

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2023 AT 17.30 via TEAMS.

PRESENT:

Dr Thomas Moore (Chair)
Mr Brian Doran (CEO)
Mr Scott Alexander
Mr Nick Harkness
Mr Stuart Harper
Mr Aidan McCormick
Mr Gary McMurray
Dr Laura Milner
Prof Gregory O'Hare
Mr Tom Redmond
Mrs Hilary Singleton
Dr Eileen Stewart
Mr Kieran Swail
Mrs Judith Thompson
Mr Matthew Turner

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Lee Campbell, Director of Finance and Planning
Ms Libby Shackels, Director of Curriculum
Mr Raymond Sloan, Director of Client Services
Miss Clodagh Palmer, Boardroom Apprentice
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 17.30.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Carla Shields, Mrs Tracy Strachan and Miss Daniela Sanches Egas.

A02. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chair reminded those present to declare at the commencement of the meeting any conflict of interest held in matters to be discussed. No interests were disclosed.

A03. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING 2 FEBRUARY 2023

The minutes of the Governing Body meeting of 2 February 2023 were reviewed for accuracy, and unanimously approved on proposal from Mr Turner and seconded by Mr Swail.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

None to report.

A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

Dr Moore informed that Mrs Donna Blaney will be leaving NICS with effect from 1 May 2023. He wished her every success in future endeavours and thanked her for her stewardship.

Miss Palmer arrived at the meeting at 17.34.

Dr Moore reminded Members of the Higher Education in Further Education event 'The Alternative Pathway to Success' taking place on 30 March. Mr Doran advised that the event is part of the sector's annual communication plan and advised that SRC will be hosting the event as part of the Department's promotion of level 4 and 5 curriculum. He advised that the event is open to the public and there is an option for remote attendance.

Dr Moore thanked all involved at the Employability and Skills Conference at the Seagoe Hotel on 23 February. He spoke to an informative event showcasing SRC alumni.

**ACTION
By whom**

Dr Moore informed on ongoing work with the 10X inclusion delivery plan. Mr Doran advised on the development of action planning.

Dr Moore informed on a request received enquiring if there was to be a 2023 Boardroom Apprentice Programme would the College like to participate as a host board or alternatively would SRC consider providing the current Boardroom Apprentice an additional year of experience. All Members expressed their support for both options, stating the opportunity for professional development is reflective of the College's principles.

Prof O'Hare arrived at the meeting at 17.41. Mr Harkness arrived at the meeting at 17.42.

Members were advised that due to the Easter break, the deadline for the submission of expenses has been brought forward.

Mr Doran confirmed that the College had responded to the Department on proposed amendments to the Partnership Agreement.

Dr Moore advised that due to an administrative error, the College was not informed of all delivery model options for proposals in advance of the Transformation Workshop on 3 February. Members were advised that the addendum was promptly submitted and is reflective of option 4 and 5 previously agreed by the full Governing Body.

A06. COMMITTEE MINUTES

- **Finance & General Purposes Committee 17 January 2023**

Mr Redmond referred Members to the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting of 17 January and advised on policy approval. He confirmed that the Committee reviewed the resource allocation and management accounts, noting difficulties in supporting claims due to errors with the new TAMS system.

Mr Redmond confirmed that Members conducted their regular review of the complaints and compliments report and expressed no significant or serious concerns.

- **Finance & General Purposes Committee 14 March 2023**

Mr Redmond relayed matters discussed at the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 14 March. He advised that the College's finance team continues to experience difficulties maintaining accounts for two differing year ends. Mr Redmond advised that Committee Members were informed that there has been no confirmation of resource allocation for the incoming year.

- **Audit & Risk Committee 7 February 2023**

Mrs Singleton advised on proceedings taking place at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting of 7 February. She informed on changes taking place to the NIAO audit approach following significant amendment to the international standards on auditing.

Mrs Singleton informed of a hard audit taking place in March 2023 and the requirement to also compare the March 2021 and March 2022 accounts. She advised on policy approval and confirmed that Members had revisited the internal audit strategy. Mrs Singleton informed that Members reviewed the internal audit for the Framework for Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Requirements, noting two low priority recommendations and recommended that the Committee are provided with an update on the implementation of audit recommendations as a standing agenda item.

Mrs Singleton relayed that Members had reviewed the final Report to Those Charged with Governance and advised on the inclusion of a heat map and risk movement report within

the Corporate Risk Register. She reported that Risk 3 Security breach of College IT systems has been lowered in response to the College achieving cyber security credentials and informed of a new risk, failure of the learner management system regarding issues highlighted following test of the EBS system.

Mrs Singleton conveyed the Chief Executive's concerns on the potential increase in industrial action as a result of a failure to progress a pay settlement for 2021-22.

