

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**  
held on Wednesday 3 February 2021 at 9.00 am  
via Microsoft Teams

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**PRESENT:** Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive) (*Items 1.0 – 7.0*)  
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey  
Mrs Gillian McDowell (Committee Chair)  
Mrs Monica McGeary  
Mr Michael Skuce (*Items 1.0 – 7.0*)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive  
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body  
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body  
Mrs Eimear Rushe, Head of Human Resources  
Ms Carol Viney, Head of Faculty (Professional & Social Sciences) (*Item 7.0 only*)

**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 2 December 2020.

There were no matters arising.

**5.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

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

### **5.1 Covid-19 Recovery & Resilience**

Referring to paper 05.02, Mr McAlister provided statistics on Covid-19 diagnoses in the college community and in relevant local government districts. He advised that updates are communicated to staff and students on a regular basis and explained that access to campuses is granted in exceptional and essential circumstances only and that Covid-19 protocols are strictly enforced. Mr McAlister also noted that it is likely that remote learning will be extended beyond the current restrictions timeframe of 19<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and commented on the consequent challenges in terms of student achievement.

### **5.2 Centre for People and Workforce Development**

Mr McAlister detailed the background to and progress of the College of the Future Commission. He noted that a nation report for Northern Ireland has not yet been published and explained that it will be impacted by DfE's anticipated new skills strategy. Mr McAlister then highlighted five key recommendations from the overarching UK report.

### **5.3 Review of College Management Structure**

It was noted that the Project Initiation Meeting had taken place with Grant Thornton who have been awarded the contract for the review of the College's culture and structure.

### **5.4 Collaborations (including Shared Services)**

Mr McAlister reported DfE's commitment to a new delivery model for FE. He also noted the Department's acknowledgement of the need for a collaborative approach to the development of the new model as well as regular communications on progress.

### **5.5 Impact and Resourcing of New Initiatives**

**Erne Campus** - Mr McAlister informed the Committee of plans for a workshop focusing on optimal utilization of the Erne Campus to include resourcing requirements. He declared an interest in the matter due to a family connection with an employee in the Erne Campus team.

**2021/22 Budget** - Mr McAlister explained that the reduction in the 2021/22 NI block grant is likely to negatively affect the sector with a 'flat cash' budget expected. He added that the impact of this shortfall will be communicated to the Minister and that there may be an opportunity to repurpose unspent Covid-19 relief funding.

**Traineeships** – Mr McAlister detailed the planning and governance structures in place for the new Traineeship Programme due to commence in September 2021. He added that Mr McNamee, Head of Faculty for Automotive, Computing & Engineering, will lead the sectoral Project Based Learning Working Group which will involve training for delivery staff.

**Funding for IT Equipment** – Mr McAlister reported the receipt of an additional £268k for equipment to support remote learning. He advised that all student requests for laptop loans have now been met and that the Learning Resource Centres remain open, under strict controls, for those students without home broadband connectivity.

**January Monitoring Round** – Mr McAlister listed the additional funds received as a result of the January Monitoring Round.

## 5.6 **Staff Retention and Recruitment**

**Transform to Deliver Business Case** – Mr McAlister reported on the frequency of engagements on this matter in an attempt to reach an agreement. He also advised that support had been drawn from the Strategic Investment Board as well as the sectoral Human Resources and Curriculum Working Groups.

**Retention and Recruitment** – Mr McAlister explained that recruitment to lecturing posts in some specialized areas remains a challenge and noted that agreement in the Transform to Deliver process would help to address such challenges.

## 5.7 **Student Experience**

Mr McAlister informed the Committee of a number of potential DfE funding schemes to support students including a contribution towards data costs and a compensation payment to Higher Education students for loss of experience.

He then referenced an Assembly Question regarding internet access and laptop loans for students and confirmed that such support is available to all South West College students.

Mr McAlister also commented on the planning underway for an internal audit of Student Engagement.

In response to questions and comments from members on his updates on the Committee's Key Strategic Issues, Mr McAlister acknowledged the additional pressure on IT staff in the configuration and loan management of laptops; confirmed the regular and ongoing engagement with the ETI District Inspector; advised that data on areas without broadband availability has been collected; and explained that scoping will be carried out on the resourcing impacts of the preparations for the new Traineeships Programme.

## 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 Management Report
- Paper 06.06 PSSSP Closure Memo
- Paper 06.07 Threshold Payments Memo.

## 6.1 **Health, Safety & Wellbeing**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 06.01*

Mrs Rushe informed the meeting that two working groups, 'People & Estates' and 'Curriculum & Examinations', have been re-instated to focus on planning for pandemic recovery. She explained that a pulse survey of staff has been launched to identify

interventions to support staff with caring responsibilities and that some flexibility has been offered in relation to 2020/21 annual leave for business support staff.

Mrs Rushe also commented on the positive feedback received on the Critical Incident Stress Decompression workshop provided to staff affected by recent crisis situations.

## **6.2 Equality**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 06.02*

The Equality Report was noted by the Committee.

## **6.3 Human Resources**

### **6.3.1 Appointments**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03*

Mrs Rushe highlighted the appointment of a Raising a Concern Champion and explained that training had been arranged for the appointee. She added that software had been procured to enable staff to anonymously raise a concern and that good progress had been made in the implementation of the Freedom to Speak Up: Raising a Concern Policy. Members welcomed developments in relation to the policy and agreed to invite the Raising a Concern Champion to a forthcoming meeting to update the Committee on her work.

