

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at 5.30 pm on 1 May 2013 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College

Present Mr G Gilpin (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Principal), Mrs I Allison, Alderman J Brown, Mr J Clyde, Mrs J Eve, Mr I Goldsworthy, Mr R Jay, Dr D Lennox, Alderman PJ McAvoy, Mr S McCartney, Mrs G McConnell and Mr K Nelson

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

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

45.1 Membership and Apologies

The Chair welcomed back Mrs Judith Eve after her recent illness.

Apologies were received from Mrs K Collins, Mr S Davidson, Mr M Murray and Mrs A Rankin.

45.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests. It was noted that the Secretary had asked all Governors to update or confirm the accuracy of their current declarations by 13 May 2013.

45.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Governing Body held on 6 March 2013 were approved subject to the replacement of 'Education Committee' for 'Audit Committee' at the second sentence of Minute 44.15 and Minute 44.22.

45.4 Matters Arising

45.4.1 Self Evaluation Review (minute 44.5 f)

The Governing Body received a copy of the Self Evaluation Review of its performance during the period October 2011 – February 2013, which had been undertaken at the Strategic Workshop (12 February 2013). The Review highlights three key areas for Quality Improvement for 2013/2014: continue to monitor and refine KPIs within the College and across the Sector; provide opportunities to meet with and obtain feedback from staff and students; and streamline and shorten length of meetings with greater involvement by all Governors. The Governing Body's performance has been evaluated as follows: Leadership and Management (Grade 3 – Good); Quality of Provision for Learning (Grade 3 – Good); and Achievement and Standards (Grade 3 – Good). The overall grade of the Governing Body was assessed as (Grade 3 – Good).

45.4.2 College Inspection (minute 44.8)

The Principal informed the Governing Body that he had received a reply to the complaint that he had made to the Education & Training Inspectorate regarding the Focused Inspection during November 2012. He indicated that he had been dissatisfied with the response but stated that there was nothing to be gained by taking the complaint to the next stage. He said that the College would now concentrate on the monitoring and improvement process.

The Director of Curriculum reported that an ETI Monitoring Visit would take place from 8–10 May 2013. She advised that the Team would concentrate on: the scrutiny of the

Inspection Action Plans; the Whole College Self-Evaluation Review Quality Improvement Plan; and the Work Based Learning IQRS Quality Improvement Plan. It was noted that a Follow-Up Inspection would take place in the next academic year

45.4.3 Any Other Matters

There were no other matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

45.5 Chair's Communications

The Chair indicated that he had attended several significant meetings and events since the last meeting. He mentioned in particular his attendance at the Bilateral meeting with DEL representatives on 4 March 2013 and the Colleges Northern Ireland Board meeting when the 14-19 Position Paper, the North West Industrial Relations Report and the Reclassification of Colleges were discussed.

45.6 Principal's Report

The Principal highlighted a number of topics in his Report:

a) Partnership with Kansas. The Chair, the Director of Curriculum and Principal were in Kansas from 11-17 March 2013 visiting Kansas State University and Johnston County Community College. The visit was very interesting and productive and confirmed the potential for collaboration in the areas of Hospitality, Community Development and Counselling and Mediation.

Two NRC students will spend a three-month placement at the Holiday Inn at the Campus in Manhattan, Kansas, this summer. The two students selected are Jason Clyde a Level 3 Catering student from Ballymoney Campus and current Student Governor and Kevin Brennan an HND Business Studies student from Magherafelt Campus. During the summer NRC will host a post-graduate student from KSU, who will work in the Living and Learning Together Project in Magherafelt and Antrim.

A delegation from KSU and JCCC will be making the return visit to Northern Ireland from 22-29 May 2013. The programme will include a Gala Dinner at the Ballymoney Campus, when a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed in the presence of the US Consul in Northern Ireland, Mr G Burton.

b) British Council Contact in Kurdistan. The Principal was in Erbil in Kurdistan/Iraq during Easter week 1-5 April 2013 as part of the consortium delivering a conference on Strategic Issues in Technical and Vocational Education and Training for an audience drawn from the various strands of the vocational education system in Iraq. Dr Mudhaffar al-Zuhairy, Dean of the Technical Institute in Baghdad, who has been hosted in NRC in recent years, is keen to develop a relationship with the College and the practicalities of this will be further examined. Apart from the income generated, NRC can now reference a track record in delivering international British Council funded projects in future tenders and project applications.

