

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Resources Committee held on 12 June 2023 in Newtownabbey campus, commencing at 4.00pm.

Present: Mr M Higgins, Mr D MacAuley, Ms Y Mallon, Ms D McIlwaine, Mr R McKernan, Mr I Murphy (Chair)

In Attendance: Ms K Craig, Mr S Laverty, Mr M Lennox, Ms C McCloskey, Ms C Murdoch, Mr K Nelson, Ms J Small

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

#### **35.1 Apologies**

None.

#### **35.2 Declaration of Interests**

None.

#### **35.3 Minutes of Last Meeting**

Draft minutes of meeting on 27 March 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Mr McKernan                      Seconded: Ms McIlwaine

#### **35.4 Matters Arising**

None.

#### **35.5 Chair's Communications / Correspondence**

The Chair referred to the number of additional Committee meetings which had taken place over a challenging year and thanked staff and members for their hard work and input.

#### **35.6 College Development Plan Progress Report**

Committee noted the report submitted to the Department on 4 May 2023, which had been considered at the Education Committee.

Ms Small outlined the background to red risks and detailed actions to be taken in the coming year, based on lessons learned in 2022/23. She confirmed focus on the full time curriculum programme and identification of where provision could be expanded.

In response to Mr McKernan's query on Skills Focus cancellations, Ms Small clarified a timing effect relating to entry of data on the College's CRM system and subsequent attendance by students on the first day of their course.

The Principal highlighted the continuous nature of being unable to reach the target set in the CDP for HE, which would be reviewed in 2023/24 with the intention to move forward with the Open University (OU). He informed members of communication with the Department in a bid to have all College activity included in the report, in order to fully demonstrate inputs, outputs and outcomes.

The Chair confirmed Committee's support for this action and welcomed the extent of development achievements to date, in particular upcoming OU approval, confirmation of which was expected within weeks.

### **35.7 HR Update**

Ms Murdoch spoke to her report and provided detail on key issues including recruitment, organisational development, and health and wellbeing activity.

In response to a number of queries from members, Ms Murdoch outlined a structured induction programme for new staff which will commence from August. She also confirmed development of a bespoke competency framework and appraisal process in line with proposals agreed by the College.

In relation to questions around absence management, members noted the role of the sector's contracted occupational health providers working in conjunction with the College's Health & Wellbeing Manager. Work was continuing to improve the College's benchmark position for absence, with no cases of absence being grievance related.

Ms Murdoch confirmed that all applicants who had applied for posts which had since been placed on hold, had been communicated with. In the context of fixed term posts, Ms Murdoch clarified reasons for appointment and action at end of term.

Members noted a significant improvement in performance management. Mr Lavery confirmed that this was tied into the College's efforts to improve the culture of the College, with the aim of achieving Investors in People position over the next few years subject to budget.

In relation to budget, the Principal summarised the effects from challenges posed over the past year and outlined pressures on staff from measures taken to protect College core functions and delivery.

In the background of upcoming alignment of resources as a result of campus new builds, Ms Mallon commended Ms Murdoch on looking ahead at potential staffing issues and the Chair highlighted the need to help employees as much as possible in the current environment.

**Action: Ms Murdoch would provide a broad outline on number of staff who may be impacted by campus new build rationalisation, for the next meeting.**

4.55pm Ms Murdoch left the meeting.

### **35.8 Estates Strategy**

Mr Lennox took members through a summary of the 10-year Estates Strategy 2022-2032 and updated on a number of issues including introductory implementation of a net zero strategy, project proposals for Newtownabbey and Magherafelt, and potential options for asset disposals to fund ongoing Estates development.

The Principal thanked Mr Lennox for his detailed report and analysis and enquired on the outworkings of the recently amended procurement framework as regards maintenance. Mr Lennox reported basic level of service from the Consultancy framework supplying both the College and another FE College in NI. However, an enhanced service was being provided through the Contractors' framework, which comprised the original contractor team associated with the College.

The Principal and Mr Lavery outlined the background to developments on the procurement framework, and guidelines for disposal of public sector land.

In response to the Chair's request, Mr Lennox outlined actions taken to mitigate risk on current health & safety issues and noted the Chair's comments on ensuring Estate's developments be made as carbon friendly as possible, subject to budget.

5.24pm Mr Lennox left the meeting

### **35.9 Finance Update**

Committee considered the finance update, DfE Report April 2023, NDPB forecast template, budget update 2022/23, budget letter 2023/24 and capital allocation letter 2023/24. It was noted that the traineeship funding allocation for 2023/24 was expected within the next week or so.

Ms Craig outlined the purpose and impact of the Budget Control Committee (BCC) in reviewing recruitment requests, non-pay expenditure and operational expenses, and confirmed work on priority expenditure for the year ahead under capital and minor works allocation for 2023/24. In response to Ms Mallon's query on impact analysis of decisions put forward to the BCC, Ms Craig confirmed that requests were reviewed by senior managers before assessment by the Committee.

Mr Lavery reported benchmarking of non-pay costs by NIFON in late April, with lessons learned from other colleges being fed into impact analysis recommendations.

### 35.10 New Building – CPSG Presentation

The report was taken as read. Mr Lavery advised that the business case addendum submission to cover inflation costs had been allocated as part of the capital allocation and was in the final stages of being approved by the Department.

Members noted work on ground source heating and extra charging points to reduce the carbon footprint of the new buildings. Mr Lavery confirmed that the NBPB would continue to look at funding opportunities to reduce energy costs and maximise sustainability going forward.

The Chair congratulated the NBPB team on the success of this project to date, with both campus new builds being successful for short-listing and awards.

### 35.11 Any Other Business


On her last Committee meeting of the academic year, the Chair thanked Ms Mallon for her provision of guidance, wealth of skills and hard work, which would be sorely missed by Committee when she retires from the College at the end of July.

### 35.12 Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed at the June meeting of GB.

The meeting concluded at 5.43pm.

Mr I Murphy



Date 22 January 2024

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace



(Secretary)