



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

held on Thursday 17th April 2025 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 (Principal/CEO), Mr Alan McCrum, Mr Darren Stewart, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Derek Wilson, Mrs Carolyn King, Mr Michael McQuillan (Items 3-9 only), Dr Danny McConnell, Mr Samuel Hagen, Mrs Nuala Reid, Mrs Pauline Leeson, Mr Chris Bruton, Mr Steven Lee (Items 1-6 only) , Ms Grainne McVeigh

In Attendance:

Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mrs Heather McKee (Deputy Principal Planning, Performance and Engagement), Mrs Emma Carson (Acting Director HR & Facilities), Mr Andrew Emmett (Acting Director IT & Finance), Mr Gary Ritchie (Deputy Principal Curriculum)

Apologies: Mrs Nicola Wilson, Ms Catherine McKay

In the Chair: Mr Nugent

b) Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:

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

- Ms Corrigan declared she is employed by 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 Principal & CEO declared his daughter is employed as a lecturer at the College.
- Mr Lee declared his wife is employed as a Deputy Head of School at the College.

- The Deputy Principal Curriculum declared his wife and sister-in-law are both employed in support staff roles at the College.

No action was taken in relation to any of the declared conflicts. Members were reminded that they should declare any potential conflicts to agenda items should they arise during the meeting.

c) Minutes from meeting on 11th February 2025

Papers previously provided to members.

The minutes from the meeting held on 11th February were approved on the proposal of Sam Hagen and seconded by Danny McConnell.

d) Matters Arising/Action Points from previous Meetings:

Papers previously provided to members.

The Acting Director of HR & Facilities advised that in terms of the request made to explore trends in other organizations of Raising Concerns, this report will be presented to the Finance & General Purposes Committee at their next meeting in June.

Members noted there were no other outstanding actions.

e) Governance Framework

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

Agenda Item 2: Secretary's Business

Papers previously provided to members.

a) Activity and Engagement Schedule 24/25

Members noted the schedule, and the Chair thanked everyone who had recently attended or performed MC at the Excellence Awards in April.

Members were advised that a 'save the date' had been issued to them for the Higher Education Graduation ceremony on 19th September and the Chair asked if everyone could update their attendance as soon as possible.

b) Training/Briefing requirements

The Secretary provided an overview of training planned in the coming months and advised if members had any further requirements to advise her so that all requests are considered.

Action: The Chair asked if the Governing Body training budget could be collated and that it was monitored going forward by the Secretary

c) Committee Membership

The Secretary requested that this discussion was deferred to agenda item 2D, where a full discussion would take place on all the recommendations from the ICS Effectiveness Review.

d) Compliance of Partnership Agreement

The Secretary informed members that to ensure compliance with the Partnership Agreement, it was agreed with the Chair that all committees would produce an annual report and this would detail how each of the clauses had been met through the cycle of work across the Governing Body.

Action: The Partnership Agreement matrix will be reviewed at the next Chairs Working Group meeting to ensure that assigned responsibility for each clause is assigned to the appropriate owner.

At this juncture Mr. McQuillan joined the meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Correspondence:

a) GB Correspondence Log

Log provided to members in advance.

Members noted the correspondence log for information.

The Chair advised that going forward the correspondence log will be simplified, and relevant items will go through committees and onto Governing Body if necessary.

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

Paper provided to members in advance.

The Principal talked to the written report provided at 004 and highlighted the current financial performance and enrolment figures.

He advised that the Department have been flexible and reassessed the budget position for the sector for 2025/26 and the pressure has now been reduced from £18m to £7m, which is still a significant pressure for the sector. Colleges are still working to find efficiencies but have welcomed this positive news.

The Principal added that a communication will be issued to staff shortly to update on the new position.

In response to a query on moving to multiyear budgets the Principal advised that. no formal commitment has been made by the Department but that there has been discussion around lead time for Colleges to move.

Moving on, the Principal updated members on the recent Accountability meeting with the FE Director and the Deputy Secretary. He advised that the meeting was much less formal than the previous meetings and had been largely positive. Members noted that the agenda included talking through the current risks to the College and the assurance statement. This included the financial position, workforce challenges, industrial relations and the audit process. A robust discussion also took place on the challenges the College face in terms of learner numbers, SERC highlighted that although there was a welcome move away from measuring the number of enrolments, work remained in recognising the varying type of student, for example an evening student in a part time course should not be considered equal to a full-time student.

Agenda Item 5: Items for Approval

Papers provided to members in advance.

- a) Audit Committee minutes from meeting held on 30th January and briefing from meeting on 27th March 2025

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 27th March 2025

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Carolyn King

- b) Education Committee minutes from meeting held on 4th February 2025 and briefing from meeting on 8th April 2025

Ms Corrigan, Chair of the Education Committee, presented the minutes for adoption and asked members to note the written briefing from the recent meeting on 8th April

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Grainne McVeigh and seconded by Nuala Reid

- c) Finance and General Purposes minutes from meeting held on 28th January 2025 and briefing from meeting on 25th March 2025

Mr McCrum, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, presented the minutes for adoption. He advised a written briefing had been provided on the meeting held on the March 2025

Agreed: The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Danny McConnell and seconded by Derek Wilson

- d) ICS Effectiveness Review Final Report and proposed Action plan

The Secretary directed members to the written report and highlighted the recommendations that had been made.

To begin the discussion members noted the recommendation to improve the relationship with the Department and the suggestion to have informal communication with relevant stakeholders within the Department.

Members noted that the Chair and Principal are in frequent contact with the Departmental officials across several platforms, and fostering good relations is important. It was suggested that officials should be invited to more College events, for example the upcoming Skills Build event, and this would enable a less formal interaction to take place.

The Secretary invited members to discuss the membership of the Education Committee. She advised that ICS advised that the committee could not be held to full account by the Governing Body due to its current size.

Members noted that if we retain the current committee structure (3 committees) and reduced membership of the Education Committee other members may feel they would miss the perspective this committee provides.

The Secretary proposed that items that are presented to the Education committee for information only, which are mainly staff presentations, could be heard at the main Governing Body instead. This would ensure that all members still get an overall perspective of the College. She further added that there is a good governance framework already in place to allow reporting across all the committees to the Governing Body, and so members have sufficient access to the information.

Members noted that the introduction of a Staffing Committee was another option, however this should not be actioned simply to satisfy the ICS recommendation.

A robust discussion took place on collaboration in the sector regarding recommendation 3 of the report. The Principal highlighted that there is collaboration in place in CEF, the Principals group and the Chairs Group, but when these meetings take place, they are for specific agenda items.

He added that the real challenge for collaboration is across shared services and it would be useful if there was a mechanism created to allow this work to develop.

Action: The word 'informal' used at recommendation 1 will be developed to within the Action Plan

Action: SERC will explore reestablishing the meeting of the ARAC Chairs to share best practice and information

Action: Chairs Working Group will review the membership of committees and committee structure and propose a way forward at the Education Committee in June.

Action: Committee membership will be reviewed more frequently than it currently is, two years into a member's term

Agreed; The ICS Report was approved on the proposal of Derek Wilson and seconded by Majella Corrigan.

e) Draft Meeting Schedule 2025/26

Members reviewed the proposed schedule and agreed to rotate Governing Body meetings across the main campus building to try and integrate staff engagement with the meetings.

As per the discussion at agenda item 5D the schedule will be finalized when an agreement on the Committee structure has been made.

Action: A review of widening staff engagement will be undertaken at Chairs Working Group

Action: The 25/26 schedule will be represented for approval in June

Agenda Item 6: Policies for approval

No policies were presented for approval.

At this juncture Mr. Lee left the meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Items for Information

Papers provided to members in advance.

a) Accounts Update

The Principal & Chief Executive directed members to the written report at 007A for noting.

b) Staff Governor Reports

Members were asked to note the written reports provided by the Staff Governors at 007B.

c) Student Governor Report

The Student Governor presented his report to members and enquired if the HE Graduation awards could be expanded to ensure that all officers are recognised for their efforts. This was agreed by CMT.

Action: CMT to take forward proposal to widen HE Graduation awards for the SU officers

Agenda Item 8: Any Other Business:

The Chair highlighted the Strategy Day on 19th and asked any member that was unable to attend to provide some written comment in advance.

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 23rd June 2025 17.30, Lisburn Campus, Meeting room D floor.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed:

Date: _____

John Nugent

Chair of the Governing Body