

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2023 AT 18.30 IN THE BOARDROOM, NEWRY CAMPUS.

PRESENT:

Dr Thomas Moore (Chair)
Raymond Sloan (Interim CEO)
Mrs Geraldine Campbell
Mr Sean Fitzsimons
Mr Nick Harkness
Mr Stuart Harper
Mrs Monica Kelly
Miss Evie Martin
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
Mr Gary McMurray
Dr Laura Milner
Mrs Hilary Singleton
Dr Eileen Stewart
Mrs Tracy Strachan
Mr Kieran Swail
Mr Matthew Turner
Mrs Angela Whiteside (via TEAMS)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Lee Campbell, Director of Finance and Planning
Ms Libby Shackels, Director of Curriculum
Mr Gary Young, Head of Estates
Mr Lindsay Bronte, Development Manager
Mrs Sinead Lavery, Boardroom Apprentice
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 18.30.

Members allowed for a change to the running of agenda items to allow presenters to leave the meeting.

A06. SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Mr Bronte presented the Sustainability report to advise on the distance travelled in relation to student services, curriculum and estates and informed on the three underpinning objectives namely:

- To develop and support a sustainable workforce;
- To embed the UN Sustainability Goals in all aspects of College life and to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to promote sustainable development; and
- To embed sustainable practice in all aspects of College operations.

Mrs Kelly arrived at the meeting at 18.32.

Members were referred to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr Bronte advised on the Student Union partnership with Friends of the Earth to deliver an extracurricular youth leadership programme called 'My World My Home' and informed on various projects linked to the sustainability goals.

He informed Members on sustainable projects within digital construction, computing, retrofit, agrifood and design of the greenpower electric GO-Kart. Mr Bronte advised that staff feedback on sustainability practices was collated at the Easter staff development day.

Mr Young reported on the College energy management strategy advising that since 2017 there has been substantial decrease in heating consumption and carbon emissions. He informed that the solar panels at the new builds at Armagh and Banbridge have generated over 120,000 kwhr of electricity since installation and commented that development of the Newry estate and creation of a new campus in the Craigavon area is pivotal to sustainability goals.

Members were advised on various projects to reduce consumption and improve the carbon footprint.

**ACTION
By whom**

Mrs Whiteside arrived at the meeting at 18.38.

Mr Turner commented on the broad spectrum of initiatives linked to UN Sustainability Goals.

In response to a query from Dr Stewart, Mr Young advised on College's obligations under the SDG Accord to address estate, fleet, waste and water sustainability initiatives.

Mr Bronte and Mr Young were thanked for their comprehensive presentation and left the meeting at 18.42.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Ann Marie Hughes.

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 29 AUGUST 2023

The minutes of the Governing Body meeting of 29 August 2023 were reviewed for accuracy and were approved as an accurate record on proposal from Mr Turner and seconded by Mrs Strachan.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

None to report.

A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- **Actions Log**
- **Correspondence File**

Dr Moore advised that he has received and will circulate a card from Mr Doran thanking Members for their support and leaving gift.

The Chair spoke of good recent engagement with Departmental representatives Mrs Moira Doherty and Mrs Louise Watson.

He extended a special welcome to Miss Evie Martin, student governor 2023-2024 and remarked on the importance of Governors hearing the student voice.

Dr Moore welcomed Mr Fitzsimons and Mrs Kelly to their first meeting of the full Governing Body. He acknowledged that it is the last Board meeting for Mr Turner and Mr Swail and thanked them for the service over the last eight years.

Dr Moore advised that he and the Vice Chair will arrange to meet with the newly elected Staff Governors, Dr Liz Finnigan and Mrs Sharon O'Hare.

He informed on a meeting with Committee Chairs arranged for 26 October and the Education Workshop scheduled for 6 November.

Dr Moore stressed that all media and press communications are to go through the Chief Executive's office and informed that a date has yet to be confirmed for the DfE Effective Governance training. He advised that all comments arising from Governor appraisals will be addressed in due course.

A07. COMMITTEE MINUTES

• Audit & Risk Committee 12 September 2023

Mrs Singleton referred Members to the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee convened 12 September 2023 and advised that new Members were welcomed, and the Committee conducted their regular review of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). She informed that six residual risks were reduced and that currently five risks sit outside the risk appetite.

Mrs Singleton relayed that the management recommendation to remove the TAMs risk of the CRR was deferred to allow Internal Audit consideration and the possible merging of risks. She commented on the need for an accountability framework to be adopted for external engagement projects and programmes and this has management agreement.

Mrs Singleton reported that all Internal Audit (IA) report have been 'Satisfactory'. She advised that approval of the IA Plan was deferred to allow feedback from the NIFON Group on recommendations on the environmental, social and governance framework.

• Education Committee 19 September 2023

Mr Harper referred Members to the minutes of the Education Committee convened 19 September 2023 and advised that new Members were welcomed, and the Committee acknowledged the sterling leadership of the outgoing Chair, Mr Aidan McCormick.

He advised that safeguarding is of particular focus and remarked that the Education Workshop will provide Members with an insight on quality assurance, performance management, the student voice and teaching and learning strategies.

Mr Harper advised that the Committee agreed a minor amendment to their Terms of Reference and were provided with comprehensive reports from the Heads of Faculty including enrolment figures to date.

He advised that Members were informed on the progress of the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan and approved the Student Criminal Convictions Disclosure policy.

