

# Northern Regional College

## Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday, 16 November 2016 at Newtownabbey Campus, commencing at 5.30 pm.

### Present:

Mrs I Allison, Cllr J Brown, Mr K Chambers, Mr H Crossey, Mr J Hannah, Cllr W Hutchinson, Mr R Jay, Mr A Kennedy, Dr D Lennox, Ms Y Mallon, Dr K McCambridge, Mr B McCluggage, Mrs G McConnell, Ms C McKinney (Chair), Mr K Nelson, Prof T Scott (Principal)

### In Attendance:

Dr S Brankin, Mr M Higgins, Mr D Hewitt, Prof M McKinney  
Mrs C Robinson, Secretary  
Mr J Cranfield

### Welcome

The Chair welcomed Governing Body members and SLT to the meeting. She also introduced the new student governor, Jonathan Hannah and said she hoped that he would enjoy the experience of being on the Governing Body.

Prof Scott introduced Mr John Cranfield to the Governing Body outlining his professional background. She advised that he was presently working with the senior management team and she would request approval for his attendance at the meeting. The Chair and fellow governors agreed to this request. The Chair formally welcomed Mr Cranfield to the meeting.

### 73.1 Apologies

Mrs J Eve and Mrs K Reilly.

### 73.2 Declaration of Interest

None.

### 73.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

Attention was drawn to the inclusion of Mr Nelson in the attendance and apologies. The Secretary would check and correct the minutes accordingly.

Subject to the amendments raised the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2016 were approved.

**Proposed:** Mr A Kennedy

**Seconded:** Mrs G McConnell

### 73.4 Matters Arising

The Chair highlighted that Cllrs Brown and Hutchinson had been recorded as 'not in attendance' at the September meeting. She explained the circumstances in that there had been of transition before the new Board Secretary had taken up post and suggested this should be recorded as an apology rather than an absence. Cllr Brown and Cllr Hutchinson were in agreement. The minute would be therefore now be changed to reflect this.

Other matters arising would be dealt with in the substantive sections of the meeting agenda.

### 73.5 Chair's Communication

The Chair referred to the recent update of members' contact details and advised that the revised information would shortly be circulated to all members.

The Chair thanked Governors for responding to the invitation to the Graduation Ceremonies on 13 December 2016 and indicated that Mr Crossey would present the opening remarks at the morning session and she would be present for the afternoon ceremony. She noted that other members of the Governing Body would be present at both sessions.

### **73.6 Correspondence**

#### **i) DfE Appointment of Student Governor**

The Chair reported that the Student President, Jonathan Hannah, had been formally appointed to the Governing Body. She had spoken with Jonathan prior to the meeting and was impressed with his enthusiasm to become involved in the work of the Governing Body.

Mr Hannah confirmed his interest in joining the Education, Resources and Strategic Improvement Committees.

The Chair put forward a proposal for Mr. Hannah to join the Education Committee initially. This was agreed by the Governing Body.

Proposed: Mr R Jay

Seconded: Mr H Crossey

#### **ii) DfE Student Governor Training/Mentoring**

Cllr Hutchinson stressed the importance of making the governance experience worthwhile for the student representative and stated the Governing Body had a responsibility to ensure appropriate training/mentoring was provided.

The Chair concurred with this view and asked members to consider taking on the mentoring role. Members noted that Mrs McConnell had been mentor to the previous student representative.

**Action: Members interested in taking on the mentoring role with student governor to contact the Secretary.**

#### **iii) DfE Amendments to the Articles for Government**

Mr Higgins reminded members of the proposed changes to the Articles for Government (charitable status and remuneration) which the Governing Body had approved at its September meeting. He advised that the revised Articles had subsequently been forwarded to the Department for consideration. The Governing Body noted the recent correspondence from the Department which acknowledged receipt of the revised articles and advised that the changes would be scrutinised by the Department before adoption could be approved.

The Governors noted the position and reiterated they were content with the changes approved at the September meeting.

#### **iv) DfE Governing Body Self Assessment Analysis for 2015/16**

The Chair also advised that in response to the Training Needs Analysis carried out at the Governors' Workshop in June the first workshop would be scheduled prior to the Governing Body meeting on 1 February 2017.

The Chair reported that a number of sector wide issues had been identified within the Governing Body Self-Assessment analysis. She had examined these in detail and in conversation with other FE chairs.

There were also specific areas to be discussed pertaining to NRC and these would be taken forward at a separate meeting.

