

**SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

**Governing Body – Education Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 5.35pm, Lisburn Campus**

Item No	Item
1.	<p><b>Chair’s Business</b></p> <p><b>a) Attendance and Apologies</b></p> <p><b>Present:</b> Mrs H Reid, Mr K Webb (Principal/CEO), Mr G Hetherington (Temporary Chair of the Governing Body), Mr A Corbett, Mr J Mackell, Prof A Woodside, Mrs C King, Mrs K Fraser</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b> Mr N Bodger, Mr S Pollard</p> <p><b>In Attendance:</b> Mrs. H McKee (Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support), Mrs. C Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr. N Parfitt (Boardroom Apprentice)</p> <p><b>In the Chair:</b> Heather Reid</p> <p><b>b) Declarations of Conflict of Interest</b></p> <p>No conflicts of interest were made in relation to the presented agenda items.</p> <p><b>c) Minutes from meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019</b></p> <p>The Chair invited members to review the minutes from the previous meeting. The committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting and agreed they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Proposer: Gareth Hetherington</b></p> <p><b>Seconder: Andrew Corbett</b></p> <p><b>d) Chairs Update</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that the meeting of Chairs of Northern Ireland Further Education Curriculum, Quality and Engagement Committees in the 6 colleges had met on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at Belfast Met and she had been unable to attend. However, she was aware that no progress had been made as a terms of reference or a way forward could be agreed.</p>

	<p>The Chair advised members that at the recent Chair’s Working Group meeting a discussion took place to highlight some SOPs that are relevant or impact on Governing Body members will be presented to the GB via the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Governing Body Secretary will now review the other SOPs in the College alongside the CMT to identify all relevant SOPs. The Chair highlighted that while the Governing Body should not become involved in operational matters however, it is important that members are made aware of these particular SOPs and any identified for this committee will be presented at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>e) Annual Review of the Committee’s Terms of Reference</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that the Terms of Reference had been circulated in advance of the meeting and members had been asked to provide on any proposed changes they felt were necessary. The Secretary confirmed that no feedback had been received to propose any suggested amendments.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Agreed:</b> The committee agreed to recommend the Terms of Reference for adoption to the Governing Body</p> <p><b>Proposer:</b> Andrew Corbett</p> <p><b>Seconder:</b> Karen Fraser</p> </div>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising:</b></p> <p><b>a) Action Points from meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019</b></p> <p>The Chair asked members to note that all actions had been completed or were addressed on the meeting’s agenda. The Chair confirmed that all suggestions for the plan of work for 2019/20 had been incorporated into the agenda for this meeting or the agenda for the next meeting in November. She further advised members that the plan of work is fluid and if at any time during the year they have further suggestions for areas of interest to contact the Secretary or herself and all suggestions will be considered. Members were asked to note the agenda for the year will follow the format linking the presented items with the College Development Plan.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Social Inclusion-For Information and Discussion</b></p> <p><b>a. Special Educational Needs</b></p>

## **1. Introduction- Governance Responsibilities**

### **2. Overview of the SEN Provision**

The Chair advised members that Special Educational Needs had been discussed last year across the committees and it is crucial that this committee have a strategic overview and take assurance that those students with partial needs have been identified. The Chair reminded members that there are some issues with the new funding model which had been highlighted to the Governing Body in 2018/19, the Finance and General Purposes will be focusing on this angle of SEN whilst this committee will have oversight of the impact of delivery, the challenges the College is facing in implementing its statutory obligations in relation to SEN, the challenges in identification and diagnosis of need and how the College identifies access and recruitment needs to meet the demands of the service. The Chair concluded her introduction by reminding members that the committee must be mindful to remain in strategic in their overview if this area.

The Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support addressed the committee to provide an overview of the SEN provision within the College, during discussion the following points were noted:

- The Director began by advising members of the statutory and legal obligations the College must adhere to in providing support to students that are identified as having SEN. She gave a brief overview of the process and how students are asked for details of their needs when applying to the College and that these students are supported by Learning support from early May through the Summer to ensure that support mechanisms are in place when they begin at the College in September. This process and the support mechanisms are audited by the Department to ensure the College has fulfilled its statutory obligations.
- The Director then advised that those students who do not declare any SEN requirements during their application process are identified by staff and the Learning Support team are alerted to put support mechanisms in place. The committee were advised that plans are in place to streamline the Learning Support and Exams teams to ensure that all students identified with SEN are given the support mechanisms they are entitled to during exams.

