



Minutes of a Meeting of the Governing Body (the “GB”)

held on Monday, 2nd October 2023 17:00 (GMT) in Meeting Room D17, Lisburn Campus and via Microsoft Teams

Agenda Item 1: Chair’s Business:

a) Attendance and Apologies for Absences:

Present:

Mr John Nugent (Chair of the Governing Body), Mr John Mackell, Mr Ken Webb (CEO/Principal), Mr Alan McCrum, Mr Derek Wilson, Mr Darren Stewart, Mr Mark Huddleston, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Samuel Hagen, Mr Andrew Corbett; Mrs Carolyn King, Mr Michael McQuillan, Dr Danny McConnell, Ms Vikki Pinkerton

In Attendance:

Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr Paul Smyth (Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)), Mrs Heather McKee (Director of Strategic, Planning, Quality & Support), Mrs Ciara O’Neill (Boardroom Apprentice)

Apologies: Ms Wilma Fee, Mrs Deborah O’Hare

In the Chair: Mr Nugent

b) Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:

The Chair invited members to declare any known or perceived conflicts of interests.

- 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.

c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on 26th June 2023:

The Governing Body reviewed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th June 2023 and agreed they were accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Derek Wilson and seconded by Alan McCrum.

d) Chair of the Governing Body update

The Chair provided members with a brief update on the work he had undertaken recently including completed the Governor assessments and attending the DfE partnership event. He advised that some members had reported difficulties with the meeting start times of 5pm and confirmed he would review the timings in the New Year.

He reminded members that the meetings have all now been scheduled to take place on either Tuesdays or Thursdays for the remainder of the year to accommodate mandatory campus closures, the Secretary has issued a new schedule to all members.

Action: Meeting start times to kept under review

e) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:

The Chair confirmed there were no outstanding actions from the previous meetings.

f) Board Effectiveness Review

The Secretary directed members to the written report setting out the effectiveness survey results. She advised that the overall results were extremely positive and demonstrated the sound governance frameworks in place in the College. The Secretary added that she would now work with the Chair to develop an action plan that will enable her to monitor the progress of the review throughout the year and use it as a benchmark for the next review, the action plan will be presented to the Governing Body in November.

g) Governing Body Membership and Recruitment

The Chair advised that DfE have confirmed a recruitment competition will be done to recruit new members for the Governing Body. An estimated timeline of 9 months has been given meaning that new members will not be in post until July 2024 the Chair advised he will continue to work with Departmental colleagues to try and expedite the process.

Agenda Item 2: Correspondence:

a) GB Correspondence Log

Members were asked to note the correspondence received from June 2023. In response to a query on the assurance statement to DfE the Principal provided a brief overview of the returns process and confirmed that it will be presented to Audit Committee.

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

The Principal talked to the written report provided and highlighted the recent student and staff successes set out. The Chair commented that this was an extremely impressive list and enquired how the College promotes the successes. The Director of SPQS advised that the College does maximise the impact in terms of publicity, for example, if students are attending a competition heat or final the coverage is increased over the social media channels, local media and internal comms.

Agenda Item 4: Items for Approval

a) Final Resource Budget 23/24

The Principal presented the Budget for approval, he began by advising further income had been confirmed since the FGP committee approved the budget on 11th September, the pressure has now reduced to £1.5m from £2.7m. The Principal provided members with an overview of the income and expenditure and advising the College is continuing to reduce costs by maximising class sizes, a recruitment freeze and working with the Department to get further income.

Mr Hagen highlighted that from a governance perspective the members are being asked to approve a budget with a deficit which is not usual. The Principal advised that the College has been in constant communication with the Department on the budget and has made it clear we have used the legal measures that we have to reduce deficit. The Department are aware of the deficit and are content that the College has demonstrated we have taken all the reasonable steps we can to reduce it.

Agreed: The Final Resource Budget 23/24 was approved on the proposal of Alan McCrum and seconded by John Mackell.

b) Strategy 2030

The Director of SPQS presented the Strategy 2030 for approval, she advised changes had been made on the back of the comments received from members.

Agreed: The SERC Strategy 2030 was approved on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Andrew Corbett.

- c) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 19th April 2023 and briefing from meeting on 13th September

Mr Hagen, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented the minutes for adoption. He asked members to note the written briefing he had provided on the meeting from 13th September.

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

- d) Education Committee minutes from meeting held on 25th April 2023 and briefing from meeting on 26th September

Mr McQuillan, Vice Chair of the Education Committee, presented the minutes for adoption. He directed members to the written briefing on the meeting from 26th September. Mr McQuillan added this had been a vibrant meeting with a lot covered. He highlighted it had been the student governors last meeting and the committee had thanked her for her a great year's service and her extremely positive contribution.

