

SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Governing Body – Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st November 2019, 5.30pm, Bangor Campus

Item No	Item
1.	<p>Chair’s Business</p> <p>a) Attendance and Apologies</p> <p>Present: Mrs H Reid, Mr K Webb (Principal/CEO), Mr G Hetherington (Temporary Chair of the Governing Body), Mr A Corbett, Mr J Mackell Items 4-10 only, Prof A Woodside, Mrs K Fraser Items 6B-10 only, Mr N Bodger, Mr S Pollard</p> <p>Apologies: Mrs King</p> <p>In Attendance: Mrs. H McKee (Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support), Dr M Malone (Director of Curriculum & Information Services) Mrs. C Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body) Mrs. H Miller (Head of Quality Excellence and Development) Items 1-7 only</p> <p>In the Chair: Mrs. H Reid</p> <p>b) Declarations of Conflict of Interest</p> <p>No conflicts of interest were made in relation to the presented agenda items.</p> <p>c) Minutes from meeting 21st September 2019</p> <p>The Chair invited members to review the minutes from the previous meeting. The Secretary confirmed there had been no feedback received on the circulated minutes prior to the meeting. The committee agreed the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Proposer: Alan Woodside</p> <p>Seconder: Andrew Corbett</p> <p>d) Chairs Update</p>

	<p>The Chair highlighted there had been one response received on the Strategy document and Mr Pollard had provided some comments on tonight's business by email that had been shared with the executive team.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Matters arising:</p> <p>a) Action Points from meeting 21st September 2019</p> <p>The Chair asked members to note that all actions had been completed or were addressed on the meeting's agenda.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>a) Annual quality assessment return from accountable officers on behalf of governing bodies as part of the quality assessment process for 2019/20-Letter from DfE 051119</p> <p>The committee noted that the letter and agreed that it would be reviewed and approved for signing by the Principal when the committee had reviewed the information presented under item 7. The Chair highlighted that it is a key governance document in terms of the committee's role in overseeing and delivery the curriculum.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Strategy 2030-For approval</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Chair's working group had recently reviewed the draft Strategy 2030 and it had then been circulated to all Governing Body members for review and comment ahead of this meeting. One response was received from Mr. Mackell and he had requested if the following points could be considered and included in the Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mention of the unique student experience SERC has to offer • Highlight the environmental awareness work the College is involved in • Include the charity/social enterprises the College is driving • Emphasize the College is a part of the local Community by highlighting endeavors such as the Creche facility in the Newcastle Campus • Reference the Ballynahinch and Newcastle Campuses on the back cover with the four main campuses

The Director of Strategic Planning Quality and Support advised that the suggestions from Mr. Mackell had been incorporated into the document. The Chair thanked Mr. Mackell for a positive contribution to the overall Strategy.

The Principal advised members that the Department are developing a new skills strategy that will take the Sector beyond FE Means Success and so the SERC Strategy document should be a working document that can be developed in response to a new Departmental strategy and any other external influences. He went on to inform members that a group of representatives across the four nations are working on what the College of the future (2030) will look like and he had recently attended a consultation event.

At this juncture Mr. Mackell joined the meeting.

The Principal highlighted two factors that need to be considered in order to have a clear definition of FE for 2030. Firstly, there needs to be a clear image of what FE is for both in the minds of parents and students which will enable them to make a clear distinction between an academic route and a vocational pathway. To achieve this the FE Colleges with local industry, need to become an Awarding Body. Secondly, there needs to be a simplification of what the College does in terms of being a key economic driver. The Principal advised the Four Nations group is keen to move forward with this idea for 2030 and at an appropriate stage, it would be beneficial to include it in the SERC Strategic Plan.

The Chair thanked the Principal for the update and advised that the Strategy is very much a working document and if any developments arise the Strategy will be adapted to feed these in. The Chair reminded the committee that the document was drafted in response to the Governing Body Strategy Day and there is a clear audit trail on how the management team were directed to draft the document.

The Principal highlighted that the Chairs Working Group reviewed the document and had consented to include an aspiration that by 2030 SERC aspires to have Awarding Body status for Professional and Technical Qualifications. Members agreed that this was a positive inclusion in the Strategy and briefly discussed the benefits this will bring in terms of funding and provide clarity on career pathways.

During a brief discussion on Higher Level Apprentices (HLA's) the Principal advised that at level 4, 5 and 6 there are 1000 places across the Sector, and SERC currently have 219 of these. He noted comments that had been made on the perception of HLA's and he highlighted that there is still a role for those not in employment of all ages. He concluded by advising the committee that the College is performing strongly in areas where the College's offer is unique, and the numbers are continuing to grow.

Agreed: The committee agreed to recommend the Strategy 2030 to the Governing Body for adoption

Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Seconder: Andrew Corbett

5. Social Inclusion-For Information and Discussion

a) Strategic Management of SEN

The Chair began this item by reminding members that the Governing Body's role in SEN is strategic and the focus of this report is to ensure that the College is implementing relevant legislation and making reasonable adjustments, it is not to delve into the operational details of how it is implemented.

The Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support provided an over-view of the written report presented and advised the report outlines how the College addressed need in terms of SEN, how the College balances the need against what a parent may request and an overview of the funding strands.

Mr Pollard referred to the College's legal (financial obligations) and enquired if a legal obligation exists within the Department to resource this? The Director advised that as a delivery arm of the Department the College is legally obliged to be the provider of a service. The Principal confirmed that the primary onus is on the College to deliver regardless of what funding it receives from the Department to deliver the service.

The Temporary Chair highlighted that often this issue is viewed as an obligation which is very expensive especially as needs are continually growing and the College is tasked with providing a solution. He suggested that the committee could view it from the learner's perspective instead and by providing this service; learning opportunities are providing for all. The Chair agreed and noted that from a strategic point of view the current demand is however outweighing the funding.

In response to a question from the Chair the Director of Curriculum & Information Services advised that staff training remains a focus. He advised that staff are not expected to be experts in dealing with these highly complex issues, but they are expected to know how to refer a student on to the appropriate service. He noted the Chair's comments that staff will find it difficult to differentiate between the strands of SEN, and he advised that there are initiatives in place to drive healthier students which is about prevention in a lot of cases.

Mr Corbett highlighted that staff are extremely good at identifying students who require additional support and so this is going to continue to have an impact of the funding, however staff will continue this as they view it as part of daily delivery now. The Chair commended the staff and advised that there can be future legal implications for the College if a student's needs are not identified during their time with us.

Action Point: The committee requested a presentation on the SEN Student journey at their next meeting

b) SEN Review Terms of Reference

The Director of SPQ&S directed members to the terms of reference for the Review of FE Student Support which will be conducted by the Department which aims to be completed by December 2019. The Director advised the College has provided some data for the review and a meeting with DfE has been scheduled for late November.

The committee noted the quick turn around expected on the review and noted their concern about how much value the review will actually produce for student support.

c) Engagement Update

The Director of SPQ& presented the latest Engagement Update and provided members with a summary of the activity that has taken place since they last met. She highlighted that the College is working in partnership with the National Trust. She advised that NT are keen to develop the Mount Stewart estate in Newtownards which will involve students in both short term and long-term plans.

Mr. Mackell noted the uplift in the engagement figures as evidence of the work that has been ongoing and the geographical spread of the work, he commended those involved on the excellent work. The Chair echoed these comments and noted the great progress had been made in a short space of time.

Action Point: The committee requested some information on school engagement for the next report

6. College Development Plan- For information

a) College Development Plan 2019/20 Progress Report

The Director of SPQS directed members to the recent progress report and advised that at the request of DfE the format of the report had changed. She highlighted that the reporting format is focused on KPI's and is further away from the agreed Outcome Based Accountability method the Governing Body had agreed to adopt. She asked members to note it is likely the requested data included in the CDP Progress Report may change. The Director noted that DfE may request different categories in the report and the numbers in the report would change due to the data lift being undertaken on 30 November 2019. This will be confirmed when the commissioning note is received from DfE.

The Chair noted her own disappointment in the changed format and advised members the report is a working document and the commissioning note for the CDP Progress Reporting template has not been received yet.

b) Applications and Enrolments

The Director of Curriculum & Information Services presented the latest report on application and enrolment figures. He provided a brief summary of the report and highlighted that head count

had increased slightly and reminded members that one student can account for more than one enrolment. He asked members to note that the full time FE figures have performed well despite the target being reduced at the DfE Bilateral meeting, so this is a positive outcome.

Higher Education numbers are down across the Sector and the Director advised that the encouraging FE numbers may demonstrate a good recovery for HE in the next few years. The Principal confirmed the HE numbers across the sector are down by 267 and SERC is down by 19 of that total.

At this juncture Mrs. Fraser joined the meeting.

The Chair reminded members that there had been a discussion at the previous meeting regarding lower entry requirements into Ulster University compared to what is required for the foundation degree the College offers, she advised that this is a factor in the declining HE figures along with the demographics.

Mr. Corbett enquired if a new relationship had been established with Napier College, in response the Principal confirmed Napier would be take SERC HND students into the final year of their degree programme. Further options for support and development are currently being explored.

Action Point: The committee requested if the figures in the report can be presented to demonstrate a like for like comparison for the same period of the previous year

At this juncture the committee took a brief break (6.45pm)

The meeting resumed at 7.50pm

c) Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Quality Improvement Plan 2018/19 and Quality Improvement Plan 2019-20 for Further Education, Higher Education and Work Based Learning

The Head of Quality, Excellence & Development presented the report to the committee and advised that it is a regulatory document that provides assurance to the Governing Body that the College has met its provision. The Chair confirmed that members had an opportunity to review the document ahead of the meeting and no feedback had been received, the HoQED advised that there are no concerns to report.

Mr. Pollard noted it was a very comprehensive report that detailed strong process and the commitment to quality is evident. The Temporary Chair confirmed that he was content with the document.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to recommend the Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Quality Improvement Plan 2018/19 and Quality Improvement Plan 2019-20 for Further Education, Higher Education and Work Based Learning for adoption by the Governing Body

Proposer: John Mackell

Secunder: Gareth Hetherington

7. Higher Education-For Information

a) HE Provision

The Head of Quality, Excellence and Development presented a written paper detailing an overview of the context and issues facing Further Education Colleges in delivering Higher Education provision. The committee noted the challenges set out in the paper in delivering HE and briefly discussed the proposed sector review by DfE of HE in FE. In response to a question from the Chair the Head of QED advised that it is not clear whether a cost analysis will be conducted on awarding bodies as part of the review. Members noted that the awarding body structure is extremely complex and requested to have further information on the structure at the next meeting, the Temporary Chair advised that this will set the scene for the longer-term strategic provision to become an awarding body.

Action Point: The committee requested a presentation on the Awarding Body structure in the UK and the current provision used by the College

b) Review of HE in FE and level 4 & 5 provision-Letter from Deputy Secretary DfE 311019

The committee noted the correspondence.

c) HE Quality Assurance Statement

Agreed: The committee recommended the Governing Body approve the HE Quality Assurance Statement for signing by the Principal

	<p>Proposer: Steve Pollard</p> <p>Secunder: Andrew Corbett</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Policies Review Schedule</p> <p>a) Complaints and Compliments Policy</p> <p>The committee noted the minor changes to the policy.</p> <p>b) Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP</p> <p>Governors were asked to note the SOP as part of the wider SOP review undertaken by the Governing Body, this SOP has been identified as relevant to members.</p> <p>In response to a members question the Director of SPQS advised that the SOP is specific to SERC but is based on a Sector template, with a more robust approach.</p> <p>As safeguarding Governor Mrs. Fraser requested further information on how the Cause for Concern app tracks complaints and how staff are notified a concern has been logged. The Principal advised that all are tracked, acted on and appropriately managed. He advised that most are generally replied to within minutes and this can be at any time of day or out of working hours.</p> <p>Mrs. Fraser enquired if the app was the only way in which a cause for concern can be reported. The Director of SPQS advised that whilst staff are encouraged to use the app as a recommended route it can at times be reported through other routes, she highlighted there are a number of designated safeguarding officers for each campus who can report through the app if approached by students or staff. The Chair noted that it is important as the Safeguarding Governor that Mrs. Fraser has ensured the reporting process is robust and thanked her for her comments.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Items for Information</p> <p>a) Safeguarding, Care and Wellbeing Report</p> <p>The Director of SPQS advised members that this report was a revised version of the Cause for Concerns report, she provided an overview of the changes in the format and advised that the</p>

