

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 2 December 2020 at 9.00 am
via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT: Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive)
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
Mrs Gillian McDowell (Committee Chair)
Mrs Monica McGeary
Mr Michael Skuce

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
Mr Barry McCarron, Senior Business Development Officer,
(*Item 8.0 only*)
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mr Pdraig McNamee, Head of Faculty (Automotive,
Computing & Engineering) (*Item 7.0 only*)
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body
Mrs Eimear Rushe, Head of Human Resources

1.0 APOLOGIES AND PRELIMINARIES

It was noted that all members were present.

The meeting was made aware of the untimely death of a student at the Enniskillen campus and of the support available to staff and students affected by this tragedy. Members expressed their sorrow at this news.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Mrs McCaffrey declared an interest in item 4.0 of the Confidential Management Report due to a family connection with an employee named in the associated paper.

3.0 SAFEGUARDING

It was noted that an update on safeguarding would be provided in confidential session.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04 Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 30 September 2020.

There were no matters arising.

5.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.01 Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 05.02 Key Strategic Issues Management Update.

5.1 Covid-19 Recovery & Resilience

Mr McAlister reported that 18 staff and 46 learners had been diagnosed with Covid-19 in the 1st September 2020 to 20th November 2020 period. He added that this relatively low infection rate can be attributed to the work of the Covid Supervisors and the adherence by staff and students to the systems and protocols in place.

In response to a query from a member, Mrs Rushe advised that a small number of staff had been quite unwell with the virus and had since experienced 'Long Covid' symptoms. She added that backfill resources had been put in place to cover classes where required.

5.2 Centre for People and Workforce Development

Mr McAlister noted that consultation on a new Skills Strategy for the Department for the Economy (DfE) will commence shortly. He added that the Skills Strategy will set the strategic direction of DfE and that colleges will need to be appropriately resourced to deliver it.

Mr McAlister provided background to the 'College of the Future' commission to scope the future of FE colleges in all UK nations. The relevance of this work to the forthcoming Review of the Structure and Culture of South West College was noted.

Mr McAlister also made the Committee aware of the flexibility sought from DfE for colleges to accommodate the members of Armed Forces families relocating to NI mid-year.

5.3 Review of College Management Structure

It was noted that this item would be discussed later in the meeting.

5.4 Collaborations (including Shared Services)

An update on the progress of the implementation of the new EBS (Education Business System) Learner Management System across the sector was provided.

5.5 Impact and Resourcing of New Initiatives

Mr McAlister provided details of the new sectoral Traineeships Programme to be launched in September 2021. He noted the overlap of this programme with some current provision and advised that training will be provided for relevant staff in preparation of the roll out of this qualification.

Mr McAlister then updated the meeting on the implications for the College of Brexit negotiations, noting that lack of clarity is impeding college planning. He explained that a Shared Prosperity Fund is expected to succeed the current European Social Fund and

that any future domestic mobility programme is likely to prioritise Higher Education. Members commented on the value of the Erasmus experience for Further Education students in heightening their ambitions and expressed disappointment that any future domestic mobility programme may not provide the same level of opportunity for these students.

Mr McAlister also advised that a further tranche of the funding provided by DfE to contribute to the costs incurred by colleges due to the Covid-19 pandemic will be received in the forthcoming days; explained that a claim has been submitted to the Department of Education (DE) for reimbursement of additional costs incurred in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework; and reported that a fund may become available from DfE in January 2021 to be used for the purchase of IT equipment to support staff and students with remote learning.

5.6 Staff Retention and Recruitment

Mr McAlister reported that recruitment to some specialized areas remains a challenge and, referencing ongoing negotiations on the Transform to Deliver business case, highlighted the need for attractive and fit-for-purpose terms and conditions for staff as well as the need to generate efficiencies.

5.7 Student Experience

Mr McAlister explained that delivery is still on a continuum from fully face-to-face to fully remote with the majority of students learning remotely during the current and previous circuit breaker. He noted the consequent challenge in completing required practical work as well as sectoral concerns regarding the lack of clarification on assessment methodologies from awarding organisations.

Mr McAlister then drew attention to the data provided on the response of Higher Education students to the questions asked in the National Student Survey and expressed his satisfaction with the College's performance.

6.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Management Report
- Paper 06.01 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report
- Paper 06.02 Covid-19 Communication Plan
- Paper 06.03 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 06.04 Fixed-Term Contracts Report
- Paper 06.05 Sickness Absence Management Report
- Paper 06.06 Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Paper 06.07 Carers' Policy
- Paper 06.08a Access NI Policy Statement
- Paper 06.08b Policy Review Summary – Access NI Policy Statement.

6.1 Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Papers 06.01 & 06.02

Mrs Rushe informed the Committee that in response to the untimely death of a number of students a workshop has been designed by Inspire, the College's wellbeing support partner, to support staff in the aftermath of a crisis situation. She also quantified the uptake amongst staff of the College's Flu Vaccination Programme.

6.2 Equality

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0

Mrs Rushe highlighted the key role of the College's Equality Officer as the sectoral reporting officer to the Public Health Agency.

6.3 Human Resources

6.3.1 Appointments

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

Mr Skuce commented on the important role to be played by the proposed Raising a Concern Champion and the on responsibilities associated with this position.

