

## Finance & Personnel Committee meeting 18 January 2011, Committee Room, Ashington Campus

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|              | <p>Present: L Ions , C Smith, B Bedson, D Cheetham</p> <p>In attendance: C Todd, H Wright, K Ramsey, K Allan, and D Simpkin (Note taker)</p>   |  |
| FP18jan11/1  | <p>Eligibility and quorum issues:</p> <p>There were no eligibility issues and the meeting was quorate.</p>   |  |
| FP/18jan11/2 | <p>Apologies for absence:</p> <p>No apologies were received.</p>   |  |
| FP/18jan11/3 | <p>Minutes of the meetings held on 7 December 2010:</p> <p>The minutes for the meeting were approved.</p>  |  |
| FP/18jan11/4 | <p>Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda:</p> <p><u>CONFIDENTIAL ITEM</u></p>  |  |
| FP/18jan11/5 | <p>Update on curriculum strategy and update on curriculum planning:</p> <p><u>Curriculum strategy</u></p> <p>HW advised that the purpose of this report was to advise Governors of the progress made with development of the Curriculum Strategy for 2010-2013. HW drew the attention of the members to the context of the strategy which illustrated both the external and internal influences. HW advised the members that the strategy document sets out to specifically address the policy issues on its curriculum, and the plans and improvements required to transform its curriculum performance to exceptional. The document has been kept as simple and readable as possible to ensure ownership by staff and College teams.</p> <p>The Chair advised that upon reading the document, she was unable to identify local drivers , for example how the County Councils' goals for economic development were reflected in the strategy. HW advised that she had been working with NCC on their Skills Strategy and added that there were additional documents which would underpin the strategy and that there was still some work to be completed.</p> <p>C Smith advised that the document was long winded; made little reference to efficiencies and when reading in conjunction with the Curriculum Planning document, found it difficult to understand what was being maintained and what was being added. C Smith asked how many new courses would start in September. HW advised that decisions regarding courses are made in May and CT added that most colleges begin planning in February/March which is similar to what Northumberland College does.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the Committee were keen to see the timely</p> |  |

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|                     | <p>production of a fully costed curriculum plan for 2011/12</p> <p>This led discussions into Curriculum Planning.</p> <p><u>Curriculum Planning</u></p> <p>HW advised that this item linked into Item 8 – Performance Monitoring and Business Planning Framework.</p> <p>The purpose of this report was to inform Governors of the progress made towards Curriculum Planning for 2011-2012 prior to more detailed work to be undertaken in the second term of the academic year.</p> <p>HW advised that she had briefed Curriculum Leaders on the requirements of the initial planning, introducing the concept of ‘Review, Refresh, Review and Transform’ and provided key points relating to national and local strategy that needed to be taken into consideration. HW added that she had followed this up by providing Connexions data and two Assistant Principals (APs) had a further meeting with the Curriculum Leaders (CLs) to provide additional guidance and information.</p> <p>It was reported that all APs had had the opportunity to review all proposals prior to formal panel meetings on 7 December when each CL had an individual session with five APs and HW. Following these meetings a broad Curriculum Plan was produced, and in addition each CL was given a written summary of his/her meeting, highlighting action points which are being monitored by the relevant AP.</p> <p>With regard to the next steps, the provisional plans are to be subjected to further scrutiny as part of the newly devised business planning procedure. This will involve refinement of proposals and include financial modelling.</p> <p>The updates had been brought to this committee on request to ensure the process was in train. Governors wished to ensure financial modelling of the plans took place at the earliest opportunity</p> <p>The updates on Curriculum Strategy and Planning were noted with governors being keen to see the end product.</p> <p>It was agreed that future updates regarding curriculum should be taken to the Standards Committee.</p> | <p>K Allan / Helen Wright</p> |
| <p>FP/18jan11/6</p> | <p>Management Accounts Report – Month 4:</p> <p>CT provided this report to give Governors a written commentary on financial performance for the year to date (month 4 – November 2010). The report was also supplemented by a detailed Management Accounts Pack which provided further information on financial performance.</p> <p>CT advised that the operating position demonstrated an over performance against budget for the year to date of £26k, and that this was a direct result of under performance against income budgets of £113k, and under spend against staffing budgets of £184k and various non-pay over spends amounting to £47k, giving a positive variance overall.</p> <p>With regard to the year end forecast, CT advised that the forecasted outturn</p>  |                               |

