

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Governing Body (the “GB”)  
held on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 17:30 (GMT) via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

**Agenda Item 1: Chair’s Business:**

**a) Attendance and Apologies for Absences:**

**Present:**

Mr Gareth Hetherington (Temporary Chair of the Governing Body), Professor Alan Woodside, Mr John Mackell, Mr Andrew Corbett (Teaching Staff Governor), Mrs Barbara Larkin, Mr Steve Pollard, Mrs Karen Fraser, Mr James Lee (Corporate Staff Governor), Mr Ken Webb (CEO/Principal), Miss Mollie Richardson (Student Governor), Mrs Deborah O’Hare, Mr Alan McCrum, Mr Derek Wilson, Mr Darren Stewart, Dr Daniel McConnell, Mr Mark Huddleston, Ms Majella Corrigan

**In Attendance:**

Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr Tommy Martin (Chief Finance Officer (“CFO”)), Mr Paul Smyth (Chief HR Officer (“CHRO”))

**Apologies:** None.

**In the Chair:**

Mr Hetherington.

**b) Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:**

The Temporary Chair invited members to declare any known or perceived conflicts of interests. No conflicts were declared.

**c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021:**

The Governing Body reviewed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Following due consideration, it was agreed that the Minutes were a true and accurate reflection of the Meeting.

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**Agreed:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body, held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021, be approved, and adopted.

**Proposed by:** Derek Wilson

**Seconded by:** James Lee

**d) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:**

The Temporary Chair highlighted that Mr Crum has been elected as Chair of the FGP Committee, this was ratified by members at the last meeting in June. Mr Wilson has expressed an interest in the role of Vice Chair, and this will be confirmed by members formally at the next meeting in September.

**e) Governing Body Register of Interests**

The Temporary Chair advised that this item has been included as an opportunity to remind all members to ensure their register of interests is always kept up to date. He advised that the Secretary would issue a new form to all members at the start of each academic year to complete but it is everyone’s individual responsibility to advise if there are changes to the register throughout the year. In response to a query from the Chair the Secretary confirmed that the register is not a published document on the College website, but it can be provided on request.

**f) Return to physical meetings.**

The Temporary Chair advised members that whilst he is keen to return to physical meetings, he is conscious that other members may not want to attend physical meetings. He advised members that the new FGP Chair Mr McCrum has agreed to trial an onsite meeting for the FGP committee in September as it is the smallest meeting in terms of the number of attendees. A further decision can than be reached on how meetings should be conducted following the trial.

**g) Co-optee Member**

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The Temporary Chair informed members that this is Mrs Larkin’s last meeting as Governor (her term is finishing on 31<sup>st</sup> July) and as she is a co-optee member it provides the Governing Body with an opportunity to recruit another member. Members were reminded that information on this matter has been circulated prior to this meeting by email which highlighted the skillset that would be useful to the Governing Body. The Temporary Chair asked if any Governor is aware of an individual who would be a suitable candidate to advise him, he noted that an initial discussion of any names produced would be had at the Chair’s Working Group. The Temporary Chair also advised that as there was recent recruitment competition for the Governing Body this may be useful as there were a number of candidates who were deemed appointable, and we may approach them to join the Board.

**Action Point:** All Governors were asked to consider the skill set and the role of a new co-optee, any known individuals who are suitable should be flagged with the Temporary Chair as soon as possible

**Agenda Item 2: Correspondence:**

**a) Letter from Permanent Secretary re Higher and Further Education Admissions Cycle for Academic**

The Principal advised that this correspondence confirms that offers from Universities will not be made to students ahead of the exam results in August as had previously been the case.

**b) Letter from FE Director re World Skills Hero Award**

Members noted the letter of congratulations from the FE Director in recognition of the hospitality and catering team winning the WorldSkills Hero Category of the Tes FE Awards 2021. The Principal commented that this was a fantastic achievement for the team, and he highlighted that they had also worked in partnership with Bangor foodbank to produce over 1000 meals at Christmas for people who were going to spend the holiday period alone. The Temporary Chair acknowledged the success of the team and asked the Principal to pass on the Governing Body’s congratulations to all those concerned.

