



SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

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

held on Tuesday 5th November 2024 at 17:30, in LRC, Lisburn Campus

1. Chairs Business

a) Attendance and apologies

Present: Mr John Nugent (Chair of the Governing Body) Mr Tommy Martin (Interim Principal & CEO) Mr Darren Stewart, Mrs Deborah O’Hare, Mr Samuel Hagen, Mrs Carolyn King, Mr Alan McCrum, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Derek Wilson, Dr Danny McConnell, Mr Steven Lee, Mrs Nuala Reid, Mrs Nicola Wilson, Mrs Pauline Leeson

In attendance: Mrs Heather McKee (Deputy Principal Student Support Services) Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr Gary Ritchie (Deputy Principal Curriculum), Mrs Emma Carson (Acting Director of HR & Facilities), Mr Andrew Emmett (Acting Director of IT & Finance), Mr Noel O’Hare (Head of Quality, Excellence and Development)

Apologies: Mr Mark Huddleston, Mr Michael McQuillan, Ms Catherine McKay

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. She is also current member of the College Advisory Group (Education) CAFRE DAERA CAFRE offers level 2 to level 6 + qualification and a member of the NI Skills Council.

- 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.

- The Interim Principal & CEO declared his daughter was a part time lecturer at the College.

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

c) Minutes of Education Committee meeting, held on 17TH September 2024

Minutes previously issued to all members.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the meeting held on 17th September and agreed they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting. The minutes were agreed on the proposal of Nuala Reid and seconded by Sam Hagen.

d) Matters Arising

The Chair highlighted there were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

2) Correspondence

Correspondence previously issued to all members.

a) CDP Feedback

The Deputy Principal Student Support Services directed members to the enclosed correspondence and highlighted the requested changes the Department have requested to the CDP and the request to seek Governing Body approval for the CDP submission.

3) Update on Restructuring

The Chair began by advising that this item has been included in the agenda to allow the senior leadership to provide updates on restructuring to the committee, however she highlighted it was not for the Governing Body to get involved in the operational matters of restructuring.

The DPSS advised that there has been a strong start to the year and there had been good feedback from students at the recent freshers fair and Halloween markets. The Interim Principal & CEO agreed and noted that staff are in much better place than September and support continues to be rolled out to management as there is an element of operational pressure.

4) Safeguarding Terms of Reference

Members reviewed the enclosed terms of reference for Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Working Group and the Secretary provided an overview of the role of the Safeguarding governors and how they sit alongside this working group.

Agreed: The Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Working Group were approved on the proposal of Pauline Leeson and seconded by Derek Wilson.

5) ETI Feedback

The Head of QED began by advising ETI had conducted an independent review of the Step-Up Programme in mid-October. Formal written feedback has not been provided yet however verbal feedback has been communicated.

The Head of QED advised members how the inspection was conducted and highlighted that an internal self-evaluation of the programme had been undertaken by the staff team after the first year. He added that feedback was extremely positive and ETI had commended the College on how well cared for students were in and outside of the classroom, the highly effective monitoring carried out through case conferencing and the impressive transversal skills displayed by students.

Mr. Wilson informed members that he had attended the feedback session on behalf of the Governing Body and began by stating that it had been a pleasure to listen to the highly positive feedback provided. He noted that it was evident there was clearly fantastic engagement with ETI by the staff. He was particularly struck by the self-evaluation piece as staff had been proactive in this work, and had acted on it to ensure the programme met the learners needs and improvements were made along the way rather than waiting for an inspection to do so.

Action: The committee asked that staff involved in the ETI inspection for the Step-Up Programme received a letter of thanks and congratulations on the success of the programme

6) College Development Plan

Papers previously issued to all members.

A) CDP 24/25

The DPSSS presented the CDP and in referencing the correspondence at agenda item 002A she talked through the planned delivery for the College for 2024/25 and how this aligns with the Ministerial Priorities. She highlighted some of the key challenges for the Colleges in 24/25, for example, in Essential Skills the adjusted projected intake is 6% above 23/24 intake, which is a sizeable increase but need timely letter of offer from peace plus in order to fully deliver on this.

The Chair thanked the DPSS and invited members to comment on the submission.

