



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

held on Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 17:30, Lisburn Campus

Agenda Item 1: Chair’s Business:

a) Attendance and Apologies for Absences:

Present:

Mr John Nugent (Chair of the Governing Body), Mr Tommy Martin (Interim Principal/CEO), Mr Alan McCrum, Mr Darren Stewart, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Derek Wilson, Mrs Deborah O’Hare, Mrs Carolyn King, Mr Michael McQuillan, Dr Danny McConnell, Ms Vikki Pinkerton, Mr Samuel Hagen, Mr Mark Huddleston, Mrs Nuala Reid, Mrs Nicola Wilson, Mrs Pauline Leeson

In Attendance:

Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mrs Heather McKee (Deputy Principal Student Support Services), Gary Ritchie (Deputy Principal Curriculum), Mrs Emma Carson (Acting Director HR & Facilities), Mr Andrew Emmett (Acting Director IT & Finance), Mr Chris Bruton (Student Governor Elect)

Apologies: Mr Steven Lee

In the Chair: Mr Nugent

In opening the meeting, the Chair paid tribute to Andrew Corbett who had been the teaching Staff Governor from 2016 until April this year, sadly Andrew passed away in September. The Chair provided members with a background of Andrew’s career and noted that he contributed significantly to the work of the Governing Body. He commented that colleagues on the GB will remember him fondly and our thoughts are very much with Andrew’s family and SERC colleagues at this time.

The Chair highlighted that this was Ms Pinkerton’s last meeting as Student Governor and welcomed Mr Bruton, Student Governor elect, to observe at this meeting.

b) Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:

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

- 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. Is also current member of the College Advisory Group (Education) CAFRE DAERA CAFRE offers level 2 to level 6 + qualifications.
- 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.
- Mr McQuillan declared he is Chief Executive of Enterprise NI and a board member of Invest NI.
- The Interim Principal & CEO declared his daughter is employed as a lecturer at the College.
- The Deputy Principal Curriculum declared his wife and sister are employees at the College.

c) Minutes from meeting on 25th June 2024

The minutes from 25th June were approved on the proposal of Michael McQuillan and seconded by Alan McCrum.

d) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:

The DPSSS and DPC advised that they had considered the suggestion from the Student Governor to include Carbon Literacy courses within the PBL fortnight. They advised, that although the qualification could not be included this year the ethos of sustainability was very much at the centre of the work.

e) Co-optee Update

Members approved the appointment of Catherine McKay on the proposal of Alan McCrum and seconded by Derek Wilson.

f) Governance Framework

The Chair reminded members that he and the Secretary are always open to any suggestions or improvements members may wish to make in terms of the governance framework.

g) Election of Vice Chair

The Chair informed members that McCrum had advised he was content to stay in the role of Vice Chair and no other expressions of interest had been received. The Chair added that Mr McCrum had been a tremendous support to the Governing Body in this role.

Agreed: Mr McCrum was elected as Vice Chair on the proposal of Deborah O’Hare and seconded by Majella Corrigan.

h) Governing Body networking

The Chair highlighted to members that if an opportunity arises for them to make connections for the College outside of the board room, they could explore the connection with the management of the College. The Interim Principal & CEO added that there is a responsibility on members to act as ambassadors and if any positive connections are made that will develop the curriculum offering, he is content to explore these with members.

The Deputy Principal curriculum highlighted that there are some areas in which the College struggles to get students into placements and that the expansion of Apprenticeship NI is making it challenging to secure external placements which would make a richer experience for learners.

Action: Members were asked to familiarise themselves with the current College offerings requiring placements and focus on these when seeking networking opportunities.

i) Engagement with Department for the Economy

The Chair provided a brief update and advised members that there is a planned strategy day later this year. It is also anticipated that the Minister will make a statement on the Delivery Model in the coming weeks..

Agenda Item 2: Secretary’s Business

a) Amendment to Articles of Government

Members noted the amendment to reflect the replacement of the MSFM with the Partnership Agreement:

Agreed: The amendment to the Articles of Government was approved on the proposal of Alan McCrum and seconded by Derek Wilson.

b) Partnership Agreement reporting framework update

The Secretary presented the reporting framework, and it was agreed this would be presented to the Governing Body for oversight twice per annum and a standing item of business would be included in future agendas to provide an opportunity to flag any current issues to members.

Mr Huddleston highlighted that the arrangement with the Department does not feel like a partnership and added that there is a huge amount of work in the agreement for the College leadership. He asked this frustration was noted as there is very little added value for the College against the workload.

c) Activity and Engagement Schedule 24/25

Members noted the schedule, and the Secretary advised that MCs would be required for the Excellence Awards in April 2025.

d) Annual Cycle of Business 24/25

The Secretary advised that as per the earlier discussion on the PA Framework, she would amend the Governing Body work plan to include this review twice per year, she asked the cycle of business was approved on the basis of these changes being made.

Agreed: The Cycle of Business was approved on the proposal of Derek Wilson and seconded by Nuala Reid.

e) Training/Briefing requirements

Members noted the training schedule for 24/25, and the Secretary reminded everyone of the mandatory IOSH training in October.

f) Communications for Governing Body

The Secretary reminded members to regularly review their SERC email account, she highlighted the extra work required when deadlines are missed, or emails must be issued repeatedly.

