

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Monday 22 February 2021 via Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mr B McGahan (Chair), Mrs I Allison, Mr K Chambers, Ms A Close, Ms A Dynes, Dr P Graham, Mrs M Hamilton, Ms Y Mallon, Dr K McCambridge, Mr W McCluggage, Mrs G McConnell, Mr T Montgomery, Mr I Murphy, Prof T Scott and Mr G Wilkinson

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Mr B Bryson, Mr M Higgins, Ms J Small
Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

99.1 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed Mr B Bryson, newly appointed Head of Quality & Change Management, who was in attendance as an observer.

Apologies were noted for Mr Hutchinson.

99.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

99.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2020 were agreed.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mrs Hamilton

99.4 Matters Arising

The following was noted:

- information on the October meeting of College Chairs with the Director of FE, and on New Build Project milestones, had been previously circulated to members;
- financial implications of draft fees and charges policy had been presented to the January meeting of Resources Committee;
- the finance training presentation had been uploaded to the Decision Time library;
- the Raising Concerns Policy was not yet finalised and would be taken to Audit & Risk on 10 March and brought to the Governing Body meeting on 24 March 2021 for approval.

99.5 Chair's Communication

The Chair updated members on the status of the NRC Chair recruitment exercise, appointment from which was likely to be made late May/early June 2021. Given an expected date of November 2021 for governor appointments, the Chair would seek clarification from the Director of FE on how positions would be covered in the interim.

The minutes of the NRC Accountability meeting on 20 January 2021, Chaired by the Permanent Secretary, were noted.

The minutes of the meeting of Chairs with the Director of FE on 14 January 2021, were noted. It was anticipated that meetings would be held 4-5 times a year.

The Chair outlined the current position on negotiations between the College Employers' Forum (CEF) negotiations with Unions. Members noted that, notwithstanding positive and constructive discussions on both sides, a Union had now declared a trade dispute with the Minister for the Economy in relation to pay.

99.6 Correspondence

Information on additional allocation from the January Monitoring Round was noted.

99.7 Principal's Report

Prof Scott spoke to her report noting, in particular, information on the Annual Accountability Meeting; improved learner outcomes; student engagement and retention; on-track status of the New Build Project; Covid-19 update; staff awards 2019/20; and the College's online Open Day which will launch on 1 March.

Mr McCluggage commended staff on the success of the virtual 2020 HE and Access Graduation. Ms Close was thanked for her contribution to the online event.

Members noted their appreciation for additional monies received from the Department and the 'Access to IT' scheme. The challenge for the College to develop a strategy for monitoring the extensive increase in number of devices, and the resultant impact on increase of data files, was highlighted. In particular, the funding to support future refresh of the laptops acquired. The importance of upskilling of students in the digital learning environment was emphasised.

ACTION: Monitoring update on student use of digital content would be brought to the Education Committee on 18 March.

Prof Scott reported on activities in place to encourage staff/student engagement and wellbeing during Covid-19 restrictions and members noted that it was proposed to share examples of best practice across the College.

99.8 Resources Committee

The draft minutes of the Resources Committee meeting on 11 January 2021 were noted.

99.9 SER/QIP

Ms Small presented the SER/QIP documents and outlined recommendations made at the Education Committee meeting on 16 February, for members' consideration and approval. The Governing Body noted that, following that meeting, the submission had been reviewed to incorporate suggestions made by governors. All changes had been appraised by Education Committee members prior to the Governing Body meeting.

Ms Small expanded on a number of issues at members' requests including course retention figures, taking note of employer feedback and tracking of students into employment.

The Governing Body recognised the exceptional amount of work which had gone into the report and asked that their appreciation, to all staff involved, be put on record.

ACTIONS: the Governing Body agreed the following actions:

- That the "Annual Submission Document – Feb 2021" (including the Whole College QIP for 2020/21) be approved and submitted to DfE by 26 February 2021.
- That the "Annual Assurance Statement for FE" be signed by the Chair of the Governing Body.
- That the "HLA Evaluation for 2019/20" be approved and submitted to DfE by 26 February 2021.

- That the “Annual Quality Assessment Return on HE Provision” be signed by the Principal as Accounting Officer.

99.10 Education Committee

The minutes of the Education Committee meeting on 17 November 2020 were noted.

A verbal update of the meeting on 16 February 2021 was noted.

99.11 Audit & Risk Committee

The minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 18 November 2020 were noted.

Mr McCluggage highlighted NIAO’s very positive comments on the quality of interaction experienced with the College.

99.12 Finance Update

Mr Higgins presented the College financial update to January 2021 and reported that the Emergency Efficiency plan and the Financial Objectives were on target for 2020/21. He highlighted the College’s revised allocation of £29,706k, reflecting additional in-year funding and Covid-19 funding. Members noted that not all of the additional in-year funding had been baselined.

In response to a question by Ms Mallon, Prof Scott and Mr Higgins outlined health & wellbeing initiatives and CPD sessions put in place to support staff. In terms of flexible working arrangements for staff, Prof Scott advised that resources being put in to support curriculum delivery were based on justification for investment.

99.13 Any Other Business

Mr Wilkinson agreed to give a presentation on the Skills Strategy at the next meeting.

ACTION: The presentation on Skills Strategy to take place at the start of the March Governing Body meeting.

99.14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 24 March 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 6.37pm



Mr B McGahan _____

Date 24 March 2021

(Chair)



Mrs K Wallace _____

(Secretary)