- **Staffing Committee 28 February 2023**

Mr Alexander referred Members to the draft minutes of the Staffing Committee of 28 February. He advised that Members had been informed that the hybrid working framework for support staff had been piloted from 27 February and is predicated around key business activity and learners' needs. Mr Alexander reported on recent negative media articles detailing individuals reporting issues as a result of being mandated to work from home. He commented that the College shouldn't be affected by concerns given the opportunity to report to base campuses.

Mr Alexander advised that comparator information is expected shortly which will provide the opportunity to conduct a benchmarking exercise against the College's Article 55 return. He advised on policy approval, informing that the consultation process has concluded, and the menopause policy was approved which provides practical advice to staff impacted by menopausal symptoms.

Mr Alexander informed that sickness absence is currently at 5.88%, above the target rate of 3.5%. He relayed that Members have recommended conducting a five-year trend of sickness absence to assess if any particular concerns have arisen.

Mr Alexander advised that the organisational development plan infographic detailing the professional development staff has been updated to include information regarding the cost of upskilling staff.

- **Education Committee 7 March 2023**

Mr McCormick spoke to discussions taking place at the Education Committee meeting of 7 March and congratulated Mr Turner and Mrs Nesbitt on their temporary promotions. He referred Members to the feature of the 2023-2024 prospectus detailing the numerous student services.

Mr McCormick advised Members of his recent engagements and accolades he received about the College. He relayed the excellent work being undertaken by the four faculties. Members were informed that SRC's provision of SPP is currently sitting at 42% of the total sector's provision.

Mr McCormick advised that the National Student Survey is live and an excellent response was relayed to Education Committee Members on the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan submission. He confirmed that the College have consulted on the DfE Level 4 and 5 provision in HE in FE and the principles of vocational qualifications in NI.

The five Committee minutes were adopted by the full Board. Dr Moore thanked Mr McCormick for his ambassadorial work on behalf of the College.

A07. GOVERNING BODY / COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE 2023-2024

Miss Armstrong referred to the proposed meeting schedule for 2023-2024 and informed that the timing of the meetings reflects previous years and aligns to College returns.

Mr Doran advised that early confirmation of Governing Body and Committee meetings helps inform the scheduling of executive and senior management team meetings.

Members were asked to review the dates and advise the Secretary of any conflicts before the Easter break.

Governors

A08. STAFF GOVERNOR ELECTION PROPOSALS

Miss Armstrong referred Members to the staff governor election proposal and the procedure which allows the workforce to vote for staff representation on the Governing Body.

Mr Turner remarked on the low response to expressions of interest in previous elections. He advised on a valuable professional development opportunity and recommended elevating the profile of the position to generate interest.

Members approved the proposal and recommended conducting a marketing campaign and concluding the process before the end of the academic year.

A09. COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr Doran presented the CDP action plan and advised on progress at the second review date. He informed that actions rated red reflect outstanding sectoral actions which had previously thought would have been concluded at this juncture.

Mr Doran advised that the overall enrolment position is reasonably good however there are areas of concern in FT HE. He informed that it is unlikely that the College will not meet the higher target set for Essentials Skills and advised that neighbourhood renewal programmes are progressing well. Ms Shackels confirmed that she is content with the enrolment and retention position, advising that HLAs continue to grow. Mrs Campbell advised that business support and innovation targets may not be met in cost recovery activity, but all other targets will be achieved.

Mr Sloan referred Members to the destination information based on learners who left or completed study in July 2022 and spoke to a strong process of tracking progression. He stated the College's aspiration to have more SPP pupils progress to FE and advised that there is a lack of detail on where school leavers are progressing to. Mr Doran informed that the revision to the college development plan places greater emphasis on outcomes.

Mr Sloan commented that the figures presented to the Board are a synopsis of the greater work presented to the senior leadership team and advised on granular information captured in relation to course progression which supports career advice and guidance.

Members noted the report.

A10. INDICATIVE BUDGET

Mrs Campbell advised that there is no confirmation of the indicative budget. She informed on a considerable projected shortfall in funding and measures that may be taken to reduce pressures. Mr Doran commented on the difficulties making decisions without an indicative budget.

Members were advised that all Arm's Length Bodies have been asked to model reductions of up to 20% and noted the significant impact this will have on the level of provision provided.

In response to a query from Dr Stewart, Mrs Campbell advised that if the Assembly were to be reconvened then pressures may reduce but not fully disappear.

Members noted the report and significant difficulty in forward planning.

A11. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Mrs Campbell referred Members to the Risk Management policy and advised it was approved by Members of the Audit and Risk Committee at their meeting on 7 February. She informed on updates to reflect the HMT Orange Book and amendments to the risk appetite section.

Members noted the report.

A12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to a query from Dr Stewart, Mr Sloan confirmed that the College uses NICS utility contracts for gas supply.

A13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Governing Body meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 20 June 2023 at 18.30 in the Portadown campus.

The meeting concluded at 18.44.

signature redacted

CHAIR

DATE

20/6/23.