purpose is to bring more issues to the committee other than Cause for Concerns. The committee welcomed the new report and confirmed it was useful and easy to follow.

Mr. Pollard noted there had been increase in the number of bullying incidents and enquired if there was a particular reason for this. The Director advised that there is no clear pattern in the increase and that social media is having an impact on bullying which has been identified as a trend. She advised that in the Lisburn Campus there had been an incident in one class involving three students which has attributed to the higher numbers in Lisburn.

Mr. Mackell noted that the 109 incidents through cause for concern is still a low portion of the student population and that the common thread of mental health is symptomatic of society. The Director agreed and advised that the issues reported are becoming more complex. Mr. Mackell further commented that this demonstrates that staff are dealing with these issues appropriately and the framework is robust which is extremely positive however it is still sobering to review the figures presented on mental health.

The Chair thanked the Director for her report and welcomed the new format, she concluded by advising that whilst the College have a duty of care to students' staff are not mental health practitioners and so the committee will continue to monitor these issues.

10. Any other Business

The Chair advised the Secretary had identified a gap in the committee's term of reference in relation to their delegated responsibility to review and recommend the Strategy.

Action Point: The Secretary will revise the Terms of Reference to include a reference to the committee's role in reviewing and recommending the Strategy, this will be presented at the next meeting for approval

The Principal provided an update on Traineeships to the committee, during discussions the following points were noted:

- The Principal informed members he is a member of the Board at DfE that is reviewing the introduction of traineeships and the current position is that the Board is not in the position to confirm the implementation of the traineeships in September 2020 as the business case has not yet been approved by the Permanent Secretary or DoF. Therefore, the College is unsure if we can offer TFS to a new intake past 31st July 2020

- The Principal advised that it is expected a minimum of 1900 traineeships will be introduced across the Sector and there is a concern that if the College is unable to announce these places the targets may not be met.
- Members noted that there is also an issue offering a traineeship to a student over the age of 24, we cannot offer a traineeship to a student over the age of 24. This has been formally raised with the Department at a recent Board meeting, as these individuals over age 24 will have no educational route following the introduction of traineeship. The numbers have now been collated by the Chief Training and Contracts Officer and there are 5.3% of individuals over 24. The Principal confirmed he will write to the Department to provide these figures and enquire what curriculum areas the College can offer in traineeships; he will also advise that the Sector does not wish to be held account to an artificial target of 1900.
- Members were asked to note that replacement for Level 0 and 1 has not progressed as the Department have confirmed this will not be ready to roll out for September 2020 and an interim scheme will instead be put in place. The Chair commented that this is merely putting these students into a failure route again.
- The Principal advised that this is a major focus for the management team and he will keep the Governing Body updated as the business case progresses, he advised that there is a challenge if Colleges and the Department fail to fully understand traineeships, it needs to be evident they are not replacing TFS or FE.

Action Point: The Principal will share correspondence from Jim Wilkinson on traineeships with the committee

The Principal reminded members that at the recent Governing Body a discussion on separate legal companies took place where the Governing Body consented to progressing this with both DfE and DoF. He advised that the Department have responded asking for a business case to be submitted, he advised he was seeking views from the committee to write to the Department stating the Governing Body is content to proceed and to stress that this should be dealt with promptly. The committee members indicated they were agreeable to this suggestion.

	Date and time of next meeting: The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 4 th February 2020, 5,30pm, Lisburn Campus.

The meeting concluded at 7.43pm