

Northern Regional College

Governing Body

Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 19 February 2025 in Newtownabbey campus commencing at 5.00pm.

The meeting commenced following a presentation by the Innovation Team including Mr C Fairless, Mr E McGahon, Dr R McKee and Dr A Pedlow, Mr A Reid at 4.30pm.

Present: Mr K Nelson (Chair), Mrs L Crilly (Teams), Mr B Devlin, Dr P Graham, Ms J Hemphill, Mr M Higgins, Mr A Hoey, Mr G McAllister, Mr D MacAuley (Teams), Mrs McGovern, Ms D McIlwaine, Mr R McKernan, Mrs P Martin (Teams), Mr I Murphy, Mr B Patterson, Mr S Shevlin (Teams), Mr D Small, Mrs J Taggart

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery

Also in Attendance: Ms A McDowell, Innovation and Consultancy Services, ICS

Secretary: Mrs K Wallace

125.1 Apologies None.

It was agreed that item 125.7 be taken at this point in the meeting.

125.7 External Effectiveness Review

The Chair welcomed Ms Anne McDowell, ICS to the meeting. Referring to the NRC draft report provided, Ms McDowell took members through the section 4 conclusions and recommendations. She answered members' questions on a number of issues including risk register, succession plan, continuity planning and skills matrix, and noted comments.

The Chair advised a 10-14 day feedback period for members, with the final plan to be presented at the meeting on 26 March. The Chair stated a sector composite report will be available in the summer.

Members would feed back any comments to the Secretary, for submission to ICS.

Members welcomed the results of the external evaluation and noted that this would be repeated 3-yearly, in line with best practice.

The Chair thanked Ms McDowell for attending, following which she left the meeting.

125.2 Declaration of Interests None. Members were reminded they could also notify the Secretary during the meeting of any declarations.

125.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024 were approved.

Proposed: PG Seconded: DS

125.4 Matters Arising

Members noted the latest position in respect of the Sector collaboration report and noted the letter which had been attached under Chair's Communications. Also that staff engagement events had taken place.

125.5 Chair's Communications

KN congratulated PG on his recent appointment to Wellington College Board of Governors and reported good attendance at staff engagement sessions on 10 and 17 January. Members noted the date of 03.04.2025 for the Accountability meeting.

DfE Strategy Event on 05.12.2024 and Partnership Event on 20.01.2025: presentations were noted.

RMK joined the meeting at 5.25pm.

CEF: MH referred to the Department's letter of 02.01.2025 to FE Chairs and Principals (provided) and to correspondence from BMC of 09.01.2025 confirming their re-engagement with CEF (provided). Members heard that FE Chairs & Principals had met on 9 January and that the Permanent Secretary had met with Chairs and Principals earlier in the day (19 February) to discuss moving ahead sector collaboration in-line with the Minister's criteria. Referring to the TOR for the CEF Constitution, MH outlined further correspondence which had taken place with the Department.

Following discussion, KN highlighted that the earlier meeting with the Department had been good and advised that members' views on the queries outlined would be taken to the next meeting with the FE Chairs and Principals on 25th March 2025.

Training: KN reported good uptake of Employee Relations and ESG training and noted that Effective Governance Training would take place on 20.02.2025.

123.6 Strategy Day Feedback

Members considered notes from the strategy day along with the summary of governors' feedback on the event.

Timescale for development of the 3-year strategy to be discussed further under reserved matters.

125.8 Principal's Report

In the context of the report, members heard that the position with CEF had now moved on, the

CDP was now online and budget would be taken under reserved matters.

MH highlighted the success of recent College open days across campuses, with significantly increased applications at the current position. Referring to the recent staff awards event, he thanked members who had attended and noted staff's appreciation for their participation.

Members noted the update on finance and welcomed the College's active involvement in the Larne Community Wealth Building Partnership.

125.9 Education Committee

PG presented the draft minutes of 20.11.2024 and gave an overview of matters discussed at the meeting, and congratulated AH for his diligence in his role as Student President. He reported his attendance at an excellent CPD childcare event the previous week.

The minutes of the meeting on 20.11.2024 were endorsed.

The Safeguarding Policy Framework 2024/25 was approved.

The Annual QIP Return 2024/25 was noted.

125.10 Resources Committee

IM presented the draft minutes of 27.01.2025 and gave a brief overview of progress on matters considered at the meeting. The minutes were endorsed.

125.11 Financial Accounts Improvement Committee

The GB considered the Committee Terms of Reference (TOR), draft minutes of meetings on 21.01.2025 and 04.02.2025, and the Improvement Plan.

MH outlined the background and rationale to the set up of the FAIC and clarified information shared with the Department, response to which was awaited. Members noted that future need for the Committee would be reviewed in Autumn 2025.

MH considered that the FAIC, with the TOR presented, was effective to ensure oversight and procedure for reporting back to the GB and Committees.

Committee retrospectively approved the establishment and membership of the FAIC and agreed the TOR. The minutes of 21.01.2025 and 04.02.2025, and the Improvement Plan, were endorsed.

KN confirmed that he was content with GB's ownership and oversight of the FAIC and had advised the Director of FE accordingly.

CMG referred to the importance of the Internal Audit of Key Financial Controls and asked if it would be completed in March 2025. SL confirmed that normal internal audit processes were scheduled for March but that timings could be flexed based on additional audit needs.

MH advised that an internal audit to look at the overall Improvement Plan, currently operating as a high-level review, was being considered.

DMI sought and received clarification on the current position with Departmental and College accounts and audits, and on reasons for increased applications for the post of College Accountant.

The GB confirmed acceptance of the additional oversight arrangements and need for regular updates to the committees and GB.

125.12 Audit & Risk Committee

The draft minutes of meeting on 16.12.2024 were endorsed.

Dr Graham left the meeting at 6.15pm, having left comments on reserved items with DS.

125.13 New Build Update

The New Build Update was taken as read and noted by members.

125.14 Any Other Business

MH outlined the details of a request for career break from a member of the support staff and recommended approval.

The GB approved the career break application.

125.13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 26.03.2025 in Farm Lodge.

The meeting ended at 6.18pm.

Mr K Nelson 

Chair

Date 26.03.25

Mrs K Wallace 

Secretary