

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at 6.00 pm on 20 April 2011 at the Magherafelt Campus, Northern Regional College

Present Mr G Gilpin (Chairman), Mr T Neilands (Director), Mr J Cromie, Mr S Davidson, Mr I Goldsworthy, Mr R Jay, Mr K Nelson, Mrs U O'Kane, Mrs A Rankin and Mrs L Wallis.

In Attendance Mrs B Crotty, Mr I Houston, Mrs C Moore, Dr C O'Mullan and Mr JA Hunter. Dr Mclvor and Mr T Redmond (DEL representatives for Minute 32.16.1)

Observer Mr S Chambers (Investor In People assessor)

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

32.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms A M Campbell, Mrs K Collins, Rev T Jamieson, Alderman PJ McAvoy, Mr P McCudden, Ms C O'Neill, Mrs C Taylor and Mr A Watt.

32.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

32.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Governing Body held on 16 March 2011 were approved.

32.4 Matters Arising

32.4.1 Meeting of Chairs of Committees (minute 31.5.1)

The Governing Body noted that the first meeting of Chairs of Committees with the Chairman and Director was held at the Newtownabbey Campus on Monday 18 April 2011. The Chairman stated that he intended to make this a regular event and the next meeting had been scheduled for 6 June 2011.

32.4.2 Centres of Excellence (minute 31.9)

The Governing Body noted that the Director had written to DEL to state that the College was unaware that the Level 3 inspection grade would be used to reassess Centres of Excellence, as it was not a comprehensive, dedicated inspection.

It was further noted that all six colleges were in a similar position and had written to the Department to express their concern. A meeting was arranged with DEL representatives on 21 March 2011 to discuss this matter.

The Director informed Members that the Department had indicated that it does not intend to remove 'Centre of Excellence' status from any College. The recent inspections had acted as a reminder to Colleges that Grade 1 status is essential to retain 'Centre of Excellence' standing. The Director advised that a new system of accreditation, Total Quality System, had been proposed to replace the current system. He added that questions had arisen as to its suitability.

32.4.3 Calendar of Meetings 2011/2012 (minute 31.14)

The Governing Body (16 March 2011) agreed that the Director and the Secretary should give further consideration to the Calendar of Meetings with a view to reducing the number of meetings of the Education and Staffing Committee. It was also agreed that consideration should be given to scheduling the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Staffing Committee on the same evening to facilitate Governors with dual membership of these committees.

The Governing Body considered a revised Calendar 2011/2012, which had been adjusted to reflect the views expressed at the last meeting.

The Governing Body agreed that the revised Calendar 2011/2012 be approved subject to an adjustment regarding the timing of the Education Committee on 6 December 2011.

A Member suggested that minutes of meetings should be circulated as soon as possible after meetings to update members, particularly those who had been unable to attend, as to proceedings and developments.

32.5 Chairman's Communications

The Chairman referred to the following events in his communications:

a) Graduation Ceremony at The Braid, Ballymena. The Chairman reported that the Town Clerk Ballymena Borough Council had written to the College extending the Council's congratulations to the 500 Further Education students on their graduation at The Braid and in particular to the ten students achieving 'Shooting Star Awards'.

b) Director's Appraisal. The Chairman had met with the Director to conduct the Annual Appraisal. He intended to review the current system.

c) Staff Celebration. The Chairman said that he had attended a very successful Staff Celebration event in the Tullyglass Hotel on 14 April 2011. This was the second year that such an event had been held. Staff achievements in the following areas were recognised: Continuing Professional Development; Special Achievements; Participation in international projects and study visits; and 30+ years service to education.

d) Recruitment of Governors. The Chairman advised that 15 candidates had applied for the two vacancies on the Governing Body. Twelve candidates had been short-listed as some individuals had applied for vacancies at two or more Colleges.

e) Appointments. Colleges NI has appointed Mr Gerrard Campbell as its new Chief Executive.