**c) FE Colleges Risk assessment outcome letter**

The Principal advised members the correspondence is in relation to a risk assessment the Department had requested in February 2020 as a first step towards a new partnership agreement. The

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correspondence confirms that the College’s individual risk outcome as low risk. The Principal highlighted the Sector approach to this piece of work and the proposed timeframe to complete this, the CFO will report the progress of the project through the Audit & Risk committee.

The Temporary Chair acknowledged the low risk assessment received and noted that this was due to the good work the College have done in managing the risk and the good relationship with the Department.

The Temporary Chair congratulated the members of the senior management team on this result.

**Agenda Item 3: Principal and Chief Executive’s report:**

The Principal advised that as his report he would take it as read and highlight some of the main points:

- The Principal advised members that the College is currently at Stage 4 of the NI Executive Covid restrictions and therefore arrangements for the new academic year will mirror those in place in September 2020, which is a 50/50 model. A decision by the NI Executive to move to Stage 5 will most likely be made in August and to ensure that there is safe resumption to site for the beginning of the year the College remain cautious and therefore the 50/50 model will stay in place, and it can be readjusted if necessary.
- Lateral flow testing has begun on site however take up rates are low, and results are not being recorded. Assisted testing is being piloted in the Lisburn campus, uptake for this has also been low however this is to be expected coming into the Summer season.
- In response to a query from the Temporary Chair, the Principal advised that there is no common Sector approach to the return to campus, he advised that one College is keen for a full return, and another is keen for school age students to return. As SERC’s student age range is not within the school age it would not be a proposal that could be delivered. The Principal highlighted that some Colleges may have concern about staff productivity however SERC have found that productivity has increased with home working. He concluded the discussion by advising that he is seeking comment from his colleagues as Chair of the Principals’ Group and will provide the Governing Body with an update on the Sector approach at their next meeting.
- Moving onto applications and enrolment the Principal highlighted that overall full-time numbers have increased and part time have decreased, there are around 6000 less enrolments.

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- The Principal highlighted some of the recent success amongst staff and students including that Paul Mercer, has won the silver Pearsons National Teaching award and is now through to the November final. Annette Dixon has also been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Certificate from Pearsons and the Access/Restart were awarded FE Team of the year, all of which are outstanding achievements.
- The Principal advised that former student Aimee Clint was awarded the Diana Award 2021 for social action and humanitarian work. The Principal advised the award was established in memory of the late Princess of Wales, the Diana award develops and inspires positive change in the lives of young people through three key programmes which include a mentoring programme for young people at risk, a youth-led anti-bullying ambassadors’ campaign and a prestigious award which publicly recognises young people. The Temporary Chair passed on his congratulations to all those who have recently received awards and commended everyone concerned for their efforts.
- The Principal then provided members with an update on the Senior Leaders Forum which aim is for the tertiary sector to discuss how to collaborate better, Queen’s University have recently launched a microsite which displays all the Higher Education offer in one place for students who were unsuccessful in obtaining a place in QUB. The Principal invited Mrs O’Hare to comment on the project as part of her role on the Schools Principal’s Group, she noted that it was an excellent piece of work, and it was extremely useful for young people to see the different pathways available, and it was helpful to see the focus on the qualification instead of the institution.
- Mr Mackell advised the Principal that he had received a hard copy of the Covid Case Studies booklet and it was an excellent piece of work. He enquired that of the remaining 30 furloughed apprentices how are they being assisted in completing their qualifications. The Principal advised that the College could support them through project work and there is a range of options open to these individuals to complete the qualification.
- The Temporary Chair noted that the new DfE Minister, Paul Frew launched the NI Traineeship programme today. The Principal advised that he is keen to run the launch again in the media in August and the BBC have confirmed that they are content to do this.

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- The Temporary Chair also commented that the Department are working to get skills programmes and strategies across the line so that if the Assembly does collapse again, it can be taken forward in the absence of a Minister.

