

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 3 December 2025 at 9:00 am
via Microsoft Teams

- PRESENT:** Mrs Libby Armstrong, Committee Chair
Dr David Cutting
Mr Brian Ingram
Ms Anne McCleary (*Items 1.0 to 6.0 only*)
Mrs Gillian McDowell
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs Camilla James, Head of People & Culture
Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mrs Sharon McGrath, Director of Corporate Services
- APOLOGIES:** Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive

1.0 **APOLOGIES**

An apology was tendered on behalf of Ms McCartan.

2.0 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

Mrs Armstrong declared her position as a board member of the Labour Relations Agency and a panel member of the Fair Employment and Industrial Tribunals NI.

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

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 1 October 2025.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4.0 **KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01 Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.02 Management Update on Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.03 Culture & Engagement Team 2024/25 Annual Report & Self Evaluation
- Paper 04.04 2025/26 Employee Engagement Plan
- Paper 04.05 Analysis Report of October 2025 Pulse Survey.

4.1 **Culture & Engagement**

With reference to paper 04.03, Mrs McGrath acknowledged the work done by the Culture & Engagement Team in 2024/25 and highlighted the impact, challenges and lessons learned as well as the team's 2025/26 priorities. She commented on the positive shift in culture evidenced and noted the work to be done in achieving consistent engagement, referencing the 2025/26 Employee Engagement Plan and the Analysis Report of the October 2025 Pulse Survey.

Members commended the progress made in culture and engagement

4.2 Staff Recruitment & Retention

Mrs McGrath advised of the continued staff recruitment challenges faced by the College and the Further Education (FE) sector as a whole, noting the resourcing pressures resulting from the high proportion of unsuccessful recruitment exercises and adding that a sectoral campaign to market FE career opportunities is under consideration.

In response to questions from members, Mrs James spoke of the workload pressure created by the simultaneous commencement of a number of large scale externally funded projects, noted the anticipated reduced level of recruitment in the forthcoming period due to the ongoing steady state approach, confirmed that proof of essential qualifications is required prior to all appointments and explained that the proposal for non-requirement of Human Resources (HR) representation on recruitment and selection panels at lecturer and band 1-7 support staff level had been withdrawn.

The meeting also discussed the reasons given by resigning staff during exit interviews, noting the high prevalence staff moving to higher paid positions, and it was suggested that feedback is sought from staff on their reasons for remaining in the College's employment, which may inform future marketing campaigns.

4.3 People Plan

In providing an update on the implementation of the People Plan, Mrs McGrath explained that all but one objective has been achieved or progressed and that work remains outstanding on the development of a succession plan for critical roles. She went on to draw attention to the proposed workstreams and actions within the updated People Plan and sought members feedback on these proposals.

In response to questions and comments from members, Mrs McGrath, supported by Mrs James, then provided an overview of the Performance Appraisal process and spoke of the benefits derived from the re-establishment of this scheme; acknowledged the need for transparency in succession planning and noted the contribution of the 2024 Leadership Programme, the current Coaching for Growth Programme and other development opportunities in succession planning; advised of the value of the staff recognition initiatives; and accepted suggestions to gain a greater response rate to staff engagement and pulse surveys.

The Committee provided positive feedback on the proposed workstreams and actions within the updated People Plan and suggested that amendments may be required to ensure that implementation of the Plan is achievable within the timeframe.

4.4 Industrial Relations

Mrs McGrath provided an update on progress in relation to the sectoral review of lecturers' workload, the review of the industrial relations framework, policy review and consideration of issues related to pay parity with teachers in the school sector including engagements with staff, trade unions, the College Employers' Forum (CEF) and the Department for the Economy (DfE).

She also reported the awareness raised with the CEF on the sectoral challenge in relation to the recruitment and retention of Classroom Assistants and the potential alleviation of this pressure due to the implementation of the support staff pay award and other external factors.

5.0 **MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Health & Safety Report
- Paper 05.02 Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Paper 05.03 Recruitment & Selection Guide
- Paper 05.04 Flexi Scheme for Support Staff
- Paper 05.05 CEF Circular 2025/02 Non-Teaching Staff Pay Scale and Rates
- Paper 05.06 Equality Progress Report Feedback.

5.1 **Health & Safety Report**

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 05.01

Mrs James advised of the site visits undertaken by the College's new insurance provider, spoke of the improved rate of completion of corporate training modules and provided an overview of the accident statistics in 2025/26 to date.

In response to comments from members, Mrs McGrath advised of the minor nature of the accidents reported, outlined the accident recording procedure, undertook to consider formal documentation of near misses to inform mitigations and acknowledged the low volume of accidents in light of the quantity of staff and students and the nature of the activities undertaken.

5.2 **Policy Review**

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Papers 05.02 & 05.03

Mrs James highlighted the changes made to the Recruitment & Selection Policy and referenced the revised Recruitment & Selection Guide, updated to reflect current practice and feedback from the recent audit of Recruitment & Selection Processes.

In response to questions from members, Mrs James confirmed the reversion to a manual system for the management of the Flexi Time Scheme for Support Staff detailing the operational and financial motivations for this change and providing assurance on the effectiveness of the manual system.

AGREED: that the Recruitment & Selection Policy is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

5.3 **Other**

5.3.1 **Support Staff Pay award**

Ref: Management Report Section 4.1 and Paper 05.05

The Committee welcomed DfE's approval of the non-teaching staff pay award and its implementation in November 2025 payroll.

5.3.2 **Student Internship**

Ref: Management Report Section 4.2

The Committee welcomed the provision of 20 part-time internship opportunities for Higher Education (HE) students.

5.3.3 Coaching for Growth Programme

Ref: Management Report Section 4.3

Mrs James reported positive feedback on the Coaching for Growth Programme and explained that a workshop on the Well-Formed Outcome approach to coaching will be delivered at the February 2026 Curriculum Conference.

5.3.4 Equality Progress Report Feedback

Ref: Management Report Section 4.4 and Paper 05.06

Mrs James referenced the feedback received from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on the College's 2024/25 Section 75 Annual Progress Report.

5.3.5 Social and Wellbeing Activities

Ref: Management Report Section 4.5

Mrs James outlined the social and wellbeing activities undertaken in the reporting period as well as those planned.

6.0 **REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions

With respect to the College's sickness absence target of 2.75%, Mrs James reported on the outcome of investigations undertaken into sickness absence targets in the sector. Members then discussed the benefits and drawbacks of sickness absence benchmarking and targets, noted the College's comparatively low sickness absence rate and agreed to withdraw the College's sickness absence target in favour of sectoral benchmarking.

AGREED: to withdraw the College's sickness absence target and to monitor the College's sickness absence rate against sectoral benchmarks.

Ms McCleary withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

7.0 **ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

8.0 **REFLECTION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEETING**

Members commented favourably on the proceedings of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 10.20 am.

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

GB CHAIRPERSON



DATE 04/02/2026