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

**15.00 on 26 February 2024 at Cumbernauld Campus and via Zoom**

Present: Keith Fulton (Chair), Derek Hamill, Christopher Moore, Ronnie Smith

Apologies: David Alves, William McCallum

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

1. **Chair’s welcome**

Keith Fulton (KF) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

**2. Apologies**

As noted above.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Ronnie Smith (RS) and Ann Baxter (AB) noted their membership of the AMCOL Board.

**4. Minutes**

**Minutes of the RGP meeting of 20 November 2023**

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 reported that Burness Paul/Galliford Try (BP/GT) have requested a further 3 month extension to give them additional time to work with and encourage their sub-contractors to the mediation table. They have also asked NCL to send information about the matters in question so that they can pass this on to their sub-contractors, this despite the fact that GT, several of its contractors and/or their representatives have benefited from previous reports and, alongside the College, partaken in visual and intrusive external and internal inspections in the past. The most recent of these took place on 31 October 2023. Notwithstanding this, the College has agreed with BTO that summary information should be made available.

KF advised that the expenditure on this issue had risen slightly. It currently stands at £671,307 in total, with less than 27% of this relating to legal costs (£180,096); the remaining expenditure has been incurred on health and safety matters, surveys and analyses to get the relevant information.

Derek Hamill (DH) asked for some background on the College’s engagement with BTO and what their plan was to get to a resolution. DH said that he was concerned to get value for money for the College and while he thought mediation was the way forward, the current position of yet another 3 month delay meant additional cost to NCL with no certainty of progress at the end of this period. After further discussion KF said he would welcome advice and guidance from DH on this and it was agreed that KF and DH would meet to discuss next steps and keep the RGP and the Board informed.

***Action: KF and DH to meet to discuss next steps.***

**5.2 Nursery update**:

AB reported that the **Coatbridge Campus Nursery** operations ceased on 15 December 2023 and the building was emptied in January. All utility services and supplier contracts have been given notice for disconnections. Statutory notifications have been submitted to the local authority and contractors have been engaged to demolish the building. (Circa late March 2024).

See also Item 8 NCL Estates Update, Asset Disposal: Coatbridge Nursery.

**Cumbernauld Nursery**: A Nursery Development Board has been set up and has Terms of Reference; it has met twice in full and once with a sub-group to discuss Operational Matters.

On-going activity includes:

**Brand Team**: Marketing has widened and the key message to get across is that the Nursery is “Open to All.” Hard copy banners are on-site, with larger banners in the pipeline for motorist viewing. Social media is also heightened, promotional materials for local facilities and leaflet drops are being costed. The on-line College application process will have revised links to the Nursery.

**Operational:**  Recognising that the operating model has to change, a sub-group met to initiate reviews into a 50 week opening model, 8.00am – 6.00pm. Staff recognise the need to change to a more commercial operation for financial sustainability. A few staff cannot commit to the longer hours due to caring responsibilities. The TU rep was present to look at any impact on Ts&Cs (e.g. shift allowance) and a model will be taken forward.

**Finance:** for the 5 month period to December, the Nursery has a deficit of £34k (excluding back-pay) against a budgeted deficit of £79k. Fees from Student Funding have been increased and the likelihood is that Private fees will move away from being aligned in the new term.

Student Funding advised that there are new rates for the Campus Nurseries. The new rates should have started from the beginning of Academic Session 2023-24 and the Student Funding Team will work at calculating the backdated payments for the College nurseries.

New Rates:

Half-Day Session £35.00

Full Day Session £70.00

Student Funding continues to promote Study Days and Childcare availability.

RS asked about the current financial position of the Cumbernauld Nursery. CM and AB said that this information was not yet available.

**5.3** **RAAC update**:

While expert opinion within NCL believes it is unlikely that there is RAAC on any of the campuses, the College has engaged Atkins to carry out a survey of the College’s current assets. The findings will be reported to the RGP.

KF said that he was keen for the Atkins survey to go ahead.

