

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Governing Body of South West College**
held on Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 5:30 pm
via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT:

- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Deborah Brown
- Mr Colin Lewis (Interim Chief Executive)
- Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
- Mr Seamus McCaffrey
- Mrs Gillian McDowell
- Mr Michael McGuckin
- Miss Caitlyn McLoughlin
- Mrs Joanne Moore
- Mr Gerard O’Hanlon
- Dr Nicholas O’Shiel (Chairman)
- Mr Michael Skuce

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Ms Elaine Grier
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood
- Ms Alana Jones Campbell
- Ms Celine McCartan
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Ms Anne McCleary (*from item 5.0*)
- Dr Lynsey Quinn
- Mr Mark Sterritt, Boardroom Apprentice

1.0 PRELIMINARIES

Dr O’Shiel welcomed all present to the meeting. He extended a particular welcome to the six pending new governors and noted that their appointment to the Governing Body by the Department for the Economy (DfE) is anticipated.

He then commented on the importance of acknowledging the current period of change within the College and the need to retain focus on students, staff and the curriculum.

2.0 APOLOGIES

It was noted that all members were present.

3.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Mrs McCaffrey drew attention to the reference to her nephew in paper 06.01 - Outcomes of COP26 Participation. It was noted that no conflict of interest exists in the context in which Mrs McCaffrey’s nephew is mentioned.

4.0 MINUTES OF AND MATTERS ARISING FROM A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 17 November 2021.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey and seconded by Mr Skuce, that the above minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.

5.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Introductions – Dr O'Shiel led a round of self-introductions. He encouraged contributions from new governors from the outset noting the value of scrutiny and challenge from all members. He referenced the Guide for Governors of Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges and highlighted governors' responsibilities in asking questions and making decisions.

Ms McCleary joined the meeting during the above introductions.

Committees – Dr O'Shiel reminded the meeting that membership of committees is subject to the approval of the Governing Body and sought delegated authority to approve committee membership on behalf of the Governing Body in light of the timing of the pending appointment of the six new governors.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr Skuce and seconded by Mr O'Hanlon, that authority be delegated to the Chair of the Governing Body to approve committee membership on behalf of the Governing Body.

Communications to Staff – Dr O'Shiel reminded members of the communications issued to staff in November and December 2021 during which staff were informed of the development of a Change Management Programme to include the establishment of a Change Management Team. He advised that engagement with DfE continues to determine membership of this team and that a communication will issue to staff later in January 2022 to provide an update on the Change Management Programme and the progress of the Chief Executive recruitment process.

Staff Governor Contributions – Dr O'Shiel referenced the discussion held at the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting on how to most effectively hear from staff. He remarked on the role of staff governors in bringing the perspective of staff to the decision making process and then invited Ms Breen and Mrs Brown to comment. The staff governors welcomed the opportunity to feedback to the meeting and spoke of the impact of the pandemic in adding to the low morale and pressure felt by staff as well as the decline in the mental health of students.

Lecturers' Pay Negotiations – Dr O'Shiel reported that a pay agreement for the two prior years had been reached with Trade Unions and that negotiations continue in relation to the current and future years.

Review of Further Education Delivery Model – Dr O'Shiel reminded governors that a review of the FE delivery model, commissioned by DfE, has commenced which will inform options for a new delivery model. He explained that this is being undertaken by an external organization and will entail a data gathering exercise in the first instance followed by consultation.

6.0 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

Newspaper Coverage – Mr Lewis referenced an article published in the Impartial Reporter newspaper on 10 December 2021 covering the allegation of malpractice in the reporting of academic achievement in the College and the review of the College's culture and structure.

Covid-19 Recovery and Resilience – Mr Lewis reported on the marked increase in the number of staff that had been diagnosed with Covid-19 or were isolating due to close contact with a positive case on the resumption of college activity after the Christmas break and explained that most affected staff continued to work remotely. He confirmed that enhanced mitigations are in place in compliance with government guidelines and advised that staff are reminded of these mitigations on a regular basis through formal communications and that a new messaging campaign aimed at students to reinforce the need for social distancing and mask wearing is in development. He added that January examinations will proceed as scheduled and acknowledged the role of staff, under the leadership of Dr Cush, in ensuring that campuses remain open for students.

Lost Learning Initiative – Mr Lewis outlined the interventions in place under the Lost Learning Initiative and spoke of his confidence that all funding provided through this initiative will be expended by 31 March 2022 as required.

College Development Plan Targets – Mr Lewis alerted the meeting to the non-achievement of enrolment targets in the areas of full-time Higher Education and Traineeships. He commented on the factors affecting the non-achievement of these targets including a decline in progression from further education programmes, competition from universities and the popularity of Higher Level Apprenticeships. He noted the sectoral decline in Higher Education in Further Education enrolments generally and the need for a wider review of government policy in this area to address this decline.

