



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Committee for Employment and Learning**

**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(Hansard)**

**North West Regional College**

**14 March 2012**

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Employment and Learning

### North West Regional College

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Thomas Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Sammy Douglas  
Mr Chris Lyttle  
Mr Fra McCann  
Mr Barry McElduff  
Mr David McIlveen  
Mr Pat Ramsey  
Mr Alastair Ross

**Witnesses:**

Mr Bertie Faulkner OBE	North West Regional College
Mr Seamus Murphy	North West Regional College

**The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome Mr Bertie Faulkner, the chairman of the governing body of the North West Regional College, and Mr Seamus Murphy, the principal. Gentlemen, thank you for coming to the Committee today and for the redundancy business case that we received a week ago. Members have gone through the business case and scrutinised it, and the Committee is not happy to discuss it today because we see no evidence that the document formed any part of the decision about redundancies in October 2010. You will know that, on three occasions, the Committee has asked for a copy of the curriculum audit, and, as yet, we have not received it. We believe that the curriculum audit determined the redundancies and that this was more or less a prepared case or a choreographed case to present to the Committee today. Therefore, we have no intention of discussing this particular document today. However, we would like to hear from you on staff morale and the ongoing difficulties and unrest in the college. Then we will open up the Floor for questions for any members who may have concerns.

You will know that this been a matter of concern for the Committee for some time. A number of questions have been asked, a number of documents have been sought, and to use an old country term, it has been like pulling teeth out of a hen to try to get what we have been looking for. However, we are glad that you are with us today and we ask you to give us some indication of the staff morale in the college and the ongoing unrest and uneasiness, and what is being done to address that matter.

**Mr Seamus Murphy (North West Regional College):** Chair, I believe that I was asked to come today to address the issue of the business case in relation to the redundancies, and I have prepared a paper in relation to that. At no stage was I asked to bring any papers in relation to any other part of the

organisation. It is somewhat unreasonable to say that you want to have a briefing on an issue when I have not been told in advance that you wanted to be briefed on it.

**Mr P Ramsey:** There is growing concern in the Committee that the so-called business case that your office has presented was manufactured and fabricated for today.

**Mr S Murphy:** I take offence at that, Chair.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Can I stop you one moment, Pat? The Committee wrote to the college requesting the principal to brief the Committee on the curriculum audit.

**Mr S Murphy:** The curriculum audit is in the documents.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** That is what we wrote and asked for the briefing on.

**Mr P Ramsey:** If I can finish, what you said is that, ultimately, we are not prepared to discuss it without having, singularly and solely, the documents that were originally presented to the board of governors in October. There is something fundamental to this issue, and I think that you have elaborated on it. There is a crisis in industrial relations in the college. Seamus, as the principal, you will know that. Bertie, as chair of the board of governors, you will know that. The Committee has raised the issue a number of times. It is not the first time that it has been raised at this Committee. In fact, I recall a previous meeting that you were at, Bertie, when you said that there was only one group to blame for all the problems and that was the University and College Union (UCU). I recall that vividly. It is fundamental because unless we get the curriculum audit, there are a number of other areas that we will be tested on in respect of the crisis.

For the record, the Labour Relations Agency made efforts to enter into some dialogue to improve that but that was denied by the college. The Minister's office, through the head of further and higher education, wrote to the college asking and encouraging it to participate and said that it would give the college support to improve employee relations in the college, but they were ignored.

**Mr S Murphy:** Untrue.

**Mr P Ramsey:** They were ignored. Chair, you are quite right to point out that the principal was asked specifically to come here to discuss the curriculum audit. I am not shocked that Seamus does not want to do that because he shied away from it entirely. The curriculum audit is important because away back when the MLAs and the MP met the board of governors on Friday 4 March 2011 — I am sure you can recall that meeting, Seamus, and I have the minutes here — when representatives questioned why the redundancies were necessary, the principal explained that a curriculum audit had been carried out that identified two areas where there had been no growth in the past few years. Those are your minutes, not mine or anyone else's. Let us see that curriculum audit.

