

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of an online meeting of the **Governing Body of South West College**
held on **Wednesday 16 September 2020 at 5:30pm**

PRESENT:

- Mr Peter Archdale
- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Joanne Lucas
- Mrs Margaret Martin
- Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive)
- Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
- Mr Seamus McCaffrey
- Mrs Gillian McDowell
- Mrs Monica McGeary
- Mr Michael McGuckin
- Mrs Joanne Moore
- Mr Gerard O'Hanlon
- Dr Nicholas O'Shiel (Chair)
- Mr Michael Skuce

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Dr Aileen Ireland, University of Sterling
- Ms Tracey McElroy, Boardroom Apprentice
- Mrs Breidge Morrison, PA to Chief Executive
- Mrs Shirley Patterson, Acting Secretary to the Governing Body

PRELIMINARIES

Dr O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body, opened the meeting by welcoming all present. At the outset the Chair explained that the meeting would be recorded for minute taking purposes and that this recording would be destroyed when the minutes had been agreed. The Chair introduced Mrs Patterson, Acting Secretary to the Governing Body and Mrs Morrison, PA to Chief Executive, who will share papers as required throughout the meeting.

The Chair extended a welcome to Ms McElroy, Boardroom Apprentice. She provided an overview of the boardroom apprentice programme and her appreciation to the board. Dr Ireland, University of Stirling was also welcomed, as commented by the Chair the board are familiar with the research project and welcomed this observation of the online meeting, Dr Ireland thanked the board for the opportunity.

1.0 APOLOGIES

None.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No declarations were made under this heading.

3.0 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of 24 June 2020 Governing Body Meeting

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr Skuce and seconded by Mr Archdale, that the minutes of the Governing Body meeting on 24th June 2020 be accepted as a true and accurate record. These minutes were not signed as the meeting was conducted online.

4.0 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

In acknowledgement of the forthcoming end of Mrs Lucas' term as Support Staff Governor, Dr O'Shiel commented on the valuable contribution made by Mrs Lucas and thanked her for her service to the Governing Body and Committees.

Members were apprised by the Chair that the purpose of this meeting was twofold; firstly, to provide an update and assurances in relation to COVID-19; secondly, to focus on the student learning experience. He explained that a balance is required between the pressures of COVID-19 and a focus on the student. He advised Governors that at a high level they can be assured that all that could be done in terms of college, staff and students has been done and work is on-going in this fluid situation. In reference to the budget, he advised that at a high level the college is in a strong position, it will have its challenges but it is viable and there is assurance for the year ahead. He acknowledged the hard work of staff and hoped staff have had an opportunity to have a break over the summer period and regroup.

With the approval of Governors, the Chair would like to take the 50/50 approach of COVID-19 and student learning experience. With reference to the Committee's Business meeting held on Friday 4th September and the one to one meetings with Governors over the summer period, he reported the feedback for committees as: to focus on student learning; avoid information overload; cap presentations to 10minutes and 4 slides; keep the duration of meetings to two hours, with the exception of circumstances that require an extended meeting; revisit further education (FE) as a primary focus; and to conduct any acknowledgments of the good work of staff at the beginning of meetings.

In response to the topic of information overload, Mr Archdale, asked the Chief Executive if it would be possible to use contacts with students and industry to provide a feed of information that is focused on Northern Ireland. Mr McAlister acknowledged this as an excellent point and commented on a new project to consolidate exam boards and that Mr Archdale's point would feed into this.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.01 College Development Plan Commissioning Memo
- Paper 05.02 Draft College Development Plan

- Paper 05.03 College Development Plan – Progress Report

5.1 Summer Assessment

The Chief Executive reported the summer assessment period as a busy and anxious period due to challenges presented by COVID-19. He noted that 5092 awards were proposed for Level 1-5 and all were ratified by the awarding organisations; in relation to adaptive assessment within further education (FE) and work based learning (WBL) out of 932, 508 have completed, 424 are ongoing, and it is anticipated the majority will be awarded by the end of September with a further 70 students extending to the next academic year; all higher education (HE) passed exam boards; 100% progression on Open University courses, noting a 1st Class Honours in BSc Hons Construction and BSc Hons Sports; there were 7 appeals in total, 4 of which were BTech level 3, 3 have resulted in grade enhancement and 1 pending, 3 are essential skills with 2 appeals not upheld and 1 pending.

