

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at 5.00 pm on 3 March 2010 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College

Present Mrs K Collins (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Director), Mr S Davidson, Ms J Fullerton, Rev T Jamieson, Mr R Jay, Alderman PJ McAvoy, Mr P McCudden, Mr K Nelson, Ms C O'Neill, Mrs U O'Kane, Mrs A Rankin, Mrs C Taylor and Mrs L Wallis.

In Attendance Mr L Anderson, Mrs B Crotty, Mr I Houston, Mrs C Moore, Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J A Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

20.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairperson welcomed Mr R Jay, who has been appointed as a Member of the Governing Body for the period from 25 January 2010 to 24 January 2014.

Apologies were received from Mrs A M Campbell and Mr A Watt.

20.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

20.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Governing Body held on 13 January 2010 were approved.

20.4 Matters Arising

20.4.1 Funding: Programme Led Apprenticeships (minute 19.4.1)

The Governing Body noted that the programme, introduced as a contingency measure, was involving the College in additional expenses. It further noted that negotiations were still proceeding with the Department regarding funding but a formal review of funding has still to be undertaken.

20.4.2 Effectiveness of Governing Body (minute 19.12)

The Governing Body noted that the Director, the Head of Quality Improvement and the Secretary have had a detailed discussion with regard to the adoption of a Self Evaluation Review (SER) to measure the effectiveness of the Governing Body; SER is the method used for the evaluation of performance throughout the College.

It is intended to conduct the Review at the commencement of the last meeting of the academic year on 9 June 2010. In the interim period the Head of Quality Improvement is preparing an appropriate Report Form for the Review. The Director stated that by the end of the current academic year all teams at the College will have carried out a Self Evaluation Review.

20.5 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's communications.

20.6 Director's Report

The Director drew Members' attention to:

a) FE Strategic Partnership Board. The first meeting of the newly established FE Strategic Partnership Board, which brings together representatives from the ANIC Board and senior DEL officials, will take place on 9 March 2010. As Vice-Chair of ANIC, The Director will be a member of this Board.

The new forum presents an opportunity for much more effective strategic engagement between the colleges and DEL. The topics to be discussed at the first meeting are funding, governance and a review of the progress with the aims of FE Means Business.

b) DEL Permanent Secretary. Mr Alan Shannon has now taken up the post of Permanent Secretary at DEL. Mr Shannon had previously occupied this role when the Department was first formed in 2003. Catherine Bell, who was Acting Permanent Secretary for a period, has now reverted to the post of Deputy Permanent Secretary.

c) Celebration of Staff Achievement. The College is holding its first Celebration of Staff Achievement event on 15 April 2010. The intention is to recognise the achievement of a range of staff particularly in relation to professional development activities such as lecturers into Industry. It is hoped that the Governing Body will be represented at the event.

d) Celebration of Kentucky Link. The Director reminded Governors of the Memorandum of Association, which exists between NRC and Morehead State University and that this developed out of the Sister Cities relationship between Ballymena and Morehead, Kentucky. The original visit by the Director and a party from NRC in 2008, a subsequent visit by a small group of staff and students last year and a further planned visit in April of this year, have all been possible due to the generous funding provided by Ballymena Borough Council.

The Director advised the Governing Body that the College has decided to organise an event, which will celebrate the link with Morehead and provide an opportunity to thank Ballymena Borough Council for their support. The event will take the form of a video link with the University. This is planned to take place on 19 April 2010, when two NRC students will be in Morehead and it is hoped that they can personally thank the Council for the opportunity to travel to the USA live from Kentucky. The Mayor and other members of the Council will be invited as well as the US Consul General in Northern Ireland Ms Kamala Lakhdir.

e) Lifelong Learning Project. The Big Lottery funded Lifelong Learning Project has now begun in Magherafelt. The Project Manager, Marie Donaghy, took up her post in January 2010. It is planned to have an official launch of the project in May. It is also worth noting that the project will extend to Antrim from next year.

f) Learning Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). A delegation from LSIS is visiting Istanbul in the near future to meet with representatives from Iraqi Colleges regarding social inclusion. The Director has been invited to participate at the conference.

g) Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC). Dr O'Mullan will be visiting Dusseldorf with a party from the six colleges in the Sector to familiarise themselves with the economic engagement and the apprenticeship provision in Germany.

