

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 at 9.00 am via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT: Mrs Gillian McDowell (Committee Chair)
Mr Colin Lewis (Interim Chief Executive)
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
Mr Michael Skuce
Ms Alana Jones-Campbell
Ms Anne McCleary

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body (*via phone*)
Mrs Carol Anne Deeny, Acting Head of Human Resources
Ms Carol Viney, Head of Faculty PSS (*Item 7.0 only*)
Mrs Sabrina Bernhardt, Secretary to the Governing Body Admin

At the outset, the Committee Chair, Mrs Gillian McDowell, opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees. The Chair welcomed the new Governors, Ms Jones-Campbell and Ms McCleary, to their first Staffing Committee meeting.

1.0 APOLOGIES

It was noted that all members were present.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

3.0 SAFEGUARDING

No safeguarding matters were raised.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04 Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 8th December 2021

There were no matters arising.

Mr Lewis joined the meeting at this juncture.

5.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.01 Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 05.02 Key Strategic Issues Management Update

Mr Lewis apologised for having no access to the Key Strategic Issues papers due to IT problems within the Omagh Campus. With reference to paper 05.02, he noted his assumption that the management update on the Committee's key strategic issues had been read by members and proceeded to provide further updates by exception.

5.1 Review of Culture & Structure

Mr Lewis reported that the College is currently in the early stages of the rebuilding phase. Internal regular communication in relation to the change management process have been well received by staff and Trade Unions.

He reassured the Committee members that arisen issues of concerns, he received via email, have been dealt with promptly. Angst from individuals and groups of staff have been expressed in relation to workload and pay unfairness. Staff expectations of job evaluations are high.

A review of the adequacy of corporate services functions will be a work strand of the Change Management Team. This will help validate requests and inform any resourcing needs.

Mr Lewis recognised that the Governing Body and the new Interim Chief Executive have an immense assignment in the coming months in building trust and morale of all employees. The Governing Body needs to include positive employee engagement by giving staff a voice and act on it. Mr Lewis highlights this as a significant step in the journey ahead to ensure this review is carried out successfully.

5.2 Centre for People and Workforce Development

Mr Lewis reported that the Head of HR currently remains off on sick leave. Mr Lewis expressed his appreciation to Mrs Carol Anne Deeny for her role as Acting Head of HR but also states that this arrangement can't remain in place and a more substantive solution needs to be found.

Mr Lewis recognizes the heaviness of workload the HR department is dealing with due to additional COVID duties. He also stressed the importance of the appraisal completions.

Mr Lewis informed the Committee members that he received an increased amount of concern emails from employees in recent months. He stressed the importance that all individuals need to re-engage with policies.

Mr Skuce queried if all staff who raised a concern with the Interim Chief Executive have discussed this firstly with HR or their Line Managers. These need to be monitored to give Governors transparency. Mr Lewis replied that all individuals have been written to advising them how to take the issues forward e.g. to get in contact with HR. Mr Lewis feels that some issues could be resolved prior to launching a grievance and are not in need of recording.

Dr Cush added that Line Managers and HR have been made aware and the issues are known. Employees are frustrated particularly in relation to a job evaluation process. Mr Lewis confirmed that most concerns are relating to workload and staff feel they are working above their pay grade. He added that job evaluations have to be carried out but not until high level work has been completed. Following this, concerns need to be validated.

Ms Jones-Campbell asked for further details to what high level work needs to be carried out. Mr Lewis referred back to the Corporate Services function which is under resourced. The current departments need to be reviewed to see if they are fit for purpose. Mr Lewis added a framework needs to be set and individual positions need to be reviewed.

Mrs McDowell thanked Mr Lewis for his help, update and support.

6.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Management Report
- Paper 06.01 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report
- Paper 06.02 Equality Update
- Paper 06.03 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 06.04 Fixed-Term Contracts Report
- Paper 06.05 Sickness Absence Report Dec 2021
- Paper 06.06 Draft Procedure for Recruiting Permanent Posts

With reference to paper 06, Mrs Deeny noted her assumption that the management report had been read by members and proceeded to provide further updates by exception.

