

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 18.30 VIA TEAMS**

<b>PRESENT:</b> Dr Thomas Moore (Chair) Mrs Lee Campbell (Principal / CEO) Mrs Hilary Singleton Mr Stuart Harper Mrs Tracy Strachan Mr Gary McMurray Mrs Geraldine Campbell Mr Sean Fitzsimons Mrs Monica Kelly Dr Laura Milner Mrs Angela Whiteside (via Teams) Mr Andrew Sloan Mrs Sharon O'Hare Mr Nick Harkness Mrs Patricia McCaffrey	<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> Ms Joanne McGuigan, Interim Director of Finance & Planning Ms Libby Shackels, Director of Curriculum Mr Raymond Sloan, Director of Client Services Ms Sandra Barry, Acting Secretary to the Governing Body  <b>APOLOGIES:</b> Dr Liz Finnigan Mr James Hutchinson
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The meeting convened at 18.30

<p><b>A01. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Apologies were noted for Dr Liz Finnigan and Mr James Hutchinson.</p> <p><b>A02. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>A03. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING 22 OCTOBER 2024</b></p> <p>The minutes of the Governing Body meeting of 22 October 2024 were reviewed for accuracy and approved as an accurate record on proposal from Mrs G Campbell and seconded by Mr McMurray.</p> <p><b>A04. MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p>Members reviewed the action log and considered all matters therein.</p> <p><b>A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS</b></p> <p>Dr Moore advised that he and Mr Harper attended the successful Open University (OU) Institutional Reapproval Event on 06 November 2024 and commended everyone on the excellent work taking place.</p> <p>Members were thanked for attending the Governing Body Strategy Day on 15 November 2024. This was a very useful engagement. There will be a follow-on session at the start of 2025 so as to finalise the Strategy discussions.</p> <p>Mr Harper has kindly taken on the mentorship role to the student Governor, Mr James Hutchinson.</p>	
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Dr Moore informed Members that the interviews had been set up for the post of Secretary to the Governing Body and the 1 shortlisted candidate advised they were now withdrawing from the interview.

Dr Moore advised that the DfE / Governing Body Chairs meeting has now been postponed to 08 January 2025. DfE are also holding a Further Education Strategy Day on 05 December 2024. An agenda has not yet been received.

The CEF / Collaboration Review (EY Review) was discussed, and Dr Moore advised that DfE have stated the current model will not be changed, in so far as it is set up for the negotiation of staffs pay and conditions of employment. The Chairs are waiting on the final EY Report which commenced in August 2024.

Dr Moore has a meeting with Moira Doherty (DfE) in December.

Referring to the upcoming Governing Body Effectiveness Review, Dr Moore informed Members that a Steering Group chaired by Ken Nelson has been setup. The 6 Colleges are at different stages of the review, and interviews will be setup for the Chair of the Governing Body, Chairs of the Committees, Principal and Chief Executive and the acting Secretary to the Governing Body. DfE had previously agreed that the review could be extended until February 2025. Members were asked to notify Ms Barry if they receive a questionnaire from Martin Cunningham in ICS, so that everyone is kept abreast of developments. The on-line survey for all GB Members has to be completed by 12 December 2024.

Dr Moore referred, in general terms, to requests for a reference for GB Member/s, and advised that he is happy to help but further advised that he is not their employer so the reference would be minimal, and factual as to the outline of their role and length of service as a Board Member.

Dr Moore notified Members that all Board papers will be sent to their SRC email address only and not to any other personal or work email address. If necessary, a flag can be sent to other email addresses to notify when paper are released. This is in line with Best Practice elsewhere.

Dr Moore (in a different capacity to his role at SRC) attended an audit training event that NIAO organised on 08 November 2024. The trainer was Brian Whalley and Dr Moore was very impressed with his delivery. Dr Moore and Mrs L Campbell hope to organise Mr Whalley to come to the College to do a training/development session, for all Governors. Mrs L Campbell confirmed this will be a procurement in accordance with procurement rules.

#### **Laptops**

Ms Barry advised Members that the IT Department will soon request all college laptops be returned for an upgrade to Windows 11. This may require laptops being left in the College overnight. In the meantime, Members were asked to ensure they switch their laptops on regularly for patches and updates and to leave them on for at least an hour for updates to be completed.

#### **A06. PRINCIPAL & CEO BUSINESS**

Mrs L Campbell advised that she is organising a Strategy Refresh session as a follow up to the Governing Body Strategy day to focus on the college's strategic objectives. There will also be a workshop on Governance, Finance in the FE sector to give a clearer insight to Governors on the financing of the college sector.

Members were reminded that a Risk Workshop will take place on 14 January 2025 and Mrs L Campbell encouraged Members to fully engage in the discussions.

Mrs L Campbell recently met with the Chief Executive of Stranmillis University College to explore potential areas of collaboration.

Mrs L Campbell informed Members that on the 22 November 2024 the College held a Higher-Level Apprenticeship Celebration Event to celebrate 10 years of the college delivering Higher-Level Apprenticeships. Mrs L Campbell noted the positive feedback from the event.

Mrs L Campbell also advised she attended and delivered the Welcome Speech at the DfE SME Productivity Booster launch on 22 November 2024. This event was launched by the Minister for the Economy and was held at the Graduate Restaurant Newry East. Mrs L Campbell confirmed she will be attending the Ministerial launch of the NI Big Apprenticeship Week (03-07 February 2025), on the 27 November 2024. Representatives from DfE and local employers will be in attendance.

Mrs L Campbell also advised she will be attending the College Alliance International Conference which takes place over 2 days in Belfast on 03-04 December 2024.