**Mr S Murphy:** You have it. It is in the papers.

**Mr P Ramsey:** We do not have it. I think that this is a retrospective rationale of the business case that was used to make 13 people redundant in the North West Regional College. I want to take the opportunity, because it is important that Hansard officials are here today. Members have been inundated, certainly in the north-west area, by existing staff. I have a letter that came in overnight, and I want it on the record. I understand that other members have received the letter, which states:

*"As an ex-member of the North West Regional College teaching staff, I feel that I have a moral duty to contact yourself to speak for present members of staff who will not speak because of fear and intimidation and a draconian management style. There is no professional consultation with the teaching staff. Management make the decisions, irrespective of the practical concerns of the classroom practitioners. Staff in the North West Regional College are treated in a bullying, abusive and intimidating manner that would not be tolerated in any other environment."*

I have a folder here of issues of an individual nature that have been raised with me over the past three years. If necessary, I can read them for the Hansard report as well. The college has been in absolute

denial of that for so many years. It is the case that there were promises made to the MP by the chair, when he was acting chair, that he would make it a serious priority going forward to resolve a most important issue, and that was industrial relations among the staff. I feel that I have to, given the number of people who contacted me. This is from a staff member:

*"Relations between staff and management have poisoned since the present management team is in place. Up until then, relationships were cordial and workmanlike, but since the present management team arrived, conditions of employment relations have deteriorated significantly."*

Another one states:

*"For the past number of years, the bullying atmosphere has worsened to the point that some of my colleagues are afraid to inject in case we are then targeted as troublemakers."*

That is fundamental to what we wanted to see the curriculum audit as. There is a concern out there that it was contrived to get rid of certain staff. That is the bottom line. We need to see it, separate from the 15-page report that was presented here. I am going to read again; there are only a few of them, Chair.

**Mr Bertie Faulkner (North West Regional College):** Chair —

**Mr P Ramsey:**

*"I have been a lecturer at the college for more than 10 years. In the last number of years I have noticed that relationships between management and staff have become increasingly fractious and it has become apparent that there now exists a management style and ethos which is based on instilling fear in the workforce."*

— that is not my language; it is from a lecturer in the college —

*"which allows to happen to continue in a public environment should not be allowed."*

I am saying that there is a concern. It is not about the 13 most recent redundancies. Scores of people have come to my office. Other members are having the same. I have shared that with some of my colleagues here in going forward. They are very firmly of the opinion that their lives have been wrecked and destroyed by the atmosphere and the bullying that is going on in the college. Something has to be done to stop it.

**Mr S Murphy:** We have 700 staff in the college. Five unions are represented, and four of them are quite happy with management.

**Mr P Ramsey:** Chair, this is being recorded by Hansard. Mr Murphy may feel he can do it with others but he is not going to intimidate and bully me. He will sit there and wait until he is asked a question. It is as simple as that.

I make the point about lives being destroyed. I say directly to both of you: you should be ashamed of yourselves. You really should be ashamed of yourselves.

**Mr Faulkner:** Pat, can I —

**Mr P Ramsey:** No you can't, Bertie.

**Mr Faulkner:** I can't what?

**Mr P Ramsey:** Chair?

**The Deputy Chairperson:** I say to you folk that Pat is in the middle of going through his concerns on this issue. He is in order to do that, so I ask you to please wait until he has finished and posed his questions. You will then have the opportunity to answer Pat's questions and concerns.

**Mr P Ramsey:** I get so frustrated because I am the single member of the Employment and Learning Committee from the wider north-west area. Clearly, I am getting a lot of this. There are wider issues here, and I have repeatedly called for a totally independent investigation of employment practices in the college. That is important going forward and is required to restore morale, trust and confidence generally among the UCU members in the college.

We were led to believe, through the Minister's office, that we would receive a report today on a so-called subgroup of the board of governors, which was examining and, in the words of Seamus's office, carrying out a forensic review of the curriculum audit and the business case that led to redundancies. What has happened to this group? We were told that, Chair. You read some of the letter in which the Minister confirmed that he would have that in his possession. I certainly had concerns leading up to that because we have had previous reviews that looked only at employment processes and not at the employment difficulties that occurred.

