

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Governing Body** of **South West College**
held on Wednesday 13 November 2019
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus, Circular Road, Dungannon

PRESENT:

- Mr Peter Archdale
- Mrs Joanne Lucas
- Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive)
- Mrs Patricia McCaffrey
- Mr Seamus McCaffrey (*Items 10.0 – 18.0 only*)
- Mrs Gillian McDowell
- Mrs Monica McGearry
- Mr Michael McGuckin
- Mrs Joanne Moore (*Items 10.0 – 17.0 only*)
- Mr Gerard O’Hanlon
- Dr Nicholas O’Shiel (Chair)
- Mr Michael Skuce

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Mr Gary Husband, Stirling University
- Ms Claire O’Donnell, Secretary to the Governing Body

10.0 APOLOGIES

Mrs Martin’s apologies were tendered for the remainder of the meeting.

11.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No declarations were made under this heading.

12.0 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 12 Minutes of 18 September 2019 Governing Body Meeting

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McGuckin, seconded by Mrs McCaffrey, adoption of the minutes of the Governing Body meeting and the recommendations therein. The minutes were subsequently signed by the Chair.

13.0 CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS

Commenting on the Grievance Policy, the Chair highlighted the very tight timelines involved. He asked if these timelines could be reviewed and brought back to the Governing Body. In response, Mrs Lucas advised that a lot of policies were currently being reviewed adding that the complaints policy was sectoral.

14.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

None.

20.0 EDUCATION, QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 20.01 Minutes of 23 October 2019 EQP Meeting
- Paper 20.02 Accuracy and Completeness of Public Information Policy
- Paper 20.03 HE Strategy 2017-2020
- Paper 20.04 EQP Committee Terms of Reference

In presenting her report of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 23 October 2019, Mrs Moore, Committee Chair, informed members that the Curriculum would be added as the third strategic issue for the Committee to consider moving forward. In relation to the strategic issues, she explained that she would be aiming to introduce three key performance indicators against each for the next meeting. She congratulated the Chief Executive on excellent enrolment figures in 2019/20, highlighting that 71 students were now enrolled on Open University programmes and 525 university places had now been allocated, just 13 short of target. She also paid tribute to the teaching staff who were still happy to be observed and pointed out that the external audit report had been very good. Referring to the Management Report, Mrs Moore informed members that the Marketing Strategy would be tabled for consideration at the March 2020 Education, Quality and Performance Meeting and that Dr Cush had been asked to look into a query on the women in STEM targets. She added that the Accuracy and Completeness of Public Information Policy had been recommended to the Governing Body for approval. In finishing, Mrs Moore apprised members of a presentation from Mr Aaron Black, Head of Business Development, on the performance and strategic plans of the Business Development Section. She explained that Mr Black had delivered a really good presentation and that the Business Development Section was performing very well.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Moore, seconded by Mr Archdale, adoption of the minutes of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee meeting and the recommendations therein, including the terms of reference for the Committee.

15.0 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 15.01 Minutes of 09 October 2019 F&GP Committee Meeting
- Paper 15.02 Finance and General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference

In presenting his report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 09 October 2019, Mr McCaffrey, Committee Chair, updated members of the status of the key strategic issues for the Committee. He apprised members of a clean audit of the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2018/19. He also apprised members of a £3.45m deficit for the year to 31 July 2019, pointing out that this was largely due to a very significant increase in pension obligations.

In response to queries from Mrs McGeary, the Chief Executive agreed to report on the insurance excess for cyber security and commented that the rise in pension costs in the current year would also be a challenge in future years. In response to further comments from Mrs McGeary and Mr Archdale, the Chief Executive confirmed that

some adjustments were required for optimum performance of the biomass system, adding that the new Erne Campus would use solar and oil.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McCaffrey, seconded by Mr McGuckin, adoption of the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting and the recommendations therein, including the revised terms of reference for the Committee.

16.0 PRESENTATION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 16 Annual Report and Financial Statements

The Chief Executive presented the Annual Report and Financial Statements for approval. He outlined a very positive report with no identified issues on the Erne Campus or the recent re-structuring, no bias in terms of accounting estimates, a review of contracts and direct awards, a materially consistent draft audit statement and no observations on the adequacy of records and information.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were duly signed by the Chair and Chief Executive.

17.0 UPDATE ON BUDGETS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 17.01 September 2019 Financial Reporting

The Chair welcomed the report.

Referencing the letter from the Permanent Secretary discussed earlier (item 5.0), the Chief Executive explained that there was no financial stability in the current climate. He explained that the figures presented were projections, based on trends, growth areas and briefings from the Department. As such he explained that they were heavily caveated.

The Chief Executive then explained that, in its allocation letter on 1 August 2019, the Department had allocated £23.5m under Part A and a further £2.5m under Part B. The Part B allocation was the one at risk. He further explained that South West College had 27% of the market in Northern Ireland for Higher Level Apprenticeships and that the Training for Success (TfS) element was being replaced by traineeships from September 2020.

Mr Archdale welcomed the information and suggested the College should challenge the removal of the TfS element on equality grounds. The Chief Executive explained that the biggest issue with all support funds was getting the money out and spent. He added that overlying pressures often prevented people from applying to these courses and that, as enrolment levels fell, so too did funding levels.

In relation to the '201920 Financial Performance' worksheet, the Chief Executive explained that this detailed a monthly management account summary for August and September 2019. He explained that income was slightly ahead and spend was slightly

behind based on projections. He assured members that he was comfortable with the position, adding that the projections allowed for some flexibility.

