

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Governing Body (the “GB”)
held on Monday, 27th September 2021 at 17:30 (GMT) via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

Agenda Item 1: Organisational Development and Transformation

Presentation from Colin Woods, Director of Corporate Governance & Transformation, Department for the Economy

The Temporary Chair welcomed Mr Woods to the meeting and provided a brief introduction to members.

On the invitation of the Temporary Chair Mr Woods shared a presentation that sets out the Organisational Development and Transformation (ODT) Programme aims and objectives, the following points were highlighted to members:

- Mr Woods began by advising members that this programme has been developed as it was felt that DfE is not as effective as it could be and one of the main drivers is that when there is not a common sense of ownership it is difficult to make decisions.
- The programme is focussed on supporting the integrated delivery of the 10X Economic Vision, Mr Woods highlighted that the programme is designed to ensure DfE are well positioned to deliver on the Northern Ireland Executives vision for the NI Economy by March 2024.
- Mr Woods set out the work streams for the programme:
 1. Refine and embed 10X Vision
 2. Define and embed an organisational culture where people are empowered, developed and supported
 3. Optimise processes
- Mr Woods gave members an overview of the programme structure and advised that it has the highest level of mandate from the Department. He went on to note projects of interest to the Department that will help to bring the programme together which include the role of 10X will play in guiding the Department and its delivery partners, policy and strategic direction,

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organisation direction, sponsorship model, core process review including budget allocation and risk management.

- Mr Woods concluded his presentation by advising how ALB participation will look in the programme and highlighted the following:
 1. Core design principle of the programme is engagement, collaboration, and transparency
 2. Delivery partners play a critical role in the successful development and transition to the future of DfE, and the implementation of the 10X Vision.
 3. A series of workshops and focus groups will provide an opportunity to share views on proposals and consider how we collaborate effectively

The Temporary Chair commented that he welcomed this project, he noted that for any organisation to be transparent about its own weaknesses is a good approach and demonstrates maturity in its leadership, he advised that SERC will be very happy to play a part in this programme. The Temporary Chair enquired how the planned sponsorship review fits into the ongoing review of partnership arrangements? Mr Woods advised he would anticipate these reviews would become the same, he added that working with ALB’s will be a core part of the programme and the Department are aiming to introduce consistency and raise standards on how they interact with the delivery partners. He advised the executive papers sets out a review of NDPB’s however it is pertinent to ensure the Department is in order before this happens.

The Temporary Chair highlighted that this is a DfE review but there will also be a review of the FE sector, and so how will these be aligned? Mr Woods advised that regardless of the FE review the Department need fulfil its part of the deal, the scale may need to change but the principles of the review will be applicable.

Mr Mackell enquired if there was a proposed timeline for the task and finish groups. Mr Woods replied that the Programme Board is keen for rapid progress, staying true to the principles of the programme along with this expectation is a challenge to balance. However, in terms of the sponsorship review the

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terms of reference have been signed off and it is anticipated the Programme Board will be presented with choices on a model by the end of January 2022.

Mr Mackell commented that there have been 3 DfE Ministers within the last 4 months and what impact would a different Minister or the collapse of the NI Assembly have on the Programme. Mr Woods advised that all the Ministers had been briefed and endorsed the Programme, however it is an Accounting Officer led programme and so it will continue in the absence of an Assembly. He advised that in terms of how the Department works with its delivery partners is very much a matter for the Department, and while some political parties may have very different policy vision from each other, a Minister from another party will have no impact as the Department have committed to this work for the next 3-5 years.

On the back of Mr Mackell’s query, Mr Huddleston enquired how much of the project would go forward if a future Minister dropped 10X? Mr Woods explained that the policy project is one of 6 and the other 5 would therefore continue in some form. He advised the programme has been designed as an 80/20 principle, which in order to do the programme needs a single overarching vision and for now it’s 10X. He advised that 10X provides the flex for this work, but the Department will always need good policy work and skilled people. He advised that this work is improving the ability to focus to make choices, a degree of common ownership and 10x gives the Department strong lead to do this.

Mr Huddleston noted the Minister had made clear that budget cuts would be implemented soon, as reform costs he advised there is a challenge moving to a partnership piece. Mr Woods acknowledged that we are facing a difficult budget settlement but advised there are practical things the Department can do to bring greater clarity on funding streams for delivery partners for more than one year. He noted that a vast majority in FE is allocated for salary costs and the Department recognises these pressures.