AGREED: that the appointments listed in paper 06.03 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.3.2 Staff Requests

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

In addition to the staff requests listed in the Staff Resource Report, Mrs Rushe sought approval to recruit a temporary Estates Officer to cover maternity leave. In response to a query regarding challenges in recruiting to specialised areas, she also referenced the proposed Lecturer in Engineering posts and noted that appointments to these posts would form part of the Engineering Development Strategy and the proposed Engineering Innovation Centre.

AGREED: that the staff requests listed in paper 06.03 and that noted above be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.3.3 Fixed Term Contracts

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.04

In relation to an outstanding recommendation in relation to the MIS / Data Services Co-ordinator, Mrs Rushe explained that this is dependent upon the term of a related secondment and undertook to bring a recommendation to the February 2021 committee meeting.

Members then sought an update on the secondment of the Assistant Chief Executive for Learner Experience and Digital Transformation. Mr McAlister outlined the

timeframe of the secondment contract, explained that this may be extended and committed to seek clarity on the likely return date of the secondee. It was also suggested that the Assistant Chief Executive for Learner Experience and Digital Transformation be given the opportunity to input into the forthcoming review of the College's structure and culture.

AGREED: that the fixed term contracts proposals detailed paper 06.04 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.3.4 Resignations and Retirements

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

The details of the resignations and retirements listed in the Staff Resource Report were noted by the Committee.

6.3.5 Career Break Requests

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

Mrs Rushe detailed the circumstances surrounding the two career break requests, and, in response to questions and comments from members, went on to outline the backfill arrangements that would be put in place and provide assurance on the consistency of policy application.

AGREED: that the career break requests listed in paper 06.03 be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

6.3.6 Other Resourcing Issues

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.03

AGREED: that the recommendations made in this section of the Staff Resource Report be noted / supported as appropriate.

6.3.7 Performance Management

Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Paper 06.05

The data presented on sickness absences in October 2020 was noted.

6.3.8 Appraisals

Ref: Management Report Section 3.3

Members welcomed the launch of the staff appraisal process for 2020/21.

6.3.9 Recruitment Statistics

Ref: Management Report Section 3.4

Mrs Rushe drew attention to the statistics provided on staff recruitment activity in the 2020 year to date and reported successful appointments to a number of posts which had been difficult to fill.

6.4 Policy Review

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Papers 06.06, 06.07, 06.08a & 06.08b

With reference to the Recruitment & Selection Policy, Carers' Policy and Access NI Policy Statement presented, Mrs Rushe provided an overview of the amendments proposed to these policies. In response to a query from a member, she then provided an example of an appropriate use of the Expression of Interest method of recruitment.

AGREED: that the Recruitment & Selection Policy, Carers' Policy and Access NI Policy Statement be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

7.0 RESOURCE PLANNING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AUTOMOTIVE, COMPUTING & ENGINEERING FACULTY

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Resource Planning and Workforce Development in the Automotive, Computing & Engineering Faculty.

Mr Pdraig McNamee, Head of Faculty (Automotive, Computing and Engineering), joined the meeting for this item.

Reflecting on his presentation to the Committee at its September 2020 meeting, Mr McNamee provided an overview of the progress made in implementing the initiatives proposed. These included an extension and enhancement of the appraisal process, the adoption of a longer-term strategic approach to resourcing, the provision of peer mentors where required and the procurement of equipment to facilitate more innovative teaching techniques. Mr McNamee was commended for his resourcefulness in finding solutions to the challenges presented and, in response to a question from the Committee Chair, commented on the inter-faculty collaboration on these initiatives.

Mr McNamee withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

8.0 RESOURCE PLANNING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SECTION

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 Resource Planning and Workforce Development in the Business Development Section.

Mr Barry McCarron, Senior Business Development Officer, joined the meeting for this item.

In commencing his presentation, Mr McCarron provided an overview of the projects underway within the Business Development Section and commented on the growth in technology integration within industry. He went on to speak of the curriculum delivery undertaken by his team as well as of the value of industry engagement to staff development and curriculum planning. He also reported on performance in the year to date, noting that targets had been met or exceeded in all areas; detailed the resourcing requirements in the forthcoming year; and, in response to a suggestion from a member, acknowledged the links established with Innovate UK.

Mr McCarron withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

The meeting went into private session at this juncture.

9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

10.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 13 Outstanding Actions.

A review of the actions listed in paper 13 was undertaken. A list of outstanding actions is provided in Appendix A.

11.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

It was noted that a number of participants had experienced minor technical issues.

The meeting concluded at 11:30 am.

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
13 JANUARY 2021**

CHAIRMAN



DATE 13/01/2021

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
03/06/2020	5.2	Review of Management Structure to be considered in September 2020
30/09/2020	13	The review of Whole College Realignment will be deferred to March 2021
02/12/2020	6.3.3	MMA to seek clarity on the likely return date of the Assistant Chief Executive for Learner Experience & Digital Transformation.
02/12/2020	2.1	Appraisal statistics to be included in the HR Annual Report going forward.
02/12/2020	2.4	ER to report on whether the honorariums agreed will bring the remuneration of the staff members involved outside the parameters of their payscale.
02/12/2020	3.0	Specification for the review of the College's culture and structure to be shared with Governing Body and the input of governors sought prior to the Project Initiation Meeting.