

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a strategy meeting of the **Governing Body of South West College**
held on Thursday 11 December 2025 at 9:30 am
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

PRESENT:

Mrs Libby Armstrong
Mr Michael Barnett
Mrs Maureen Brunt
Dr Frances Campbell
Mr Tom Corr
Dr David Cutting
Mrs Maria Hackett
Mr Brian Ingram
Mrs Sandra Isherwood (*via MS Teams*)
Mr Ryan Kearney
Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive
Ms Anne McCleary
Mrs Gillian McDowell
Dr Nichola Melanaphy
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chairman (*items 1.0 – 4.0 only*)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Sam Dempster, Department of Education (*via MS Teams*) (*item 5.0 only*)
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mrs Sharon McGrath, Director of Corporate Services (*items 1.0 – 3.0 only*)
Mr Ciaran McManus, Director of Development & Support
Mr Padraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum
Professor Paul Moore, Ulster University and Future Screens NI (*items 4.0 - 6.0 only*)
Mrs Nicola Nugent, Executive Support Officer

APOLOGIES:

Dr Lynsey Quinn

1.0 CONTEXT

Dr O'Shiel began by welcoming all present to the Governing Body Strategy Meeting.

He commented on the success of the Higher Education graduation ceremonies held the previous day and paid tribute to all involved in delivering this event to recognise the achievements of students.

He went on to reflect on the external environment within which the College operates, commenting on the challenging financial climate at a Northern Ireland government level and noting the Governing Body's responsibility to manage the College within the parameters set by the Department for the Economy (DfE).

He reminded the meeting of the College's balanced budget and its good performance against College Development Plan targets and spoke of its strong base to commence implementation of the recently agreed 2025 – 2029 Strategic Plan.

He also commented on the intrinsic nature of Artificial Intelligence in society and of the need to exploit any associated opportunities arising.

2.0 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT COLLEGE POSITION

PRESENTED at the meeting and subsequently made available to all members:

- Paper 02 GB Strategy Meeting Management Presentation.

Ms McCartan began by reflecting on the outputs from previous Governing Body strategy meetings and spoke of the objectives for the meeting in hand of providing updates on the progress of the strategic projects endorsed by the Governing Body at its December 2024 Strategy Meeting; considering the development of a longer term vision for the College; and providing an opportunity for Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team engagement.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, she then provided an overview of the College's current position in terms of learner numbers, student performance, curricular provision, the impact of local demographics, student satisfaction, financial management, resourcing, employee relations and governance. She also made the meeting aware of DfE's recently published Artificial Intelligence Strategic Direction and outlined the work underway both within the College and through sectoral collaboration to ensure alignment with this direction.

Ms McCartan closed her report by reminding the meeting of the Governing Body's endorsement of strategic projects in the areas of special educational needs (SEN), concrete sustainability and advanced manufacturing and engineering sustainability and invited updates on these projects by the Director of Development & Support and the Director of Curriculum.

3.0 STRATEGIC PROJECTS

PRESENTED at the meeting and subsequently made available to all members:

- Paper 02 GB Strategy Meeting Management Presentation.

3.1 Strategic Industry Projects

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr McManus provided an overview of the proposed Concrete Sustainability Innovation Centre and the Mid Ulster Productivity Centre projects, highlighting the objectives, stakeholders, funding sources, inputs, outputs, timelines, challenges and governance arrangements in each case.

In response to questions from members, the meeting was apprised of the scale and impacts of the projects as well as of the support available to industry to support decarbonisation and productivity.

AGREED: endorsement of the further development of the Concrete Sustainability Innovation Centre and the Mid-Ulster Productivity Centre projects.

3.2 Special Educational Needs – Student Experience Project

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr McNamee updated the meeting on developments in relation to the Special Educational Needs – Student Experience (SEN-SE) Project. He reminded members of the drivers for the establishment of the project, outlined the vision for special educational needs provision within the College, reported on the initiatives underway and highlighted plans to build on initial successes to deliver a college-wide mentoring programme and provide practical projects for all learners.

Ms McCartan apprised the meeting of the increased focus on SEN within DfE including the establishment of a SEN Working Group and the commissioning of external evaluations of SEN provision within colleges.

AGREED: endorsement of the proposal to deliver a college-wide mentoring programme and provide practical projects for all learners.

A short break then followed during which photographs were taken to formally launch South West College's 2025 – 2029 Strategic plan.

Mrs McGrath withdrew from the meeting and Professor Moore joined the meeting at this juncture.

4.0 FUTURES DESIGN CONCEPT

PRESENTED at the meeting and subsequently made available to all members:

- Paper 04 Future Screens NI.

Professor Moore began with a self-introduction and went on to provide an overview of the background to and the work of Future Screens NI. He then introduced the World Building and Futures Design concepts, providing examples of past and current projects. Members discussed the benefits to the College of the implementation of such methods, particularly in the SEN field, and undertook to consider potential further partnerships with Future Screens NI.

Dr O'Shiel withdrew from the meeting during the above presentation and Mrs McDowell, Vice Chair of the Governing Body, took the Chair.

5.0 16 – 18 LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

PRESENTED at the meeting and subsequently made available to all members:

- Paper 05 Overview of Proposed 16 – 18 Legislative Change.

Mr Sam Dempster, joined the meeting for this item.

Mr Dempster took the meeting through the PowerPoint slides in paper 05 on the proposed legislative change to mandate the continued participation of young people in education or training until the age of 18. He outlined the purpose, scope, requirements, roles, enforcement framework and available support of the proposed legislation and summarised the feedback received in the public consultation undertaken.

In response to questions and comments from members, he detailed the proposed timeline for the enactment of the bill, confirmed that supporting regulations will be drafted thereafter, advised of cross-departmental collaboration to address duplication of provision for the 16-18 cohort, spoke of the concessions to be made in the regulations for vulnerable groups and reported that a number of consultations were undertaken, including one targeted at young people.

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

6.0 MEETING CLOSE

Mrs McDowell closed the meeting by thanking all present for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting concluded at 12:45 pm.

CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

CHAIRMAN

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicholas", written over a horizontal line.

DATE

04/02/2026