

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

STAFFING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 31 May 2011 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr S Davidson (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Director),
Mr I Goldsworthy and Mrs L Wallis. The following
Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
joined the Staffing Committee for a joint discussion of minute 19.11:
Mrs K Collins and Mr P McCudden.

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

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

19.1 Apologies

An apology was received from Mrs U O’Kane.

19.2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

19.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 11 April 2011 were approved.

19.4 Matters Arising

19.4.1 Investors In People

The Director informed the Committee that he had received oral feedback in relation the award of Investors In People. The feedback indicated that a further assessment may be necessary in order to achieve the award; a written report would be issued in the near future.

19.5 Chairperson’s Communications

There were no Chairperson’s communications.

19.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

19.7 Staff Absenteeism Report

The Committee received a paper indicating that overall sickness absence statistics for the College for 2009/10 have improved from what was reported for 2008/09. NRC has moved from having the highest level of sickness absence in the sector and is now ranked fourth out of six.

For 2009/10 the average percentage days lost for the sector is 4.27% and the total number of days lost per employee is 11.14. NRC figures of 4.24 % days lost and 10.07 total days lost

per employee are just below the sectoral average. These figures are just short of the College's target of 4.06% and 10.59 working days lost for 2009/2010.

The Head of HR drew the Committee's attention to the following departments, where the number of working days lost for the College is above average:

- Built Environment 20.24
- Estates 20.93 (17.42 for 2008/09)
- Social Care, Early Years, Hair & Beauty 13.2
- Student Services & Marketing 13.88 (16.92 for 2008/09)

The high level of absence is attributable, in the main, to long-term sickness absences. An initial assessment of long-term sickness absence in 2009/10 has revealed that the three most common reasons for absence were: stress, limb injury and post operation debility. The Head of HR advised Members that the College had several measures to assist employees to cope with stress. The Deputy Director of Planning and Resources informed Members that the College relied on managers to identify stress at an early stage and training was being provided for them to assist in the identification process.

Whilst the College sickness absence has improved marginally on last year, management continues to monitor sickness, to examine the efficient implementation of the absence management policy and to ensure awareness of individual employee health and welfare issues. The target for 2010/2011 has remained the same as the 2009/2010 target, 4.06% and 10.59 total days lost per employee.

The Chairman commented that the figures for short-term absence were good but questioned how the College dealt with the high level of long-term absences. The Head of HR informed the Committee that the Occupational Health provision maintains contact with absentees and gets in touch with them at the four-week stage.

19.8 Staffing Committee Action Plan and Annual Report

The Committee considered the following papers:

a) Staffing Committee Action Plan. The Staffing Committee, at its meeting on 2 November 2010, agreed an Action Plan to enable it to review its effectiveness at the final meeting of the academic year. The Committee gave consideration to the Action Plan, which included added comments to enable it to review its effectiveness.

The Committee agreed that the Committee had met its objectives during the academic year 2010/2011

b) Annual Report of Staffing Committee 2010/2011 for submission to Governing Body.

The Staffing Committee received a copy of the Annual Report summarising its activities for submission to the Governing Body.

A Member suggested that the report did not reflect the heavy workload undertaken by members of the Committee and HR staff in the resolution of tribunal and grievance cases.

The Committee agreed that the Report should be revised to indicate the onerous workload and be approved for submission to the Governing Body (Appendix 1).

19.9 Any Other Notified Business

19.9.1 College Employers' Forum

The Director informed the Committee that the Chairman of the Governing Body had forwarded a number of Northern Ireland College Employers' Forum (CEF) circulars including: Contract for Lecturers; Contract of Employment for Hourly Paid Part-Time Lecturers;

Maternity Leave Scheme for Employees in Colleges of Further Education; and Adoption Leave Scheme for Employees in Colleges of Further Education.

It was agreed that these Circulars should be forwarded to appropriate members of staff within the College, who would bring any issue of interest to the Committee.

There was no other notified business.

19.10 Next Meeting

The Committee noted that this would be the last meeting of the Staffing Committee during the academic year 2010/2011. The next meeting of the Staffing Committee is scheduled for 7.00 pm on Tuesday 8 November 2011 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.

The Chairman said that he had been pleased with the progress made by the Committee over the last year and he thanked Members for their contribution. He also thanked Mrs Wallis, who has announced her retirement at the end of the academic year, for her contribution and input to the Committee over the past four years.