

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 22 March 2023 in Magherafelt campus commencing at 5.00pm.

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

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

Presentations by Mr Matthew Murray, HOD Advanced Technologies and Mr David Russell, CAM Advanced Technologies

Mr Murray took governors on a short tour of the campus Engineering Department, during which he provided an update on College apprenticeships.

Following the tour, Mr Russell provided a summary of the College's engagement programme in partnership with NIE Networks. He outlined the variety of courses and skills programmes carried out through BTEC Level 3; Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) which give a pathway to managerial positions; and through upskilling of NIE Networks' staff through bespoke training modules.

Members noted that the NIE Networks partnership had been one of 3 programmes shortlisted in the large employer award section of the DfE NI Apprenticeships Awards, the final of which would take place on 29 March 2023. Also that a number of other partnerships were being established with industry based on needs.

The Principal thanked Mr Murray and Mr Russell for their presentations and advised similar partnerships with Translink and Bombardier. Members heard that it was hoped to replicate these partnership arrangements across other areas in the College.

113.1 Apologies

None.

113.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

113.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr McCluggage

113.4 Matters Arising

None.

113.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

- a) The Chair gave an update on engagements undertaken from 1 February to 22 March including ongoing work on the Review with the Task & Finish Group; regular engagement with the Department, Chairs and CEF; and involvement in College marketing activity. He also reported that, during a recent visit to Washington, he had the opportunity to meet with Joe Kennedy III, US Special Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland. The Chair hoped to invite Mr Kennedy to visit the College in future, as well as Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive, SEUPB.
- b) Members noted the Strategy Day evaluation, a short summary of which was also given in the Principal's Report. The Chair thanked all who completed the survey for their very positive responses and all those involved in the Strategy Day.
- c) Members noted the Impact Analysis draft scope document.

Action: Expressions of interest were invited for a small group of governors to consider this issue in depth and report back to the GB – names to be notified to the Secretary.

- d) Consideration was given to the updated Partnership Agreement and updated Risk Assessment. Members noted that the majority of governors' comments had been accepted and welcomed the low rating and settled position.

113.6 Principal's Report

The Principal spoke to his report and highlighted a number of key points including effects of ongoing industrial action, update on ETI evaluation of L3 which was progressing as intended, high level of interest in student applications and progress on Ballymena new build. Members heard that Mrs Brown had passed on governors' congratulations to students for success across a range of student activity.

During a period of discussion, the following issues were raised

- Mr McCluggage confirmed that concerns in relation to interim EBS reporting processes as a result of industrial action had been allayed following clarification

- The Principal reported that engagement with staff by himself and the Chair had demonstrated good relations. However, deterioration of goodwill was envisaged as industrial action continues.
- Members heard that the presence of both staff and employers at open days, along with online marketing, had produced high levels of interest from parents and potential students. It was suggested that dual events be kept in mind for future activities.
- The Principal reported he was comfortable with how the interim system for recording student attendance was being utilised and managed. In relation to the student system, he was content with data entry procedures but noted that application processing and progression of outcomes was more of an issue.

Members' comments in relation to recording of regular checks to provide a statistical level of assurance on reporting, and the need for the software system to be assured by Tribal, were noted.

113.7 Education Committee

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of meeting on 1 March 2023. Mr Chambers summarised the contents of the Safeguarding Review Form which was recommended for signing. He outlined reports received at the meeting and congratulated Ms Morrow on her work as Student President.

Mrs Brown provided an update on the ETI Level 3 evaluation which had, to date, received very positive feedback. The Chair reported that he had met with the lead inspector, who was interested in hearing of the effectiveness of governance at a Governing Body level.

Mr Chambers also noted very good attendance at the earlier meeting of the Entrepreneurship Club, at which the Mayor of Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council had been present. His congratulations were extended to all involved and it was noted that a report would be presented at the April GB meeting.

Action: The Safeguarding Review Form was agreed for signature by the Chair.

The draft Committee minutes of 1 March were endorsed.

113.8 Resources Committee

Mr Murphy presented the draft minutes of meeting on 23 January 2023 and highlighted excellent reports on College Development Plan, HR, New Builds and Finance.

Members endorsed the draft minutes.

113.9 Audit & Risk Committee

Mr McCluggage gave a brief summary of the meeting on 8 March 2023. He noted, in particular, changes to risk levels for TAMS and financial stability; and highlighted the Department and NIAO stated positions on liability cover and audit of same. Mr McCluggage also reported a continuing positive relationship with external audit.

Members endorsed the draft minutes of the meeting on 8 March.

113.10 Finance Update

Consideration was given to the finance update and Mr Lavery confirmed the College is operating within budget to March 2023. A more challenging position for 2023/24 was recognised.

113.11 Governance Update

The DfE Corporate Risk Appetite statement and NRC Corporate Risk Register were shared with members who heard that the College would consider its risk appetite assessment when the budget for the coming year was known. In relation to the annual assurance statement, members voiced deep concern around financial management and lack of a budget for 2023/24; and issues relating to the new data management training system (TAMS).

Action: Mr McCluggage asked that ratings for risks 2 and 6 be reviewed at the next Audit and Risk and GB meetings.

113.12 Equality Progress Report

Mr Lavery paid credit to Fiona McDowell for her work on equality initiatives and drew attention to the letter from the Equality Commission recognising the comprehensive report and College efforts.

The Chair endorsed these comments and placed the thanks of the Governing Body to Ms McDowell on record.

Reference was made to recent census figures on recruitment levels for people with disabilities and potential role for the College in educating employers; and percentage of population with no educational qualifications. The upcoming importance of mapping equity levels was also noted.

113.13 Any Other Business

Members noted that presentations on organisational change and entrepreneurship would be given at the April meeting.

113.14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 26 April in Coleraine campus.

The meeting ended at 6.19pm.

Mr K Nelson



Chair

Date 26 April 2023

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary