**Minute: NCL Resources and General Purposes Committee (RGP)**

**15.00 on 9 September 2024 at Coatbridge and via Zoom**

Present: Keith Fulton (Chair), Derek Hamill

Apologies: David Alves, Christopher Moore, William McCallum, John Morrison, Ronnie Smith

In attendance: Ann Baxter, Ronnie Gilmour, Elaine Turkington, Diane McGill, Penny Neish

1. **Chair’s welcome**

Keith Fulton (KF) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. KF noted that unfortunately the Committee was not quorate. Any decisions the RGP wished to make on the information provided at the meeting would be referred, as recommendations, to the full Board for ratification.

Derek Hamill (DH) commented that he still did not have access to his nclan emails and files and therefore had been unable to read the papers for the meeting.

**2. Apologies**

As noted above.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Ann Baxter (AB) noted her membership of the AMCOL Board.

**4. Minutes**

**Minutes of the RGP meeting of 20 May 2024**

The minutes were agreed.

**5. Matters arising:**

There were no matters arising which were not included in the agenda.

**5.1 Update on BTO:**

KF gave his update and advised that this situation concerning the cladding, render and screed at Motherwell campus had begun in 2018 and that it was only in August 2024 when Burness Paull (BP) had offered, without prejudice, a sum of money on behalf of Galliford Try: both parties would pay their respective legal costs and BP offered to pay £225k to NCL.

At a recent meeting with the college’s legal representatives, BTO, aspects of this offer had been considered; the sum offered would not cover 50% of the college’s costs to keep the Motherwell site secure and safe for students, staff and visitors. At their meeting the NCL representatives and BTO agreed that while they viewed the sum of money as an opening proposal, the college would keep the mediation option open while continuing negotiations. A further 3 month sist in proceedings to 28 November 2024 is now in place.

The costs relative to Motherwell to date are:

£683,487 (from £677,187 reported at the previous meeting), of which £1200 of the increase relates to legal costs. Overall, the split is approximately 73% safety costs, 27% legal costs.

In discussion in the RGP, DH suggested that alongside a sum of money, an approach should be made to BP regarding resolving the matter of the building faults and how the contractors could contribute in kind in addition to financial compensation. KF acknowledged this and added that a further consideration for NCL is how it will engage with the students over the period of the repairs as this will have a knock-on impact on finance too. Any contractors undertaking the remedial work will want sole occupancy of the building to comply with health and safety requirements. No teaching would be able to take place in the affected block. How would NCL address the relocation and teaching of students? These are all issues which need to be taken into consideration and formed part of the meeting with BTO earlier in the month.

The RGP will be updated at its next meeting.

**5.2 Nursery update**:

AB and Ronnie Gilmour (RG) gave an update:

**Coatbridge campus nursery:**

* The Coatbridge nursery buildings have now been demolished and the ground cleared;
* NCL has received an estimate of over £100k for the land (without planning permission). This is significantly less than had been indicated in earlier discussions on dealing with the nursery buildings. To clarify the position and to inform the college’s decision on the best way to maximise the valuation of the land RG was contacting Atkins consultants for their proposal in terms of valuation and marketing of the site.

The RGP will be updated at its next meeting following which next steps can be decided.

**Cumbernauld campus nursery**. The Care Inspectorate visited the nursery and made its report which is very favourable. The Nursery Board met on 21 August.

Recruitment is going well. The Board held a Nursery Open Day which was well attended. Good use is being made of social media and community groups to spread awareness. As well as new recruits, places are being taken up by children moving from other nurseries in the area.

Under 3s are at 98% capacity; and

3-5s at 54% which is expected to increase to 68% after Christmas. It must be noted that although the numbers will increase so will the costs to cover the longer nursery days.

Financially, the nursery is in a better position than anticipated.

KF commented that things are progressing positively.

**5.3 RAAC**: RG confirmed that the full surveys on all NCL buildings have been completed. No RAAC has been found. SFC has been advised.

**6. AMCOL Nursery update**

AB updated the RGP and advised that there had been no formal contact with the AMCOL Board since the last meeting of the RGP but that work was ongoing on the written agreements.

KF emphasised the importance of making progress on the agreements as this was the basis of NCL’s working relationship with AMCOL, elements of which needed clarification.

AB confirmed that the RGP would be kept updated.

**7. College Registrar’s Report**

Elaine Turkington (ET) spoke to her paper and highlighted a number of points:

**Voluntary Severance Scheme**: The recent scheme, now concluded, had been successful. Some staff left in July and others in August.

**Executive Board and Deans Group:** Two Interim Dean appointments were recently announced:

* The Dean for Student Recruitment & Experience is currently leading the bid activity for the Scottish Prisons Service Personal Development & Learning Service contract, and a temporary appointment has been made to cover the Dean’s substantive role responsibilities;
* A new position of Interim Dean for Digital Learning & Quality Enhancement will lead on the development for The Learning Well, NCL’s new digital campus, as well as guiding the Quality Team through a digital transformation of existing policies and ensuring that all courses meet rigorous academic and accreditation standards.
* **Professional Services Review:**  This review has been progressing during the last academic term 23/24 and throughout the summer months, with Phase 1 almost complete.  Professional Services staff alongside trade union representatives have been consulted, resulting in a high level of engagement and feedback.

