

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Governing Body of South West College**  
held on Wednesday 26 April 2023 at 5:30 pm  
via Microsoft Teams

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**PRESENT:**

- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Deborah Brown
- Mrs Maureen Brunt
- Dr Frances Campbell
- Mr Jack Daly
- Ms Elaine Grier
- Mr Brian Ingram
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood
- Ms Alana Jones Campbell
- Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
- Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive
- Ms Anne McCleary
- Mrs Gillian McDowell, Vice Chair
- Mr Michael McGuckin
- Dr Lynsey Quinn

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body

**APOLOGIES:**

- Mr Seamus McCaffrey
- Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chairman

**1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Mrs McDowell, Vice Chair of the Governing Body, opened the meeting and advised that she would preside over the meeting on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Mr McCaffrey and Dr O'Shiel.

**2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

**3.0 MINUTES OF AND MATTERS ARISING FROM A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 8 March 2023.

**AGREED:** on the proposal of Ms Jones Campbell and seconded by Mrs Brunt, that the above minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

#### 4.0 VICE CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Mrs McDowell advised that updates on the 2023/24 budget, the Review of the Further Education (FE) Delivery Model and other matters would be provided by the Chief Executive forthwith and drew members' attention to the Staff Express newsletter containing updates on staff and student activities.

Mrs McDowell then referenced Dr Cush's forthcoming departure from the College to take up another post and went on to express the Governing Body's appreciation to her for her contribution to the College during her service.

#### 5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.01 DfE Letter on Draft Partnership Agreement and Updated Risk Assessment
- Paper 05.02 Draft Partnership Agreement Between DfE and SWC
- Paper 05.03 Updated SWC Risk Assessment
- Paper 05.04 DfE Acknowledgement Letter on Strategic Alliance
- Paper 05.05 Permanent Secretary Budget Communication
- Paper 05.06 DfE Update on the Review of the FE Delivery Model
- Paper 05.07 DfE Letter on Change of Accounting Date Proposal.

**Save Our SWAH Campaign** – Ms McCartan reported on the support provided to the Save Our SWAH campaign through the availability of petitions to staff and students. She also noted the representations made to the College by local businesses in support of the Save Our SWAH campaign as well as those made by the Rural Transport Network in relation to the impact of budget cuts.

**Events** – Ms McCartan reported on a number of events hosted and attended since the last meeting of the Governing Body in March 2023.

**NIFRS Project Board** – Ms McCartan advised on her appointment to the Project Board of Phase 2 of the construction of Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service's Learning and Development Centre in Cookstown, following engagement facilitated by the Department for the Economy (DfE).

**Draft Partnership Agreement** – With reference to papers 05.01 and 05.02, Ms McCartan explained that the Partnership Agreement between the College and DfE, when finalised, will replace the existing Management Statement & Financial Memorandum and defines the terms of engagement between the two parties.

**SWC Risk Assessment** – Ms McCartan drew attention to DfE's updated risk assessment of the College in paper 05.03, noting the overall reduction in the risk level from Medium / High to Medium.

**Accountability Meeting** – Ms McCartan reported on the positive engagement with the Permanent Secretary of DfE at the Annual Accountability Meeting held with on 22 March 2023.

**Review of the FE Delivery Model** – Ms McCartan referenced the letters from DfE providing an update on the Review of the FE Delivery Model and acknowledging the proposal to explore the development of a strategic alliance with Northern Regional College (NRC) and North West Regional College (NRWC). She noted that actions have been approved to progress stage 2 of the Review of the FE Delivery Model and that

preparatory work has commenced with a view to initiating collaborations within the Strategic Alliance.

**2023/24 Budget** – Ms McCartan explained that the 2023/24 budget had not yet been allocated, referenced the Permanent Secretary’s caution against entering into financial commitments in paper 05.05 and advised of the most recent communications regarding the sectoral savings to be made and the apportionment of these savings within the sector. She highlighted DfE’s request that savings should be made whilst seeking to protect curriculum provision and noted the extent and scope of adjustments required to achieve this. She added that the financial pressures resulting from various budget scenarios had been discussed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

**Industrial Relations** - Ms McCartan informed the meeting of trade unions’ rejection of the latest lecturers’ pay offer of a 1% baselined consolidated pay increase for 2021/22, a 1% baselined consolidated pay increase for 2022/23 and a one-off ex-gratia payment. She noted the possibility of increased industrial action and the potential for significant disruption and impact on students.

**Change Programme** – Ms McCartan highlighted the delivery of cultural and wellbeing initiatives under the Change Programme. She also commented on the probable negative impact of the industrial relations issue on staff morale.

**Funding Applications** - Ms McCartan advised of the College’s success in leading a consortium which has secured £2.8 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund following the NI economic inactivity competition to deliver the Rural Economic Accelerator Programme (REAP) as well as the College’s participation in a consortium, led by NI Screen, which has secured funding from the British Film Institute.