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

- e) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 18th April 2023 and briefing from meeting on 11th September

Mr McCrum, Chair of the FGP Committee, presented the minutes for adoption. He advised a written briefing had been provided on the meeting held on 11th September.

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

6. Policies for approval

- a) Mental Health Policy

The CHRO presented the policy for approval, he advised that minor changes had been made to reflect current updates.

Agreed: The Mental Health Policy was approved on the proposal of Andrew Corbett and seconded by Carolyn King.

- b) Little SERC Fees Policy

Members noted that the policy was developed for anyone who does not have third party funding and this document sets out the basis for the charging of fees, and the associated payment terms.

Agreed: The Little SERC Fees Policy was approved on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Alan McCrum.

c) Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy

Members noted this was sector policy and recently been reviewed with no changes required.

d) Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management Policy

Members noted the policy was reviewed and there had been a minor change to the title.

7. Items for Information

a) Bi-Annual review of the Strategic Risk Register

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr Hagen, advised members he had requested the risk register was presented bi-annually to the Governing Body to ensure there was complete transparency as the register covers business across the College. He highlighted that there are currently 5 red risks that have not changed in the last quarter.

The Chair noted that these are critical risks and enquired if there were any further updates on the risk around the TAMS system. The Principal advised while there have been improvements to the system it is still producing significant error rates. He advised that the NIAO are conducting a sector audit will be focussing on the manual work arounds in place rather than the issues with the system.

Mr Mackell added at the recent audit meeting, NIAO advised they would be conducting an audit on TAMS as part of a wider civil service audit on computerised systems rather than the governance and risk aspects of it. Mr Hagen advised he had received confirmation in writing from NIAO that this wider value for money audit would be conducted would focus on the following:

- Updating NIAO understanding of the controls in place around revenue recognition.
- Examining and test the process through which management identify and quantify any income that needs to be accrued (or deferred) at year-end.
- Considering the manual workarounds and projections in place to estimate accrued income.
- Evaluating the accounting policies for revenue recognition to ensure that current practice is in accordance with the stated policy.
- Performing substantive testing of income.

The evaluation of the implementation of the TAMS system would not form part of the audit. Mr Hagen finished by advising members the CMT and Audit Committee will continue to monitor the risk.

b) Financial Governance Report

The Chair directed members to report and advised it was for noting, the Financial Governance Report presents the performance of the College for both the Departmental financial year ended 31 March 2023 and the College financial year ended July 2023.

c) Staff Governor Reports

Members noted the written reports provided by the staff governors. Mrs King highlighted that there is a vibrant buzz around campus with the return of students. She also advised that despite reports all staff continue to have cordial relations during the recent industrial action.

Mr Corbett added that not all lecturing staff are taking part in the planned strikes and unfortunately morale is low among the staff as they are unsure what is happening at times, not all staff are members of the unions striking.

The Student Governor added that students had been unsure if classes were going ahead at times, and she had encouraged them to check their emails to make sure they did not miss vital communication. The Principal advised that unfortunately management are not advised which of the staff members will be going on strike and so from a safeguarding point of view, all classes had been held online. He added that this has been last minute, but the point of the strike was to cause as much disruption as possible and management continue to put contingency plans in place to support students and deliver classes.

d) Student Governor Report

The Student Governor talked to the written report provided and advised of the successful fresher's fairs held.

e) Skills Matrix-Presentation

Mr. Huddelston presented an overview of work he had completed in his role with the Skills Matrix panel for the Department for the Economy.

Mr. Huddleston began by advising the Matrix is an industry led panel convened to advise government and inform academia and industry on the commercial exploitation of R&D and science and technology in Northern Ireland. Matrix is a collaborative endeavour, with the primary aim to champion the role of science and technology as one of the key drivers of economic growth in Northern Ireland.

He provided members with an overview of the scenarios the panel developed, the skills required and the recommendations they are making to DfE.

The Director of SPQS thanked Mr. Huddleston for the information and advised she has been communicating with the Executive Office in relation to the programme for government. She enquired if this work is happening in isolation or if there is cross departmental working. He responded that there is a desire to have a more joined up approach. However, the challenge is there was not cross executive support pre the NI Assembly collapse and all the panel can do is to make their recommendations from an industry perspective.

The Chair of the Governing Body noted the alignment to T-Skills with the innate skills highlighted in the report. Mr. Huddleston advised that innate and cognitive skills are becoming more a societal need and there is a need to develop these skills at an early age through education.

The Principal added that there is lack a common language for this area of work. He noted the College would be keen to build on and map this to something that is better defined and understood once the work has been published.

8. Any Other Business:

No other business was discussed.

9. Confidential Business

A separate note was taken for this item.

Date of next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Governing Body is scheduled for Tuesday 28th November 2023, 17.00, Lisburn Campus.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.50pm

Signed:  _____

Date: 28.11.24 _____

John Nugent

Chair of the Governing Body