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The Temporary Chair concluded the discussion by thanking Mr Woods for his time and his presentation which had been very informative, he advised the Governing Body are very supportive of the work and are happy to help any way in any way.

At this juncture Mr Woods left the meeting.

Agenda Item 2: 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), Mr Steve Pollard, Mrs Karen Fraser, Mr James Lee (Corporate Staff Governor), Mr Ken Webb (CEO/Principal), 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”), Mr Colin Woods (Director of Corporate Governance & Transformation, Department for the Economy) Agenda Item 1 only, Ms. Amy Frazer (Boardroom Apprentice) Agenda Items 1-8 only

Apologies: None.

In the Chair:

Mr Hetherington.

b) Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:

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The Temporary Chair invited members to declare any known or perceived conflicts of interests. Ms Corrigan declared that she is employed by CCMS and is a Council Member of CCEA.

c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on 28th June 2021:

The Governing Body reviewed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th June 2021. Following due consideration, it was agreed that the Minutes were a true and accurate reflection of the Meeting.

Agreed: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body, held on 28th June 2021, be approved, and adopted.

Proposed by: James Lee

Seconded by: John Mackell

d) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:

The CFO provided members with an update on the Cleaning Services Tender. During the discussion on this item at the previous meeting a query was made as to whether the final costs included CPI. The CFO advised that there is not a standard inflationary rise in the overall cost, but it is applied to the individual elements, he confirmed that this was considered when the procurement for the contract was done.

e) Governing Body Vice Chair role

The Temporary Chair informed members that Professor Woodside had recently advised him that he would be stepping down from his role as a Governor due to other commitments. The Temporary Chair advised that he had found Professor Woodside’s input and support very helpful, and he understood his decision to step back and so he goes with our best wishes. The Principal commented that he had greatly appreciated the support from Professor Woodside and the breadth of experience and knowledge had brought to the College, he wished him well for the future.

At this juncture the Temporary Chair asked that any member wishing to express an interest in the role make contact with himself or the Secretary. The Secretary advised that as per Standing Order 4.6 the

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Principal, Chair of the Audit committee, staff members and student member shall not be eligible for appointment as Vice-Chairperson.

Action Point: Members wishing to express an interest in the role of Vice Chair of the Governing Body should advise the Temporary Chair and the Secretary by 20th October

f) Return to physical meetings

The Temporary Chair began by advising that he had spoken to all members individually about the return of physical meetings and while there is strong support from the Governing Body to return some people have some concerns and this is understandable. He advised that the FGP committee held a hybrid meeting and it had worked well, attendees had been able to make contributions when they wanted to, he commented that he would like to see how this approach would work for a larger meeting. The Temporary Chair advised that he would liaise with the Principal and GB Secretary about how this could be facilitated for the next round of meetings. The Principal added that the NI Executive are due to meet again soon to review the current restrictions and this could have an impact on social distancing and how the meetings can be facilitated.

Action Point: The Temporary Chair advised that he would confirm the meeting arrangements with the Governing Body in advance of the November meeting cycle

g) Co-optee Member

The Temporary Chair informed members that Mr Pollard had put Michael McQuillan’s name forward as a possible co-optee. Mr Pollard provided members with a brief overview on Mr McQuillan’s background, he highlighted that he is a successful entrepreneur with a vested interest in skills. He currently sits on the board of Invest Northern Ireland and is CEO of Enterprise NI. Mr Pollard noted that Mr McQuillan’s connection to small business and his entrepreneurial skills would be an excellent addition to the Board and a great benefit to the College. Members agreed that Mr McQuillan would be a suitable candidate to

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approach and noted the Temporary Chair will reach out to him to discuss membership of the Governing Body.

Action Point: Background information on Mr McQuillan will be issued to GB members. The Temporary Chair and Mr Pollard will make contact with Mr McQuillan to discuss his membership, GB approval will be sought in November.

h) GB Chair competition

The Temporary Chair advised he has been notified by the Department of their intention to run a competition to recruit a Chair for both SERC and SRC. The Department have advised the competition will be launched ahead of Christmas and it is their intention that an appointment would be made in the current Assembly mandate (i.e. by May 2022) and therefore a new Chair will be in post by the beginning of the new academic year in September 2022. The Temporary Chair advised members that it is currently not his intention to apply for the post and if this position should change, he will inform them.

The Secretary advised that the competition is open to all members, and she will advise the Governing Body when the competition is live.

Agenda Item 3: Correspondence:

There were no items of correspondence to note.

