

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Governing Body (the “GB”)
held on Monday, 26th September at 18:00 (GMT) in the SPACE Theatre, Bangor Campus**

Agenda Item 1: Chair’s Business:

a) Attendance and Apologies for Absences:

Present:

Mr John Nugent (Chair of the Governing Body), Mr Gareth Hetherington, Mr John Mackell, Mr Steve Pollard, 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, Mr Samuel Hagen, Mr Michael McQuillan, Mr Andrew Corbett

In Attendance:

Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr Tommy Martin (Chief Finance Officer (“CFO”)), Mrs Heather McKee (Director of Strategic, Planning, Quality and Support (“Director of SPQ&S”)), Mr Adam Donnell (Boardroom Apprentice), Ms Sophie Leigh Francis (Student Governor Elect), Mr William Greer (Chief Training & Contracts Officer (“CT&O”)) Item 6 only, Mr Andrew Emmett (Chief Technology Officer (“CTO”)) Items 6 only

Apologies: Ms Gemma Diamond, Mrs Karen Fraser

In the Chair:

Mr Nugent

b) Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:

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

The Secretary was advised by the Chief Finance Officer that his daughter was employed at the College as a full-time nursing lecturer, and it was agreed this would be noted in the minutes.

c) Chair’s Introduction

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The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and as it was his first meeting of the full Governing Body, he gave members a brief introduction and background to his career. He noted that there are challenges ahead for the Sector and that as a GB it is important to get it right for the students. He concluded his introduction by advising members that he is available to discuss concerns at any time.

d) Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on 27th June 2022:

The Governing Body reviewed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th June 2022. 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 27th June 2022, be approved, and adopted.

Proposed by: John Mackell

Seconded by: Gareth Hetherington

e) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:

Members noted there were no outstanding actions from the previous meetings.

f) GB Vice Chair

The Secretary advised members that as per the agreed Standing Orders the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body is elected annually and Mr McCrum has now been in the post for a full year. Mr McCrum had indicated in advance of the meeting that he would like to continue in the role.

Agreed: Mr McCrum was re-elected as the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body with immediate effect

Proposer: John Mackell

Seconder: Gareth Hetherington

Agenda Item 2: Correspondence:

Nothing to note.

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

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The Principal advised that the written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and he moved on to a presentation on Grade inflation and the Impacts on enrolments to Higher Education and Mainstream Level 3 programmes in Colleges of Further and Higher Education, he began by advising this information on grades had recently been released from CCEA.

The Principal took members through the presented data and in summary advised that in the longer-term grade inflation achieves little. Employers devalue learner attainments and students are embarking on educational pathways which are not in their best interests or in the best interests of the Northern Ireland economy.

In response to a question on what the Governing Body or Sector can do to, the Principal provided a brief background on issues of vocational qualifications, he advised that a paper will be presented to the Skills Council which the College need to respond to.

Agenda Item 4: Items for Approval

a) Resource Budget 22/23

On the invitation of the Chair the Chief Finance Officer addressed the meeting to present the Resource Budget 22/23, before seeking approval from members the CFO advised that the Budget had been presented and reviewed in detail at committee level. He advised that this is an uncertain budget and the College have been provided with a planning allocation in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive. He informed members the Budget presented has a pressure of just over £1m, this has been reduced from £3.1m as work has been ongoing throughout the year with Departmental officials to secure additional funding. The CFO advised that since the committee's had reviewed this budget an adjustment is required around National Insurance based on the Chancellor's mini budget.

The CFO provided a breakdown of the pressure and advised that £280k is non staff items and £828k is around staff pay pressures, mainly the lecturing pay award, the Department have advised these funds will be held until agreement is reached on the pay award.

1. Non-staff inflationary pressures relating to PFI contracts, utilities and learning materials
2. Staff increments, pay awards and National Insurance Contribution increases.

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Mr Hagen noted that the Governing Body are being asked to approve a budget that does not balance, and he enquired if there is a risk around that? He suggested that members may be more comfortable in approving the budget if it is clear that the Resource allocation is not available to the College in its usual form and that negotiations are ongoing with the Department to further reduce the pressure. The CFO advised that members are being asked to approve the operational plan and are not being asked to ensure it balances with Grant in Aid funding. The CFO reminded members that once approved, operational budget will be monitored and reported against throughout the year to both DfE (via the NDPB monthly forecasting process) and to SERC’s Governing Body.

