

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at 5.30 pm on 11 January 2012 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College

Present Mr G Gilpin (Chairman), Mr T Neilands (Director), Mrs K Collins (Vice Chair
Mrs R Handley, Mr I Goldsworthy, Mr R Jay, Alderman P J McAvoy,
Mr S McCartney, Mr P McCudden, Mrs U O'Kane and Ms A Rankin.

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

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

36.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms S Cassidy, Rev T Jamieson, Dr D Lennox, Mr K Nelson and Mrs C Taylor.

36.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

36.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Governing Body held 24 November 2011 were approved subject to minor textual adjustments to minutes 35.5, 35.6 and 35.7

36.4 Matters Arising

36.4.1 Economic Appraisal Larne Adult Education Centre (minute 35.10 e)). It was noted that a communication had been received from the Department indicating that the Larne Campus Economic Appraisal had received Ministerial approval. The Director indicated that the College would be advertising for shared usage on 20 January 2012.

36.4.2 Antrim Campus (minute 35.7). It was noted that the Department had advised that the letter received from DEL regarding the closure of the Antrim Campus had been backdated to protect the College rather than the Department.

36.5 Chairman's Communications

The Chairman referred to the following events in his communications:

a) Meeting of Chairs of Committees. The Chairman referred to the recent meeting of the Chairs of the four committees at the Newtownabbey Campus on 9 January 2012, when several issues were discussed including: Finger Print Learning; the Larne Adult Education Centre Economic Appraisal; the programme for the Strategic Away Day; the CEO's Report to Colleges Northern Ireland and the Minister's speech to Colleges Northern Ireland; and the Review of the Management Structure.

Referring to Finger Print Learning the Chairman informed the Governing Body that DEL had commissioned the Report on Finger Print Learning but had still to decide on the way forward. In the meantime it was noted that the Governing Body would receive a presentation on Finger Print Learning at a future meeting. The Secretary distributed, in confidence, a copy of the Summary Report on Finger Print Learning to Governors.

b) Recent Engagements. The Chairman provided details of the engagements he had fulfilled since the last meeting mentioning in particular his attendance at a CNI training course and a CNI Board meeting.

c) Christmas Dinner. The Chairman mentioned the superb Christmas Dinner and interesting student presentations at the Ballymoney Campus on 15 December 2011. He asked the Director to convey his appreciation to the staff and student concerned. The Director added that the staff and students, who had participated at the event, had welcomed the interest shown by Members of the Governing Body in the presentations, which they had given previously at the Worldskills Competition in London in October 2011.

The Chairman stressed the need for the Governing Body to communicate more effectively with students and he asked Governors to forward any suggestions to the Secretary.

36.6 Director's Report

The Director in presenting his Report made reference to the proposed abolition of the Department for Employment and Learning. He mentioned that he had just come from a telephone conference with members of the CNI Board concerning the implications for the Sector. It was considered that the workload of the Department would be divided between the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). There was speculation as to whether FE Colleges would become part of DE or DETI or whether there would be some division of responsibilities between both Departments. The Director stated that CNI would prepare a statement as to the FE position within the next 24 hours. The Director said that the abolition of DEL would have implications for some of the issues referred to in his report:

a) Shared Services. On 22 November 2011 the Minister, Dr S Farry, wrote to Chairs and Directors expressing his desire that the FE Sector should develop a plan for the sharing of services across the Colleges. He subsequently attended a meeting of the CNI Board on 6 December 2011 and outlined the timescale for implementation. It was agreed that the CNI Board would prepare a paper outlining the Sector's response by the end of January 2012. In the meantime DEL has organised a seminar on Shared Services at which the Director and the Director of Finance, on behalf of the Sector, will be outlining progress to date.

The Director advised Governors that any development of shared services may have considerable impact on individual College structures and staffing.

b) Joint Ministerial Visit. There is concern that changes to the funding for collaborative activity in delivering the Entitlement Framework could jeopardise the volume of work, which Colleges are engaged in with Schools. NRC has invited both the DE and DEL Ministers to visit the College and see the range and quality of its collaborative work with schools.

c) Charter for Workplace Domestic Violence. The College received a Gold Award Workplace Charter for its work in relation to Domestic Violence and its effect in the workplace.

d) FE Graduations. FE Graduation Ceremonies were held in Newtownabbey, Ballymena and Ballymoney from 12-14 December 2011. The Director thanked Governors for their attendance at these ceremonies

e) Student and Staff Successes. Emma McQuilkin, a former Built Environment student, has won a prestigious JP McManus Scholarship Award. Tony Madden and Vivien Greenlees, School of Business Studies, have been awarded Chartered Management Status by the Chartered Management Institute.

f) Significant Events and Meetings. It was noted that the Director had attended a number of events and meetings since the last meeting.

