

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 18 June 2008 at the Antrim Campus, Northern Regional College

Present Mrs K Collins (Acting Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Director),
Mrs A M Campbell, Dr L Caul, Mr S Davidson, Rev T Jamieson,
Alderman P J McAvoy, Mr P McCudden, Mrs U O'Kane, Ms C O'Neill,
Mrs A Rankin, Mrs L Wallis, Mr A Watt

In Attendance Mr S Bell (for minute 9.14), Mr I Houston, Mrs C Moore,
Mr J A Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

9.1 Membership of Governing Body

a) Members observed a moment's silence in memory of Professor Bill Clarke, who passed away very suddenly on 23 April 2008. As well as being Chairperson of the Governing Body, Professor Clarke was a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Staffing Committee. The Governing Body asked the Director to pass on its condolences to his wife. The Director advised Members that he was attempting to find some suitable way to pay a more lasting tribute to the work of Professor Clarke; he would advise the Governing Body in due course.

b) The Governing Body agreed that:

i) Mrs K Collins should be appointed as Acting Chairperson until a permanent replacement is found for Professor Clarke;

ii) The Secretary should advise DEL of the appointment;

iii) Mr P McCudden should be appointed as Vice Acting Chairperson until a permanent replacement was recruited.

The Governing Body noted that DEL would advertise the appointment in the press in the autumn, by which time a decision will have been taken as to whether or not Chairpersons of Governing Bodies should be reimbursed for their services. The appointment process is likely to take six months.

c) The Chairperson welcomed Dr Leslie Caul to his first meeting. Dr Caul will also serve on the Staffing Committee.

9.2 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms J Fullerton and Mr A Henderson.

9.3 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

9.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Governing Body held on 16 April 2008 were approved

9.5 Matters Arising

9.5.1 Education & Training Inspectorate

The Deputy Director informed Members regarding the outcomes of the Follow-Up Inspection of Jobskills at the Newtownabbey Campus. He advised that the Education & Training Inspectorate had still to issue its written Report.

He informed the Governing Body that The Inspectorate had awarded an overall grade 4, which was regarded as satisfactory. This represented a considerable improvement since the initial inspection, when a grade 6 (poor/unsatisfactory) had been awarded. Members of staff, however, had expressed disappointment and were of the view that they were capable of a higher grade. The Director welcomed the improvement but advised the Governing Body that the College should be aspiring to Grades 1 or 2 at Inspections. A Member suggested that some departments, that had achieved higher grades, should be sharing their good practice and alerting underachieving departments as to what it looks and feels like to be a Grade 1 department.

9.5.2 Industrial Action

The Director informed the Governing Body that in the recent ballot UCU had rejected the “clarified Pilling package” and had voted for continuing strike action. He advised that the College would now pursue the course of action, which had been agreed by the employers. This matter would be discussed under reserved business.

9.6 Chairperson’s Communications

9.6.1 Freedom of Information.

The Chairperson stated that she had received a letter from DEL Providing information about the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into full effect on 1 January 2005.

The letter states that the Chairs of each of the Governing Bodies of the six colleges are authorised to act as qualified persons for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

9.7 Director’s Report

The Director highlighted the following topics in his report:

a) Restructuring. By 20 June 2008 appointments at the fourth-tier of management posts will have been completed. The next stage of the process will be to finalise the structures and staffing compliments within the various sub-sections of the Faculties and Departments.

An Away Day was held for senior post-holders on 12 May 2008 to address communications and core values. A Management Conference has been arranged for 23 June 2008, which will include discussion on the CDP.

b) Internal Communications Programme. Following the approval of the College’s ICP at the last meeting of the Governing Body aspects of the programme have been advanced as follows:

i) The Senior Management Team conducted six staff briefing sessions for staff at various campuses between 9-11 June 2008;

ii) A pilot newspaper has been produced;

iii) The College has agreed to participate in a project lead by LSDA and the Pacific Institute on organisational culture.

c) Visit To Morehead, Kentucky. During the week 25 May- 1 June 2008 a delegation of seven staff visited Morehead as part of the Seven Cities relationship between Morehead and Ballymena and was supported by generous funding from Ballymena Borough Council. The delegation undertook an intensive programme of educational and cultural visits and events. The delegation also attended an official civic reception hosted by the Mayor and the Morehead Sister Cities Committee, at which a Memorandum of Understanding between Morehead State University and NRC was signed. An action plan has been drawn up to encourage and promote educational and cultural links with Morehead State University, Kentucky Community College, Ballymena Borough Council and the NRC.