Members agreed with this approach and noted that there has been a positive shift in the size of the pressure since the committees had met a few weeks previously and commended the good work which taken place in the interim

Agreed: The Governing Body reviewed, and approved SERC’s Resource Budget 22/23 based on the current planning allocation received from the Department for the Economy. Members approved the Budget on the basis the committees will receive regular updates on the ongoing negotiations with the Department, which seeks to secure additional funding which will further reduce the pressure

Proposer: Alan McCrum

Secunder: Derek Wilson

b) Committee Terms of Reference

The Chair invited the Committee Chair’s to present the Terms of Reference for review and approval:

Audit Committee Terms of Reference were presented by Mr Mackell, he advised that a slight amendment was made to bring the ToR in line with guidance around the effectiveness of the NIAO and to include the committee’s role in reviewing the Business Continuity Plan annually, which came from an internal audit recommendation.

Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Secunder: Sam Hagen

Mr Pollard presented the Education Committee Terms of Reference for review; he advised the committee had not recommending any changes during this review:

Proposer: Majella Corrigan

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Seconder: Darren Stewart

Mr McCrum presented the Finance & General Purposes Terms of Reference for review; he advised the committee had not recommending any changes during this review:

Proposer: Derek Wilson

Seconder: Andrew Corbett

a) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 15th June 2022:

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

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Mark Huddleston and seconded by Gareth Hetherington

b) Education Committee minutes from meeting held on 20th June 2022:

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 Alan McCrum

c) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 14th June 2022:

Mr McCrum, Chair of the FGP Committee, presented the minutes for adoption.

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Derek Wilson and seconded by Andrew Corbett

5. Policies for approval

a) Charity and Fundraising Policy

Mr Pollard presented the policy and advised the Education committee had reviewed it and suggested some changes to ensure it was clear in its purpose.

Proposer: John Mackell

Seconder; Mark Huddleston

b) Safeguarding Policy

Mr Pollard presented the policy and advised the committee had reviewed the minor changes that are highlighted in the document.

Proposer: Michael McQuillan

Seconder: Deborah O’Hare

c) HE Admissions Policy

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The Secretary recorded the decision which had been agreed via email.

Proposer: Mark Huddleston

Secunder: Deborah O’Hare

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 College had proactively made changes to ensure that targets were met, this has been reported regularly to FGP Committee. The spending plan reduction was instrumental in the College delivering an outturn very close to this at £42,507k for the July year and so the College is also in a much better position to meet the March year end target.

The Chair noted that this result is something to be proud of in the current climate and he asked the CFO to pass his thanks on to the finance team.

b) TAMS Briefing

The Chief Training & Contracts Officer attended the meeting to brief members on the issues with the Trainee and Apprenticeship Management System, the written report was circulated in advance of the meeting and so the CT&CO provided a brief overview of the main issues, the following points were noted in discussion:

- The CT&CO set out the problems encountered using the TAMS system so far, he advised there is a lack of communication from the Department when issues are raised, there has been little staff training and any that’s has been offered has been ineffective . There have been major problems with the migration of data when the system went live and there is an upgrade issue as the contract with the provider ended over a year ago. The CT&CO provided members with an extensive and detailed briefing on the issues and advised that at this current time there does not seem to be a solution offered.

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- Members commented that this is a College reputational issue and the Principal added that there is a real concern that students will not receive their payments, staff have had to put some manual processes in place to process payment runs.
- The Principal also advised that as the previous TMS system has now been switched off there is no potential to perform an audit on the work carried out on it. He advised members that this has created a very stressful situation for the staff involved.
- The Chair thanked the CT&CO for this update and noted the Governing Body acknowledge the lengths staff have gone to, to ensure that business remains operational, and students are not impacted.
- The CFO informed members this issue has been added to the strategic risk register and will be monitored closely by Audit & Risk committee. Mr Mackell, Chair of Audit & Risk Committee, commented that the fundamental point in this issue is there has been no crossover of the systems which is negligent of the Department in that they stopped access to the old system.
- The Principal thanked members for their feedback and advised that if this matter cannot wait until the next meeting in November, he will brief the Chair of the GB in order to update members and confirm what action needs to be taken.

