

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

STAFFING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 9 June 2014 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

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

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

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

35.1 Apologies

There were no apologies.

35.2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

35.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 31 March 2014 were approved.

35.4 Matters Arising

35.4.1 Staff Appraisals (minute 34.7)

The Committee received a report on the College's Self-Appraisal Schemes. It was noted that there are currently two sector wide appraisal schemes in operation in the College: the Academic Staff Appraisal Scheme; and the Non-Teaching Staff Appraisal Scheme.

The Academic Staff Appraisal Scheme requires lecturing staff to be appraised once in a two year period. The non-teaching staff appraisal scheme requires support staff to be appraised once each year, with one informal mid-year review also taking place.

It was noted that that the participants involved in the process are the appraiser, the appraisee and where appropriate, an observer. The appraiser is responsible for planning the appraisal interview and will set objectives for the cycle ahead; identifying training needs; assessing performance for the previous cycle; and giving constructive feedback to the appraisee

The Committee noted that the target for completion is 100% and that the projected completion of appraisals by Directorates by 30 June 2014 is as follows: Planning and Customer Services (95%), Curriculum (90%) and Finance and Corporate Development (100%). It was noted that issues that contributed to the lower than target completion rates were: difficulty in appraising part time staff; number of staff to be appraised by each line manager; and long term absences. The College will give consideration to devising a variation on the current scheme for part-time lecturers employed for a limited number of hours per year.

35.5 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's Communications.

35.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

35.7 Balanced Scorecard KPIs

The Committee received a Progress Report regarding the Balanced Scorecard KPIs 2013/2014 for the Staffing Committee. The Committee noted that the Support Staff & Technician structure has been implemented; the staff cost to income ratio and the staff cost to student related income ratio are on target; good progress has been made in relation the Staff Voice target; the absentee ratio (working days lost as a % of working days) is currently in excess of the target at 3.90%; and staff utilisation is slightly below target.

It was explained that the absentee rate was higher than the target due in the main to long term absences. It was noted that absence for April 2014 was lower than for April 2013. It was anticipated that the College would get close to its target by the end of the academic year if the current improving trend continues. The staff utilisation rate was noted and 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.

35.8 FE College Health Check Issue 2 2013/2014

The Committee received the FE College Health Check Report Issue 2 2013/2014 prepared on the 2013/2014 Quarter 2 information provided in March 2014. The Report provides a range of comparative information in financial, economic, staffing, learning and quality areas.

The Committee noted, in particular, Section 1, which provides comparative performance information for the Sector. Staff costs as a % of total income ratio is 72% at NRC, which is outside the DEL target range and staff costs as a % of student related income ratio indicates that NRC is above the Sector average. The definition of this ratio is currently being reviewed by DEL. The Committee also noted that the Part-time Staff as a % of Total Staff ratio was above the Sector average, however, it was noted that the optimum ratio was not determined.

The Committee examined the total staffing cost per head, which indicates that the College has one of the lowest costs in the Sector. This confirmed that the College's lower than sector average staffing to income ratios were income as well as staff cost related. The Principal added that the Tribal Stock Taking Report would consider this issue and should make recommendations. It was anticipated that the Report, or an executive summary and recommendations, may be available for the Governing Body meeting on 25 June 2014.

35.9 Review of Industrial Relations

The Committee received a verbal update on 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. The Staffing Committee (31 March 2014) noted that several recommendations had been made and agreed that progress in relation to their implementation should be a standing item on the agenda.

The Principal referred to the Task Force comprising Union representatives, College HR staff and DEL representatives would meet during the current week to discuss the implementation of the recommendations. The Task Force would be chaired by the Chief Executive Colleges Northern Ireland. It was noted that Sir Robert Salisbury had recommended that the process be employer led.

35.10 Overview of HR Strategy

The Committee received a Report providing an overview of the proposed format of the HR Strategy. It was noted that a full strategy will be presented during 2014/15, once the outcome of the Tribal Report has been received and a review of the College vision has been completed. The Strategy would bring together existing HR strands and make reference to the Vision Statement

The Committee endorsed the proposed format of the HR Strategy.

35.11 Staffing Committee Action Plan 2014/2015

The Committee considered and approved its Action Plan for 2014/2015 (see Appendix 1)

35.12 Staffing Committee Annual Report 2013/2014

The Committee approved its Annual Report for 2013/2014 and agreed that it should be submitted to the Governing Body (see Appendix 2).

35.13 Section 75 Annual Progress Report

The Committee received the Section 75 Annual Progress Report 2013/2014. It was noted that Part A of the Report highlights the key policy/service developments made by the College during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Mrs Laverty noted the progress made embedding equality into the curriculum and advised the Committee that the Equality Officer had issued guidance to all Teaching Staff on equality issues. It was noted that equality issues were also included in Staff Surveys. An equality module has been part of the tutorial programme for several years.

During the period of the Report, the College developed or reviewed a number of policies, which promote Equality of Opportunity. A new Employee Standards Policy was introduced for all staff, which aims to promote respect amongst staff, the Equal Opportunities Policy for staff was reviewed and implemented and a new Good Relations and Cultural Diversity Policy has been developed and will be implemented in 2014/2015. Dignity at Work, Revised Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave and Paternity Leave Policies were also approved. It was noted that a detailed Report on Employment Policies would be forwarded to the September meeting.

A member, referring to the recent controversy regarding extremism in English schools, was informed that the College has a very low percentage of students of religions other than Christianity. Mrs Laverty said that statistics were gathered annually regarding religious denominations at the College. She stated that the College had addressed a number of issues in relation to diversity in recent years.

The Committee noted that an update, as at March 2014, had been provided regarding the College's Disability Action Plan 2013 – 2018.

The Committee approved the plan and recommended that it should be submitted to the ECNI.

35.14 Any Other Notified Business

The Committee noted that:

a) The Internal Auditors had issued a substantial assurance in relation to Human Resources with no recommendations. The Committee congratulated Mrs Laverty and her team on a very successful outcome;

- b) The sad death of Ms Aine Lynch, Head of School after a lengthy illness; and
- c) Mrs Lavery had obtained a Post Graduate Certificate in Shared Services.

Mr Davidson indicated that this was the Committee's final meeting of the academic year 2013/2014 and he thanked Members of the Committee and Senior Members of Staff in attendance for their assistance in the conduct of Committee business

35.15 Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Staffing Committee has been rearranged for Monday 29 September 2014 at 5.30 pm.