The Chair of the Governing Body noted that the template is very defined, and the College are limited in what can be included as it has to be evidence based. The Interim Principal agreed that the

template is extremely prescriptive, and the departmental message so far has been to include more as Minister Murphy has plans to grow FE. He further highlighted that the FE Director is aware that the timing of the CDP needs to be corrected, and it is anticipated this will be addressed at a sector workshop in December.

Members briefly discussed the announcement from the Education Minister recently to keep learners in education until the age of 18. It was noted there has been no formal response from Minister Murphy, but the committee agreed this would be an opportunity of great growth for the sector. The Chair added that with such a significant policy change the two departments will need to work together to ensure the opportunities for FE are well managed.

Agreed: The College Development Plan 24/25 was agreed on the proposal of Nicola Wilson and seconded by Carolyn King.

B) Applications and Enrolments

The Deputy Principal Curriculum talked to the written report provided at 006B. Members noted the data trends and current number of enrolments. In a brief discussion around HE enrolment numbers the DPC advised that the College had not incurred any financial penalty for not reaching the MASN targets. He highlighted this is a sector wide issue and discussions are ongoing with Departmental colleagues on the MASN targets and internally, the College will begin planning in the New Year how to target courses to ensure the MASN is achievable.

Mr Lee advised that he finds it difficult to get students to progress to level 4 from level 3 and enquired if there was best practice in other schools that are more successful in this, that could be shared across the College. The DPC agreed that would be beneficial and would review best practice.

The HoQED added that research had been undertaken to ascertain why students choose to progress the HE pathways at other institutions. He advised that learners leave the College with exceptionally good results and so they have first choice of university, and they want to experience that lifestyle.

The Interim Principal concluded the discussion by reminding the committee that in order to grow HE numbers the sector must offer a unique product, for example, technical HLA's, and that will be the future of HE in FE.

Action: The DPC agreed to include data to demonstrate the PT figures against the same period the previous year at the particular point in the year

7) Higher Education/Further Education

Papers previously issued to all members.

a) National Student Survey

The Head of QED spoke to the enclosed survey results and highlighted that SERC have an excellent uptake in the number of students completing the survey. He added that The target for the survey is final year Higher Education students of courses longer than 1 year, and was conducted between 15th

January and 30th April 2024, it was active at the same time as the DfE Big 14 Survey which ran between 26th February and 15th March 2024.

Members noted that 17 out of the 27 questions asked are above the benchmark, 9 are broadly in line with the benchmark and the 1 area that fell below the benchmark around marking criteria will be reviewed. The Chair commented that this was a very positive result and highlighted that some of the questions are subjective.

In response to a question the Student Governor suggested it may be useful to issue the survey students at a time where they are not on a break from the College to ensure there is more meaningful engagement.

b) HERB Update

The DPSS advised the committee that the planned HERB meeting for 24th October has been postponed to accommodate the introduction of the UK Quality Code 2024 in higher education. The workshop will be delivered by QAA on 14th November as part of the HERB meeting, updates will therefore be provided at the next committee meeting.

8) Items for Information

Papers previously issued to all members.

a) Safeguarding report

Members noted the report at 008A. The Chair advised members that in her capacity as the Safeguarding Governor along with Mr. Wilson they had been briefed on an incident (which took place after this report was produced) and took assurance on the steps taking operationally to address it.

In response to a query the DPSS set out what the Recharge rooms are used for and advised that this was quite unique to SERC. She added that it has been a very much needed additional tool as mental health continues to remain a significant pressure for many students.

9) Policies for review

Members were asked to note the following policies had been reviewed and no substantive changes were required:

- Library/Learning Resource Centre Policy
- Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy
- Student Carer Policy

- Charity and Fundraising Policy
- Student Performance, Behaviour And Disciplinary Management Policy

In response to a member's comments regarding the template used the Interim Principal advised that the policy reviews are currently being done in blocks as there was substantial work to be done after the restructuring and so all policies will be standardised once all policies have been reviewed.

10) Any other business

The Secretary reminded members of the outstanding modules on the Learning Engine that need to be completed. She asked this was done as a matter of urgency by all members.

No other business was discussed, and the Chair closed the meeting at 6.50pm