Two of the teams have changed their names as a result of the review to help with the increased focus on clarity of purpose:

* Management Information Systems (MIS) is now known as Student Records
* Key Support has become Student Retention

The most complex element has been disbanding the Professional & Work Based Learning department as it was acknowledged to be no longer fit for purpose.  The Apprenticeship Team has moved to the newly created Automotive & Apprenticeships Department and all other team members have been successfully redeployed to new opportunities in other college departments.

All Phase 1 employees have either remained in the same role, been job matched to similar role profiles in their current department, or opted for new roles.  There have been no redundancies as a result of the review activity.

Phase 2 is in its early stages and covers Admissions, Student Funding and Student Advisors.

**College Employers Scotland (CES)**:

**National Bargaining Update**

***Pay Claim:***The National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) – **Side Table (Support)** met on 5 June 2024 where the staff side confirmed that, following consultative ballots, all support staff trade unions, UNISON, GMB and Unite had a mandate to accept the full and final pay offer 2022/25.

The Support Staff Side Secretary subsequently confirmed on behalf of UNISON, Unite and GMB acceptance of the Pay and Terms and Conditions Offer 2022/25.

*Update since ET’s report:* EIS/FELA Lecturing staff union: following an intervention and offer of an additional £4.5m from the Scottish Government, the lecturing union put the revised pay offer of a 4th year to be included in the settlement to their members. This was accepted. Details of the 4 year settlement are set out in Paper 7.3 Appendix 3 Lecturing Staff Pay Offer. All related industrial action was cancelled. The £4.5m announced by the Minister will be included in subsequent settlement for the college sector.

KF anticipated that the Professional Services unions would now be seeking a 4th year settlement akin to that agreed with the lecturing union. The Minister is aware that colleges will need the same level of funding support for support staff.

KF asked if, since the discontinuation of ASOS, staff were now entering students’ results. AB confirmed that this process was well underway. The college is expediting as far as possible teaching and assessment which had not been able to take place because of the industrial action and has written to SFC seeking an extension. AB added that in a meeting with the local branch of EIS/FELA, the union representatives had expressed appreciation that NCL had not deducted staff pay (‘deeming’) which a number of other colleges had done. As part of the final pay settlement, deeming was to be reversed by those colleges that had applied it.

**Employment Tribunal Update**

There are six claimants in total and the claims remain sisted.

**8. NCL Estates Update**

This paper was presented by Ronnie Gilmour. RG highlighted:

Over the summer period of May to Aug 2024, Estates delivered on several significant projects and essential maintenance throughout the 3 main campuses:

**Motherwell Campus**: the student residences in the Rotunda Building were re-purposed to learning and teaching space, notably for the Undergraduate School, a music practice area and a new testing lab.

**Coatbridge Campus**: the safe demolition of the nursery buildings, and the relocation of the café bar to the main canteen area.

The completion of 3 student Wellbeing Centres in Motherwell, Cumbernauld and Coatbridge have been received well and the capital works on the evacuation lifts and fire doors in the main teaching block of the Motherwell campus totalled £230K. Over £100k was utilised for Curriculum Development works which covered over 30 separate projects for several departments.

KF noted that SFC was carrying out a survey on the state of college estate across the sector. This may help NCL as regards the issues with cladding, render and screed. The survey will also include ICT infrastructure.

**9. ICT Update**

RG spoke to John Morrison’s paper and noted the following points**:**

**Eduroam**: JISC/JANET network access has been implemented at NCL.

This is a free, international, Wi-Fi internet access roaming service for higher and further education which allows staff and students to access the internet when visiting participating institutions other than their own.

**Transfer to Teams Telephony**: NCL isexperiencing configuration/technical issues which are preventing calls from being routed between the college network and the internet. The ICT team, together with engineers from Charterhouse and Gamma are working to diagnose and rectify the problem and hope to have a solution within the next few weeks.

**9.2 Information systems and development**

RG spoke to Allan Forsyth’s paper.

RG reported that over the summer, a **recruitment process** had taken place to bring permanent strength to the Development team. As a result of this 2 of the Graduate Apprentices who were coming to the end of their placement in Development were successful in their applications and are now in place as permanent Developers.

**Process Improvement: part time teaching hours.** This new system streamlines the process of requests for temporary teaching hours. The temporary staffing budget is one of the single biggest lines in the college budget over which there is significant in-year control. The new system makes it easier for Department Heads to see where they are in relation to their budgeted contract hours and to check these against the timetables. The new system has now gone live and initial feedback from the Department Heads is very positive.

**Student Funding – Attendance Checking:** After a review of the way that student attendance is monitored Academic Departments requested a process whereby Academic Leaders could review a student’s attendance where it was low and decide whether there were extenuating circumstances or whether the students funding should be withheld. A new screen has been developed where this can be done and automatic emails setup to alert the Academic Leaders to students affected.