32.6 Director's Report

The Governing Body received a detailed report from the Director, who highlighted the following issues:

a) Iraqi Visitors. As part of the UK-Iraq Rawabit project, the College will host two Iraqi Deans of Technical Institutes for a study visit in May. The visitors will be at the College from 9-19 May 2011 (dates to be confirmed) and a programme of activities is currently being finalised. The itinerary will include a meeting with the Chair and any other Governors who may be available.

b) Appointments. Ms Noelle Buick has been appointed as the new Chief Inspector at ETI.

c) Skills Competitions. NRC hosted the Northern Ireland Engineering Skills competition and achieved two first places and two second places in the four events.

Preparations are continuing for the WorldSkills event in London in October. The College has three students in the UK training squad. Mr David Russelk, an engineering lecturer at NRC, is the UK Mechatronics team manager and is in charge of preparing the squad in this area.

As part of Worldskills event there are showcase opportunities for which Colleges can apply. NRC has submitted showcase proposals in the areas of Performing Arts and Catering.

NRC has also been short-listed as a finalist in two of the four categories in the DEL Apprentice of the Year award. Dwayne McMullan from the Newtownabbey Campus is short-listed in the Brickwork category and the College is also short-listed for the Partnership award with Michelin.

e) Living and Learning Together. The Big Lottery Funded Living and Learning Together project, which was launched in Magherafelt last year, has now extended its programme to Antrim.

e) Significant Meetings. The Director has had a number of meetings with MPs, MLAs and Borough Councils since the last meeting of the Governing Body.

32.7 Correspondence

The Governing Body received correspondence from DEL, dated 14 April 2011, confirming the recurrent budget allocations for 2011/2012. The total allocation for NRC amounted to £22,076,921, a decrease of £949.854 over the previous academic year. The six Directors would meet with DEL representatives on 6 May 2011 to discuss how the allocations had been determined. The Director advised Governors that the College was required to forward its proposed budget letter to the Department within six weeks of the recurrent budget allocation. He proposed and **the Governing Body agreed that authority should be delegated to the Finance and General Purposes Committee (31 May 2011) to approve the budget letter for submission to the Department.**

In response to a query the Director stated that the allocation would affect the College Development Plan, which was currently being drafted.

32.8 Education Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 15 March 2011. Mrs O'Kane, the Chair of the Education Committee, stated that the Governing Body had no action to take in relation to the minutes.

Mrs O'Kane referred to the Training Quality Standard (TQS) that DEL is keen to introduce across the FE Sector. She expressed the view that it was critical to provide employers with details of this quality kitemark. She suggested that Colleges Northern Ireland should be asked to address this matter.

The minutes indicate that the following matters were also considered at the meetings on 15 March 2011:

a) Centres of Excellence. The Committee noted that in the past DEL had designated Centres of Excellence in various Colleges on the successful submission for ear-marked funds aligned with a Grade 1 (Excellent) under the old grading system. NRC has two Centres of Excellence, one in Construction and one in Manufacturing Engineering.

It was also noted that following the recent focussed inspection of Priority Skills at Level 3 Manufacturing Engineering was awarded a new Grade 2 (Very Good) and Construction a Grade 4 (Satisfactory). The Director has written to DEL to state that the College was unaware that the Level 3 inspection grade would be used to reassess Centres of Excellence, as it is not a comprehensive, dedicated inspection.

This matter has been addressed at minute 32.4.2 above.

b) FLU Plan. The Committee noted:

i) Revised FLU Plan 2010/2011. In January 2011 DEL had extra funds to distribute so colleges were asked to revise their FLU Plan 2010/2011 to take account of this – NRC received further funding equivalent to 35 FLUs and the NRC revised bid was for 6,493 FLUs: Further Education 5,403 FLUs; Essential Skills 487 FLUs; and Higher Education 603 FLUs.

