

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Governing Body of South West College**  
held on Wednesday 8 March 2023 at 5:30 pm  
in the Boardroom, Omagh Campus

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**PRESENT:** Ms Siobhan Breen (*via MS Teams*) (*Items 1.0 – 9.0*)  
Mrs Deborah Brown  
Mrs Maureen Brunt  
Dr Frances Campbell  
Mr Jack Daly  
Mr Brian Ingram  
Mrs Sandra Isherwood  
Ms Alana Jones Campbell (*via MS Teams*)  
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey (*via MS Teams*)  
Mr Seamus McCaffrey  
Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive  
Mrs Gillian McDowell  
Mr Michael McGuckin  
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chairman  
Dr Lynsey Quinn

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive  
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body

**APOLOGIES:** Ms Elaine Grier  
Ms Anne McCleary

### **1.0 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Ms Grier and Ms McCleary.

### **2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

### **3.0 MINUTES OF AND MATTERS ARISING FROM A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 11 January 2023.

**AGREED:** on the proposal of Mrs McDowell and seconded by Mr Ingram, 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**

**Students** - Dr O'Shiel reminded the meeting of the importance of maintaining focus on the best interests of students. At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Ingram and Mrs Brunt spoke of the success of the Higher Education (HE) Graduation ceremonies held on 3

March 2023 noting the meaningful occasion for students and commending staff for their organisation of the event.

**Review of the Further Education (FE) Delivery Model** - Dr O'Shiel reminded the meeting of the Open Letter from the Interim Permanent Secretary of the Department for the Economy (DfE) to all staff in the sector providing an update on progress in relation to the Review of the FE Delivery Model. He also noted the reduced pace of progress in recent months.

**Strategic Alliance Proposal** – Dr O'Shiel reflected on the reasons for the proposal to develop a strategic alliance with Northern Regional College (NRC) and North West Regional College (NWRC) and advised that the Chief Executives have been progressing the proposal. Ms McCartan explained that a Project Initiation Document is under development to explore work strands in the areas of Governance, Curriculum, Corporate Services, External Engagement, Finance and Project Management. She commented on the merits of the proposed collaboration notwithstanding the review of the FE Delivery Model and the budgetary challenges and provided assurance that decision making authority will remain with individual Governing Bodies. Members welcomed the update provided and was suggested that a report on the proposed Strategic Alliance is provided at each Governing Body meeting.

**Budget** - Dr O'Shiel advised that confirmation of the 2023/24 budget is expected in late March 2023 and that cuts of up to 20% may be made. He commented on the differing cost bases across the sector and on the need for equity in the reductions required by each college.

## 5.0 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.01 Proposed Mission, Vision Statement and Values.

### 5.1 **Students**

**Young People Inequalities in the Northern Ireland Skills System** – Ms McCartan referenced the recently published Presentation on Young People Inequalities in the Northern Ireland Skills System and undertook to circulate this to members. She highlighted the statistic within on the 17,000 of 18 to 25 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training and, in response to questions, commented on the challenges faced by this cohort as well as on the opportunity for colleges to target and support them into employment. Ms McCartan also referenced recently published data on Apprenticeships and Higher Level Apprenticeships by local government area and reported on the good performance recorded in respect of Mid Ulster Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

**Higher Education Graduation** – Ms McCartan referenced the HE Graduation ceremonies which took place on Friday 3 March 2023.

**Get Engineering Event** – Ms McCartan made the meeting aware of the annual Get Engineering event, organized in conjunction with local Manufacturing and Engineering firms, taking place in the Dungannon campus on 25 March 2023.

**International Mobilities** – Ms McCartan informed the meeting of the international mobility opportunities afforded to students under the Erasmus and Turing programmes and of a forthcoming visit from the UK Secretary of State for Skills, Further and Higher Education with responsibility for the Turing Scheme.

## 5.2 **Staff**

**Strike Action** - Ms McCartan reported that formal notification of action short of strike has been received from Trade Unions representing lecturing staff in relation to the 2021/22 pay claim. Members were made aware of the submission of a business case to DfE for this pay increase and of the likelihood of strike action in the absence of DfE approval.