- The Director highlighted the issues the College is facing in terms of funding the increasing demand for SEN, she advised that there are three different funding streams and there are challenges around FE students as previously funding would have been ring fenced for SEN but it is now part of core funding and not allocated based on student needs.
- Members were asked to note that currently the team is managing well by sharing resources and using more technologic support mechanisms. The Director highlighted that the College can only provide support if the request is reasonable and the legislation requires reasonable physical adjustments to be made. She detailed a case where the College had to decline the request because the request had been unreasonable and would have required significant changes to the campus.
- In response to a question from the Chair the Director confirmed that there has been an increase in the number of students presenting with cognitive, social and emotional disabilities which are not always obvious.
- The Chair reminded members that the committee's focus is looking at the delivery of these services and the challenges the College face to ensure they are delivered, she invited questions from members at this point.
- Professor Woodside highlighted that the College need to be proactive in this area and cost should not be a factor in in the approach to delivering this service, he also asked for confirmation of the compliance with GDPR rules now the students are adults and how sharing information with previous education providers works in terms of the new legislation.
- Mr. Mackell highlighted to members that the Audit committee are also reviewing the funding impact on the College as it is included in the strategic risk register and therefore as a number of layers of governance taking an oversight role in the process he has a good level of assurance that it is being managed effectively.
- In response to a query from Mr. Parfitt the Chair provided a detailed overview on how a disability is defined and how students are assessed to determine if they require additional support or not.
- In concluding this discussion, the Chair asked members to contact the Secretary in between meetings if they have any further questions or would like clarification on any other points relating to the SEN provision.

**Action Point:** The committee requested further information on cases where adjustments have not been made because they have not been deemed reasonable

**Action Point:** The committee requested confirmation on the GDPR implication of information sharing with SEN students

**Action Point:** The Director of SPQS will provide an update on funding and the impact on delivery at the next meeting

### **b. Building Resilience**

The Director of Strategic Planning Quality and Support presented the Student Wellbeing and Resilience Framework and gave an overview of the wide range of activities that take place across the College Campuses each year to support the student Wellbeing and to enhance student Resilience.

The Director highlighted that the Duke of Edinburgh scheme had been so successful within the College that a further 20 staff had been trained in August to support the scheme this year and an awards ceremony is being planned for November for students that participated in the scheme. Members were asked to note that part of this framework is to ensure that the peer mentoring scheme is aligned with the Student Unions activities so that a consistent message is given to students.

The Chair reminded members that resilience has been identified as a strategic priority for staff along with students and therefore the FGP committee will be reviewing different strategies to support staff. Mr Mackell commented that the student framework is a very positive endeavour and directly feeds into the issues highlighted to the committee in the Cause for Concerns report, in particular he noted that the activities around mental health and cervical smear tests is very topical.

**Action Point:** The committee asked that congratulations were passed onto Michelle Hickland for the work she has led on developing the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme in the College.

**c. Engagement Plan 2019/20**

The Director of SPQS presented the Engagement Plan to the committee and began by advising that whilst the work has been labour intensive the efforts have started to produce some excellent results. Members were directed to the figures in the report setting out the increased Restart and Access courses in place and asked to note the increase in areas such as Westwinds estate, Newtownards and Atlas Women’s Centre, Lisburn. The Director advised that although enrolment in the Westwinds estate had proved difficult to begin with; by delivering the course in the primary school, difficulties students faced coming into campus have been overcome and students will gradually be introduced to the campus so that if they graduate to the Access programme they will be familiar with the College.

The Chair noted that engaging with the economically inactive is a strategic priority for the College and this type of engagement directly feeds into it but she queried if it could be maintained because it was so labour intensive. The Principal advised that should be no effort spared in engaging with the economically inactive as it is extremely rewarding to see this group achieve and staff in the College are highly motivated to deliver these courses. He asked members to note that this group cannot be addressed by universities or schools and so the College is one of the only places to help them achieve the skills to gain employment.

The Temporary Chair commented that this scheme is one of the most important initiatives the College could pursue and queried if the College could engage with the community/voluntary sector to deliver a partnership. The Director advised that the College have already begun to explore this approach and partnerships are in place with Atlas Women’s Centre, Sure Start and some Men’s Sheds. She advised that these types of partnerships rely on good relationship building and those who are willing to be innovative.

**d. Newcastle Creche Proposal**

The Director of SPQS advised members that SERC has been successful in securing financial assistance of up to £99,373.00 from the Coastal Communities Fund to implement a creche in the Newcastle Campus. She directed members to the written report provided that sets out the full synopsis and business case used in the bid, she highlighted that as part of the bid the team mapped out creche facilities in the area which determined an undersupply in the area and the local bus timetables would not enable students to attend class and pick their children up after because of a change in routes.

The Director advised that the funding will cover the capital build costs and fund staff for the first year, it is anticipated that there will be high demand for the facilities and therefore the creche should be self-sustaining after the first year.

