

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **GOVERNING BODY**

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 24 February 2016 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus **commencing at 4.30 pm and concluding at 6.30 pm.**

Present: Ms C McKinney (Chair), Professor T Scott (Principal). Mrs I Allison, Mr K Chambers, Mr H Crossey, Mrs J Eve, Mr B Hutchinson, Mr R Jay, Mr A Kennedy, Mrs G McConnell, Mr B McCluggage, Ms Y Mallon, Mr Murray, Mr K Nelson and Ms K Reilly

In Attendance: Mr M Higgins, Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

#### **69.1 Apologies & Membership**

Apologies were received from Councillor J Brown, Dr S Brankin and Dr D Lennox

#### **69.2 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

#### **69.3 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 January 2016 were approved.

#### **69.4 Matters Arising**

##### **69.4.1 Access to College Email Server (minute 67.14.1)**

Governors received an explanation from the Chief Operating Officer as to why they had experienced difficulty accessing emails during the Christmas period. He indicated that there had been works to the email servers and one of the two email transport servers had also failed over the Christmas period. He advised Governors that if they experience any difficulties assistance is available [support@nrc.ac.uk](mailto:support@nrc.ac.uk).

##### **69.4.2 Membership of Resources Committee (minute 67.11 a)**

It was noted that the College had placed an advertisement to select a person with suitable experience to provide financial expertise to support the Resources Committee.

##### **69.4.3 Safeguarding Training Programme (minute 67.4.2)**

The Governing Body asked the Secretary to contact Mr S McCartney to arrange for Governors to have access to the online safeguarding training programme.

#### **69.5 Communication from Chair**

a) Times Educational Supplement FE Awards. The Principal confirmed that the College has been short-listed in three categories and congratulated the teams involved.

b) Accountability Meeting with DEL on 22 February 2016. It was noted that the Chair, the Principal and Chief Operating Officer had attended the Accountability Meeting on 22 February 2016. The Principal and Chief Operating Officer had given a detailed presentation of progress being made at the College.

c) Bi-Lateral Meeting. The Senior Leadership Team and the Chair would be attending the Bi-lateral Meeting on 4 March 2016. The Principal stated that DEL had provided the agenda and that the College would raise concerns in relation to an equitable MaSN allocation. It was noted that if the MaSN is not increased, the College may have to have a pause in the recruitment to first year STEM Foundation

Degrees. A Governor asked if all colleges in the Sector meet their MaSN targets and if there was scope for transfer between colleges. The Principal advised that this would be raised with DEL.

It was noted that the draft FLU Template, illustrating how NRC plans to meet its overall targets, had been completed and forwarded to DEL; this document would be considered at the Bi-lateral Meeting.

#### **69.6 Principal's Report**

The Principal referred Governors to her Report and drew attention to the following points:

a) Outline Business Case. Approval had been received from DFP to proceed to the next stage. The College will now progress the appointment of a Project Director with SIB.

b) Vice Principal Teaching & Learning. An offer had been made and GB will be updated on appointment in the coming days.

c) Voluntary Exit Scheme. It has been confirmed that a further round of the Voluntary Exit Scheme will operate in 2016.

d) Eti Inspection. Following a scrutiny inspection from 1-3 February 2016 to assess the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in the College, a confirmation of 'confidence' was confirmed.

f) Estate Support Champions. A number of senior colleagues have been identified as 'champions' for each campus estate across the College. Working with Estates the group's first task is to ensure that each campus demonstrates a clean, safe and appealing environment that will attract prospective students during forthcoming Open Evenings.

#### **69.7 Correspondence**

The Governing Body received the following correspondence:

a) DEL letter dated 27 January 2016, regarding the remuneration of student governors. Mr Higgins stated that the College would remunerate the Student Governor in the same way as other Governors;

b) DEL letter dated 12 February 2016, requesting Governing Bodies to approve amendments to Articles and Instrument of Government, recommended by the Department, to reflect the introduction of remuneration. **It was agreed that:**

**a) The amendments to the Articles and Instrument of Government be approved and forwarded to the Department.**

**b) Consideration should be given at the next meeting to the amendment of the Articles to reflect the revised committee structure.**

#### **67.8 Monitoring Report Implementation of Strategic Improvement Plan**

The Governing Body monitored the following KPIs:

KPI 1 (Recruitment) is colour coded amber as at February 2016. The College has met its overall FLU targets. Full-time FLU remains ahead of target and is balanced by a small shortfall in part-time enrolments. Essential Skills enrolments are behind target but opportunities exist to make up the shortfall before the end of the academic year.

KPI 5 (Finance) is colour coded green. The staff costs: income ratio is slightly lower than predicted in the period to January 2016 as a result of higher than anticipated FE and HE fees and lower than anticipated part-time lecturer costs. It is anticipated that NRC will achieve its target by the year-end.

KPI 6 (Curriculum Efficiencies) is colour coded green. Staff utilisation is on target overall, with higher utilisation in Engineering & Built Environment and Science & Service Industries in contrast to lower

utilisation in the other two departments. Average class size across all programmes is 14.2, which is above target (14).

KPI 8 (Learning Environment) is colour coded amber. The planned expenditure on furniture will help enhance the learning environment on all four campuses.

KPI 9 (Priority Skills) is colour coded amber. As an outcome of the challenge session in September 2015, some of the non-STEM courses have been removed from the College portfolio and more economically relevant courses have been introduced.

