

**FOR PUBLICATION EXCLUDING RESERVED BUSINESS**

**STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**GOVERNING BODY MEETING ON 15 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 2PM IN SPERRIN ROOM,  
REFECTORY BUILDING**

**Governing Body:** Mr E Jardine (Chair), Mr R Thompson, Mrs H Miller, Mr P Weil, Dr A Brown, Mr D Feely, Professor J. Heggarty, 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 – Item3), Dr K Gibson (Director of Student and Learning Services – Item 4), Ms R McQuaid (Head of HR – Item 5)

**Apologies:** Dr E Birnie, Mrs C Moore, Ms M Corrigan, Professor D Jones, Miss M Magee

**Any Other Business:** None

**PRIVATE MEETING**

The Non-Executive Members met in private Session for a preliminary discussion of Chair's Business.

**AGENDA**

**GB/1/22/1.1 INTRODUCTION**

1/22/1.1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the change of venue was due to the need to free up teaching space.

1/22/1.1.2 This was Mr Jardine's first meeting as the new Chair of the Governing Body. He informed Members that he was pleased to be appointed as Chair and thanked Members for their messages of congratulations. This was a new and exciting time to be taking over as Chair, with the

appointment of a new Principal and the College looking forward to its centenary celebrations. He further reflected on his family's connections with Stranmillis and teaching generally, over 67 years. He looked forward to his new role working with a strong Board with sound governance arrangements in place. He noted while there are challenges ahead, that it was important to build on the achievements to date, including ensuring sustained close relationships with stakeholders, such as the Department for the Economy (DfE), Queen's University (QUB) and the Department of Education (DE). Members noted that the Principal has already been engaging with the latter on matters of mutual interest.

1/22/1.1.3

Members noted that the Chair would be informing those attending that they should assume that their Papers have been read and only to provide a high-level summary in their introductions.

**GB/1/22/1.2**

**APOLOGIES**

1/22/1.2.1

The apologies from Dr Birnie, Mrs Moore, Ms Corrigan, Professor Jones and Miss Magee were noted.

**GB/1/22/1.3**

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1/22/1.3.1

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**GB/1/22/1.4**

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

5/21/1.4.1

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

**GB/1/22/2**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 30 NOVEMBER 2021 AND MATTERS ARISING**

1/22/2.1

The Minutes of the previous meeting on 30 November 2021 were agreed.

1/22/2.2

There were no action Points outstanding from previous meetings.

## **Matters Arising**

- 1/22/2.3 Members noted that good progress is being made in implementing the Governor Training Plan **(5/21/9.4)**. Those Governors who had already attended various training courses, including On Board, Chairing Effective Meetings and Finance for Board Members had found the training relevant, informative and professionally delivered.
- 1/22/2.4 Members noted that the Governance in the Round paper would be discussed more fully on 30 March 2022 at 2pm. Lunch will be available from 1.30pm **(5/21/11)**. The Chair emphasised the importance of reading the background information provided at the previous meeting. The Secretary will upload the Paper to MS Teams for this purpose.
- 1/22/2.5 There were no other matters arising.
- GB/1/22/3 NOVEMBER 2021 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND ASSOCIATED COMMENTARY**
- 1/22/3.1 The Head of Finance was welcomed to the meeting and was invited to highlight the key points from her Report. The latter had not previously been considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, given that there had been no Committee meetings since November 2021. In this respect the Governing Body agreed that Board meetings in the next academic year should be scheduled to take place following meetings of Committees.
- 1/22/3.2 Members noted that the Management Accounts for December 2021 had become available after the Paper for the meeting was submitted. Spend was largely in line with expectations. The funding for the 28 additional ITE students who started in 2021-22, was received in December 2021; this and the additional tuition fee income will be included in the December figures and concerns about energy costs will remain. A detailed Report on the December 2021 figures will be submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 22 March 2022.
- 1/22/3.3 In respect to the November 2021 Management Accounts, Members noted the detail in the Report.
- 1/22/3.4 Members noted that there has been a significant increase in gas costs in recent months, which has been widely reported in the media and that Estates colleagues have reviewed heating arrangements to see if any additional consumption efficiencies can be found.
- 1/22/3.5 Clarification was provided that Capital Costs will be reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

1/22/3.6 Following comments from the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Governing Body agreed that the College's finances are in a healthy position and that a close eye needs to be kept on the impact of increased gas costs. The improvement in Hospitality, Accommodation and Conferencing Services income was also welcomed.