MS advised that as requested William McCallum (WMcC) was making weekly reports to SFC on the regular inspections being carried out by NCL. SFC has now advised that these reports are no longer required.

**6. AMCOL Nursery**

AB reported that she and RS are now members of the AMCOL Board; AB attended a meeting on 8 February 2024 at which management accounts and staffing were discussed.

From end of December the @nclan.ac.uk email addresses for all the Firtrees Nursery staff was disabled, with the exception of Celia Devine, Managing Director of AMCOL and member of NCL staff. Nursery staff will still be able to login to their computers but using @amcol.scot email address for all communication.

The recent chemical incident at the Firtrees Nursery had been the subject of a complaint to the Care Commission. The complaint has been upheld. This is now in the hands of the insurance company.

Concern was expressed that AMCOL had not informed NCL about the outcome of the Care Commission’s deliberations. While as the parent company NCL would not be responsible for something done by a subsidiary company, NCL’s reputation could be impacted negatively. KF again sought an improvement in communications between AMCOL and the College on such matters, as this was not the first time that delays had occurred.

KF asked if any progress had been made on re-writing the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between NCL and AMCOL, and AMCOL’s Articles of Association.

Elaine Turkington (ET) advised that she had spoken to NCL’s lawyers, Anderson Strathern, who have looked at the paperwork. They have agreed to work with the College to draw up a new SLA and Articles. The RGP agreed that AMCOL should be included in this work and should be required to pay for the re-drafting of the Articles.

MS confirmed that decoupling Firtrees from the College (including emails etc as reported by AB) should be completed by June 2024.

**7 College Registrar’s report**

ET spoke to her paper and highlighted:

**Voluntary Severance Scheme:**

As part of the College’s plan to address the budget shortfall for the academic year 2023/24, a self-funded Voluntary Severance Scheme was opened to all staff from 22 May 2023. Two business cases for extensions to the Scheme were approved by the Scottish Funding Council which enabled the College to consider applications until 30 September 2023 and then again until 31 January 2024.  To date, the College has been able to accept Voluntary Severance applications from 32 Academic and 33 Professional Services employees.

**Executive Board Restructure Proposal**:

There have been no successful applications for the new post of Deputy Principal for Professional Services at this time, and in the meantime the following appointments have been made:

* An interim post of Deputy Principal
* Creation of a new position - Chief Resource Officer, an ex-officio member of Executive Board.

Recruitment activity for the permanent position of Deputy Principal will resume in due course.

Additionally, following the resignation of the Dean for Staff Development Academy, this position will not be replaced.  Line management responsibility for the Staff Development Academy will be assumed by the Dean of Learning & Teaching.

**College Employers Scotland (CES):**

The RGP was advised that the lecturers’ and the professional services’ trades unions have rejected the current pay offer. (With regard to the professional services’ trades unions, GMB and Unite have accepted the 3 year offer. However, as it continues to be rejected by Unison, it cannot be implemented). The lecturers are taking ASOS (Action Short of Strike) action. A national strike called by both unions will take place on 29 February 2024.

**Job evaluation:**

The framework delivered to colleges has not been well received either by the colleges or the unions. National discussions are at an impasse on next steps.

**NCL JNC Professional Services:** The local Recognition and Procedure Agreement template remains the subject of discussion between management and Unison and Unite representatives.

The unions are seeking a route to the Board for dispute procedures.

The wording to accommodate this within the RPA is now with the College’s lawyers.

CM left the meeting to attend another appointment.

KF asked RS for any feedback from the recent CES meeting which he had been unable to attend and which RS and CM had attended. RS said that as regards the pay offer what is on the table is the full and final offer, and on the deduction of pay for EIS members participating in ASOS there was not yet an agreed sector position. The issue centres on how ASOS affects resulting for students, ie entering their course results into College systems, which is a breach of contract entailing the loss of 1/365 of salary. However, this is a very sensitive issue on which there needs to be consistency across the sector. NCL will take legal advice before the implementation of any action.

**8. NCL Estates Update:**

MS made his report.

During the Christmas holidays **essential maintenance works** were carried out including a large scale building energy controls replacement project at Motherwell. There was no noticeable disruption to the staff and students on their return in January.

