

## **Northern Regional College**

### **Governing Body – Unreserved Business**

**Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 24 November 2021 in Farm Lodge and via Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.**

**Present:** Mr K Nelson (Chair), Mrs I Allison, Mr K Chambers, Ms A Close, Ms A Dynes, Dr P Graham, Mrs M Hamilton, Mr M Higgins, Mr W Hutchinson, Ms Y Mallon, Mr D Macauley, Mr W McCluggage, Mrs G McConnell, Mr T Montgomery, Mr I Murphy

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

#### **Presentation:**

The Chair welcomed Mr Ken Webb, Principal and CEO at SERC and Chair of FE Principals' Group, and Ms Grace Neville, FE Collaboration Manager, to the meeting. Mr Webb and Ms Neville outlined their remits in relation to the current FE sector collaboration groups. They detailed the advantages and disadvantages of the current collaboration model and highlighted recent examples of good practice delivery.

Members considered the range and rationale for the variety of collaborative groups and queried opportunities for future collaboration. The Governing Body and the representatives noted the potential for colleges to trade globally and would explore the issue in more detail.

The Chair affirmed the Governing Body's support for collaborative working across the FE sector and thanked the representatives for a very informative presentation. Mr Webb noted the valuable contribution provided by the NRC staff members on all of the individual collaboration groups.

#### **104.1 Apologies**

An apology was noted for Mr Wilkinson

Congratulations were extended to Mr Higgins on his appointment to the Principal & Chief Executive and Accounting Officer positions.

#### **104.2 Declaration of Interests**

Mr Murphy declared his 3-year appointment to the Board of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) from 1 December 2021.

The Chair declared his connection to Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas Ltd (NICO) as a member of the Board.

#### **104.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2020 were agreed.

Proposed: Mr McCluggage      Seconded: Mr Murphy

#### **104.4 Matters Arising**

It was noted that meetings in the new calendar year would revolve around campuses and include a 15 min opportunity to meet with staff.

The Curriculum Strategy, which would be aligned to the 3-year Corporate Plan, had been discussed with the Education Committee on 10 November 2021.

## **104.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence**

Members were informed that this would be the last meeting that Mrs Allison, Mrs McConnell and Ms Dynes would attend as members of NRC Governing Body. Confirmation from the Department of an early termination date for Ms Hamilton, Mr Montgomery and Mr Wilkinson was also expected.

The Chair thanked all departing members, on behalf of the Governing Body, the SLT and the College staff, for their work for the College. He particularly acknowledged Mrs Allison and Mrs McConnell for their long service and commitment to the Governing Body.

The Chair updated the meeting on the Departmental competition for new College governors, interviews for which had been completed, with appointments expected by January 2022. Members noted that allocation of vacant positions on the Governing Body would be considered once all new members were in place.

Members were advised that Mr Liam McSorley had also now been elected from among the College support staff, to take up the position of Staff Governor (support) from 15 January 2022, subject to formal appointment by the Department.

**Action: Members approved the appointment of Mr McSorley.**

The Chair referred to the visit to the College by the Minister for the Economy on 9 November, which would be covered under the Principal's report. He advised of upcoming meetings with senior staff members and key stakeholders, during December/January, to raise the profile of the College and re-engage with sponsors.

Members agreed a proposal to reschedule the February and March meetings of the Governing Body.

**Action: February and March Governing Body meetings would be rescheduled to the following dates:**

- **22 February**
- **23 March**

A date for a College Corporate Planning event would be arranged for early 2022. Members' attention was drawn to a draft Terms of Reference for a Task and Finish Group, and all interested members were invited to submit an Expression of Interest to the Secretary. Membership of the group would be looked at once all new governors were in place.

**Action: All members interested in participating on the Task and Finish Group to notify the Secretary.**

Members noted the 2020-21 NRC Governing Body Self-Assessment analysis report. Mr McCluggage welcomed the opportunity to take part in hybrid meetings and noted the positive effect on attendance figures captured in the report.