We have to reflect, first of all, on why the college felt it was necessary not to send us the curriculum audit separately — not the retrospective, manufactured or fabricated case that has been prepared for a number of weeks leading up to today's meeting.

I have some other points that I want to make but I want to make it very, very clear that there needs to be an independent investigation into employment practice in the North West Regional College. The issue is whether the chair of the board of governors concedes to that or whether this Committee considers carrying out an inquiry into employment practices. We will call witnesses, including former staff and existing staff, to the Committee.

I have a brother who is an alcoholic. He has suffered for a number of years. Thankfully, he is off the drink now but he was always in denial and contriving some excuse to not do something. This puts me in mind of an alcoholic: completely in denial and not wanting to listen to people's concerns. These are not my concerns. All the parliamentarians in Derry, including the local MP, have raised this issue continuously. We met Danny Kennedy, Stephen Farry and Sir Reg Empey, and we have had no joy. He is not listening to his own Department, which is meant to be managing this. Dr Mary McIvor offered assistance. The Minister offered assistance. I am saying that unless we have the curriculum audit and a clear commitment today from the chair of the board of governors, we have to look at alternatives as a Committee.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** OK, folks.

**Mr S Murphy:** Chair, can I make a number of comments? First, we have 700 staff employed in the college and five recognised trade unions. The relationship between four of those trade unions and management is very, very good. It is disappointing to me, the board of governors and the other unions that one union has opted out of the consultation process in the college and refuses to come back on board. In front of you, you have the curriculum audit, which stretches back to the year 2008-09, which is when this problem started in relation to the redundancy areas. The curriculum audit is in the papers.

Now, I came here today to speak to the curriculum audit —

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Can I ask you, sir, why the curriculum audit was not forwarded to us separately when we as a Committee specifically asked for it on three occasions? The reason we gave in our letter to ask you to come today was as follows:

*"At the Committee meeting which was held today,"*

— that was 11 January —

*"members agreed to write to you concerning their request for sight of the College's Curriculum Audit. The Committee expressed its disappointment that you have not yet provided this information, and agreed to ask you to brief the Committee on this issue in person."*

That was simply because, after three written requests, we still have not got it. What we have received is a business case but we have not received the curriculum audit. What we are asking for, and Pat has already asked for it, is a copy of the curriculum audit separate from the business case.

**Mr S Murphy:** First of all, the curriculum audit is the business case; there is no separate document. When the governing body was informed originally, in, I think, October 2010, before I wrote to the staff associations, I informed it, as I have to do as principal, that there was a requirement to reduce staff in a number of areas. The board of governors was informed of that. The board of governors does not get the full details of all the curriculum areas involved. This document that I have today goes back to 2008-09. That identifies the areas; that is the curriculum audit, and it is presented today as part and parcel of the business case. The two go together. There are no other documents apart from what you have here.

**Mr P Ramsey:** There clearly was a paper presented to the board of governors, and that is what we want to see. We want to see the curriculum audit that was referred to, and I have the documents here. Let us go back again:

*"The principal explained that a curriculum audit had been carried out which identified periods where there was no growth in the past three years."*

That is specifically what we want because that is what he referred to at the meeting.

We can go a stage further. Bertie, on 7 January 2011, you made a major statement to the 'Belfast Telegraph'. This is all to do with the curriculum audit:

*"There will be a total of 16 posts going. We have identified where the fat is"*

— those are your words, Bertie; verbatim —

*"and we will be taking the necessary action."*

So it had nothing to do with the curriculum audit. It was to do with a decision, according to the chair of the board of governors, to remove the fat. Do you think it was responsible and mature to say that in the circumstances?

**Mr Faulkner:** Through the Chair; absolutely.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Allow Bertie to answer. Go ahead, Bertie.

