

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**  
held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 9:00 am  
via Microsoft Teams

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**PRESENT:**

- Mr Brian Ingram
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood
- Ms Alana Jones Campbell, Committee Chair
- Ms Celine McCartan
- Ms Anne McCleary (*from item 4.0*)
- Mrs Gillian McDowell (*from item 4.0*)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Mrs Camilla James, Head of People & Culture
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mrs Sharon McGrath, Director of Corporate Services

### **1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Ms Jones Campbell, Committee Chair, welcomed all present to the meeting and requested that the three key objectives set by the Department for the Economy (DfE) for the Further Education (FE) sector, of increasing enrolments, reducing costs and enhancing quality, are kept in mind during the course of the meeting.

It was noted that no apologies had been received.

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

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

### **3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03                      Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 29 November 2023.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

***Ms McCleary and Mrs McDowell joined the meeting at this juncture.***

### **4.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04                      Strategic Update
- Paper 04.01                PPP Change Programme Evaluation Proposal
- Paper 04.02                Change Programme Evaluation Direct Award Contract Submission
- Paper 04.03                Leadership & Development Programme Overview.

## **4.1 Change Management**

### **4.1.1 External Evaluation of the Change Programme**

Ms McCartan outlined the steps taken to appoint Phillipson Performance Partners Limited to undertake an evaluation of the Change Programme, noting DfE's approval of the appointment, the familiarity of the lead consultant with the project and the value for money achieved.

### **4.1.2 Change Team**

Ms McCartan apprised the meeting of the proposal to transition the Change Team to a Culture & Engagement Working Group upon the expiry of its tenure in March 2024. Management commented on the value of the Change Team in seeking feedback on a range of matters and members reflected on the assurance received through the commitment and achievements of the team and by its transition to a Culture & Engagement Working Group.

In response to a comment on the importance of inclusivity in the membership of the Change Team, Ms McCartan affirmed her satisfaction that the team is representative of the staff body and advised that membership nominations will be sought from Trade Unions upon finalization of the terms of reference for the proposed Culture & Engagement Working Group.

### **4.1.3 Management Structure**

Ms McCartan explained that internal appointments to positions within the realigned management structure had necessitated further recruitment exercises to backfill vacated positions. She went on to advise that the Reform to Save Scheme presents an opportunity to streamline the management structure of curriculum departments, referenced the optimal structure illustrated in paper 04, highlighted the need for consultation on this proposal, and noted that new and emerging demands may necessitate further amendments to the structure.

Mrs McGrath, supported by Mrs James, updated the meeting on the progress of the assessment of applications for voluntary redundancy under the Reform to Save Scheme, outlining the criteria applied and commenting on the need to ensure the continued availability of required skills in each curricular area. It was also noted that the availability of skills has been listed as a risk on the Corporate Risk Register.

Members welcomed the promotion of skilled and experienced staff to management positions and spoke of the need to continue to work through the process of implementing the management structure in a methodical manner.

### **4.1.4 Leadership Development Programme**

Ms McCartan informed the meeting of the commencement of the delivery of the College's bespoke leadership development programme to 75 staff, including 30 aspiring leaders, and undertook to update the Committee on the progress of the programme over its duration.

### **4.1.5 Communications**

Ms McCartan confirmed the continued publication of monthly e-briefings to staff to provide information on the matters discussed at Management Team meetings and advised of plans to deliver information sessions on the campuses in March 2024. Members welcomed the reported ongoing focus on communications at all levels.

## **4.2 Implementation of the People Plan**

Mrs James reported on the progress of the implementation of the People Plan noting that 14 of the 36 objectives are now fully complete and 13 are partially complete. She commented on the continuous awareness raising of the College's values, of the implementation of the management structure approved by the Governing Body, of the work undertaken by the Change Team, of the establishment of the Leadership Development Programme and of the ongoing recruitment challenges in a number of curricular areas.

Members welcomed the substantial progress made in the implementation of the People Plan and acknowledged the efforts of the staff involved in this achievement.

## **5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Sickness Absence Statistics
- Paper 05.02 CEF Circular 2003/01 Non Teaching Pay Scales
- Paper 05.03 SWC Pay Scales for Non-Teaching Staff
- Paper 05.04 Circular 2024/02 Change to Employer Contribution Rates
- Paper 05.05 Circular 2024/03 Salary Bands for Member Contributions
- Paper 05.06 SWC Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 Non-Compliance Complaints Policy
- Paper 05.07 Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy
- Paper 05.08 Fixed Term Contracts Policy
- Paper 05.09 Access NI Policy Statement.

