

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 23 March 2022 in Newtownabbey campus, commencing at 5.00pm.

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

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery, Ms J Small and Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

107.1 Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded members that the timeframe for meetings was 90 minutes, on the basis that all papers had been pre-read.

Apologies were recorded for Mr Chambers, Mrs Crilly and Mr McSorley.

107.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest. Members were reminded that interests could also be recorded through the Secretary.

107.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 were approved.

Proposed: Mr Murphy Seconded: Mr Hutchinson

107.4 Matters Arising

None.

107.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

GB and Committees: Members were asked to review the content of GB and Committee papers and agendas, once released, with feedback and comments to be raised with the Secretary in writing prior to the meetings.

Action: Responses re agendas and papers would be considered during a short, non-executive session of the meeting, on 22 June 2022.

The Chair stated his intention to drop in on a meeting of each Committee once a year, to inform the annual performance process. He reminded Committee Chairs that he was also available to attend any Committee meeting, or to speak with them, by request to the Secretary.

5.05pm Mr McAllister and Ms Mallon joined the meeting.

Review of Draft Partnership Agreement: The Principal presented his review of the Draft Partnership Agreement document and highlighted areas of increased significance for the Chair and GB.

Members considered and debated the review report and a number of issues arising were noted by the Principal. Members were invited to submit feedback on the document to the Principal for inclusion in final response to the Department on 8 April 2022.

Action: Members' comments on the Agreement to be submitted to the Principal by 31 March 2022.

Review of FE: Members agreed to invite the Director of FE to the June meeting of GB to talk about the way ahead and the role FE has to play.

Action: Donna Blaney to be invited to the GB meeting on 22 June 2022.

Visit to Coleraine on 9 March: Members noted that the Minister was unable to attend the meeting in Coleraine due to illness. Planned proceedings had gone ahead and the Chair reported an excellent engagement event with Causeway Coast & Glens representatives and Chief Executive; NRC staff, teams, apprentices; and New Build Project Board members.

Meeting with Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council representatives on 23 March: The Chair reported very useful engagement and feedback between Councillors and College officers at the event held earlier in the day. He thanked everyone involved in organising the meeting.

Feedback from Governance induction on 2 March. Members noted the feedback report on this session, along with a verbal summary of the key points arising from the report and the training.

Governors were also reminded of the Effective Governance Training sessions being run by the Department on 25 and 28 March.

Feedback from Strategy Day on 11 March: Ms Small presented an update on developments with the Strategic Plan following the recent strategy day, and thanked everyone for their input to the session. She advised that an updated report would be brought to the Strategy Group meeting on 11 April, following consultation with the SLT. There was some discussion with a number of points made in relation to the draft vision and mission statements as well as the proposed outcomes. All members were invited to offer suggestions on the structure of the strategic plan and vision statement, for consideration by the Group.

Action: Members' comments on the structure of the strategic plan and vision statement to be submitted to the Secretary, for consideration by the Strategy Group.

107.6 Principal's Report

The Principal presented his report and highlighted, in particular, the following:

- Agreement on lecturers' pay remit for 2019/20 and 2020/21. He reported minimal impact for the College of current strike action and that new pay negotiations for 2021/22 will commence.

The Chair thanked Mr Higgins for his significant work on pay negotiations.

- Applications for 2021/22 with a substantial increase on applications for the past 2-years expected. The Principal noted a request for figures to be stated as % expected annually.

Action: Application figures to be provided in % form for comparison purposes.

- Covid restrictions requiring masks to be worn in colleges remain in place, pending further guidance from the DfE and PHA.

The report was noted.

107.7 Education Committee

In the absence of Mr Chambers, Dr Graham updated members on issues considered at the meeting on 28 February and the circulation of the audit report on Teacher Assessed Grades, noting there was no impact on outcomes for learners. Members noted the updated Education Committee Terms of Reference and the draft minutes of the meeting on 28 February 2022.

Mrs Brown spoke to her report on Traineeships. She outlined the context and stated aim for the strategy; provision of courses in the current academic year; and sectoral challenges to future progress including the potential for delayed implementation. Mrs Brown drew members' attention to the financial implications of changing from an FE delivery model to traineeships and the request from the Advanced Technicals and Traineeship Implementation Group (ATTIG) for direction from the Department to enable future planning. Members heard that a sectoral workshop would take place on 24 March 2022 to further consider the issues.

Mrs Brown advised on the September 2022 schedule for introduction of L2 Traineeships and a sector wide emphasis on the need for staff training. She reported that a proposal would be taken through the Resources Committee on 4 April 2022, as part of a wider review of WBL staff resource.

The Principal emphasised that the Traineeship programme represented a fundamental change in curriculum across FE in terms of course timescales and implications for staff, resources and finance. Members noted that the FE sector was keen to progress implementation of the strategy.

107.8 Audit & Risk Committee

Mr McCluggage presented the draft minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2022 and provided a brief summary of issues considered, 3 internal audit reports, final report to those charged with governance, information governance review and comprehensive review of College risk register. Mr Murphy congratulated the SLT on achieving an unqualified audit opinion and members noted the draft minutes and the updated Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference.

107.9 Governance Update

Members considered and approved the report on Risk Appetite and recommendations contained therein.

Consideration was given to the Corporate Risk Register to March 2022 and it was noted that Risk 10 should be recorded as having moved to green following the NBPB meeting. The Risk Register and the Annual Assurance Statement were noted for submission to the Department, subject to this amendment.

The Chair sought agreement on the contents of the Annual Assurance statement and GB confirmed agreement to submit.

Action: The Risk Register would be amended and the Assurance Statement to be submitted to the Department.

107.10 Budget Update

Members were advised of the confidential nature of this update, presented by Mr Lavery, which had been prepared purely for planning purposes based on the initial proposed budget allocation.

The College opening allocation for 2022/23 was noted along with an initial assessment of College activities for 2022-2025 and an analysis of expenditure across the sector.

Implications of scenarios would be assessed by the Resources Committee on 4 April 2022.

Action: In response to a request by Mr Small, Mr Lavery agreed to provide figures on relative costs across colleges.

Members would be kept fully informed on the budget process.

107.11 Any Other Business

None.

107.12 Date of Next Meeting

Strategy Group meeting on 11 April 2022 via Microsoft Teams.

Next meeting of the Governing Body on 27 April 2022 in Magherafelt campus, commencing with a staff engagement session at 4.30pm.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and participation in the meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.29pm.

Mr K Nelson 

Date 27 April 2022

Chair

Mrs K Wallace 

Secretary