

FOR PUBLICATION EXCLUDING RESERVED BUSINESS

STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GOVERNING BODY MEETING ON 26 APRIL 2022 AT 1.30PM IN THE CONFERENCE HALL, MAIN BUILDING

Governing Body: Mr E Jardine (Chair), Mr P Weil, Dr A Brown, Mr D Feely, Professor J. Heggarty, Mr K Nelson, Dr M Bennett, Dr L Boyce, Dr E Birnie, Mrs C Moore, Mr R Thompson, Professor D Jones

In Attendance: Ms K Robinson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr N McCarter (Student President elect – Observer), Dr P Eaton, Dr N Purdy, Dr K Gibson and Dr B McDade (Item 2), Ms J O’Boyle (Head of Finance – Item 4)

Apologies: Ms M Corrigan, Ms M Magee, Mr W Patterson, Mrs H Miller

Any Other Business: None

AGENDA

GB/3/22/1.1 WELCOME

3/22/1.1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Mr McCarter who was invited to attend as an observer in advance of his formal appointment as Student Representative on the Governing Body from 1 June 2022.

3/22/1.1.2 Members noted that the Chair would be informing those attending to assume that members have read the papers and therefore it is only necessary to provide a high level summary.

3/22/1.1.3 Members noted that Dr Eaton, Dr Purdy, Dr Gibson and Dr McDade would be attending the meeting for Item 2.

GB/2/22/1.2**APOLOGIES**

2/22/1.2.1

The apologies from Ms M Corrigan, Mr W Patterson, Mrs H Miller and Ms M Magee were noted. As this would have been Ms Magee's last meeting as Student Representative on the Governing Body, the Chair extended the Governing Body's best wishes for the future in her absence.

GB/3/22/1.3**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

3/22/1.3.1

Mrs Moore declared an interest in the discussions on Widening Participation under 3/22/2.3. This was not considered sufficiently significant to warrant Mrs Moore leaving the meeting for the relevant item.

GB/3/22/1.4**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

3/22/1.4.1

Members noted that the Chair would brief members under 'Chair's Business' on the discussions that had taken place with the Department for the Economy (DfE) on the tenure of Members. He would also inform members of his proposal for the appointment of a Vice-Chair.

3/22/1.4.2

Members noted that the Chair would also provide reflections on the Advance HE training session for Governors which he, Mr Patterson, Mrs Moore and Mr Nelson had recently attended.

GB/3/22/2**DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN STRATEGY**

3/22/2.1

The College's four Directors were welcomed to the meeting. The Principal delivered a presentation of the work that has been undertaken to date, by the Directors and the Secretary to the Governing Body as Head of Corporate Governance and Planning, to develop a new Corporate Plan for the College. Members received a copy of the draft plan in advance of the meeting.

3/22/2.2

The draft which included a proposed new set of Values for the College, was subject to discussion by the Governing Body. The broad direction of travel over the course of the next three years 2022-2025 was approved subject to some minor adjustments, for example to acknowledge that children and young people are also stakeholders.

3/22/2.2

The Governing Body also agreed that there should be fewer Key Performance Indicators at the corporate level.

3/22/2.3

There was a broader discussion on the recruitment of high calibre learners, widening participation and encouraging more males into

teaching. Embedding the new Values was also discussed. Members noted in this regard that the Principal will be picking this up with the Head of HR.

3/22/2.4 In conclusion, Members noted that work will continue to finalise the draft and staff, students and the unions will be consulted before a final version is submitted to the Governing Body for approval, in June 2022.

GB/3/22/3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING, INCLUDING ACTION POINTS

3/22/3.1 The Minutes of the previous meeting on 15 February 2022 were agreed.

Action Points

3/22/3.2 Members noted that the action to undertake further work on the Personal Relationships Policy and Procedures was not yet completed **(1/22/5.3)**

Matters Arising

3/22/3.3 **(1/22/2.4)** The Chair reflected on the Special Meeting of the Governing Body on 30 March 2022, which was convened to pick up discussions on the 'Governance in the Round' Paper and Governing Body Effectiveness.