Mrs Rushe also drew attention to the appointment to the Part-Time Lecturer Register of a former employee who had left the College's employment under the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

#### **AGREED:**

- **that the Raising a Concern Champion be invited to a forthcoming meeting to update the Committee on her work; and**
- **that the appointments listed in paper 06.03 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.**

### **6.3.2 Staff Requests**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03*

In addition to the staff requests listed in the Staff Resource Report, Mrs Rushe sought approval to recruit a part-time Placement Officer and an Associate Lecturer in Mathematics. She explained that the former is a permanent direct replacement for a resignation and that the latter is temporary cover for an employee who has been appointed to another internal fixed-term position.

**AGREED: that the staff requests listed in paper 06.03 and those noted above be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.**

### **6.3.3 Fixed Term Contracts**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.04*

In response to a query on the background to fixed-term contracts, Mrs Rushe explained that some posts are funded for a specific period and that others were appointed for a fixed-term due to budget restrictions.

**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.**

#### 6.3.4 Resignations

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03*

The details of the resignations listed in the Staff Resource Report were noted by the Committee.

#### 6.3.5 Other Resourcing Issues

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03*

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

#### 6.3.6 Performance Management

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Paper 06.05*

Mrs Rushe reported a reduction in sickness absences in the academic year to date and noted that similar reductions have been evidenced across the sector.

#### 6.3.7 Appraisals

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.3*

Mrs Rushe explained that appraisals are taking place through Microsoft Teams throughout the remote working period and that staff are engaging well with the process. Members welcomed the strategy of proceeding with appraisals remotely.

### 6.4 Workforce Development

#### 6.4.1 Digital Skills

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.1*

Mrs Rushe explained that the Digital Skills Programme is currently focused on upskilling part-time and community lecturers.

#### 6.4.2 Leadership and Learning Programme 2020/21

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.2*

Mrs Rushe provided an overview of modules scheduled under the Leadership and Learning Programme in the areas of Developing High Performing Teams, Managing Grievances Effectively and Managing Workplace Investigations.

#### 6.4.3 Curriculum Upskilling

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.3*

Mrs Rushe detailed plans to upskill relevant staff in RobotStudio and Performance Analysis in Elite Sport.

#### 6.4.4 Health, Safety & Wellbeing

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.4*

With reference to section 4.4 of the Management Report, Mrs Rushe drew attention to the training delivered and planned in the areas of Safeguarding and Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

#### 6.4.5 Erne Campus Development Plan

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.5*

Mrs Rushe made the Committee aware of the upcoming One Planet Living workshops and referred to the earlier report of a workshop focusing on optimal utilization of the Erne Campus to include resourcing requirements.

#### 6.4.6 Certificate in Teaching / Post Graduate Certificate in Education

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.6*

Mrs Rushe reported that 25 lecturing staff are being supported in their studies for a Certificate in Teaching or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. She noted that this expenditure represents a significant portion of the workforce development budget.

### 6.5 Other

#### 6.5.1 Public Sector Shared Services Programme

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.1 and Paper 06.06*

The Committee was informed of the closure of the Public Sector Shared Services Programme (PSSSP). A discussion then ensued on the objectives and outputs of the overall PSSSP as well as on STS, the FE sector collaborations arising from the programme. It was noted that STS, including the Learner Management System, represents an exceptional example of good practice in sectoral collaboration.

#### 6.5.2 Draft Student Internship Budget Proposal 2021/22

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.2*

Mrs Rushe emphasized the draft nature of the student internship budget presented and explained that the final proposal will be available later in the academic year. She also noted that the 2020/21 budget had been used to provide paid internships to students from the College's own foundation degree programmes due to a shortage of such opportunities externally.

#### 6.5.3 Payroll

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.3 and Paper 06.06*

The update provided on threshold payments was noted by the Committee.

#### 6.5.4 Safeguarding

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.4*

The update provided on the closure of the disciplinary case was noted by the Committee.

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

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

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

***Ms Carol Viney, Head of Faculty (Professional & Social Sciences), joined the meeting for this item.***

In presenting her report on resource planning and workforce development in her faculty, Ms Viney began by outlining the resourcing challenges encountered including difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified lecturers due to low starting remuneration, the consequent reliance on part-time lecturers for a number of professional programmes and the under-deployment of staff in some areas due to the suspension of practical classes. She then highlighted the reduction in both sickness absences and part-time lecturer usage within the faculty.

Ms Viney went on to report good collaborative working on a cross-campus, cross-faculty and cross-sector basis. She also identified workforce development priorities for the faculty as upskilling relevant staff to deliver ILM Level 7 and training all HE lecturers in Open University standards and procedures.

In concluding her presentation, Ms Viney informed the Committee of the commencement of new Open University degrees in Culinary Arts and Salon Management in September 2021 as well as a new honours degree in Youth and Community Planning in Practice in September 2022, noting that a resource may be required for the latter.

In response to members' questions and comments, Ms Viney provided background to the development of the new degrees and explained that the new organizational structure has facilitated the progression of students within the College and contributed to increased Higher Education enrolments.

***Ms Viney was thanked for her presentation and withdrew from the meeting.***

***The meeting went into private session at this juncture. Mr Skuce and Mr McAlister withdrew from the meeting during private session.***

## **8.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

## **9.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 12 Outstanding Actions.

A review of the actions listed in paper 12 was undertaken. A list of outstanding actions is provided in Appendix A.

**10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Members commented favourably on the proceedings of the meeting.

*The meeting concluded at 11:15 am.*

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY  
10 MARCH 2021**

**CHAIRMAN** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_



**SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>
02/12/2020	6.3.3	MMA to seek clarity on the likely return date of the Assistant Chief Executive for Learner Experience & Digital Transformation.
03/02/2021	6.3.1	Raising a Concern Champion to be invited to a forthcoming meeting to update the Committee on her work.