**Proposal to Amend Colleges’ Financial Year** – Ms McCartan referenced the letter from DfE in paper 05.07 seeking Governing Body support to align colleges’ financial year to that of DfE. She commented on the benefits of this approach in terms of budgeting and resourcing and advised that the proposed change would require a legislative amendment.

**AGREED: to support the approach to amend colleges’ financial year to align it with that of DfE.**

In response to questions and comments from members, Ms McCartan identified potential areas of collaboration and efficiencies under the proposed Strategic Alliance including pooling of staff resources and joint curriculum delivery, where appropriate; spoke of the complementarities with NRC and NRWC and of the opportunity to influence the future FE delivery model; acknowledged the personnel changes in DfE and suggested that the new Director of FE is invited to attend a future Governing Body meeting; provided further details of the benefits of the REAP programme; and noted the reflection of the progress made by the College in the improved risk rating awarded by DfE and the opportunity to further improve this rating upon further progression of the Change Program.

## **6.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE CURRICULUM & QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee held on Wednesday 22 March 2023
- Paper 06.02 Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities
- Paper 06.03 Centre Assessment Policy 2022/23
- Paper 06.04 Post 16 PTE Quality Assurance Handbook 2023-2025.

Mr McGuckin, Presiding Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 22 March 2023, began by referencing the updates provided on the Committee's key strategic issues highlighting the reported increased enrolments to FE programmes in 2022/23, the continued strong enrolments to Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) programmes, the need to transition to an affordability led approach to curriculum provision in light of anticipated budget challenges, the commitment to discontinue provision only where a viable delivery model cannot be identified, the implementation of the Essential Skills Action Plan to enhance success rates, and the positive feedback from DfE on the College's Quality Improvement Plan 2022-24.

He went on to reference the Higher Education (HE) and Management Reports received by the Committee highlighting the key strategic priorities for HE, the additional initiatives in place to support student success and the increased reporting of mental health issues amongst students. He also drew attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities, the Centre Assessment Policy 2022/23 and the Post 16 PTE Quality Assurance Handbook 2023-2025.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McGuckin, seconded by Mrs Brunt, adoption of the minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meeting and the recommendations therein. The minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.**

## **7.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 29 March 2023
- Paper 07.02 Stress Management & Prevention Policy
- Paper 07.03 Recruitment & Selection Policy.

With reference to paper 07.01, Ms Jones Campbell, Chair of the Staffing Committee, highlighted the reported potential for an escalation of industrial action due to the lecturers' pay dispute as well as the request for legal advice on the risk and processes related to offering permanent contracts to staff employed under fixed term contracts. She also drew attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Stress Management & Prevention Policy and the Recruitment & Selection Policy.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Ms Jones Campbell, seconded by Mrs McDowell, adoption of the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting and the recommendations therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.**

## **8.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 APRIL 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 19 April 2023
- Paper 08.02 Review of Banking Mandates
- Paper 08.03 Hospitality & Gifts Policy
- Paper 08.04 Finance & General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference.

On behalf of the Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, Mr McGuckin provided an overview of the business covered during the 19 April 2023 committee meeting noting the discussions held on the uncertain 2023/24 budget position, the sale of the Fairview campus and the Post Project Evaluation of the Erne Campus development. He went on to inform the meeting of the Committee's agreement in principle to focus expenditure of the 2023/24 capital funding allocation on initiatives to support the College's sustainability agenda and investments to support the priorities of the Skills for a 10X Economy Strategy as well as of its agreement to accept the offer of an item of robotic equipment, subject to advice from DfE, and to meet the expense of its transport to and commissioning in the College. He also drew attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Banking Mandates, the Hospitality & Gifts Policy and the Finance & General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McGuckin, seconded by Mrs Brunt, 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 Vice Chair of the Governing Body.**

## **9.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09.01 List of Outstanding Actions
- Paper 09.02 Comparative Performance Data
- Paper 09.03 Examination Costs.

Dr Cush referenced the information provided on performance data and examination costs as requested by the Governing Body. She also explained that an internal working group has been established to explore potential efficiencies in examination costs. It was noted that the Presentation on Young People Inequalities in the Northern Ireland Skill System had previously been circulated to members.

## **10.0 DECLARATION OF HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED**

No declarations were made under this heading.

## **11.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

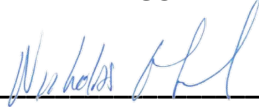
**12.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Members noted their satisfaction with the proceedings of the meeting.

*Mr Daly withdrew from the meeting at this juncture. The meeting then went into confidential session.*

**CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE 2023**

CHAIR



DATE 21/06/2023