6.1 Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 06.01

Mrs Deeny advised that the focus in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing report still remains on COVID-19. She went on to report on the COVID-19 statistics and planned online workshops for staff.

6.2 Human Resources

6.2.1 Appointments

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

Mrs Deeny quantified the number of staff appointments made since the December 2021 committee meeting. She also commented on the associated workload and ongoing recruitment activities.

AGREED: that the appointments listed in paper 06.03 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.2.2 Staff Requests

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

Mrs Deeny provided background information on the staff requests listed in paper 06.03 and specifically highlighted SRF2 (FT Lecturer of Computing (Cyber Specialism)) as this request relates to a career break approval and SRF 11 and 12 (Technical Supervisor (Infrastructure Services) and Information Security Officer).

The Technical Services department has recently received two further resignations within the team. The Interim Chief Executive agreed to proceed to advertisement of these two posts prior to the Staffing Committee meeting due to shortage of staff within IT.

Mr Skuce queried if present lasting technical issues in Omagh Campus are relating to staff shortage. Mrs Deeny reassured Mr Skuce that there was a hardware failure and the College is currently awaiting a replacement delivery.

Mr Skuce enquired if local recruitment agencies have been taken considered to secure short term cover. Mrs Deeny advised that there are contractual difficulties but it is an avenue that can be explored further.

Mrs Deeny also made the Committee members aware of the progress of the MIS Manager vacancy which to date has not received any applications. Further avenues need to be sourced to secure an appointment for this significant role.

Mrs McDowell inquired where current College vacancies are being advertised. Mrs Deeny responded that all positions are being advertised on the GETGOT portal, Social Media platforms and occasionally local papers. Due to a high fee, the College is not using NI Jobs.

Following a resignation within the HR team in recent days, Mrs Deeny sought approval for additional staff requests for a HR and Workforce Development Assistant and a temporary HR Administration position.

Subsequent discussions took place in relation to length of contracts. It was agreed that urgent HR positions are to be advertised on a temporary basis while the re-structuring process is ongoing.

Mrs McDowell asked for a report to be drafted for the next Staffing Committee meeting with a summary of under-resourced departments divided into risk categories. Mr Lewis appreciated the request but advised that it is not timely to produce such report due to the re-structuring process.

AGREED: that the staff requests listed in paper 06.03, as well as that verbally reported above, be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.2.3 Resignations

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

The resignations listed in paper 06.03 were noted by the Committee.

6.2.4 Other Resourcing Issues

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

Mrs Deeny quantified the number of upcoming maternity leaves and associated staff requests.

She also referenced the recommendations made in section 4 of the Staff Resource Report in relation to changes in contracted hours and the request to extend

Renewable Engine Research and Innovation Co-ordinator's role due to short-term funding.

AGREED: that the recommendations made in this section of the Staff Resource Report, be noted / supported as appropriate.

Mrs Deeny referred to the career break application and advised that this request has not been endorsed by ICE and DCE and that the staff member has handed in her resignation, in line with notice periods, should the career break application be denied. The Committee agreed that Cyber Security is an important area and needs to be filled on a full-time / permanent basis.

AGREED: that the career break listed in paper 06.03 is declined.

6.2.5 Fixed Term Contracts

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.04

Mrs Deeny provided details on the rationale for each of the fixed-term contract recommendations made in paper 06.04.

AGREED: that the fixed term contracts proposals detailed paper 06.04 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.2.6 Performance Management

Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Papers 06.05

Mrs Deeny drew attention to the 4.70% overall sickness absence rate for the College in the 2021/22 academic year to date. She advised the Committee members that changes have been made to the document. Paper 06.05 now highlights the comparison of monthly overall days lost compared to previous year (COVID-19 vs Pre-COVID-19) and a breakdown of reason absences has been added as requested by the Interim Chief Executive.

