

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2020 AT 17.30 VIA TELECONFERENCE.

PRESENT:

Mr Andrew Saunders (Chair)
Mr Brian Doran (SRC CEO)
Mr Scott Alexander
Miss Hollie Burton
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
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 17.33.

Mr Saunders welcomed all parties to the meeting and remarked on good attendance.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Arder Carson and Mrs Teresa Campbell.

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. Mrs Wilson declared an interest as an employee of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. The interest was noted.

A03. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD;

- **19 November 2019**
- **24 March 2020**
- **9 April 2020**
- **2 June 2020**

The minutes of the four Governing Body meetings were reviewed for accuracy and unanimously approved subject to a minor grammatical amendment to the minutes of 24 March.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

Members noted that all matters arising have been addressed or deferred as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

A06. COMMITTEE MINUTES

- **Audit Committee 9 March 2020**
- **Audit Committee 24 March 2020**

Mr Nugent referred Members to the two Audit Committee minutes and provided a summary update in regard to internal audits, advised that all recommendations have been fully implemented and informed on a very good annual assurance report.

Mr McGonigal confirmed that the tender is out for new internal auditors and on track to appoint for the new academic year. He advised that when the new auditors are in place the

ACTION By whom

College will evaluate their three year audit cycle and use this to inform next year's audit plan.

Mr Nugent confirmed that Committee Members were provided with a comprehensive report on the Corporate Risk Register and were advised on heightened risks due to the Covid-19 pandemic and evolving challenges.

- **Staffing Committee 25 February 2020**
- **Staffing Committee 5 May 2020**

Mr Alexander provided an update on discussions taking place at the Staffing Committee meetings on 25 February and 5 May. He informed that Members approved the disciplinary policy for non-lecturing staff having agreed the formation of an internal panel for the appeal stage.

Mr Alexander advised that Members reviewed the draft Employee Development Plan and granted leeway for adjustment in light of Covid-19 challenges.

Mr Alexander informed that Members approved the recruitment and selection policy noting the removal of Governing Body representation on panel composition for Tier 3 posts. He confirmed that the Committee were advised of a significant increase on people viewing vacancies on the NI Jobs webpage.

Mr Doran informed that the new Health and Safety Manager is now in post.

Mrs Thompson arrived at the meeting at 17.45.

- **Education Committee 4 February 2020**
- **Education Committee 19 May 2020**

Mr Gough provided a summary of items reviewed at the Education Committee meetings of 4 February and 19 May. He advised that Members were briefed on measures introduced to reflect the impact of the current health crisis and controls in place to address remote working, qualifications and awarding assessments.

Mr Gough confirmed that Committee Members reviewed the KPI in year report and level 2 balance scorecard.

- **Finance & General Purposes Committee 3 March 2020**
- **Finance & General Purposes Committee 26 May 2020**

Mr Redmond spoke to matters discussed at both Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings. He advised that Members reviewed the College financial position and were informed on a shortfall of £25m funding across the sector and that the Permanent Secretary has granted authority to allow colleges to proceed at risk.

He informed Members that the sector has not met the MASN target and advised on a redistribution across the sector and impact on loss of income for 2020-21.

Mr Redmond confirmed that Committee Members noted a tight budget position and were advised on variations across budget lines. He informed that the Committee were instructed that the submission of the College Development Plan is delayed as considerations are ongoing regarding the impact of Covid-19 on enrolment targets and delivery next year.

Mr Redmond advised that the Committee was informed on arrangements in place to pay suppliers under vesting agreements in accordance with legal advice, CDP guidance and in order to protect a continuation of service. He informed that Members discussed the importance of protecting the supply chain and the responsibilities of public bodies.

Mr Gough referred Members to Minister Dodds' earlier press release reallocating £30 million to address Covid-19 budgetary pressures and enquired on the bearing to the College of the announcement to allocate £13.6 million to address pressures in skills and education, including focusing resources on apprenticeship and training programmes on further and higher education.

Mr McGonigal advised that the IT bid to provide laptops has been approved however expressed concern on securing the required additional funding. He advised that the College has initially estimated an additional £1.3 million shortfall in addressing the required health and safety adjustments to infrastructure and related expenditure as a result of Covid-19.

Mr Saunders advised that governance provisions will continue throughout the summer period.

The Committee minutes were unanimously adopted by the Governing Body.

A05. CHARIMAN'S BUSINESS

Mr Saunders remarked on the uncertainty that has arisen as a result of the current health crisis and thanked Committee Chairs and Members for their commitment to the Governing Body.

Mr Saunders thanked Dr Stewart to agreeing a second term of office and welcomed Mr Gough's and Mrs Wilson's extensions to tenure.

Mr Saunders expressed his condolences to Mr Sloan on the passing of his father and offered the full support of the Board.

Mr Saunders reminded Members to complete and return their committee self-assessment questionnaires and provide the Secretary with any update to their Register of Interest.

A07. DfE COVID BUSINESS PLAN

Mr Doran referred Members to the Department for the Economy Covid-19 Response Business Plan 2020-21 detailing their budget allocation. He advised on changing priorities and referred Members to committed actions and targeted timescales.

Members expressed concern over some of the mandated timeframes and remarked that they felt troubled that a lot on planning still needs to be undertaken.

Mr Doran and Mr Kilpatrick advised on a significant amount of work undertaken within the College to address concerns and provided information on the work of the sector Employee Development Group.

