
**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY THIRD MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF
THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE LIMAVADY CAMPUS
ON WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE 2011 COMMENCING AT 5.10PM**

PRESENT: Mr H Faulkner (Chair)
Mr M Agnew
Ms E Cavanagh
Mrs J Doherty
Mr L Gallagher
Dame Geraldine Keegan
Mr D Limb
Mr W McBride
Mr D McMahan
Prof F Monds
Mr S Murphy (Principal and Chief Executive)
Mr A O'Connor (from 5.25pm)
Mr A Rainey
Mr A Smyth

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D McClelland (Secretary)

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

23.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs M Lestas.

23.2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Mr D Limb declared an interest in agenda items 23.8 and 23.10.

23.3 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 20 APRIL 2011

It was proposed by Prof Monds seconded by Dame Geraldine Keegan and agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

Action: Secretary to publish approved minutes asap.

23.4 MATTERS ARISING

None.

23.5 EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT (Ref: EC Draft minutes – 21 June 2011)

The Committee Chair referred members to the minutes of the meeting. In particular he mentioned

- Assessment for iP to take place by November
- Revised FLU targets
- ETI follow-up reports and the improvement that had taken place in the 2 areas of priority skills inspected
- The BEST and Media awards achieved by College students. Members congratulated students and staff involved

It was proposed by Prof Monds seconded by Mrs Doherty and agreed to adopt the draft minutes of the Committee and to agree the recommendations

- That the revised FLU targets be approved
- That the amendments to the constitution of the Academic Board be approved.

23.6 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE REPORT (Ref: AC Draft minutes – 13 June 2011)

The Committee Chair presented the draft minutes of the Committee. He referred to:

- The Internal Audit status report
- The absence of Schools' Risk registers presentations on this occasion. He commented on their mutual value and looked forward to their resumption under the new Schools' structure
- The IA presentations on findings in 4 areas of College work – two areas receiving a 'substantial' rating, one a 'satisfactory' rating and the other was a non-assurance review.

The Committee Chair related to members the excellent service provided by IA during the year and the significant degree of assurance it had given to the Committee on the management and operation of the College.

It was proposed by Mr McMahon seconded by Mr McBride and agreed to adopt the draft minutes of the Committee.

The Principal informed members that a further IA report on a review of procurement had been received by the College since the Committee meeting. It had been awarded a 'satisfactory' rating.

23.7 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT (Ref: FC draft minutes – 20 June 2011)

The Committee Chair referred members to the following matters:

- A problem which had arisen in relation to the Maydown site. The Principal said that the matter had now been resolved
- The management accounts showing both positive and negative variances but none giving cause for concern. Further efficiencies had been gained in the utilisation of staff. The planned deficit for the year of approximately £0.5m would be met from College reserves
- The budget for 2011/12
- The inspection of the defective windows in the Benevenagh building at the Limavady Campus which should strengthen the College's claim.

It was proposed by Mr Rainey seconded by Mr Agnew and agreed to adopt the draft minutes of the Committee and to approve

- The College budget for 2011/12.

A member enquired about the College reserves. The Principal indicated that the College was planning to use reserves to finance a number of capital items and minor works subject to DEL approval.

[Mr Limb withdrew from the meeting following this item.]

23.8 STAFFING COMMITTEE REPORT (Ref: SC approved minutes – 5 May 2011 & SC draft minutes – 20 June 2011)

The Committee Chair drew members' attention to the Committee minutes of 5 May 2011. It was proposed by Dame Geraldine Keegan seconded by Mrs Doherty and agreed to accept the minutes which contained no recommendations.

The Committee Chair then referred members to the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 June 2011. She mentioned:

- The excellent evening she had experienced during her visit to the Worldskills Training evening
- The improvement over the year shown by the responses to the recent ‘Listening to Staff’ survey
- The recommendation on the response to the Minister’s enquiry on staffing issues
- The revised equality scheme.

It was proposed by Dame Geraldine Keegan seconded by Mrs Doherty and agreed to adopt the draft minutes of the Committee and to approve the following recommendations:

- The response outlined in the minutes to the Minister’s enquiry
- Requests from 4 members of staff for career breaks
- The College’s draft Equality Scheme.

The Principal then updated members on the redundancy situation. He said that two members of staff had now accepted redeployment. The College had written to the third staff member indicating that it noted that he had not taken up the offer of the post.

[Mr Limb rejoined the meeting.]

