

## **Northern Regional College**

### **Governing Body – Unreserved Business**

**Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on Tuesday 20 June 2023 in Farm Lodge commencing at 5.00pm.**

**Present:** Mr K Nelson (Chair), Mr K Chambers, Dr P Graham, Mr M Higgins, Mr W Hutchinson, Mr D MacAuley, Ms D McIlwaine, Ms Y Mallon, Mrs P Martin, Mr G McAllister (on Teams), Mr W McCluggage, Mr R McKernan, Mr I Murphy, Mr S Shevlin, Mr D Small

**In Attendance:** Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery, Ms J Small

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

#### **116.1 Apologies**

Ms A Morrow, Mrs L Crilly, Ms J Hemphill.

#### **116.2 Declaration of Interests**

None.

#### **116.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Mr McCluggage                      Seconded: Dr Graham

#### **116.4 Matters Arising**

None.

#### **116.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence**

- a) Members attended a site visit of the new Farm Lodge campus and Mr Lavery outlined progress at the new campus development.
- b) Members agreed the draft Meetings Schedule 2023/24 and noted focus on a blended approach to meetings in the coming year. The Chair highlighted the GB Strategy Day scheduled for 24 January 2024.
- c) Members noted that Mr Tom Dornan had been elected College Student President 2023/24 and agreed that his details be put forward to the Department for appointment as Student Governor for the new academic year.
- d) The DfE letter of 1 June 2023 advising a 'low' assessment of College risk was welcomed and an expected tangible outcome in relation to oversight noted.

e) Members were encouraged to complete the DfE Governing Body Self-Assessment survey 2022/23 which they had received directly from DfE. Closing date for the survey is 30 June 2023.

f) The Chair gave an update on engagements undertaken from 26 April to 20 June 2023. He highlighted a substantial increase in the number of CEF meetings which had taken place during this period and referred to the role of the Principal on behalf of the College. The Chair reported an excellent day at the Entrepreneurship Hub PBL competition, along with Dr Graham. He also drew attention to the Open University (OU) lunch and degree ceremony, at which Mr John D'Arcy, Regional Academic Staff Director Ireland, had been very complementary about the College. Finally, he reminded members that the annual assessment interviews would take place on 27 June and 6 July, and would be an opportunity to get perspective on how the GB had performed over the year.

### **116.6 Principal's Report**

In the context of the report, the Principal highlighted a number of key issues, viz:

- The Departmental meeting with Principals on 8 June at which shared priorities were discussed on the basis of funding allocated at this point in time.
- The first meeting of the College Impact Assessment Sub-Group and subsequent plan to engage with the Department and FE colleges on the impact measurement theme at a sector-wide level. The Principal thanked the four governors who had taken part in the Sub-Group.
- Plans to maximise enrolment days in August and potential impact from further industrial action.
- Concern around a possible increase in tuition fees by the Department and the impact this would have for the College on enrolments and on widening participation.
- Student and staff achievements over the year were acknowledged. However, the Principal was sorry to report the death of a student at the weekend, unexpectedly whilst on holiday. The thoughts of the students, staff and governors of the College were with the family.
- Funding secured through business engagement would be used to support staff utilisation on delivery of work going forward.

Ms Small outlined work taking place on projects, proposed roll-out of new projects and potential new funding streams. Members noted the short term nature of forthcoming funding and plans for relevant use of existing staff and through fixed term appointments.

In relation to the refreshed competency framework for future appointments, members were reassured that this had been carried out in line with OD supported by Baker Tilly Mooney Moore demonstrating best practice and communicated effectively to staff.

In response to a member's request, Mr Lavery advised that the Estates Strategy had been reviewed by the Department and the final report approved by the Resources Committee on 12 June.

**Action: The Estates Strategy would be uploaded to the College website.**

#### **116.7 Education Committee**

The draft Committee minutes of 10 May 2023 were endorsed.

Mr Chambers commended the work carried out on impact assessment and subsequently as part of shared priorities.