**Agenda Item 4: Items for Approval**

**a) Tender For the Provision of Cleaning & Ancillary Services**

The Chief Finance Officer presented the tender for approval, he provided members with an overview of the services required, the procurement exercise and the recommendation he was making, the following points were highlighted:

- The CFO advised that the subcontracted cleaning service with Mount Charles expires on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 and so a procurement exercise was undertaken to source a new contract.
- The business case estimated the cost of outsourced cleaning over an 8-year period would be £1,998,530 and therefore required approval from DfE, the SERC Accounting Officer and the Governing Body which is in line with Management Statement and Financial Memorandum.
- The CFO provided a high-level overview of the procurement process, which was also set out in the presented paper, he advised that Aramark had been awarded the contract as they were competitive and had outscored the other tenderers.
- The CFO highlighted that the bid was £200k over the estimated cost of the business case however CPD were content with this as it within 10% of the estimated costs and reflects the current market prices.
- The CFO informed members that both the Department and the SERC Accounting Officer have signed off on the tender and it was not presented to the FGP committee at their most recent meeting because of some delays from CPD, however the contract needs to be in place over the Summer as the current contract expires in July and so approval is required before that date.
- Mr Stewart noted that after 60 months the College has an option to extend the contract for a further period / periods up to a maximum of 36 months, he enquired if this needs to be reviewed again. The CFO advised that the GB do not need to sign off on the extension and will be part of the contract management process. He advised that Aramark are extremely experienced in the

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public sector, and he would hope that the contract is extended, and a further tender exercise is unnecessary after the 60 months is completed.

- In response to an observation from Mr Mackell regarding the overall cost of the contract and optional extension, the CFO advised that the cost is consistent across the submissions and short contracts are against the advice of CPD as the handover, TUPE and administration of any contract can be a lengthy process.
- Dr McConnell required if the final cost includes uplift for CPI. The CFO advised that he would need to clarify this and come back to members

**Agreed:** The Governing Body approved the recommendation to award the Cleaning Ancillary Services contract to Aramark Ireland Holdings Ltd

**Proposer:** Gareth Hetherington

**Seconder:** Danny McConnell

**Action Point:** The CFO will confirm if the overall costs set out in the Aramark Contract includes uplift for CPI

**b) Governing Body and Committee Cycle of Business 2021/22**

The Temporary Chair advised that the presented spreadsheet that sets out the GB and committee cycle of business is used by the Chair’s Working Group at the beginning of each cycle of meetings to discuss workflow. He advised that the document is fluid and can be changed to reflect the business needs.

On the invitation of the Chair the GB Secretary advised members that the current format has been in place for 3 years, with the exception of the Education committee the cycle of business has remained static, and it would be very helpful if all members could take time to review the cycle. She advised that this item did not require approval at this meeting and if all members could feed back their thoughts it can be approved at the first meeting of the academic year.

**Action Point:** All Governors are asked to review the Cycle of Business for 2021/22 and advise the Secretary or Committee Chairs if they have any suggestions to make on it ASAP

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**c) Baseline Budget 2021/22**

In presenting the Baseline Budget for 2021/22 the Chief Finance Officer advised members that this is an operational budget based on the Resource Requirement set out in correspondence received from the Department dated 30<sup>th</sup> April, members were asked to note that the Budget will be represented for final approval in September. The CFO highlighted the following in summary:

- Base its plans on an “indicative resource budget” of £38,775k for the year April 2021 to March 2022 (i.e. £25,850k for the 8 months from August 2021 to March 2022).
- Use a “notional allocation” of £14,218k for the period April 2022 to July 2022 for planning purposes; and to bridge the gap between the NDPB Budgeting Year and the College’s financial year. For operational budget purposes, SERC’s Resource Requirement target is therefore £40,068k for the college’s 2021/22 year. The CFO confirmed that the Resource Requirement is £1.9m higher than has been allocated so far this is directly linked to Covid related pressures. The CFO assured members at this time that the pressures are not operational, and the Department have been kept fully briefed on the College’s funding requirements directly linked to Covid.

The CFO provided an overview of income and expenditure to the committee members and the following points were highlighted:

- Income has decreased by £381k this can be attributed to TFS and Apprentice NI funding which will decrease with the introduction of Traineeships. This funding will also now be classified as core funding rather than grant in aid.
- Higher Level apprentice finding has also decreased along with Steps to Success as this programme has now finished. It is expected that there will be an increase to Erasmus Funding of £150k.
- In terms of expenditure staff costs have increased by £1.4m (4.2%) which can be attributed to £400k of contractual costs and new staff posts for ILT staff and intern staff. New posts are also being created in Business Services to support delivery along with HR, finance and estates, these costs total £420k. The CFO highlighted that a finance post for a Quantity Surveyor is being created as the College moves away from using Properties Services Division.