The Committee noted that full-time FE recruitment had held up well during 2010/2011 and looked likely to exceed the original target (4,335 FLUs) by approximately 47 FLUs. Projected part-time FLUs were down by 195 on the original target (1,033 FLUs). The College intended to expand its part-time provision in 2011/2012 and was confident that it could achieve its target

ii) FLU Bid 2011/2012. The deadline for the submission of the FLU Bid 2011/2012 to DEL was 24 February 2011. The bid would now be subject to discussion at the bi-lateral meeting between the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director and DEL officials on 16 March 2011.

NRC has bid for 6,509 FLUs: Further Education 5,400 FLUs; Essential Skills 487 FLUs; and Higher Education 622 FLUs. 6,509 FLUs: Further Education 5,400 FLUs; Essential Skills 487 FLUs; and Higher Education 622 FLUs.

The Committee received information in relation to the HE and Essential Skills Bids. It was noted that the College was unable to cope with HE demands; as a consequence the College had increased its bid from 603 to 622 FLUs in 2011/2012. DEL had suggested an increase in the ES bid from 487 to 510.

c) Whole College Self Evaluation Review and Quality Improvement Plan. The Committee received a copy of the updated whole College Self Evaluation Review and Quality Improvement Plan, which had been submitted to DEL to meet a deadline of 24 February 2011.

It was noted that the College overall grade had been evaluated internally as Grade 3 (Good). Substantial progress has been made but there is still much work to be done to enhance the delivery of high quality teaching and learning and progress the monitoring of performance management.

The Committee endorsed the document, which had been forwarded to the Department

d) Training - Improving Quality: Raising Standards. The Committee received a copy of the annual IQ:RS return. Dr O'Mullan advised the Committee that the format accorded with the revised layout prescribed by DEL.

The Committee agreed that the document be approved for submission to DEL

e) Quality Improvement Update. The Committee received a Quality Improvement update, which highlighted a number of areas including:

i) Training Quality Standard (TQS). TQS is the quality kitemark that has been heavily promoted across the FE Sector in England and Wales and is used by the Centres of Vocational Excellence. DEL is keen that this standard will ultimately replace the Centres of Excellence model in Northern Ireland. DEL has agreed to pay the registration and assessment fees associated with the TQS of up to £5k per college before the end of March 2011. It was noted that the College intended to register by 31 March 2011 and submit an application by December 2011.

ii) Quality Improvement. NRC has agreed to participate in a DEL funded QI pilot to consider the impact of using a range of teaching and learning and quality initiatives over a short time period. Built Environment National Diploma has been identified as the area to be piloted.

32.9 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 29 March 2011. The Governing Body had no action to take or comments to make in relation to the minutes.

The minutes indicate that the following matters were considered at the meeting:

a) Staff Cost Ratios. The Committee considered Staff Cost Ratios for 2009/2010 and noted that NRC has payroll ratios higher than the Sector average and is at the top of the Sector range for most of the ratios with the exception of the Direct Teaching Staff cost per Lecturing Staff FTE, where NRC is more in line with the Sector average.

The Committee noted that the Directors of Finance of the six Colleges were currently engaged in a benchmarking exercise in regard to staff cost ratios. The Committee agreed that a joint meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Staffing Committee should be arranged to address this matter.

b) Catering Arrangements (minute 20.4.2). The Committee noted that the Catering Review Team had drawn up their recommendations in regard to catering arrangements and these would be presented in the first instance to the Executive Management Team. The Finance and General Purposes Committee would be kept informed of developments.

c) Northern Ireland Executive's Budget. The Director informed the Committee that the Executive had agreed the Budget for 2011/2012 since the last meeting and the Department for Employment and Learning had received an additional £51million. He said that it was still not clear how it would be distributed. He added that DEL intended to proceed with 3% efficiency gains and some other reductions still to be quantified.

d) Monthly Management Account. The Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 28 February 2011 indicate that the College has a surplus of £1,312k on continuing operations and an historic cost surplus of £1,893k, which is £927k ahead of budget. It was noted that the surpluses were a consequence of profiling and would drop steeply over the next few months.