5.2 SWC Assurance Statement

The Chief Executive informed members of a SWC Assurance Statement for the Safe Resumption of On Site Education for the Department for the Economy. He referred to 8 key areas as: business readiness; risk assessment; staff and learner guides; practical changes; safe guarding policy; adequate staffing levels; continuity of learning; and finances. He explained the college can provide assurance on all of the key areas with the exception of finances. The college are in a position to provide a partial assurance due to approval of partial funding for the additional budget requested for COVID-19. Members were apprised that all six colleges are in the same position and have put in a caveat. The Chair explained that with the approval of the board the submission on Monday 21st September will be a judgement by the Chair and Chief Executive of either assurance or a caveat.

In response to questions from Governors, the Chief Executive further advised that he was very comfortable with the assurances. He explained that a bid of £1.4 million for additional works and new delivery model in relation to COVID-19 was submitted and £448,000 was approved.

5.3 Erne Campus

An overview of the Erne Campus was provided by the Chief Executive, he referred to a delay on site due to COVID-19 and advised that the new completion date is 14 January 2021. He noted the project is on budget and additional funding has been confirmed by DfE to cover the costs associated with COVID-19. He referred to progress on site as positive and remarked that Health and Safety is key.

The Chief Executive further drew attention to the successful work in relation to BREEAM and PassivHaus, noting that BREEAM on site assessment has exceeded 90% and has been submitted to the Building Research Establishment (BRE). The PassivHaus is at a level for accreditation and is ongoing with the PassivHaus Institute, he noted this as positive progress. In terms of maintenance of the building he explained that the defect liability period will be in place for one year after completion and that a new PassivHaus framework will be available through CPD from April 2021.

5.4 Enrolments

The Chief Executive highlighted concerns for the sector in relation to enrolments, but apprised members that enrolments are currently at a level that the college can operate with and are still rising. He advised that FE is at approximately 80% and noted that with social distancing measures there will be challenges to manage more. In terms of HE the college received an increase in MaSN, he explained the enrolment challenges due to Universities reducing entry grades, however, noted the college currently has 320 enrolments and outlined this as positive.

In response to a query from Mrs Martin regarding a reduction in FE enrolments across the sector, the Chief Executive confirmed the sector are hoping and anticipating a change next year, however, there is no guarantee. He further noted that if the college has to continue with the social distancing measures then the college is close to maximum capacity. In reference to entitlement framework he informed members that the college is looking at access to additional buildings. Mrs Martin commented to acknowledge her support of seeking additional buildings.

In reference to paper 06 the Erne Campus 5 year plan Mrs McGeary commented on potential to increase enrolments and the requirement for a strong marketing plan to represent the new state of the art campus and facilities. In conclusion, it was agreed that this would be addressed at the Education, Quality and Performance Committee.

AGREED: that discussions around the marketing plan will take place at the Education, Quality and Performance Committee.

5.5 Department for the Economy

The Chief Executive provided a summary of a meeting with the Department, in particular he detailed a piece of work around coherence of policies and the launch of the new skills strategy. In reference to essential skills he referred to a working group led by the Department to review the qualification. He explained that an e-learning action plan is being developed alongside the six colleges and that following the Level 3 review the department are setting up a number of workshops to identify the key findings and develop an action plan. The last point detailed by the Chief Executive was the area of Training for Success (TFS), one of the challenges the college will face is the return to college of TFS for 20 hours per week, and this is on ongoing discussions with the Department.

With reference to e-learning, Mrs Martin complimented the college on implementing the initiative many years ago and commented that there is an opportunity for the college to put themselves forward as sector leading. In response the Chief Executive detailed the current skills intervention programme and opportunities to deliver Open University Degrees internationally, in conclusion he noted the college do intend to take this further.

5.6 College Development Plan

The College Development plan was introduced by Dr Cush, she referred to the 5 areas of the new template: strategic context; current operating environment in light of COVID-19; guiding principles; regional operating context; and planned activity. She provided a summary of the three report cards and explained that they are fluid due to incoming enrolments. She noted that in terms of caveats from the Department it has

been acknowledged that it is unlikely that the college will be able to deliver the same as 2019/20 due to the 2 meter social distancing and that internally the strategy is to get as many students in as possible.

In response to comments from Mrs McGeary regarding a reduction in FE enrolments and increase in HE enrolments, the Chief Executive explained that Level 1 and Level 2 courses require teaching on site and that the 2 meter social distancing measures has had an impact on the space available, whereas, it has been more viable to implement online delivery for HE.