**Vision, Mission Statement & Values** – With reference to paper 05.01, Ms McCartan drew attention to the proposed Vision, Mission Statement and Values developed from the discussions held at the 1 March 2023 Governing Body workshop. She acknowledged the work of the Change Team in developing the proposed values in conjunction with staff.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McDowell, seconded by Mrs Brunt, that the Vision, Mission Statement and Values outlined in paper 05.01 be adopted by the Governing Body.**

**Change Management** - Ms McCartan reported the following in relation to the Change Management process:

- The previously circulated analysis report of the responses to the first 'We're Listening' Staff Engagement Survey highlighted staff appetite for structural change;
- An organizational structure review has been undertaken and a special Staffing Committee meeting held to consider management realignment options for consultation;
- Consultations with management, staff, trade unions and DfE has commenced. The consultation document has been circulated to governors and feedback is sought;
- Monthly email communications are issued to staff providing updates on progress and campus meetings will be held in May 2023;
- Staff training is being rolled out on the revised Recruitment & Selection Policy and Guide;
- A meeting has been held with DfE to evidence progress of the external Change Management Committee and the capacity of the Internal Change Team to take the process forward;
- The Accountability Meeting with the Interim Permanent Secretary has been rescheduled on 22 March 2023 which will provide a further opportunity to update DfE on progress.

Members welcomed the progress made by the Change Management Committee and the Internal Change Team.

**Fixed Term Contracts** – Ms McCartan commented on the significant number of staff employed under fixed-term contracts and on the employment rights accrued by these staff.

**Wellbeing Initiatives** - Ms McCartan outlined the staff wellbeing initiatives held across the College. It was noted that these initiatives must be complemented by adherence to college values.

### 5.3 **Stakeholders**

**Curriculum Plan 2023/24** - Ms McCartan advised that the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee (formerly known as the Education, Quality & Performance Committee) will consider principles to be applied in relation the 2023/24 curriculum offer should the budget allocation require a reduction in provision.

**Erne Campus** – Ms McCartan confirmed that the Post Project Evaluation of the Erne Campus development will be finalized and submitted by 31 March 2023 following its review by DfE.

**Cookstown Campus** – Ms McCartan reported that advanced discussions have been held with the Education Authority regarding its proposed use of part of the Cookstown campus for its youth provision and that other options are being explored to further enhance utilization.

Members welcomed the progress made on the items reported on. Mrs Brown commented on the positive feedback from staff on the change management process. Mr Daly advised of students’ appreciation of the initiatives to alleviate cost of living pressures and suggested that additional communication approaches may be necessary to reach all students.

### 6.0 **REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION, QUALITY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee held on Wednesday 18 January 2023
- Paper 06.02 Examinations Policy
- Paper 06.03 Curriculum and Quality Assurance Committee Terms of Reference.

Dr Quinn, Chair of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee, drew attention to the minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting held on 18 January 2023 and to the proposal within to rename the Committee to the ‘Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee’. She went on to highlight the Committee’s recommendations for approval of the Examinations Policy and the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee Terms of Reference.

In response to a question, Ms McCartan, supported by Dr Cush, outlined the annual expenditure on examination costs, noted the steady increase in this cost due mainly to additional support needs and acknowledged the opportunity to explore cost savings in this area as part of the strategic alliance with NRC and NWRC. Management undertook to circulate a report on examination costs and to explore cost saving opportunities.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Dr Quinn, seconded by Dr Campbell, adoption of the minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting and the recommendations therein. The minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.**

## **7.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 1 February 2023
- Paper 07.02 Staffing Committee Terms of Reference.

With reference to paper 07.01, Ms Jones Campbell, Chair of the Staffing Committee, proposed the adoption of the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 1 February 2023 and the recommendation within to approve the Committee's revised Terms of Reference.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Ms Jones Campbell, seconded by Mrs Isherwood, adoption of the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting and the recommendation therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.**

## **8.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on Wednesday 8 February 2023
- Paper 08.02 Corporate Risk Register
- Paper 08.03 Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy.

In reporting on the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 8 February 2023, Mrs McCaffrey, Committee Chair, advised that satisfactory assurance ratings had been awarded following internal audits of Repairs and Maintenance and Work Placements, that a limited assurance rating had been awarded following an internal audit of Email Access Control and that good progress had been recorded in the implementation of outstanding recommendations. She went on to comment on the raising a concern framework, on the aspiration to achieve Cyber Essentials accreditation and on the value of the deep dive into the risk associated with learner experience and drew attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy. She also confirmed the Comptroller & Auditor General's signing of the Annual Report & Financial Statements 2022/23 and advised of the resource requirements arising from the additional audit needed to incorporate the College's accounts into the Whole of Government accounts as well as the more extensive audit required under the introduction of ISA 315.

In response to questions and comments from members, the meeting was informed that two further internal audits had been undertaken since the Audit & Risk Committee meeting each achieving a satisfactory assurance rating, that the framework for Raising a Concern is under review by the Change Team, that complainants are advised of their right to appeal decisions under the Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy and of the additional audit fees arising from the increased audit requirement.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded by Dr Campbell, adoption of the minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting and the recommendation therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.**

## **9.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 22 February 2023
- Paper 09.02 Financial Management Report to 31 January 2023.

With reference to paper 09.01, Mr McCaffrey, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, provided an overview of the business covered during the 22 February 2023 committee meeting. He highlighted the report received on the scenario planning undertaken in preparation for anticipated budget cuts, the progress reported on the sale of the Fairview campus and the post project evaluation of the Erne campus, the utilization of Hardship Fund monies to alleviate the cost of living pressures on students and the appointment of the Chief Executive and the PFI Contracts Manager to represent the College at the Annual PFI Contracts Meeting with Belfast Education Services (BES).

Ms McCartan advised that financial forecasts and approval for retention of proceeds from the Fairview campus are predicated on completion of the sale by 31 March 2023 and commented on the close attention being given to this matter.

**AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McCaffrey, seconded by Mrs Brunt, adoption of the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Chair of the Governing Body.**

*Ms Breen withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.*

## **10.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 10 List of Outstanding Actions.

The following updates were provided in relation to the four outstanding actions listed in paper 10:

- Governors are encouraged to exercise their challenge function; this was discussed at the workshop held on 1 March 2023;
- Work is ongoing to provide comparative data on the success rates of colleges, schools and universities as well as comparative data on the destination of college and university leavers;
- Statistics on the level of compliance with the Sickness Absence Notification Procedure is not currently gathered; good compliance is reported anecdotally;
- Focus will be placed on College Values and Employee Standards at the Connect & Plan Day in August 2023.

A revised list of outstanding actions is included in Appendix A.

## **11.0 DECLARATION OF HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED**

No declarations were made under this heading.

**12.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

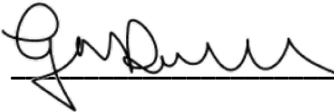
Dr O'Shiel advised that Mrs McDowell, Vice Chair of the Governing Body, will chair the 26 April 2023 Governing Body meeting.

**13.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Dr O'Shiel welcomed any feedback on the effectiveness of meetings and noted the assumption of effectiveness unless an issue is raised.

***Mrs Brown and Mr Daly 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 26 APRIL 2023**

VICE CHAIR  \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 26/04/2023

## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	16/11/2022	6.0	Mr Brolly to seek comparative data on the success rates of colleges, schools and universities as well as comparative data on the destination of college and university leavers.
2	08/03/2023	5.1	Presentation on Young People Inequalities in the Northern Ireland Skills System to be circulated to members.
3	08/03/2023	6.0	Management to circulate a report on examination costs.
4	08/03/2023	6.0	Management to explore opportunities for savings in examination costs.