

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Governing Body of South West College**
held on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 6:35 pm
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

- PRESENT:**
- Mrs Libby Armstrong
 - Mr Michael Barnett
 - Mrs Deborah Brown (*via MS Teams*)
 - Mrs Maureen Brunt
 - Dr Frances Campbell
 - Mr Tom Corr
 - Mrs Maria Curran
 - Dr David Cutting
 - Mrs Maria Hackett
 - Mr Diarmuid Hanna
 - Mr Brian Ingram
 - Mrs Sandra Isherwood
 - Ms Alana Jones Campbell
 - Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive
 - Mrs Gillian McDowell
 - Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair
 - Dr Lynsey Quinn
- IN ATTENDANCE:**
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
 - Mrs Nicola Nugent, Executive Support Officer
 - Mr Ciaran McManus, Director of Development & Support (*Item 7.0*)
- APOLOGIES:**
- Ms Anne McCleary

1.0 PRELIMINARIES

Dr O'Shiel opened the meeting by welcoming all present. He acknowledged Mrs Brown's and Mr Hanna's last meeting as Support Staff Governor and Student Governor respectively due to the forthcoming end of their terms of office and thanked them for their contributions to the Governing Body during their tenures.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Dr Cutting noted his membership of the University & College Union.

3.0 MINUTES OF AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2024

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 12 June 2024.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Brunt and seconded by Dr Cutting, that the above minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.

4.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Chairs' Meeting – Dr O'Shiel reported on a recent meeting of chairs involving committee chairs, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive, highlighting the agreed focus on enhancing the student experience in order to progress DfE objectives for colleges of increasing student numbers, reducing costs and enhancing quality.

College Employers' Forum (CEF) – Dr O'Shiel informed the meeting that Ernst & Young LLP has been commissioned to undertake a review of CEF and that consultations with stakeholders are ongoing as part of the review process. He also advised that a response to the draft revised CEF constitution is awaited from Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC).

Review of Governing Body Effectiveness – Dr O'Shiel reported that the Department of Finance's (DoF) Innovation & Consultancy Services (ICS) team has been commissioned to review the effectiveness of the governing bodies of the six NI Further Education (FE) colleges.

Review of the FE Delivery Model – Dr O'Shiel advised of the expectation of an announcement from the Minister for the Economy on the future of the Review of the FE Delivery Model.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Chief Executive's Update
- Paper 05.01 2024/25 College Priorities
- Paper 05.02 FE Outcomes 2022/23.

2024/25 Enrolments – Ms McCartan presented information on positive enrolment figures, noting ongoing recruitment throughout the year and advising that it was anticipated that targets would be met, over the course of the year. She highlighted the transition of some former FE programmes to traineeships and a slight reduction in enrolments in the engineering sector, which was anticipated to be short-term in nature.

Key Trends – Ms McCartan presented an analysis of student numbers, enrolments and average class size in the preceding three years noting increases in key metrics.

Strategic Context – Ms McCartan referenced the draft Programme for Government 2024-27 and the Department for the Economy's (DfE) Economic Vision Action Plan, noting colleges' role in delivering the objectives within. She also referenced the published 2022/23 FE Outcomes and noted satisfaction with the College's performance in relation to the progression of its students to employment and / or further learning.

2024/25 College Priorities – Ms McCartan informed the meeting of senior management's analysis of the successes and challenges of the 2023/24 year and presented the 2024/25 college priorities covering five themes of Student Experience, Curriculum Planning, Organisational Development, External Engagement and Financial Stability.

Members commented on the alignment of the 2024/25 college priorities with the missions and priorities within the draft 2024-27 Programme for Government as well as

on the College's contribution in delivering the actions set out in the Economic Vision Action Plan. Members also commented on the impact of reduced entry requirements to some university degree programmes, on the opportunity presented by the increased popularity of apprenticeships, the enhanced perception of the value of vocational education and on the positive atmosphere on campuses.

6.0 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Minutes of 5 September 2024 Special Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting
- Paper 06.02 2024/25 Budget Presentation
- Paper 06.03 Proposed 2024/25 Budget
- Paper 06.04 Budget Revision Reconciliation.

Mr Barnett, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, reminded the meeting of the initial draft 2024/25 budget presented to the Governing Body at its 12 June 2024 meeting showing a cash deficit position. With reference to papers 06.01 to 06.04, he provided an overview of the changes leading to a balanced budget position including cost reductions and the confirmation of additional income streams. He also spoke of the Committee's review of the reconciliation between the cash and non-cash budget positions and of the assurance received on the prudence of the assumptions applied. Mr Barnett concluded his report by highlighting the Committee's recommendation for the Governing Body's approval of the 2024/25 budget.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr Barnett, seconded by Mrs Brunt, adoption of the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting and approval of the 2024/25 budget presented.

7.0 2024/25 COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01 2024/25 College Development Plan Briefing
- Paper 07.02 Draft 2024/25 College Development Plan.

Mr McManus joined the meeting at this juncture.

Mr McManus confirmed the submission of the first draft 2024/25 College Development Plan (CDP) to DfE for review as required and outlined the approval and monitoring processes. With reference to papers 07.01 and 07.02, he then detailed the targets within the CDP, noting the 1% growth target set, and proposed the development of a three year strategic plan to provide longer term context and objectives.

In response to questions and comments from members, management highlighted some curriculum constraints limited by staffing resources and workshop capacity, the continued popularity of Apprenticeship and Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes and the consequent importance of continued engagement with industry, and of the focus on an improvement in success statistics through an enhancement of the quality of the student experience.

Members welcomed the proposal to develop a three year strategic vision, delegated authority to management to progress the CDP development process and agreed to review the final draft of the CDP for approval by correspondence if timelines necessitate.

AGREED: that:

- authority is delegated to management to progress the CDP development process; and
- review and approval of the final draft of the CDP is undertaken by correspondence if required.

Mr McManus was thanked for his presentation and withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

8.0 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 Committee Membership Proposal.

Mrs McCauley thanked members for their engagement in the committee membership review process and, with reference to paper 08, explained that the committee membership proposal presented had been developed to ensure compliance with membership requirements and to best utilise the skills of members.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Brunt, seconded by Dr Cutting, adoption of the Committee Membership Proposal presented.

9.0 REGISTER OF INTERESTS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 Register of Governors' Interests.

Mrs McCauley explained that the Register of Governors' Interests had been tabled as required under the Instrument of Government and requested timely notification of any changes in governors' interests during the 2024/25 year.

10.0 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 10.01 Partnership Agreement
- Paper 10.02 2024/25 Annual Engagement Plan.

Mrs McCauley referenced the Partnership Agreement and Annual Engagement Plan tabled for the attention of governors as required under the Partnership Agreement.

11.0 POLICY REVIEW

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 11 Proposed Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members.

Mrs McCauley provided an overview of the amendments made to the Code of Conduct for Governing Body members and confirmed its conformity with the DoF Guidance on Codes of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies (NI).

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Brunt, seconded by Mr Ingram, adoption of the Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members.

12.0 GOVERNANCE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 12.01 Review of 2023/24 Governance Key Performance Indicators
- Paper 12.02 Proposed 2024/25 Governance Key Performance Indicators.

With reference to paper 12.01, Mrs McCauley explained that a review of the Governing Body's performance against its 2023/24 Governance Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been undertaken where a factual response was available. With respect to the remaining question, members agreed that the Governing Body had demonstrated its practical implementation of college values.

The proposed 2024/25 Governance KPIs were then adopted with an amendment to allow for an extended meeting duration in exceptional circumstances.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Brunt, seconded by Dr Quinn, adoption of the proposed 2024/25 Governance KPIs with an amendment to allow for an extended meeting duration in exceptional circumstances.

13.0 DECLARATION OF HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED

Ms Jones Campbell declared hospitality received during her attendance at a Women in Leadership event.

Dr Cutting declared his forthcoming attendance at a Canvas conference through his employer.

Ms McCartan declared hospitality received during a Turing Programme mobility.

14.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Dr O'Shiel reiterated his thanks to Mrs Brown and Mr Hanna during their tenure as governors and wished them well in their future endeavours.

15.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members commented favourably on the effectiveness of the meeting.

Mrs Brown, Mr Corr and Mr Hanna withdrew from the meeting at this juncture. The meeting then went into confidential session.

CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2024

CHAIRPERSON 

DATE 20/11/2024