

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee (unreserved business) held on 12 October 2020 via Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Ms Y Mallon, Mrs G McConnell, Mr I Murphy (Chair), Prof T Scott and Mr G Wilkinson.

In Attendance: Dr H Dixon (23.8), Mr M Higgins, Mr S Laverty, Ms J Small and Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

23.1 Apologies

Mrs Brown.

23.2 Appointment of Committee Vice-Chair

Nominations were invited for the Vice-Chair appointment, to be notified to the Secretary.

23.3 Declaration of Interests

None.

23.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020 were approved.

Proposed: Ms Mallon Seconded: Mrs McConnell

23.5 Matters Arising

One item under matters arising would be covered under agenda item 14 below.

23.6 Chair's Communication

The Chair noted satisfaction with work being carried out by the New Build Project Board and referred to updates to be provided relating to finance, Covid and online learning, which would be covered later in the agenda.

5.05pm Mr Wilkinson joined the meeting.

The Draft Terms of Reference were approved subject to a minor amendment.

23.7 Correspondence

Members noted details of the Covid-19 resource allocation being provided by the Department. Mr Higgins detailed measures put in place within College campuses to comply with Public Health Agency (PHA) and Department guidelines. Also contingency plans developed to ensure online delivery of curriculum in the event of further lockdowns or restrictions. Members

noted that these plans were reviewed regularly. The Chair noted a need for plans to be put in place to ensure 'acting up' by staff where necessary.

Mr Higgins also outlined the College's extended role in contact tracing and identification, details of which are relayed to the PHA.

23.8 Budget Letters

Mr Higgins summarised information on the opening indicative resource allocation for 2020/21; updated allocation in June 2020; and revised capital funding as a result of easements within the sector. He outlined impact of reduced HE numbers on Department funding, which would be assessed when the Department receives the College's finalised CDP.

Mr Higgins reminded members of the College's emergency efficiency plan, presented at the June meeting of Committee, to allow the College to adhere to the Department opening allocation. He advised that all colleges had now placed further bids with the Department to cover additional new pressures as a result of Covid-19, £500k received to-date and a favourable response anticipated for further bids, especially IT.

The Chair confirmed that he had been reassured that the College could adhere to outlined budgets to March 2021 and to July 2021, provided no additional expenditure was entered into.

23.9 New Build Update

Members considered and queried information in the New Build Project Board progress report October 2020. In response to questions raised, Mr Higgins detailed assurances given to the College and with which both the Department and CPD were content viz:

- Covid-19 Deed of variation has been scrutinised by both CPD and DfE;
- use of optimum bias to cover additional Covid-19 costs agreed by the project Board and submitted for Minister consideration;
- easement of capital funding due to delays caused by Covid-19 would be reimbursed when required by the College;
- the preferred contractor for the Coleraine build had confirmed agreement to the quantum of additional costs for Covid-19;
- the pre-tender estimate for Ballymena would include cover for Covid-19 costs and should achieve a more realistic price.

The Chair took on board the points raised and acknowledged the work carried out by the Project Director and the CPD and Department representatives on the Project Board.

Mr Wilkinson sought clarification and confirmed he was content to note the work carried out to reach the decisions by the Project Board.

Members also noted that it was hoped to proceed with the Ballymena project earlier than had previously been anticipated.

23.10 Shared Services

The LMS update was taken as read. Dr Dixon updated members on changes which had recently taken place including progress on finance integration, which was now ready to proceed to the live testing, and sectoral review of work done on investigating reports in the system.

Members noted benefits to date of online registration and capture of data not previously available.

The Chair thanked Dr Dixon for her work on the LMS project.

5.40 – Dr Dixon left the meeting.

23.11 HR Update

Mr Higgins presented the HR update to September 2020, noting that the format of the report had been revised to present Committee with key information. Members noted information on long-term sickness, negotiations on lecturers' contracts, reduction in complaints and status of staff appraisals.

Prof Scott advised that a College Employers' Forum (CEF) meeting was currently taking place to discuss a response to Unions and members noted the possibility of industrial action resulting.

The Chair also highlighted to members that the College was currently developing mitigation measures in the event of a number of lecturers having to self-isolate.

23.12 Annual Report and Accounts

Mr Laverty presented the draft financial statements 2020 and drew members' attention to the summary of key points provided. Mr Laverty provided clarification on the impact of actuarial losses on the support pension scheme as a result of Covid-19, as detailed in the Aon accounting briefing note provided.

Members noted that the draft accounts were currently with NIAO for audit, following which they would be presented to Audit & Risk Committee for recommendation to the Governing Body in early November. The signed accounts would then be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly in December.

23.13 Monthly Management Accounts

Members noted the NDPB return to September 2020 along with an update on financial requirements to March 2021. Mr Laverty highlighted that the Department was content with the overall budget deficit position.

The Chair was content to note the position to March 2021 with the proviso that no additional expenditure should be entered into.

23.14 College Development Plan (CDP)

Ms Small presented an update report on the CDP outlining projected activity and highlighting the revised format for 2020/21.

Members noted the summary position for 2020/21, resulting from a decline in enrolments across the sector, and were advised that the College was currently prioritising the full-time cohort and residual students from last year.

Mr Wilkinson referred to new initiatives led by the Department in response to Covid, and the need for colleges to be agile and responsive.

23.15 Any Other Business

None.

23.16 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 11 January 2021.

The meeting concluded at 6.13pm.

Mr I Murphy 

Date 11 January 2021

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace 

(Secretary)