c) Ministerial Visit to Larne. The Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, visited Centrepoint, the former Larne Adult Education Centre on 18 April 2013. The visit was intended to familiarise the Minister with the current partnership arrangements in the Centre prior to the completion of the Estates Outline Business Case. There was a useful and positive discussion with the Minister, which should help towards approval of the completed Outline Business Case.

d) Acumen. Acumen, which is the College's brand for its Management and Leadership programmes, will be holding its first conference on 30 May 2013 at the Newtownabbey Campus. The theme of the conference is 'Leadership and Innovation in Tough Economic Times' and the guest speaker is Mark Nodder, CEO of Wrightbus and President of the NI Chamber of Commerce.

e) Skillbuild. NRC hosted the Annual Skillbuild competition in Newtownabbey 20 and 21 March 2013. Visitors to the campus were very complimentary about the facilities and organisation of the event. NRC apprentices and trainees gained a number of medals: Brickwork (a gold and a bronze); Industrial Heating (Bronze); Carpentry (Bronze); Lead Sheetwork (Silver); and Plastering and Dry Wall Systems (Bronze). The Principal said that it was encouraging to note that an area of underachievement was still capable of competing successfully in the Northern Ireland National Finals Competition.

f) Student Successes. All recent student successes will be celebrated at a Student Awards ceremony to be held on 31 May at 1.30 pm at a venue to be confirmed. Members of the Governing Body would be invited to attend

The most recent student successes have included the award of Queen's University Entrance Scholarships to two NRC students, David Costley and Simon King, in the STEM category. NRC has three nominations in the Apprentice of the Year Awards to be held on 15 May 2013.

Sharon McKeown, a Foundation Art and Design student at the Newtownabbey Campus, designed the trophies presented at the Newtownabbey Sports Awards on 10 May 2013. This was a result of a design competition commissioned by Newtownabbey Borough Council and the NRC Faculty of Building, Engineering and Science produced the winning design.

g) W5 Odyssey. The Principal indicated that Dr C O'Mullan had been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the W5 (Odyssey). The Governing Body congratulated her on this important appointment.

h) Leadership Courses. The Governing Body noted in future employers would no longer have to pay 50% of the cost of Level 5 Leadership Programmes. This could lead to increased interest in these programmes and create more business for Acumen. It was noted that Acumen was on the DEL list of approved providers.

g) Other Significant Meetings and Events. The Principal listed several meetings and events, which he had attended, addressed or chaired since the last meeting of the Governing Body.

45.7 Balanced Scorecard

The Governing Body received a copy of the updated Balanced Scorecard as at 1 May 2013 with projections to 31 July 2013. The Governing Body noted the status of the following domains:

a) Student Experience. The College has achieved its targets in respect of Retention, and is expected to achieve its target in respect of Student Survey by the year-end. The College has not achieved its targets in respect of FLUs and ETI Inspection grades, which are colour coded red. A Governor expressed concern that the College could suffer financially as a result of failing to reach its FLU targets and asked what measures should be taken to remedy the situation. It was noted that the College was endeavouring to minimise the loss of students by fully implementing the College's retention strategy in order to maximise the number of students retained until the year-end.

b) Relationships. The College has made satisfactory progress in relation to its targets in respect of Partner Voice (colour coded Green) and generating income and achieving funded projects (colour coded amber). An observation was made that private training agencies were of the view that they can react more quickly than colleges to the needs of employers and are able to deliver courses in a more timely manner. The Director of Curriculum refuted this observation and in response to a query indicated that the College had been proactive in the provision of innovative and creative courses, which meet the needs of employers.

c) Staffing. The College has achieved its staff to income ratio of 70% as at 1 May 2013 but by the year-end it is projected to be in excess of the target. The outturn is projected as being 2% better than 11/12 outturn

d) College Operations. Satisfactory progress has been made in relation to the completion of the Outline Business Case and the achievement of 'minimum 'satisfactory' grades in all Internal Audit Reviews. It is projected that all targets will be achieved by the year-end. The Principal advised that the Minister was anxious to support the College's Estate Strategy but he needed the finalised Outline Business Case as a matter of urgency. It was noted that size of build was currently delaying the Case; ETI is of the view that the College is under-estimating the space requirements for the new build whereas the Department wishes to restrict the size of build. **It was agreed that the Finance and General Purposes should hold a special Open Meeting, to which all Governors would be invited, to approve the finalised document for submission to DEL.** A Governor suggested that it would be advisable to examine whether a sub-committee had the powers, even at an open meeting, to approve the Business Case.

e) Finance. The College is expected to achieve its historic cost target by the year-end but projects an overspend on redundancy costs. It is colour coded red as at 1 May 2013 and 31 July 2013. The affordability of redundancy costs is to be discussed at a joint meeting of the Staffing Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 8 May.

