

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of an **Online** meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 03 June 2020 at 9.00 am

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 John Moss, Head of Built Environment, Creative and Life
Sciences Faculty (*Item 9.0 only*)
Ms Claire O'Donnell, Secretary to the Governing Body
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Governing Body Chair
Mrs Eimear Rushe, Head of HR

PRELIMINIARIES

At the outset the Chair explained that the meeting would be recorded for minute taking purposes and that this recording would be destroyed when the minutes had been agreed. She also advised that the scheduled meeting on 1 April 2020 had been suspended due to Covid-19.

1.0 APOLOGIES

No apologies were recorded.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No declarations were made under this heading.

3.0 SAFEGUARDING

No safeguarding issues were raised.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 29 January 2020

NOTED.

5.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.00 Management Update on Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 05.01 Framework for Covid-19 Recovery Plan

5.1 Centre for People & Workforce Development

The Chief Executive advised that the focus was now on Covid-19 recovery planning, with a lot of work being carried out internally while also trying to ensure linkages with other colleges and alignment with the Department's plan. He advised that three working groups had been established – Curriculum, People and Estates. The people working group was being led by the Head of Human Resources and Assistant Chief Executive for Industry Partnership and Centres for Excellence. The three areas this group would be looking at included (i) return to work guidance; (ii) a review and refocus of existing health and wellbeing supports and; (iii) the curriculum delivery model for 2020/21.

Following comments from the Chair, the Chief Executive advised that the University of Ulster had contingencies in place up until November 2021, but added that South West College would keep this under review. He also noted that preparations were underway for potential partial opening over the summer.

5.2 Review of College Management Structure

At the outset, the Chief Executive explained that he was seeking Staffing Committee advice on the Review of the College Management Structure. He noted that this review was scheduled to be carried out in June 2020. He also noted that the existing management structure had worked exceptionally well during the present crisis. He asked members to take into consideration that staff were heading into an intense period of planning and preparation over the next four months, that a huge amount of work was underway to get things operational for 2020/21 delivery and also that staff were aware that the review was scheduled to take place. He then sought advice on whether the review should go ahead or should be deferred. The Chief Executive further noted that the Assistant Chief Executive for Learner Experience and Digital Transformation was currently on secondment until August/September 2021. He explained that the remaining Assistant Chief Executive and three Heads of Faculty were sharing responsibility across this role which he noted was working very well. Finally, the Chief Executive explained that the College Development Plan would normally be agreed at this time of the year, but the Director of Further Education (on the recommendation of the six principals) had withdrawn the commissioning memo and was working on a slimmed down version which was not likely to be received before August 2020.

Members agreed that a review of the new structure should be carried out but not at this time. Mrs McGeary suggested that a pulse check on students and staff would help to determine the urgency of the review. Mr Skuce outlined concerns about staff resilience in the current Covid-19 situation. Dr O'Shiel suggested that students should remain the priority between now and September, whereafter a review of the management structure and any other business could be picked up.

AGREED: that consideration of the Whole College Review would be deferred until September 2020.

5.3 Collaborations

The Chief Executive advised that the new payroll service had been live and operational since 1 April 2020 with no significant issues to report, adding that an app would be rolled out in the coming months.

In relation to the STS Project, the Chief Executive advised that the Learner Management System (LMS) was well progressed, with a lot of strands operational. He noted that the Acting Manager of the Centre for Excellence (FE & Learner Management) represented the College on the Shared Service Project Board, but that the permanent postholder had now returned to work after a period of maternity leave and would be representing the College on this Board moving forward.

Mrs McCaffrey queried if the College would expect increased enrolments as people were at home and potentially looking for something to do. In response the Chief Executive advised that it was hard to judge but added that the College had submitted a bid for funding for additional online courses.

5.4 Impact and Resourcing of New Initiatives

The Chief Executive noted that the introduction of Traineeships had been deferred until September 2021, with the Training for Success Scheme to continue until then.

He also noted the requirement for ongoing planning and preparation for supporting staff moving forward, which he advised would be carried forward by the Covid-19 recovery people working group.

5.5 Student Experience

The Chief Executive outlined a number of aspects of student experience which were being addressed by the Whole College Covid-19 Recovery Plan. He noted that the induction and re-induction of students were critical pieces of work with Dr Cush adding that a lot of work was going on here, including work on the social aspect of induction.

The Chief Executive also advised that results from the recent ETI inspection had been very positive, although he noted that the publication of the report was currently on hold as two colleges were not inspected due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

In relation to staff resilience, Dr O'Shiel commented that it would be important to set out the context clearly when carrying out work around this to try to frame the situation in a positive light.

