

Northern Regional College

Governing Body

Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 19 June 2024 in Causeway campus commencing at 5.00pm.

The meeting was preceded by a tour of the campus at 4.00pm.

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

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

122.1 Apologies and Congratulations

Apologies were received from Mrs Crilly and Mrs Martin.

Congratulations were extended to Mrs McGovern on the birth of a baby boy, Fionn. Members noted that she was now on maternity leave.

Condolences were noted on the passing of Mrs Carmel McKinney, former Chair of the College.

Action: The Chair would send a letter of sympathy to the family on behalf of the College.

122.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

122.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mrs Taggart

122.4 Matters Arising

The revised College Code of Conduct was approved.

122.5 Chair's Communication/ Correspondence

The Chair updated members on his activities since the last meeting including staff engagement; Committee attendance; and annual assessment meetings. He thanked the Chair and members of Resources Committee for facilitating an on-site meeting with AEL, update on which would be provided later in the agenda.

Consideration was given to the draft meetings calendar 2024/25, which was agreed.

Action: Future meetings of GB would take place in person and include a 30 min pre-meeting engagement session with staff. Committee Chairs would decide on mode of attendance for Committee meetings.

Members noted the appointment of Mr Aiden Hoey as Student Union President for 2024/25. Details would be forwarded to the Department for his appointment as Student Governor.

The Chair gave an update on the current position of CEF following notification by the Department that Ernst & Young (EY) were to be appointed to carry out a review on the Forum. Members heard that Mr Nick O'Shiel had resigned his position as Chair earlier in the day.

Mrs Taggart joined the meeting at 5.11pm.

122.6 Principal's Report

The Principal gave a brief summary of topics in his report. In particular, he highlighted a matter discussed with the Minister at the meeting on 2 May; student achievements, with best wishes expressed to those shortlisted in the upcoming OCN NI annual awards; and recognition of Gordon Kane and Lisa Burns at the inaugural FE Excellence Awards.

Members heard that invites to the official opening of the Causeway Campus would issue shortly and thanks were extended to Mr Lavery and Mr Mooney for their work on this project.

In relation to a member's question, Mr Murphy and Mr Lavery explained the current two year-ends, Department's 31st March year-end and the College's academic year-end, requiring 2 sets of year-end accounts to be produced by colleges until 2026. Positive engagement with the Department to enable a smoother reporting process for 2024/25 was welcomed.

122.7 Education Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting on 15 May 2024 were endorsed. Dr Graham referred to the report on HE provision, included later on the agenda, which he had asked to be incorporated in education committee and strategic planning going forward.

Having attended Committee in May, the Chair reported a good meeting with extensive discussion.

Mrs Brown was invited to update members on recent staff resource and recruitment issues which had detrimentally impacted on the electrical installation course planned to commence in September. Members noted the updated record of actions taken and ongoing activities to mitigate and provide alternatives for students.

Mrs Brown highlighted the work of the curriculum team in managing relationships with employers, MPs, MLAs and parents and would review the situation again with the team in

August. Meanwhile, an alternative electrical engineering pathway had been identified and a number of employers were looking at this.

Mr Murphy acknowledged the challenging situation but stressed the need to liaise with external employers and the private sector.

The Principal reminded members of the difference between private and FE sector pay offers but would take on board the possibility of canvassing the private sector. He also noted Mr Shevlin's suggestion that this issue be looked at across all College curriculum programmes, to identify any further single points of failure.

122.8 Audit & Risk Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting on 22 May 2024 were endorsed.

Mr Small gave a summary of topics discussed at the meeting including accounts, NIAO strategy and timetabling as the main issues. The proposed timeframe for audit completion has been reflected in scheduling of the A&R Committee and GB in November. An award of Satisfactory Assurance for the Health & Safety audit was commended and members noted that it had been agreed to add electrical installation to the risk register.

122.9 Resources Committee

Mr Murphy gave a verbal update of the meeting on 10 June 2024 at which Committee had agreed that SLT look into extending the lease of the College campus at Larne, subject to the outcome of an upcoming meeting with another interested party. Other topics considered were an insurance update, with the possibility of self-insurance being looked at by the finance team; an IT update on progression toward Cyber Essentials accreditation which prompted good input from members; and notification of the concerns relating to the electrical installation apprenticeship.

In response to queries on self-insurance, the Principal clarified the current collaboration by colleges on a single policy and explained the basis for looking at all elements of insurance to assess risk and major issues. Members noted that any cost benefit from self-insuring would be at sector level and subject to an approved business case.

Action: GB were content that Committee progress the Larne campus lease decision to its conclusion, subject to final legal advice and the meeting with other interested party.

122.10 College Equality Report

The March 2022/23 report was taken as read. Members heard that the 2023/24 update was currently in development and would come to GB at a future date.

The report was noted.

122.11 Strategic Plan

Consideration was given to: CDP Progress Report 2023/24, which had now gone through all Committees; Strategic Plan year 2 update; and the HE review report carried out internally. The Principal outlined the value of this report giving the context for providing HE and for identifying HE pathways for local students' progression.

Mr Small referred to the Department of Agriculture's successful HE programme and noted that this would be a good source to seek information or have discussions about their experience.

Dr Graham commended Mr Aaron Ballantyne for his work on this very comprehensive paper.

122.12 Any Other Business

The Chair thanked the members and Secretary for their work and contributions over a very busy year.

122.13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 2 October 2024.

The meeting ended at 6.02pm.

Mr K Nelson



Chair

Date 2 October 2024

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary