

MNNUTES (EXCLUDING RESERVED BUSINESS)

STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY MEETING ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 2PM IN THE CONFERENCE HALL, MAIN BUILDING

Governing Body: Professor Sir Desmond Rea (Chair), Mr E Jardine (Vice-Chair), Dr E Birnie, Mrs C Moore, Mr R Thompson, Mrs H Miller, Ms M Corrigan, Professor D Jones, Mr P Weill, Dr A Brown, Mr D Feely, Miss M Magee, Professor A Heaslett, Mr W Patterson, K Nelson, Dr M Bennett, Dr L Boyce

In Attendance: Ms K Robinson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Ms J O'Boyle (Head of Finance – Item 4), Mr P Gallagher (Head of Estates and Procurement – Item 6)

Apologies: None

Any Other Business: None

PRIVATE MEETING

The Non-Executive Members met in private session immediately prior to the main meeting. There were no substantive matters requiring discussion.

AGENDA

GB/4/21/1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4/21/1.1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Dr Jonathan Heggarty who will be taking up his new post as Principal and Chief Executive of the College, with effect from 20 September 2021.
- 4/21/1.1.2 Professor Heaslett was thanked for agreeing to stay on as Principal until 17 September 2021 to ensure a smooth handover to Dr Heggarty.
- 4/21/1.1.3 Thanks were also extended to the Secretary to the Governing Body for her effective and efficient management of the Board's business and for the papers provided for the meeting.

GB4/21/1.2**APOLOGIES**

4/21/1.2.1

There were no apologies.

GB/4/21/1.3**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

4/21/1.3.1

No conflicts of interest were declared.

GB/4/21/1.4**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

4/21/1.4.1

There was no other business to discuss, other than that included on the Agenda.

GB/4/21/2**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 22 JUNE 2021 AND MATTERS ARISING, INCLUDING ACTION POINTS**

4/21/2.1

The Minutes of the previous meeting on 22 June 2021 were agreed.

4/21/2.2

All Action Points from previous meetings had been cleared.

Matters Arising

4/21/2.3

The Principal and the Chair provided Members with an update on the Permanent Secretary's visit to the College on 7 September 2021. The visit provided an opportunity for the Permanent Secretary to view the capital works that had been undertaken on campus, including the refurbishment of Nendrum Halls. An update on the Sports Pitches Project was also provided and the visit provided an opportunity to discuss what Central Building would look like if it was refurbished.

4/21/2.4

Members noted the update provided by the Principal on the Property Maintenance Framework. A new risk had been identified with regard to the challenges experienced with having to avail of the Pan Government Property Maintenance Framework (PMF'19). There has been ongoing liaison with the Permanent Secretary and Departmental officials over the summer. This resulted in a meeting with the Head of Property Services on 1 September to discuss the restoration of the 2017 derogation for a temporary period until the CONCERTO system is fully embedded. On the 9 September 2021 the College received correspondence from the Chief Executive of CPD to state that the current contractor, Grahams, wishes to retain the current contracted processes because they are facilitating 'Go Live' on the Concerto Reactive module for the Department of Finance (DoF). CDP has offered the College the opportunity to move ahead with on boarding for reactive, PPM and Remedial modules of the new Concerto system possibly at the end of October 2021. The College has accepted this offer and will keep the implementation under review.

4/21/2.5 There were no other matters arising.

GB/4/21/3 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) 8 July 2021

4/21/3.1 Members received an overview from the Chair of ARAC on the discussions that had taken place at the ARAC meeting on 8 July 2021. Members noted the following:

- That the meeting had been moved into July 2021 to facilitate completion of the 2020-21 Internal Audit Programme.

- That the annual meeting had taken place between the Chair and the Principal with other Members of the Committee present. Discussions took place around the following:
 - The effectiveness of the relationships between the College and the Internal Auditors.
 - The good progress that had been made on 'Follow-up Reviews and the good standard of Internal Audit Reports overall.
 - The maturity of control of risks and effectiveness of the College's Risk Management arrangements, including the review of the Risk Management Policy, Risk Appetite Statement and Reporting arrangements which had taken place.
 - The effectiveness of the management by the College of the COVID-19 situation and the importance of considering lessons learned. The latter will be considered in the context of Business Continuity Planning, a review of which is to be undertaken by the Head of Finance.
 - The positive feedback from students on the College's management of the Pandemic.
 - The importance to support staff and students in the transition out of the Pandemic and that wellbeing is ensured. In this respect the Committee indicated that Student Support funding which had been applied for would be helpful.
 - That the Committee had undertaken its annual Effectiveness Review. A suggestion that the Committee could perhaps consider how learning

from research conducted by the College is fed back into the education system and what the College should be specialising in in terms of research would be worthy of further discussion.

- That the Committee had approved the External Audit Strategy.
- That the Committee had requested further information via Internal Audit on Cyber-Security.
- That the Committee had emphasised that all staff who have not completed compulsory Data Protection Training, should be reminded to do so.
- That overall Satisfactory Assurance has been awarded for the 2020-21 year following completion of the Internal Audit Programme.
- The Committee was content with the Corporate Risk Register and the changes proposed to the Risk Management Policy.
- That the Department had informed the Committee that the work to develop a new Partnership Agreement with the College had not yet started.

Education Committee 30 July 2021

4/21/3.2 Members received an overview from the Chair of the Education Committee of the discussions that had taken place under Reserved Business at the Committee meeting on 30 July 2021.

4/21/3.3 The Business Case which was considered at the meeting was approved by the Governing Body. The final draft included for consideration takes account of the discussions and comments by the Education Committee. The Committee has agreed that a worthwhile case has been made, it has approved the content and is also content with the philosophy, objectives and logical structure of the proposal.

GB/4/21/4 FINANCE REPORT INCLUDING JUNE 2021 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND DRAFT BUDGET

4/21/4.1 The Head of Finance provided an overview of the June 2021 Management Accounts. Members noted the detail provided in the Paper.

- 4/21/4.2 Members congratulated the College for keeping costs under control.
- 4/21/4.3 In terms of the reduced income of the Hospitality, Accommodation and Conferencing Services, Members noted that the Ad-Hoc Group established to review this area would continue with its work in the current year.
- 4/21/4.4 The draft Budget for 2021-22 was discussed.
- 4/21/4.5 Members noted the key assumptions upon which the draft figures were based as well as the potential financial position for the three subsequent years' that might arise based on the assumptions used.
- 4/21/4.6 Members noted that Budget setting for 2021-22 still remains a challenge, as September is a key month for firming up on student enrolments and halls occupancy information for the more accurate estimation of key sources of income. However, given the information available at the time of preparation, an operational surplus for 2021-22 is predicted.
- 4/21/4.7 Members noted that there remains a risk that income will be negatively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions during 2021-22. In this respect DfE invited NI HEI's to submit bids for 2021-22 COVID-19 risk mitigation funding as set out in the Paper. In this regard, Members noted that DfE has recently advised the College that *'there is both sufficient budget cover and cash cover currently in place for the spend being bid for, and on that basis the Department is unable to progress the bid any further at this time'*.
- 4/21/4.8 The Committee noted the clarification provided by the Head of Finance on:
- the expected increase in National Insurance Contributions;
 - the potential for increases in Bank charges;
 - the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review on DfE's Budget which is likely to be known in mid to late November 2021; and
 - the current position with regard to the uptake of Halls accommodation which is that Halls are currently fully booked and that there is a waiting list;
- 4/21/4.9 The Chair of the HR & Remuneration Committee informed the Head of Finance that a Budget will be needed for Governor Training once a survey of Governor Training Needs is completed. The Governing Body agreed that the Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee will liaise with the Head

of Finance when costs have been calculated with a view to securing an appropriate level of Budget to take training forward.

4/21/4.10 In conclusion, of the discussions, and following the proposal by the Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee which was seconded by the Chair of ARAC, the Budget for 2021-22 was approved.

4/21/4.11 The Governing Body thanked the Head of Finance for her Report.

GB/4/21/5 GOVERNING BODY FORWARD WORKPLAN 2021-22

4/21/5.1 The Governing Body Workplan for 2021-22 as submitted by the Secretary, was approved.

GB/4/21/6 REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY OPERATING FRAMEWORK AND MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

4/21/6.1 Amendments to the Governing Body's Operating Framework, including revised procedures for the election of the Staff Representatives on the Governing Body, as set out in the Paper from the Secretary, were approved.

4/21/6.2 The Governing Body also approved the proposed changes to Committee Membership as proposed by the Chair.

GB/4/21/7 REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY STANDING ORDERS

4/21/7.1 The Governing Body approved minor changes to its Standing Orders as proposed by the Secretary.

GB/4/21/8 REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY'S CODE OF CONDUCT

4/21/8.1 The Governing Body approved a number of minor changes to its Code of Conduct as well as the inclusion of updated Guidance on Declaration of Interests. Members noted that the Secretary would be liaising with Members to update their Declarations for the 2021-22 Register of Interests.

GB/4/21/9 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2020-21

GB/4/21/9.1 The Governing Body endorsed a report from the Principal on progress against Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets during 2020-21. A good overall position was achieved in spite of the impact of COVID-19 on the achievement of some targets. Congratulations were extended to all staff for the good performance.

GB/4/21/10**CENTENARY CELEBRATION STRATEGY**

4/21/10.1

The Principal provided an overview of the proposed Centenary Celebration Strategy and extended her thanks for the inputs from Staff and Mr Weil who had contributed to the development of the Strategy. Members noted that planning will now need to commence to implement the Strategy and that an additional resource will be needed to take the Strategy forward and to flesh out the Plans.

4/21/10.2

The Governing Body endorsed the Strategy.

GB/4/21/11**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

4/21/11.1

Members noted the following updates from the Principal in respect to:

- The management of COVID-19;
- the Plans for opening up the Campus in the 2021-22 Academic Year. The principles guiding the planning activity continue to be:
 - the health, welfare and safety of our College community;
 - the continued provision of a high-quality learning and teaching experience for all students, and the maintenance of quality standards; and
 - the continued provision of a high-quality educational experience for all students.
- the National Student Survey (NSS) results 2021, which scored, lower than last year; reflecting lower results in the UK as a whole. The Governing body acknowledged the internal feedback from students that the sense of loss of community has been deeply felt by students and staff. The Governing Body congratulated staff and students for the work that was undertaken 2021 in what were very difficult circumstances.
- the Graduate Outcomes Report;
- the success of the college's Careers and Employability Service, which achieved the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Membership Quality Standard. Members extended their thanks to Ms Joanne Doherty, Careers & Employability Officer, with the support from Dr Ken Gibson for taking forward this initiative, which assists in the continued articulation of the College's services and standards to all stakeholders; and

- the Queen's University Archaeological Excavation Project.

GB/4/21/12**STUDENT PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

4/21/12.1

The Student President presented her Report, which covered for example, the preparations for the new academic year, the work that was undertaken to gauge student views on the Students' Union; Freshers' Event planning, Clubs and Societies preparations and the graduation ceremony.

4/21/12.2

The Student President welcomed Dr Heggarty on behalf of the Students' Union and extended her thanks to the College for the Residential that had taken place for the new first year students.

4/21/12.3

Members thanked the Student President for her Report and wished her every success during her term of office.

GB/4/21/13**CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

4/21/13.1.

The Chair referred to his note to Members informing them that there would be a discussion at the next Governing Body meeting on 30 November 2021 on 'Governance in the Round'.

Mr Nelson and Mrs Miller left the meeting at 3.30pm and 3.35pm respectively

GB/4/21/14**CORPORATE RISK REGISTER, INCLUDING UPDATED RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND REVIEW OF RISK APPETITE**

4/21/14.1

The Principal provided an overview of the proposed changes to the Risk Management Policy and acknowledged the Secretary's work on the review.

4/21/14.2

The Governing Body endorsed the changes and agreed its Risk Appetite, all of which were supported by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

4/21/14.3

The Corporate Risk Register was endorsed.

GB/4/21/15**ACCOUNTS DIRECTION 2020-21**

4/21/15.1

The Accounts Direction for 2020-21 was noted.

In the absence of any other business, the meeting ended at 4pm.

Signed _____ Date _____ 30/11/21 _____
Chair of the Governing Body