SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 13 May 2026 at 9:03 am
via MS Teams

PRESENT:	Mrs Libby Armstrong, Committee Chair Dr David Cutting Ms Anne McCleary Mrs Gillian McDowell
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mrs Camilla James, Head of People & Culture Mrs Sharon McGrath, Director of Corporate Services Mrs Nicola Nugent, Executive Support Officer
APOLOGIES:	Mr Brian Ingram Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Mr Ingram and Ms McCartan.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Mrs Armstrong declared her position as a board member of the Labour Relations Agency and a panel member of the Fair Employment and Industrial Tribunals NI.
Ms James declared a conflict in respect of discussions concerning staffing issues which arose under confidential business.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:
- Paper 03 Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 February 2026.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:
- Paper 04.01 Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.02 Management Update on Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 05.07 People Plan 2025-29.

4.1 Culture & Engagement
Reporting on the work of the Culture & Engagement Team, Mrs McGrath provided an update on ongoing activity across culture, staff engagement and leadership development. This included progress against the Employee Engagement Plan, recent staff engagement activity, feedback mechanisms, and continued focus on coaching, leadership behaviours and workforce development.

Discussion highlighted the importance of maintaining meaningful staff engagement through a mix of communication channels, ensuring representation across the College, and embedding a coaching-led approach to support individual and organisational development. The Committee noted progress in strengthening engagement activity and welcomed the continued emphasis on listening to staff feedback and responding through practical actions.

In response to points raised during discussion, management acknowledged the ongoing work to review and refine engagement approaches, confirmed that feedback from staff continues to inform priorities and delivery, and noted alignment between engagement initiatives, leadership development activity and wider organisational objectives.

4.2 **Staff Recruitment & Retention**

Management provided an update on staffing matters, including ongoing recruitment activity and workforce challenges across specific operational areas. Members were advised of continued recruitment pressures within technical and specialist roles, with mitigation measures in place to manage associated risks and support service continuity.

The Committee noted the importance of workforce planning aligned to strategic priorities and acknowledged the ongoing work by managers to analyse resourcing requirements in response to operational demands and future organisational needs.

4.3 **The People Plan**

Ms James presented the final version of the People Plan 2025-2029, outlining its focus on embedding a values-led culture, leadership and coaching development, staff voice, wellbeing and trauma-informed practice. The Committee noted the plan's ambition to support increased engagement, sustained high performance and robust succession planning through to 2029. The People Plan was approved, with management confirming that final sign-off would be completed ahead of the next Governing Body meeting to enable timely implementation.

Members acknowledged the progress and strengthened robustness of the People Plan, noting the achievable delivery approach and the positive incremental improvements made in response to Committee feedback. The Plan was recognised as providing a clear and credible framework to support people priorities and long-term workforce sustainability.

AGREED: that the People Plan 2025-2029 is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

4.4 **Industrial Relations to include Remuneration**

Management updated the Committee on the current industrial relations climate, advising that relations remain stable with ongoing engagement with staff and recognised trade unions. Members were advised that the sector is entering a period of increased scrutiny, with particular attention on pay and workload matters.

The Committee was informed of progress in relation to the pay parity business case arising from the most recent pay award. Management confirmed that the business case is currently under economist review in the context of wider budgetary constraints, prior to consideration at Departmental level. Members acknowledged the associated risk should parity not be achieved and noted the importance of continued engagement to mitigate the potential for industrial dispute.

Management also advised on ongoing work to clarify lecturer workload arrangements, including actions taken to standardise teaching weeks and issue clear communication regarding overtime claims to ensure consistency and avoid duplication. Engagement with teaching unions on these matters was noted, with emphasis placed on transparency and consistency of approach.

In addition, the Committee noted challenges in progressing certain support staff matters due to resourcing pressures within one of the recognised trade unions, which has impacted the pace of engagement. Members acknowledged the issue and noted Management's continued efforts to maintain constructive dialogue as capacity allows.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 — Management Report
- Paper 05.01 — Health & Safety Report
- Paper 05.02 — Term 2 Sickness Absence Report
- Paper 05.03 — Fair Employment Monitoring Return Analysis Report
- Paper 05.04 — Stress Management and Support Policy
- Paper 05.05 — Equality Scheme
- Paper 05.06 — NILGOSC Annual Update 2026/27
- Paper 05.07 — People Plan 2025-2029.

5.1 Health & Safety Report

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 05.01

Management presented an update on health and safety matters, advising the Committee of reported incidents and the College's ongoing approach to monitoring and assurance. Members were informed that, during the reporting period, a number of minor incidents had been recorded, predominantly low-level in nature, with no resulting claims or matters of significant concern.