Mrs Moore referred to opportunities for retraining and upskilling of mature students and commented that it should be included in the marketing plan, it was agreed that this will be discussed at the Education, Quality & Performance Committee. With reference to the College Development Plan Mrs McCaffrey welcomed an update later in the year, this was agreed.

Agreed: on the suggestion of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded by Mr O'Sheil an update of the current status of the College Development Plan is to be presented to the Governing Body later in the year.

6.0 ERNE CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Erne Campus 5 Year Plan

It was noted that the Erne Campus development update had been undertaken in item 5.0.

7.0 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01 Minutes of 9 September 2020 Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
- Paper 07.02 Corporate Risk Register
- Paper 07.03 Disaster Management Policy
- Paper 07.04 Policy and Procedure for the Declaration and Handling of Criminal History Disclosures
- Paper 07.05 Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Paper 07.06 ILT Security & Auditing Policy
- Paper 07.07 Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference
- Paper 07.08 Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy

With reference to minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on Wednesday 09 September 2020 (paper 07.01), Mrs McCaffrey, Committee Chair, began by providing a summary of the meeting. She advised of the new auditors, RSM, and the five audits planned for 2020/21. She further commented on the committees request to auditors to include a student focus in the terms of reference of all audits. She explained that due to recommendations from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)

the term whistleblowing will be changed to 'Raising a Concern' and the whistleblowing policy will be updated to represent this. Mrs McCaffrey commented on a very informative presentation from Mrs Grugan in relation to the Erne Campus, and noted that the Chief executive has covered this in detail in item 5.0.

In reference to the annual corporate risk register (paper 07.02), she noted eleven categories of risk had been identified. She explained that COVID-19 was acknowledged and identified in all risks, but following discussion and feedback from the committee it was decided that COVID-19 should be identified as a separate risk category and this will now be included. She informed members of the risk registers presented for both Finance and Services department, noting that a common risk identified across the two departments was the introduction of the new EBS enrolment system and the link to payments, she explained this is being managed and mitigation measures are in place. She explained and welcomed progress in the area of data security in terms of additional technical resources to manage the security systems.

Mrs McCaffrey tabled and recommended for approval papers 07.03 Disaster Management Policy; 07.04 Policy and Procedure for the Declaration and Handling of Criminal History Disclosures; 07.05 Conflicts of Interest Policy; 07.06; ILT Security & Auditing Policy; and 07.08 Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy. She also tabled paper 07.07 Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference for governing body adoption.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded by Mr Skuce, adoption of the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting and the recommendations therein. These minutes were not signed as the meeting was conducted online.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded by Mr Skuce, adoption of the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded Mr Skuce, approval of the Disaster Management Policy; Policy & Procedure for the Declaration and Handling of Criminal History Disclosures; Conflicts of Interest Policy; ILT Security & Auditing Policy; and Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy.

8.0 POLICY REVIEWS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08.01 Vision, Mission & Values
- Paper 08.02 Student Hardship Fund Policy & Procedure

In reference to paper 08.01, the Chair presented the South West College Vision, Mission and Values for consideration.

In reference to paper 08.02, the Chair presented the student hardship fund policy and procedure for approval. Following discussions on the hardship fund it was agreed that an update at would be presented at the next Governing Body meeting on 11 November 2020.

Agreed: that a summary update on student hardship fund will be presented at the 11 November 2020 Governing Body meeting.

Agreed: approval of the student hardship fund policy and procedure.

9.0 REGISTER OF INTERESTS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 Register of Governors' Interests.

The Secretary to the Governing Body drew attention to the register of governors' interests contained in paper 09 and requested notification of any changes in governors' interests during the 2020/21 year.

10.0 MANAGEMENT STATEMENT & FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 10.01 Management Statement & Financial Memorandum.
- Paper 10.02 Appendices to Management Statement & Financial Memorandum

It was noted that the Management Statement & Financial Memorandum must be tabled annually for the information of members at a meeting of the Governing Body

11.0 DECLARATION OF ANY HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED

No declarations were made under this heading.

12.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

None.

13.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members conveyed their satisfaction with the proceedings of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7:00pm.

CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2020

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	16/09/2020	5.4	That discussions around the marketing plan will take place at the Education, Quality and Performance Committee.
2	16/09/2020	5.6	An update of the current status of the College Development Plan is to be presented to the Governing Body later in the year.
3	16/09/2020	8.0	That a summary update on student hardship fund will be presented at the 11 November 2020 Governing Body meeting.