#### **116.8 Audit & Risk Committee**

The draft Committee minutes of 31 May 2023 were endorsed.

**Action: GB approved the change in the Accounting Year date and the change of phrase to 'Speak Up Champion'.**

Mr McCluggage reported that all data protection policies had been updated before the meeting and commended Ms Kerr and her team for due diligence in getting these through the final meeting of the academic year.

Mr McCluggage thanked members of the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC), finance and internal governance teams, and GB members for their support during his tenure. He especially thanked Mrs Martin for agreeing to take up the position of Committee Chair from 1 August and noted that a Vice Chair would be appointed in due course.

The Principal advised that the audit strategy had not been available from NIAO in time to be presented to the ARC meeting but had instead been received by email at the start of the current GB meeting. In the light of this it was agreed that, once reviewed, the audit strategy be shared with members of the ARC for their response.

**Action: Audit Strategy to be circulated to ARC members.**

#### **116.9 Resources Committee**

Mr Murphy provided a verbal update of the meeting held on 12 June 2023. He commended the Estates team for an excellent strategy report and detailed plan of refurbishment work, subject to budget. He noted that whilst the budget position for the current year was better than had been expected, the coming year would provide a challenge.

In response to a member's query, Mr Lavery advised that any further or additional work not identified in the strategy would require separate funding via a business case.

Members noted that all safeguarding training had now been completed and the Chair acknowledged Ms Murdoch's efforts in achieving this challenging target.

#### **116.10 Finance Update**

The GB noted the finance report which had been reviewed by Resources Committee on 12 June. Mr Lavery highlighted that savings required of the College by the Department had been as expected, with the Department having funded some pay and cost of living pressures.

Mr Murphy commended the Principal and Mr Lavery for work done on achieving this position. The Principal agreed that this was a reasonable result but cautioned that the Permanent Secretary had notified a more challenging situation in 2024/25.

#### **116.11 CDP Progress Report**

Ms Small summarised the current status of the CDP Progress Report, which had previously been considered at Education Committee and Resources Committee before being submitted to the Department on 4 May 2023.

The report was noted.

#### **116.12 Strategic Plan Update**

Consideration was given to this report and progress made in the first year noted.

Members heard that proposed targets for year 2 would be brought to the first GB meeting of 2023/24, however at this stage, due to funding a number of the targets have been classified as red or amber. The Chair advised members that the second year of the Plan would be considered further at the Strategy Day to be held on 24 January 2024, when the situation should be clearer.

In response to a question from Mr Small, Mr Lavery confirmed that in-year financial stability was currently being met. However, the risk was shown as red in the Plan due to uncertainty around longer-term financial sustainability due to the budget not being fully baselined.

#### **116.13 New Build Update**

Mr Lavery presented the update and thanked Mr McCluggage and Mr Murphy for their work and involvement on the New Build Project Board (NBPB).

Members noted the key milestones of the Coleraine build, which would be ready for service in September 2024, with local engagement ongoing and a bid for extra funding towards achieving net zero sustainability in process.

The Chair welcomed progress made on this project.

#### **116.14 Any Other Business**

On behalf of the GB and the College membership, the Chair extended deep appreciation to the retiring members, Ms Mallon, Mr Chambers, Mr McCluggage and Mr Hutchinson, for their work for the College. He also extended thanks to Ms Morrow for her contribution as Student Governor.

The Principal highlighted the increase in status of the College since the beginning of the 2022/23 year, based on enrolments, achievements and outcomes, directly due to Governing Body members' stewardship.

Outgoing members voiced their appreciation to members of the SLT for a collegiate and collaborative working relationship, and to the GB Secretary for her support. Thanks, was also extended to the NBPB Programme Manager for her assistance.

The Chair advised that membership of Committees would be looked at in due course.

#### **116.15 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 4 October 2023 in Farm Lodge.

The meeting ended at 6.06pm.

Mr K Nelson



Chair

Date 4 October 2023

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary