mr Lavery on his appointment as Chief Operating Officer.

The Chair referred to the sad passing of the late Mr Gerrard Finnegan, Chair of North West Regional College, and members extended their sympathies to the family.

106.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest. Members were reminded that interests could also be recorded through the Secretary.

106.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 November 2021 and 15 January 2022 were approved.

Proposed: Mr Murphy Seconded: Mr Hutchinson

106.4 Matters Arising

The Governing Body (GB) heard that 5 members had so far expressed interest in joining the Strategic Planning Group. Any further members interesting in taking part in the Group were asked to notify the Secretary by 4.00pm on Friday 25 February. The Chair thanked all who had volunteered to date.

Members agreed the appointment of an independent financial specialist to the Audit & Risk Committee. It was noted that this would be taken forward by the Committee, at the meeting on 9 March 2022.

Consideration of a 10-year estates strategy would be included on the Strategy Day agenda.

106.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

The Chair thanked governors who had expressed an interest in the position of GB Vice Chair and advised that Mr Murphy had been elected to the position.

Action: Members unanimously agreed the appointment of Mr Ian Murphy as Vice Chair of the GB.

Consideration was given to communication on the FE Review on the Delivery Model, which had been shared with members, staff and Trade Unions. Members noted that the process was up and running but that no Terms of Reference or reports had so far been shared.

The Chair referred members to a paper detailing his engagement with staff and stakeholders during December 2021/January 2022, issues raised at which would be reflected in taking forward the strategy of the College. He encouraged members to engage with staff during campus visits.

Members noted very positive feedback from the Directorate induction days, and approval was given to the recommendation for shorter annual updates to be incorporated into the meetings schedule. The Chair and members thanked everyone who took part in the sessions, especially the Vice Principals (VPs) and Heads of Department (HODs)

Ms Mallon expressed her gratitude to the Chair and SLT for engaging with relevant stakeholders especially given the change in leadership of the College and the GB.

Action: Annual Directorate updates to be scheduled into annual meetings calendar for January going forward.

The Chair reminded members of the governance training session with Mr David Nicholl on 2 March 2022. He also encouraged anyone who had not yet completed the Safeguarding training to take part in the session on 1 March 2022.

106.6 Principal's Report

The Principal spoke to his report and highlighted key issues including:

- the transition of young people into careers (14-19);
- the independent review of education which is underway and will take approx. 18 months;
- enhancing education and employment opportunities through a shared ecosystem which is working to provide pathways to suit young people and retain them in NI;
- DfE budget position 2022-2025, on which initial discussion with the Department for next year had commenced.

The Principal confirmed that Covid restrictions for the College remained in place with further updates expected in the coming weeks.

Members considered and discussed a number of points arising from the report in relation to Regional City Deal, budget, World Skills and the hydrogen academy.

The report was noted.

106.7 Resources Committee

The draft minutes of the Resources Committee meeting on 24 January 2022 were noted.

Members were informed that Mr Donal Lavery would deliver a presentation on the Organisation Development Project, at the end of the meeting.

106.8 Audit & Risk Committee

The draft minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 17 November 2021 were noted. Mr McCluggage highlighted a very good working relationship with NIAO.

106.9 New Build Update

Mr S Lavery spoke to the new build update and members noted that the project remains within in-year budget, with additional steelwork costs for Coleraine. The legal challenge relating to Ballymena had been resolved and the issue with the Coleraine sub-contractor had been settled.

Members discussed and queried the possibilities for reducing the effects of escalating material costs. The Principal advised on steps being taken by the College to minimise the impact and that a risk allowance had been built into both the Coleraine and Ballymena projects.

The Principal commended the work of the Quantity Surveyor on this project and the report was noted.

106.10 Strategy Day

Ms Small presented a summary of work on the Strategic Plan to date along with outline arrangements for the strategy day on 11 March.

Members noted plans for consultation meetings with managers and an expectation of the workload for the Strategy Planning group. SLT would meet on 8th March to discuss priorities resulting from meetings and circulate the high level themes to the GB.

Ms Small highlighted the purpose of the day would be to identify key initial thoughts, with progression on an iterative basis. Members agreed to consider outcomes they would like to see by 2025, in advance of the day.

Action: A plenary session would be incorporated into the agenda for the strategy day.

106.11 Finance Update

Mr S Lavery presented the finance report, College on target for March 2022 (Department year-end), and clarified the context for the variance to budget.

Members noted the report and the recommendations within.

106.12 College Development Plan (CDP)

Ms Small outlined the background to the CDP for the benefit of new members. She clarified the context for the maximum student number (MaSN) target and the sector-wide challenges over the past 2 years, and explained the resultant variances.

The GB noted the report.

106.13 Any Other Business

The Chair outlined the need for a pre-approval process when planning to attend unscheduled meetings. Attention was drawn to an associated request form, to be submitted to the Secretary in advance, and members were requested to await the Chair's authorisation before proceeding with meetings.

106.14 Date of Next Meeting

- Governance Training with Mr David Nicholl on 2 March 2022, 2.00-4.00pm.
- Strategy Day on 11 March, 9.30am-3.30pm in the Rabbit Hotel, Templepatrick.
- Governing Body meeting on 23 March 2022, commencing with staff engagement session at 4.30 – 5.00pm. Members noted that the meeting would take place in Newtownabbey campus to coincide with an event with Antrim & Newtownabbey Council representatives. Future meetings would continue to rotate around campuses.

Mr D Lavery joined the meeting at 6.30pm.

106.15 Organisation Development Project

The Chair welcome Mr Donal Lavery from Baker Tilly Mooney Moore to the meeting.

Ms Small explained Mr Lavery's work with the College on this project, for the benefit of new members.

Mr Lavery outlined the context for development of a Talent strategy framework and action plan for the College, aligned with the College's strategic priorities. He commended the College on the work being undertaken and recognised the feedback of staff as key to the process.

Members welcomed the progress made on this process, which was expected to adhere to a 2-3 year timeplan. They also noted details of the new employee engagement programme which had commenced in 2021.

The Chair thanked Mr Lavery, Ms Small and all involved in this work and looked forward to the implementation of the strategy.

The meeting ended at 6.51pm.

Mr K Nelson



Date 23 March 2022

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary