

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 20 June 2016 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus **commencing at 4.00 pm.**

Present: Mr H Crossey (Chair), Ms Y Mallon, Mrs G McConnell, Mr K Chambers and Professor T Scott

In Attendance: Dr S Brankin, Mr M Higgins, Mr Des Hewitt and Mrs R Bell

Observer: Mr Ian Murphy

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

4.1 Apologies

An apology was received from Professor M McKinney.

4.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of Interests.

4.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Mr Higgins advised that the reference within the last minutes to Project Director would be further clarified to read Estates Project Director.

With this clarification, the minutes were approved.

4.4 Matters Arising

Mr Crossey enquired if the issue regarding remuneration for Staff Governors had been resolved; Mr Higgins advised that negotiations were ongoing.

4.5 Chairman's Communications

The proposed dates for Resources Committee Meetings for 2016/17 were agreed. Clarification was sought for the venue for the GB Workshop on 27 April 2017.

4.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

4.7 Monthly Management Accounts

Mr Higgins presented the April Management Accounts, the Narrative and the Forecast Template.

Mr Murphy raised a query about the different financial year endings for DfE and the College, Mr Higgins explained that the Departments year-end was 31st March and the College reported at 31st July'16 and that a reconciliation of both accounting periods took place.

Mr Higgins outlined the factors which were influencing underspend, for example delays in recruitment to posts which had been profiled within the budget along with the VES impacts on budgets. He reassured the Committee that a number of expenditure plans have been accelerated to ensure maximum spend in the areas of estates and IT.

After discussion, the papers presented were unanimously agreed.

4.8 Budget 2016/17

Mr Higgins presented the Draft Budget Delegation Policy and Scheme. He explained at length the concept behind the greater delegation of the budget to a wider pool of staff. By empowering a greater number of staff with budget responsibilities, these staff will gain valuable experience and be better enabled to progress within the organisation.

In response to Mr Crossey's query about associated risks, Mr Higgins advised that there had been comprehensive training for all budget holders, with whom the Budget Manager has been working closely. Mr Higgins advised that the Audit & Risk Committee had approved the policy and scheme at their recent meeting on the 15th June '16.

Members unanimously agreed the proposed delegation scheme.

Members had been presented with the Draft Budget for 2016/17. The budget proposed was broadly in line with the SIP and has been previously approved by DfE; it is part of a 3-year DfE-approved plan to reach a break-even position. The budget reflects the move to financial sustainability over a 3 year period.

Mr Murphy enquired about the monitoring process in relation to the budget throughout the financial year and if profiling had been examined. Mr Higgins confirmed that the budgets are closely monitored and that budget holders had been advised to front-load their budget profiles and be mindful of the Department's year end of 31 March. He further advised that the budgets had been set in line with SIP projections.

The Chair sought clarification for the reduction in Fees (other) of £1m approximately from the SIP to the draft budget. Mr Higgins stated this was due to market conditions and difficulties with recruiting staff. Members sought assurance that budgeted costs had been reduced in line with the reduced revenue target. Mr Higgins confirmed that this was the case.

Mr Higgins explained that the establishment of the Business Development and Transformation Team would be the final section of re-structuring; that priority had been given to progressing Curriculum, IT and Estates posts.

Members were advised that this was a draft budget with a view to being re-visited at the start of the academic year to take account of actual enrolments.

Members unanimously agreed to proceed with the outlined Draft Budget for 2016/17 on the understanding that it would be reviewed in September following the major learner recruitment phase.

4.9 Outsourcing

Members had been presented with a paper, detailing the Review of the College's Facilities Management Service, with a view to outsourcing.

Mr Higgins addressed the contents of the paper and the rationale behind the proposal to proceed with outsourcing Facilities Management for the College.

Mrs Mallon enquired if the outsourcing would specify the same provider for all services and all campuses. Mr Higgins confirmed that it would be practical to have a single sole supplier.

Members unanimously approved the preferred option of Outsourcing the Facilities Management Service for the College.

4.10 Estates

Mr Higgins provided the Committee with a verbal update on the position with regard to the OBC.

Members noted the ongoing progress. Members stressed the need to strive to meet the outlined timetable for the delivery of new premises.

4.11 KPI Reporting Schedule

Members received a paper on the current position with regard to KPIs 5, 7, 8 and 11.

Mr Higgins addressed the salient details of the paper.

Members noted the contents.

4.12 College Health Check

Members received the FE College Health Check Report, Issue 2 2015/16.

Contents were noted.

4.13 Shared Services

Members received papers in relation to the Shared Service and Collaboration Project. Contents were noted.

Mr Chambers commented on the huge potential savings.

Dr Brankin outlined his role on the Project Team and that he was extremely supportive of the collaboration project.

Members unanimously agreed this was well worth pursuing.

4.14 Staff Survey

Members were circulated with the results of the College Staff Survey; it was noted that the response rate of 51% was pleasing. Mr Hewitt outlined key aspects from the survey. The Chair stated that the survey results were encouraging, given the level of change the College is currently going through. He highlighted that the key to success with staff surveys was to ensure that actions are taken in respect of areas for improvement and that these actions are clearly communicated back to staff. Mr Hewitt indicated actions were already underway in some areas and all areas for improvement would be addressed.

Areas for improvement included facilities, the environment and communication.

In respect of communication, Mr Hewitt reported on the advances in this area which had been made during the past 6 months, with Staff Conferences, Staff Survey, Roadshows and Engaging with staff in various areas.

In September it is planned to introduce a Formal Team Briefing System; this will be a priority for next year.

In response to Mrs McConnell, Mr Hewitt advised that this was a significant increase on the last staff survey.

Mr Chambers enquired about incentivising staff to complete the survey; the Principal advised that the implementation of the Internal Communications Plan would provide timely reminders for staff to participate in the annual survey and that consideration would be given to the suggestion.

In response to Mrs Mallon's query regarding staff awareness of the survey results, members were advised that the summary results were presented at the recent staff conference.

In response to Mr Murphy, Professor Scott advised that issues highlighted within the survey would be reinforced through team briefings.

4.15 Business Transformation Structure

Members had received a paper detailing the Business Development Transformation Role and Structures.

Dr Brankin spoke to the paper and highlighted the role of the Section. The staffing structure was discussed at length.

Mr Crossey enquired about the correlation of the structure to the SIP, including the costs; he highlighted the requirement for £150,000 additional staff costs.

Dr Brankin summarised the cost benefits of implementing the proposed structure. There followed detailed explanation of the impact of the Digital Learning Strategy on the student experience within the college.

Mr Crossey asked for Dr Brankin to prepare an addendum to the paper, highlighting the increased costs and clearly quantifying the potential cost savings and/or anticipated benefits.

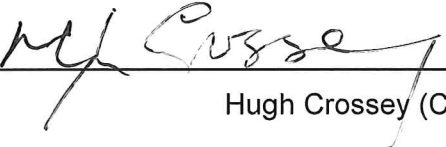
Members unanimously agreed that the updated paper should be tabled with the Governing Body for approval at the next meeting, providing that they were content with the requested addendum.

4.16 Any Other Business

Members had received details of the Block Grant Dates in relation to the Monthly Grant Instalments 2016/17. Contents were noted.

4.17 Next Meeting


It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday 24 October 2016 at 4.00pm at the Newtownabbey Campus.



Hugh Crossey (Chair)

Date 24/11/2016

24 October 2016



C Robinson (Secretary)