

## **Northern Regional College**

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

#### **Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 26 April 2023 in Coleraine campus commencing at 4.45pm.**

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

**In Attendance:** Mrs C Brown, Ms J McCourt (presentation), Dr L Monteith (presentation), Ms J Small  
Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

#### **Entrepreneurship Presentation by Dr Laura Monteith, Head of Teaching & Learning and Ms Joanne McCourt, Principal Lecturer, Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

Dr Monteith outlined the background to the Entrepreneurship Hub and action plan and thanked Ms McCourt for her extensive work to date, with the College first to have their action plan signed off by the Department.

Ms McCourt summarised work carried out on phase 1 of the action plan 2018-2021 and outlined plans for phase 2 to cover 2023-2025. She expanded on key issues including engagement and activities taking place to ensure the embedding of entrepreneurship across all programmes, achieve internal and external priorities and facilitate an international presence to include sector wide Turing application across hubs. Members noted that a meeting would take place with Invest NI on 28 April to discuss possible funding for a student trip to the Leuven Institute.

Members congratulated Dr Monteith and Ms McCourt for the enthusiasm and action invested into this project and noted that discussion with DfE was taking place to clarify benefits of the programme and how to measure impact. Opportunities for the programme to align business teaching with practical skills and thereby access relevant support, were also recognised.

The Chair thanked the presenters for their report, following which they left the meeting.

#### **114.1 Apologies**

Mr Lavery and Mr McKernan.

#### **114.2 Declaration of Interests**

None.

#### **114.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Mrs Martin      Seconded: Mr Chambers

#### **114.4 Matters Arising**

As ratings for risks 2 and 6 on the Corporate Risk Register had not yet been considered by the Audit & Risk Committee, review by GB was deferred until the June meeting,

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

- a) The Chair gave an update on engagements undertaken from 23 March to 26 April including extensive ongoing work on engagement with CEF and attendance at the Young Enterprise NI Gala Dinner, where a team from the College were recognised as finalists. He reported recent meetings with Ms Laura Gilmour, new Director of Operations for P&O Ferries and former NRC student and Young Enterprise winner; and Dr Peter Fitzgerald CBE, CE Randox. It was hoped to invite these contacts to connect with the College for future events.
- b) Members noted correspondence from the University and College Union (UCU) in relation to FE lecturers' pay dispute and further action by members. The Principal briefly outlined recent activity on this issue and advised that the College would continue to engage with the UCU as far as possible, with a view to meeting students' expectations and outcomes.
- c) Dr Graham, Mr McCluggage, Mr Murphy and Mr Small have agreed to take up positions on the new Impact Analysis Group.
- d) The Chair advised he would again attend Committee meetings during May/June to advise the upcoming annual governor assessment interviews, which would be arranged over the July/August period.

#### **114.6 Principal's Report**

The Principal spoke to his report and highlighted a number of key points including 2023/24 budget position, ETI evaluation feedback, progress with OU Institutional Approval and increase in student application numbers. He applauded exceptional achievements by students and noted that it had not been possible to proceed with planned engagement to acknowledge same before the meeting, due to strike action by staff. The Principal also outlined extensive engagement with the community on the College new builds.

The Governing Body noted the report.

#### **114.7 Resources Committee**

Mr Murphy presented the draft minutes of the Resources Committee meeting on 27 March 2023. Members heard that a number of Committee meetings had since taken place due to a rapidly changing budget landscape.

The Principal outlined currently available information on expected budget cuts, including a moratorium on recruitment, which had been communicated to staff. In response to members' questions, he updated on the withdrawal of the College's previously advised minor capital allocation; and Ms Morrow noted students' concerns at changes within the College, especially the removal of water coolers. Members accepted that a number of initiatives available to students would be reviewed in the light of required savings demands.

The GB were content to endorse the draft minutes.

#### **114.8 Finance Update**

Consideration was given to the finance update and Mr Higgins confirmed the College is operating within the revised budget for DfE year 2022/23. Mr Higgins highlighted that the information provided in the report was submitted to DfE on 23 March and did not reflect the extra pay which colleges were accruing into their accounts. Also, that Mrs Brown and her team were engaging with the Department on MaSN funding and updates would be provided to Resources Committee for consideration.

Mr Higgins also advised a recent request for the College to consider changing its accounts year end to 31 March, to align with the Department's year end. The request would be presented to the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 31 May for consideration.

#### **114.9 CDP Progress Report**

Ms Small reported that, due to a delay by the Department to the commissioning date for this report, it would now be considered by the Education Committee on 10 May. Members heard that the College was well prepared to meet the revised deadline for submission.

#### **114.10 Any Other Business**

The Principal outlined two applications by staff for career breaks, which had been approved by line managers, and advised recommendation subject to positive assessment against backfilling requirements for vacancy management by the Budget Sub Committee.

The GB noted senior managers' experience and developing guidelines as the basis for replacement cover decisions to date. Strong emphasis voiced by members on the need for a

policy on vacancy control to underpin decisions on staff movement, career breaks etc and defend potential future challenge, was noted by the SLT.

**114.11 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 20 June in Farm Lodge. The Chair indicated that this would be the last meeting for a number of long serving governors and encouraged as many members as possible to attend in person.

The meeting ended at 5.55pm.

Mr K Nelson 

Date 20 June 2023

Chair

Mrs K Wallace 

Secretary