Action Point: The Principal and Chief Training & Contracts Officer to keep GB chair updated on the progress of the TAMS issue, a Special Governing Body meeting will be convened if necessary

At this juncture the CT&CO and CTO left the meeting.

c) Staff Governor Reports

On the invitation of the Chair Mr Corbett addressed the meeting, he advised that at this point of the year there is not a significant amount to report on as students have just started the new academic year. He advised that the Student Expo’s had just taken place and they had been very successful for staff and students.

d) Student Governor Report

The Chair asked members to note the written report in the absence of the Student Governor.

e) Audit Committee briefing on meeting held on 6TH April 2022:

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

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- The committee considered the terms of reference and annual cycle of business along with the internal audit plan which is now in its 3rd year. Mr Mackell advised the committee had agreed to include an additional review on Lost Learning as requested by the Department.
- The CFO presented the Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st July 2022, the committee reviewed the audit processes and noted the governance statement, a final draft will be presented for approval in November.
- The Chief Human Resources Officer presented an overview of operational risks in his departments and the committee noted with interest the issue of vacant posts across the College, the risks to delivery and the financial impacts on readvertising, the committee requested to be regularly updated on this particular risk.

f) Finance and General Purposes Committee briefing on meeting held on 5th April 2022:

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 spent a considerable amount of time considering the Resource Budget 22/23, Mr McCrum commented it was gratifying to note the pressure has been reduced to £1.1m from £3.1m.
- FGP Committee also reviewed the Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st July 2022 and focussed on the financial statements.
- The standing items of finance were presented along with an update on insurance renewal and the committee noted costs had increased significantly.
- The Estates strategy was reviewed, and the committee noted that a re-write and full approval will be sought in 2023.
- The committee reviewed and approved new strategic human resources priorities and received an update on last year’s, it was noted that 3 have been carried over to this year.
- The committee received an extremely interesting presentation on the work the HR team are carrying out in Health and Wellbeing across the College, the committee was very impressed with the excellent work that is being delivered. Mr McCrum noted that it demonstrates the caring and compassionate support that is embedded in the College.
- The CHOR presented the staff survey results, and while some results are down on last year the information will be taken forward to the focus groups which will inform action plans.

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g) Education Committee briefing on meeting held on 12th April 2022:

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

- The committee received a very informative presentation from the Marketing Manager to advise on the work of her team and the plans they have to increase the marketing activity and awareness of the brand.
- The Director of Curriculum & Information Services provided a presentation on Transversal Skills and Project Based Learning, the committee noted how they have been embedded into the curriculum and the long-term benefits for students.
- Time was spent discussing university policies and vocational qualification recognition and the issues students face in progressing to HE. A further discussion took place on the risk around HE enrolments and the provision overall of HE in FE. The committee noted the various factors contributing to this such as the lack of a 14-19 strategy, declining demographics and that level 3-5 is not being provided for.
- The standing items of the safeguarding report and policies were also reviewed and an update on the College Development plan was noted.

7. Any Other Business:

The Chair informed members that as the newly elected Chairs of the Education and Audit Committees, Mrs O’Hare and Mr Hagen will take over these roles for the next round of meetings. The Secretary has requested that members interested in the Vice Chair roles for both committees should advise her via email so that it can be included in the committee’s agenda in November.

With Mr. Pollard’s term due to end in mid-December there is an opportunity for the Governing Body to co-opt a member and particularly someone from industry, the Chair asked members if they have any suitable suggestions for a co-opted member to advise the Secretary.

Finally, the Chair thanked Mr Hetherington for his role as Temporary Chair of the Governing Body, he noted his long service to the Governing Body and that he had led the GB through a very challenging period. He congratulated him on his very well-deserved MBE and that he looked forward to his continued support this year.

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The Principal added his thanks to Mr Hetherington on behalf of the College Management Team, he commented that his support had been valued and greatly appreciated.

At this juncture the Director of SQPS, Staff Governor, Student Governor Elect and Boardroom Apprentice left the meeting.

8. Confidential Business

A separate note was taken for this item.

Date of next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for Monday 21st November 2022, 17.30, location TBC.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.11pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____

John Nugent

Chair of the Governing Body