5.6 Staff Retention and Recruitment

The Chief Executive advised that the Transform to Deliver business case had recently stalled as the process got down to the last few critical areas of negotiation. He noted that the employers side were currently preparing for a conciliation process to be hosted by the Labour Relations Agency.

The Chief Executive then advised that while the terms and conditions of lecturing staff were traditionally less favourable than their comparable industry counterparts, no lecturer in the FE sector had been furloughed during the recent extended lockdown whereas thousands of skilled employees had been.

At the request of the Chief Executive, Mrs Rushe then outlined a new process for onboarding staff which was under development.

The Chief Executive then outlined the Framework for Covid-19 Recovery Planning (Paper 05.01). He noted that the oversight and advisory group terms of reference were currently with the Minister and that this group would set out the high level principles moving forward. The oversight and advisory group would include one representative from each college he advised, and would aim to align recovery plans.

The meeting went into confidential session at this juncture.

8.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 Management Report
- Paper 08.01 Health, Safety & Wellbeing Report
- Paper 08.02 CE Communication to all Staff 22/05/2020
- Paper 08.03 Summary of Weekly Health and Wellbeing Communication
- Paper 08.04 Commentary on the Colleges FEMR
- Paper 08.05 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 08.06 Fixed-term Contract Report
- Paper 08.07 Sickness Absence Report April 2020
- Paper 08.08 Digital Skills Staff Development Programme

Reporting by exception, Mrs Rushe, Head of Human Resources, took the Committee through the key elements of the Management Report focusing on the following papers and issues in particular.

8.1 Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Papers 08.01, 08.02 & 08.03

Mrs Rushe advised that the focus was very much around the recovery planning process, and outlined some of the work which was underway to prepare to reintroduce staff and students to the campuses safely. She explained that while the work had been divided among three sub-groups, the various plans would merge at a point in time and a whole College Plan would be presented to the Governing Body for consideration.

Mrs Rushe also assured members that the health and wellbeing of staff continued to be a very important priority for the College and she outlined the various initiatives underway at the moment.

8.2 Equality

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 08.04

Mrs Rushe advised that the new Equality Officer Catherine McCrory had launched a flyer on equality. All policies around Covid-19 have to be equality assessed she advised and as such Mrs McCrory sat on a number of the working groups to keep a firm eye on equality and diversity as the College progressed through this very challenging time. Mrs Rushe also advised that Mrs McCrory had completed the commentary on the College's Fair Employment Monitoring Return (Paper 08.04).

In response to a query from Mrs McCaffrey, Mrs Rushe advised that feedback on the wellbeing initiatives had been very good. Line managers were asked to raise at team meetings, where any issues could be identified and interventions agreed. She also advised that a health survey would issue to all staff in June 2020.

8.3 Human Resources

8.3.1 Resourcing

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Papers 08.05 & 08.06

Mrs Rushe pointed out that new posts were subject to funding and that the Lecturer in Games post was subject to sufficient enrolments in August 2020.

Mrs McCaffrey then queried if the recently advertised Marketing Manager post was advertised externally, as she noted that permission was now being sought to appoint to the post temporarily. Mrs Rushe explained that the external candidate appointed to this role would be on maternity leave until November 2021.

In relation to the Fixed Term Contracts Report (Paper 08.06), Mrs Rushe explained that the Centre for Excellence Manager had now returned after a period of maternity leave and that the employee covering this post would then revert back to her substantive role. Mrs Rushe explained that the postholder covering the Centre for Excellence Manager post had done an excellent job and she extended her appreciation to her for this. She also relayed the appreciation of this employee for the opportunity the post had presented her with.

In response to queries from Mr Skuce, Mrs Rushe explained that a contract extension was proposed for MIS Assistant until August 2021 as the current postholder was on maternity leave. She advised that the contract had been extended a number of times and she proposed tabling it for permanency when the substantive postholder returned from maternity leave.

Mrs Rushe advised that a number of learning mentor posts had been recommended for permanency. She then addressed queries from the Chair on the MIS Timetabling Coordinator post. Mr Skuce queried if there were additional staffing requirements for LMS. Mrs Rushe explained that flexibility would be required from staff as LMS was being implemented. The Chief Executive further advised that the College would be seeking efficiency and effectiveness from the new system, with no requirement for new posts to support its delivery.

Mrs Rushe finished by advising that she was seeking three intern extensions for the summer period.

AGREED: that the staff resource report proposals detailed in Paper 08.05 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body. (ii) that the fixed term contracts proposals detailed in Paper 08.06 be ratified by the Chair of the Governing Body on behalf of the Governing Body.

8.3.2 Performance Management

Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Paper 08.07

Mrs Rushe advised that May 2020 sickness absence details had been circulated. She noted that sickness absence in May 2020 was 1.28% as compared to 2.5% in April 2020. The Chair welcomed these statistics, noting that there had also been a year-on-year drop and queried if there was any particular reason for this. In response Mrs Rushe advised that line managers had been actively engaged with staff on long term absence and six staff had now returned to work. She also pointed out exceptionally supportive communication with staff on the part of management.

In response to a query from Mrs McCaffrey on absence figures in the Centres for Excellence, Mrs Rushe explained that figures were highest in the Centre for Excellence for Social Inclusion as these young people were particularly hard to reach and particularly hard to mentor. The complexity Covid-19 had added to this was significant she added. Mrs Rushe advised that management were aware of this and were working to address it.

8.3.3 Workforce Development

Ref: Management Report Section 3.3 and Paper 08.08

Mrs Rushe explained that the Leadership and Learning Programme, LLP5, had been launched on 11 May 2020 and rolled out remotely. Two workshops had taken place to date and engagement and feedback were both very positive she advised. She noted that the cost was around a quarter of what it would have been if carried out face-to-face.

Mrs Rushe also advised that a webinar and online courses brochure had been launched. She noted that various staff were engaged in upskilling activities through this initiative.

Mrs Rushe also outlined the Digital Skills programme which she noted was a big component of the support to staff and managers to enhance digital capacity going forward.

8.4 Other

Mrs Rushe advised that significant work was ongoing in relation to the continuation of working remotely and return to campus policy. Sectorally, the College had been asked to share this policy as a template for others she noted.

9.0 Built Environment, Creative and Life Sciences Faculty Update

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 BECLS Faculty Update

Mr John Moss, Head of Faculty, joined the meeting for this item.

Through his presentation Mr Moss outlined the structure of the Faculty, including the staffing complement and advising that they had almost 9,000 main stream students and 1,500 work based learning students. Register marking was currently at 84% he advised and student attendance was 90% which he noted was very good for the current remote working environment. He also outlined staff development activity in his Faculty. Mr Moss then provided detail of collaborative work being undertaken. He also reported three new top up honours degrees to be delivered in the Faculty. Mr Moss highlighted in particular the work of the Erne Academy to link industry and staff and students for a joined up education project aligned with One Planet Living Principles. Mr Moss finished by outlining Faculty priorities and associated support requirements, noting that staff had been surveyed in relation to remote working and a planned support programme was in place. In relation to recovery planning, he advised that a range of staff across the Faculty were involved in each of the three working groups.

Referring to an earlier paper, Mrs McCaffrey then queried the large number of part time lecturers in Creative Arts, asking if Mr Moss felt he had an appropriate balance of part time and associate lecturers. In response Mr Moss advised that this was currently under consideration explaining that community provision was one large consideration here. Mrs McCaffrey further queried if Mr Moss had any staffing concerns regarding virtual delivery. In response Mr Moss advised that the timetabling process had just commenced remotely and various models were being considered. Community provision would be looked at here. He further advised that he had no data to suggest that part time staff were more adversely impacted by remote delivery, but added that further survey responses were expected and support would be targeted where required.

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

10.0 REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

Ref: Paper 10.0

The Chair sought further comments on the partially completed review of Committee performance. No further comments were received.

Noted.

11.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Ref: Paper 11.0

The Chair drew members' attention to the proposed schedule of meetings for 2020/21, noting that meetings would be programmed to take place on campus unless social distancing restrictions remained in place in which case they would take place remotely using Teams.

Noted.

12.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

12.1 Authority for Chief Executive to make Summer appointments

Mrs Rushe sought approval for the Chief Executive to make appointments over the summer months.

AGREED

12.2 Bereavement

The Chief Executive advised that Mr Gabriel Keown's father had passed away recently and that a letter of sympathy would be issued.

Noted.

13.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Chair noted that the quarterly leavers report had been discussed. She also noted that the part time timetabling analysis document had been circulated.

Dr Cush advised that the meeting with Invest NI and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council had taken place the previous week. The College were submitting information to Invest NI and further meetings would take place to try to ensure a more balanced regional economy.

All outstanding actions, including those arising out of this meeting are detailed in the Summary of Outstanding Actions table attached at Appendix A.

12.0 EVALUATION OF MEETING

Members conveyed their satisfaction with the proceedings of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.17 am.

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
24 JUNE 2020.**

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
27/03/2019	13.2	Review of campus management arrangements to be undertaken twelve months after implementation – September 2020.
29/01/2020	8.3.1	Mid-point evaluation to be carried out on LLP and presented to the Staffing Committee
03/06/2020	5.2	Review of Management Structure to be considered in September 2020