

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2019 AT 18.30 IN THE BOARDROOM, NEWRY WEST CAMPUS.

PRESENT:

Mr Andrew Saunders (Chair)
Mr Brian Doran (SRC CEO)
Mr Scott Alexander
Miss Hollie Burton
Mrs Teresa Campbell
Mr Gordon Gough
Mr Aidan McCormick
Mr John Nugent
Prof Gregory O'Hare
Mr Tom Redmond
Dr Eileen Stewart
Mr Kieran Swail
Mrs Judith Thompson
Mr Matthew Turner
Mrs Nicola Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Keith Kilpatrick, Director of Curriculum
Mr Terry McGonigal, Director of Finance and Planning
Mr Raymond Sloan, Director of Client Services
Dr Gary Husband, ESRC Project
Dr Aileen Ireland, ESRC Project
Miss Yiwen Yin, QUB & CPANI Mentee
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 18.35.

Mr Saunders welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated Mr Turner and Mr Swail in being duly elected by their peers for a second term of office.

Mr Saunders welcomed Miss Burton to her first meeting of the full Governing Body.

Mr Saunders welcomed Miss Yin to the meeting.

Mr Saunders welcomed Dr Husband's return to the meeting of SRC Governing Body and introduced Dr Aileen Ireland.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Arder Carson and Mrs Kimberley Neill McCready.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

3. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting of 3 September were reviewed for accuracy and unanimously approved on the proposal of Mr Alexander and seconded by Mr Turner.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Mr Doran stated that recommendations regarding the Level 1 Balance Scorecard have been actioned and are being presented as an agenda item later in the meeting.

5. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

On behalf of the Governing Body, Mr Saunders expressed his sincere condolences to Mr Kilpatrick on the recent death of his father.

Mr Saunders stated that recent departmental communication provides for the College to avail of charitable status for the next two to three years. Mr Doran stated that he will engage with Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee to address retrospective claims.

Mr Saunders advised that he has been invited to attend a Chairs Development Network at the Said Business School at the University of Oxford. Members discussed the benefits in terms of awareness of best practice and recognised the merit in raising the profile of FE in Northern Ireland.

Mrs Wilson arrived at the meeting at 18.49 and retrospectively declared an interest as an employee of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. Mrs Wilson gave an undertaking to exclude herself from decisions that could potentially be perceived to cause conflict.

Mrs Thompson arrived at the meeting at 18.51.

6. COMMITTEE MINUTES

• Audit Committee 17 September

Mr Nugent provided Members with an update regarding discussion taking place at the Audit Committee on 17 September and recommended that Governors avail of the DfE training course scheduled for November 2019.

Mr Nugent informed that the Committee were apprised of the Sector Wide review of the Hardship Fund, Additional Support Fund and Care to Learn, noting that no issues have been identified in regard to Southern Regional College and that minor discrepancies had been noted across the sector with regard to signatures required on certain documentation.

Mr Nugent confirmed that the Committee reviewed the internal audit report on SharePoint and were advised that out of 29 audit recommendations brought forward, 22 have been fully implemented, 2 partially implemented and 5 are not yet due.

Mr Nugent informed Members that SRC were awarded a 'satisfactory' rating across all audit areas reviewed throughout the year. He thanked Mr McGonigal and his team for ensuring all audit reports were completed and presented in year.

Mr Nugent confirmed that the Audit Committee were apprised of the audit strategy and plan for 2019-20 and advised that Members had conducted a thorough review of the Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Annual Report.

Mr Nugent advised that the Committee reviewed the DfE Compliance Audit and queried the use of public money in conducting these audits so regularly given the minimal errors identified.

• Education Committee 1 October

Mr Gough provided a summary of events taken place at the Education Committee on 1 October. He stated that the Assistant Director had apprised Members on an update to the Student Union Constitution.

Mr Gough informed that the Committee had been comprehensively briefed on the Work Based Learning recovery plans and process changes. He advised that the Committee approved their Annual Report and agreed Terms of Reference.

Mr Gough advised that Members reviewed the KPI report, Level 2 Balance Scorecard and Whole College Quality Improvement Plan and action plan.

