

Northern Regional College

Governing Body

Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 22 November 2023 on MS Teams commencing at 5.00pm.

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

In Attendance: Mr S Lavery, Ms J Small

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

118.1 Apologies

Mr Dornan and Mrs Brown.

118.2 Declaration of Interests

Dr Graham noted his relationship to the Chief Inspector of ETI.

118.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr Small

118.4 Matters Arising

Members noted that Mr McAllister had rejoined the Education Committee and that Ms Small's presentation later in the meeting would provide an update on relationships with funding bodies. All other matters had been completed.

118.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

The Chair updated governors on a full programme of Chair's meetings and events from October and over the Christmas and New Year period. Upcoming meetings including College graduation events on 13 December with Mr Peter McKittrick, US Consulate as one of the guest speakers; meeting with the Deputy Secretary and Director of FE on 18 December; campus visits scheduled for January 2024; accountability meeting to be scheduled in January/February 2024. Referring to the Strategy Day, the date of which had been changed to 6 February 2024 to allow DfE to attend, he suggested that the date for the GB meeting be moved from 7 February to follow the strategy meeting on 6 February.

Action: The GB meeting scheduled for 7 February would be moved to 6 February to

follow the Strategy event.

A number of governors asked that this event be held in a location close to Belfast.

The Chair congratulated the Principal on his appointment to the Board of Trustees of World Skills UK and endorsed the appointment on behalf of the GB.

Members noted the results of the GB Self Assessment 2022-23 and DfE's notice of amendment relating to an error on new appointee numbers. In relation to members' comments in the report, the Chair highlighted the requests for training and encouraged new members to attend the training events organised by DfE if possible.

Action: Uptake on training would be reviewed in the new year to identify any gaps. The possibility of working with other colleges to supplement this training would be considered if necessary.

118.6 Principal's Report

The Principal spoke to his report and highlighted a number of key points including: engagement with Scottish and Irish FE Principals/CEOs; request for support from ETI on ES quality improvement planning; CDP final submission date of 11 December 2023 (subsequently revised to 18 December by DfE). With no GB or Committee meeting in December, it is proposed to present the CDP at the end of the training meeting on 4 December for governors' endorsement. GB heard that this CDP template development represented a move towards an outcome based approach aligning to 10X.

Members were informed that further discussion on the bilateral would be held in the reserved meeting.

5.18pm Mrs Crilly joined the meeting.

An extensive number of staff and student achievement awards were reported and the quality of staff teaching and student learning commended. It was noted that an improvement in ES outcomes would bring the College into line with its outcome targets.

Mr Small welcomed the impressive achievements and encouraged maximum promotion of same.

118.7 Management Statement and Financial Memorandum

The MSFM was presented for annual note. Mr Lavery anticipated that this would be replaced with the Partnership Agreement in future governance arrangements.

Action: The Governing Body noted the MSFM.

118.8 Draft Fees and Charges Policy 2024/25

Mr Laverty presented the draft policy and advised a proposal for the Strategic Alliance Group (SAG) to align fees and charges for 2024/25. He advised that no significant changes to the fee regulations for the College were envisaged for 2024/25.

Action: The GB approved the Fees Policy 2024/25 and agreed delegation of the Fee Regulations to the SAG Corporate Services (CS) Workstream.

118.9 Resources Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting on 12 October 2023 were endorsed.

Mr Laverty reported that initial investigations across all campuses hadn't identified any RAAC and no remediation work was required.

118.10 Education Committee

GB noted the membership update to the Education Committee Terms of Reference (ToR). Dr Graham advised that the ToR would be reviewed in 2024/25 to ensure strategic alignment to any relevant NI Executive action.

Dr Graham provided a verbal update of the meeting on 14 November 2023 and referenced ongoing updates to the industrial action position; improvement and enrolments update; a very positive DfE commissioned report on HLA with the Department considering streamlining of future funding, claims and policy processes; development of a Committee programme of work for the coming year. He stated his intention to write to ETI to request a meeting on a number of issues.

Mrs Crilly advised nothing further to report on safeguarding.

The Principal updated on the current position on industrial action, and a number of potential strike actions to take place across November 2023 and January 2024. He advised efforts to ensure students are as prepared as possible for upcoming exams including engagement with the Regulator and support and interventions by the College.

The Chair considered that the situation was being handled as well as possible and congratulated the Principal and College team for their continued work to develop mitigations.

118.11 Audit & Risk Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting on 27 September 2023 were endorsed.

Mrs Martin reported that timing of work on accounts had required rescheduling of the next meeting to 11 December. As a result it was proposed that delegated powers be given to the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) to approve the Annual Report & Accounts at the meeting on

11 December 2023.

The Principal advised that the normal processes for approving the annual accounts allowed delegation of authority if needed. He highlighted that NIAO will then provide verification and issue a Report To those Charged With Governance (RTTCWG). He noted the slippage in timing due to NIAO's work on both Department year end and College year end accounts in 2023 and provided apologies to GB for any delays caused by the College.

Mr Murphy emphasised that approval had not yet been received for additional funding for the new builds. The Principal advised that approval was expected shortly but that the current position would be reflected in the Annual Accounts in the meantime.

Action: Agreed that delegated authority be given to the ARC to approve the Annual Accounts.

Dr Graham advised that he will be travelling on 11 December but would endeavour to take part in the meeting, especially for quorum requirements.

The Principal noted that pressures with annual accounts had resulted in correspondence from the Department, which would be dealt with separately.

Members noted the update to the ARC membership in the revised Committee Terms of Reference.

118.12 New Build Update

GB noted the Capital Steering Group presentation. Mr Lavery reported that final approval on addendum finance was awaited from DoF with DfE having already approved the addendum and additional in-year budget allocated. Any narrative for the year-end accounts would reflect the latest approved position from the Department to align with figures.

118.13 Strategic Plan, Year 2 Targets

Ms Small presented a report on the proposed targets for the 2nd year, 2024/25, of the 3-year Strategic Plan. She highlighted that since setting success measures for the Plan in 2022/23, the sector had experienced severe budget cuts which might warrant mediation of those success measures.

Members noted the targets outlined and that, whilst the College was moving in the right direction, funding cuts had impacted a number of areas eg performance levels and work with people.

In response to a member's query, Mr Lavery advised that the draft NIAO report would be considered by the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) when available, after which it could be circulated to the GB.

Action: Draft NIAO report to be circulated to GB members after consideration by ARC members.

118.14 Any Other Business

None.

118.15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 6 February at 4.00pm or immediately following the GB Strategy Day.

The meeting ended at 5.56pm.

Mr K Nelson



Chair

Date 6 February 2024

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary