

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 9 June 2021 at 9.00 am
via Microsoft Teams

- PRESENT:** Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive)
Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
Mrs Gillian McDowell (Committee Chair)
Mrs Monica McGeary
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive (*Items 1.0 - 5.0 only*)
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mr John Moss, Head of Faculty (Built Environment, Creative & Life Services) (*Item 7.0 only*)
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body
Mrs Eimear Rushe, Head of Human Resources
- APOLOGIES:** Mr Michael Skuce

1.0 APOLOGIES AND PRELIMINARIES

An apology was tendered on behalf of Mr Skuce.

Members agreed to re-order the agenda to allow Dr Cush to present the Review of the Business Development Management Structure in advance of her withdrawal from the meeting at 9:55 am to attend another meeting.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Mrs McCaffrey declared an interest in the Review of the Business Development Management Structure due to a family connection with a member of the Business Development Team. Mr McAlister declared an interest in the Fixed Term Contracts Report and the Estates Team Restructure Proposal due to a family connection with a member of the Erne Project Team.

3.0 SAFEGUARDING

No safeguarding matters were raised.

The meeting went into private session at this juncture.

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 14 April 2021.

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 two Covid-19 diagnoses had been confirmed in the College community in May 2021 bringing the total since September 2020 to 142. He advised that colleges moved to Stage 4 of the NI Executive's Pathway out of Restrictions on 24 May 2021 enabling increased face-to-face teaching and the resumption of extra-curricular, inter-college and sports activities. He reported that a communication had been received from DfE advising colleges to plan on the basis of a normal learning delivery environment for the new academic year.

Mr McAlister explained that a number of staff and students are participating in a self-administered Lateral Flow Device testing pilot on a voluntary basis with results being reported to the NHS through the UK government portal. He also provided details of an assisted testing pilot soon to commence in the Dungannon campus and noted that, if successful, assisted testing may form part of Covid-19 mitigations in the forthcoming academic year.

5.2 Centre for People and Workforce Development

It was noted that updates on the Centre for People and Workforce Development would be provided through the Management Report.

5.3 Review of College Management Structure

It was noted that the review of the College's management structure will be discussed at the special committee meeting on 10th June 2021.

5.4 Collaborations (including Shared Services)

Mr McAlister reminded the meeting of the development and implementation of sectoral Curriculum Hubs with South West College leading on curriculum in the field of Engineering. He explained that approximately £100k had been provided in seed funding but that this had not been baselined. He advised that ETI have been commissioned by DfE to independently review all hubs, listed the objectives of the review and noted that they would take place early in the 2021/22 academic year.

In response to a question on the practical impact of the hubs, Mr McAlister reported that curriculum at all levels is managed by the hubs and detailed the voluntary arrangements in place for participation in the design of each course developed.

5.5 Impact and Resourcing of New Initiatives

Regarding resourcing of the Erne Campus, Mr McAlister advised that the recruitment process for the previously approved BIM & Asset Management Co-Ordinator will commence shortly and that a proposal for a restructure of the Estates Team will be presented later in the meeting.

He noted that discussion on future cover arrangements for the Assistant Chief Executive (Learner Experience & Digital Transformation) will be postponed pending consideration of the report on the review of the College's culture and structure.

AGREED: that the Governing Body be requested to grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive to ratify routine appointments over the Summer months, if required,

with a list of all such appointments to be submitted to the Governing Body for retrospective ratification at its next meeting.

5.6 Staff Retention and Recruitment

Mr McAlister commented on the ongoing negotiations with trade unions on lecturers' terms and conditions and highlighted the continuation of action short of strike by lecturers.

5.7 Student Experience

Mr McAlister reported that five referrals to the College's Safeguarding Assistants had been made during March and April 2021 and that 92 students had received support from Learning Mentors in the same period. He confirmed that no referrals to Social Services had been required and advised that the final Strategic Safeguarding meeting of the year had taken place.

Mrs McDowell temporarily withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

Mr McAlister went on to explain that Internal Assessment Panel meetings to finalise student grades are continuing. He then made the Committee aware of the challenges encountered in finalising assessment arrangements with Awarding Organisations noting in particular the potential disadvantage faced by NI students due to the longer lockdown and shorter academic year compared with other UK nations. He also commented on the continuing impact of social distancing requirements and on the clarification required in relation to appeals and plausibility checks.

Dr Cush withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

Mr McAlister informed the meeting of the proposals of local universities to make unconditional offers to students before receipt of examination results, commented on the negative impact of this proposal on the HE in FE sector and referenced a communication from the DfE Permanent Secretary outlining the agreed position. He also reported on the launch of a website to refer students unsuccessful in gaining their first choice place at QUB or UU to opportunities available at FE colleges.

Mrs McDowell re-joined the meeting at this juncture.

In response to questions from members, Mr McAlister explained the practical outworkings of the website referenced above noting that it will not have the functionality to guide students to specific HE in FE courses as had been anticipated.

6.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Management Report
- Paper 06.01 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report
- Paper 06.02 Equality Update
- Paper 06.03 Commentary on Fair Employment Monitoring Return
- Paper 06.04 Equality Scheme
- Paper 06.05 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 06.06 Fixed-Term Contracts Report
- Paper 06.07 SMART Workplace Programme
- Paper 06.08 Redeployment Proposal.

6.1 Health, Safety & Wellbeing

6.1.1 Health & Safety Update

Ref: Management Report Section 1.1 and Paper 06.01

The update provided in paper 06.01 was noted by the Committee.

6.1.2 Covid-19

Ref: Management Report Section 1.2

Mrs Rushe referenced the update provided on Covid-19 earlier in the meeting and detailed the requirements for the assisted testing pilot, advising that additional resourcing would be required should assisted testing be mainstreamed in September.

