

**MINUTES OF STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE'S GOVERNING BODY  
MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 2024 AT 10:00  
IN SLEMISH ROOM, REFECTORY BUILDING**

**Present:** Mr Edgar Jardine (Chair), Dr Maureen Bennett, Dr Andy Brown (Staff Governor), Dr Lavinia Boyce, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Robert Drennan, Mr Darren Feely (Staff Governor), Professor Jonathan Heggarty (Principal / Chief Executive), Mr Andrew Irwin (Student Governor), Ms Paula Leitch, Ms Heather Miller, Ms Kim Scott and Mr Peter Weil.

**In Attendance:** Professor Patricia Eaton (Director of Teaching and Learning) for ICS Briefing, Professor Noel Purdy (Director of Scholarship and Research) for ICS Briefing, Mr Raymond DeLargy (Director of Corporate Services and Development) for item 6, Ms Jo O'Boyle (Head of Finance) for item 6 and Mr Ken Nelson (Independent Facilitator).

**Secretariat:** Mr Sam Snodden.

**Apologies:** Ms Una Nic Eoin, Mr Aaron Diver and Ms Wilma Fee.

**SESSION 3 ROUTINE BUSINESS**

**GB/2/24/1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

2/24/1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone.

The Chair thanked Committee Chairs for the work in supporting the Governing Body and noted that Members are expected to have read the various reports and papers and, while those presenting will report briefly, Members are welcome to raise any exceptional items of interest.

2/24/1.2 Apologies were noted as above.

Ms Heather Miller had to leave early to represent the University College at a Department event.

Ms Kim Scott and Ms Majella Corrigan had to also leave early due to other commitments.

2/24/1.3 There were no conflicts of interest to record.

2/24/1.4 There was no other business not on agenda to include.

**GB/2/24/2 RESERVED BUSINESS**

**GB/2/24/3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD 27 MARCH 2024, ACTION POINTS AND MATTERS ARISING**

2/24/3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 March 2024 were agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

2/24/3.2 The Principal updated Members on recent Ministerial visits.

A follow up meeting on Special Education Needs is scheduled for 3 July 2024.

**GB/2/24/4 COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**2/24/4.1 Overview of Education Committee 5 June 2024**

2/24/4.1.1 The draft minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 5 June 2024 were considered as an overview of discussions until the final minutes are approved at the next Education Committee meeting.

2/24/4.1.2 The Principal outlined issues discussed including that there had been some movement on student numbers.

**GB/2/24/4.2 Overview of Finance and General Purposes Committee 12 June 2024**

2/24/4.2.1 The draft minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12 June 2024 were considered as an overview of discussions until the final minutes are approved at the next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

**GB/2/24/4.3 Overview of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 19 June 2024**

2/24/4.3.1 The draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 19 June 2024 were considered as an overview of discussions until the final minutes are approved at the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting.

2/24/4.3.2 The Committee Chair updated on a Satisfactory Internal Audit programme for the year and expressed thanks to all staff involved in the areas audited.

**Adoption of Committee Minutes**

On the proposal of the Chair all of the following Committee Meeting minutes which had been approved by the relevant Committees were unanimously adopted:

2/24/4.4 Education Committee Meeting on 6 March 2024.

2/24/4.5 Finance and General Purposes Committee on 14 February 2024.

2/24/4.6 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 20 March 2024.

## **GB/2/24/5 STUDENT PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

2/24/5.1 The Student President / Student Governor presented his first report. The report outlined the events and activities held during the year and planned for the remainder of the year.

2/24/5.2 The Student President expressed thanks to the outgoing President and Committee for their hard work during their year in office. He also thanked his incoming Committee for being willing to take on this role.

The Director of Corporate Services and Development and the Head of Finance joined the meeting.

## **GB/2/24/6 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS APRIL 2024**

2/24/6.1 The Chair thanked both the Head of Finance and Director of Corporate Services and Development for another successful year.

2/24/6.2 The April 2024 management accounts were considered which reported a total income of £10,715k is £381k ahead of budget while total spend is some £223k behind budget at £9,368k with both non-staff costs and staff costs running £133k and £90k behind budget respectively. This has resulted in a reported surplus at April 2024 of £1,347k compared to a budgeted surplus of £744k – a variance of £603k. An explanation was provided around the concept of budget cover

2/24/6.3 The April 2024 figures will not yet reflect much of the impact of a number of unbudgeted bids to be funded from 2023-2024 funds identified as available as part of the 2023-2024 reforecasting exercise which was reported to Governing Body in March 2024 as follows:

A re-forecasting exercise, to predict the revised year-end position, has recently been undertaken. This predicts a revised surplus for the year to 31 July 2024 of £502k compared to a budgeted surplus of £14k. The main contributors to this change in estimated year-end position include:

- 1) the positive impact of Skill Up income, which is expected to be £340k ahead of budget in 2023-2024, on Tuition Fee Income (overall +£70k at February 2024),
- 2) higher than estimated Investment Income (+£100k at February 2024),
- 3) higher HACS income (+£99k at February 2024),
- 4) expected savings in respect of energy costs offset by higher repairs and maintenance costs.