Quality Assurance Action Plan – Mr Lewis commented on his satisfaction with the implementation of the Quality Assurance Action Plan developed to restore confidence in the College's compliance with the requirements of Awarding Organisations and acknowledged the potential for the Governing Body to commission a wider external review of assessment practices throughout the College.

Assurance Statement to DfE – Mr Lewis reported that the adjustments made to the Mid-Year Assurance Statement to DfE had been formally corrected.

Erne Campus Development – Mr Lewis explained that focus has been placed on operations and benefits realization in preparation for the Gateway 5 review and confirmed that ownership of each of the nine benefits to be reported on has been allocated to individual managers.

MEGA – Mr Lewis advised that a meeting with MEGA has been scheduled to discuss future collaborations and cautioned that any commitments must be sufficiently resourced.

MPs – Mr Lewis informed the meeting of requests from two MPs for an invitation to visit the Erne Campus.

7.0 ERNE CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Outcomes of COP 26 Participation.

Dr Cush reminded members of the College's strong profile in sustainability through its curriculum and facilities. She outlined the commitments made within the Sustainability Strategy and the alignment of the opportunities provided through the College's participation in the COP 26 Conference with these commitments. With reference to paper 06.01, she provided details of the Erne Campus' recognition as a Centre of Excellence for High Performance Buildings by the United Nations as well as an overview of the seminar hosted by the College on how buildings play a role in fighting climate change. She quantified the value of the exposure received at £461k advertising equivalency and commented on the partnerships made as a result of the conference including the opportunity for 12 students to attend a Summer School on High Performance Building Design in Humber College, Canada, to be funded through the Turing Scheme.

The team involved in the College's participation in the COP 26 Climate Change Conference was congratulated for its presentation and the significance of the benefits to be accrued was noted.

8.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION, QUALITY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee held on Wednesday 24 November 2021
- Paper 07.02 Digital Strategy 2021 – 2024
- Paper 07.03 Digital Strategy 2021 – 2024 Implementation Plan
- Paper 07.04 Higher Education Admissions, Admissions Appeals and RPL Policy
- Paper 07.05 Higher Education Internal Moderation Policy
- Paper 07.06 Higher Education Feedback on Assessment Policy
- Paper 07.07 Management of Work Based Learning in Higher Education Policy
- Paper 07.08 Learning Resource Centre Policy
- Paper 07.09 Anti-Bullying Policy for Students
- Paper 07.10 Student Attendance Policy
- Paper 07.11 Quality Assurance & Improvement Policy.

Mrs Moore, Chair of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee, began her report on the committee meeting held on 24 November 2021 by referring to the updates provided on the Committee's key strategic issues noting in particular the discussion held on the impact of the interventions implemented through the Lost Learning Initiative and the link to be established between the Quality Manager and the Student Governor to enable further feedback on students' views on the effectiveness of the interventions to be provided.

She went on to provide an overview of the Management Report received by the Committee highlighting the decline in enrolments to further education provision, the challenges in recruiting to full-time higher education provision, the receipt of funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund for the Rural Economic Accelerator Programme, the positive feedback received from the ETI following its evaluation of the

Engineering & Manufacturing Hub and the provision of professional supervision for the safeguarding team to support them in managing their personal response to safeguarding incidents.

Mrs Moore then referenced the presentation received on the performance and strategic plans of the Automotive, Computing & Engineering Faculty and explained that subsequent discussion had focused on the recruitment of females and adult returners to STEM courses as well as the ongoing challenge in attracting staff to certain curricular areas.

She concluded by drawing attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Digital Strategy 2021 – 2024, the Higher Education Admissions, Admissions Appeals and RPL Policy, the Higher Education Internal Moderation Policy, the Higher Education Feedback on Assessment Policy, the Management of Work Based Learning in Higher Education Policy, the Learning Resource Centre Policy, the Anti-Bullying Policy for Students, the Student Attendance Policy and the Quality Assurance & Improvement Policy.

It was suggested that the Digital Strategy 2021-24 be held back from ratification pending a review of its key performance indicators to ensure that measurable targets are defined within. Mr Lewis undertook to chair a meeting with the Digital Services Manager and interested governors to develop KPIs for incorporation into the strategy.

A further review of the Management of Work Based Learning in Higher Education Policy was requested, specifically in relation to the proposed indemnity to be afforded to employers providing work placements for students and to update the reference to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Legislation (2000).