Mrs L Campbell also advised she will be attending the DfE Further Education Strategy Day on the 05 December 2024, at SWC in Dungannon. Governing Body Chairs, Vice Chairs, Committee Chairs, Principals, Curriculum Directors and Finance Directors have also been invited to attend. The aim of the session is to set out the Minister's Economic Vision and DfE's Business Plan priorities.

Mrs Campbell informed Members she will be attending the Good For Me, Good For FE Awards to be held on 06 December 2024 at the House of Lords, London, due to the College's Student Engagement Team being nominated for an award.

Additionally, Mrs L Campbell confirmed she will be attending both the WorldSkills Celebration Event taking place in Parliament Building, Stormont on 09 December 2024 at 6.30pm and the Stranmillis University College's 'Celebration of Christmas' event on 12 December 2024 at 7pm.

Mrs L Campbell advised that the financial accounts and Report To Those Charged With Governance (RTTCWG) are the same version Members have already seen, and it is hoped to schedule an Audit and Risk Committee meeting, directly followed by a Governing Body meeting on 10 December 2024, to sign these off.

#### **A07. COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR ADOPTION**

- **Finance and General Purposes Committee 03 June 2024**

Mrs Strachan referred Members to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee convened on 03 June 2024 advising these are for adoption. These had been brought to the Governing Body meeting on 03 September 2024 for noting and were subsequently approved at the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 16 November 2024.

- **Audit and Risk Committee 17 September 2024**

Mrs Singleton referred Members to the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee convened on 17 September 2024, confirming as they had been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee on 19 November 2024, they were here for adoption

Members adopted both of the Committee minutes on proposal.

## **A08. COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR REVIEW**

### **• Education Committee 24 September 2024**

Mr Harper referred Members to the minutes of the Education Committee convened on 24 September 2024 and advised that these are for review and will be presented at the Education Committee on 04 December 2024 for approval, following which they will be brought back to the Governing Body for adoption.

Mr Harper informed Members that Faculty presentations have been introduced and these are focused with a theme which was 'student performance and enrolment' update. The Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (WCQIP) was reviewed and updates were recommended to the curriculum strategy. Mr Harper and Ms Shackels will look at this in more detail in February. Dr Moore thanked Mr Harper and Ms Shackels for working so collaboratively across all aspects of the College curriculum provision.

Members noted the minutes.

## **A09. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

### **A10. DRAFT REPORT FOR THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE**

Discussing Agenda Items 9 and 10 together, Mrs L Campbell referred Members to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 31 July 2024 and confirmed these were presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 16 October 2024, and subsequently to the full Governing Body on the 22 October 2024. Mrs L Campbell confirmed these have not changed from those previously presented but referred members to the changes proposed by NIAO full compliance. Mrs L Campbell referred members to the key issues as detailed in the Report To Those Charged With Governance (RTTCWG), and a further recommendation relating to a disclosure issue in note 12, relating to splitting out the indexation figure between its cost and depreciation elements. Mrs L Campbell advised that the College will not be amending note 12, as the effort to make the change is disproportionate to the impact. Mrs L Campbell confirmed the current net figure in the primary statements is correct.

When the Audit and Risk Committee and Governing Body meetings are scheduled to review the final RTTCWG, and Annual Report and Financial Statements, Members will be presented with a comparison paper which will detail any changes made to the current version of the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

### **A11. FINAL COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CDP) 2024-25**

Mrs L Campbell presented the final CDP to the Governing Body. This had been presented previously to the Governing Body and DfE made a minor amendment to a figure to split out the Essential Skills figure. Overall, the figure has not changed. The CDP has been submitted to DfE; it will then go to the Minister for the Economy for approval, following which it will be published on the College website.

Dr Moore queried who signs off the numbers we recruit to each year. He was informed that the College populate the targets based on their knowledge, trends, and growth aspirations. However, DfE require all targets to represent a 3-5% increase.

### **A12. GOVERNING BODY SELF-ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS REPORT**

Dr Moore noted that this is a Review of Governing Body performance and advised that he had an assurance on 28 August 2024 from Brian Patterson (DfE), that following the Effectiveness Review, DfE will review how best to approach this matter subsequently.

## **A16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Briefing Note Insurance November 24**

Ms McGuigan presented Members with a briefing note on insurance and informed that a draft business case had previously been submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on the 16 April 2024 for noting.

Ms McGuigan advised Members there has been a significant amount of work done over the last 6 months with the FE Sector Group. Advice was sought from an independent expert and the business case is almost ready for submission to DfE. Through research, the group have identified another option of joining a Mutual. The work on the business case indicated the saving made would be of a similar scale to self-insurance; so legal advice was sought and there is no reason not to go this route so we will seek DfE approval. There is a casework date to review the business case in February 2025. The sector is not comfortable going down the self-insurance route. It would cost an extra £2m to go the commercial insurance route. The draft business case will be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 21 January 2025 prior to submission to DfE. Approval is being sought from the Governing Body to submit the Draft Business Case, as submission will be in advance of the next scheduled GB meeting. Dr Moore will be required to sign the Business Case. Members gave approval.

## **A12. MEETING EVALUATION**

Dr Moore enquired if Members were satisfied with how the meeting was conducted and asked Members to contact him and the Committee Chairs with any suggestions on improving the Governing Body and Committee meetings.

## **A13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Governing Body meeting is scheduled for 18.30 on Tuesday 04 February 2025 in the Boardroom , Newry Campus.

The meeting concluded at 19.20.

*Mrs O'Hare left the meeting.*

	<u>4/2/25</u>
<b>CHAIR</b>	<b>DATE</b>