**Mr Faulkner:** First of all, I thank you for the invitation to be here. I am sorry that this is degenerating into an atmosphere that I did not expect. First, again, I thank you for coming. Let me re-emphasise, Chair, that there is a protocol. I respect that this Committee has the right to invite anybody, but I would like it to understand the process and the procedure around the accountability of a governing body in a college. I am answerable to the Minister. The principal is accountable and answerable to me, the governing body and the permanent secretary. All I ask is that the Committee respect the protocol and write to the chair as a protocol. You have absolutely the right to write to anybody, but I am just asking that the protocol be observed in correspondence, and that would cut out any delay in responding and any misunderstanding. That is just a statement.

**Mr P Ramsey:** It says a lot about the chair of the board of governors that, given the comments that I have made, all he has to offer —

**Mr Faulkner:** I am only starting.

**Mr P Ramsey:** — is a bit of process. Chair, it is important. We cannot dismiss the curriculum audit. We are not going down that road. We want to see the document that was presented to the board of governors. That is the bottom line.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** That is the bottom line. That is what we want to see, and until we see it, that is what we will continue to press for, but perhaps we can let Bertie continue.

**Mr Faulkner:** Thank you very much.

At the very outset, the governing body was asked by Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) officials and the Minister to carry out an independent review into the redundancy. We invited PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in to do that on 18 August 2011, and that document has been sent to the Minister in its fullness. That was a completely independent review by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The UCU regional secretary asked for a copy of that, and he got what is called a redacted copy, because, in the full copy, there is information that, under the Data Protection Act, could not be disclosed in the public domain because a lot of members are noted. That was the first instance.

We were then told, again by Mr Ramsey, through DEL, that the terms of reference of the independent review into the redundancy were too narrow, and he then asked whether we could have an independent review or a review of the business case and the curriculum review. Again, the governing body set up a committee comprising four members of the governing body. Two were chartered accountants who would examine the business case, and two were ex-principals of highly esteemed colleges who would understand a curriculum review. We invited a member of staff to join that for transparency, and we also invited DEL to nominate. So, we had six members involved in that review of the business case and the curriculum audit.

The member of staff, who is the branch chairman, nominated one person out of 300 lecturers. That person was involved in the redundancy and in the schools and could not possibly sit on that committee because there would have been a conflict of interest. The secretary of the governing body wrote to the branch chair and told him that it would be a conflict of interest for that staff member out of 300. The committee went over the head of the branch chair and appealed directly to the staff members to nominate, and we got nominations from the staff. The staff member sat on that independent review, which carried out a forensic audit of the curriculum and the business case. So those six people have now completed that review, and that review will be discussed.

However, as the principal pointed out, what you have received today is the business case and the curriculum review. I, as chair, have now received that copy, and that will be discussed at a special governing body meeting. You will certainly receive a full copy of that.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Bertie, with respect, you have said here now that the curriculum audit and the business case were two different documents.

**Mr Faulkner:** No, they are the same.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Hold on. You have alluded to the fact that there were two different documents, so why then are we saying today that they are all tied into one document rather than the two different ones that we have been asking for?

**Mr S Murphy:** Sorry; if you want the detail on the curriculum aspect, it is at documents 2, 5 and 6 of the pack you have. The context of the curriculum is also the affordability of what you can run in any individual area and the effectiveness of that. Both go together. If you are looking for the paper that was presented to the board of governors, what was presented to the staffing committee of the board of governors was a recommendation from me that, having looked at the curriculum, there was a need to do a staff adjustment. That was accepted by the staffing committee and by the board of governors. We then went into the process of the redundancies.

There were two aspects to the redundancies: 13 were linked to the curriculum to move money from inefficient areas into front line services in other areas where there was a demand, and three were linked to restructuring. Of those 16 redundancies, 15 were satisfied through agreed redeployment of staff or voluntary severance. There was one compulsory redundancy when one individual member refused a management post at over £30,000 a year and preferred to take a redundancy. Only one redundancy of the 16 was compulsory, and we offered a redeployment opportunity.

The case is basically quite simple; we have redeployed £600,000 of underused resources into front line services to ensure that no student, part-time or full-time, who applied for a course in the north-west was turned away. Over the past three years, including this year, we have delivered £7 million of provision out of our reserves and efficiencies — that was not funded by the Department. That is because we believe two things; first, that it is absolutely essential that we provide the highest quality education possible to the people in the region, and secondly, that we do so at the least cost to the public purse.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** On that, Seamus, how are you meeting the priority targets set by DEL?