• Staffing Committee 3 October 2023

Dr Stewart provided an overview of discussions taking place at the Staffing Committee meeting convened on 3 October. She stated that the Committee welcomed new Members Mrs Patrica McCaffrey and Mr Gary McMurray and concluded that better reasoning should be provided by Governors as part of their self-assessment for inclusion in the Annual Reports.

Dr Stewart advised that Members agreed an amendment to the Terms of Reference and approved the Organisational Development Plan 2023-2024.

She confirmed that Members reviewed the KPI Annual Report 2022-2023 and advised that although sickness absence is at 4.3% and sitting outside the self-imposed target of 3.5%, SRC have much lower sickness absence when compared to sector and NICS figures.

Dr Stewart advised on comprehensive data reviewed in health and wellbeing activities and commended the positive work of the HRD team.

Dr Moore remarked that all Committees have commented on the confusing messages received in Governor self-assessment questionnaires and will be asked to provide a narrative in future on any concerns raised.

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

Mrs Strachan referred Members to the Finance and General Purposes minutes of 17 October 2023 and advised that the Committee had welcomed new Members Mr Fitzsimons and Mrs Kelly and extended a welcome to the Boardroom Apprentice 2023-2024, Mrs Sinead Lavery.

Mrs Strachan advised that Members had conducted their annual review of the Health and Safety Report noting that SRC has achieved 100% compliance on the HASMaP standard and are the first F&HE College in Northern Ireland to achieve the standard. She advised that the College has plans to invest heavily in estates works to reduce the carbon footprint and informed on an action to review the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Mrs Stachan confirmed that Members had reviewed the fiscal components of the draft Annual Report and Financial Statement for the period ended 31 July 2023 and conducted their regular review of the SRC Management Accounts and DfE Forecast Returns.

The Committee minutes were unanimously adopted.

A08. COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORTS

The Governing Body unanimously adopted the four Committee Annual Reports 2022-2023.

A09. CO-OPTEE PROPOSAL

Mr Sloan informed that Miss Armstrong and Mrs Hughes have updated the Co-optee Proposal taking cognisance on recruiting for a preferred skillset within employee relations, human resources and corporate services.

Mrs Singleton advised that the desired experience for co-option was determined having taken due regard to Members self-assessed skills audit, industrial relations and succession planning.

Dr Moore commented that the requested skillset is reflective of a recent review of the knowledge and experience of Governing Body Members and does not lessen from the proficiency and competency of College staff.

Members were informed that advice received from the Department for the Economy states that it has been convention for Governing Bodies themselves to identify and discuss potential candidates and then obtain agreement on the appointment. Miss Armstrong advised that all appointments to the Governing Body are subject to ratification by DfE.

All Members advised that they are content to proceed with the recommended co-option proposal.

A10. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Mr Sloan referred Members to the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 31 July 2023 advising that the Finance and General Purposes Committee have conducted a review and it will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee before being tabled for final approval by the full Governing Body.

He referred Members to the enrolment profile acknowledging that approximately 50% of College learners are from quintiles 1 and 2 and advised that the College achieved 98.9% of its full-time enrolment target and 100.9% of the part-time enrolment target in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Mr Sloan reiterated that HLA provision is growing whilst full-time HE has reduced. He clarified that traineeships are transitioning into apprenticeship and advised on strong student outcomes.

Mrs L Campbell advised that there is a risk that the draft Report to Those Charged with Governance will not be released for timely consideration by the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and advised that consideration may have to be taken to defer both the next ARC and Governing Body meetings.

Mrs L Campbell referred Members to the Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure advising that Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee had reviewed the fiscal statements in detail.

She advised that income has increased, and education contracts are where they were expected to be. Mrs L Campbell advised that staff costs remain the same and informed of actuarial gain in respect of the pension scheme. She informed that the Department of Finance are to confirm the methodology in respect of the outcome of the PSNI legal findings.

Members noted the report. Dr Moore remarked that should any Members require finance training, this should be requested through the office of the Secretary.

A11. BUDGET ALLOCATION UPDATE 2023-2024

Mrs L Campbell referred Members to the Departmental letter dated 20 September 2023.

A12. CONSOLIDATED ENROLMENTS

Ms Shackels advised that all enrolments have now been consolidated and acknowledged the work of staff. She advised on a College campaign 'every student counts' and ensuring that learner aspirations are matched to the appropriate course.

Ms Shackels spoke to the fluidity of the VET model and the ability of students to migrate across courses. She remarked on the core business of L3 provision and advised that the College enrolments have increased on year.

Members were informed that MaSN sits at 277, 17 down against target and HLA is up 43 against a target of 362.

She further informed on good engagement between the NI Ambulance Service and the RCN Nursing cadets.

Members noted the report.

A13. DfE MID-YEAR ASSURANCE STATEMENT

Mr Sloan referred Members to the DfE assurance statement for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 having been submitted to the Department following the Chair's review. He advised that colleges have been asked to provide detail on emerging issues.

Mr McMurray enquired about assurances in place. Mrs L Campbell advised that assurance is provided for in a variety of areas, recorded within operational risk registers with controls checked by members of the senior management team.

In response to a query from Mrs Singleton, Members were advised that completion of mandatory training is reported to the Staffing Committee.

Members noted the report.

A14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Swail advised that the Business Support and Innovation Team will be running a series of webinars titled Webcast Wednesday in areas of digital, tourism, food, engineering and eCommerce.

Mr Turner thanked the College for his opportunity to represent staff on the Governing Body and spoke to knowledge gained from the appointment. Dr Moore remarked on the benefit of having staff representation on the Board.

A15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Governing Body meeting is yet to be determined.

The meeting concluded at 19.49.

signature redacted

DATE 28/4/23.