

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 13 October 2021 on Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mr M Higgins, Ms Y Mallon, Mrs G McConnell, Mr I Murphy (Chair) and Mr G Wilkinson

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Dr H Dixon (27.1-27.8), Ms D Kearney, Mr S Laverty, Ms C Murdoch (27.1-27.9), Ms J Small, Mr J Woods, STS Project Manager (27.1-27.4)

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

27.1 Apologies

None.

27.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

27.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021 were approved.

Proposed: Ms Mallon Seconded: Mr Higgins

27.4 Matters Arising

The Chair welcomed Mr Jim Woods, who was in attendance to report on developments with the STS Programme. Mr Woods outlined the key issues which had been progressed since his last update on 30th June including: issues experienced with the operation of the Student Record system and lessons learnt; work ongoing on the Agresso and Jane systems; and key focus for moving forward.

During a period of discussion, Mr Woods advised that Tribal and IT Assist had been asked to provide 'lessons learnt' documents; a benchmarking exercise by Tribal had also been requested. Alongside this, the SRO would insist on an independent load testing review of the system.

Members noted that operation of the EBS had stabilised but further slippage in the completion timeline was expected. Mr Woods advised that assurance requirements for the system would be included in an annual schedule going forward. Committee noted that a draft job description and requirements for a Contract Manager, was underway.

Ms Small noted that at the last STS Project Board, given the performance issues recently experienced on EBS and the six-month extension agreed for M-hance, it had been requested that consideration be given to a range of suppliers for the hosting of Jane Systems.

Members thanked Mr Woods for a comprehensive report, following which he left the meeting.

27.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

Consideration was given to information on the October monitoring allocation, with details of additional Covid funding expected shortly.

Members noted that catering and cleaning contracts are due for renewal next year and operational needs will be reviewed at that time to ensure Value for Money.

It was agreed to take the reports of senior College managers next on the agenda.

27.8 Shared Services

Dr Dixon spoke to her report and highlighted work being carried out on the transition to 'business as usual' and set up of post-project governance.

Committee heard that a review of the risk register would take place shortly, with most red risks expected to be re-classified as amber. No additional concerns were reported, with work ongoing to close off tasks.

Dr Dixon left the meeting.

27.6 External Engagement Strategy

Ms Small took members through the Business Engagement Update. She outlined the background to the establishment of the Business Engagement team and the excellent progress made against objectives to date, with expectation that the 2021/22 income target would be exceeded. Ms Small highlighted the need to build on College strengths to deliver sustainable alternative funding strategies going forward, which would require a review of resources.

Members congratulated the Business Engagement team on work carried out and the links to the Department's skills strategy. Members' requests for further analysis of outcomes to be included in updates, were noted.

Action: Outcomes of Business Engagement activities to be recorded and inclusion of Apprenticeship/Traineeship Activity

27.7 Pulse Survey Update

Ms Small reported a staff response rate of 48% to the 2 pulse surveys carried out to date, 75% of which was from FT staff, with 5 further surveys planned over the rest of the academic year. Results of each survey would be addressed by a dedicated senior manager and a working group, with results and actions being reported to Committee and shared in the Principal's message to staff.

Members heard of actions under way to ensure an open and transparent culture, and noted the programme of CPD training being made available to all staff.

27.9 HR Update

Ms Murdoch spoke to her report and noted, in particular: SIB review of support structures was nearing completion; progress and difficulties in recruiting for particular curriculum areas; and a slight reduction in the overall absence rate.

Requirement for completion of mandatory training, particularly on cyber security, as part of the annual performance management process was outlined along with penalties for non-compliance. CPD for Support Staff was planned for 22 October.

Options for attracting necessary talent and supporting curriculum delivery were discussed and would be examined by the SLT. Particular focus on innovative ways to attract talent within skills shortage areas.

Ms Murdoch left the meeting.

27.10 Annual Report and Accounts

Mr Lavery presented the draft Annual Report and accompanying summary of key points. Members noted that no issues had been raised against the accounts at the Audit & Risk meeting on 22 September. Mr Lavery responded to a query from the Chair on the value of campuses due to the decant and move towards new campuses.

Whilst underwritten by the Department as an ALB, Mr Wilkinson expressed concern about the sustainability of the College's business model. Mr Higgins underlined the efforts underway to secure alternative funding streams in order to reduce reliance on central government funding and make the College more sustainable going forward.

Members heard that following completion of audit, the draft Annual Report and Accounts would go to Audit & Risk on 17 November. They would then be recommended for signing by the Governing Body on 24 November.

27.11 Finance Update

Mr Lavery presented the NDPB budget position to 24 September 2021 and updated members on management finances at October 2021. Members noted that confirmation on bids for Loss Learning and other Covid-19, was expected.

Mr Lavery clarified issues on re-phasing of funding due to construction delay of the new build in Coleraine, and on the annual sector-wide deficit position due to depreciation.

Ms McConnell and Mr Murphy highlighted that the Department were fully informed of construction issues to date, due to their participation on both the Capital Steering Group and the Project Board.

The Chair will update the Governing Body on issues around capital and terms of expenditure on 24 November.

27.12 College Development Plan (CDP)

Ms Small reported that Departmental feedback on the draft CDP submitted on 24 September was awaited, with the final version due for submission by 22 October.

The Chair's comments on business engagement tying up with outputs in future CDPs, were noted.

27.13 Any Other Business

None.

27.13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 24 January 2022.

The meeting concluded at 6.40pm.

Ian Kershley

(Chair)

G. Wallace

(Secretary)