

**MINUTES OF A MEETING THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON
TUESDAY 18 June 2024 AT 18.30 IN THE BOARDROOM, BANBRIDGE CAMPUS**

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

ACTION	By whom
<p>A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies were recorded for Miss E Martin.</p> <p>A02. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</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>A03. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING 19 MARCH 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the Governing Body meeting of 19 March 2024 were reviewed for accuracy and approved as an accurate record on proposal from Mrs Singleton and seconded by Mrs Strachan.</p> <p>Mr A Sloan was welcomed to the meeting as an observer and Dr Moore expressed his thanks to Mr A Sloan for his patience in awaiting his minute of appointment. Dr Moore advised that he had met with the DfE FE Director to discuss Mr A Sloan's appointment and papers are expected.</p> <p>A04. MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>Members reviewed the action log and updated actions therein.</p> <p>A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS</p> <p>Dr Moore reported that he and Mr Harper attended the FE Sector Excellence Awards event on 04 June in Armagh City Hotel. Dr Moore and Mrs Singleton also attended the recent Full STEAM Ahead event in Banbridge campus. Both were excellent events and showcased the students' achievements.</p>	

Dr Moore and Mrs L Campbell met with the College's UCU representatives after the pay award had been agreed and had a very constructive and informative meeting.

The DfE, SRC Partnership Agreement was signed in January 2024 and related to this, a letter dated 30 May has been received from B Patterson (DfE) relating to the Effectiveness Review and requesting a response by the end of June. Dr Moore has sent an email to the FE College Chairs to inform them that the Effectiveness Review is in addition to the existing arrangements and is to be completed by an external body by December 2024. There is an urgency on this.

Board members annual appraisals will be upcoming, and paperwork should come from DfE by the end of June. Once received, Ms Barry will contact Members to arrange one to one appraisal meetings.

Dr Moore informed Members that the Principal/Chief Executive Officer of Belfast Metropolitan College has signalled their intention to step down and an Interim Principal/Chief Executive Officer is to be appointed. The Chairs of CEF are acknowledging their contribution to CEF over recent years. A letter is to be sent to this effect.

The annual DfE Partnership Engagement event will be held in Adelaide House on 26 June 2024, Chairs and Principals/Chief Executive Officers are invited.

Miss Lindsay Armstrong has been contacted for some dates when she is available so that the available Members can meet with her for a light lunch and present a gift.

Dr Moore referred Members to a letter regarding Governance & Accountability Issues that was sent to them for review.

A06. COMMITTEE MINUTES

- **Finance and General Purposes Committee 25 January 2024**
- **Staffing Committee 30 January 2024**
- **Audit and Risk Committee 06 February 2024**
- **Education Committee 27 February 2024**
- **Finance and General Purposes Committee 16 April 2024**

The Committee Minutes had previously been presented to the Governing Body in draft format, they are presented now for adoption.

The Governing Body formally adopted the five sets of minutes.

A07. REGISTER OR INTERESTS

Any changes to the Register of Interests will be captured for the end of year, 31 July 2024.

A08. DfE ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2023-24

Mrs L Campbell informed Members that the Accounting Officer is required to complete the Assurance Statement twice a year and the Chairman will review to ensure he is satisfied that it is effective. The timing of the Governing Body meeting next year has been moved so that the Governing Body will have time to review prior to submission.

Mr McMurray referred to the Cyber Response item on the Assurance Statement and enquired if there are tests and disaster recovery in place to ensure the system is robust. Mrs L Campbell advised that a number of tests including phishing tests take place on a

regular basis. It was also a recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee to look at cyber response.

A09. INDICATIVE BUDGET 2024-25

DfE sent a letter dated 05 June 2024 indicating the 2024-25 draft budget allocation for £35,398k, an increase to our baseline to account for salary pressure and 2024/25 assumed pay uplifts.

This figure is £300k less than expected but it is not expected to cause significant issues.

A10. COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Members were informed that work is being undertaken to develop the 2024-25 CDP and it will be presented to the Governing Body meeting in September. The budget will be updated based on CDP.

A11. TERTIARY EDUCATION REPORT

Mrs L Campbell presented the Tertiary Education Report and gave Members a summary of the current position and an update on personnel changes.

Mrs Shackels gave an update on Micro-credentials, which are small bites of study, some are not credit bearing but those that are credit bearing will need to be assessed. Northern Ireland is no further ahead than the other 3 nations but is behind ROI who have invested a lot of money into this.