23.9 CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS

1. The Chair thanked all involved in organising the successful visit of the Minister to open the new Strand Road building. He remarked on the impressive quality of the new build.
2. The Chair reported on a presentation he had attended by the FE sector to the Assembly’s Committee of Employment and Learning.
3. The Chair read a letter he had received from Mr P Ramsey MLA relating to discipline and redundancies in the College. The Chair reminded members that DEL had already investigated ‘whistleblowing’ letters on similar issues in October 2010 and had found no substance to the allegations made in the letters. He then referred to the matters raised in Mr Ramsey’s letter.

[Mr Limb withdrew from the meeting at this point]

They reflected those the Minister had raised with the Chair recently and to which a reply had been furnished detailing Governing Body action on disciplinary procedures, redundancy and ‘listening to staff’ survey. A discussion then ensued which included the following comments:

- The need for the Governing Body to publicly state its full support for the Principal and management of the College
- Disappointment that matters of dissatisfaction with College management were still apparently being aired by public representatives without first checking for factual accuracy with the College contrary to the Governing Body’s understanding of the agreement reached with public representatives at its meeting with them on 4 March 2011
- The need for the Governing Body to issue a strong public statement detailing actions taken in their governance of the College with particular reference to the issues causing concern
- The need to ensure that the audited findings by external bodies relating to academic achievement and management of the College be highlighted and placed in the public domain.

It was agreed that the Chair together with the Vice-Chair and the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee would formulate a press statement for immediate release which would also be transmitted to College staff through the intranet.

[Mr Limb rejoined the meeting.]

4. The Chair expressed his sincere thanks to Mrs M Lestas, Mrs G McCafferty, Mr A O'Connor and Mr A Rainey, members of the Governing Body who would not be returning to the GB following the expiry of their term of office on 31 July 2011. He thanked them for their valuable input to and interest in the work of the Governing Body and its Committees. He thanked all members for their contributions during the past 4 years and to Committee Chairs for their significant role in the work of the GB.

[Before withdrawing from the meeting for the next item, Mr Limb said that he objected to paper GB23.10 being tabled as he was concerned about references it contained to individuals who could readily be identified. Mr Limb then left the meeting.]

23.10 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Ref: paper GB23.10)

The Principal began his report by commenting on the improvement over the year in both curriculum delivery performance and in student performance. He then referred to the following matters

- Curriculum Delivery Hours. He explained to members that the level of total teaching hours for course delivery at the College was well above those of some similar colleges in England, above those set by DEL for funding and considerably more than those required by Awarding Bodies. As well as planning for a modest decrease in taught weekly hours on full-time courses next academic year, he said that the Academic Board were exploring, through a cross College staff focus group, possible innovative ways of curriculum delivery for the future. In reply to a member's question, the Principal said that the savings generated by the reduction in hours will allow for a greater number of students to be provided with programmes. He also hoped there might be opportunity for some staff redeployment. He considered there would be additional benefits for students in terms of maturity and ownership of their learning.
- 'Listening to Staff survey'. The Principal indicated that a detailed analysis would be available in September.
- Industrial Relations. The Principal referred to on-going problems and lack of co-operation with official representatives of the teaching staff.
- Good News stories. All items listed had been reported in the press.

23.11 SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

None.

23.12 CORRESPONDENCE

None

23.13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Report on appeal heard under the Dismissal and Suspension Procedure for Full Time Teachers in Institutions of Further Education

[Mr Agnew, Mrs Doherty, Dame Geraldine Keegan, Mr McMahon, Mr Murphy and Mr Rainey withdrew from the meeting.]

The Chair of the Appeals Committee reported on the hearing with the member of staff concerned. A discussion on the matter then took place following which it was proposed by Mr Smyth seconded by Mr O'Connor and agreed with one member abstaining that the Committee's recommendation be approved.

[Mr Agnew, Mrs Doherty, Dame Geraldine Keegan, Mr Murphy and Mr Rainey rejoined the meeting.]

2. DEL's Review of Governance. It was agreed that Prof Monds should represent the Governing Body on DEL's review group.
3. Review of Directors' Salaries. Having heard a short report by the Principal it was proposed by Mrs Doherty seconded by Dame Geraldine Keegan and agreed to approve the Principal's recommendation.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 28 September 2011 at 5.00pm in Strand Road Campus.

This being all the business the Chair closed the meeting at 7.45pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____