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Moore, seconded by Mr O'Hanlon, adoption of the minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting and the recommendations therein with the exception of the Digital Strategy 2021-2024 and the Management of Work Based Learning in Higher Education Policy. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.

9.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 8 December 2021
- Paper 08.02 2020-21 Equality Progress Report
- Paper 08.03 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 08.03 Fixed Term Contracts Report.

In commencing her report on the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 8 December 2021, Mrs McDowell, Chair of the Staffing Committee, spoke of the development of a Change Management Programme, adding that further details thereof will emerge in time.

Moving on to the Management Report received by the Committee, Mrs McDowell commented on the plan for a review of business support staff structures as part of the Change Management Programme; explained that a procedure will be developed to identify posts which may be offered on a permanent basis as a step in addressing staff recruitment issues; and drew attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the 2020/21 Equality Progress Report for submission to the Equality

Commission. She also alerted the meeting to an increase in the sickness absence rate when compared to the low base at the same point in 2020/21 and provided assurance that this is not a concern at present.

Mrs McDowell then referred to the presentation received on resource planning and workforce development in the Centres for Excellence highlighting the reported declining enrolments to further education provision across the sector, the collaborations with partners to acquire skills to deliver curriculum in priority areas and the introduction of a level 4 Certificate in Healthcare Practice course.

In response to a query on the origins of the Change Management Programme, Dr O'Shiel explained that the programme had been proposed during a meeting with DfE in response to the report on the review of the College's culture and structure as well as a number of other issues.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McDowell, seconded by Mr Skuce, adoption of the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting and recommendation therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.

10.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 15 December 2021
- Paper 09.02 Annual Report & Financial Statements 2020/21
- Paper 09.03 Report to Those Charged with Governance
- Paper 09.04 Financial Management Report Q1 2021/22
- Paper 09.05 Investment Policy
- Paper 09.06 Bad Debt Policy
- Paper 09.07 Fees & Charges Policy 2022/23
- Paper 09.08 Energy Management Policy
- Paper 09.09 Hardship Fund Policy 2021/22.

Reporting on the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 15 December 2021, Mr McCaffrey, Committee Chair, apprised members of the updates provided on the Committee's key strategic issues noting the likelihood of a reduced budget in forthcoming years, the focus placed on the realization of benefits arising from the Erne Campus Development and the finalization of the Annual Report & Financial Statements 2020/21 with an unqualified opinion.

He referenced the Management Report received by the Committee and highlighted the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Investment Policy, the Bad Debt Policy, the Fees & Charges Policy 2022/23, the Energy Management Policy and the Hardship Fund Policy 2021/22. He added that a solution to the catering VAT issue in the Dungannon and Omagh campuses had been found and that a summary report will be tabled at the next committee meeting.

He explained that a presentation on the financial performance of the Built Environment, Creative & Life Sciences Faculty had been received and advised that decreased enrolments to full-time further education and higher education courses had been reported as well as a favourable budget position for the faculty for the year to date.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McCaffrey, seconded by Mr McGuckin, adoption of the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting and the recommendations therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.

11.0 REVIEW OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 10.01 Cover Letter
- Paper 10.02 Report on Analysis of 2020/21 GB Self-Assessment.

Dr O’Shiel made reference to the analysis of the 2020/21 Governing Body self-assessment exercise in paper 10.02. He acknowledged the opportunity to reflect on the self-assessment and welcomed comments from members.

It was noted that the reported reduction in the satisfaction levels of governors was to be expected in light of the timing of the survey and the pending change process and that the 2021/22 self-assessment exercise may evidence improved satisfaction.

12.0 DECLARATION OF HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED

No declarations were made under this heading.

13.0 REVIEW OF OUSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 12 Outstanding Actions.

It was noted that an evaluation of the outcomes for the College of its participation in the COP26 Climate Change Conference had been provided as requested. A revised list of outstanding actions is included in Appendix A.

14.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

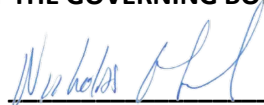
15.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members noted their satisfaction with the proceedings of the meeting.

Ms Breen, Mrs Brown, Miss McLoughlin and Mr Sterritt withdrew from the meeting at this juncture (7:10 pm). The meeting then went into confidential session.

CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

CHAIRMAN



DATE 02/03/2022

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	12/01/2022	8.0	Mr Lewis undertook to chair a meeting with the Digital Services Manager and interested governors to develop KPIs for incorporation into the Digital Strategy.
2	12/01/2022	8.0	Further review to be undertaken of the Management of Work Based Learning in Higher Education Policy, specifically in relation to the proposed indemnity to be afforded to employers providing work placements for students and to update the reference to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Legislation (2000).