

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 28 June 2017 at Farm Lodge Campus, Ballymena commencing at 4.15pm.

Present:

Mrs I Allison, Mrs J Eve, Mr K Chambers, Mr H Crossey (Temporary Chair), Mr W Hutchinson, Mr R Jay, Ms Y Mallon, Dr K McCambridge, Mr B McCluggage Mrs G McConnell, Mr K Nelson, Prof T Scott (Principal)

In Attendance:

Dr S Brankin, Mr M Higgins, Mr D Hewitt, Mr Kieran Mooney (item 77.7 only), Ms Clare O'Neill (Item 77.6 only), Mr V Taggart
Mrs C Robinson, Secretary

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Governing Body members and SLT to the meeting.

The Chair proposed that with members' agreement the order of business would be changed in order to take item 7.13 Development Plan at the start of the meeting.

77.13 Development Plan Update

Prof Scott provided an update on the Development Plan process. She reported that since the last Governing Body meeting the stocktake document had been forwarded to the Department and several minor adjustments had been agreed. The stocktake document was now complete and also gives an outline of what would be included in the next strategic plan. She noted that the stocktake document confirms that the SIP actions are complete and the next stage will be the development of a new plan.

Prof Scott outlined that the new approach to corporate planning announced at Department meeting at the beginning of June, required all Colleges to have a common planning cycle that linked to the draft Programme for Government and the Industrial Strategy. She noted that the College KPIs would be in line with the Department's strategic objectives in order to deliver on the PfG outcomes but noted that two to three of the industrial strategy pillars whereas and a number of the PFG outcomes and corresponding indicators were relevant to FE Colleges. Prof Scott highlighted the relevant PfG outcomes and indicators.

Prof Scott summarised the framework for developing the new Plan; highlighted the four KPIs identified for the College from the previous Board discussion. She spoke to each of the four KPIs detailing what would be achieved and when this would happen, as well as how reporting would be scheduled across the organisation.

Prof Scott indicated that further refinement was necessary to align in with Department requirements and this work would be done through a working group which would include Mr McCluggage, Ms Mallon and Mr Crossey. A work programme would be developed for the Governing Body/committees and updates would be provided to the Governing Body throughout the year. A single session strategy workshop was proposed.

Members noted that due to the Department's cycle the new development plan would not start until April 2018 and a six month plan would be prepared in the interim, covering the period to March 2018, in line with the Departments requirements.

Prof Scott advised that the Department wished to use the College's presentation of KPIs to inform others and the Governing Body agreed that the relevant information could be shared.

Members discussed the difficulties associated with setting KPIs for the sector, the alignment with Departmental KPIs, how the Department acquired information to support indicators and noted caution at the possibility of confusion between output and outcomes.

The Chair thanked Prof Scott for the presentation.

77.1 Apologies

Dr D Lennox.

Non Attendance: Kerry Reilly

77.2 Declaration of Interest

None.

77.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

- i) The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2017 were approved.
Proposed: Mr W Hutchinson Seconded: Ms Y Mallon
- ii) The summary of discussion at the workshop held on 18 May 2017 was noted.

77.4 Matters Arising

77.5 Chair's Communication

Mr Crossey advised that his appointment as Temporary Chair had been confirmed by the Department and would be for a six month period. Recruitment for the new Chair would commence once a Minister as in post.

ACTION: The Chair indicated that consideration would be given to the selection of a temporary Vice Chair at the September Governing Body meeting.

Members were asked to complete the Declaration of Interests form circulated and return to the Board Secretary at the earliest convenience. They were also reminded to complete the mandatory online training modules in Safeguarding and Equality & Diversity. Any issues accessing these modules should be referred to IT Support.

77.6 Community Engagement Report

Ms Clare O'Neill joined the meeting.

Mr Hutchinson outlined the community engagement process with Belfast City Council, the City deal proposal and alignment of all community bodies and organisations with an emphasis on raising education attainment. In addition, he advised that as a neighbouring Council area that NRC should also engage with Belfast City Council on community planning.

Ms O'Neill noted the importance of liaisons with Council officers and reported on a presentation made to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council which could be replicated to other Councils. She added that the College recognised the importance of staff engagement time and the benefits with regard to building partnership work.

Prof Scott stressed the importance of ensuring that at the design and strategy stage the College were involved in the skills agenda.

The Chair commended the work being done and extended thanks to everyone involved.

In response to the Chair's offer of assistance from the Governing Body Ms O'Neill noted that advice on the Belfast City Council and how to engage with the Council would be helpful.

ACTION: Clare O'Neill to follow up with Mr Hutchinson in relation to engagement with Belfast City Council.