**Mr S Murphy:** On essential skills levels one to three, we are meeting targets. On priority skills areas, such as computing, construction and engineering, like most colleges, we are below target. We are 9% below the 28% target but we are in line with most colleges. In the north-west, that has partly been exacerbated by the fact that our priority skills numbers have remained steady but our overall numbers have increased.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Yes, but in today's climate, when DEL sets priorities that the North West Regional College is funded to deliver, is it not in your interest to ensure that those targets are being met? We are actually sitting at 10% below, which is quite a bit below. Given that it is a priority target funded by DEL, it is quite a bit below target.

**Mr S Murphy:** The main aspect of the priority skills recruitment in the north-west is from the construction industry. For the past two to three years, the construction industry has not been recruiting.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Is it fair to say that the areas that were reduced — some of the redundancies and the areas identified in the curriculum audit that we cannot get hold of — are pulling back these figures on the priority skills target?

**Mr S Murphy:** That is completely untrue. If you look at documents 2 and 4, you will find, first, that business studies is not a priority skill. We reduced staffing in computing, but with the staffing we retained, we have increased our student numbers this year. The problem in some of the priority skills areas is lack of demand. If you wish to go through the details of the curriculum in the documents that you have got, I am quite happy to do that, because the figures stack up and the redeployment has been successful.

**Mr Douglas:** I have a couple of comments to make before I ask a question. First, I was elected to the Assembly last May, and this was one of the issues that came up in the early days. It strikes me that this has been festering for many months, as we are now into a new year.

Secondly, like Pat, I have been contacted by people. I am more distant a local representative than Pat is, but people have expressed their concerns. One letter was from a person who said:

*"The minutes of a meeting between the governing body on 4 March indicate that the principal explained that a curriculum audit had been carried out."*

That was on 4 March, so my question is, if this curriculum audit was carried out, at what stage did it merge with this business plan?

**Mr S Murphy:** We carry out a curriculum audit each year as part of the planning process. I will take you very briefly through it. In the year 2007-08, which was the first year of the college, numbers were below the numbers agreed with the Department, but that recruitment had been through the legacy colleges. The year 2008-09 was the first in which the college had been in control of its own recruitment. In November 2009, we had a three-day workshop with all managers to look at the performance of the college over the first two years. That was the first aspect of the curriculum audit as defined by this Committee. Document 2 shows the result of that curriculum audit. It shows a number of schools significantly underperforming in relation to the staff:student ratio, which is the main focus of

delivery through staff. The staff:student ratio is, in effect, the audit of the performance of that curriculum area over the year.

We did the same exercise in 2009-2010. The result of the 2008-09 exercise was that the senior staff in those schools believed that they could improve their performance through the recruitment of extra students. When we looked at it in 2009-2010, based on the past year, the performance had not improved. We then looked at those two areas for the enrolment for 2010-11 and, again, the enrolment numbers had not improved. Therefore, having tried for two years to improve the situation by recruiting extra students, and having seen that that had not been the result in the third year, there was a requirement, since we had a demand in other areas, for extra provision. There was a demand to redeploy the resources to meet the areas of demand. I believe that, from the management point of view, that is the correct and proper thing to do when providing a public service.

**Mr Douglas:** Pat mentioned the scores of people who have come to his office, and we have been contacted by people. I know that you said that one of the trade unions has opted out of any negotiations. Who are these people who are coming to Pat's office and writing to us? There is definitely a problem here.

**Mr S Murphy:** As I said in my paper, we have a small number of people who do not accept the college philosophy of putting the student first. There is a cohort around an active member of one union that basically is of the view that we should go back to the way that FE was in the past. I believe that they are small in number. We have carried out focus groups internally with staff over a period of time, and some of the issues that you referred to did not arise in those focus groups. The inspectorate has been in to look at course provision over a two-year period, and it did not find any issues linked to what you have been talking about. I am not for one moment saying that there are not some disillusioned members of staff; there are. However, when we did a full staff survey last year — it went to the Department for a comparison with the previous year — we found that the main area of concern was job security in the current climate, and all the other issues had showed significant improvement on the previous year. So I believe that staff morale and the issues that have been addressed are improving.