20.7 Correspondence

The Governing Body noted that correspondence had been received from DEL indicating that:

a) The period of appointment of Mrs K Collins, as Acting Chair, has been extended through until 31 August 2010. A public competition has been launched to appoint a permanent chair with a view to taking up post on 1 September 2010;

b) Views are being sought regarding the establishment of a Commissioner for Older People. Members have received the draft consultation document for consideration and comment. The Commissioner is still willing to receive comments and is contactable by telephone 028 9052 2975 or by e-mail olderpeoplescommissioner@ofmdfmi.gov.uk. Secretary to seek extension to closing date for comments.

20.8 Minutes of the Education Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 26 January 2010. The Governing Body noted that the following topics had been discussed at the meeting:

a) Quality Improvement Strategy. The Committee received a presentation regarding the College's Quality Improvement Strategy. It agreed that the Strategy be approved and forwarded to the Governing Body for endorsement.

The Governing Body agreed that the Quality Improvement Strategy be approved.

b) Information and Learning Technology. The Committee received a presentation regarding Information and Learning Technology. It noted External Evaluation Reports from the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Regional Support Centre Northern Ireland both of which indicated that satisfactory progress is being made. Reference was also made to a NRC Newsletter, which summarised the main findings of the inspections and provided details of the College's response.

c) Education and Training Inspectorate. The Committee noted that the Education and Training Inspectorate had conducted an interim Follow-Up Priority Skills Level II Inspection and had indicated that the College had made satisfactory progress in implementing the Action Plan prepared following their initial inspection.

20.9 Minutes of Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 2 February 2010 and 23 February 2010:

Meeting 2 February 2010

The Governing Body noted inter alia:

a) Vodaphone/O2 Upgrade Service. The Committee received correspondence from Mono Consultants regarding a proposed Vodaphone/O2 Upgrade Service at the Ballymena BT Exchange at Trostan Avenue, which is in close proximity to the Trostan Avenue Campus. The Director stated that the College had now received notification of their planning proposal. The Director of Finance informed the Governing Body that the upgrade involved the erection of a replacement.

b) Financial Memorandum. The Committee noted that the Department had updated the Financial Memorandum to take account of new developments and new guidance from DfP. The Committee examined a paper providing comments from the Finance Managers' Committee regarding the revised Memorandum. The Director of Finance said that these comments had been forwarded to the Department

Meeting 23 February 2010

The Governing Body noted inter alia:

a) Sale of Leases of Land at Larne. The Committee noted that the solicitors had now released a payment of £95,745.41 College, in respect of the sale of a lease of land to Larne Grammar School. It was also noted that a meeting had been held with representatives of the YMCA on 26 February 2010 to discuss a payment plan for the sale of a second lease of land at Larne.

The terms of agreement, 10% deposit and the remainder paid over 4 ½ years, had been forwarded to the College's solicitors in the first instance.

b) New Skills Centre, Newtownabbey. The Committee noted that the contractors were on target for the completion of the New Skills Centre prior to the commencement of the next academic year. It was also noted that the anticipated completion date for the refurbishment of the Social Area was the end of November 2010. The Deputy Director Planning and Resources advised the Committee that additional design requirements may lead to an overspend in the region of £50,000, which is being addressed by the Project Board.

c) Monthly Management Accounts. The Committee received the Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 31 January 2010 indicating that the College had an historic surplus of £542k, which is £77k better than budget. The bank balance as at 31 January 2010 was £5.5 million. The Director of Finance informed the Committee that she and the Director would meet with budget holders and line managers over the next few weeks to discuss budgetary positions.