The Chair thanked Mr McCluggage for presenting the Opening Remarks and awards at the Staff Awards Day. Mr Chambers and Ms Mallon acknowledged an excellent event and congratulated Mr McCluggage, Mr Higgins and Ms Small on their presentations. Commitment of staff to the College was recognised by the high attendance at the event.

#### **104.6 Principal's Report**

The Principal 's report was taken as read. Mr Higgins' advised that new Departmental guidance on Covid is due to be issued following the statement by the NI Executive on 23 November. In the meantime the College would continue to operate as is, however, the graduation ceremony would be postponed to Spring/Summer 2022. The College would engage with the PHA if the opportunity arose to host booster sessions for young people in the area.

In response to members' queries, the Principal provided an update on the position with the College New Build and Mrs McConnell reported on the Department's approval of the process and the College's management of the situation. The Chair acknowledged Mrs McConnell's role in building strong relationships with all parties, as part of the Capital Steering Committee.

#### **104.7 Management Statement and Financial Memorandum**

Members considered and noted the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM). A number of members referred to the importance of information on relationships and governance, highlighted in a NI Public Sector Chairs' Forum (NIPSCF) seminar held earlier in the day.

**Action:** The presenter of the seminar, Mr David Nicholls, would be asked to deliver a presentation at an induction event for governors in the New Year.

#### **104.8 Draft Fees and Charges Policy 2022/23**

The Governing Body considered the draft policy and proposal not to increase fees for the incoming year. Members noted that a potential upcoming opportunity to provide a number of courses subsidised by the Department, would not change the policy.

**Action:** The Governing Body approved the Draft Fees and Charges Policy 2022/23.

#### **104.9 Resources Committee**

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting on 13 October 2021 were noted. Mr Murphy highlighted the potential for a number of upcoming budgetary pressures.

**Action:** The Resources Committee would draw up an action plan for new members .

#### **104.10 Audit & Risk Committee**

- The Annual Accounts 2020/21 were approved.  
Proposed: Mr Murphy                      Seconded: Dr Graham
- The Draft Report to those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) 2020/21 was approved.
- The Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report 2020/21 was approved.
- Mr McCluggage updated members on the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 17 November 2021, noting the annual independent meeting with auditors immediately prior. The Governing Body endorsed a proposal for an independent financial specialist to be appointed to the Audit & Risk Committee.

**Action:** Appointment of an independent financial specialist to the Audit & Risk Committee would be reviewed when new governors have been appointed.

#### **104.11 Education Committee**

Draft minutes of the meeting on 10 November 2021 were noted, along with an update on the Entrepreneurship Hub. The Chair thanked Dr Graham for representing the Governing Body at the Hub evaluation and acknowledged the work of Mrs Brown and her team.

The Principal thanked Mrs Brown for introducing a VP Teaching & Learning (T&L) Report item to the Education Committee agenda, extracts from which would be used for the upcoming strategy day.

#### **104.12 Capital Steering Group**

It was noted that this item had been covered under the Principal's Report at 104.6 above.

#### **104.13 Finance Update**

Mr Lavery provided a summary of the November Financial update and outlined pressure, agreed additional funding, surrender of new build capital funding and resultant submission of a £0.5m bid to the Department.

Mr Lavery reported on development of an updated 10-year financial strategy, focused on additional funding for Newtownabbey and Magherafelt campuses, which would be aligned to the curriculum strategy. Plans would be considered by the Resources Committee before being presented to the Governing Body for approval.

**Action: 10-year strategy to be included on agenda for the strategy event.**

6.14pm Mr Hutchinson and Ms Close left the meeting.

Information on plans for business engagement were noted, to be reviewed by the Principal in the coming weeks.

The Chair welcomed proposals for progress on finance plans.

#### **104.14 Any Other Business**

None.

#### **104.15 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 22 February 2022 in Newtownabbey campus.

The meeting ended at 6.29pm

Mr K Nelson



Chair

Date 22 February 2022

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary