

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**  
held on Wednesday 4 October 2023 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

**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**

The Committee Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. It was noted that no apologies had been received.

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

Mrs James highlighted references in section 1.3 of the Confidential Management Report and section 2 of the Staff Resource Report which were relevant to her position and undertook to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of these items if necessary.

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

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03                      Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 31 May 2023.

There were no matters arising.

### **4.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01                  Change Program Update
- Paper 04.02                  Update on Management Realignment Process.

Ms McCartan apprised the Committee of a meeting held with the Department for the Economy (DfE) on the College's Change Program and, with reference to paper 04.01, outlined the updates provided in relation to the Strategic Improvement Plan, the embedding of the College's revised vision, mission and values, the implementation of the management realignment, the development of the People Plan and the actions taken to address the limited assurance rating awarded for 2021/22. She reported DfE's satisfaction with the progress of the Change Program and outlined the options discussed in relation to seeking external assurance on its effectiveness. She also confirmed DfE's

allocation of £81k to support the Change Program in 2023/24 enabling the delivery of a Leadership Development Program to be launched in December 2023.

***Ms McCleary joined the meeting at this juncture.***

Ms McCartan went on to report on the Senior Management Team's continuing focus on enhancing communications. She also commented on the initiatives undertaken to improve culture noting the continued effort required in this regard. She reflected on the challenge of culture development, informing the meeting of the receipt of an anonymous letter alleging nepotism as well as adverse local press coverage referencing lecturers' strike action and the proposed Voluntary Severance Scheme.

Ms McCartan also referenced the report contained within paper 04.02 providing a summary of the management realignment process and the appointments made therein.

Members welcomed the additional funding committed to support the Change Program, suggested that a modified gateway review may be considered in seeking external assurance on its effectiveness and described the reported developments in relation to the College's culture as disappointing.

## **5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 2022/23 Sickness Absence Report
- Paper 05.02 2022/23 Equality Progress Report
- Paper 05.03 Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy
- Paper 05.04 Employee Standards and Ethical Practice Policy
- Paper 05.05 Number of Academic Staff on Strike
- Paper 05.06 SWC Pay Scales for FE Lecturers
- Paper 05.07 Communications regarding Voluntary Severance Scheme
- Paper 05.08 NILGOSC Employer Annual Update Form.

### **5.1 Workforce Development**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0*

Mrs James reported on the co-design of the Leadership Development Programme mentioned earlier in the meeting as well as the delivery of coaching support for senior staff transitioning to new roles. She also apprised the Committee of the refreshed approach adopted to workforce development to align development opportunities with priority needs.

Members commented on the importance of leadership training and welcomed the strategic approach adopted to workforce development.

### **5.2 Absence Management**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 05.01*

With reference to paper 05.01, Mrs James highlighted the above target sickness absence rate in 2022/23, adding that the majority of days lost are attributable to long-term absences. She also advised of the training provided to managers on the Absence Management Toolkit and of the reminder communications issued to staff on Absence Management Procedures.

Ms McCartan then made the meeting aware of the different contractual entitlements of academic and business support staff regarding sick pay, of the need for sectoral modernisation of policy in this regard, of the commitment to support staff with genuine medical conditions and of the need to consider the capability to discharge contract obligations in the event of persistent repeated absences in a small number of cases.

In response to questions and comments from members, management commented on sectoral frustrations in relation to Occupational Health and undertook to consider aligning welfare meetings with the receipt of Occupational Health reports and to review policy in relation to the frequency of communication with staff on sick leave.

### **5.3 Equality**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.02*

Mrs James confirmed the appointment of a HR & Equality Officer as well as the submission of the 2022/23 Equality Progress Report to the Equality Commission.

At the suggestion of a member, Mrs James undertook to include information on recruitment panel training in the 2023/24 Equality Progress Report and to consider undertaking an environmental screening exercise on support for staff and students with a neurodisability.

### **5.4 Policy Reviews**

*Ref: Management Report Sections 4.1.1 & 4.1.2 and Papers 05.03 & 05.04*

At the suggestion of a member, Mrs James undertook to strengthen the College's zero tolerance approach to alcohol and drugs within the Employee Standards & Ethical Practice Policy.