The Chair proposed that with members' agreement a more detailed discussion of the document should be undertaken at the next GB meeting.

Mr Chambers stated that as there were a number of complex issues within the report he would propose that these would be best taken forward at another meeting. Members concurred with this suggestion and it was agreed this would be expedited accordingly.



The Governing Body agreed that the Self Assessment Analysis for 2015/16 would be added to the agenda for the workshop scheduled for 1 February 2017.

Proposed: Mr K Chambers

Seconded: Cllr J Brown

### **73.7 Principal's Report**

Prof Scott apologised for the late circulation of the Principal's and the SIP reports.

She spoke to her report highlighting key issues.

**Strategic Improvement Plan** – following discussion with the Department the format of the SIP report had been revised and the report was tabled. The report would be considered by each of the GB Committees at their next scheduled meetings. Prof Scott also reported that the dates of Strategic Improvement Committee meetings had been changed to align with Departmental reporting dates.

**CDP Process** – the Department had streamlined the CDP process and reshaped the template and format to focus on performance and quality. Two officials from DfE would now be involved in meetings with the College. SLT welcomed this new streamlined approach.

**SER/QIP** – the submission date for the SER/QIP for this year, 18 November 2016 was noted. The timeframe for completion was earlier than last year's report that was submitted on 1 December. The final compilation of the document had been tight but a draft report had been circulated to the Education Committee for consideration.

Prof Scott pointed out that the previous practice of a week-long ETI visit in January had been changed. There would be only one visit and the College would be given advance notice of the date and the aspect of the focussed inspection. The Principal had requested the visit later in the year and would advise the Governing Body of the date as soon as it was confirmed.

**Finance Update** – items highlighted from the management accounts included:

The postponement of grant claims until confirmation of grant conditions being met;  
The level of staff vacancies on the staffing budget;  
The capital position for the New Build project.

**Staffing** – recruitment to the SMT was complete and the management structure chart would be uploaded to Minutepad.

**Enrolment** – updated figures on enrolment were detailed in the KPI report circulated.

An evaluation of the new admissions process was underway and would be presented at the next Education Committee meeting.

**Stakeholder Engagement** – Cllr Hutchinson commented on attendance at community planning meetings and enquired about the priority given to skills/education. He referred to funding available to Colleges through Councils and suggested this may be an area NRC should investigate. Prof Scott acknowledged the value of the College's involvement in community planning and advised on relationship with the 4 Councils in the NRC catchment area.

Cllr Brown and Mr Kennedy both commented on involvement in community planning and emphasised the importance of encouraging NRC's on-going engagement with local Councils.

**Action: Cllr Hutchinson to discuss potential funding available through Councils further with SLT.**

Mr Jay made reference the earlier discussion on the SER/QIP and noted that the report would normally be signed off by the Education Committee before submission.

He pointed out the complications that had prevented the report being available for the Committee meeting.

He confirmed that a draft document had been circulated to committee members for comment on the 11 November 2016.

A more up to date version had also been circulated earlier in the day.

Mr Jay also referred to changes to the reporting mechanism for HE, noting that the Governing Body was now required to provide written annual assurance on the provision. The Education Committee could provide the assurance once it had the opportunity to comment on the document.

Prof Scott advised that the evidence required to support the assurance was provided throughout the year in the SIP reports and SER/QIP report. The completed template would be circulated to members for comment during the coming week. The Principal would then be in a position to sign off the assurance statement.

The Chair thanked Mr Jay for his attention to the matter.

**Action - It was confirmed by governors that the Education Committee would review and approve the necessary documentation on behalf of the Governing Body to meet the required timeframe.**

### **73.8 2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements (audited)**

Dr Lennox acknowledged the time and effort required to produce the improved format of the Annual Report. He advised that the Audit & Risk and Resources Committee had reviewed the draft documents.

Dr Lennox drew attention to the summary of KPIs;

The explanation on the status of KPIs;

Actual performance against targets;

The College's Risk Management approach; and the Statement on Governance and Internal Control.

The CFO explained that the green status recorded against the KPIs illustrated that the College was on track.

He reported that in relation to KPI 12, 92% had actually been achieved. A statement explaining the position would be included in the Annual Accounts.

Governors were then asked to ensure that details on attendance and conflicts of interest were accurate and were also invited to discuss the Governance Statement.