In response to questions from members the Director confirmed that the creche will have 26 children for a session with 4 full time members of staff which will be further supplemented with Early Years students on placements. She advised that the creche places will be allocated on a first come first served basis to students enrolling for courses in the College and confirmation from the local Jobs & Benefit office has been received that those students' in receipt of benefits will not be affected. This is crucial in supporting people back into education as it has been a barrier in the past

The Principal advised that there needs to be a level of discretion applied in terms of attendance and highlighted that the main purpose is to facilitate people achieving and getting back to education.

The Chair congratulated the Director and the team on a successful bid and noted that it links directly into the Colleges strategic priority to support the economically inactive and to support the local community.

**4. 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 gave an overview on some of the actions, she advised that the enrolment action had been flagged red at the time this report was produced but the numbers had since increased and reminded members that this is a fluid report and is a snapshot at the time.

In response to a question from the Chair the Principal gave an overview of the International work that is ongoing and being developed. He provided an update on funding opportunities that are being pursued to continue this work and Lahore Garrison university are keen to progress a number of areas with the College.

Mr. Corbett noted that in terms of an ETI inspection this is an excellent report card.

**b) Applications and Enrolments**

The Principal presented the enclosed report on behalf of the Director of Curriculum and Information Services and began by providing members with a brief overview of the current enrolment figures and the factors affecting HE enrolment figures.

Members noted that the figures for Further Education have performed well and in excess of the target set out in the CDP. Where the College has a unique offering such as TFS or apprenticeships the figures have performed well and the overall head count should exceed last years but the Higher Education numbers have not met target.

During a brief discussion the Principal highlighted that universities have decreased their own entry requirements which are now lower than the foundation degrees the College is offering. He advised that the Sector has been impacted by HE this year and he has met with Departmental officials to discuss the challenges faced in maintaining HE in FE. He further highlighted that the College is unable to offer foundation degrees from universities in Great Britain because of an



outdated policy that had been put in place in 2008 to try and deter students from leaving Northern Ireland.

The Temporary Chair enquired if there is scope for the Sector to create a case that demonstrates a strong case for change and recognizes that policy changes cannot be implemented until a Minister is in place but if a case was approved pending a Minister's decision it would allow the Colleges to be placed in a stronger position. The Principal noted this suggestion and advised the committee that he will be pursuing the matter with the Department to try and reach an agreeable position for the Sector.

**c) Interim update on Achievements Summer 2019**

Members were asked to note the achievement report provided and noted the FELS returns are not fully complete as of 17 September 2019 and will be complete by mid-October to be returned to DFE.

The College is on course to equal the 2017/18 overall success rate of 84% which was the highest in the sector (according to DFE benchmarking data).

The Chair noted that there are no concerns to report to Governors on retention, achievement and success.

**5. Higher Education-For Information**

**a. HE Achievements**

Members noted the report setting out the Higher Education Achievements.

**b. Growing Higher Education**

The Principal began by advising the committee that Higher-Level Apprenticeship regulations have been changed in some cases where the industry is trying to professionalize itself. There are no foundation degrees that would cover this and so the College is working with the Department

	<p>to develop this, but it may take some time. There are no degrees for industries such as gas or motor vehicle and the College is working with awarding bodies on this as some vocational and technical courses may never progress to a degree stage.</p> <p>The Director of SPQS advised that a paper on growing HE will be presented to the committee at their next meeting which will provide further details on these issues.</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Policies Review Schedule</b></p> <p><b>a) SENDO Policy</b></p> <p>The Director of SPQS presented the policy for approval. She advised that the changes set out the Colleges role in SEN and the definition of SEN.</p> <div data-bbox="209 898 1477 1133" style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Agreed:</b> Members agreed to recommend the SENDO policy to the Governing Body for adoption</p> <p><b>Proposer:</b> Gareth Hetherington</p> <p><b>Seconder:</b> Karen Fraser</p> </div> <p><b>b) Student and Trainee Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management Policy</b></p> <p>Members noted the policy had been reviewed with no changes proposed.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Items for Information</b></p> <p><b>a) Cause for Concerns</b></p> <p>The Director of SPQ&amp;S presented the Cause for Concerns written report, she highlighted the increase in mental health referrals and 358 academic and support staff completed training during August 2019 to assist them to develop an understanding of the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma on children and adults throughout their lives. She reported the feedback from staff was positive and there is an appetite for more in depth training.</p>

<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other Business</b></p> <p><b>Strategy 2025</b></p> <p>The Chair advised members that the Strategy document will be presented to the Governing Body in November and she would intend for the committee to review it after its approval to ensure the committee is meeting its strategic priorities.</p>
	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting:</b></p> <p>The Chair advised she had a request to change the meeting date and asked members if they had any objections to polling for a new date.</p> <div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <p><b>Action Point:</b> The Secretary will poll for a suitable date in November and confirm by 30<sup>th</sup> September</p> </div>

**The meeting concluded at 7.51pm**