

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Governing Body (the “GB”)
held on Monday, 21st November 2022 17:30 (GMT) in Meeting Room D17, Lisburn Campus**

1. Confidential

A separate note was taken for this item.

Agenda Item 2: 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; Ms Sophie Leigh Francis (Student Governor), Mrs Carolyn King

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 Paul Smyth (Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)); Mr Adam Donnell (Boardroom Apprentice), Ms Donna Blaney (FE Director at Department for the Economy) Item 1 only, Mr Sean Brolly (Deputy FE Director at Department for the Economy) Item 1 only. Mr Noel O’Hare (Deputy Chief Officer Quality, Excellence and Development) Item 5G Only

In the Chair:

Mr Nugent

The Chair welcomed Carolyn King to her first official Governing Body meeting since her election to the post if corporate staff governor.

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.

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c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on 26th September 2022:

The Governing Body reviewed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th September 2022. Ms Corrigan asked that her role at CCEA was declared due to the discussions held. 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 26th September 2022, be approved, and adopted.

Proposed by: Alan McCrum

Seconded by: Steve Pollard

d) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:

The Principal provided members with an update on the TAMS system that had been discussed at the previous meeting. The Principal advised that while the work is ongoing on the software progress has not been made in terms of processing payroll and the FE Branch have allowed the College draw down more cash. In response to a query from the Chair the Principal confirmed that there is a possibility of seconding a member of staff from the Sector to the Department as the work does need a practitioner who is using the software to advise of the issues they are experiencing and how the system is by the Sector. The Chair thanked the Principal for the update and added that the Governing Body are supportive of any of the issue and also noted that a post review is required by the Department when the software issues have been rectified.

e) Annual Self-Assessment review

The Chair asked members to note the enclosed review, and on the invitation of the Chair the Secretary advised that the return rate of the review was extremely low in comparison to previous years, and this is perhaps a communication issue over the Summer months.

Mr. Hetherington encouraged all members to speak to the Chair of the GB at any time if they had any issues they would like to address and that the review is not their only opportunity to disclose such matters.

Action Point: The Chair asked the Secretary to review the response rate and to ascertain if there are any other measures, that can be done to increase the rate next year

f) Co-optee Vacancy

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The Chair advised members that he had recently met with two potential co-opted members however for different reasons they were not suitable, he asked if any member would like to send through suggestions to do so before January when the vacancy will be discussed at the Chair’s Working Group meeting.

Action Point: Members were asked to forward any suggestions they may have for the co-optee vacancy to the Secretary in advance of the CWG meeting on 10th January

g) Gifts and Hospitality Register

Members were asked to note the enclosed register as per the agreed annual cycle of business, the Secretary reminded members that any declarations need to be through her so the register can be updated accordingly.

h) Partnership agreement

The Chair advised that the Department are continuing work on the Partnership Agreement that will replace the MSFM, the document is expected on 12th December and therefore members will be updated after this date.

Agenda Item 3: Correspondence:

Nothing to note.

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

The Principal talked to the written report provided and began by highlighting some of the very impressive achievements by staff and students; including the HR Team’s achievement of highly commended at the CIPD Awards and the several students confirmed as finalists in the BT Young Scientist of the Year Awards which will take place in January 2023. The Chair asked that the congratulations of the Governing Body was passed on to all.

The Principal moved on to advise that the Quality Improvement Team Feedback on HLA Evaluation, Traineeship & SFLW QMER had been received although they are not final for publication, Mr. Pollard commented on the robustness and positive outworking’s in the report which was so impressive.

Agenda Item 5: Items for Approval

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a) Annual Report and Financial Statements Year ending 31st July 22

In presenting the Final Annual Report and Financial Statements the Chief Finance Officer advised members that the draft and final accounts had been though both the Audit and FGP committee in detail and they had both recommended the accounts for adoption. Member commended the CFO and his team on the return of a clean audit report and asked that their thanks were passed onto the wider team involved in the audit.

Agreed: The Governing Body reviewed and agreed the Annual Report and Financial Statements Year ending 31st July 22 for adoption

Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Secunder: Alan McCrum

b) Equality Annual Progress Report

The Chief Human Resources Officer presented the Equality Annual Progress Report, he advised that the report has been submitted to the Equality Commission as a draft in order to meet the timeframe set by them. Members noted the letter from the Equality Commission within the report which was very commendable and impressive.

Agreed: The Governing Body reviewed and approved the Equality Annual Progress Report

Proposer: Steve Pollard

Secunder: Derek Wilson

c) Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Mr Mackell, out-going Chair of the Audit committee presented the Audit committee Annual Report, he began by advising members of the content within the report, he further advised that the report confirms the assurances the committee have had during the last year. He asked members to note that despite the busy period there has been excellent work from CMT, and this has been demonstrated in the outstanding audit report received from NIAO. Mr Mackell concluded his update by asking members to approve the report that will then be issued to the Department for the Economy.

Agreed: The Governing Body reviewed and approved the Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22

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Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Seconder: Mark Huddleston

At this juncture Mr Corbett joined the meeting.

d) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 14th September 2022:

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

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

e) Education Committee minutes from meeting held on 20th September 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

f) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 13th September 2022:

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

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Michael McQuillan and seconded by Derek Wilson

At this juncture the Deputy Officer Quality, Excellence and Development joined the meeting

g) Whole College Self Evaluation Report 2020-22 and Quality Improvement Plan 2022-24

The Deputy Officer Quality, Excellence and Development presented the final report to the members for consideration, he provided a brief overview of the report And highlighted the following in summary:

- The DCOQED began by advising that the development of this report was led by the Chief Officer and Deputy Officer Quality Excellence and Development along with the Head of Higher Education.
- In terms of the successes that have been reported members noted the seamless transition the College made in delivering blended learning during the pandemic, along with the loan system of IT equipment it meant that no classes were impacted by the closure of the campuses.
- The DCOQED highlighted that the continuation of Project Based Learning had been modified for online delivery and that T-Skills have been very much embedded now into the programmes.
- Challenges that the College faced included the lost learning aspect of the pandemic and how school students were impacted when coming into the College, a remedial programme was established to bring all students to the standard needed to progress with their studies.

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- Members noted that significant effort had been made post pandemic to re-engage with learners and there has been an issue around confidence of learners. The standard of English in numeracy papers has proved to be challenging and so this something the College has raised with the awarding organisations.

The Chair thanked the DCOQED for his presentation and noted that this is an excellent piece of work, he advised that in his role of Chair he was content to sign off on the report and sought approval from members.

Agreed: The Governing Body reviewed and approved the Whole College Self Evaluation Report 2020-22 and Quality Improvement Plan 2022-24 for submission

Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Secunder: Alan McCrum

5. Policies for approval

a) HE Fees Proposal

The Secretary advised this proposal had been agreed via email so that the changes were available for the Open evenings earlier in the month.

Agreed: The HE Fees proposal was agreed by email

Proposer: Andrew Corbett

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 advised at the end of March there is a pressure of £1.9m, the vast majority is attributed to pay awards, and funding has not been allocated because the pay award has not been agreed yet. The CFO advised that negotiations are ongoing to reduce the pressures in terms of utilities etc and the position for the July year end is the same as March.

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b) Staff Governor Reports

On the invitation of the Chair Mrs King, Corporate Staff Governor, provided members with a verbal report, she advised that with the emphasis on T-Skills and M-Skills at the recent Education Committee it was timely to update members on FE/HE work placements and the World Skills Competition. She advised of the past and current success of students and members noted that students can be under immense pressure performing at the competitions and so their success is even more well deserved. The Chair thanked Mrs King and asked her to pass on the Governing Body’s best wishes to all those awaiting results in the competition.

Mr Corbett, teaching staff Governor, advised members that the students had an online learning week which had been successful, but many are glad to return to face to face teaching this week. He advised that in the HND graphics course there is an issue around retention of students on the second year and so it might be useful to consider a one-year programme for this particular area.

c) Student Governor Report

The Student Governor talked to the written report provided and advised that the Student’s Union focus has been very much on student engagement and creating a community feel for students. She provided a detailed overview of the recent activity undertaken and the plans for the coming months. The Chair thanked her for a very full and comprehensive report.

Mr McCrum highlighted that the student voice should never be underestimated and encouraged the ongoing work adding that community interaction can be very powerful.

Action Point: Members requested regular updates on the student experience in HE

d) Audit Committee briefing on meeting held on 9th November 2022:

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

- The committee reviewed the Gifts and Hospitality register and there was significant issue on the TAMS issue and the associated risks with it for the College and students.

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- The committee reviewed the Report to Those Charged with Governance and received a detailed overview of the Annual accounts from the CFO, Mr Mackell reiterated the very positive outcome and the unqualified audit opinion that was received. He noted that it rare to receive this for any organisation two years in a row and it is testament to the hard work of the CFO, the Financial Controller and the wider Finance team.
- Two internal audit reports were reviewed, both with a satisfactory outcome and the committee reviewed the progress of previous recommendations.
- A low-level fraud case was reported to the committee, and it was noted that the investigation is complete and a disciplinary process is now being progressed by HR.

e) Finance and General Purposes Committee briefing on meeting held on 8th November 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 recommended the Annual Report and Financial Statements for adoption following a detailed overview from the CFO, along with the Annual Equality Report which was presented by the CHRO.
- A detailed discussion took place around PPP contracts following a report from the CFO to give the committee better understanding of the benchmarking data used in the recent Tribal report.
- The Head of the Learning Academy presented a very comprehensive overview of their work, the Chair noted that the breadth and scope of the work is very impressive. Other HR items included the review of the HR Priorities and key metrics which are all broadly were the committee expect them to be at this stage of the year.

In response to a question from a member on whether the PPP contracts could be bought out, the CFO advised that it would be a substantial decision to make and would cost a sizeable amount to do so, however, it may be relevant to consider it in terms of cost savings.

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

Mrs O’Hare, Chair of the Education Committee, provided an update on the recent meeting and highlighted the following in summary:

- The Director of Tertiary Education at DfE, Mark Lee, attending the committee to provide an update on the review of HE in FE, he advised the committee that he wanted to create a unique point for a HE product in FE.

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- The committee received reports on safeguarding, social inclusion, reviewed the HERB minutes and had a presentation from the Director of Curriculum & Information Services on T-Skills.
- The Deputy Officer Quality, Excellence and Development attended the meeting to brief members on Intelligent Analytics and the QIP/SER. She added that it had been a very busy meeting with a focus on quality.

h) Chair's Working Group Minutes of meeting held on 27th October 2022

Members were asked to note the minutes for information.

7. Any Other Business:

The Principal advised members that the Director of Strategic, Planning Quality and Support had been shortlisted for Director of the Year by IoD. The Chair congratulated the Director and wished her well for the final on behalf of the Governing Body.

The Chair advised members that he intends to keep board effectiveness on the agenda and asked members to submit any ideas they have to him or the Secretary. Other areas for consideration are a Whats app group to keep members informed of any urgent developments, this will not replace any formality of the Governance piece of communication.

Members noted that there will be a reorganisation of the TeamSite and that training and development for members will be reviewed in 2023.

Action: Ground rules for a WhatsApp group will be presented to members at their next meeting for consideration

At this juncture Mr Huddleston, 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.

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

John Nugent

Chair of the Governing Body