44.8 FE College Health Check

The Governing Body received the FE College Health Check for the 2nd Quarter 2012/2013. It was noted that the sub-committees had considered the appropriate sections

The Principal drew attention to Section 3, which makes reference to Econometric Analysis, a statistical model, which examines all factors affecting the performance of students attending colleges. The results show that the gap between the performance of NRC (the lowest ranked college in terms of student success rates) and every college in the Sector widens after making adjustments to allow for like for like comparison. The report claims that a typical student enrolling at NRC is less likely to gain a successful outcome than at the highest performing college (SRC). Subject studied is a significant determinant of the likelihood of success. NRC has relatively strong performance in 'Leisure', 'Retail', 'Health', and 'Social Science' but weaker in 'Languages', 'Science and Maths', 'Business', 'ICT', and 'Education and Training'.

The Director of Curriculum advised that the analysis had not taken a number of factors into consideration. She mentioned that no consideration had been given to the extent of distance travelled from entry to exit levels.

The Principal stated that it would be advisable for the Governing Body to examine the full Report and **it was agreed that a representative from DEL's Analytical Services should be invited to a future meeting of the Governing Body to discuss the Report.**

45.9 Strategic Aims

The Governing Body noted that it had given consideration to the College's Strategic Aims and Objectives at its meeting on 6 March 2013 and agreed that they should be approved, subject to the Staffing Committee (15 April 2013) giving further consideration to the 'Staffing' aim.

The Governing Body received a copy of the revised College's Strategic Aims and Objectives, which provides the existing and two alternative forms of wording for the 'Staffing' aim.

The Governing Body agreed that the following 'Staffing' aim should be included in the College's Strategic Aims and Objectives:

'Deliver the College's provision and associated services through a team of high-quality staff, in a supportive and performance-focussed culture.'

45.10 Correspondence

The Governing Body received a copy of a letter from CITB-Construction Skills NI, dated 28 March 2013, thanking the College for hosting both the Skillbuild Northern Ireland National Finals Competition and the CITB-Construction Skills Northern Ireland Board meeting on 20 and 21 March 2013 at the Newtownabbey Campus.

45.11 Education Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee held on 19 March 2013. Mr Jay, the Chair of the Education Committee, stated that the Governing Body had no action to take in relation to the minutes but drew the Governing Body's attention to:

a) College Inspection. The Committee was joined by a number of Members of the Governing Body to discuss:

(i) The Report of an Inspection of the Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision in the Northern Regional College, which indicates that the overall quality of further education and training provided by the College, across the areas inspected, is satisfactory.

(ii) Professional and Technical Area Reports. The Committee gave consideration to the Professional and Technical Area Reports at Part 3 of the Inspection Report. It was noted that nine of the twelve areas inspected had received 'good' or 'very good' grades but 'satisfactory' had been given to ES and EI and 'inadequate' grades had been allocated to: Mechanical Engineering Services (plumbing); Trowel Occupations (brickwork); and Wood Occupations.

(iii) Action Plans. It was noted that all members of the Governing Body had received copies of the Action Plans, which had been prepared for Whole College Issues and for the following areas deemed to be satisfactory or inadequate by the Inspectorate: brickwork, electrical installation, plumbing and wood occupations and Essential Skills. Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Action Plans should be approved.

It was noted that a cover sheet had been provided for Governors giving the following details considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 19 March 2013:

a) Balanced Scorecard. The Committee received an update regarding the 'Student Experience' domain of the College's Balanced Scorecard. The Committee noted that: there is currently a shortfall of 73 FLUs with a-predicted year-end shortfall of some 200 FLUs; and overall College retention rates are above target at 96% .

b) Whole College Self Evaluation Review and Quality Improvement Plan. The Committee received a presentation from Mrs Kennedy regarding the Whole College Self Evaluation Review and Quality Improvement Plan. She explained that the Plan, which was partially complete, reflected the recommendations contained in the College Inspection Report. The Committee agreed that the document, when completed, should be circulated to Members for comment and forwarded to the Department to meet the 29 March 2013 deadline.

c) Training IQRS QI Plan. The Training IQRS QI Plan for the March 2013 submission was discussed. It was agreed that the final draft document should be forwarded to members before Easter for comment and the final document submitted to DEL 15 April 2013.

45.12 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19 March 2013.

