

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on Wednesday 22 June 2022 in Farm Lodge, commencing at 5.45pm.

Present: Mr K Nelson (Chair), 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 (on Teams), Mr R McKernan, Mr I Murphy, Mr S Shevlin, Mr D Small

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

Guest

Presenters: Mr S Dallas, CEO, The Bytes Project; Ms Donna Blaney, Director of FE

Presentations

The meeting was preceded by the following presentations:

The Bytes Project

The Chair welcomed Mr Dallas who was in attendance to update members on Bytes' work on the 'Connect with Tech' programme, which had been commissioned by the College.

Mr Dallas summarised work carried out with young people to build confidence and deliver digital skills training across community based facilities. He confirmed that the project had the technical infrastructure and resources to tackle social exclusion and outlined a model for progressing the Connect with Tech programme in the community.

Members noted that the College was working with Mr Dallas to develop funding opportunities and partner on programmes.

Action: Ms Small would work with Mrs Brown, and contacts, on identifying progression pathways for the programme.

Members thanked Mr Dallas for his presentation.

Department for the Economy

Ms Blaney summarised the background and current position on the following topics:

- 2022/23 Budget. Capital planning and Minor Works allocations had been notified and it was hoped to confirm Resource planning allocations for colleges as soon as possible after 6 July 2022.
- FE Review of Delivery Model. Initial Tribal Report on current performance due early July 2022; final report identifying best practice in August and submission to the Minister in September 2022.
- Review of Sponsorship Role. This review was now complete with findings issued to partner bodies on 7 June 2022, outlining a hybrid model of sponsorship, with sponsorship arrangement for FE remaining largely unchanged and identifying 20 recommendations.

- Partnership Agreement. The plan is to have draft Partnership Agreements ready by end of 2022. A meeting to discuss development had taken place with Principals to take forward the joint development of the partnership agreement.
- Aligning FE Delivery to 10X and Skills Strategy: Principals' group to provide first draft high-level strategic report, agreed by Chair/Boards, by end of summer

The Principal thanked Ms Blaney for her detailed presentation and welcomed work being carried out on the budget. He acknowledged points made on proportional autonomy and queried colleges' ability to input views before finalisation of the FE Delivery report.

Ms Blaney confirmed that she would be in touch to take views on interpretation and proposals before submitting the report to the Minister.

The Chair thanked Ms Blaney for the presentation and the Department's support and looked forward to receiving confirmation on the budget.

Ms Blaney left the meeting at 5.45pm.

109.1 Apologies

None.

109.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

109.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022 were approved subject to a slight change to wording of item 108.10.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mrs Martin

109.4 Matters Arising

- Feedback received on recent governance training provided by DfE would be fed into future training for governors.
- Net zero strategy being developed and overseen by Resource Committee..

109.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

The Chair outlined his participation in events across April and May 2022 including: recent FE collaboration event; College graduation ceremony; strategy sub group meetings; media training; NRC cycle event; meeting with Principal of Stranmillis; CEF meetings; and staff engagement meetings. He thanked Committee Chairs for the opportunity to attend a meeting of each Committee over the May/June period.

The Chair and member attendees at the College graduation spoke enthusiastically about the day and encouraged as many governors as possible to attend the December event.

Dates for one-to-one governor assessment interviews had now been confirmed and a pre-assessment survey would be circulated shortly.

Members noted that Ms Jennifer McKeever had been appointed interim Chair of NWRC.

109.6 Principal's Report

The Principal spoke to his report, having noted that the Director of FE had covered Department related issues in her earlier presentation. Mr Higgins responded to members' questions on a number of key topics including 14-19 framework, application numbers and HLAs. He noted

information provided by a member on the relevance of the Department of Education's area planning document.

Action: Trend information to be included in future reports, where applicable.

Members considered the ongoing difficulties with staffing issues and noted details of work being carried out through CEF negotiations and marketing in trying to resolve same. The intention to look at innovative models of staffing was also noted.

The Principal advised that the 2022 staff conference would take place on 16 August, invitations for which would be circulated in due course.

The report was noted.

109.7 DfE Review

Members were content that the review had been covered in the presentation delivered by the Director of FE.

109.8 Education Committee

Mr Chambers gave a brief overview of the meeting on 11 May 2022, noting in particular the achievements of NRC students at the World Skills competition; an excellent presentation by the Careers team; and Business & Services Industries Department to progress a sports academy – which he strongly encouraged.

In relation to the work of the student body representative, members noted that the most recent member had elected to leave the College earlier than the normal 12-month term.

Action: The potential for overlap on the work of student representatives would be reviewed.