Members discussed the impact of C19 on the Capital Works Project and were advised on a lack of interest in the sale of certain sites at this time.

Governors noted the award arrangements for Essential Skills and were advised that calculated results have been appraised by the Awarding Panel to allow students to receive a qualification in the summer.

Members noted the departmental action to establish a working group to take forward preparations for the safe resumption of on-site vocational provision at colleges and the Minister's announcement to partially reopen FE colleges and work based learning providers to support the delivery of vocational qualifications this summer.

Governors noted existing actions to oversee and promote good governance and accountability arrangements across all of the departmental arm's length bodies and important considerations to co-design a Domestic Alternative Programme for international mobility opportunities which protect the best interest of Northern Ireland's HE and FE sectors.

Mr Doran referred Members to actions relating to the STS project and informed Members of DfE aims to review ESOL and Essential Skills policies.

Mr Doran advised that the College Development Plan is still in draft and target outcomes will be aligned to DfE KPIs

A08. DfE OVERSIGHT AND ADVISORY GROUP - TOR

Mr Doran advised Members on the establishment and approach of the Advisory and Oversight Group for the safe resumption of on-site educational provisions and related activity at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges and non-statutory contractors. Members were advised that the Secretary will circulate the Terms of Reference to the Governing Body when approved by the group.

Discussion took place regarding the plan for curriculum based on the 2 metre rule, principles of social distancing and the need for preparedness in the event of a second wave of coronavirus.

Members acknowledged that the safety of staff and students is paramount, the importance on good communication and consistency across the sector. Members agreed that should there be a reduction in social distancing requirements College management should continue to plan for the delivery models as previously presented including continued use of alternating delivery.

A09. COVID-19 PLANS FOR COLLEGE REOPENING

- **Risk Assessment**
- **Campus Preparations**
- **Curriculum Planning**
- **Staff Support**
- **Financial Implications**

Mr Doran advised Members on a number of different workstreams assigned to the Directorate.

Mr Kilpatrick provided an overview on measures taken to address registration and inductions and the process of adaptive assessment. He informed that Head of Faculty, Mr Bronte has devised a well thought out plan to ensure assessments can take place to allow for the award and progression of students in building and technical areas before the end of the summer.

Mr Kilpatrick advised that a small number of students and staff came to site voluntarily on 15 June for adaptive assessments and the Minister visited the campus to observe the proceedings and to gauge the importance of this work for student progression.

Mr Saunders stated that he is appreciative and comforted by the team's hard work.

Mr Sloan informed Members of work undertaken for building readiness, student services, and safeguarding. He advised that risk assessments have been shared with the trade unions and managers are reactive to emerging work force guidance issued by Government.

Miss Armstrong

Mr McGonigal informed on challenges that have arisen in regard to online training and the new learner management system. He advised that IT are ensuring that platforms are available for secure remote working.

The Governing Body recognise that a great many members of staff have adapted quickly and efficiently to the changing work environment and considered it appropriate to write and thank them for their diligence and resilience.

Mr Saunders

A10. STANDING ORDERS

Members approved minimal amendments to the Standing Orders updated to include additional mandatory online training modules.

A11. REVISED COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Members noted that submission of the Plan has been postponed.

A12. REGISTER OF INTERESTS 2019-2020

Mr Saunders referred Members to the Register of Interests for the 2019-2020 academic year and asked that any omissions or amendments be relayed to the Secretary.

Governors

A13. INDICATIVE BUDGET ALLOCATION

Mr McGonigal referred Governors to the DfE letter of 17 April and advised Members that NIFON are considering submitting a sector wide bid as colleges cannot reasonably absorb the necessary costs that will arise due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He advised that initial estimates have calculated that the College will be facing £1.3m added pressure and counselled that pay and pensions should be consolidated within the baseline budget.

He referred Members to item 7 of the letter and the statement 'I do not expect to see any other pressures reported in your college's monthly budget returns.' Governors expressed concern at this account commenting that it would be financially reckless and morally wrong to not operate in an open and transparent manner when reporting financial pressures.

Members asked that their concerns be relayed through the NIFON Group and the rationale on this instruction be sought from the Department.

Mr McGonigal

A14. POLICY REVIEW

- **Covid-19 – Exceptions policy**

Mr Doran referred Governors to the new policy developed to permit College management to vary the mechanism by which it delivers its business operations and outlining those activities which may be conducted remotely.

The policy was unanimously approved on the proposal of Mr Turner and seconded by Mr Gough.

A15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Saunders enquired about new student intake estimations and discussion took place regarding marketing on the promotion of provision.

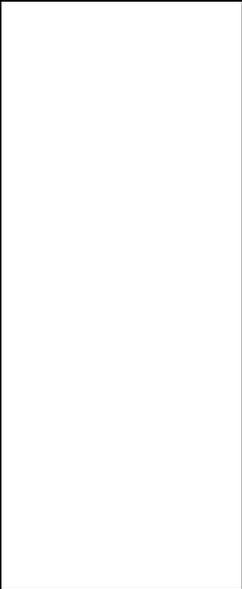
Mr Swail informed Members of a 3D online engineering event and a planned summer series of webinars to engage with the greater business community.

A16. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Mr Saunders advised that he anticipates scheduling an exceptional meeting of the Governing Body in early July and stated that he appreciates Members cooperation in attending the meetings convened at short notice.

He expressed his gratitude for Members' support and guidance during these unprecedented times.

The meeting concluded at 19.45.



CHAIR

DATE