6.1.3 Health & Wellbeing

Ref: Management Report Section 1.3

Mrs Rushe informed the meeting of the wellbeing workshops planned during a Staff Wellbeing Week later in June. She also reported on a proposal to gift a voucher to all staff in appreciation for their efforts during the pandemic.

Members welcomed the voucher proposal but queried its regularity in the context of public sector financial regulations. In response, Mrs Rushe provided assurance that approval has been received from DfE following its assessment of an associated business case.

6.2 Equality

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Papers 06.02, 06.03 & 06.04

Mrs Rushe referenced the Fair Employment Monitoring Return and outlined the amendments made to the Equality Scheme. The Committee Chair spoke of the comprehensive commentary provided on the Fair Employment Monitoring Return.

7.0 RESOURCE PLANNING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, CREATIVE AND LIFE SCIENCES FACULTY

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Resource Planning and Workforce Development in the Built Environment, Creative and Life Sciences Faculty.

Mr John Moss, Head of Faculty (Built Environment, Creative & Life Sciences) joined the meeting for this item.

In presenting his report on resource planning and workforce development in the Built Environment, Creative & Life Sciences Faculty, Mr Moss began by acknowledging the commitment and dedication of faculty staff to student welfare and progression during the Covid-19 pandemic. He then provided a breakdown of academic and business support staff within his faculty as well as an analysis of staff deployment throughout the year. He drew attention to the staff deployment rate greater than 100% and explained that additional teaching hours had been allocated to Associate Lecturers as a result of the requirement to split classes due to pandemic impacts.

Mr Moss commented on the broad range of Continuous Professional Development undertaken by staff in 2020/21 and noted in particular the completion of PGCE training by two staff and CIT training by five staff.

In reporting on faculty priorities, Mr Moss highlighted the preparations underway for the introduction of traineeships, the pilot in FE Advanced Technical Provision, the forthcoming commencement of two new apprenticeships, the transfer to the Erne Campus, the continued focus on sustainability and the ongoing work to secure funding for international mobilities.

In concluding his presentation, Mr Moss commented on the sectoral action short of strike by lecturing staff and the potential impact of this going forward.

In response to questions from members, Mr Moss commented on the specialist expertise provided by part-time lecturers, the additional pressures placed on staff due to the pandemic, the supports provided to staff, the sectoral difficulty in attracting staff due to low starting salaries relative to the private sector, the support provided to the faculty by the Centres for Excellence and the requirement for lecturers to undertake teacher training.

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

8.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT (CONTINUED)

8.1 Human Resources

8.1.1 Appointments

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.05

AGREED: that the appointments listed in paper 06.05 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

8.1.2 Staff Requests

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.05

With reference to the Staff Resource Report, Mrs Rushe took the Committee through each of the proposed new posts listed. She also sought approval for the recruitment of maternity leave cover for a Lecturer in Counselling.

AGREED: that the staff requests listed in paper 06.05 and that noted above be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

8.1.3 Resignations / Retirements

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.05

The resignations and retirements listed in paper 06.05 were noted by the Committee. With reference to the ill-health retirement, Mrs Rushe explained that support is being provided to the member of staff concerned.

8.1.4 Other Resourcing Issues

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.05

In response to a query from a member, Mrs Rushe provided details of the request for a reduction in teaching hours by a member of staff and detailed the extensive consultation and options appraisal undertaken to support the member of staff

concerned. It was suggested that the Flexible Working Policy would be an appropriate route for progression of this request.

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

8.1.5 Fixed Term Contracts

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 06.06

Mrs Rushe provided an overview of the fixed-term contract recommendations made in paper 06.06.

AGREED: that the fixed term contracts proposals detailed paper 06.06 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

8.2 Workforce Development

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 06.07

With reference to paper 06.07, Mrs Rushe apprised the meeting of the SMART Workplace Programme which aims to modernize working practices within the College. She explained that the programme has been informed by the recent Health & Wellbeing survey, the One Planet Living project and the Digital Strategy 2021-24 and detailed the consultations undertaken with staff and trade unions.

Members welcomed the SMART Workplace Programme and sought feedback on its outworkings as implementation progresses.

The meeting went into confidential session at this juncture.

9.0 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S PERFORMANCE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 Partially Completed Review of Committee's Performance in 2020/21.

With reference to paper 08, it was noted that the review had been partially completed by the Secretary to the Governing Body where a factual response was available. She then sought members' views on the self-assessment with the resulting review attached as Appendix A.

10.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2021/22

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 Schedule of Meetings 2021/22.

AGREED: acceptance of the proposed schedule of Staffing Committee meetings for 2021/22.

11.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

12.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 11 Outstanding Actions.

Mrs McCauley confirmed that policy summaries have been drafted for recently reviewed policies where appropriate.

A list of outstanding actions is provided in Appendix B.

13.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

No comments were made on the proceedings of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon.

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
30 JUNE 2021**

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OF STAFFING COMMITTEE 2020/21

		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 in September 2020 by the Committee and approved by the GB in November 2020.
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 September 2020 meeting.
5	Did the Committee cover all business listed in the programme of business?		✓	Annual Equality Progress Report deferred until Autumn 2021 due to change to submission date.
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?	✓		Noted expected loss of a number of members during next academic year.
Governing Body Key Performance Indicators				
10	Did attendance levels at Committee meetings average at least 65%?	✓		96%
11	Did Committee meetings generally last no more than two hours?		✓	Average 2.5 hours
Additional Comments				
12	Important to spend time discussing strategic matters.			

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
03/02/2021	6.3.1	Raising a Concern Champion to be invited to a forthcoming meeting to update the Committee on her work.
14/04/2021	10.0	Presentation from the Raising a Concern Champion deferred until the 2021/22 academic year.