36.7 Correspondence

The Governing Body received a copy of DEL circular FE 15/11, dated 9 December 2011, providing guidance on the format, content and timing requirements of the College Development Plan process for the period 2012/2013 to 2014/2015. The Director stated that arrangements were similar to those for the previous year. It was noted that the deadline for the FLU bid was 24 February 2012, which was prior to the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 28 February 2012. The Director suggested that it might be possible to forward the draft bid to DEL to meet the deadline, on the understanding that the bid would be confirmed at the meeting of the F&GPC.

36.8 Education Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 6 December 2011. In presenting the minutes Mrs O’Kane, the Chair of the Education Committee, highlighted the following issues:

a) Faculty Presentation. The Committee received a presentation from Mr Gerard Quinn, Head of the Faculty of Well-Being & Lifelong Learning in which he provided an overview the structure of his Faculty. Referring to performance management he described how the Faculty derived and monitored enrolment and achievement targets.

b) Education Action Plan. The Committee approved its Action Plan for 2011/2012;

c) Entitlement Framework. The Committee noted that the Colleges Northern Ireland Board had expressed concern about the possible effects of Circular 2011/09, which stipulates that collaboration funding for the Entitlement programme will cease in 2012/2013.

d) Correspondence. The Committee received the following correspondence: DEL Circular FE 08/08, dated 14 October 2011, providing information regarding procedures for the payment of Childcare Support to students enrolled on Learner Access and Engagement provision; and DEL Circular, dated 19 October 2011, regarding arrangements for the Department’s Employer Support Programme, which will provide a dedicated fund to support FE College engagement with employers.

e) Performance Management. The Committee received a Report detailing the use of Performance Management to support the continuous quality improvement agenda within the College and to ensure a high standard and consistent approach across the curriculum.

The Committee noted that a cycle of monitoring performance is being developed in respect of: FLU Performance; Retention Rates; Achievement Rates; Success Rates; Enrolments and FLUs; Retention Rates 2011/2012; Proposed Targets for 2011/2012; Entitlement Framework; External Quality Indicators; Overall NRC Inspections; Training Provision KPIs 2011/2012; Retention Training Courses; Work Placement Rates; and Economic Engagement.

f) Quality Improvement Report. The Committee received a Report detailing the following quality improvement reviews and activities undertaken since its last meeting:

(i) Quality Assurance Agency. The QAA team has identified areas of good practice and made a number of advisable recommendations; no essential recommendations have resulted from the Review.

(ii) Priority Skills Area Level 3 Construction 9-10 November 2011. The College has been awarded a revised grade (Grade 3 – Good).

(iii) ETI Pastoral Scoping Survey – October 2011. The Survey concluded that the College has very good arrangements in place.

(iv) Deloitte Leadership and Management Project. Modules 3-6 of the Deloitte’s Leadership and Management Project have been completed or are in the course of completion. It was

noted that all six colleges have identified projects, which were the focus of a recent SMT residential. The NRC project is 'Using Performance Management for Continuous Quality Improvement'.

g) Economic Engagement Report. The Committee received an Economic Engagement Report, which provided details relating to: International Staff and Student Exchanges; Visit to Morehead State University of two staff and two students in October 2011; senior management participation at a Workshop on Community Planning at the Braid; NRC's involvement in the DEL's Employer Support Programme. The Committee noted the following ESR projects: Advancing Enterprise, which will work on live projects with industry; InnoTech focusing on providing Knowledge Transfer; Carbon Zero NI establishing an audit process for the responsible sourcing of materials; and Open Source providing tailored ICT solutions to meet the needs of business.

h) Monitoring Process. The Committee noted that a list of courses, which were under-performing, would be made available at a future meeting to assist with the monitoring of the educational provision.

36.9 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 12 December 2011. In presenting the minutes Mrs Collins, the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, highlighted the following issues:

a) Catering Services. It was noted that the draft tender document regarding the provision of catering services had been circulated for consultation to the Trade Unions and no response had been received.