Agenda Item 4: Principal and Chief Executive’s report:

The Principal asked members to note the written report provided and he highlighted the application and enrolment figures that were included in the appendices. The Principal advised that a consolidated report on the Sector figures had been provided, however he asked members to note that these numbers are constantly changing, and some Colleges still need to do some data cleansing.

The Principal highlighted that Higher Education is down by 14% in the College and this is a Sector issue, he advised that all Colleges are doing their best to recruit in this area, however NRC’s numbers indicate that they will be likely to lose all HE in FE as class sizes are no longer viable with falling enrolments. The

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Temporary Chair enquired if other Colleges will be able to offer places to those students affected by NRC’s position? The Principal advised that there is no central clearing scheme in place, this has been because there has been no requirement for FE as these students cannot usually travel. Clearing for traineeships was introduced and it worked quite well and so the Sector may look to broaden their methodology across the board next year.

The Principal moved on to highlight the JISC report that was within the appendices of his report, he advised that the report brought together 12 leaders of further education (FE) and community colleges in the UK and the US for the first Jisc/EDUCAUSE digital transformation roundtable to share best practice and SERC features heavily in the report. The Temporary Chair commended the staff and students involved in this report and noted the College has excelled in digital transformation over the last 18 months.

Mr Pollard commented that the staff and student achievements set out in the report are very impressive particularly Paul Mercer who has been honoured as one of the UK’s Pearson National Teaching Silver Award. Also, Aimee Clint who as a SERC alumni has not only received the Diana Award but is also the Young Ambassador for Social Enterprise Northern Ireland. Mr Pollard concluded by highlighted Joe Traynor’s story and noted he had been very touched by his story and congratulated him on his achievements.

Agenda Item 5: Items for Approval

a) Governing Body and Committee Cycle of Business 2021/22

Members noted that each Committee had now approved its own cycle of business and that the work plan set out is fluid, if an essential piece of work needs to be urgently addressed it will be facilitated.

Agreed: The Governing Body approved and adopted the Cycle of Business 21/22

Proposer: Alan McCrum

Secunder: Andrew Corbett

b) Committee Terms of Reference

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1. Audit Committee

Mr Mackell, Chair of the Audit Committee, advised members that the committee had reviewed the terms of reference and agreed one minor amendment. An amendment has been made to include the committee’s annual review of the Business Management Continuity Plan, Mr Mackell informed members that the annual review came from an internal audit recommendation.

Agreed: The Audit Committee Terms of Reference were adopted on the proposal of Karen Fraser and seconded by Mark Huddleston

2. Education Committee

Mr Pollard, Chair of the Education Committee, presented the Committee terms of reference for adoption he advised that the committee had no changes to make during this review.

Agreed: The Education Committee Terms of Reference were adopted on the proposal of James Lee and seconded by Majella Corrigan

3. Finance and General Purposes Committee

Mr McCrum, Chair of the FGP Committee, presented the Committee terms of reference for adoption, he advised the committee were content that no changes were required during this review.

Agreed: The FGP Committee Terms of Reference were adopted on the proposal of Daniel McConnell and seconded by Derek Wilson

At this juncture Mr Stewart enquired if there were plans to split the FGP again so there would be a standalone Staffing Committee. The Temporary Chair advised that it had been the intention to split the committee once a larger GB was in place, however he noted that it could be argued there is not sufficient business to merit a standalone staffing committee. Mr McCrum agreed that the HR element of the committee’s business is very small, and he felt that there is an interdependency of people and money in any business, and it was much better to view it in the round.

Action Point: The FGP committee will discuss the structure of the committee at their next meeting and report the outcome to the GB in November

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c) Final Resource Budget 2021/22

The CFO began his presentation of the Budget by advising members that the FGP committee had reviewed the Budget at their recent meeting and had recommended it for adoption. He moved to provide an overview of the approval process and advised that usually there is not much change between the draft Budget presented to members in June and the final draft however this year there are some variations. The CFO provided members with a brief overview of the significant changes income and expenditure.

The CFO advised that since members reviewed the Baseline budget in June an additional £573k of funding had been allocated to the College. Therefore, for operational budget purposes, SERC’s Resource Requirement target is therefore £40,641k for the college’s 2021/22 year. A pressure of £1.7m is included within this budget (which is a reduction from June of £1.9m). The CFO spoke about the £1.7m pressure which is directly related to Covid. He advised members that the Department are aware of this pressure, and they have secured £9m for the Sector. The Department are in the process of finalizing the allocations and the College is confident that the required allocation will be met. The CFO advised that he expects the allocation will be made at the end of September, the Department have advised that the additional funding is now tied up with the Lost Learning business case, once this has been approved the bids from each College will require Ministerial approval.