1/22/3.7 The Governing Body also agreed that from a staffing perspective and subject to the review of structures and posts by the Principal, it will be important to fill the right posts and not just those currently established, in order to deliver future Corporate Plans.

1/22/3.8 **RESERVED BUSINESS**

1/22/3.9 The Governing Body thanked the Head of Finance for her Report.

#### **GB/1/22/4 STUDENTS' UNION ACCOUNTS 2020-21**

1/22/4.1 The Governing Body welcomed Dr Gibson to the meeting and invited him to who provide a high level overview of the Students' Union Accounts for 2020-21. Members noted that the Financial Statements had been prepared by the Finance Department and have been independently examined by Moore NI. Dr Gibson extended thanks on behalf of the Students' Union for the College's support of the Union and for the administrative support provided by Mrs Gillian Crawford.

1/22/4.2 The Governing Body noted that while income and expenditure during 2020-21 was impacted due to the Pandemic, for example the annual Pantomime, which is a significant source of income for the Students' Union, there were no issues to highlight regarding the Accounts.

1/22/4.3 A general discussion followed on Student involvement in College life. Members noted that the level of involvement is mixed, varies across the academic year and seems to depend on whether Students live on Campus or travel into College from home.

1/22/4.4 In terms of Student engagement, Members noted that the Induction Week for new Students in 2021-22 has brought benefits as has the appointment of a Student Engagement Officer. More Students have been retained this year and there appears to be fewer problems being reported.

1/22/4.5 In conclusion, the Accounts were approved.

1/22/4.6 The Governing Body thanked Dr Gibson for his Report.

## **GB/1/22/5**

### **PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

1/22/5.1

The Governing Body welcomed the Head of HR to the meeting who introduced the 'Personal Relationships Policy and Procedures.'

1/22/5.2

The Governing Body noted the background to the development of the Policy and Procedures as set out in the Paper and the challenging timeline for implementation. Some actions in the Action Plan are already underway and are being undertaken jointly between the Human Resources Department and the Director of Student and Learning Services. Consultation on the Policy and Procedures had taken place with Students and Staff.

1/22/5.3

A number of questions/points were raised in discussion as follows:

- How will the College ensure that Visitors to the College are aware of the behavior required? The Head of HR informed the Committee that there will be a zero tolerance approach and this will be publicised across the College via poster campaigns.
- Given that this is an increasingly complex area, what best practice has been picked up from elsewhere and how will this translate into the classroom situation on Schools? The Head of HR informed the Committee that training from the top down is key and this needs to be sourced with due regard to the Education sector.
- There needs to be a concrete set of guidelines for the Governing Body and clear accountability and reporting lines for the policy and its implementation. How the Policy and Procedures interact with other HR Policies, for example Dignity at Work and Study, Grievance Procedures and Whistleblowing Policies and whether reporting on cases and progress against the Action Plan should be through the Education Committee, the HR and Remuneration Committee or to the Board direct needs to be considered. Clear ownership of the Policy and its implementation is key.

1/22/5.4

In conclusion of the discussions, the Governing Body agreed that further work was necessary to refine the Policy and Procedures. This should be taken forward by the Head of HR and the Director of Student and Learning Services through the Chairs of the Education and HR and Remuneration Committees, via the Secretary, with a view to bringing a revised Paper to the Governing Body for its next meeting on 26 April 2022.

1/22/5.5

The Governing Body thanked the Head of Human Resources for her Paper.

**GB/1/22/6**

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

1/22/6.1 The Principal introduced his Report which included updates on:

- Covid-19;

**Mrs Miller left the meeting at 2.45pm**

**Mr Patterson left the meeting from 2.55pm – 3pm**

- Centenary Planning;
- the Pitches Projects;
- Curriculum Delivery; and
- Research.