6.2.7 Workforce Development

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0

The updates provided in the Management Report on workforce development were referenced.

6.3 Other

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0

The updates provided in the Management Report on policy review and payroll were referenced.

Mrs Deeny advised that the College to date has not received a letter from DfE confirming the College grouping and that this information will be requested.

6.4 **Outstanding Actions**

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Paper 06.06

Action 1 – Implications on resourcing of DfE’s requirement (Minute Ref 6.3.2)

The Interim Chief Executive will raise the implications on resourcing of DfE’s requirement for more frequent data returns with the Principals’ group and DfE at their next meeting. An update will be provided at the March Staffing Committee meeting.

Action 2 - Procedure for Recruiting Permanent Posts (Minute Ref 6.3.2)

Mrs Deeny advised that the HR team and DCE developed a procedure for identifying posts which may be offered on a permanent basis.

Mr Skuce queried the funding of permanent posts. Mrs Deeny referred to the procedure which states that budget for a permanent position needs to be available.

AGREED: that the Procedure for Recruiting Permanent Posts be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

Action 3 - Return to Work Interview Report (Minute Ref 6.3.6)

The report on Return to Work Interviews will be submitted at the next Staffing Committee meeting in March due to the current workload.

Mr Skuce thanked Mrs Deeny, on behalf of all the Committee members, for her very informative and impressive brief on all previous headings.

7.0 **RESOURCE PLANNING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES FACULTY**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Resource Planning and Workforce Development in the Professional and Social Sciences Faculty

Ms Carol Viney, Head of Faculty joined the meeting for this item (10.10am).

The Committee Chair welcomed Mrs Viney and asked for a short presentation and to welcome questions from the Committee members at the end.

Ms Viney began her presentation with a breakdown of staff and areas within the Faculty and the resourcing challenges as per Paper 07. Ms Viney stressed the challenges due to high level of staff absences in relation to COVID. She praised her staff for supporting each other.

Ms Viney highlighted the low enrolments in Hairdressing and Hospitality due to COVID and commented on the Lost Learning funding. Ms Viney went on to address the workforce development priorities and stated due to new high level equipment high level training for staff is needed.

Ms Viney also appraised the Committee members of new developments for the Faculty of Professional and Social Sciences Faculty as per Paper 07.

In addition, she shared the most recent Faculty successes including Skills Competitions.

Mrs McCaffrey praised the adaptability of staff and opportunities available for Lecturers in relation to upskilling. She inquired if Lecturers are taking part in staff development activities. Ms Viney confirmed that the interest is there but due to COVID it is lower than in previous years.

Mrs McCaffrey also queried the status of the enrolment figures. Ms Viney responded to say that cohorts of classes are being merged but she is foreseeing a healthy increase in numbers. Her only concern is the competition from schools as they are offering the same qualifications though the relationships with schools remain excellent across the board. The College needs to market courses on all avenues.

Mr Lewis thanked Ms Viney and acknowledged that the offered qualifications within schools is a known concern and a big issue.

Ms McCleary stressed the importance with links employers and industry. Ms Viney assured the Committee members that strong measures are in place that links the College with employers e.g. CRM tool, practitioners from the fields on advisory boards.

Ms Viney withdrew from the meeting at this juncture (10.33am).

8.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

9.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 Outstanding Actions.

It was agreed to reference outstanding actions and the associated updates in the Management report as a new section going forward. A revised list of outstanding actions is provided in Appendix A.

The meeting went into confidential session.

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
2nd MARCH 2022**

CHAIRMAN



DATE 02/03/2022

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
02/02/2022	6.4	The Interim Chief Executive undertook to raise the implications on resourcing of DfE's requirement for more frequent data returns with the Principals' group and DfE at their next meeting. An update will be provided at the March Staffing Committee meeting.
02/02/2022	6.4	The report on Return to Work Interviews will be submitted at the next Staffing Committee meeting in March.
02/02/2022	9.0	Reference outstanding actions and the associated updates in the Management report as a new section going forward.