

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

STAFFING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 31 March 2014 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

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

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

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

34.1 Apologies

An apology was received from Mr T Neilands.

34.2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

34.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 27 January 2014 were approved subject to the insertion of an apology in respect of Mr Jay.

34.4 Matters Arising

34.4.1 Staff Survey (minute 33.4.1)

The Committee (2 December 2014) considered the Staff Survey Summary. During discussion the Chair stated that it would be interesting to explore variances between campuses. The Director of Finance and Corporate Development provided a paper indicating responses by campus for selected questions.

The Committee noted that there was room for improvement in respect of communications. A member suggested that there was a need for greater EMT visibility at the various campuses and suggested options such as 'a day a month' scheme. Reference was made to responses regarding work-related issues at the various campuses.

In response to a query as to what remedial action was being taken to issues emerging from the Survey, the Director of Finance and Corporate Development affirmed that: an Action Plan had been prepared; Campus meetings, the Principal's Newsletter and HR Clinics were helping to address a number of communication issues highlighted in the Survey; the College intranet was proving useful for the dissemination of information; and each Department had been asked to update their communication plans.

Mrs Moore advised that a new Survey would be undertaken during the summer term.

34.5 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's Communications.

34.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

34.7 Balanced Scorecard KPIs

The Committee received a Progress Report regarding the Balanced Scorecard KPIs 2013/2014 for the Staffing Committee. It was noted that the absentee rate was higher than the previous year and if the trend continues it will be difficult for the College to achieve its target by the year-end. Mrs Laverty, Head of HR and Equality, stated that long term absences had been largely responsible for the higher absentee rate; short-term absentees to date this year were under control. The Chair suggested that consideration should be given to the inclusion of the short-term absence rate as a KPI in future years.

It was noted that there had been an improvement in the staff utilisation rate. Mrs Moore explained that efficiencies were planned in terms of the redundancies identified in 2013/2014 and changes to curriculum delivery patterns which would seek to further improve the utilisation rate next academic year.

Referring to staff appraisals, Mrs Moore stated that a more detailed report on appraisals will be submitted to the next Staffing Committee meeting.

34.8 Review of Industrial Relations

The Committee received the Review of Industrial Relations Framework in the Further Education Sector in Northern Ireland, undertaken by Sir Robert Salisbury at the request of the Board of Colleges Northern Ireland. Several recommendations have been made including a recommendation that 'the Sector needs to take ownership of its employee relations by moving towards an employer led employee relations framework.

Mrs Laverty advised the Committee that there had been a Sector meeting on 5 March 2014, at which unions had been requested to provide their initial response to the recommendations of the Review within a 4-week period.

Mrs Laverty referred the Committee to Recommendation 15, which recommended the appointment of a Task Force comprising Union representatives, College HR staff and DEL representatives, under the auspices of the College Employers Forum, to design a precise project brief, monitor progress, manage the communication process and set out the expected timescale for the projected industrial relations model. The first meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for 17 April 2014.

Mrs Laverty also drew attention to Recommendation 13 regarding the use of the Labour Relations Agency, where agreement cannot be reached between parties at negotiating committee. It was deemed necessary to have a neutral arbitrator to conclude negotiations.

The Committee agreed that

- a) The recommendations of the Industrial Review be endorsed;**
- b) Progress in relation to the implementation of the recommendations of the Industrial Review should be a standing item on the agenda**

34.9 Any Other Notified Business

There was no other notified business

34.10 Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Staffing Committee is scheduled for 5.30 pm on Monday 2 June 2014 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus. **It was agreed that the Committee should meet at 5.30 pm on Monday 9 June 2014**, the date scheduled for the F&GPC meeting, to enable a joint discussions of items of reserved business.