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- Other operating expenses have decreased by £500k, the College heavily invested in IT kit last year to ensure that staff and students were fully equipped for home working/learning and so this investment will not be repeated this year. However, other costs have risen as there is an increased return to campus such as travel and subsistence costs and teaching materials, all of which has been factored into the presented budget.
- Mrs O’Hare noted that staff have been working at home since the beginning of the pandemic and she enquired if there were any plans to recompense staff. The CFO advised that there are no plans to pay staff expenses for home working as staff can claim tax relief and this has been highlighted to all staff, a Sector policy change would be required for the College to reimburse staff, and this is unlikely to happen as it would require a full business case presented to the Department.
- Mr Stewart noted the Covid pressures and asked the CFO if he had concerns of any other risks outside of Covid. In response the CFO advised that he did not, he informed members that in previous years he had highlighted Commercial Income as a risk as it was so variable. However as this has been mostly replaced by the DfE Skills Intervention Programmes the risk has decreased as the programmes are underwritten by the Department and SERC are delivering well on the programmes with over 30% across the Sector.
- The CFO went on to highlight that the new Traineeships will be monitored as the new programme begins in September. The CFO advised that there is less risk than there was with TFS funding as it was based on a complex milestone and the retention of participants, the new programme is now funded through Grant in Aid and so the finding is provided upfront.
- Mr McCrum noted the funding allocated to curriculum delivery and that it is intended to support students impacted by Covid, he enquired given the uncertainty that remains around restrictions how will this work through the £1.9m pressure. The CFO advised that if the College goes ahead with the planned 50/50 model all these teaching hours will be required to support students and if there is a return to campus, they will also be required in terms of providing pastoral care support. He advised that the Department are aware that the College requires flexibility in response to the easing of restrictions.

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**Agreed:** The Governing Body reviewed and approved the Baseline Budget 2021/22

Proposer: Alan McCrum

Seconder: Barbara Larkin

**d) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 31st March 2021**

Mr Mackell, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented the minutes for adoption.

**Agreed:** The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Mrs Fraser and seconded by Mr Pollard.

**e) Education Committee minutes from meeting held 23rd March on 2021**

Mr Pollard, Chair of the Education Committee, presented the minutes for adoption.

**Agreed:** The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Mr Corbett and seconded by Mrs O’Hare.

**f) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 30th March 2021**

Mrs Larkin, Chair of the FGP Committee, presented the minutes for adoption.

**Agreed:** The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Professor Woodside and seconded by Mr Wilson.

**5. Policies for approval**

The Temporary Chair advised members there are no policies for approval.

**6. Items for Information**

**a) Financial Governance Report**

In presenting the Financial Governance Report the CFO advised that it aims to set out the forecasted financial position as at both 31 March 2021(DfE year-end) and 31 July 2021(SERC year-end). The CFO highlighted that the current report shows the College’s actual financial performance for the year up to the end of March; and its forecast for the year ending July.

The CFO confirmed that actual performance in the Departmental year ending March was on target. The College’s final March 2021 year-end resource requirement target was therefore £40,257k. The CFO

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provided a brief overview of the variances and highlighted that additional funding had been secured from the Department early on to meet the requirements of the pandemic.

Members noted that the July year end was also on target, and it was over the original budget, but additional funding was secured early on. The College’s July year-end resource requirement target as at Period 9 is £40,977k. The CFO highlighted that there was an increase in income which was linked to the delivery of the Skills intervention Programme, the College has delivered more of the programme than planned and has successfully bid for further funding that was not allocated in the Sector. He advised that income in commercial outlets has decreased because there was no activity and Erasmus funding decreased as students could not travel and avail of the programme.

**b) Strategic Risk Register**

The CFO presented the Strategic Risk Register to members, he advised that the Audit and Risk Committee review the register at each of their meetings and this version had been reviewed in detail by the committee. He pointed out that there are currently 5 amber risks and 4 red, a new risk around Cyber Security will be added to the register at the next risk management meeting. The CFO provided a high-level summary of the risks to members.

**c) Staff Governor Reports**

On the invitation of the Chair the Teaching Staff Governor, Mr Corbett, provided members with a brief report. He provided an update on how teaching staff are assessing students and gave members assurance that the process has been rigorous and has been evidence based. He moved on to report that interviews have begun with potential students, and he noted that he was pleased to hear those additional resources will be in place to bridge the skills gap for these students. In conclusion Mr Corbett advised that for the first time in his SERC career all level 3 students have achieved at GCSE maths which is commendable. The Temporary Chair thanked Mr Corbett and noted that the important issue he raised around the skills gap the new cohort may have, he advised it will remain a challenging time and will take time to work through.