The Director informed the Governing Body that the College was in the process of establishing staff/student exchanges in engineering and construction with Morehead and investigating links with the NACCO organisation in respect of the Lecturers into Industry Scheme.

The Director thanked the Ballymena Borough Council for their generous support for the NRC delegation. Alderman McAvoy stated that the group had been excellent ambassadors for the College and Ballymena and had added another dimension to the relationship between Ballymena and Morehead.

The Governing Body agreed that the Director should write to the Ballymena Borough Council to express the College's thanks for its funding and support.

d) Welsh Colleges. The Director addressed the annual conference of the Association of Welsh Colleges concerning the Northern Ireland experience of mergers. He has been subsequently invited to contribute to LSN (the UK parent body of LSDA Northern Ireland) consultancy support to the Welsh Colleges during the impending changes.

e) Northern Health and Social Services Trust. The College is close to signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Trust.

f) Skillbuild 2008. NRC has continued the success, which the former colleges enjoyed at the annual Northern Ireland Skillbuild Competition. NRC entered trainees in six categories and won four gold, one silver and a bronze in four of these. NRC will be well represented at the UK Finals in Leeds College of Building in the new academic year.

g) Construction Training. Mr Frank McDonagh won the Hugh Gettinby Memorial Award for excellence in construction training. It was suggested, and the **Governing Body agreed, that Mr McDonagh and as many of the above prize winners as possible, should meet the Governing Body for a group photograph, when it visits the Farm Lodge Campus on 1 October 2008.**

h) Electrical Training Trust. The ETT recently held a Skill Electrical Competition, at which a trainee from Ballymena won through to represent Northern Ireland at the National Competition at the NEC Birmingham in October.

The Governing Body expressed its thanks to the Director and the Senior Management Team for an excellent year's work in difficult circumstances.

9.8 Correspondence

The Governing Body noted correspondence from DEL concerning measures of financial performance. The Director of Finance advised that the Financial Performance Indicators currently in use have been in place since 1998 and that some

of the measures are out of date and do not provide meaningful performance measurements. In order to address these issues the Department has issued a revised list of indicators. The Department is eager to gain feed back from colleges in order to establish a list of measures that will be beneficial to both the sector and the Department.

The Director of Finance stated that she welcomed the review but expressed concern in regard to the excessive number of Performance Indicators. She said that she was pleased that both financial and non-financial indicators had been reviewed but she had reservations concerning the KPI relating to reserves. She was of the view that this KPI was directed at reserve rich colleges and did not take into consideration colleges with limited resources, who wished to build up their reserves. The matter had been discussed at the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Governing Body agreed that the Director of Finance should express these views in her reply to the Department.

9.9 Report from the Audit Committee

The Governing Body received a verbal report from the meeting of the Audit Committee held prior to the meeting of the Governing Body on 18 June 2008. The Chairperson drew attention to the following issues addressed by the Committee:

a) External Examiners. Arrangements for the appointment of External Auditors had still to be finalised by the Audit Office.

b) Internal Audit Reports. The Committee received the following Internal Audit Reports prepared by the Internal Auditors: Review of Security of Assets and Delivery Arrangements (unacceptable assurance rating); Review of FE Fees and Enrolments (limited assurance rating); Review of Training for Success (limited assurance rating); and Review of IT Infrastructure and Computer Related Controls (satisfactory assurance rating).

The Director of Finance stated that many of the issues raised in the Reports were being or had been addressed; she advised that attention was being given to the harmonisation of procedures within the College and that staff had now been appointed to critical positions in the Finance Department, who had not been in position during the Audit Reviews.

c) Risk Management Policy. The Committee approved the College's Risk Management Policy prior to circulation for consultation. The Committee also noted that a Corporate Risk Register had now been prepared, which outlines the key corporate risks facing the Northern Regional College as identified by Northern Regional College's Senior Management Team and Members of the Governing Body.

The Governing Body agreed that the Corporate Risk Register be approved.

9.10 Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 11 June 2008.

The Governing Body noted the following topics considered by the Committee:

a) 2008/2009 Budget Letter. The College has still to receive its 2008/2009 budget letter. Indications are that the budget will be down on last year's total. It was noted that a special meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee had been arranged for 28 August 2008 to discuss the budget for 2008/2009.

b) Monthly Management Accounts. The Accounts record a surplus of £3k on continuing operations and an historic surplus of £1014k.

c) College Treasury Management Policy. The Committee agreed that the Treasury Management Policy be approved for circulation to stake holders prior to submission to the Governing Body.

d) Sale of Lease. Discussions are taking place regarding the sale of the lease of playing fields at Pound Street, Larne to Larne Grammar School.

e) Financial Training for Governors. Prior to the next presentation of the Annual Report and Accounts, the Governing Body would have a briefing session, in non-technical terms, regarding the financial statements.

