

**Minutes of Governing Body (GB) Meeting  
Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, 5.30pm, Lisburn Campus**

**Agenda Item 1: Chair's Business**

**a) Attendance and apologies for absences**

**Present:** Mr Gareth Hetherington (Temporary Chair of the Governing Body), Professor Alan Woodside, Mrs Barbara Larkin (By conference call), Mrs Heather Reid, Mr Neil Bodger, Mrs Karen Fraser, Mr John Mackell, Mr Ken Webb (CEO/Principal)

**Apologies:** Mr Steve Pollard

**In the Chair:** Mr Hetherington

**In attendance:** Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr Paul Smyth (Chief Human Resources Officer)

The Temporary Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that Mrs Larkin would be joining by conference call.

**b) Declarations of conflicts of interests**

The Temporary Chair advised members that Christine Goodwin was conflicted in relation to agenda item 2 and would not be attending the meeting.

**Agenda Item 2. Complaint Report**

**a) Complaint investigation report**

The Temporary Chair directed members to the investigation report and reminded them that as per the agreed procedure the Governing Body must meet within 20 working days of receiving the report to consider the report and make a determination as to whether the report and its recommendation is accepted, members noted that the timescale had been met.

In response to a query from a member the Temporary Chair advised that the appendices had not been provided and Carson McDowell solicitors had withheld these, and they had not been issued to the Chair or the Chief Human Resources Officer.

Members took time to review the report and highlighted some typing and date errors that needed to be corrected before the report could be issued to the complainant, the CHRO agreed to seek the amendments with Carson McDowell.

The Temporary Chair asked members if they had any comment to make on the overall report, the following points were noted:

- Mrs Larkin advised she felt that the report was balanced, it read well and was reflective of what the Governing Body had went through during the period of crisis.
- Mr Mackell enquired if there are additional lessons to be learned, for example how periodic updates are managed when dealing with complaints. The Temporary Chair reminded members that the communications issue had been picked up and will be progressed through the recommendations through the Governance review conducted by Stephen Mungavin.
- Mr Mackell noted that as one of the initial complaints was raised in July and only in October did the complaint come through relating to Ms Goodwin in the same complaint, was there scope for the policy to be amended to ensure complaints can be narrowed down at the beginning?
- The CHRO advised that as the policy is a sector policy, we are constrained in any amendments to it, he advised that that the policy steps set out are sound, the timeframe is the issue. He advised members that with any complaint there can be reasons as to why there is a time delay in meeting with the investigator and in this scenario the time was deemed reasonable.
- In response to a query from a member the CHRO confirmed that there is no timeframe stipulated in employment law and an employer must demonstrate that they are dealing with a complaint swiftly and decisively.
- The Temporary Chair advised that in terms of how often the complainant was kept informed had been dealt with thoroughly in the investigation which is reflected in the written report. Mrs Reid noted that it had been an equally long time for the staff members involved.
- The Temporary Chair reminded members that the Governing Body had been operating in unprecedented circumstances and he noted that if the Governing Body were to find themselves in a similar situation again it would be in a better position to progress complaints and valuable lessons had been learned.

- Mrs Reid noted that from 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018 the culture in the Governing Body was to get resolution to several issues as quickly as possible and the Governing Body had assigned this work to external agencies and therefore acted prudently and in good faith.
- Mr Mackell noted that the only adverse finding through all the investigations conducted was on the former Chair. He stressed that there was no template in how to manage the circumstances and that it had been a difficult period of time for a lot of people who had been impacted by the former Chair.

The Temporary Chair thanked members for their input and asked members to consider the determination of accepting the report. The Principal advised that the report should be accepted on the basis that the errors highlighted in the report will be corrected before it is communicated to the complainant, the Temporary Chair advised that Carson McDowell will be asked to amend the report urgently to ensure that the complainant receives the Governing Body's determination along with the report within 7 working days as per clause 2.1 of the policy.

**Agreed:** The Governing Body accepted the investigation report and its outcomes subject to the corrections being made to typos and dates that are incorrect

**Proposer:** Karen Fraser

**Secunder:** Heather Reid

The Temporary Chair highlighted that the report set out a recommendation to suggest a facilitated session between staff members and the complainant, he advised he was content to endorse this recommendation and will propose this if the complainant is happy to participate. In response to a member's question the Temporary Chair advised that if some of the staff members do not wish to participate there is scope for the others to participate.

**Agreed:** The Governing Body endorsed the recommendation within the report to offer a facilitated session amongst relevant parties

**Proposer:** Alan Woodside

**Secunder:** Neil Bodger

The Principal advised that the report will be presented to the complainant in her role as a governor and will be unredacted and therefore should be treated as a confidential report that is not for wider circulation. He noted that if there is a request for a subject access request on the report then it must be redacted.

The Temporary Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020, 5.30pm, at the Lisburn Campus.**

**The Governing Body Strategy Day will take place on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020, start time and venue TBC.**

**The meeting concluded at 6.01pm**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Temporary Chair of the Governing Body