The Sector has ownership and DfE are leading on this. There was a Tertiary Education meeting held today with the Permanent Secretary, FE Director, Principals/Chief Executive Officers and representatives from Stranmillis and all Colleges and Universities in attendance to work on purpose of group, what to look at and how to deliver. It is hoped that a TOR and scope of agenda items will be developed. The key is the overlap between FE and HE groups, and this is where the WAPP and Micro-credentials come in. Tertiary Education Group is an interface between FE, HE and Universities.

Dr Moore queried if the schools were not included and was informed that this was raised and as the scope is so wide, there is a need for clarity on what we want to achieve in the next 2.5 years, boundaries between FE and Universities and where to collaborate to benefit the students. The schools may come in later on, but it is too early for them now.

A12. HARDSHIP FUND

The Hardship Fund is to aid students who are experiencing hardship. Mr McMurray advised that he recently met with the Hardship committee and thanked staff involved in identifying the students in need of support and getting help to them. Mr McMurray referred Members to the amounts of funding over the past 4 years, in particular the cut back in 2023 compared to 2022. Under-utilised funding has been given back to the Colleges in the form of free breakfasts and lunches for students.

DfE sets the criteria for applications; the household income threshold is £34k and has not been updated in 10 years. Grants have to be utilised before hardship can be used and Apprenticeships are not eligible. A lot of benefits have migrated to Universal Credit, so parents are less inclined to encourage students to apply as they feel these are more intrusive.

Hardship and student finance is regularly promoted at enrolment and throughout the year and there are good examples of students able to stay in education as a result of this fund.

DfE has commissioned a review with a view to giving colleges more autonomy. A draft is due to be sent to the Colleges and will hopefully see an impact going forward.

Dr Moore asked Mr R Sloan to thank all staff involved on behalf of the Governing Body.

A13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Retirees and Members Leaving

Mrs Stewart is now retiring, and Dr Moore advised that Mr McMurray has agreed to Chair the Staffing Committee and Mr Fitzsimons has agreed to attend the Estates Project Board meetings in her stead. Dr Moore explained that as Mrs Stewart is retiring mid-term the Chairman can appoint another Chair to the committee.

Dr Moore gave a presentation to Mrs Stewart on behalf of the Governing Body and Management of SRC thanking her for all her work and public service given to the College.

Mrs Lavery was also presented with a gift and thanked the Board for the opportunity to participate in the Governing Body meetings as part of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme. Members thanked Mrs Lavery for her contribution to College Governance over the past year. Miss Martin was also thanked in her absence for her contribution to the College.

Standing Orders

Dr Moore advised that as two of the committee Chairs have been in the position of Chair for 2 years or more agreement is needed to reappoint.

Mrs Singleton and Mrs Strachan left the meeting so discussion and agreement could take place.

Dr Moore asked the remaining Members if they were in agreement to reappoint the incumbent Chairs for another 2 years. All Members agreed.

Mrs Singleton and Mrs Strachan rejoined the meeting and were asked if they would like to accept the position of another term. Both agreed and the Board gave unanimous approval.

Dr Moore thanked Ms Barry for covering the position of secretary at short notice and thanked Mrs L Campbell for agreeing to this. Dr Moore further thanked Mrs L Campbell for her stewardship and leadership of the College during this period of change where 50% of the Colleges do not have a permanent Principal/Chief Executive Officer, 40% have no Chair, a new Minister is in place and DfE have a lot of staffing changes taking place internally. Mr R Sloan was also thanked again for his stewardship and leadership earlier in the year.

Dr Moore thanked all new Governors for their work over the past 12 months. The previous Board was very effective in their governance role and Members are grateful for all the public service they gave. Thanks to those over the past year for their stewardship and governance.

Mr Harkness discussed Committee minutes coming to the Governing Body for approval. Discussion took place and it was agreed that there would be a draft set of minutes for information, and then once approved at committee, will go to the Governing Body for adoption. Mr R Sloan referred to Standing Orders for completeness.

External Review of Governing Body - December 2024

Dr Moore explained that the Partnership Agreement is a vehicle for stronger performance management and was signed in January 2024. One of the requirements of this is an Effectiveness Review and DfE suggested that all Colleges should think of coming together to commission an outside body to undertake this review. Terms of Reference have to be agreed first and DfE wish to have these shared prior to progressing.

A Task Group is to be established to take this work forward. Further information will be provided to Members, when known.

A11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Governing Body meeting is scheduled for 18.30 on Tuesday 03 September 2024 in the Boardroom, Banbridge campus.

The meeting concluded at 19.43.



CHAIR

DATE

3/9/24.