

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

STAFFING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 31 January 2012 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr S Davidson (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Director),
 Mr I Goldsworthy, Mr R Jay and Mrs C Taylor

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

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

22.1 Apologies

An apology was received from Rev T Jamieson.

22.2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

22.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 12 December 2011 were approved.

22.4 Matters Arising

22.4.1 Investors In People Award

The Committee received a progress report in respect of the IIP Action Plan, which had been drawn up to address the development areas specified by the IIP assessor: Learning and Development; and People Management, Effective Management and Performance Management.

The Committee noted that action was being taken by the Quality Improvement Unit to provide managers with the full costs of all internal and external staff development. Reports on all CPD undertaken by staff within a Faculty/Department would be available on Sharepoint. Details of CPD would also be available to staff under 'My Profile' and 'My History' on the staff intranet. The Director stated that the College was making a substantial investment in CPD and it was important for managers to have an understanding of the nature and type of CPD undertaken by their staff. It was noted that training courses were available to update and raise the awareness of managers in respect of CPD. A Member said that it was necessary to monitor the uptake of staff on CPD courses and to ensure that adequate numbers attended each course.

The Committee also noted that the Action Plan addressed staff development in regard to performance management. Work was in progress to raise staff awareness of performance management; appraisal and appraisee training sessions have taken place; and a project on performance management is nearing completion.

The Committee agreed that the Education Committee should be provided with a copy of the Action Plan as it had also an interest in CPD.

22.5 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's communications.

22.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

22.7 Staff Appraisal

The Committee received a presentation on the College's Appraisal Schemes by Mrs Laverty, Head of Human Resources. She stated that the College had three schemes in operation: the scheme for non-teaching staff agreed by the Non-Teaching Staff Negotiating Committee in 2005; the scheme for academic staff up to Head of Department grade agreed by the Lecturers' Negotiating Committee in 2009; and a local appraisal process for the Director and Deputy Directors. The scheme for academic staff appraisal included observation of one lesson in the classroom during a two-year period. The Director stressed the need for classroom observation; he said that the College was attempting to establish classroom observation, on a voluntary basis, as part of the Improving Quality process.

Mrs Laverty outlined the appraisal process commencing with the preparation of appraisee and appraiser reviews and concluding with arrangements for and the conduct of the appraisal meeting. She reiterated that appraisal and appraisee training sessions have been organised by the Quality Improvement Unit for both Academic and Support Staff.

During discussion Members raised a number of issues:

a) Social Media. Attention was drawn to the increasing use of the social media for communication and interaction. It was noted that the College had drawn up a Policy to ensure protection for staff and students. A suggestion was made that Colleges Northern Ireland should undertake the drafting of a Sector Policy but the Director expressed the view that CNI had not the necessary resources for this task.

b) Dispute Resolution. Clarification was sought as to the method of resolving disputes between the appraiser and the appraisee. It was noted that on such occasions the Head of HR would be asked to consider the situation.

c) Review of Objectives. It was noted that appraisees were not given a grade; the appraisal was a review of a common set of objectives, which had been specified for all staff.

The Committee agreed that a paper should be presented to a future meeting indicating the number of appraisals completed and detailing any issues arising

22.8 Staff Absenteeism

The Committee received a copy of the Staff Absentee Report providing sickness absence statistics for the College for 2010/2011. It was noted that sickness absence statistics show an improvement for 2010/2011 compared with 2009/2010. For 2010/2011 the average percentage days lost per employee at NRC was 3.21% and 8.37 average days lost compared with the sector average of 3.48% and 9.10 days.

The Committee examined a number of tables analysing the College's absence figures for 2010/2011 and 2009/2010 and illustrating the peaks and troughs of staff absences throughout the academic year. It was noted that this was a useful device for anticipating high levels of sickness absence at certain times of the year and would enable a more pro-active approach in reducing these.

It was also noted that the three most common reasons for long-term absences in 2010/2011 were: stress, hospitalisation and limb injury. Long-term absences made a major contribution to the overall cost of sickness absence during 2010/2011, when the direct staffing cost to the College amounted to £626,800.

The Head of Human Resources explained that the College had significantly reduced its sickness absence figures during 2010/2011 and said that improved targets had been set for 2011/2012 at 7.7 days lost per employee or 3% working days lost as a % of days available.

She expressed concern, however, that absenteeism had been high during December 2011 as a result of a number of long-term absences. This may have implications for the 2011/2012 targets.

A Member asked if the College recognised good attendance. The Director stated that a suggestion had been made to this effect, which had resulted in a heated but inconclusive discussion.

22.9 Any Other Notified Business

There was no other notified business.

22.10 Next Meeting

The Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 27 March 2012 at the Ballymena Campus commencing at 7.00 pm.