## **5.1 Absence Management**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 05.01*

Mrs James, supported by Ms McCartan, highlighted the marginal improvement in the days lost due to sickness absence compared with 2022/23, reported on the ongoing focus by management and the HR Team on this area and commented on the decrease in absences due to work-related stress as well as the occurrences of long-term absences due to medical conditions. Acknowledging the improvements evidenced, the Committee Chair commented on the value of the focus placed on sickness absence.

In response to a query from a member, the meeting was made aware of the challenges faced by the sector in relation to access to Occupational Health Services.

## **5.2 Equality**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.0*

Mrs James commented on the embedding of equality and diversity in all college activities, advised of the delivery of an equality and diversity induction to all new staff and outlined the equality related initiatives undertaken in the year to date.

## **5.3 Pay Matters**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Papers 05.02, 05.03, 05.04 & 05.05*

Mrs James informed the meeting of the successful applications by 18 eligible lecturers for threshold payments, of the updated pay scales for non-teaching staff and of the increased employer contribution rate to the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme.

In response to a query from a member on the impact on morale amongst staff of the pay increases for non-teaching staff, management reminded the meeting of the contractual commitment for support staff pay awards and the ongoing dispute in relation to lecturers' pay, reported that no adverse reaction had been received from academic staff locally and noted the potential for loss of academic staff to support roles as well as the positive impact of the recently agreed increased minimum starting salary for academic staff.

#### 5.4 **Workforce Planning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.0*

Mrs James referenced the current factors to be considered in workforce planning as listed in the Management Report.

#### 5.5 **Policy Reviews**

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Papers 05.06, 05.07, 05.08 & 05.09*

Mrs James informed the Committee of plans to introduce a more structured and consultative approach to the review of policies going forward and went on to provide an overview of the amendments made to the Section 75 Non-Compliance Complaints Policy, the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy and the Access NI Policy Statement. She also referenced the Fixed Term Contracts Policy presented in paper 05.08 and advised of its draft status pending trade union consultation.

With reference to the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy, members noted the absence of specific references to vaping within as well as the incongruity concerning the College's reported zero tolerance approach to alcohol and its alcohol service within its licensed restaurants.

It was also suggested that the Access NI Policy Statement is amended to highlight the responsibility of staff members to declare any criminal convictions received following appointment and to undertake an updated Access NI check if required by the College.

It was agreed that a further review of the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy and the Access NI Policy Statement is undertaken by Management to consider the comments above and that the revised policies are circulated to members with a view to recommending them to the Governing Body for approval at its April 2024 meeting.

**ACTION: that a further review of the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy and the Access NI Policy Statement is undertaken by Management to consider the suggestions made above and that the revised policies are circulated to members with a view to recommending them to the Governing Body for approval at its April 2024 meeting.**

**AGREED: that the Section 75 Non-Compliance Complaints Policy is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.**

#### 5.6 **Other**

*Ref: Management Report Section 6.0*

Mrs James referenced the information provided in the Management Report on the planned Connect & Plan Event for support staff, the annual leave carry over arrangements and the Leadership Development Programme. She also extended her thanks to the Committee Chair for her input into the introductory sessions of the Leadership Development Programme.

**5.7 Update on Outstanding Actions**

*Ref: Management Report section 7.0 and Paper 06*

The updates provided in the Management Report on the progress of the implementation of the actions arising from the previous meeting were noted by the Committee.

**6.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions

A revised list of actions is contained within Appendix A.

**7.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.


**8.0 REFLECTION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEETING**

Members commented on their satisfaction with the pace and content of the meeting.

*The meeting went into confidential session.*

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11 APRIL 2024**

CHAIRPERSON



DATE 11/04/2024

## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	04/10/2023	5.3	Mrs James to include information on recruitment panel training in the 2023/24 Equality Progress Report.
2	04/10/2023	5.3	Mrs James to consider undertaking an environmental screening exercise on support for staff and students with a neurodisability.
3	21/02/2024	5.2.1	Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy and Access NI Policy Statement to be further reviewed to consider the comments outlined and circulated to members with a view to recommending them to the Governing Body for approval at its April 2024 meeting.