3/22/3.4 Members noted that it had been a very useful meeting as it allowed those members that could attend the time to focus on the Governing Body's effectiveness and the good progress that has been made in the area of governance over the lifetime of the current Board. The discussions focused mainly on the results of the survey in those areas where comments from individual members warranted further exploration.

3/22/3.5 The general consensus was that the Governing Body is strong on governance and overall there are robust processes in place. The Secretary role is also well positioned to support the Governing Body and the Principal.

3/22/3.6 There was a consensus among members that the Governing Body is open to reviewing its own performance on a regular basis. However, it was acknowledged that while the Advance HE Checklist used for the survey, provided a baseline of performance, the Governing Body needs to consider a more structured framework for future 3-yearly reviews that focuses on outcomes for example. Annual reviews of the Governing Body's Operating Framework and how the College performs against the CUC Code of Governance should also continue.

- 3/22/3.7 A number of suggestions were made about how the Governing Body could further improve governance structures and processes. For example, a review of how Board Papers are structured, disseminated and prioritised in terms of those where decisions need to be made. Overall it was considered that there was too much narrative in the covering papers.
- 3/22/3.8 It was agreed that the previous issues over Academic Governance were now resolved, and that there was no longer a need for a workshop as recommended in the Academic Governance Review report.
- 3/22/3.9 It was agreed that the Governing Body needs to consider how it can engage more with staff.
- 3/22/3.10 It was also considered that there is a need for the College's work to be driven more by research and the needs in schools. We also need to have a clearer picture of graduate outcomes as the current survey, which is undertaken externally does not provide the detail of how many of our former students are in teaching roles, for example.
- 3/22/3.11 In terms of benchmarking, there is a need to develop relationships with other similar institutions in GB and Ireland and to make more use of Advance HE and the Committee of University Chairs in this area. Opportunities for governors to network on education matters should also be explored.
- 3/22/3.12 It would also be useful to identify all the College's stakeholders and ensure that we are communicating with them.
- 3/22/3.13 On Diversity of Board Membership, good progress has been made. Board appointments are the responsibility of DfE and we should work with the Department on the forthcoming competition to identify and target appropriate demographics and skills.
- 3/22/3.14 Members noted that a paper will be provided for the next meeting on 21 June 2022 with a view to agreeing an action plan.

GB/3/22/4

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND ASSOCIATED COMMENTARY

- 3/22/4.1 The Chair invited the Head of Finance to draw out the headlines from her report.
- 3/22/4.2 Members noted the current position on budgets and agreed to consider the College budget for 2022-23 in September 2022.
- 3/22/4.3 The Governing Body welcomed the allocation of additional Student Support funding from DfE, which will be allocated to students in financial hardship.

3/22/4.3 The Governing Body noted the information on the annual reforecasting exercise for 2021-22 as set out in the paper. There were no matters which required discussion.

3/22/4.4 **RESERVED BUSINESS**

3/22/4.5 The Governing Body noted the Management Accounts for February 2022.

3/22/4.6 The Governing Body concluded that the College's finances are being well managed and thanked the Head of Finance for her report.

GB/3/22/5 READOUTS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

3/22/5.1 The Chairs of the Education, Audit and Risk Assurance and Finance and General Purposes Committees reported to members on business that had been discussed at their respective Committee meetings on 1 March 2022, 3 March 2022 and 22 March 2022. The reports were noted. There were no matters for discussion or decision by the Governing Body.

3/22/5.2 The Governing Body endorsed the following Committee Minutes:

- Education Committee 2 November 2021;
- Finance and General Purposes Committee 16 November 2021; and
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 25 November 2021.

GB/3/22/6 PROGRESS AGAINST KPIS

3/22/6.1 The Principal introduced his report on progress against KPIS for the period 1 August 2021 – April 2022. The Governing Body welcomed the good progress that has been made against targets to date.

