



## SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)

held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 at 17:00, in Meeting Room D Floor, Lisburn Campus and via Microsoft Teams Videoconference

### 1. Chairs Business

#### a) Attendance and apologies

Present: Mr Ken Webb (Principal), Mr John Nugent (Chair of the Governing Body), Mr John Mackell, Mr Darren Stewart, Mrs Deborah O’Hare, Mr Samuel Hagen, Mrs Carolyn King, Mr Alan McCrum, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Derek Wilson, Mr Andrew Corbett, Dr Daniel McConnell, Mr Michael McQuillan, Mr Mark Huddleston Ms Vikki Pinkerton

In attendance: Mrs Heather McKee (Director of Strategic Planning, Quality & Support, Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Ms Catherine Shipman (Head of Engagement) Item 4 only, Dr Michael Malone (Director of Curriculum & Information Services)

Apologies: Ms Wilma Fee

In the Chair: Mrs O’Hare

#### b) Declarations of Conflict of Interests

The following conflict were declared:

- Mrs O’Hare advised she is employed by The Board of Governors of the Wallace High School (a NDPB) as Principal. The sponsor department for funding and development work and other applications is DENI supported by or delegated to the EA as appropriate. Is also current member of the College Advisory Group (Education) CAFRE DAERA CAFRE offers level 2 to level 6 + qualifications. No action was deemed necessary on any of the declarations made.

- Ms Corrigan declared she is employed by CCMS whose sponsor department is DENI. She is a current member of the Governing Body of Stranmillis College.
- Mr McQuillan declared he is Chief Executive of Enterprise NI and a board member of Invest NI. No action was taken in relation to the declared conflicts.

No action was taken in relation to any of the declared conflicts.

### c) Minutes of Education Committee meeting, held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023

The committee reviewed the minutes from the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June and agreed they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting. The minutes were agreed on the proposal of Carolyn King and seconded by Sam Hagen.

## 2) Matters Arising

Members noted there were no matters arising or action points from the previous meetings.

## 3) Correspondence

### a) **Interim Evaluation of the Higher-Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) Programme.**

The Chair asked members to note the very positive response received.

### b) **Arrangements For the Submission Of The Quality Improvement Plan Mid-Cycle Update In The Colleges Of Further Education NI 2023/24**

### c) **Update SER/QIP**

The Chair began by advising that items 3a and 3b would be taken together. The Director of SPQS advised the correspondence sets out the content of the return and the Department have asked for a lot more information than previously which is a substantial piece of work for quality team.

The Chair highlighted that when there is a Departmental ask for something that creates pressure on staff the College need to fully understand the purpose of the request for this additional information. The Director advised that she was informed by the quality team that not all colleges providing same extent of information and there is no consistency in the quality of the reports being returned across the sector.

**Action:** Members agreed to invite the FE Director to a future meeting of the committee and to include the format of information requests and streamlining this reporting as a point of discussion

#### 4) Social Inclusion and Engagement Presentation

*At this juncture the Head of Engagement joined the meeting.*

On the invitation of the Chair the Head of Engagement presented an overview of the work within her department, she highlighted the success and challenges of the team and plans for future work.

The Chair commented that the presentation was very interesting, and it was clear despite the small team in place they are extremely impactful.

In response to a question from the Chair of the Governing Body the Head of Engagement advised that the funding in place for the initiatives is different for each and in terms of feeding back to the Department there is a wider sector group in place and on spot departmental visits.

Mr McQuillan enquired after a successful engagement, how long do participants engage with services and in capturing this impact how far after are we able to track them? The HoE advised that this very much depends on the participants chosen pathway. She added that they could be completing a course in 12 weeks or a full-time programme at 9-16 hrs a week. She advised that in terms of tracking we always aim that they progress through SERC and will work closely with the widening participation team.

The Chair thanked the HoE again for her time and advised the committee were grateful for her attendance.

*At this juncture the Head of Engagement left the meeting.*

#### 5) College Development Plan

##### a) College Development Plan Progress Report

The Director of SPQS advised members that the CDP 23/24 template was now agreed, and she had provided the new template for their information. She highlighted that the template is heavily focussed on the alignment with 10x and has moved away from outcome-based accountability. The submission must be provided to DfE by 11<sup>th</sup> December and the committee will have a copy circulated when it is available.

The Chair noted the lack of joined up thinking demonstrated again with the information requests and recognised the substantial amount of change and extra work for staff as a result of the new template.

**Action:** The committee requested that key departmental information returns were documented to provide a view on where the overlaps are

##### B) Applications and Enrolments

The Director of C&IS talked to the written report and provided members with an update on the current figures. He highlighted the 26% increase in full time enrolments and talked briefly about the methodology for class sizes.

In response to a member's question if there was a change in trends this year to students choosing FE over university and schools, the Director advised that he believed this is down to the quality of course provision and teaching provided at SERC and the fact that the College maintained a lot of courses when they had been struggling has been testament to these additional numbers.

## 6) Higher Education/Further Education

### a) HERB Minutes

The Director of SPQS presented the HERB minutes from 25<sup>th</sup> October for review, she highlighted the College has signed up to QAA academic integrity charter and she provided an overview of the principles and commitments that the College has committed to implement.

**Agreed:** The HERB minutes from 25<sup>th</sup> October were approved on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Alan McCrum.

## 7) Items for Information

### a) Engagement Update Report and update on funded programmes

The Chair took the report as read and commented that she was impressed with the range of support and activity outlined in the report. Ms Corrigan added that she was also struck by the breadth of activity, and it had been very powerful hearing individual case stories earlier from the Head of Engagement on the impact it has made to people. She noted that it was essential to recognise the smaller activities that are having an impact on wider communities.

In response to a query from the GB Chair, the Director of SPQS advised that she had raised the issue of benefits with the Deputy Secretary at DfE as there was still an inconsistent message at different benefit offices. The Deputy Secretary has agreed to raise this matter with her colleagues at the Department for Communities as this is a key barrier stopping some participants from staying on the Access course.

### b) Safeguarding report

The Director of SPQS talked to the written report and she highlighted the work of the Head of Learner Welfare and his team, she added that they are extremely proactive, and the Chair commented that this is another support mechanism in place in retaining students.

In response to a members query the Director talked through the process if a student needs to declare they have a criminal conviction and how the assessment plans are managed by CMT and the Head of Learner Welfare.

## 8) Policies for review

The Chair advised members that no policies had been reviewed during this business cycle.

## 9) Any other business

### a) Tension between funding and enrolments

The Chair began the discussion by advising members that she had wanted to have this discussion noted in this meeting and provide an opportunity to discuss the way in which funding is allocated. As members have been informed there was a significant increase in enrolments this year and this has added to the financial pressure for the College.

On the invitation of the Chair, the Principal provided a detailed overview of the current funding streams and highlighted that each of these has a different governance framework in place. He added that the College still does not have a consolidated budget and that the funding streams should make a contribution to the overheads of the College, however as some programmes are funded by grant in aid this is not possible. Therefore, it is critical for the College to receive a consolidated budget going forward as the amount of funding received is so variable.

Members briefly discussed their concerns how funding is being managed and the Chair noted that it is very complex and with so many ring-fenced funding streams it is extremely difficult to manage.

**Action:** Funding streams will be added to the agenda to discuss with the FE director, particularly the link between funding and enrolments.

The Principal advised members that the College had produced a book titled 'Enterprise Education Development'.

The Director of C&IS added that SERC had collaborated with a number of people from Ulster University, Stranmillis college, Simon bridge and Young Enterprise. He advised that the book will outline the model we have developed in the college and how to apply this to other areas. The book aims to highlight the success of the college methodology and we want to share this with others to see if they can replicate. The Director commented that it should be applied to all levels of education.

The Chair noted that this was an impressive piece of work and asked that the committee's thanks was passed onto all staff involved for their efforts.

The Director of SQPS advised members that the College had signed up to the UCAS pilot and it is being done in a low-risk environment with 25 enrolments.

The Chair of the Governing Body highlighted that a document had been provided in the Sector that covers priority areas for sector improvement and this one side of the work to capture best practice in the delivery model work.

The Chair concluded by asking the Secretary to issue an invite to the FE Director and her colleagues to the next meeting and agreed to include HE in FE, streamlining reporting and finding streams on the agenda for discussion.

**Action:** GB Secretary to issue invite to 6<sup>th</sup> February meeting to FE director

**No other business was discussed, and the Chair closed the meeting at 6.30pm.**