d) College Development Plan Funded Learning Unit Bid. The Committee received a presentation regarding the College's Funding Learning Unit (FLU) bid 2010/2011. The Committee approved the following bid for submission to the Department by 26 February 2010:

FE target of 5,500 FLUs (5,400 in 2009/2010);
HE target of 600 FLUs (536 in 2009/2010); and
ES target of 455 FLUs (450 in 2009/2010)

20.10 Minutes of Staffing Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 23 February 2010. The Governing Body noted that the following topics had been discussed at the meeting:

a) Key Performance Indicators Human Resources. The Deputy Director Planning and Resources stated that she would be attending a sector meeting on 10 March 2010 to discuss performance indicators and she would put forward the Committee's views on HR KPIs.

b) Special Leave Provision. The Committee noted that the College had currently two different entitlements to special leave; the provision varies from location to location due to conditions of service from previous institutes still being used. For some campuses it also varies between academic and support staff due to different terms and conditions of service. The Committee approved a proposal that the College should offer the best of the special leave provision to all staff, until such time as an agreement is negotiated across the sector.

c) Statutory Retirement Age. The Committee noted that from October 2006 the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 has banned age discrimination in the workplace. Employees are required to retire only if they reach the statutory retirement age of 65, or a retirement age below 65 if the employer can objectively justify it. The College has a normal retirement age of 65 for all employees. The new legislation provides employees, who reach the age of 65, with the right to request to remain in employment beyond that age.

Under current College procedures circumstances in which a retirement date may be extended are based solely on the business needs of the College and where there is no concern over the capability of the employee to fulfil the role in question. A temporary appointment is made each year.

The Committee agreed a recommendation that, with immediate effect, circumstances in which a retirement date may be extended should be based solely on the business needs of the College and that appointment will only be extended in exceptional circumstances for identified key posts. It is anticipated that the incidence of key posts will be extremely low.

During discussion it was noted that age-related retirement was one of the efficiencies included in the Business Improvement Plan. A query was raised as to what assistance the College provides for staff reaching retirement age. The Deputy Director Planning and Resources stated that staff could avail themselves of the Teacher Retirement Scheme, which enabled a reduction of teaching hours during the final three years of service. It was suggested that the Staffing Committee should give consideration to this matter.

20.11 College Development Plan

The Governing Body received a copy of the College Development Plan 2010/2011-2012/2013. It also noted that the Funding Learning Unit (FLU) bid had been agreed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee (23 February 2010) for submission to the Department to meet a deadline of 26 February 2010 (see minute 20.9 d) above).

The Deputy Director Planning and Resources stated that the CDP followed a format prescribed by the Department. The CDP included, for the first time, a Quality Improvement Plan. Some adjustments would be made for the forthcoming 2011/2012 –2013/2014 Plan to align College requirements with those of the Department.

The Governing Body agreed that the College Development Plan be approved for submission to the Department

20.12 Corporate Targets

The Governing Body received a paper indicating progress against Corporate Targets. It noted that the College had made considerable progress in areas such as: Quality Improvement, the College Aspiration Statement, the ILT Strategy, the Strategic Outline Case and the Business Improvement Plan. The Director expressed satisfaction that targets had been achieved despite the time demands of the Business Improvement Plan.

A Member suggested that mention of the Business Plan should be inserted at Target 5, which relates to the estates strategy.

20.13 Any Other Notified Business

20.13.1 Calendar of Meetings 2010/2011

The Governing Body received the Calendar of Meetings for 2010/2011, which follows the same format as the schedule for the current academic year. The Governing Body is scheduled to meet on six occasions during 2010/2011 and the Committees as follows: Audit (five occasions), Education (five occasions), Finance and General Purposes (seven occasions) and Staffing (five occasions).

The Governing Body approved the Calendar of Meetings for 2010/2011.

20.14 Next Meeting

The Governing Body noted that the next meeting of the Governing Body was scheduled for 5.30 pm Wednesday 28 April 2010 at the Farm Lodge, Ballymena Campus