**AGREED: that the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy and the Employee Standards Policy are recommended to the Governing Body for approval, subject to the amendment above.**

### **5.5 Industrial Action**

*Ref: Management Report section 4.2 and Paper 05.05*

With reference to paper 05.05, Mrs James apprised the Committee of the number of lecturers involved in the discontinuous strike action taken by the University & College Union (UCU) and commented on the associated continued risk posed to student delivery and College operations.

Ms McCartan then updated members on the most recent Lecturers' Negotiating Committee meeting. She outlined generic pay and conditions requests from the Trade Unions and advised that written clarification of the request is awaited. She explained that she understood a 5% maximum pay lift would be available under the NI civil service 2023/24 pay remit and that transformation would be required to support a business case for a request for a greater pay increase. She apprised the meeting of the 2019/20 negotiations to transform and modernise the pay and conditions of academic staff which, she understood, had broken down and was rejected by Trade Unions without a vote of members at that time, and undertook to circulate background information on this.

## 5.6 Further Education Lecturers' Pay

*Ref: Management Report section 4.3 and Paper 05.06*

Mrs James referenced paper 04.06 containing the current lecturers' pay scales. She explained that past experience can be considered in determining lecturers' starting salary on request, and in response to comments from members, undertook to review the process for determining starting salary.

## 5.7 Voluntary Severance Scheme

*Ref: Management Report section 4.4 and Paper 05.07*

Mrs James reminded members of DfE's offer of funding for a voluntary severance scheme to assist with cost reduction in progressing towards financial sustainability and noted that whilst the resourcing implications for South West College are still unknown relevant planning is being undertaken by Management.

Ms McCartan commented on the relative inexperience of the Human Resources team in administering such a scheme and requested approval to procure specialist support in this regard in order to mitigate the risk posed.

**AGREED: approval of the proposal to procure specialist support to administer the Voluntary Severance Scheme.**

## 5.8 NILGOSC Triennial Covenant Submission

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.5 and Paper 05.08*

The information provided on the NILGOSC Triennial Covenant Submission was noted by the Committee.

## 5.9 Culture & Wellbeing Initiatives

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.6*

Mrs James advised that funding is available under the Change Program to continue the delivery of culture and wellbeing activities.

## 6.0 ANNUAL REVIEW OF STAFFING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Staffing Committee Terms of Reference
- Paper 06.02 Amendments to Staffing Committee Terms of Reference.

The Secretary to the Governing Body reminded members of the comprehensive review undertaken of the Committee's Terms of Reference in January 2023 as well as of the Governing Body's delegation of authority to the Chief Executive to approve all routine resourcing matters going forward, and drew attention to the proposed amendment made to the Terms of Reference to facilitate the revised approval arrangements.

**AGREED: that the revised Staffing Committee Terms of Reference is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.**

**7.0 DRAFT 2023/24 STAFFING COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Proposed 2023/24 Staffing Committee Programme of Business.

**AGREED: acceptance of the proposed 2023/24 Programme of Business.**

**8.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

**9.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 List of Outstanding Actions

It was noted that all outstanding actions had been implemented.

A revised list of actions is contained within Appendix A.

*The meeting went into confidential session.*

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY  
15 NOVEMBER 2023**

**CHAIRMAN**



**DATE** 15/11/2023

## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	04/10/2023	5.2	Mrs James undertook to consider aligning welfare meetings with the receipt of Occupational Health reports.
2	04/10/2023	5.2	Mrs James undertook to review policy in relation to the frequency of communication with staff on sick leave.
3	04/10/2023	5.3	Mrs James to include information on recruitment panel training in the 2023/24 Equality Progress Report and to consider undertaking an environmental screening exercise on support for staff and students with a neurodisability.
4	04/10/2023	5.3	Mrs James to consider undertaking an environmental screening exercise on support for staff and students with a neurodisability.
5	04/10/2023	5.4	Mrs James to strengthen the College's zero tolerance approach to alcohol and drugs within the Employee Standards & Ethical Practice Policy.
6	04/10/2023	5.5	Ms McCartan to circulate the 2020 transformation proposal.
7	04/10/2023	5.6	Mrs James to review process for determining starting salary.