

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

STAFFING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 10 November 2009 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr S Davidson (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Director),
Mrs U O'Kane and Ms L Wallis

In Attendance Mrs B Crotty, Mrs B Lavery and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

10.1 Apologies

There were no apologies.

10.2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest. The Deputy Director Planning and Resources asked to be excused for an item in Reserved Business.

10.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 19 May 2009 were approved.

10.4 Matters Arising

10.4.1 Lecturers' Pay Agreement (minute 9.9)

The Director informed the Committee that there were still some items to be resolved before the new contract is signed. Questions have been raised as to whether or not Heads of Department and Principal Lecturers are included in the new contract. There has also been discussion regarding pay scale placements of Lecturers on appointment.

10.5 Terms of Reference and Committee Effectiveness

a) **Terms of Reference.** In reviewing its Terms of Reference the Committee noted that there was some ambiguity as to whether Equal Opportunities and Health & Safety matters should be referred to the Staffing Committee or the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee, at a subsequent meeting on 10 November 2009, agreed that responsibility for issues relating to Equal Opportunities should be transferred to the Staffing Committee or the Education Committee. Health and Safety matters should continue to be the responsibility of the Finance and General Purposes Committee; it would be necessary from time to time to refer certain matters to the Staffing Committee.

A Member stated that the remit of the Staffing Committee was too narrow and she asked for it to be extended to include the quality assuring of staff development. She also said that not all duties related to the remit. The Director explained that the Workforce Development Plan could be used as a vehicle for monitoring the effectiveness of the staff development processes.

The Chairperson enquired about ways of determining staff satisfaction. The Deputy Director informed the Committee that LSDA published an annual Staff Survey for DEL, which addressed this matter. The Chairperson also suggested that Key Performance Indicators

should be devised which could throw light on staff satisfaction within the College. He mentioned staff retention, absenteeism and pay rates as possible KPIs.

The Committee agreed that:

(a) The Terms of Reference be adjusted to reflect the discussion above and forwarded to the Governing Body (see revised Terms of Reference attached);

(b) The Deputy Director Planning and Resources and the Head of Human Resources should prepare staff related KPIs for discussion at the next meeting of the Staffing Committee on 30 November 2009.

b) Staffing Committee Action Plan. The Committee received a copy of the Staffing Committee Action Plan for 2009/2010. It was noted that there was a need to monitor the Plan throughout the academic year and to utilise it to review the Committee's effectiveness at its final meeting on 26 May 2010.

The Committee agreed that the Action Plan be adjusted to reflect the foregoing discussion

10.6 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's communications.

10.7 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

10.8 Absence Statistics

The Committee received a Report providing details of the FE Sector sickness absence statistics for 2008/2009. It was noted that NRC had the highest level of sickness absence in the Sector. Sickness absences for Support Staff in 2008/2009 (13.8 days) are the highest in the Sector whilst absences for Teaching Staff (8.59 days) are among the lowest.

An initial assessment of the statistics reveals that there has been a decrease in short term and medium term absences and an increase in long term absences for all staff in 2008/2009 compared with 2007/2008.

Further analysis of the statistics reveal that Ballymena, Ballymoney, Magherafelt and Newtownabbey are above the College percentage of days lost. The following departments are above the average number of days lost: Economic Engagement, Student Services & Marketing, Estates and PAs. The most common reasons for absence are stress, post op debility and back pain.

It was noted that the College is undertaking a number of measures to reduce sickness rates including working with teams that have a higher than average number of working days lost, hosting health promotion events across the campuses and training in relation to stress management. The Staff Internet has a page devoted to managing stress. The College made use of Care Call and referrals were made to Occupational Health consultants, as and when required.

During discussion the Chairperson expressed concern at the high level of absenteeism and the related resource implications. The Director advised Members that staff had been apprised of the situation at a series of meetings he had held at the various campuses during the previous week. A query was made concerning procedures on return from sickness absences. It was noted that, when absentees returned to College. they reported to their line manager on the first day if possible.

10.9 Any Other Notified Business

There was other notified business.

10.10 Next Meeting

The Chairperson reminded Members that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for Monday 30 November 2009 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.