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|              | <p>position now demonstrated an overall surplus for the College group of £505k, which represented a £272k increase against the original budget. CT highlighted the key changes to the forecast.</p> <p>CT added that HE income was below budget due to franchise payments being paid in arrears and at a reduced rate of 15% for non-completion; Employer Responsive was below budget due to 16-18 Apprenticeships and ESF income was below budget due to under delivery on all project lines. CT added that tuition fees remained a favourable variance this was related to the profiling method used when budgeting as opposed to an increase in fees. CT added that the various would reduce over the year as the budget catches up with the actual income recorded.</p> <p>CT summarised that at month 4 the College had generated £9.208m from its major funding streams, although achievements with regards to Train To Gain and Apprenticeships were not included. CT added that along with in year progressions arising from the change to QCF qualifications, the forecasted outturn of £10.011m does reflect an assumption that the College will generate some further funding. The forecast also reflected recent work carried out by the APs to develop and implement a funding recovery plan.</p> <p>The Governors noted the report.</p>   |  |
| FP/18jan11/7 | <p>Review of Virtual Learning Environment:</p> <p>Maureen Charlton attended the meeting to advise Governors of the review of the College's use of Blackboard as its virtual learning environment (VLE). MC advised that the review investigated the cost implications of using an open source solution (Moodle) against the current cost of a fully managed solution in addition to a review of the strengths and weaknesses which these different solutions provide for the College. The reviewed also explored the financial implications associated with the migration between two platforms and successful implementation of a new solution.</p> <p>MC commented that in the current year the College has had 2514 individual users which equated to £20 per annum for each user. She advised that as more students use Blackboard during the remainder of the academic year, the cost per capita would reduce but would also suggest it would remain between £17-£20 per capita.</p> <p>MC commented that in order to gain an understanding of what the College would face in moving to an Open Source solution, she had reviewed Gateshead Colleges' move from Blackboard to Moodle through discussions with Andrew Robson who had led the team at Gateshead through the migration. In order for Northumberland College to host Moodle, costs would be incurred to provide a main and backup server; extend support hours; migrate data from Blackboard to Moodle; employ a PHP programmer; train staff; and provide learning materials.</p> <p>Migration to Moodle could potentially provide savings of 15% compared to the use of Blackboard; however there were risk factors which could prevent these savings being realised, particularly staffing.</p> <p>Finally, MC added that prior to completing the report the College announced its intention to proceed towards a Type B merger with the Newcastle College</p> |  |

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|               | <p>Group. MC advised that both Newcastle College and Skelmersdale and Ormskirk Colleges use Blackboard or as separate licensing agreements. MC added that as Blackboard 9, Full Academic Suite does facilitate the use of different organisations from one portal it may be better to discuss this aspect with NCG prior to May 2011 when the College is due to renew its annual subscription with Blackboard.</p> <p>It was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To continue with the use of Blackboard as the colleges' virtual learning environment</li> <li>b) To discuss with NCG possibilities for reducing the costs of running Blackboard.</li> </ul>   | Maureen Charlton |
| FP/18jan11/8  | <p>Performance Monitoring and Business Planning Framework:</p> <p>Kelly Ramsey introduced the the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, which had been modelled on the Newcastle College approach, with modifications based on the differing structure, systems and processes that are in place in Northumberland College. KR advised that the purpose of the framework is to integrate business planning, performance monitoring and self assessment, strategic planning, quality assurance, risk management and budget setting into a single continuum.</p> <p>KR added that prior to the commencement of the formal Business Planning framework, the Executive Team presented the strategic direction, headline targets and analysis of the external environment. Following on from this, KR advised that each Business Manager was required to deliver a 15 minute presentation on their 'big ideas' and plans for the future.</p> <p>The Governors approved the Planning and Performance Management framework and its implementation for 2011-12.</p> |                  |
| FP/18jan11/9  | <p>Capital request (Hair &amp; Beauty):</p> <p>CT presented this capital request and advised members of a need in Beauty for a Microdermabrasion machine to allow students studying on the level 3 programmes to access the machine for training as part of their course. The cost of the machine is £1700 + VAT. It was noted that without the machine the students would not be able to complete their course of study but that the Course leader had not brought the bid forward before the course commenced</p> <p>CT advised that future capital applications would run alongside the Business Planning process. The Governors noted this and agreed the request to purchase the machine.</p>   |                  |
| FP/18jan11/10 | CONFIDENTIAL ITEM  |                  |
|               | <p>Any other business</p> <p>Confidential items: Items 4 and 10</p>  |                  |
|               | Date of next meeting:  |                  |

**Minutes agreed of the 18 January 2010**

**Signed :** .....

**Dated:** .....

DRAFT