The Director of Finance drew attention to a number of items that had been incorporated into the budget. An additional recurrent grant received from DEL, amounting to £224k, had been factored into the budget. Following the review of income and expenditure the net training income is projected to be £240k less than the original budget by the year-end and tuition fees are projected to decrease by approximately £260k. Both items have also been factored into the budget.

32.10 Staffing Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 11 April 2011. Mr Davidson, the Chair of the Staffing Committee, stated that the Governing Body had no action to take in relation to the minutes.

Mr Davidson referred to the forthcoming joint meeting of the Staffing Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee to discuss voluntary redundancies, the staffing plan and payroll ratios. It was noted that it was difficult to compare the NRC payroll ratios with those of the Sector as some colleges had outsourced functions such as cleaning and catering. A Member stated that it was important to provide a breakdown between academic and non-academic staff costs for this exercise.

The minutes indicate that the following matters were also considered at the meeting:

a) Investors In People. It was noted that an IIP External Assessor was visiting the College on 20 April 2011 to interview a range of staff and to attend the meetings of the Executive

Management Team and the Governing Body. Further visits have been arranged in May; the College expects to hear the outcome in late June/July 2011.

b) Health and Safety Report. The Committee received a presentation from Mr K Leckey, the Health & Safety Co-ordinator, regarding Health and Safety matters. Mr Leckey said that the College was in the second year of a five year Health and Safety Strategic Plan. He said that there had been a focus on policy and procedure and standardisation across all sites to ensure compliance with relevant safety legislation during the first year of the Strategic Plan. He also provided details regarding: accident rates, which have fallen from 143 to 98 reported accidents over the past year; student initiatives, which included a Health and Safety induction programme for freshers; staff development, which has been enhanced by an on-line training platform; and the Internal Audit, which resulted in an overall satisfactory assessment.

c) Fair Employment Monitoring Return. The Committee received the Fair Employment and Monitoring Return, which indicates that the composition of the workforce remains relatively unchanged in terms of community background and gender from the previous year.

d) Next Meeting. The Committee noted that the Finance and General Purposes Committee (29 March 2011) had agreed that a joint meeting of the F&GPC and the Staffing Committee should be arranged to address the high payroll ratios pertaining at the College.

32.11 Update Planning 2011-2014

The Director drew Governors' attention to the following documents:

a) Key Principles/Parameters for Planning, Statement of Aspiration and Strategic Aims 2011/14. Following discussion at the last Governing Body meeting (16 March 2011) the three papers above have been amended as agreed. The Governing Body noted the amended papers.

b) Suggested Format and Content for College Development Plan 2011/14. The Governing Body received a copy of the suggested format and contents of the College Development Plan 2011/2014. It was noted that, where possible, a link would be established to back-up documents on the website to ensure a less verbose CDP.

The Governing Body agreed that the format and contents of the CDP be approved. It also agreed that a draft CDP should be presented at the June meeting.

32.12 Monthly Management Accounts

The Governing Body received the Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 31 March 2011, indicating that the College has a surplus of £1,630k on continuing operations and an historical surplus of £2,294k, which is £1,269k ahead of budget. It was also noted that the Cash at Bank balance at 31 March 2011 was £5.0 million. The Director of Finance said that the surpluses were a result of profiling and would drop significantly over the next few months.

32.13 Any Other Notified Business

32.13.1 Student President. The Director informed the Governing Body that this would be Mr Cromie's last meeting as Student Governor. The Director stated that he had made a considerable contribution to the Governing Body and had spoken with confidence at graduation ceremonies and staff celebrations events. He wished Mr Cromie every success at university. The Chairman endorsed the Director's remarks.

Mr Cromie thanked the Director for his kind words. He informed Governors that his successor would be appointed on 29 April 2011 and it was hoped that he could attend the next meeting of the Governing Body. **The Governing Body, noting that the appointment of the Student Governor was subject to Departmental approval, agreed that he could attend the meeting 'in an attendance' capacity.**

32.14 Date of the Next Meeting

The Chairman reminded Governors that the next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for 5.30 pm Wednesday 15 June 2011 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.