- **Finance & General Purposes Committee 15 October**

Mrs Campbell referred Members to the Finance and General Purposes minutes of 15 October and confirmed that discussion had taken place regarding the Communication policy and procedural note.

She confirmed that the Head of Estates had attended the meeting and provided Members with a detailed report on Health and Safety practices and a summary of insurance claims.

Mrs Campbell advised that the Committee agreed the Health and Safety policy statement and endorsed approval by the full Governing Body.

Mrs Campbell informed that the Committee reviewed the Estates Planned Maintenance for 2019-22 and expressed serious concerns regarding brickwork issues in the Newry East campus. Mr Sloan confirmed that a risk assessment has taken place to mitigate problems and advised that since PSD has not responded to the College's concerns, Estates have acted on the Committee's directive to seek an alternative solution.

Mrs Campbell advised that Members approved the Committee Annual Report and agreed Terms of Reference. She advised that the Committee reviewed the Annual Report and Statutory Accounts and conducted a review of the financial figures.

Mrs Campbell confirmed that the Committee had reviewed the Management Accounts, the Governing Body Budget year-end report and DfE Financial Returns. She stated that Committee Members were advised that the College will be subject to two audits relating to the two differing financial year ends.

Mrs Campbell informed Members that the Committee reviewed the Direct Award Contracts annual report, agreed changes to the Fees Schedule and Bank Mandate and reviewed the Complaints and Compliments report.

The Governing Body unanimously adopted the minutes.

- **Staffing Committee 21 October**

Mr Alexander provided a verbal update summarising discussion taking place at the Staffing Committee on 21 October. He informed that Members had approved their Annual Report and proposed minor amendments to their Terms of Reference.

Mr Alexander confirmed that Members reviewed the KPI Annual Report noting the excellent staff attendance figures.

Mr Alexander advised that the Committee reviewed the Annual Equality Progress report noting good work taking place in community projects. He informed that Members were apprised of employee development activities, considered the benefits of IOSH Leading Safety training and of implications regarding overtime and holiday pay and advised that there were minimal financial implications for the College.

7. COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORTS

- **Education Committee**

Mr Gough presented the Education Committee Annual Report and Self-Assessment noting membership and consistence attendance by Members. He stated that the main findings of the individual assessments were that the number of Committee members is appropriate, the Committee has the right balance of skills and expertise to enable it to function effectivity and Members are provided with sufficient and timely information to facilitate decisions and monitor effectively.

Mr Gough referred Members to items monitored and approved throughout the year and advised that the Committee has focused on the outcome of the ETI inspection and WBL and ES recovery plans.

Mr Gough referred Members to the concluding statement with Members in agreement that the Committee is operating effectively and the Governing Body can take assurance that the Committee is functioning well. Mr Gough thanked Members for their input throughout the year.

- **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

Mrs Campbell presented the Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Report and Self-Assessment and referred Governors to membership, the schedule of meetings and Terms of Reference.

She advised on items monitored and approved and additional areas of work undertaken. Mrs Campbell referred to the self-assessment findings that the membership is appropriate, and that Members possess the right balance of skills and expertise to enable it to function effectively.

Mrs Campbell confirmed that Members identified a financial training requirement particularly in relation to the risk the College is asked to currently take to balance its budget.

The Governing Body formally adopted the two reports.

8. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND STATUTORY ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 JULY 2019

Members reviewed the draft Annual Report and Statutory Accounts for the period ended 31 July 2019 and reviewed the Strategic Report setting out College engagement in community works.

Mr Doran advised that the annual report has been aligned to the three report cards, DfE targets and outcomes and informed that the NIAO response is due on 23 October. He advised that the report will be further reviewed by the Finance Committee before being presented to the full Governing Body for formal approval. Mr Doran advised that the Report To Those Charged With Governance will be presented to the next meeting of the Audit Committee for scrutiny.

Discussion took place regarding School Partnership Programme, the 14-19 strategy and tracked student destination.

Members reviewed the Governing Body Statement of Responsibilities and the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control setting out the role of governance, committee requirements, risk management, internal audit reports, fraud reporting and whistleblowing.

Governors noted the information regarding related party transactions and remarked on a good document with high quality of information.