In response to Mr McCluggage's comments on innovation vouchers, Ms O'Neill stated that a number of vouchers were in process within the engineering section and the College was working on how to improve this activity using social media and marketing. Prof Scott confirmed that targets

for Innovation Vouchers and other knowledge transfer activities would be incorporated into targets for 17/18

Ms O'Neill also reported that work with the Councils was ongoing and meetings with the Heads of Economic Development were already in the diary.

Members noted the work being done and the Chair thanked Ms O'Neil for attending the meeting and addressing queries.

Ms Clare O'Neill left the meeting.

77.7 New Build/Campus 21 Presentation

Mr Kieran Mooney joined the meeting to present an update on the New Build Project. The presentation included imagery of a completed new build project in Kilmarnock, Scotland that the project team had visited. He outlined the core principles within the design brief which was currently out to tender and provided details of the individual projects planned for the Coleraine and Farm Lodge sites.

Mr Mooney spoke to the planned project timeline which had been presented to the Project Board earlier in the day and highlighted key dates for the completion of the design, the appointment of contractor(s), the decant of buildings and the commencement/completion of building work. He advised that every effort would be made to bring the project in ahead of schedule if at all possible.

Mr Mooney provided a summary of progress to date along with details of key activities planned for the next six months and stressed the importance of client user assurance group engagement in the design process. Consultation would be ongoing throughout the design stage and updates would be provided to stakeholders.

As a member of the Project Board Mr McCluggage provided an update on matters considered at a meeting earlier in the day. He referred to issues that had been raised in relation to a funding application and a proposed new road. Mr McCluggage indicated he had been impressed with progress.

Members noted that all issues were logged and monitored.

Mrs I Allison joined the meeting.

Discussion on the appointment of a design team and contractor(s), the project timeline, planning applications, consultation processes, the decant, the proposed new road in the vicinity of the new build in Ballymena and the risk management strategy followed.

Mr Mooney noted member's queries and concerns and addressed issues raised. He provided additional information and assurances that the Project Board was aware of issues and the consultation process was being managed proactively. Mr Mooney acknowledged the Governing Bodies support for the project.

The Chair thanked Mr Mooney for the informative presentation and Mr Mooney left the meeting.

77.8 Principal's Report

The Principal's report was taken as read.

Prof Scott recapped on comments made earlier in the meeting regarding the revised approach to business planning proposed by the Department and its effect on the new College Development Plan. She highlighted that the submission on extending the WBL provision had been approved by the Department, and that courses had been identified and plans to address related operational changes were in place. She also referred to the marketing campaign planned for over the summer that would focus on student recruitment and the generation of additional applications/enrolments. Reference to recent prize giving events marking the achievement of students; the uptake in the current Voluntary Exit Scheme; the outcome of the facilities management outsourcing exercise and the appended management accounts up to the end of April were noted.

The Governing Body noted the Principal's report and comments.

77.9 Correspondence

The Governing Body noted the correspondence received since the last meeting.

- i) NIAO Letter re Marking Study. The Chair noted the positive outcome, as expected on the basis of verbal update provided by the NIAO at the most recent Audit and Risk Committee.
- ii) Partnership between Department & ALBs: Code of Practice – noted.

77.10 Budget 2017/18.

The Chair reported that following discussion at the Resources Committee the 2017/18 draft Budget was recommended to the Governing as indicative until formal confirmation of budget allocation for 2017/18 was received from the Department. He referred to the indicative figures since received and noted that the budget would be revised once the Department notified the College of the final allocation.

A reduction to the capital fund was noted along with the request from the Department for further efficiency savings. Mr Higgins reported that this had been factored into the report circulated along with adjustments linked to the outsourcing of facilities management and a further tranche of VES.

Mr Higgins stated that the reduced capital allocation was disappointing and would prevent commitment to essential works required. In addition, difficulties associated with the CPD process would hinder the procurement of any services up to the end of March 2018 even if additional funds were made available. Mr Higgins advised that this situation was common to all Colleges.

The Governing Body was asked to approve the draft indicative budget as presented.

The Governing Body considered the information presented taking into account the indicative figures provided by the Department and approved the 2017/18 budget for submission to the Department.

77.11 Staff Survey

Mr Hewitt reported that the closing date had been extended and the survey had closed earlier in the week. A new survey tool was being used that required staff to access the survey via the staff intranet. He noted the response rate of 44% was lower than the previous year. A detailed analysis would now be undertaken and the results would be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

ACTION: Report on staff survey to the September Governing Body meeting.

77.12 KPI Monitoring Report – Implementation of Strategic Improvement Plan

The Chair referred to the detailed and informative report on all eleven KPIs noting that there had been no significant changes since last discussed at the May meeting.