In relation to the Business Development Accounts Summary, the Chief Executive explained that expenditure was slightly behind projections, adding that SEUPB were very slow in releasing payments. He concluded by advising that pay and non-pay costs were behind in Virtual Services and that the Chair had requested further detail on the Virtual Services Project.

Mrs Moore exited the meeting at this juncture

In response to queries from Mr O’Hanlon, the Chief Executive clarified that Virtual Services did incur costs but that it was an embedded service across the College which would enhance provision.

In concluding the financial report, the Chief Executive advised that Open University was more cost-effective than University of Ulster, adding that we were heading into a major review of higher and further education. Mrs McGeary then queried the cost split and staff split between further and higher education, explaining that it would be useful information for the Board to know.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the financial information.

18.0 ERNE CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 18.01 Erne Campus Update

The Chair apprised members that, by Departmental direction, the Governing Body was asked to take assurance from those Governors who sat on the Project Board and from the Chief Executive that the Erne Project was within budget. Mr McGuckin explained this was for reasons of commercial interest. Mrs McCaffrey added that the Project Board met monthly, that these meetings were very focused and that all information discussed was at a point in time. She assured members that the College was on target to open the new facility on 6 August 2020.

Mr McCaffrey exited the meeting at this juncture.

Mr Archdale then queried how a successful fit out would be determined and pointed out that the risk register for the Erne Project was last reviewed by the Audit Committee six months ago. In response, the Chair clarified that the fit out strategy was being addressed as part of the Project Board work and he agreed to bring Mr Archdale’s questions to the Board.

19.0 STAFFING COMMITTEE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 19.01 Minutes of 02 October 2019 Staffing Committee Meeting
- Paper 19.02 Dignity at Work Policy
- Paper 19.03 Staffing Committee Terms of Reference

In presenting her report of the Staffing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 02 October 2019, Mrs McDowell, Committee Chair, informed members there were two main areas being scoped by the Committee – the apprenticeship policy and well-being hubs. A three year plan for the new Erne Campus would be presented to the December 2019 Staffing Committee Meeting and the Committee welcomed the €9m investment in electric vehicles and in particular the €2m project on software development which South West College would lead. Dr Cush explained that this was an Interreg funded project focusing on the installation of rapid charge points. The South West College role would be around software development, journey mapping, etc. In response to a query from Mr Archdale, the Chief Executive agreed to confirm the number of rapid charging points that would be available in the new Erne Campus.

Mrs McDowell then apprised members that overall sickness levels were falling although she noted an increase in long-term sickness absence. She explained that an audit of sickness absence was scheduled to be carried out. Mrs McDowell went on to explain that IIP reaccreditation was considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and that this would cost £17,100. She recommended ratification of the Dignity at Work Policy and apprised members of the very interesting presentation given by Mr Padraig McNamee, Head of Automotive, Computing and Engineering Faculty.

In response to a query from Mrs McCaffrey, the Chief Executive explained that it was a big year for ETI inspections. The scrutiny team in the Department had also requested additional inspections. However, in light of the ETI inspections, the Department had agreed to undertake ‘professional discussions’ instead.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McDowell, seconded by Mrs McGeary, adoption of the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting and the recommendations therein, including the revised terms of reference for the Committee.

21.0 AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 21.01 Minutes of 06 November 2019 Audit Committee Meeting
- Paper 21.02 Report to those Charged with Governance
- Paper 21.03 Terms of Reference for Internal Audit of Erne Campus
- Paper 21.04 Software Compliance Policy
- Paper 21.05 Internet and Email Usage and Monitoring Policy
- Paper 21.07 Backup Policy
- Paper 21.08 User Account Management Procedure
- Paper 21.09 2018/19 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

In presenting her report of the Audit Committee meeting held on Wednesday 06 November 2019, Mrs McCaffrey, Committee Chair, informed members that two minor recommendations had been made in the Report to those Charged with Governance. Three internal audits had been completed all with satisfactory assurances and terms of reference for the Erne Project review had been circulated. In relation to the Erne Project, Mrs McCaffrey assured members that it was on time and within budget. She welcomed the one page global costing summary and noted that a five year operational plan would now be presented to the Audit Committee. She apprised members that geo-location locks were now in place, meaning that access to the shared network drive was location limited to the UK and Ireland, except by prior arrangement. Mrs

McCaffrey recommended the Annual Report and Financial Statements for ratification, noting that these had both been signed under item 16.

In relation to PFI re-profiling, the Chief Executive explained that a solution had yet to be agreed, adding that NIFON were trying to identify a solution which would work across the four colleges with PFI.

Mrs McCaffrey finished her report by advising that the Software Compliance Policy, the Internet and Email Usage and Monitoring Policy and the ILT Acquisition and Disposal Policy were all recommended to the Governing Body for ratification. She further recommended that the Back Up Policy and User Account Management Policy become procedures. Finally Mrs McCaffrey outlined the details of the risk register updates given by the Faculty of Professional and Social Sciences and by Human Resources.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs McCaffrey, seconded by Mr Skuce, adoption of the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting and the recommendations therein, including the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report.

22.0 POLICY REVIEWS

None

23.0 DECLARATION OF ANY HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED

None

24.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

None

25.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

It was noted that a five year operational plan for the Erne Campus would be presented to the December 2019 Project Board Meeting and subsequently to the January 2020 Governing Body Meeting.

26.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Mr Archdale suggested that catering could be placed in the centre of the room.

CONFIRMED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 JANUARY 2020

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

