

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

STAFFING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 19 November 2012 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr S Davidson (Chairperson), Mrs I Allison, Mr I Goldsworthy and Mr T Neilands (Principal)

In Attendance Mrs B Laverty, Mrs C Moore and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

26.1 Membership

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs Isobel Allison to her first meeting as a Member of the Staffing Committee.

It was noted that the Governing Body (10 October 2012) had agreed the revised Terms of Reference of the Staffing Committee.

26.2 Apologies

An apology was received from Mr R Jay.

26.3 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

26.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 8 October 2012 were approved.

26.5 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

26.6 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's communications.

26.7 Correspondence

The Committee noted Circular FE 01/12, circulated by DEL on 12 September 2012, providing details of qualifications to teach in Institutes of Further Education. The Chairman drew attention to the list of qualifications recognised for teaching in the Northern Ireland FE Sector. It was noted that prospective lecturers, who do not hold one of these qualifications, may still be eligible to apply for a teaching post, provided they complete the in-service PGCE (Further Education) teaching qualification. It was noted that the provisions specified in the Circular apply to new applicants for a teaching post.

The Principal advised members that DEL/DE is currently consulting on extending General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) powers to cover further education lecturers. The Principals have agreed that there will be a sector response to this consultation.

26.8 FE College Health Check

The Committee received the FE College Health Check Report based on information available at the end of Quarter 4, 2011/2012. The Report provides statistics relating to a number of staffing ratios and refers in particular to the staff cost as a percentage of income ratio. This was further discussed under Reserved Business.

The Committee noted that a Representative from DEL would give a presentation regarding the revised format of the Report at the meeting of the Governing Body on 21 November 2012.

26.9 Sickness Absence Statistics 2011/2012

Members were reminded that the Staffing Committee (8 October 2012) had received a report on Sickness Absence and had noted that long-term absences had increased across all staff groups during 2011/2012. It was suggested that it would be helpful if details could be provided of the number of staff moving to and from the long-term absence list.

Mrs Laverty, Head of HR, provided a Report indicating that there were 68 employees on long-term sickness absence totalling 6,143 days during 2011/2012. Of these 68 employees, 12 are no longer employed by the College and only one of the remaining 56 employees is currently on long-term sickness absence.

She stated that this year to date 24 employees that have incurred long-term sickness absence. Six employees that incurred long-term sickness absence during 2011/2012 have incurred long-term sickness absence in 2012/2013; five of these employees have returned to work.

It was noted that stress, anxiety and hospitalisation are the most common reasons for absence. Mrs Laverty confirmed that there are a number of Health and Wellbeing events planned throughout the academic year aimed at improving employees' health, promoting a healthier lifestyle and raising awareness of mental health problems and stress.

26.10 Staff Survey

The Committee received a presentation by the Principal regarding the 2012 Staff Survey.

The Principal explained that there had been a good response to the electronic survey, which had been accessed by 430 (49%) of the staff.

Mr Neilands said that positive responses had been received in relation to questions regarding: enjoyment of work at the College; staff awareness of what is happening in their team and within their School/Department; attitude to working together with staff in their team and in their School/Department; support and appreciation of work by line managers; and knowledge of events in Schools and Departments.

He said that there had been a less than positive response to questions regarding respect and diversity between staff and the communication of management of change. A Member suggested that the negative response might be attributable to the ambiguity of the question.

The Principal added that staff had been asked to rate the support services; 11 out of 18 services scored above 4 on a 5-point scale and were in the good to very good range.

The following conclusions were drawn from the Survey:

- Teaching and Learning must be the core focus
- There is a need for improved communication
- Managers must be more involved with their staff
- Respect for all is necessary
- Improvements are required in some support areas

The Committee noted that all members of staff had received the full report and the survey has been used to inform operational plans. A recent staff survey on equality has further explored the issues of respect and diversity within the College. This is currently being analysed and the results will be reported to a future Staffing Committee. The Principal stated that the report had also been discussed at staff meetings.

The Chairman praised the College for initiating the Survey and members discussed further methods of encouraging an even higher response rate. He also suggested that consideration should be given to formally measuring the progress on views and opinions of staff and use this as a KPI.

26.11 Any Other Notified Business

There was no other notified business.

26.12 Next Meeting

The Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on **Monday 10 December 2012** at the Ballymena Campus commencing at 5.30 pm.