

Miss Burton advised that it is her last meeting on SRC's Governing Body and informed on her learning progression to study law at university. On behalf of Members, Mr Saunders and Mr Doran expressed their best wishes for her future endeavours.

Dr Ireland advised that she is observing the meeting as part of the ESRC Project and interested in discerning any differences in meetings being restricted to online means.

Mr Saunders informed Members of a productive meeting of the Chairs Group in the previous weeks reflecting on challenges arising in response to the global health crisis.

Mr Saunders advised that he has taken the decision to conduct future meetings of the Governing Body and its committees online and will review as appropriate.

Mr McGonigal advised on the successful appointment of the sector Internal Auditors RSM UK following completion of the tender process.

Mr McGonigal informed of a meeting scheduled with Mr Ian McCartney, Risk Assurance Director, himself, the CEO and the Chair of the Audit Committee on 1 September to agree the SRC Audit Strategy.

Mrs Wilson arrived at the meeting at 17.58.

A06. QUALIFICATION OUTCOME – UPDATE

- **GCSE / AS / A level**
- **Vocational qualifications**

A07. ADMISSIONS POSITION

- **Full time FE & HE**
- **HLA**
- **Training & Apprenticeships**

Mr Kilpatrick began by informing Members of the earlier announcement that the Head of England's exams regulator OFQUAL has stepped down following the controversy surrounding the algorithm which downgraded thousands of teacher assessed grades. Members acknowledged the well-publicised failings and the stress it generated for the affected students.

Mr Kilpatrick informed that the College has processed 4,723 grades and stated that of the 832 adaptive assessments, 170 have been completed. He remarked on a very demanding period for staff, impacted on by a busy period of recruitment and Covid risk assessments.

Mr Kilpatrick informed that in light of the numerous anomalies detected within the algorithm, the Minister has reverted to centre assessed grades for GCSE and A level and that currently the Quality team are working through 8 A level appeal submissions. He added that there was likely to be grade inflation at both GCSE and A Level and that this would most likely impact on college enrolments to FE and HE.

Prof. O'Hare remarked on the probability of inconsistency when applying macro data to calculate micro performance.

Mr Kilpatrick advised that over 1000 Essential Skills assessments has heralded no appeals to date and informed on a good working relationship with the awarding organisation that led to a smoother outcome process.

A detailed discussion followed with Members debating the impact of universities increasing enrolment opportunities, the possibility of government funding and the negative impact on colleges due to the likelihood of schools' retention of GCSE students. Mr Kilpatrick advised that the College is currently estimating an 11% downturn in Higher Education applications.

Members expressed concern at the perceived lack of unease and attention for vocational students, commenting that these learners are not receiving a proportionate amount of scrutiny in media coverage.

Governors noted that Pearson instructed institutions not to release predicted grades for Level 2 qualifications on the eve of results day and are now recalculating results. Members were informed that there has been no confirmation from Pearson if they are reverting to teacher predicted grades. Governors remarked on an unacceptable position for learners anxiously waiting to hear about their educational progression.

Mr Kilpatrick advised that the curriculum team are communicating directly with the student body in an effort to ease apprehension. He informed that the Quality Team anticipates receiving a number of appeals relating to Btec Level 3 diplomas. Mr Kilpatrick explained that many anomalies were present on Level 3 outcomes as a result of the algorithm applied by Pearson to predict exam based module outcomes.

Mr Doran advised on the collective frustrations expressed throughout the sector in dealing with inconsistencies across the many awarding organisations, a lack of effective regulation and an apparent unwillingness to address FE concerns in a timely manner. He also advised that both he and the SERC CEO are addressing the Economy Committee in Stormont tomorrow to relay concerns pertaining to apprenticeships and a lack of detail on the Departmental incentive schemes which is in turn affecting the ability of colleges to engage with employers.

Mr Kilpatrick addressed recruitment pressures, detailing that 75% of furloughed Higher Level Apprenticeships have not returned to employment. Members were informed on a lack of detail on DfE interventions to support apprenticeships, a restrictiveness due to operational requirements and the necessity for flexibility to deliver the curriculum offer. Governors expressed concern that existing apprentices will be failed in their progression and noted this will likely manifest in a skills shortage in years to come.

Mr Kilpatrick commented on the hard work undertaken by staff and the robust procedures developed to issue centre assessed grades. He commented on the perception that the UK is undervaluing vocational qualifications in comparison to their European counterparts and advocated the need for innovative thinking to take place across the sector to address vocational learners' opportunities and support the decision of work based learners to avail of hands-on delivery.

Mr Saunders asked Members to reflect on strategic solutions and requested that a Governors' workshop be convened in the following weeks to discuss possible scenarios for progression.

Mr Alexander remarked on an upsurge in non ET1 being progressed by the LRA and sought clarity regarding the students that have not yet been assessed.

Mr Kilpatrick confirmed that the College has been unable to assess over 400 students within the hair and beauty sector due to the industry having been restricted to operate by the NI Executive until recent weeks.

The Governing Body noted the reports.