Where data is available:

- 22 of 29 (76%) of KPIS have either been achieved/exceeded or are on track for achievement; and
- 3 of 29 (10%) of KPIS are likely to be achieved but with some delay, which in the case of the Sports Pitches Project and the Boundary Wall upgrade for example, has been outside the College's control.

4 of 29 (14%) of the KPIS are awaiting the availability of final data in order to assess performance.

3/22/6.2 Members noted that Widening Participation Targets are set by DfE.

3/22/6.3 **RESERVED BUSINESS**

3/22/6.4 The Governing Body congratulated staff for the achievements to date and thanked the Principal for his report, the new format for which was welcomed.

GB/3/22/7 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

3/22/7.1 The principal provided Members with updates on the following as detailed in the paper for the meeting:

- i. Covid-19
- ii. Centenary Planning
- iii. Capital Projects
- iv. Student Recruitment
- v. Curriculum Delivery
- vi. Research
- vii. Visiting Professors
- viii. The Plans for a staff BBQ on 21 June 2022 at 12:00pm as part of staff development days. An invitation was extended to Governing Body Members to attend the event before the commencement of the final Governing Body meeting of the Academic Year at 2pm.

3/22/7.2 Members further noted that regular coffee mornings are to be arranged for staff and students and that there will be an open invitation to Governing Body members to attend.

3/22/7.3 The Governing Body thanked the Principal for his comprehensive report. There were no specific questions emerging.

GB/3/22/8 STUDENT PRESIDENT'S REPORT

3/22/8.1 The Student President's Report was noted. The Report included updates on Clubs & Societies, Wellbeing, International Work and SU Executive work.

3/22/8.2 The Chair congratulated Mr McCarter on his appointment as the new Student President and looked forward to his full participation in Governing Body and Education Committee meetings during his tenure.

GB/3/22/9

CHAIR'S BUSINESS

3/22/9.1

The Chair informed Members that Dr Birnie and Mr Patterson would be standing down from the Governing Body at the end of their term of office on 31 July 2022. Mrs Moore had agreed to an extension to her appointment.

3/22/9.2

The Chair nominated Mrs Heather Miller as the new Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. The nomination was endorsed by Members.

3/22/9.3

The Chair reflected on his recent participation in an Advance HE course for Chairs and aspiring Chairs of Governing Bodies. Members noted that it was a very useful session with a good balance between formal input, Q&A and small group discussion. He was struck by the scope of the impact of the pandemic and the likely long-term implications on student mental health, curricular deficits, with for example grade inflation masking what students had actually covered in school.

There was discussion of student expectations as fees and overdrafts escalate and the importance of keeping students front and centre and to think about the student journey. The importance of getting the initial induction of students right and also to think about how the principles of induction can be applied as students progress through their university career. Recognising the weight students attach to employability and how this needs to be reflected in careers guidance.

A good student journey also requires engaged and motivated staff which implies support for teaching and support staff. HEA Fellowship was recommended.

There was an emphasis on good governance, including inclusiveness, diversity in Board composition and engagement of students in course appraisal.

A general issue about keeping the Board fixed on Strategy was also discussed. There is a risk of too much focus on operational issues and there were some suggestions about how to carve out time to devote quality time to strategic issues and to encourage senior staff to ensure that papers prepared for the Board are sharply focussed.

3/22/9.4

Other Members indicated that they had been similarly impressed by the standard of courses they had attended and it was suggested that there may be opportunities for Advance HE to run courses in Northern Ireland.

GB/3/22/10 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

3/22/10.1 The updated Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and endorsed.

GB/3/22/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

3/22/11.1 There was no other business other than the Reserved Business under Item 12. Dr Brown, Mr Feely and Mr McCarter left the meeting at this point.

GB/3/22/12 RESERVED BUSINESS

Signed _____ Date 21/6/22 _____

Chair of the Governing Body