Members noted several amendments highlighted by Prod Scott. She indicated these were all positive and moving in the right direction.

The Governing Body noted the update report on all of the KPIs and commended all involved in its preparation of the comprehensive report.

77.13 Development Plan

Taken at start of the meeting.

77.14 Education Committee

Mr Jay reported on the wide ranging discussion at the last meeting. He referenced in particular the detailed consideration given to the consequences of the recent ETi inspection, along with the action plans prepared for Essential Skill and Training for Success; the 2017/18 Curriculum Plan and the improved approach to the collection and collation of information for the SER/QIP report.

The draft minutes of the meeting on 24 May 2017 were noted by the Governing Body.

77.15 Audit & Risk Committee

In Dr Lennox's absence Mrs Eve summarised key discussions at the last committee meeting. She referred members to the detailed minutes and highlighted that committee members had been reassured by the IT Department's activities in response to recent ransomware attacks; the outcome of the NIAO's marking study and the satisfactory assurance received on the two recent internal audit reports. With regard to the tender for a new internal audit service she reported that Dr Lennox had been involved in the process that was now nearing an end.

Mr Higgins drew attention to the Internal Auditor's report on Corporate Governance and Risk Management that had been circulated to the Governing Body at the request of the Committee Chair. He highlighted the good practice recommendations within the report noting that these were relevant to the Governing Body in general. Mr Higgins referred to comments and recommendations on training noting the importance of ensuring that action is taken to fulfil members' training requirements.

Mr Higgins also mentioned the recommendation on financial reporting at all full Governing Body meetings. He outlined the Resources Committee's responsibilities in this area and stated that consideration would be given to establishing the correct balance of information to be presented to the Governing Body. If required the summary financial report currently appended to the Principal's Reports could be extended.

Members noted that the Department would be providing training for all Governing Body members on improved financial management. It was the intention that all Colleges would adopt this approach and all members would receive a summary information pack along with the training.

The draft minutes of the meeting on 6 June 2017 were noted by the Governing Body.

77.16 Resources Committee

Mr Crossey drew attention to the draft minutes of the last committee meeting circulated for information. He reported that the draft 2017/18 budget had been discussed and was recommended for approval earlier in the meeting. Updates on the outsourcing of facilities management and the STS project had also been presented. Mr Crossey advised that the facilities management contract excluding the caretaking service, had been awarded to Mount Charles. He noted that efficiencies had been realised overall.

Dr Brankin advised that the business case for the STS had been approved by the Department and final approval from DFP was expected shortly. Further details on progress should be available at the Project Board meeting the following day. He indicated that there was still significant risk associated with the project and that contingencies were still required.

Mr Chamber's reference to the scheduling and number of Resource committee meetings was noted.

The draft minutes of the meeting on 19 June 2017 were noted by the Governing Body.

77.17 Calendar of Meeting Dates

Attention was drawn to the schedule of proposed meeting dates circulated. The Chair advised of the requirement for the Governing Body to meet on at least six occasions during the year and added that the individual committees would agree the appropriate number of meetings required to address business needs. He noted that committee meetings had varied between three and four meetings during 2016/17.

Members noted that the proposed dates had been identified to align with the submission of key annual returns and to aid the smooth flow of business between committee and the Governing Body. Prof Scott advised there was also an expectation that the dates would run parallel to the Departmental reporting schedule. In light of this members were asked to note that the dates for the September meetings were confirmed but be aware that the other dates may be changed.

Mr Chambers expressed his support with regard to the alignment of committee and Governing Body meeting dates.

Prof Scott also made reference to feedback from the student governor on the timing of meetings noting that evening meetings presented difficulties and suggested that an earlier start at 4.30pm could be considered.

Prof Scott proposed a single session Governing Body workshop to focus on strategic matters would be considered.

ACTION: Schedule of dates and times to be presented for further consideration and approval at a future meeting.

Mr Hutchinson and Mrs McConnell left the meeting.

77.18 Any Other Business

Appraisals: - The Chair referred to the annual appraisal process and noted the requirements to complete with input from the previous Chair.

New members: - Members noted that the appointment of new members to replace EA representative had been suspended until a new Minister was in place.

Assessment of Effectiveness: - The Chair indicated that a survey on Board effectiveness would be circulated to all members. He encouraged all members to complete this.

77.19 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the first meeting of the 2017/18 academic year would be held on Wednesday 13 September 2017.

The unreserved business meeting ended at 6.40pm

Mr Hugh Crossey (Temporary Chair)

Date _____
13 September 2017

Mrs C Robinson (Secretary)