Mr Sloan left the meeting at 19.16 and returned at 19.21.

9. LEVEL 1 BALANCE SCORECARD

Mr Doran presented the Level 1 Balance Scorecard revised to reflect Members' comments and identifying items carried over.

The Governing Body noted the report.

10. HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

Mr Sloan presented the Health and Safety policy statement and informed that the Health and Safety policy was approved by Finance Committee Members at their meeting of 15 October.

Governors unanimously approved the statement and authorised the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer to sign.

11. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr McGonigal provided Members with an update regarding the resource allocation and advised Governors of an authorised overspend of £2,465k. Mr McGonigal reminded Members of the position taken by the Department for the Economy to permit colleges to operate on the basis of a shortfall in funding and the plans to address the shortfall in year.

The Governing Body noted the report.

12. ETI EVALUATION – FURTHER EDUCATION LEVEL 3

Mr Kilpatrick informed Members of a planned ETI inspection at Level 3 to review six identified areas. He advised that the inspection is expected to last approximately two days and will occur in semester two.

- **ETI WBL Inspection – recovery planning**

Mr Kilpatrick advised on a planned ETI evaluation of full time FE Level 3 provision to take place in the new year.

Mr Kilpatrick also provided an update on the follow up visit on WBL and Essential Skills planned for 11-13 November. He reminded Members that this visit would be used to assess the level of progress made by the College to date against areas for improvement.

Prof O'Hare congratulated the College on steps taken to address concerns and offered assurance that plan of work had full visibility of Education Committee Members.

Mr McCormick stated he was very impressed and acknowledged the work and efforts of Mrs Bradley and Mr Bronte.

13. SRC EQUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Sloan presented the Annual Equality Progress Report setting out the College's progress in meeting statutory obligations and ongoing commitment to equality. He advised that the document had been reviewed and endorsed by Staffing Committee Members on 21 October.

The Governing Body unanimously approved the report on the proposal of Mr Alexander and seconded by Mrs Campbell.

Mr McGonigal left the meeting 20.09 and returned at 20.10.

Mrs Wilson left the meeting at 20.12 and returned at 20.16.

Dr Stewart left the meeting at 20.13 and returned at 20.16.

14. POLICY REVIEW

- **Communications policy**

Mr Sloan presented the Communications policy and procedural note, recommended for publishing by Finance and General Purposes Committee Members on 15 October. He informed that Committee Members advocated the directive for electronic communication with Governors to be via the SRC email system only.

Members noted that the College insists that communication between staff and students must be via the SRC email account and discussed methods of secure communication to Governing Body Members including virtual private networks.

Individual Members agreed to consider piloting the use of college email and to discuss further at the next Governing Body meeting.

Mr Turner, Mr Swail, Miss Yin and Miss Burton left the meeting at 20.28.

- **Disciplinary policy & procedure – support staff**

Mr Doran informed that the Disciplinary policy and procedure has been amended to reflect agreed changes to the Article of Government, to align with existing policies and to ensure that Governor involvement was consistent with maintaining charitable status.

He advised that policy is a local document and differs from the lecturing policy which is subject to collective negotiation requirements with recognised trade unions.

Mr Doran left the meeting at 20.32 and returned at 20.34.

Mr Alexander advised the Governing Body of discussions taking place at the Staffing Committee meeting of 21 October with Members expressing some concern regarding impartiality and independence in decision making by removal of Governor participation from a disciplinary hearing and removal of the LRA at any appeal hearing subsequent to that. He stated that Members acknowledged that the dismissal of staff is an operational matter.

Mr Alexander stated that Staffing Committee Members gave consideration to any perceived allegation of bias.

A detailed discussion took place with Members agreeing to postpone approval of the document to the next full Governing Body meeting.

Mr Turner returned to the meeting at 20.00.

Mr Nugent left the meeting at 21.04.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Doran referred Members to the Assurance Statement signed and dated 4 October agreeing compliance to the checklist identifying internal controls in place.

16. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled to take place on 19 November 2019 in Boardroom, Newry West campus.

The meeting concluded at 21.05.



A.P.S. [Signature]
CHAIR

19/11/19
DATE