KF asked RG what decision had been reached about the introduction of Windows 11 as discussed at the last meeting of the RGP. RG said that the options had been further reviewed and it had been decided that leasing PCs as opposed to purchasing them outright was not an appropriate option for NCL in the current financial situation. The process to update machines is in progress with a view to purchasing extended support for Windows 10 from Microsoft for a further year to October 2026 if necessary,

**10. NCL Health and Safety Report**

**ET spoke to Fiona Curran’s paper:**

There have been no significant incidents since the last report to the RGP.

**Health & Safety Management System**

**Policies:**

* The work on improving the health and safety management systems has continued. The Mental Health & First Aid, Food Safety, and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Policies & Procedures have all been approved since the last update. There are two policies in draft for consultation (Managing Stress & Educational Excursions). The Drugs & Alcohol Policy & Procedure is still under consultation with the trade unions.
* A fire safety policy, procedure, emergency action plans, and information sharing system have been agreed upon and developed between Estates & H&S. This will ensure best practice and consistency across the campuses. These have been passed to the Trade Union H&S Reps for consultation.

**Occupational Health:**

The Occupational Health provider’s contract ends in September. NCL will go out to tender.

**11. Brand update**

The main features this quarter are recruitment, advertising and the Undergraduate School launch.

**12.**  **NCL College Update**

AB reported that student recruitment was significantly up and ahead of schedule for the time of year. HE FT is slightly down but this does not include the Undergraduate School.

Last year NCL worked in 19 of the 20 secondary schools in South Lanarkshire Council area, to date this academic year figures indicate that NCL will engage with at least 14.

KF welcomed these figures and commented that they could be of significant importance in representing NCL in a positive way in the on-going discussions on the dissolution of the RSB.

**13. RSB and Assigned College update**

A response to the Scottish Government’s consultation on the dissolution of the RSB is in preparation. The final version is required to be submitted to the Government by 20 September; a draft will therefore be circulated to the Board for comment as the next scheduled meeting of the RSB is 7 October.

NCL is also preparing a response to the Scottish Government’s consultation on proposals to reform the post-school education and skills system in Scotland. The consultation is seeking views on changes to the roles of the three main funding bodies in the system: Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and Skills Development Scotland (SDS). In addition, Colleges Scotland is submitting a response on behalf of the sector.

In discussion, concern was expressed regarding the funding of apprenticeships through private training providers if this was to be drawn into SFC’s remit. It would require a complex governance model to ensure efficacy and balance between public and commercially funded provision.

**14. Chair’s update**

KF said his activities had been covered in the foregoing discussions on BTO, CES and the Scottish Government consultations. He advised that he had also attended a meeting at SFC with the Chair and a number of the NCL senior team, on the NCL forward plan.

**15. Horizon scanning**

* AB reported that the new position of Interim Dean for Digital Learning & Quality Enhancement will lead on the development for The Learning Well, NCL’s new digital campus, as well as guiding the Quality Team through a digital transformation of existing policies and ensuring that all courses meet rigorous academic and accreditation standards.
* Education Scotland’s contract with SFC has ended. SFC has been working with QAA (the Quality Assurance Agency) on taking a new approach which will be more focused on the student voice.
* NCL’s student satisfaction survey got a 61% completion rate with increased levels of satisfaction of the services provided.
* RG added that the recruitment numbers for the Undergraduate School were now close to 200 having met the original target of 145 very early in the recruitment process.

**Scottish Prisons Service Personal Development and Learning Service contract:** AB updated the RGP on NCL’s bid for the contract to undertake further education in Scottish prisons. This project continues to require a huge amount of work, such that the Dean for Student Recruitment & Experience who is leading the bid activity has been released from her substantive role responsibilities and a temporary appointment made. The bid documents have been submitted and the next step is a meeting with Novus in Manchester later in September.

AB commented that this is a huge undertaking for the college and that a number of issues remain to be resolved, however, despite the investment in time made by NCL, the terms of the final contract have to be advantageous to the college before agreeing to proceed.

**General Committee Business**

**16. Approval of publication of papers from this committee:**

* Agenda for RGP 9 September May 2024
* Minutes of the meeting 20 May 2024
* College Registrar’s Update
* Brand Dashboard

**17. AOB**

**NCL Interim Audit:** JISC IT Infrastructure Review

The JISC IT Infrastructure review conducted in December 2023 included a suggested action plan. John Morrison (Head of ICT) had noted the resource challenges in the team, and the lack of capacity to potentially take some of these actions forward, especially in the context of the current financial position at NCL. The college had not set a timeframe against the actions on this basis, or provided a formal response to the suggested action plan.

RG advised the RGP that the recommended actions are being picked up by the teams as far as possible as they progress through other projects.

The auditors had recommended that the situation should be kept under review by either the RGP Committee or ICT Strategy Group. KF said that the RGP would welcome this opportunity but that the ICT Strategy Group should be the prime monitor of these activities. The RGP would expect to receive an update through the ICT Strategy Group at the next meeting of the RGP in November.

**18. Date of next meeting**: the next meeting of the RGP Committee will be on **Monday 18 November 2024 at 15.00 at Cumbernauld Campus and via Zoom.**