

Northern Regional College

Governing Body – Unreserved Business

Minutes of the Unreserved Meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 24 March 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, Mr W Hutchinson, 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 M Higgins, Ms J Small

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

100.1 Apologies

No apologies.

100.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

Members noted that the meeting was being recorded for the purposes of the Minutes.

100.3 Presentation

Mr Wilkinson presented the DfE 'Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland', highlighting the impact of key economic constraints on the Province, drivers of future change, recommendations and action plans. Mr Wilkinson noted that the findings presented in the report were reflective of the comments in the 2020 OECD Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, which he also recommended to members.

5.12pm Mrs McConnell joined the meeting.

Members debated and examined the Strategy and, in particular, the Skills Action Plan summary. Mr Wilkinson clarified a number of key points and identified his colleague, Mr Jim Wilkinson, as the authority on apprenticeships and Level 3 awards.

5.19pm Mr Hutchinson joined the meeting.

Members noted the potential for a shortfall in future capacity of FE colleges in relation to the Strategy.

The Chair thanked Mr Wilkinson for his presentation and indicated that a meeting with Mr Jim Wilkinson from DfE might be useful for the future.

100.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2021 were agreed subject to a change to the date recorded for the Governing Body meeting.

Proposed: Mrs Allison Seconded: Mr Murphy

The minutes of the reserved meeting held on 22 February 2021 were agreed.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mrs Hamilton

100.5 Matters Arising

Members noted that the monitoring update on digital content was included in the Education Committee meeting on 18 March and that the SER/QIP documents had been submitted/signed off as previously agreed.

The Principal reported that ETi had advised an award of 'A' grade for the College, and that feedback would be made available to staff when confirmed. The Principal asked that her thanks to Governors for undertaking extra meetings to review documents, provide feedback and offer suggestions, be placed on record.

The Chair welcomed the excellent outcome for the College and the team.

100.6 Chair's Communication

The Chair updated members on the results of the Unions' ballot on pay negotiations for lecturers, strike action having taken place on 24th March 2021 and further action planned from 25th March onwards. Whilst recognising Union members right to ballot, he nevertheless expressed disappointment at the action taken when negotiations were ongoing.

The Chair informed members that a meeting of the Entrepreneurship Hub would take place on 21 April. Any members interested in attending were asked to contact the Secretary.

The Chair reminded members of the mandatory online training previously notified.

100.7 Correspondence

Members noted correspondence on College Development Plans 2021/22 and the CDP Progress Report Commissioning Memo. Ms Small highlighted the tight turnaround on the report, which required submission by 16 April, due to the Easter holidays. An update would be presented to the Resources Committee on 14th April and the Education Committee on 5 May.

100.8 Principal's Report

The Principal spoke to her report and highlighted key topics including student retention, extension to the Ballymena campus new build tender and lessons learned from recent cyber attacks within education establishments..

ACTION: The Principal will follow up on Mr Murphy's suggestion for use of additional cyber security training to reduce incidents of human error.

Members noted the impact of lecturers' strike action on students and work carried out to mitigate disruption and ensure availability of lessons.

100.9 Education Committee

Draft minutes of the Education Committee unreserved and reserved meetings on 16 February 2021 were noted.

Mrs Allison gave a verbal update of the meeting on 18 March. She advised that invitations to the Entrepreneurship Hub meeting on 21 April would be circulated to any member who indicated their interest in attending to the Secretary.

100.10 Audit & Risk Committee

Draft minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee unreserved and reserved meetings on 10 March were noted. Ms Small advised that the digital communications policy referred to in the minutes had been circulated to staff.

The Policy for Raising Concerns, which had been revised as agreed at the Audit & Risk Committee on 10 March, was approved. Members noted that additional consultation dates would be added to the document to reflect the additional input from Mr McCluggage. The Chair advised that the Policy would be kept under review and updated for emerging changes in best practice.

Proposed: Mr Hutchinson Seconded: Ms Mallon

100.11 Governance Update

Mr Higgins presented the annual submission of the Corporate Risk Register and Annual Assurance Statement, which had previously been considered at the Audit & Risk Committee on 10 March.

Members noted the addition of risk in relation to industrial action and the proposed escalation of risk of cyber attacks onto the Corporate Risk Register. Discussion took place on awareness of cyber incidents and testing the business continuity plan for IT disaster recovery.

The Governing Body approved the Corporate Risk Register and Annual Assurance Statement.

100.12 Any Other Business

An application for a one-year career break was approved.

100.13 Date of Next Meeting

Entrepreneurship Hub meeting - 21 April 2021. Interest to be advised to the Secretary.

Governing Body meeting - 12 May 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 6.52pm



Mr B McGahan _____

Date 12 May 2021

(Chair)



Mrs K Wallace _____

(Secretary)