In relation to the staff association that you are referring to, the governing body has yet again written to the regional secretary to try to improve relations. I believe that the regional secretary is meeting the staffing committee on 23 March. This is the second attempt to do that. The result the last time — I am quite happy to say this — is that the chair of the branch suggested to the chair of governing body that if he sacked me, the chair of the branch would consider standing down. That was their solution.

**Mr Faulkner:** Chair, can I follow up on Mr Douglas's question? There is an orchestration of letter writing, and I can give you one very clear example. Five alleged whistle-blowing letters were sent to the Minister anonymously, and I was mentioned in them. It was quite vile what was said in those letters that were sent anonymously to the Minister — it was Minister Kennedy at the time. I am a volunteer, and I do not receive any remuneration. All the members of the governing body are volunteers, and I resent some of the comments that Mr Ramsey has made about me personally. As I was mentioned in those letters, there was no way that we were going to carry out a review, even though the letters were anonymous. So the governing body invited DEL to do a forensic audit of what was contained in those anonymous whistle-blowing letters, and we got a completely clean bill of health. We closed that loop even though those letters were anonymous. I could give you other examples, but that was one that really hurt me personally.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** There is certainly a problem here, and it has been rumbling on for some time. That problem has not been dealt with, and it is still rumbling on. I get quite a number of e-mails and correspondence from people who are not anonymous. These people are genuinely concerned about the situation and the fact that it is not being dealt with. One reason why the Committee is looking into this particular issue is that there are ongoing difficulties and problems that are not being taken on board and dealt with. We are talking about one of the unions, the UCU, pulling out and not taking part in this, but let us remember this and not hoodwink ourselves this morning: the UCU represents up to 50% of staff. So do not think that because one union is not taking part, it does not represent many staff. That union represents up to 50% of staff. Again, that raises questions about why this matter is not being dealt with. I just want to put that on record.

Pat, you indicated that you want to speak again.

**Mr P Ramsey:** Again, both Bertie and Seamus are in denial. The red herring that has been thrown in about whistle-blowing that happened years ago is nothing to do with what we are sitting here talking about. It is an absolute red herring. People have sent anonymous letters. I have seen anonymous letters. I saw them before I became involved in the Committee for Employment and Learning. That was for the Department to deal with. Thomas, as the Deputy Chairperson, is saying now that we are inundated, and I mean inundated. I have had people in my office, Bertie, in tears, grown men in tears, telling me that you wrecked their lives.

**Mr Faulkner:** I wrecked their lives?

**Mr P Ramsey:** Yes; the board of governors that is overseeing this. It is not being challenging enough as regards the senior management of the college. That is what they have been saying to me.

With all these independent reviews, you would imagine that there is a swinging door into the North West Regional College in Derry. I just want to say, for the record, that the independent review that was carried out by PwC was on the process of redundancies. It had absolutely nothing to do with redundancies, the curriculum audit, the business audit, or anything else. It was very limited in its scope. You are right; I did raise it as being unsatisfactory. A subcommittee has been set up. Somebody has the cheek to come in here now to tell me that a lecturer was not allowed on that subcommittee because there was a conflict of interest. The board of governor members on this subgroup have a conflict of interest because they made the decision to make people redundant. You cannot have it one way and then have it another way.

Honestly, I think that people's positions on this one are becoming untenable in not promoting and being more challenging. I do not like this idea of rubbishing staff. I spent three years in the North West Regional College. I took great pride in my City and Guilds qualifications when I did them, many moons ago now. How dare anybody tell me that a lecturer does not put the student first? That was said here today; that lecturers in the college do not put students first. How dare anybody make that statement? The amount of absolutely good work that goes on in the North West Regional College for people who are not in education, employment or training — NEET — and who are trying to secure employment opportunities, get through their training and get NVQs is fantastic. That is what it is all about. The language that was used today epitomises what happens in the North West Regional College — if you do not conform in that college, you put a big sign on your back to be targeted. That is what has happened here.