The CFO concluded his update by advising that he would not normally present a final Budget for approval that is not balanced however this Budget is exceptional.

Agreed: The Governing Body approved and adopted the Final Resource Budget 21/22

Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Secunder: Alan McCrum

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d) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 16th June 2021

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

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Karen Fraser and seconded by Deborah O’Hare.

e) Education Committee minutes from meeting held 25th May 2021

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

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Andrew Corbett.

f) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 15th June 2021

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

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Derek Wilson and seconded by Daniel McConnell.

6. Policies for approval

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

7. 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 the end of July, both of which are on target.

b) Annual Review of MS/FM and appendices

The Temporary Chair advised that the MS/FM is reviewed annually by the Governing Body, and it is a useful exercise for everyone to read and review as a reminder, he highlighted it sets out roles and responsibilities and how the finance arrangements are set out with our Sponsor department. The CFO

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noted that another version of the document may be produced in line with the current partnership work across the public sector.

c) Staff Governor Reports

On the invitation of the Chair the Corporate Staff Governor, Mr James Lee provided members with a brief verbal update. Mr Lee advised that he had attended the Expo event in Lisburn as a judge and noted it was encouraging to see the students work.

Mr Corbett, Teaching Staff Governor, provided members with an overview of the support students are given when coming into the College such as how to use Microsoft Teams and how to prepare digital portfolios. The Temporary Chair asked Mr Corbett what students’ expectations are and if they have a greater understanding this year of what they are facing in terms of delivery. Mr Corbett advised that returning students are doing very well with the 50/50 approach and for some students they are getting practical assessments completed early in the year, so they are responding well. Students from schools this year seem to have had a mixed experience, they do seem prepared but are keen for more face-to-face learning.

The Temporary Chair thanked both staff Governors for their helpful updates.

d) Audit Committee briefing on meeting held on 15th September 2021

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

- Mr Mackell highlighted that in reviewing the strategic risk register the committee noted that the risk relating to the use of Properties Service Division has been removed which is an excellent outcome for the College as it had been a long-standing issue.
- The committee reviewed and approved the Draft Financial Statements and Annual Report for the year ended 31 July 2021, fieldwork on the audit has already started and the committee look forward to reviewing the final report in November.

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- In terms of internal audit, the committee approved the internal audit plan, which is now in year 2 of a 3-year plan, RSM have assured the committee the plan is fluid to allow for any work requests from the committee to be included. The committee also received an overall assurance rating of satisfactory which demonstrates the good controls and processes in place.
- As per the recent audit recommendation the committee reviewed and the Business Continuity Management Plan and took assurance that it had been successfully implemented during the Covid pandemic.
- Finally, the committee noted the IT Resilience Statement and the results of the internal security exercise which was sent to staff and students.

e) Finance and General Purposes Committee briefing on meeting held on 14th September 2021

Mr McCrum, 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 Wilson as Vice Chair of the committee.
- There were 3 substantive items for approval, the Final Resource Budget and the Draft Financial Statements and Annual Report for the year ended 31 July 2021, both of which have been approved by the Governing Body earlier in the agenda this evening. The committee also reviewed and approved the HR Priorities for 2021/22.
- Following on from this the CHRO linked back to the HR Priorities of 20/21 and gave the committee a review of the progress of each.
- The CHRO also gave the committee informative presentations on Case Management and Health and Wellbeing.

f) Education Committee briefing on meeting held on 21st September 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 Covid Q&A session with management which gave the committee an update on how the College is approaching the academic year.

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- The Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support presented the draft College Development Plan 21/22 for review ahead of its submission to the Department.
- The committee received an excellent presentation from the Director of Curriculum & Information Services on the blueprint SERC have produced on Transversal Skills and Project Based Learning, the Chair noted the committee were pleased to see the blueprint being adopted by the Sector.
- The committee discussed the challenges around applications and enrolments and noted the impact grade inflation and the offer from schools is having on the Sector overall.

Action Point: The Temporary Chair asked the Secretary to resend the Transversal Skills presentation to all members for information

g) Chair’s Working Group Minutes of meeting held on 6th September 2021

Members were asked to note the enclosed minutes for information.

8. Any Other Business:

There are no other notified items of business.

9. 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 22nd November 2021, 17.30, location TBC

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 19:15

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Temporary Chair of the Governing Body



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