Governors discussed a number of points within the Governance Statement

On a matter of clarity and in advance of bringing forward the Financial Statements for Board approval, Dr Lennox requested assurances from the Resources committee chair that these had also been sighted and assured by Mr Murphy the independent observer

Mr Crossey reported that the Resources Committee had carried out a detailed review of the financial aspects of the accounts and he was content to recommend them to the Board. He confirmed that Mr Murphy (independent observer/co-opted member) had not been present at the meeting, however he had been sighted on same. He had confirmed to Mr Crossey that he was content with the report overall. Dr Lennox welcomed this assurance for the record.

The Governing Body then accepted the Committee recommendations and approved the 2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Proposed: Dr Lennox

Seconded: Mrs Allison

### **73.9 2015/16 Report to those Charged with Governance**

Dr Lennox drew attention to the report which summarised issues arising from the audit of the financial statement, including the audit opinion and a supplementary report from the Comptroller and Auditor General. He highlighted key points within the report which included:



i) **Audit Findings** – one priority one and two priority three issues had been identified which had been accepted by management. Dr Lennox advised members that the Audit and Risk Committee had raised concerns about the late submission of the draft accounts to the NIAO. That was the substance of the priority one recommendations but was acknowledged by management. The Committee would review as part of its ongoing monitoring of implementation of audit recommendations.

ii) **Misstatements** – nothing significant had been highlighted. Dr Lennox advised that all unadjusted misstatements had been included at the request of the Audit & Risk Committee.

iii) **Letter of Representation** – a £35k contingent liability for European claims money had been included. Dr Lennox advised that the issue had been discussed at length at the last Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

Mr Higgins summarised the position noting that the issue had arisen from an external audit of the scheme and had been raised with the Department at an accountability meeting. However, the Department required further information and would not be in a position to advise on a course of action until December. A further assessment of the potential liability for the 2015/16 Accounts had taken place and had been confirmed as not material.. Mr Higgins provided assurances were given that the College could cover the liability and that systems were in place to ensure no recurrence. Processes were also in place to ensure availability of evidence to satisfy future drawdown.

The Governing Body noted Cllr Brown's comments and noted that the Audit & Risk Committee members had expressed concern that the issue had not been picked up by any other internal or external audits.

iv) **Proposed Audit Certificate** – the accounts received an unqualified audit opinion.

v) **Prior Year Recommendations** – the priority one recommendation carried over had been cleared by NIAO.

vi) **C&AG Report** – Dr Lennox referred members to the short paper tabled at the meeting which the C&AG would be appending to the Annual Accounts to reflect his concerns about the extent of progress against the SIP actions..

The Governing Body discussed the content and implications of the C&AG report. Dr Lennox indicated that the Audit & Risk Committee would be considering what additional arrangements might be appropriate to monitor progress against SIP actions, taking into account the oversight by the Strategic Improvement Committee.

It was agreed that given the content of the report lines to take should now be put in place by Management. It was also agreed that the college had travelled on a significant improvement journey and that a narrative to evidence this should be included.

The RTTCWG was noted by the Governing Body.

Dr Lennox advised that the Audit & Risk Committee had recommended the 2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements to the Board for approval.

The Governing Body accepted the Committee recommendation and approved the 2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Proposed: Dr Lennox

Seconded: Mrs Allison

In response to Mr Chamber's query Prof Scott confirmed that the Governors and other stakeholders would receive a hard copy of the annual report and accounts.

**Mr Kennedy and Mr McCluggage left the meeting (7.15pm)**

### **73.10 Audit & Risk Committee**

Dr Lennox drew attention to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2016 and highlighted that the Committee had received presentations on Complaints and the New Build Risk Strategy. The Gifts and Hospitality Policy had been approved, and it had been agreed that a gifts and hospitality report would be produced annually.

**The minutes of the 5 October 2016 meeting were noted by the Governing Body.**

The Committee Annual Report which set out the work of the Committee during 2015/16 was presented to the Governing Body for approval. Dr Lennox advised that the report would then be forwarded to the Department.

The Governing Body approved the Audit & Risk Annual Report.

Proposed: Dr Lennox

Seconded: Cllr Hutchinson

Dr Lennox informed the meeting of Audit Committee training being provided by the Department on 24 January 2017. He advised that the training was open to all Governors but Audit and Risk Committee members would be given priority. He recommended the training stating that the Committee members had attended a similar session the previous year.