The Committee noted that incidents were primarily associated with operational environments such as kitchens and workshops and acknowledged that reporting practices vary across areas. Members agreed that while incidents remain minor, continued monitoring is important to ensure early identification of any trends or escalation risks.

The Committee noted the update and received assurance that appropriate controls remain in place and that health, safety and wellbeing matters continue to be monitored through established management reporting arrangements.

5.2 Absence Management

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.02

Management provided an update on absence management trends during the reporting period. The Committee was advised that the primary reasons for absence continue to relate to hospital or post-operative matters and personal stress, with work-related stress remaining a notable contributing factor.

Members were informed that short-term absence levels have reduced, while long-term absences have shown a slight increase. Management confirmed that absence trends continue to be monitored closely, with relevant policies and support mechanisms applied where appropriate.

Management reported that a recent sickness absence audit found processes, training, and support to be effective, with only one recommendation regarding timely completion of return-to-work procedures, which is being addressed at the management level.

The Committee noted the update and received assurance that absence management remains under active review through established reporting and management arrangements.

5.3 **Fair Employment Monitoring Return**

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 05.03

Mrs James confirmed the submission of the Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission and reported an 11.3% increase in appointments during the reporting period. Members were advised that overall staffing levels remain stable.

5.4 **Policy Review**

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Papers 05.04 & 05.05

The Committee was advised that the Stress Management and Support Policy has been reviewed, amended and renamed, and is currently subject to consultation with the recognised trade unions. Members noted that personal resilience training was delivered as part of the April CPD day, with further sessions scheduled for August. It was also reported that Mental Health Awareness Week and Stress Awareness Month were promoted across the College, supported by staff resources and appropriate signposting.

Members were advised that, subject to no substantive issues being raised through the trade union consultation process, the Stress Management and Support Policy would be progressed for approval.

AGREED: that the Equality Scheme is recommended to the Governing Body for approval and that the Stress Management and Support Policy is recommended to the Governing Body for approval, subject to trade union satisfaction with the draft policy following consultation.

5.5 **Other Resourcing Matters**

5.5.1 NILGOSC Annual Update

Ref: Management Report Section 6.1 and Paper 05.06

For information.

5.5.2 People Plan 2025-2029

Ref: Management Report Section 6.2

It was noted that the People Plan 2025-2029 had been reviewed earlier in the meeting and recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

6.0 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S PERFORMANCE IN 2025/26

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Partially Completed Review of Committee's Performance in 2025/26.

With reference to Paper 06, Mrs Nugent advised that the self-assessment checklist had been completed where a factual response was available and sought members' views on remaining questions. The resulting review is attached at Appendix A.

7.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026/27

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Schedule of Meetings 2026/27.

The Committee considered the proposed schedule of meetings for 2026/27. Members agreed the schedule, subject to minor adjustments to accommodate members' availability.

AGREED: acceptance of the proposed schedule of Staffing Committee meetings for 2026/27, subject to minor amendments to accommodate member availability.

8.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 List of Outstanding Actions

It was noted that the action listed had been implemented.

A revised list of actions is included in Appendix B.

9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

10.0 REFLECTION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEETING

Members commented favourably on the proceedings of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 9.39 am.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2026

GB CHAIRPERSON ____________________________________ **DATE** ___________________

APPENDIX A

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OF STAFFING COMMITTEE 2025/26

		Yes	No	Comments
Terms of Reference				
1	Does the Staffing Committee have written terms of reference?	✓		
2	Were the terms of reference reviewed by the Committee and approved by the Governing Body in this academic year?	✓		Reviewed on 1 October 2025 by the Committee and approved by the GB on 19 November 2025.
3	Has the Committee complied with the provisions of its terms of reference in its proceedings throughout the year?	✓		
Programme of Business				
4	Did the Committee agree a programme of business for the academic year?	✓		Agreed by the Committee at its 1 October 2025 meeting.
5	Did the Committee cover all business listed in the programme of business?	✓		
6	Have all actions identified by the committee been satisfactorily delivered?	✓		
7	Was there any business that members feel do not need to be covered next year?		✓	
8	Was there any additional business that members feel should be included next year?		✓	
Skills, Knowledge and Competences of Members				
9	Does the appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and competences exist within the Committee to perform most effectively?	✓		
Governing Body Key Performance Indicators				
10	Did attendance levels at Committee meetings average at least 65%?	✓		83% year to date.
11	Did Committee meetings generally last no more than two hours?	✓		
Additional Comments				
12				

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1			