The Governing Body noted the information concerning the updates as recorded in the Paper.

1/22/6.2 The Visiting Professors' Report was also noted and the Honorarium for their work was approved. Members noted that the Visiting Professors are currently providing service to the College until the end of March 2022.

1/22/6.3 The Governing Body also noted the background provided on the DfE Organisational Development and Transformation (ODT) Programme. In this respect, the Principal provided a further update at the meeting on the session that had taken place on 8 February 2022 and which was also attended by the SUC Chair and colleagues from across Higher Education Institutions. The agenda was in 3 parts:

- 1) Consideration of the linkages between policy and delivery and how decisions are made in relation to who is best placed to deliver.
- 2) Consideration of the current distribution of policy and delivery between the Department, sponsored bodies and other partners.
- 3) Consideration of constraints and opportunities to change this distribution and rationale for doing so.

1/22/6.4 Members noted that the College has clear lines of responsibility compared to other NDPBs and therefore arrangements are unlikely to change for the College as a result of the review of this particular area.

1/22/6.5 The Principal also reflected on a meeting that had taken place with the Vice-Chancellor from QUB. Members noted that QUB is keen to work with the College and will consider matters such as access to QUB

resources and how the College might offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to QUB staff.

1/22/6.6 Members also noted an additional update on the meeting that had taken place with the DE Minister and how for example the College as a Non-Departmental Public Body could assist DE with research to inform Policy development.

1/22/6.7 The Governing Body thanked the Principal for his comprehensive Report.

## **GB/1/22/7 STUDENT PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

1/22/7.1 The Student President's Report was noted. The Report included updates on:

- the success of the Pantomime;
- the Celebration of Christmas which took place online;
- the December 2021 Graduation Ceremony;
- the arrival of our international students; and
- current Executive work.

## **GB/1/22/8 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

1/22/8.1 The Chair informed Members that the Non-Executive Members of the Board had considered whether or not Private Sessions in advance of the main Governing Body meeting should continue. The decision taken was that such sessions would only be held on an ad-hoc basis subject to agenda items either from the Principal or the Non-Executive Members. The Secretary will ask if there are any such Items in advance of the Agenda for the Governing Body meeting being prepared.

1/22/8.2 The Chair informed Members that given his new position, a vacancy for a Vice-Chair now exists. Members noted that only the Non-Executive Governing Body Members are eligible for election. Members were content to endorse the decision of the Non-Executive Members, that given the demographic of the Governing Body and the Students and Staff of the College, the Chair was minded to appoint a Vice-Chair from within the female Membership of the Governing Body. Members noted that the Chair would consult accordingly and would bring a proposal to the next Governing Body meeting for ratification.

1/22/8.3 The Chair reflected on the discussions that had taken place at the Private session on the topic of Governance, and in particular the importance of communication between the Chair, Chairs of Committees, the Board Secretary and the Principal/Senior Leadership Team. The Chair emphasised the importance of Governors not becoming involved in operational matters. He acknowledged however, that given the Governing Body's support role, there will be occasions when Governors are asked for advice, or undertake operational work as provided for in certain policies and procedures e.g. participate in a recruitment exercise, or be a member of a grievance Appeal Panel. It was noted that where Board member involvement is provided for in a policy or procedure normal line administration and management of that policy or procedure will apply. Similarly, Governors may attend meetings or require information from the Principal/Senior Leadership Team or other staff in operational areas such as HR or Finance. In such circumstances, it was agreed that in line with good practice and the role of the Secretary such communication should be directed through the Secretary.

1/22/8.4 Members noted that the retirement lunch for the former Chair has been re-scheduled to take place on 5 April 2022.

**GB/1/22/9 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

1/22/9.1 The update Corporate Risk Register was reviewed. Other than updates to the controls, there were no other material changes to note.

**GB/1/22/10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1/22/10.1 There was no other business to discuss.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of the Governing Body