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The Corporate Staff Governor, Mr Lee provided members with a brief verbal report and advised MIS staff are busy rolling over the academic calendar for 21/22, there has been an update to the signage in Campus to ensure that everyone on site is aware of the social distancing requirements and an app has been developed for the G4S staff to record all the relevant information on Covid which is then directly sent to the Head of Health and Safety for review.

**d) Student Governor Report**

The Student Governor provided an overview of the written report provided. She advised that despite being a challenging year; students have felt both relief and pride at getting to the end of the academic year. She highlighted the support the Students Union have had in place for students and the activity that has taken in place over the year.

The Temporary Chair thanked the Student Governor for her report, he thanked her for her work over the year and noted she had represented the Students Union well over the year and contributed well at all the Governing Body meetings. He wished her well for the future on behalf of the Governing Body.

**e) Audit Committee briefing on meeting held on 16th June 2021**

Mr Mackell, Chair of the Audit Committee, provided an overview of the recent meeting, the following points were highlighted in summary:

- The committee discussed the request from the Department to include a review of Covid disruption schemes in the internal audit programme, the committee were advised that terms of reference had been issued to the NIAO and the review was planned for July.
- The committee reviewed the risk register in detail and noted the addition of a risk on Cyber Security which will be presented at their next meeting.
- The committee noted that financial and IT policies had been reviewed with no substantial changes to approve and they noted the Governing Body Gifts and Hospitality register for information.

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- The internal auditor presented an internal audit report on Cyber Security which received a satisfactory rating. One of the recommendations from this report was the inclusion of a risk on the risk register as the impact on the business from a Cyber Security attack is so significant. The Committee Chair advised that despite the challenging year the internal audit team has been completed facilitated by the management team.

**f) Finance and General Purposes Committee briefing on meeting held on 15th June 2021**

Mrs Larkin, Chair of the FGP Committee, addressed the meeting and provided an update on the recent committee meeting, the following points were noted:

- The committee elected Mr McCrum as the new Chair and Mr Wilson will be ratified as Vice Chair of the Committee in September.
- The CFO provided the committee with a very comprehensive overview of the Baseline Budget which has been recommended to the Governing Body for approval. The committee also reviewed the cost implications that Covid continues to have and were provided with an update on the pilot for Lateral Flow testing.
- The CHRO advised the committee that 3 out of 4 of the HR Strategic Priorities will be met. The committee also noted the results of the staff survey and despite the number of respondents being down the results were still largely positive. The CHRO advised that a Covid specific survey will be issued to staff in August.

The Temporary Chair thanked Mrs Larkin for the update and noted that this is her last meeting as a SERC governor, he thanked her for her contribution to the Governing Body over the last 8 years and specifically in recent times as she had a great deal of business to cover with the FGP committee.

**g) Education Committee briefing on meeting held on 25th May 2021**

Mr Pollard, Chair of the Education Committee, provided an update on the recent meeting and highlighted the following in summary:

- The committee had a review with CMT on the College’s response to Covid, they received updates on the Lateral Flow testing pilot, issues outstanding with awarding organisations, and they reviewed the Case Studies booklet.

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- The issue around conditional offers from Universities was highlighted to the committee, but as reported by the Principal earlier in this meeting this issue has been rectified.
- Presentations were received on the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, the Construction Hub and from the Business Services team. Mr Pollard informed members that all presentations were excellent and demonstrated the commitment from the staff to the College.
- The Chief Training and Contracts Officer provided an update of TFS and Apprentices and the committee noted that there was growth in the area ahead of the target.
- A regular item on the agenda is the Social Inclusion report, Mr Pollard noted that this was an important piece of work for the College and the progress made had been excellent.

**h) Chair’s Working Group Minutes of meeting held on 13th May 2021**

Members were asked to note the enclosed minutes for information.

**7. Any Other Business:**

There are no other notified items of business.

**8. Confidential Business**

A separate note was taken for this item. At this juncture the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.

**Date of next Meeting:**

**The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 17.30, via Microsoft Teams**

**There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 19:48**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Temporary Chair of the Governing Body