Warm spaces have had a good use across all the campuses.

Preliminary discussions and design concepts are underway to remodel the Social Space at Motherwell, the Den at Cumbernauld and F5 in Coatbridge as the new Wellbeing Centres.

**Sustainability:** Proposals for the introduction of centralised recycling bins and the removal of waste paper baskets throughout offices and classrooms have been drawn up. The Sustainability committee met during this period and further works are in progress with communications, web page and energy saving initiatives being discussed.

The 2022/23 Public Bodies Climate Change Reporting submissions were completed in November and Estates collated data from various sources to publish our carbon footprint via the PBCCR portal. The results are due to be published on Sustainable Network Scotland.

**Cladding:**  The Estates Team continues to ensure that the fixtures and the netting are regularly inspected; the netting will be re-roped shortly.

**Resources:** There has been some resource changes in Estates supervision with the promotion of a cleaner to Supervisor at Motherwell and an Estates Supervisor at Cumbernauld. These posts were internal and no additional staff were added to the existing teams. A significant increase in new projects, room alterations and lifecycle capital maintenance works has increased the workload for Estates Managers on all campuses.

Absenteeism in term time cleaners is still high, however; with improved support, supervision and rota improvements, we are confident that progress will be made. Two members of the cleaning team are now due to go on maternity and cover for these posts has been submitted to the EB for approval.

**Asset Disposal:** **Coatbridge Nursery** operations ceased in December. KF said that in response to a request from DA, the report from Allied Surveyors Scotland on the Coatbridge Nursery site had been included in the meeting papers. The report had been considered and it had been agreed to proceed with the demolition of the building in light of concerns around asbestos, the potential for vandalism together with the anticipated bad December/January weather. NCL has applied to the Council for the necessary permission to go ahead with the demolition. Contractors are now lined up to undertake the work.

**Kirkintilloch Campus:** NCL is in discussion with East Dunbartonshire Council on the disposal of this building. The Council is happy to work with the College on the sale of the site as a complete entity; a market valuation is currently being investigated. The College is taking the lead on marketing the sale of the building. RS said that before the sale can go ahead, he needs reassurance from SFC/Scottish Government that the College will be allowed to retain the majority of the proceeds. MS said that it was encouraging to have the support of the RGP.

**Procurement, Funding and Finance**: Estates continues to work with procurement colleagues to provide due diligence in contract and project delivery. William McCallum (WMcC) will attend the next meeting of the RGP to update on projects for 24/25.

MS concluded his report by stating that there are no estates issues around strategic compliance.

**9. ICT Update:**

Ronnie Gilmour (RG) made this report and ran through the projects being carried out and identified those under:

* the Capital Maintenance Fund and
* the Digital Poverty Fund.

He updated on ongoing activities:

* the annual Desktop & Laptop refresh cycle (working towards 5-6 year replacement lifecycle);
* the replacement of the Cisco VOIP Telephone System with Microsoft Teams Telephony;
* the upgrading of the LAN Core Switch at Motherwell Campus;
* Cyber security;
* The activity to decouple AMCOL Firtrees Nursery from NCL (nclan) systems;
* ICT staff resources and development.

KF commented that some of these projects would incur considerable expenditure and sought reassurance that they would be completed by the end of March or that extensions had been sought from SFC. RG said that ICT was confident that the projects would be completed within their respective agreed timeframes.

MS added that in going through the budgets of previous Estate/ICT projects a number of small residual funds had been collated and advised to SFC. NCL had been allowed to retain this funding (£112k) which can be used for such projects as the demolition of the Coatbridge nursery building.

Estates and ICT are already working on next year’s budget.

RS said he fully endorsed all of the activities and projects outlined but that he was keen to see NCL form alliances with other colleges where appropriate to maximise the spend. The RGP was advised that NCL is working with Edinburgh College’s Development Team to find out where savings can be made. RS was pleased to hear this and said that he has already raised the need to develop such collaborations across the sector with Colleges Scotland. KF supported this approach.

