

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Governing Body** of **South West College**
held on Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 5:30 pm
via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT:

- Mr Peter Archdale
- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Deborah Brown
- Mrs Margaret Martin
- Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive)
- Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
- Mr Seamus McCaffrey
- Mrs Gillian McDowell
- Mrs Monica McGeary
- Mr Michael McGuckin
- Mrs Joanne Moore
- Mr Gerard O’Hanlon
- Mr Michael Skuce (Vice Chair)
- Miss Clara Jane Whitley

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mrs Tracey McElroy, Boardroom Apprentice

APOLOGIES:

- Dr Nicholas O’Shiel (Chairman)

1.0 PRELIMINARIES

Mr Skuce, Vice Chair of the Governing Body, welcomed all present and explained that he would preside over the meeting in the absence of Dr O’Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body, who was unavailable to attend.

2.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Dr O’Shiel.

3.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

4.0 MINUTES OF AND MATTERS ARISING FROM A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 13 January 2021.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr O’Hanlon, seconded by Mr McCaffrey, that the above minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

5.0 CHAIR’S BUSINESS

With reference to the Chair’s report at the previous meeting on the sectoral governor recruitment campaign, Mr Skuce advised that this recruitment would not be completed prior to the 2021/22 academic year as had been expected, and that relevant governors would be offered a further extension to their term of office until Autumn 2021. A discussion then took place on the impact of the simultaneous loss of five governors and on possible mitigations. It was suggested that information on the skills gaps resulting from the loss of these governors be provided to DfE to inform placement of suitable candidates and that a phased turnover of governors be proposed.

AGREED: that information on the skills gaps arising from the loss of the governors whose term of office ends this year be provided to DfE and that a phased turnover of governors be proposed.

6.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

Covid-19 – Mr McAlister explained that the NI Executive’s Pathway out of Restrictions document provides scope for some essential face to face teaching to resume. He then detailed the preparations underway to bring specific groups back to campus from 15th March 2021 on a phased basis to facilitate practical teaching and assessment. He advised that remote working and learning will continue until 9th April 2021 for all other staff and students and that this will be reviewed in due course. Mr McAlister went on to report that 12 new Covid-19 diagnoses had been confirmed in the College community since his last update to the Governing Body in January 2021 and, in response to a question from a governor, explained that face coverings are mandatory for all staff and students on campus, with exemptions to be agreed with Human Resources. It was also noted that only one case of transmission of the virus within the College has been reported.

College Development Plan 2021/22 – Mr McAlister explained that the college development planning and budget setting process for 2021/22 would mirror that of the 2020/21 year in light of the unpredictability of enrolments in the current environment. He outlined the timeframe of this process noting that indicative and final budget allocations will be made in late March and late October respectively and that College Development Plans will be required by mid-September. He added that

investment in digital skills, promotion of a culture of learning for all ages and reducing the skills imbalance had been mandated by DfE as areas to be included in the College Development Plan. Mr McAlister also advised that development of a new three-year sectoral Corporate Plan had been deferred to facilitate alignment with DfE's Skills Strategy, which is due to be published later in the year.

In response to a queries regarding the development of a culture of learning for all ages, Mr McAlister commented on the alignment of this aspiration with DfE's new Skills Strategy as well as with the College of the Future Reports. He clarified that it refers to skills development and progression opportunities at all ages and not to recreational courses. Members commented on the timeliness of this development in light of pandemic impacts on the economy as well as on the need for a joined up approach to achieve Programme for Government outcomes.

In response to a question on the resilience of staff in managing pandemic impacts, Mr McAlister acknowledged the challenges faced by many staff in moving to remote working and in balancing caring responsibilities with work commitments. It was noted that staff absence due to stress has occurred but that sickness absence levels have declined within the College and the sector. Members were also advised that a staff survey has been undertaken focusing on support for staff with caring responsibilities and that recommendations arising from this survey will be presented to the Staffing Committee for consideration.

7.0 ERNE CAMPUS PROJECT UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Erne Campus Report.

Erne Campus Planning for the Future Workshop – Mr McAlister informed the meeting that a productive workshop had been held in late February to consider the current and future needs of the Erne Campus. He listed the three areas of focus and explained that action plans are under development to implement the recommendations arising from the workshop.

Programme – Mr McAlister reported that the agreed completion date for the construction has passed and that penalties will be applied unless evidence can be provided by the IST to substantiate the delay. He added that decant from Fairview will take place in June 2021 and that curriculum delivery will commence in September 2021. Caution on leniency in completion date extensions was advised by a member.

Budget – Mr McAlister reminded governors that validation of the IST's claim for additional pandemic related costs is taking place through an open book assessment and that an allocation has been provided by DfE to cover such costs.

Mediation on Rock Excavation Compensation Event – Mr McAlister advised that mediation on the compensation event relating to rock excavation is scheduled to take place in mid-March. In response to a query, he provided an overview of the mediation process and explained that the matter will progress to Adjudication should it remain unresolved following mediation.

8.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION, QUALITY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee held on Wednesday 20 January 2021
- Paper 07.02 Student Union Constitution
- Paper 07.03 HEAR & Tutorial Policy.

In commencing her report of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 20 January 2021, the Committee Chair, Mrs Moore, provided an overview of discussions held on strategic matters including Covid-19 impacts and recovery, assessment arrangements and safeguarding.

She went on to refer to the Quality Assurance Report presented to the Committee and highlighted the assurances received on the continued focus on the student voice, on the maintenance of academic standards and on the assessment processes put in place to evidence student achievement in the 2020/21 academic year.

Mrs Moore explained that a presentation had also been received on the Performance and Strategic Plans of the Business Development Section, noting that updates had been provided on the full range of programmes and activities undertaken by the section and that KPIs had been overachieved in all areas. She also spoke of the assurance received on the ability to mitigate Brexit impacts.

Regarding the Management Report, Mrs Moore drew attention to the approval of three new Open University degrees, the continued focus on digital learning and the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Student Union Constitution and the HEAR & Tutorial Policy.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Moore, seconded by Mr Archdale, adoption of the minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting and the recommendation therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

9.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 3 February 2021
- Paper 08.02 Staff Resource Report
- Paper 08.03 Fixed Term Contracts Report.

Reporting on the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 3 February 2021, Mrs McDowell, Chair of the Staffing Committee, began by referring to the updates received on the Committee's key strategic issues. She highlighted the commencement of the review of the College's culture and structure, the ongoing work in the development of a new delivery model for FE, the preparations underway for the commencement of the new Traineeships Programme and the challenges experienced in recruiting staff to some specialized areas.

Mrs McDowell went on to provide an overview of the Management Report noting in particular the reinstatement of pandemic recovery planning working groups, the appointment of a Raising a Concern Champion, the reduction in sickness absence levels and the continuation of the appraisal scheme as well as workforce development activities.

With reference to the presentation received by the Committee on resource planning and workforce development in the Professional & Social Sciences Faculty, the Committee Chair commented on the reported reliance on Part-Time Lecturers in some curricular areas due to difficulties in attracting suitably qualified lecturers as well as on the need to recruit a resource for one of the newly approved Open University degree programmes.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McDowell, seconded by Mrs McGeary, adoption of the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

10.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on Wednesday 10 February 2021
- Paper 09.02 2019/20 Annual Report & Financial Statements
- Paper 09.03 Report to Those Charged With Governance
- Paper 09.04 Corporate Risk Register
- Paper 09.05 Social Media Policy.

Referring to the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on Wednesday 10 February 2021, Mrs McCaffrey, Committee Chair, advised that reports of internal audits of Cyber Security and Budgetary Control & Financial Management had been reviewed by members. She noted that satisfactory assurance ratings had been awarded following both audits and that further information has been requested in relation to data security as a result of the discussions held.

Mrs McCaffrey then explained that the 2019/20 Annual Report & Financial Statements had been finalized following a delay due to ambiguity over the accounting treatment of the Fairview campus and commended the Head of Finance and his staff for their work in concluding the matter. She drew attention to the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Annual Report & Financial Statements 2019/20 as well as to the Report to those Charged with Governance, noting that no recommendations have been made within.

With reference to the Corporate Risk Register, Mrs McCaffrey alerted the meeting to the high residual risk relating to the implementation of the new Learner Management System and listed the mitigations in place.

Mrs McCaffrey also provided an overview of the risk management reports received in relation to the Centres for Excellence and the Faculty of Built Environment, Creative & Life Sciences; highlighted the Committee's recommendation for approval of the Social Media Policy; and reported that audits have been mandated on the administration of Covid-19 related support initiatives.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded by Mrs Moore, adoption of the minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting and the recommendations therein including approval of the Annual Report & Financial Statements 2019/20. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

11.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2021

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 10.01 Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 24 February 2021
- Paper 10.02 Asset Management Policy.

Mr McCaffrey, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, explained that the Annual PFI Contracts Review meeting with Belfast Educational Services (BES) had taken place during the 24th February 2021 committee meeting and noted that information on discrepancies against the asset register had been requested from BES.

Mr McCaffrey advised that a comprehensive Management Report had been received at the meeting as well as updates on the Committee's Key Strategic Issues. He added that a presentation had been provided on the Financial Performance of the Automotive, Computing and Engineering Faculty and commented on the alignment of financial performance with quality curriculum delivery and student experience.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McCaffrey, seconded by Mr McGuckin, adoption of the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting and the recommendation therein. These minutes were subsequently digitally signed on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

12.0 DECLARATION OF HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED

No declarations were made.

13.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

With reference to the Social Media Policy, Miss Whitley, Student Governor, suggested that student involvement in the management of the College's social media platforms and the development of content for these platforms may enhance accessibility and student engagement. She also welcomed any progress in the establishment of a Student Union. At the suggestion of the Chief Executive, Miss Whitley agreed to liaise with the Marketing Manager to outline her suggestions on the College's social media platforms.

14.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 13 Outstanding Actions.

Mrs McCauley advised that preparations are underway to transition from Gateway to MS Teams for the storage of papers for Governing Body and committee meetings. It was noted that all items outstanding following the previous meeting have now been actioned.

15.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members noted their content with the proceedings of the meeting.

The Staff and Student Governors along with the Boardroom Apprentice withdrew from the meeting at this juncture. The meeting then went into confidential session and concluded at 7:25 pm.

CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 MAY 2021

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	10/03/2021	5.0	Information on the skills gap resulting from the loss of those governors whose term of office ends this year be provided to DfE. A phased turnover of governors be proposed to DfE.