Members heard that issues related to recruitment for 22/23 referred to sub areas of curriculum, which would be monitored and actioned by the HODs; further sessions of safeguarding training had been delivered to staff since the meeting, with a target of full completion by the end of June; and, in relation to safeguarding issues, governors noted the need for ongoing dedicated resource.

Action: Mrs Brown would provide updated figures on uptake of safeguarding training.

The draft minutes of the meeting on 11 May 2022 were noted.

109.9 Resources Committee

Mr Murphy referred to information on the new build update; net zero strategy; budget issues; staff recruitment and working from home guidance. He confirmed that he was content with the current situation notwithstanding a number of uncertainties.

The Principal updated members on the position with the net zero strategy, being taken forward by the Resources Committee..

The draft minutes of the meeting on 6 June 2022 were noted.

109.10 Audit & Risk Committee

Mr McCluggage drew members' attention to the revised Committee Terms of Reference; recommendations outlined in the cyber security report; and changes to the risk register including creation of a new risk category and rewording of risk 7.

Members noted that all cyber security training had now been completed by staff, would be reinforced at the staff CPD in August, and further action would be considered by SMT at the end of the month.

Action: Requests that some amendments be made in the cyber report, would be taken on board.

The minutes of the meeting on 1 June 2022 and the updated Terms of Reference, were noted.

109.11 Finance Update

Mr Laverty presented the financial update at April 2022. He explained the forecast variance to budget position for the College management accounts at the end of the College year and confirmed capital budget, minor works and new build allocations to date.

Mr Laverty confirmed that the 2022/23 budget allocation was expected in July and advised that Resources Committee had agreed an August meeting to pick up on this. The Strategy Group would meet the same week to finalise the strategy and pick up on the CDP. Members noted the possibility of an extra GB meeting if needed.

Action: A meeting of Resources Committee would be organised for 22 August 2022.

109.12 Corporate Plan

Members noted two design versions of the draft Strategic Plan, which had been updated to reflect the outcome of recent workshops. Ms Small advised positive feedback from staff consultation, which would necessitate some minor changes to the report.

Members were asked to review the content of the report and feedback design preference/ comments.

Action: Members to advise their preference for report design to the Secretary along with any comments on content by 8th July.

On behalf of the GB, the chair thanked Ms Small, Ms Kerr and all involved in the draft Corporate Plan (and related consultation) for producing it within a relatively short timeframe.

109.13 New Build Update

Mr Laverty reported success for the College's new Coleraine campus in the recent international NEC Awards, where the project had been deemed 'Highly Commended' in the Contract Innovation category.

Members noted the new build budget allocation for 2022/23 with the project remaining on schedule and on budget as at 31 May.

Mr McCluggage outlined progress to date, with Ballymena land transfers completed and work on concluding the Construction Notice ongoing.

The Principal reported on the recent Capital Steering Group collaboration event at which the Departmental representative and partners had been very complimentary of the project management and interaction especially in relation to Mr McCluggage.

109.14 Any Other Business

Consideration was given to career break applications from two HSC lecturers. Members noted that the applications had been approved by the Principal and Head of Department.

Action: The career break applications were approved.

Members noted that Ms Julie Hemphill, Career advisor, had been elected as support staff governor and would take up position once the Letter of Appointment had been received from the Department.

The Chair reminded members that they would be asked to update their Register of Interest information over the summer and encouraged them to complete and return forms as soon as possible.

The Chair advised that members would be kept updated on important issues over the summer period.

109.15 Date of Next Meeting

The draft meetings schedule for the 2022/23 academic year was agreed, subject to noting that GB meetings would commence at 5.00pm, with staff engagement meetings taking place from 4.30pm.

The date of the next GB meeting was noted as 5 October 2022. Location to be advised.

Members broke to hold a short non-executive meeting of the GB, with Mr Laverty, Ms Small and Mrs Brown withdrawing from the meeting at 6.54pm.

The Chair reported that GB feedback on appropriateness of papers and agendas had confirmed that members were broadly happy with same. This would also be picked up in a self-assessment survey which would be circulated to members.

Members were asked if they had any other concerns they wanted raised. None were raised.

Action: Secretary to circulate survey to members.

Members commended College managers and staff for achievements over the year, especially in light of the difficulties faced due to the pandemic and Covid restrictions. The Principal advised that thanks would be communicated to staff and specific team members through his monthly communication, at the SMT meeting, Staff Awards and at the Staff Conference in August.

Action: The Chair would pen a note of thanks to staff on behalf of the GB.

The Principal reported that feedback from both governors and staff for the pre-GB engagement meetings had been very positive and that these sessions would continue during 2022/23.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.00pm.

Mr K Nelson



Date 5 October 2022

Chair

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary