

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON TUESDAY 31 AUGUST 2021 AT 17.30 VIA TELECONFERENCE.**

**PRESENT:**

Mr Andrew Saunders (Chair)  
 Mr Brian Doran (SRC CEO)  
 Mr Scott Alexander  
 Mr Gordon Gough  
 Mr Aidan McCormick  
 Mr John Nugent  
 Prof Gregory O'Hare  
 Mr Tom Redmond  
 Mrs Carla Shields  
 Dr Eileen Stewart  
 Mrs Tracy Strachan  
 Mr Kieran Swail  
 Mrs Judith Thompson  
 Mr Matthew Turner  
 Mrs Nicola Wilson

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Keith Kilpatrick, Director of Curriculum  
 Mr Raymond Sloan, Director of Client Services  
 Mrs Lee Campbell, incoming Director of Finance and Planning  
 Mr Colin Woods, Dept. for the Economy  
 Mrs Joanna Brown, Safeguarding Board for NI  
 Mrs Janet Toal, Boardroom Apprentice  
 Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 17.32.

Mr Saunders welcomed all parties to the meeting and introduced Mr Colin Woods.

**A01. DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

ACTION By whom

Mr Woods thanked Members for the opportunity to present the programme strategy. He advised that the Department for the Economy are reprioritising policy objectives reflective of a number of challenging years, impacted by Covid-19 and Brexit. He informed of limited recruitment and legacy issues post-merger 2016, and referenced the impact of the RHI enquiry.

Mr Woods referred to the 10X economic vision for the Northern Ireland economy and informed of three overarching objectives in the Department's transformation programme that will better enable DfE to deliver the strategy - policy, people and systems. He advised that the transformation piece will focus on innovative vision and informed on six key projects to address policy and strategic direction; culture, behaviours and working practices; investment in talent management, success planning and inclusion; leadership skills and development; organisational design and core process review.

Mr Woods advised that it is the Department's intention to engage with SRC and all other Arm's Length Bodies to seek input on the transformation programme and to establish a shared understanding of the strategic direction, remit, purpose and priorities for the Department for the Economy.

Mr Saunders remarked on a large project and advised he is glad that ALBs will be party to discussions. He expressed a concern for cultural change and the potential impact on staff morale.

Mr Woods advised that the time is right for fundamental change within DfE and acknowledged that staff have been asked a lot of as a result of the current pandemic.

Mr Redmond recognised the diversity of the DfE organisation and questioned priorities for budget allocation. Mr Woods advised that work needs to be undertaken to address funding priorities, informing that some funding is fixed and others managed through flexibility and responsiveness.

In response to a query from Mr Doran, Mr Woods stated that future FE sector structures are not within scope of the programme of work and separate stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to inform on future delivery partners.

Mr Turner recommended that further considerations be given to the duplication of provision and potential efficiencies that may be established in partnership with the Department for Education.

Prof O'Hare requested clarity on the cost benefit analysis, remarking on a well-motivated project and expressing concern over the projected timeline. He remarked that a repurposing of tasks will not equate to getting the work done.

Mr Woods advised that the Department is not currently operating effectively and perennial changes are required to improve working practices.

On behalf of the Governing Body, Mr Saunders thanked Mr Woods for his comprehensive report and extended an invitation for him to return to future Board meetings to provide updates and seek the Governors input as the project progresses.

Mr Woods left the meeting at 18.10.

#### **A02. BECOMING A TRAUMA INFORMED COLLEGE**

Mrs Brown joined the meeting at 18.10 however due to technical issues was unable to deliver her presentation and left the meeting at 18.14.

#### **A03. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **A04. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The Chair reminded those present to declare at the commencement of the meeting any conflict of interest held in matters to be discussed.

Mrs Wilson declared an interest as employee of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon borough council.

#### **A05. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING 22 JUNE 2021**

The minutes of the Governing Body meeting of 22 June 2021 were reviewed for accuracy, and unanimously approved on proposal from Mr Turner and seconded by Mr Gough.

#### **A06. MATTERS ARISING**

Members were advised that governance finance training is arranged for 13 September, that all other matters have been addressed or remain on the action sheet for future discussion.

#### **A07. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

Mr Saunders welcomed all parties to the meeting, extending a warm welcome to new Members Mrs Shields and Mrs Strachan. Mr Saunders greeted Mrs Campbell and Mrs Toal and offered his thanks to Mr Gough and Mrs Wilson for agreeing a further extension to their tenure of office.

Mr Saunders referred to the Departmental competition for BIP Governors and advised that SRC should expect four further new Members to their Board in the New Year.

He offered his congratulations to Prof O'Hare on his new appointment with Trinity College Dublin, advised that Donna Blaney has been appointed as Interim FE Director and referred Members to Mr Swail's recently circulated information on Instagram Reels for Business and planned Autumn webinar series.

Mr Saunders relayed the tragic news that the Head of MIS and Examinations, Mrs Judith Givan passed away in early June following a recent illness. Mr Doran advised that the circumstances are particularly sad as Judith leaves behind two young sons and her husband passed away a number of years back. He informed that Judith was a much beloved and well respected member of staff and advised that he is in talks with Judith's brother and Minister to organise a memorial service to mark Judith's life and allow staff the opportunity to pay their respects. Mr Gough advised that he was lucky to have known Judith, and spoke to a lovely young women, cherished by all that knew her.

Mr Saunders advised that Mr McCormick has agreed take up chairmanship of the Education Committee when Mr Gough's term of office expired.

All parties made their introductions, providing detail on their professional background and roles within the College.

Mr Saunders advised that Governing Body and Committee meetings will be kept online for the time being with the matter kept under review.

#### **A08. SAFE RESUMPTION OF ONSITE DELIVERY**

Mr Doran referred Members to the guidance note setting out the College's position on resumption of onsite delivery from 1 September. He confirmed that the guidance is based on the direction provided by DfE following the NI Executive's decision on 12 August to permit FE colleges to resume face to face delivery following the triggering of Stage 5 of the Pathway Out of Restrictions. Mr Doran informed Members of a webinar held on 23 August to inform staff of the College's position to safe resumption of onsite delivery.

Mr Doran advised on measures aligned to Stage 4 are continuing to address the increased number of staff coming onsite, including social distancing and the use of face coverings. He informed that the College will continue to promote the use of lateral flow testing and maintain contact tracing measures. He advised that staff are liaising with the PHA and taking an active role to support the vaccination programme and address health and safety priorities.

Members noted the report.

#### **A09. CDP ACTION PLAN 2020-21 close out**

Mr Doran referred Members to the close out of the CDP Action Plan 2020-21 and advised on the RAG status of actions previously set. He informed that part time enrolments were particularly severally impacted as a result of the government imposed lockdown and advised on the enrolment challenges that have arisen due to GCSE and A level grade inflation.

Mrs Strachan concurred with Mr Doran's assessment on grade inflation, stating that the clearing process appears to be pointing to greater numbers entering university than ever before.

Mr Doran advised that in the previous weeks, many students have still not been placed and further discussion will be required at the Principals and Curriculum Directors Working Groups to consider colleges entering the UCAS system.

Mr McCormick informed Members of a good publicity report on the work of FE colleges in the Belfast Telegraph. Mr Doran remarked on a good example of collaborative working.

In response to a query from Dr Stewart on collaborative working with ROI partners, Mr Doran advised on the inclusion of apprenticeships under the CAO application process.

Mr Kilpatrick concurred that grade inflation and ineffective learning progression signposting remains a challenge for FE colleges.

Mr Doran advised that objectives marked yellow within the CDP Action Plan will be carried over into the new academic year, informing that the ETI WBL inspection has been delayed and approval of the commercialisation strategy has been deferred. He advised that the HE FE review is not yet complete and expressed concern that the issue of duplication of provision and the outworking of the 14-19 strategy has not yet been progressed.

Members noted the report.

#### **A10. CURRICULUM STRATEGY**

Mr Kilpatrick referred Members to the Curriculum Strategy previously presented to the Governing Body in January 2021. He reminded Members of the challenges that have arisen due to Covid-19 and the impact that this has had on both delivery and the development of many curriculum initiatives.

Mr Kilpatrick referred to the strategic aims of the Curriculum Strategy, partnership working and the introduction of Advanced Technical awards. He advised on a focus on learning progression pathways and the development of an online e-campus.

Mr Kilpatrick informed that the lockdown restrictions have resulted in enhancing staff's digital capabilities. Mr Doran advised on good collaborative working in the areas of HUBs.

Prof O'Hare advised on opportunities to provide micro credentials and demonstrate fluidity and agility by offering a programme of accumulating modules of accreditation.

Mr McCormick expressed frustration that various evolutions of the entitlement framework has yet to address the 14-19 problem.

#### **A11. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REGISTER**

Members reviewed the Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship Register and expressed no concerns.

#### **A12. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

Mr Sloan referred Members to the proposed Personal Development Programme and advised that the pilot is open to all staff to enrol on a recreational or accredited course with the tuition fee met by the College.

The proposal was unanimously approved by the Governing Body.

#### **A13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr Saunders thanked Mrs Toal for her attendance and advised that support is on hand to assist her in her boardroom experience.

#### **A14. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the full Governing Body is scheduled for 17.30 on Tuesday 2 November 2021.

The meeting concluded at 20.00.

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**CHAIR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