A08. SAFE RESUMPTION OF ONSITE DELIVERY

- **DfE Framework on Safe Resumption**
- **Covid Plan**
- **Management Guide**
- **Staff Workforce Guide**
- **Classroom Management Guide**
- **Student Induction Plans**

Miss Armstrong

- **Campuses preparations**
- **Assurance Statement**

Mr Doran referred Members to the previously distributed papers and advised that given the diverse learner base within the College, PHA had advised that the optimum 2 meter distance guidance should apply.

Mr Doran advised that all UK Government approved guidance is being adhered to and referred Members to the key actions within the College developed Covid Plan. He referred Governors to the Manager's Guide and highlighted the College principles to maintain the safe return to campus.

Mr Doran confirmed that in order to minimise the number of people coming onto campus at any one point, three curriculum delivery models were being employed; face to face, online learning and alternating model.

He stated that the College remains committed to the principle that work that can be done from home should still be done from home, and that this needs to be balanced against the need of performing business functions and ensuring that the College continues to provide the full range of services to students on site.

Mr Doran informed on the need for clear dialogue between staff and their line managers, sensitivity by taking account of individual circumstances and adherence to the checklists, risk assessments and induction protocols developed.

Mr Doran informed that proposed measures have been conveyed to the trade unions through the Health & Safety Committee.

- **Screen procurement**

Mr Doran confirmed that room audits have been conducted across the campuses and following a review of options and with the support of the Chairman, he has placed an order of approximately £96k for the purchase of acrylic screens in order to comply with safe working conditions. Governors expressed their support for the decision commenting that the judgment was entirely appropriate.

Mr Doran advised Members on the content of the dedicated Covid SharePoint site providing detailed, transparent guides on staff and student personal responsibilities.

Mr Doran set out the approach to be adopted should a student present with symptoms of Covid-19 and confirmed that should a learner test positive the PHA will not be routinely contacting the College. He confirmed that the PHA will only contact the College to provide information when it deems it necessary or where it needed to contact a high risk contact.

Mr Doran advised that the Heads of Faculty will be responsible for logging all potential C-19 cases in order to determine when it is safe for the learner to be allowed back on site. Members noted the immense challenges that may arise during the flu season.

Mr McGonigal provided assurance that all information potentially obtained will be requested for legitimate health and safety purposes, securely stored and deleted as necessary.

Members discussed the overarching drive to keep people safe, the critical importance of personal responsibility, the need for understanding of individual circumstances and the necessity of adopting a zero tolerance to individuals deemed to be flouting the advice provided.

Mr Doran referred Members to the DfE Assurance Statement and advised that having reviewed the Safeguarding policy no changes have been deemed necessary. Mr Doran

confirmed that additional costs associated with Covid have been shared with the Department. Members noted that the budget cover to date does not cover these additional costs.

Mr McGonigal informed that SRC has submitted a £2.3m Covid bid which will be addressed through the October monitoring round and confirmed that all spend relating to C-19 is being tracked.

Mr Doran advised that all staff are required to complete the online mandatory Covid training guide and health declaration before returning to campus and informed that the Wider Management Team are onsite acting as Covid Champions with policing responsibilities to ensure recommended practices are being adhered to, particularly in public areas.

Mr Doran confirmed that the new builds in Banbridge and Armagh are operational and the College will be welcoming students on site next week. He highlighted the enormous work undertaken by the Estates team and acknowledged the dedication, resilience and co-operation of all staff across the various business functions. He thanked Members of the Governing Body for their collaboration and support.

Members noted the phenomenal amount of work undertaken by College management and staff, remarked on a high quality of detail and requested that their thanks be relayed to staff.

Mr Doran

Members expressed satisfaction with the steps taken and agreed that Mr Doran should sign off the assurance statement as presented.

Mr Doran

A09. COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr Doran advised Members that the Department have agreed to delay the submission of the CDP to 24 September to allow colleges to highlight the position in relation to the current health crisis.

A10. INDICATIVE BUDGET RESOURCE ALLOCATION 2020-21

Mr McGonigal referred Members to the Departmental letter dated 17 June and informed on the sector's intention to submit a Covid bid to the Department to reflect additional expenditure to ensure health and safety and delivery of the curriculum offer.

A11. REVIEW OF ARMS' LENGTH BODIES

Members noted the letter dated 30 July regarding the review of Arm's Length Bodies with a view to their rationalisation.

Mr Doran agreed to provide further information once it has been received.

A12. LEVEL 1 BALANCE SCORECARD

- **2019-2020 close out**

Members noted that many actions contained within the Balance Scorecard have not reached target due to the government lockdown and Covid-19 implications.

A13. POLICY APPROVAL

- **Return to Campus and Remote Working policy**

Governors reviewed the first issue of the Return to Campus and Remote Working interim policy developed by the sector and setting out the College's position on staff returning to site.

The policy was approved on proposal by Mr Turner and seconded by Mr Nugent.

A14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members recommended that page numbers and hyperlinks be utilised within the agenda.

Mr Doran advised that the Governor SharePoint site is currently being developed.

A15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Mr Saunders advised that he anticipates scheduling a meeting of the Governing Body in September to reflect on the re-opening of campuses and in order to review the College Development Plan.

The meeting concluded at 19.48.

Miss Armstrong

CHAIR

DATE