**Action: Information on training to be circulated to members. Expressions of interest to be returned to the Secretary.**

The Chair recommended a CIPFA breakfast meeting on Lessons from Audit which was being held on 8 December 2016, 8.30am to 10.00am. Details for this breakfast meeting and registration process on the CIPFA NI website

### **73.11 Strategic Improvement Committee**

Mrs Allison referred to the minutes of the Strategic Improvement Committee meeting and the Strategic Improvement Plan monitoring report to Governors which had been circulated. She reported that the Committee had examined and scrutinised the monitoring report. She explained that on their recommendation some of the narrative therein had been changed after discussion with SLT. The report had then been forwarded to the Department.

The Chair also reminded colleagues of her discussion on the SIP with KPMG and that she had joined a meeting with SLT and officials on 1<sup>st</sup> November.

Prof Scott drew attention to the revised format of the KPI report tabled. She advised that the document would be reviewed at each meeting of the Strategic Improvement Committee and updated as required. The Principal also reported that the schedule of Committee meeting dates had been revised in response to changes in reporting dates to the Department. This would allow the Committee to discuss and comment on the report in advance of the Department meetings.

The Governing Body noted the minute of the Strategic Improvement Committee held on 10 October 2016.

### **73.12 Resources Committee**

Mr Crossey drew attention to the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held in October and summarised the business addressed.

He stated that the year end and revised budget position were presented and an outturn report on spend would come to the next Resources Committee meeting.

The Committee approved the return of £600k capital funds to the Department; income targets were unlikely to be met however, controls were in place to mitigate this; outsourcing was progressing and the Committee was supportive of the shared services proposal.

The Chair agreed that it would be useful for the Governing Body to have a schedule of dates for the approval of decisions relating to the New Build project and regular updates on progress. She acknowledged this was incorporated in the project execution plan.

The minute of the Resources Committee held on 24 October 2016 was noted by members.



### **73.13 New Build Project Update**

Mr Higgins drew attention to the minute of the first Project Board meeting circulated and provided an overview. He referred to the ongoing issue around the extended site at the Coleraine campus and informed Governors that Gateway had commenced.

Mr Chambers indicated that he had points of clarification which he would take up with Prof Scott and Mr Higgins outside of the Governing Body meeting.

Prof Scott outlined issues and the current position with regard to negotiations on the extended site of the new build in Coleraine in response to Mr Jay's query about problems/concerns raised by colleagues.

The minutes of the New Build Project Board and the progress report were noted by the Governing Body.

### **73.17 Any Other Business**

#### **(i) Education Committee**

Mr Jay provided a verbal update on the Education Committee meeting held on the 9 November 2016. He reported that there had been detailed discussion on the KPIs; the new curriculum planning process; the Digital Learning Strategy; the Students Union and the SER/QIP reporting process. In addition, he advised that assurances had been given that the problems with enrolment/retention had been identified and were being dealt with.

Prof McKinney provided additional information on how the College was addressing the enrolment/retention issue and progressing the curriculum planning process. He referred to the full KPI report circulated which noted progress against individual KPIs.

Dr Lennox sought further information on the difficulties experienced in recruiting to some of the senior posts and acknowledged the response provided by Prof Scott. Mr Jay commented on the Head of Student Experience appointment noting the promising outlook.

Prof Scott referred to the duplication of vocational provision and advised that she had raised concerns with the Department. A further update would be provided at each Governing Body meeting.

### **73.14 Governing Body Register of Interests 2016/17**

The Chair reported that the register of interests for Governing Body members had been reviewed, updated and confirmed by members. The register would be made available on the College website and Minutepad.

### **73.15 Fees and Charges Policy**

Mr Higgins highlighted pertinent points from the report circulated noting in particular that the fees had remained at the same level and more flexibility being introduced.

The Governing Body considered and approved the Fees and Charges Policy.

Proposed: Mr K Chambers

Seconded: Mr J Brown

### **73.16 DfE Health Check (Issue 4)**

Mr Higgins reported that the Health Check had been reviewed at recent Committee meetings and advised that the revised Gifts and Hospitality Policy had been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Health Check report was noted and the Committee's decision on the Gifts & Hospitality Policy was endorsed by the Governing Body.

### **73.17 Any Other Business**

(ii) The Chair commended the recent issue of the College ezine, Northern Voice, and noted that the next issue would be available via the ipad shortly.


**Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair confirmed the next meeting of the Governing Body would be held at Farm Lodge, Ballymena on Wednesday 1 February 2017 and would be preceded by a training workshop.

The unreserved business meeting ended at 7.50pm

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mrs C McKinney (Chair)

Date 1/2/17  
1 February 2017

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mrs C Robinson (Secretary)