Agenda Item 3: Correspondence:

a) GB Correspondence Log

Log provided to members in advance.

Members noted the correspondence log for information.

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

Paper provided to members in advance.

The Interim Principal and Chief Executive began by advising he changed the format of the report and was content for members to make suggestions on any other information they would like to see within the report.

In discussing the KPI's within the CDP, the discussion moved onto the upcoming ETI inspections, at this juncture Mr McCrum declared a conflict of interest as his wife is an ETI inspector. No action was taken in relation to the declared conflict.

Members noted the upcoming inspection in October for the Step Up programme and the DPC highlighted it will provide the College with the opportunity to demonstrate what is done well and how we support the learners. Moving on the Interim Principal & CEO provided members with a brief update on the restructuring of the schools and highlighted the support in place for the managers across the College. He added that the new structure is functioning effectively and there are no issues of concern to report. In concluding the update, he also advised that restructuring is included in the strategic risk register and so Audit Committee will have complete oversight and updates on the progress.

Agenda Item 5: Items for Approval

Papers provided to members in advance.

a) Resource Budget 24/25

The Interim Principal and CEO presented the budget for review and approval. He highlighted this is a balanced budget and set out the following detail:

SERC's 2024/25 resource budget allocation, as stated by DfE on 5th June 2024, is £46,510k.

The attached operational budget highlights a Resource Requirement of £46,510k.

The full year result for the 2023/24 year is included for comparative purposes. The most significant items in the plan to note include:

1. Total income has reduced by approximately £781k year-on-year.
 - a. The most significant reduction relates to Business Engagement income from DfE. 2024/25 will see £865k less income across Flexible Skills Fund, SME Productivity Booster and Ignite your Skills. This reduction is partially offset with the addition of the Multiply programme at £250k.
 - b. The most significant increase relates to the £630k income expected under the commercial arm of Business Engagement. This is an increase of c.£245k on previous year.
 - c. Other significant reductions include £146k within AppNI and Skills for Life and Work; and approximately £204k of project and other ring-fenced income.

The Interim Principal and CEO asked members to note that business services income is always the most variable income for the College, however, time is being spent working with Departmental colleagues to try and get a firmer confirmation going forward.

Agreed: The Resource Budget 24/25 was approved on the proposal of Alan McCrum and seconded by Derek Wilson.

b) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 13th June 2024 and briefing from meeting on 12th 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 12th September.

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Carolyn King and seconded by Michael McQuillan

c) Education Committee minutes from meeting held on 18th June 2024 and briefing from meeting on 17th September 2024

Mrs O'Hare, Chair of the Education Committee, presented the minutes for adoption and asked members to note the written briefing from the recent meeting on 17th September

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Nuala Reid

- d) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 11th June 2024 and briefing from meeting on 10th September 2024

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 10th September

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Danny McConnell and seconded by Majella Corrigan

- e) Sector Governing Body effectiveness review terms of reference

The Secretary addressed the meeting and took members through a presentation from ICS who are delivering the review for the sector. Members were asked to review and approve the proposal document from ICS and note the timelines set within the report. Members were advised that the Secretary and the Chair led on the procurement for this project on behalf of the Sector and a project Steering Group will now be chaired by Ken Nelson, Chair of NRC

The details of how the review would be conducted was presented and members asked that the questionnaire was changed to reflect the sector as it was quite generic.

Agreed: The ICS proposal and terms of reference were approved on the proposal of Deborah O'Hare and seconded by Michael McQuillan.

Action: Members asked if ICS could review the questionnaire and provide CV's for the staff working on the SERC review

- f) Standing Orders, Governance Framework and Code of Conduct

The Secretary presented the documents for review and highlighted that A&L Goodbody had reviewed all the documents after the initial internal review to provide assurance they were fit for purpose and aligned to the Partnership agreement.

Agreed: The Governance documents were approved on the proposal of Deborah O'Hare and seconded by Michael McQuillan.

Agenda Item 6: Policies for approval

Nothing to note.

Agenda Item 7: Items for Information

Papers provided to members in advance.

a) Accounts Update

The Interim Principal and CEO reminded members that the management accounts process had been suspended in May due to the lack of any confirmed budget and the college restructuring. During this suspension only essential spend was to be progressed. With the confirmed budget and the completed implementation of the new structure, this suspension was now lifted. The accounts up to end of August have just been produced and the forecast is in line with the previously predicted performance.

b) Staff Governor Reports

Members were asked to note the written report provided by the Staff Governor at 007B.1 The corporate Staff governor highlighted the excellent work of the staff at the recent open days.

In the absence of the teaching Staff Governor, members noted the written report provided at 007B.2 and briefly discussed the suggestion within the report to reduce the PBL fortnight to one week. The DSC advised that staff feedback would be taken on board for planning next year's expo events.

c) Student Governor Report.

The Student Governor referenced the paper at 007C and highlighted some of the recent activity. The Chair noted this was her last meeting and thanked Ms Pinkerton for her tremendous input this year and wished her well for the future.

Agenda Item 8: Any Other Business:

Agenda Item 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 26th November 2024 17.30, Lisburn Campus, Meeting room D floor.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed:

Date: _____

John Nugent

Chair of the Governing Body