It was noted that a cover sheet had been provided for Governors giving the following details considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 19 March 2013:

a) Correspondence. The Committee noted the following correspondence received since the last meeting:

(i) Circular FE 04/13, dated 27 February 2013, circulated by DEL providing summary information from College Accounts for the academic years 2006/2007 to 2011/2012. Mrs Moore, the Director of Finance and Corporate Development, drew attention to Appendix 2a to the Circular, which shows NRC to have the lowest income in the Sector in the year 2011/12, the highest deficit, the second lowest in terms of cash, the highest diversity of income and the highest ratio of payroll costs to total income.

(ii) Correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel, dated 12 March 2013, regarding the prompt payment of invoices.

(iii) Correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel, dated 4 March 2013, to advise of a revised process for notifying DFP and the Northern Ireland Audit Office of fraud cases detected through the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

b) Monthly Management Accounts. The Committee noted the Monthly Management Accounts for the period up to 28 February 2013. The Accounts indicate that the College has an historic cost surplus of £828k, which is £70k ahead of budget. The Bank Balance as at 28 February 2013 was £3.1 million. It was also noted that the College expected to achieve a deficit of no more than £181k for normal activities for the year to 31 July 2013. Projected redundancy costs, however, were likely to be higher than the amount budgeted, £148k. She said that it may be necessary to have a joint meeting with the Staffing Committee to give consideration to this matter.

c) Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) Budget Submission February 2013. The Committee noted the Monthly Forecast Out-Turn Returns, which are required by DEL as a result of Colleges being reclassified as Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB).

d) Estate Issues. The Committee received an update regarding estate issues. It was noted that:

(i) Antrim Campus. The Campus had now been placed on the open market leaving the option for sale of part of the campus to Fold Housing; the sale was being administered through Land and Property Services

(ii) Portrush Property. A meeting had been held with representatives from NEELB last week, when it was noted that the property could only be sold for educational purposes. The College's solicitors are to obtain Counsel's opinion as to the current ownership of the property.

(iii) Outline Business Case. It was noted that the Case was close to final submission

e) Corporate KPIs. The Committee received a paper providing the current status as at 31 January 2013 and the projected status as at 31 July 2013 for the following domains and KPIs:

(i) College Operations Domain. Both KPIs relating to the draft Schedule of Accommodation and the disposal of surplus sites are currently colour-coded amber. It is anticipated that the OBC will be completed by 31 July 2013 and is coloured code green but the disposal of surplus sites is not expected to be achieved by the target date and is colour coded red.

(ii) Finance Domain. Four of the five KPIs are currently colour coded green; the fifth relating to the generation of External Grant Funded income is less than budget and is colour coded red. It is anticipated that three KPIs will be achieved by the projected date of 31 July: generation of £2.3m net Training Income; generation of £360k Bespoke Training Income; and achievement of a deficit of no more than £181k for normal activities and £148k for redundancy costs. The Committee noted that projected redundancy costs, however, were now expected to be higher than the amount budgeted, £148k. Two further KPIs are not

expected to be achieved by 31 July 2013: the generation of £1.545m Entitlement Framework Income; and the generation of £827k External Grant Funded Income.

f) Financial Planning And Budgetary Control. The Committee received a copy of the Internal Audit Review of Financial Planning and Budgetary Control (January 2013). It was noted that the Internal Auditors had provided financial benchmarking information in relation to the Financial Performance of 73 FE Colleges throughout the UK. NRC has one of the highest ratios for staff costs as a % of total income.

45.13 Staffing Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meetings of the Staffing Committee held on 15 April 2013. Mr Jay, in the absence of the Chair, stated that the Governing Body had no action to take in relation to the minutes.

It was noted that a cover sheet had been provided for Governors giving the following details considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 15 April 2013:

a) Equality Staff Survey 2012. The Committee noted that the College had undertaken, in its 5-Year Equality Improvement Plan, to survey staff on equality issues bi-annually. A Whole College Staff Survey was completed in May 2012 and a further survey focusing on equality and respect issues was conducted in September 2012. It was noted that the findings had been made available to all members of staff.

Members of staff were also asked to comment on the steps they think the College should take to improve Equality of Opportunity, Diversity and Good Relations. The main suggestions did not focus on these areas but stressed the need for: more integration with management; development of team building events; better communication; awareness of work of other departments; and further Equality, Diversity and Good Relations training.

A good response rate, 31%, was achieved. The response rate reflected the campus locations, staff profile, community background and gender breakdown of the College.

45.14 Any Other Notified Business

There was no other notified business

45.15 Next Meeting

The Governing Body noted that the next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for 5.30 pm Wednesday 26 June 2013 at the Farm Lodge, Ballymena Campus.

G Gilpin, Chair

J A Hunter, Secretary