## **69.9 Education Committee**

Mr Jay presented the minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 17 February 2016. He highlighted the following issues considered by the Committee:

a) Terms of Reference Education Committee. The Governing Body approved **the revised Terms of Reference forwarded by the Committee.**

b) Level 2 Pearson Examinations. The Director of Curriculum provided an update regarding the Level 2 Pearson Examinations. She said that the investment in the Level 2 resits during 2014/15 had assisted students to achieve enhanced success rates ranging from 80-92%. A recent request to support a number of students on L2 Sport and L2 IT courses with resit fees has been approved with a view to ensuring that this will be the final request.

c) Under-Delivery of FLU. It was confirmed that the under-delivery of FLUs in 2014/2015 had been taken into consideration for funding in 2015/2016. It was noted that DEL had subsequently provided additional funding, which had helped to alleviate the adverse effects of budget reductions.

d) Correspondence. The Committee considered a range of correspondence including the DEL Strategy for Further Education 'FE Means Success – The NI Strategy for FE'.

e) Strategic Improvement Plan. The Committee noted the College's FLU performance is -55 FLU below target with the main areas of underperformance being Level 2 Essential Skills and part-time HE provision. The CMT is planning to address the potential end-year outturn by improving retention, offering extra 'additionality' to full-time FE students and endeavouring to achieve the Essential Skills FLU target. The present figure indicates an anticipated end-year underperformance of -230 FLU.

f) Curriculum. The Director of Curriculum advised that the current curriculum portfolio for 2015/2016 was influenced by the implementation of the revised curriculum review process at the end of 2014/2015. A number of strategic decisions were taken regarding the withdrawal of courses from the portfolio and the introduction of new courses across the College. Decisions were also taken with a view to improving the average class size. It was noted that the College had met its targets in relation to average class size.

Dr O'Mullan outlined the proposed changes to full-time FE provision for 2016/2017. It was noted that delivery of the College full-time HE plan requires 372 MaSN, an increase of 40 to the current provision for 2015/2016. If there is no additional allocation of MaSN the plan for full-time provision will have to be reviewed.

Dr O'Mullan referred to the Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) provision; NRC had the lowest level of HLA provision in the Sector and it would be necessary to give consideration to its enhancement.

The Chair stated that this would be Dr Catherine O'Mullan's last Governing Body meeting and thanked her for her dedication and support. She wished her well in the future.

g) Quality. The Committee noted:

(i) Quality Assurance Review of Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) Pilots. The first phase of quality assurance focussed on the initial stages of the delivery of HLAs relating to recruitment, induction and the early experiences of learners, employers and providers.

(ii) Whole College Self-Evaluation Report for 2014/2015 and Quality Improvement Plan for 2015/2016. The SER document is presented in five sections based on the criteria used by Eti as part of the scrutiny process. The College has self-evaluated each sub section and awarded an overall level of **'confidence'**. This document has been considered by the Chair of the Education Committee and approved on behalf of the Governing Body for submission to DEL.

(iii) Performance Improvement Programme (PIP). Dr Brankin and Mr Taggart provided a presentation for the Committee regarding the Performance Improvement Programme, which has been designed to raise College performance from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'. Mr Taggart outlined the Four Point Strategy for Improved Quality, which involved: course intervention and support; peer observation; lecturer appraisals; and embedding of the Virtual Learning Environment. The Quality Improvement Team would be focussing on courses currently performing below average. It was noted that four Teaching & Learning Advisers would be acting as 'Champions for Quality Improvement'.

h) ETI Scrutiny Inspection. The Eti carried out a scrutiny inspection to assess the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in NRC in February 2016. The inspection team identified a number strengths and areas for improvement. Eti has indicated that it has **confidence** in the College's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

#### **69.10 Strategic Improvement Committee**

Mr Kennedy provided an update from the meeting of the Strategic Improvement Committee (27 January 2016).

#### **69.11 FE College Health Check Report Issue 1 2015/2016**

It was noted that this document has been scrutinised by the Education Committee (17 February 2016) and will be reviewed by the Resources Committee (21 March 2016) and the Audit & Risk Committee (6 April 2016).

The Report has been prepared using the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter (31 October 2015) management accounts and includes figures from the first FLU lift for 2015/2016. The Governing Body expressed the view that the Report was of limited value as the information contained in the document was too historic. The end-of-year Report, however, was a useful guidance document.

It was noted that a number of colleges had forecast underspends as at 31 March 2016. DEL has requested Finance Directors to take proactive action to remain within the 0.5% tolerance level.

#### **69.12 Any Other Notified Business**

##### **69.12.1 Governance Section NRC Website**

The Governing Body noted that the Governance Section of the NRC website had been revised. Governors were requested to forward any comments/adjustments to the Secretary.

It was also noted that it was intended to include pen pictures of all Governors on the web site; some Governors had still to submit their pen pictures to the Secretary.

##### **69.12.2 Secretary of Governing Body**

The Chair stated that this would be Jim Hunter's last meeting as Secretary of the Governing Body. She thanked him for his contribution to the work of the College and wished him well in the future. Mr Hunter thanked the Governing Body for the presentation and for its support over his period as Secretary. He wished the College every success in the future.

### **69.13 Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for **Thursday 26 May 2016 at 5.30 pm** at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus. It was intended to conduct a Governing Body Self-Evaluation exercise prior to the meeting commencing at 2.00 pm.

As there was no other notified business the unreserved meeting **concluded at 6.20 pm.**