

Item 4.3 CC 4/02/19

**Minute of the meeting of the Chair's Committee
At NCL Cumbernauld on 17 August 2018**

Present: Linda McTavish (Chair), Keith Fulton, Kenny Alexander, Dave Winning
By invitation: Robert Pyper (by phone)
Apologies: Ann Stark, Diane McGill (Board Secretary)
In attendance: Penny Neish

The Board's non-executive Members had been asked if they wished to comment on matters raised about New College Lanarkshire at the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee's (PAPLS) session on 28 June 2018. The invitation had been made by the Convenor of the Committee and related to the Auditor General's 2016/17 audit of the College together with issues raised at the session in June. The deadline for the response to PAPLS was 13 September 2018.

KA commented on the importance of clarifying the context of the Auditor General's report and how the Board and Management Team had responded to it and the other issues raised. He also stressed the need for the Board to express strongly its support for the Principal and senior managers at NCL. It was agreed that it would be useful to draw up a summary of the current situation pointing to relevant documents etc while at the same time pulling together a succinct, but full response to PAPLS.

RP suggested that within the letter, it would be important to briefly address some specific points, particularly:

1. Staff engagement on the process of business planning: here it would need to be noted that the Board includes staff representatives who, along with all other members of the Board, were appropriately and regularly updated with reports about progress with the SFC on the business scenario planning process. Once that process moved to the point where significant details became available, and it was appropriate to do so, a series of open meetings was put in place in order to maximise staff involvement.
2. Management structure: the repeated implication during the Committee hearing that NCL is 'top-heavy' in managerial terms, and that this somehow contributes to our financial challenges needed to be addressed. This could be done by referencing the comments made at the hearing by the Interim CEO of the SFC regarding the unproblematic nature of this structure, in its own terms, and in comparison with the rest of the sector in relation to both the numbers and types of senior posts and the salary costs. Reference could also be made to the full details on the management structure provided as additional evidence to the Committee, post-hearing. The latter would show our commitment to ongoing review and rationalisation of management structures as part of the overall forward strategy of the Regional Board and NCL.

After further discussion a general approach was agreed.

Tone and content of the response to PAPLS:

- Emphasise that improvements made are significant and substantial;
- This could not have been achieved without the support of staff across the college.

The main elements should cover:

- Improvements
- Engagement
- Relationship with SFC:
 - That the business plan has not been achieved is not of the college's making
 - The lateness of the publication of the FFR guidance
- Keep the letter balanced

Next steps

Process:

- KF agreed to draw up a draft letter for consideration, in the first instance;
- This would be circulated to the other Non-Executives on the Board for comment/contribution w/b 27 August seeking comments by 30 August. All would be advised that 'No response' would be taken as agreement to the letter as drafted;
- If there was disagreement on the draft, the Non-Executives could be invited to a meeting on 3 September, either prior to or following the Board Committee meetings scheduled for that date;
- Actions taken would be reported to the Board on 10 September for their information.

The Chair thanked all for attending and for their contribution.

The meeting closed.