

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee (unreserved business) held on 20 January 2020 in the Newtownabbey campus, commencing at 5.25pm.

Present: Mr K Chambers, Ms Y Mallon, Mrs G McConnell, Mr I Murphy (Chair) and Prof T Scott.

In Attendance: Ms H Dixon, Mrs M Donnelly (by Skype), Mr M Higgins, Mr S Laverty, Mr P O'Neill, and Mr S Watt (20.6)

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

20.1 Apologies

None.

20.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

It was agreed that the Staffing Update be taken as the next item.

20.6 Staffing Update

Mr Watt outlined changes to the presentation of his report, which was taken as read.

Committee noted that an update on plans to increase appraisal returns would be brought to the next meeting.

Mr Watt left the meeting at 5.30pm.

20.7 Shared Services Update

The Chair welcomed the Creative & Innovative Learning Manager, to the meeting. Ms Dixon spoke to her report, outlining the current position with preparations for uploading part-time courses, staff resourcing and project risk. Committee noted that 'go live' dates had been met, and project timelines were on course.

ACTION: Ms Dixon to provide a written update for the Committee meeting on 27 April 2020.

Prof Scott thanked Ms Dixon for her report and advised Committee that she was also responsible for Digital Learning and leading on the implementation of canvas, having taken on additional duties relating to STS as a result of recent staff moves.

Members congratulated Ms Dixon on her report and thanked her for assuming the increased responsibilities.

Mr O'Neill highlighted the College's leading position on opening applications, which would commence in February, ahead of other colleges in the sector which were scheduled for April. Prof Scott noted that an update would be provided to the A&R Committee in February, with the proposal to reassess the risk level from red to amber.

20.8 New Build / Estates

Mr Higgins provided a summary of the Project Board report, updating Committee on the position with procurements, decant and the Ballymena new build.

Members were advised that slippage from the original 2021/2 timeline for completion of the Ballymena new build were solely as a result of funding issues with all milestones having been met by the College to date. Mr Higgins reported that the Department agreed budget position for Ballymena, with plans for preliminary works on the Ballymena site..

Committee noted actions taken to progress procurement, update on key stakeholders and plans in place to accelerate the work programme in the event that further funding was secured.

Mrs McConnell reported on lessons learned during the project and the impressive performance of the Project Manager and Project Director.

Members confirmed their assurance that the project was progressing expeditiously and on track.

20.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2019 were approved.

Proposed: Chair Seconded: Mr Chambers

20.4 Matters Arising

None.

20.12 Monthly Management Accounts

Mr Lavery summarised the NDPB return for December and advised on pressures, additional capital allocation and bid for additional funding. Members noted that the current shortfall position was likely to recur in the coming year.

Mr Lavery presented the summary accounts at November 2019 and reported the overall variance position to be on track for July 2020.

Committee noted the contents of the letter of 25 November relating to the 2019/20 budget and were assured that any potential, additional funding could be spent before the end of March. Mr Higgins reported that the current unsustainable funding model had been raised at the accountability meeting and that the issue of baseline underfunding would be brought to a future meeting of Committee.

ACTION: Mr Laverty to bring budget plan for the coming year to the April meeting of Committee.

Ms Mallon left the meeting at 6.00pm.

Mr Laverty reported that the College's procurement officer left the College and a new officer was being sought centrally.

20.9 Chair's Communications

The Chair invited Prof Scott to give an update on the accountability meeting with the Deputy Secretary, The Director of FE and David Conliffe, at which the GB Chair and Mr Higgins had also been present. Prof Scott highlighted concerns which had been raised in relation to enrolments and issues impacting on the sector, noting that the increased enrolments of L0 and L1 required more resources to deliver such provision.

The Chair welcomed the return of the NI Assembly and the appointment of Diane Dodds as Minister for the Economy and Peter Weir as Minister for Education.

20.13 Budget 2019/20

Members noted that the Emergency Efficiency Plan along with steps to remain within budget in particular holding key posts vacant and the Revised Capital Allocation letter had been addressed earlier under item 20.12.

20.5 GB Self-Assessment Survey

The Chair reminded members that, at the November meeting of GB, the GB Chair had asked the Resources Committee to respond on the governors' self-assessment survey. He took Committee through the 5 sections of the report, noting the following actions:=-, whilst noting that no significant issues had been raised overall.

Section 1: A point was made about HR training, governors felt they were capable of carrying out their duties.

Actions: No actions identified.

Section 2: Continuing to build relationship between the Department and the GB. Interaction with the Department at the A&R pre-meeting was highlighted.

Actions: (i) Department should restore budget. (ii) GB should have strategy meeting every 6 months.

In relation to engagement with DfE It was noted that several governors have attended DfE events and training during the year and the College had issued invitations to senior officials (including the Permanent Sec) to visit the College. However, to date a suitable promotional/engagement event had not been confirmed.

Section 3: Replacement governor(s) on the Board should have a background in education.

Actions: To be noted in recruitment of new governors.

Section 4: No points.

Section 5: Training/induction.

Actions: Training in grievance/disciplinary procedures would be welcomed. Prof Scott highlighted the desirability of delivering training via online platform or hosting on Canvas. The College would be willing to take this forward if resources were provided.

20.10 Correspondence

Covered under 20.12 above.

20.11 College Development Plan Progress Report

Mr Higgins reported that DfE had changed the format for this report advising that it should be completed on an exceptional basis with any deviations highlighted. He drew attention to the red risks shown in the report noting that enrolment numbers were down for TfS and L3 FT FE, with an increase in FT apprenticeships. Competition from post primary schools and HE institutions was highlighted and members noted that anticipated overall numbers were slightly below targets for the current year. As a result, targets would be realigned going forward with emphasis on high value areas.

Prof Scott outlined an increase in demand for L0, L1 and H&SC courses, which she would follow up with the Education Committee and that this matter had been highlighted at the recent Accountability meeting. The trends in increased demand for Level 0/1 in our catchment would also be highlighted at the 14-19 Project Board.

Mr Higgins drew attention to the employers' scorecard and Committee were advised that business development would be prioritised by the new VP, when she commences with the College in March.

Prof Scott referred to the extremely difficult circumstances faced by the College and senior leadership team over the past 12 months, including the reduction in the College VP numbers and a reduction in participation in public engagements and partnerships with business and local authorities due to dealing with College commitments in the absence of VPs.

20.14 Any Other Business

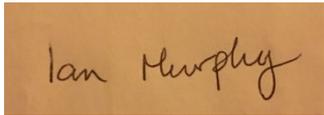
None.

20.15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 27 April 2020 in Farm Lodge campus.

The meeting concluded at 6.27pm.

Mr I Murphy



(Chair)

Date 27.04.20

27 April 2020

Mrs K Wallace



(Secretary)