It was noted that the tender document had now been forwarded to all the current suppliers of catering services to the FE Sector, with a deadline for responses of 20 January 2012. Responses would be evaluated and a proposal on the future of catering services within NRC would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on 31 January 2012.

b) Monthly Management Accounts. The Committee noted the Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 31 October 2011, which indicate that the College has an historic cost deficit of £256k, which is £135k more than budget. The Bank Balance as at 31 October 2011 was £ 3.3 million.

c) Single Action Procurement. The Committee received a paper detailing Single Action Procurement since the commencement of the financial year 2011/2012 and listing the suppliers that are exceptions to the NRC Guidelines. The Committee agreed that:

(i) The Single Action Procurement List for goods/services less than £5,000, and the Single Action Procurement List for goods/services in excess of £5,000 but less than £50,000 be approved for the period 1 August 2011 to 31 October 2011;

(ii) The List of Suppliers that are exceptions to the NRC Guidelines should be approved and signed by the Chair on behalf of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

d) Estates. The Committee received an update regarding the following estate issues:

(i) Outline Business Case. It was noted that a schedule of accommodation, being prepared by Estate and Curriculum teams, was due on 31 January 2012. The Director of Finance advised that consultants are to be engaged by January 2012. It was also noted that it would be necessary to establish a Project Board. It was suggested and the Committee agreed that Mr P McCudden should be nominated as the NRC Governing Body representative on the Project Board. It was noted that the first meeting of the Board would be on 27 January 2012

(ii) Larne Adult Education Centre Economic Appraisal. The Director advised that an e-mail had been received indicating that the Economic Appraisal had received Ministerial approval.

(iii) Antrim Campus. It was noted that the disposal process had started.

(iv) Portrush. It was noted that there had been some difficulty relating to joint ownership of an unused property at Portrush and that NRC had requested NEELB to provide a 'good copy' of the deeds.

(v) Station Road, Newtownabbey. There was no progress to report.

(vi) Maintenance Matters. It was noted that a bid for capital funds and a business case for a building conditions survey have been submitted to DEL.

36.10 Staffing Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 11 October 2011. In presenting the minutes Mr Davidson, the Chair of the Staffing Committee, drew attention to the discussion regarding the Investors In People (IIP) Award. It was noted that the Committee had received the IIP Action Plan, which addresses the development areas specified by the assessor as necessary to achieve the IIP award. It was further noted that the implementation of the staff appraisal scheme across the College was an integral part of one of the development areas. The Committee requested a presentation on staff appraisal at its next meeting.

36.11 Corporate Targets

The Governing Body received a paper detailing progress against the corporate targets for 2011/2012 as at 11 January 2012. Governors noted that colour coding had been used to denote progress: Red (R) indicates progress not as originally intended; Amber (A) refers to issues to be addressed; and Green (G) denotes satisfactory progress. Four of the five strategic aims fall into the Green category and one into the Amber category (the delivery of a curriculum and associated provision in relation the social and economic regional need, government policy and resource allocation).

36.12 DEL Healthcheck Quarter 4

The Governing Body received a copy of the FE College Healthcheck Report based on information available at the end of Quarter 4, 31 July 2011. The Report provides a range of information on various key performance indicators from the financial, economic, staffing and learning categories.

It was noted that the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Staffing Committee had already discussed the draft version of the FE College Healthcheck Report for 4th Quarter at a joint meeting on 8 November 2011.

Governors raised a number of comments regarding the Report. Referring to the targets set by DEL at the section of the Report dealing with Sector KPIs, a Member suggested that it would be of interest to know the College's targets. A Member also suggested that it would be interesting to have details of the balance scorecard approach inherent in the Report. The Chairman expressed the view that these matters could be considered at the forthcoming Strategic Workshop.

36.13 Student Council Annual Report and Action Plan

As Ms Cassidy, the Student President, had been unable to attend the meeting it was agreed that this item should be deferred to the next meeting on 14 March 2012.

36.14 Monthly Management Accounts

Mrs Moore, the Director of Finance, presented the Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 30 November 2011, which indicate that the College has an historic cost deficit of £574k, which is £206k more than budget. The Bank Balance as at 30 November 2011 was £3.2m.

In her presentation the Director of Finance referred to DEL grants (£13k ahead of budget), tuition fees (£151k lower than budget), staff costs (£52k less than budget) and premises expenses (£111k less than budget). She drew attention to a section of the Accounts providing details of deposits with the Ulster and First Trust Banks.

The Governing Body noted that the Director and the Director of Finance would meet with Budget Holders on 16 January 2012 to consider requests for the addition to/release of funding. Adjustments would not affect the projected outturn for 2011/2012.

36.15 Any Other Notified Business

There was no other notified business to discuss.

36.16 Date of the Next Meeting

The Chairman reminded Governors that

a) The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for 5.30 pm **Wednesday 14 March 2012** at the Farm Lodge, Ballymena Campus;

b) **A Strategic Workshop is scheduled for Wednesday 29 February 2012. It was agreed that the Workshop should be extended from 1.00 pm – 6.30 pm.** Sandwiches would be available prior to the Workshop from 12.30 pm and the Workshop would conclude with dinner. Members would be apprised of the location of the meeting.