Chair, I propose that we move on and that, after the meeting, we consider the options going forward with regard to the curriculum audit. The two or three points that Seamus refers to are graphs. There is no text at all. So I think that we have to consider the options. Absolutely, we have a scrutinising role in terms of public money. I am more concerned, given some of the responses today — I really am, Chair — that, in some way, there is a cover-up of this. I say that quite deliberately. They are trying to protect themselves. So I propose that we move on and reaffirm our position. We need to see the curriculum audit and the business case that led to the curriculum audit. We will consider what we think is best going forward. If that includes a Committee inquiry into employment relations, we should do that, if nobody else is prepared to do it.

**Mr Faulkner:** Two weeks ago, when, again, you were abusing me personally, the governing body and the college on the radio, you were asked how many redundancies there were. What was your answer?

**Mr P Ramsey:** Well, Chair, irrespective —

**Mr Faulkner:** What was your answer?

**Mr P Ramsey:** Chair, first of all —

**Mr Faulkner:** What was your answer?

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Hold on, folks. I think that we are out of order here. This is not an issue. The meeting was not called to allow two individuals to question each other in such a fashion. Therefore, I am ruling that completely out of order.

**Mr Faulkner:** Can I give the answer, Chair?

**The Deputy Chairperson:** I am ruling it out of order. A proposal has been made that we move on.

One thing I wanted to ask was —

**Mr McElduff:** Chair, can I ask whether we as a Committee are satisfied that we are not in possession of the curriculum audit? Are we as a Committee satisfied that we are not in possession of a standalone document — I think that October 2010 was mentioned — namely the curriculum audit?

**The Deputy Chairperson:** I think that that is the feeling of the Committee — that we are not in possession of that document. That is why we have forwarded the letter. After writing on three occasions to ask for a copy of the document, we still had not received it, so we sent a letter specifically addressed to the principal of the college to get him to come along here today and give a verbal report on why we have not received it. As a Committee, we are strongly of the opinion that we still have not received it. Bertie, you said in your comments earlier that a redacted copy had been given to the union.

**Mr Faulkner:** No.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** I wonder why that copy could not have been given to the Committee.

**Mr Faulkner:** A redacted copy?

**The Deputy Chairperson:** Yes.

**Mr Faulkner:** A redacted copy of the redundancy document was given to the unions.

**Mr P Ramsey:** The redacted document that he is talking about is the so-called independent review by PwC, which did not look at the curriculum audit or — [*Inaudible.*] It only looked at the processes.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** We have not seen that document either.

**Mr P Ramsey:** Really and truly, it was looking at the processes of Colleges Northern Ireland only; it was not about North West Regional College. That is what the independent review —

**Mr Douglas:** Chair, may I just link in a question? I just want to get clarification on a point that Pat raised about some of the staff not putting the students first. It clearly states on page 3 of your proposals:

*"in a staff of 700 ... some individuals find change difficult and ... have a difficulty in putting the students first".*

That is in your paper.

**Mr S Murphy:** A small number.

**Mr Douglas:** I am just going to ask you how many people we are talking about and whether they exist in the college at the moment.

**Mr S Murphy:** I think that we have a small number of actives around the UCU branch; I would say no more than 10. The vast majority of staff do a very good, professional job, and I want to put that on record. I want to come back to the Chairman's comment. There is no other curriculum documentation, except for what you have here. Documents 2, 5 and 6 are the curriculum audit.

**The Deputy Chairperson:** With all due respect, we as a Committee will decide whether there is any other document. We are not happy. As you have heard from the tone of this morning's meeting, we are still not happy. A proposal has been made to move on, and in the interests of the Committee, we will do so on this occasion. Thank you for coming along to the Committee, folks. Again, it has not been the type of meeting that we would have liked to have had. However, we appreciate your time and your coming to the Committee. We are going to move on.

**Mr Faulkner:** Thank you very much.