9.11 Minutes of Staffing Committee

The Governing Body received the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 11 June 2008.

The Governing Body noted the following topics considered by the Committee:

a) Third-Tier Management Appointments. The Committee endorsed two appointments approved by the Chairperson of the Staffing Committee:

Gerard Quinn	Head of Faculty of Social Care, Early Years, Hair Beauty, Therapies, Access and Community
Julie Kerr	Head of MIS

b) Fourth-Tier Management Appointments. The Committee approved ten appointments and agreed that the Governing Body be advised accordingly:

PL Partnership	Tom Heaney
PL Essential Skills	Kathleen Mullan
Head of School Business and Hospitality	Tony Madden
Head of School Travel Tourism and Sports	Adrian McNeice
Head of School Engineering and Science	Brian Hill
Head of School IT, Media and Performing Arts	Merlyn Brown
Head of School BE (FE,HE) & A & D	David Avery
Head of School BE TFS and Crafts	David Lisk
Head of School Hair and Beauty, Therapies	Aine Lynch
Head of Social Care, Early Years	Steven Lavery

The Committee noted that: interviews for the PL with responsibility for ILT post had had to be postponed as there had been objections to the short-listing process; the gender balance in regard to recent appointments was more or less even; and the appointment process had resulted in a redeployment/redundancy option in respect a member of staff, who had not been appointed to a post.

c) Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for Support Staff. The Committee approved draft procedures prior to circulation for consultation.

d) Access Northern Ireland Records. The Committee approved a Policy Statement in relation to Access Northern Ireland Records and forwarded it to the Governing Body for endorsement.

The Committee endorsed the Policy Statement.

e) Annual Monitoring Report. The Committee noted a copy of the first statutory Annual Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission.

9.12 Calendar of Meetings

The Governing Body considered the draft Calendar of Meetings 2008/2009 and noted that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had recommended it to the Governing Body for approval.

The Governing Body agreed that:

a) The Calendar of Meetings 2008/2009 be approved;

b) Meetings of the Governing Body should rotate around the various campuses to enable Governors to meet staff and students and familiarise themselves with the College's estate.

9.13 College Development Plan

a) CDP Progress. The Director said that the CDP would be submitted to DEL in two Phases; Phase 1 would deal with FLUs and Phase II with everything else, including the ILT Strategy.

b) CDP Targets and Projections. Mr Ian Houston, the Deputy Director Curriculum, presented a paper reviewing the College's performance in respect of its CDP in 2007/2008 and providing targets for 2008/2009.

The Governing Body noted that the College's CDP performance 2007/2008 was reviewed at a recent meeting with DEL officials and projections for 2008/2009 were agreed. The number of FLUs for 2007/2008 fell short of the CDP target by 341 FLUs but DEL did not claw back funding. The FLU target for 2008/2009 has been reduced to 5,400 from 5,550 in the current year. The drop in FLU target means a drop in income from £18.87m to £18.36m. It will be necessary to reduce costs in order to balance the budget. It was noted that the Finance and General Purposes Committee would examine the implications of this reduction of income at its special meeting in August.

9.14 ILT Strategy

The Governing Body received a presentation from Mr Bell regarding the College's ILT Strategy.

Mr Bell informed the Governing Body of the recent appointment of a Principal Lecturer with responsibility for ILT and a Head of IT Infrastructure, and he referred to the establishment of an ILT Management Group. He indicated that the Group had developed the ILT Strategy to enrich, support, deliver and manage the NRC's learning process and to facilitate and integrate all of the support and management services of the organisation. He said that DEL had made substantial investments in ILT across the sector and now wished to have a return on its outlay. The Department regarded the use of ILT in a college as an important indicator of quality.

He explained that the outline of the Strategy was determined by the requirements of DEL. He drew the Governing Body's attention to the following sections: Evaluation of Progress; Vision for ILT; Analysis of Internal and External Influences; Strategic Aims and Objectives; Management of Strategy; and Finance. He also pointed out the Action Plan for 2008/2009.

The Director thanked Mr Bell and his team for the production of a detailed and informative document.

The Governing Body endorsed the ILT Strategy and the Action Plan for 2008/2009.

9.15 Any Other Business

9.15.1 Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for Wednesday 1 October 2008 at 5.30 pm (and not on 23 August as stated on the Agenda) at the Director's new offices at the Ballymena Campus.