**10.** **Health, Safety and Wellbeing update**

The HSW report covered:

* The five significant incidents reported during this academic year; all are detailed in the HSW report;
* Update on the Health and Safety management system;
* Update on audits and inspections;
* Ongoing work to ensure legal compliance. The HSW Team is:
  + Seeking quotations to conduct workplace hygiene monitoring across the campuses;
  + Continuing to work in conjunction with the construction and engineering departments to complete machinery risk assessments;
  + Developing audit proformas to ensure NCL is the standards set by our policies and procedures.
* **Training:** The HSW dept is working in conjunction with the SDS to develop two NCL learning modules. One will focus on risk assessment and the use of display screen equipment and the other on fire safety. These will complement the All Staff Essentials module and will replace the external safety e-learning platform via Worksite providing cost savings and a more tailored programme of training.
* **NCL Joint Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Committee**:  The NCL Joint HS&W Committee met on 21 February 2024. The RGP will be updated on those discussions. The EIS has successfully recruited an additional H&S Representative.
* **Health & Wellbeing**: The NCL Occupational Health Advisor ran confidential health clinics across the three main campuses in December. These clinics were open to all staff and offered services such as checks of blood pressure, lung function, and hearing as well as weight Management advice. The clinics were well attended and received positive feedback from staff.
* The Team is working to create a new Wellbeing area on the intranet for staff and students as part of the launch and promotion of Mental Health First Aid.

**11. Brand update**

The RGP welcomed the information and graphic lay out of the Brand Dashboard and noted the wide range of activities in which the College is involved.  KF welcomed the inclusion, where possible, of the consequences of some of the actions, although ET said that this was difficult to quantify.

ET advised that the exploration of the effectiveness of the brand is on-going and will be reported to the RGP at its next meeting.

**12. NCL College update**

AB reported that the Executive Board and the Deans Group has engaged with North Lanarkshire Council, SDS and South Lanarkshire College on Graduate Apprenticeships.

The final report of Education Scotland’s visit to NCL in December has now been received and is very positive.

NCL Graduation will take place on 9 March at the Coatbridge Campus. The Events Team has the arrangements well in hand.

**13. RSB and Assigned College update**

RS reported that he had had a meeting with the Minister on 7 February. The Minister is still considering next steps for the Lanarkshire Board with dissolution remaining his preferred option at the current time. RS said that in their discussion, he had said that he would not oppose dissolution but sought assurance from the Minister that collaborative agreements would be put in place prior to the separation of the two colleges. RS has advised Paul Hutchinson (PH) and Stella McManus (SMcM) of his discussion with Mr Dey. RS said that SMcM has proposed that NCL and SLC should reconvene the Transition Group without waiting for further activity from SFC/Scottish Government. RS is happy to do this, however, he remains keen that SFC/Scottish Government are involved to ensure the Transition Group is aware of Government thinking over the period (possibly 18 months) while discussions are on-going. This is particularly relevant given that there will be a new Minister for Further Education in November 2024 who may take a different view.

**14. Chair’s update**

KF said that his commitments had been covered in the discussions noted above.

**15. Horizon scanning**

Further discussion was deferred until the review of the Executive Board was finalised. It was agreed that feedback from SFC/Scottish Government was needed on asset retention, etc, before any major strategies could be devised. RS said that the business recovery plan which NCL has put to SFC is very good and their response is awaited. KF commented that the sector would benefit from a sector business plan from SFC as the sector needs to look forward as a joined up entity with increased guidance and leadership from SFC/Scottish Government.

**General Committee Business**

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

* Agenda for RGP 26 February 2024
* Minutes of the meeting 20 November 2023
* College Registrar’s Update
* Brand Dashboard

**17.** Before the Chair closed the meeting KF thanked MS, on his last meeting of the RGP, for his work for the Committee on a professional and personal level. He said MS had been very supportive and helpful during his time on the RGP.

**Date of next meeting**: the next meeting of the RGP Committee will be on **Monday 20 May 2024 at Motherwell Campus and via Zoom.**