In addition, 20 bids totalling in the region of £231k, for additional unbudgeted expenditure were received from Budget Holders. These bids range for upgraded resources, equipment and repairs as well as some additional activities. The bids were considered at Corporate Planning Committee on 12 March 2024 and all bids were approved.

The related paperwork is being completed and procurement expected to start shortly. We had also planned to undertake a significant portion of a painting project within one of the Halls of Residence blocks over the summer of 2024 but the project could not proceed for contractual reasons outside the control of the College. It was hoped that we will be able to progress a partial lower value painting project before the end of July 2024.

The Value for Money Policy and Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policies have both been updated.

**GB/2/24/7      DRAFT BUDGET 2024-2025**

2/24/7.1      The Head of Finance presented the draft budget for 2024-2025.

The University College draft 2024-2025 budget, which also included indicative figures for the subsequent three years covering 2025-2026 to 2027-2028, and a supporting commentary. The draft budget papers had previously been presented for consideration by Finance and General Purposes Committee on 12 June 2024 prior to presentation, for approval, to Governing Body on 26 June 2024. No changes were made in the interim period.

The detailed workings estimated a small surplus of £5k in the 2024-2025 University College financial year to 31 July 2025 with predicted deficits in the range £102k to £121k in the subsequent three years which highlights that challenges lie ahead. The assumptions on which the calculations are made were set out in the detailed commentary.

The assumptions relating to the Department for the Economy (DfE) 2024-2025 block grant funding, and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) student numbers/tuition fee income, are based on the latest information available from DfE but the final position has not been confirmed by DfE.

Governing Body was asked to review and approve the draft budget for the University College 2024-2025 financial year to 31 July 2025.

Approval was proposed by Dr A Brown and seconded by Dr L Boyce and approved by the Governing Body.

It was also noted that the University College still awaits DfE official confirmation of the 2024-2025 Block Grant and Capital Grant funding.

A Letter of Offer has been received providing increased DfE (£293k) funding in 2024-2025 towards the increased NI Teachers Pension Scheme (NITPS) employer contributions, which increased further with effect from 1 April 2024.

The Director of Corporate Services and Development and the Head of Finance left the meeting.

## **GB/2/24/8 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

2/24/8.1 The Principal presented his report which provided briefing updates for Members of the Governing Body on the following topics:

- Student Places and Budget for 2024-24
- Music in May Event - Sharing: A Celebration of the College Year
- College Honorary Fellow
- Update on Memorandum of Agreement
- Update on College Management Committee Meetings

### **2/24/8.2 Student Places and Budget for 2024-25**

As of time of writing, DfE and the Department of Education (DE) have not confirmed in writing ITE numbers nor any MASN allocation. The University College has been informed verbally that our numbers for ITE places, known as "Approved intake to Initial Teacher Education courses" will be restored, following the 5% cut last year.

The Principal, along with the Principal of St Mary's University College have met separately and jointly with DfE and DE officials during the year to express our common concern over the loss of student places this academic year. We have highlighted the implications for students, the impact to teacher education in Northern Ireland as well as the financial costs to the University Colleges of DE reducing places and DfE (as the funder) cutting the teaching grant accordingly. Officials from DfE and DE have been open to hearing these concerns, as was the Permanent Secretary during the Annual Accountability Meeting.

Discussions are ongoing between Stranmillis and DfE and DE in relation to reviewing the ITE allocations, alternative pathways into teaching in NI (there currently is no local part-time pathway in NI due to capped numbers) and well as discussing future opportunities for widening our undergraduate offer, should MASN change.

In response to the ongoing challenging NI public finances forecast and other external factors, a working group is being established.

This group will:

- review commercial income opportunities e.g. from HACS and office rental
- explore further enhancing/increasing our curriculum offer at undergraduate and post-graduate level
- explore opportunities for additional income streams e.g. from projects or programmes, International work and research
- look at further opportunities to reduce expenditure where possible

The outworking of this group will help inform the new Corporate Plan which will cover the period 2025-2028 and also the longer term planning for the University College.

### **2/24/8.3 Music in May Event - Sharing: A Celebration of the College Year**

The Music in May event this year, entitled "Sharing: A Celebration of the College Year", was held on the 16 May 2024 in the Conference Hall in the Main Building.

The event was inspiring, heartfelt and joyous and shared with the audience some of the many activities that Stranmillis staff and students have undertaken this year, in addition to the excellent teaching and learning that takes place across the campus. The event showcased a sample of what happens outside of class, both locally and internationally and included:

- Instrumental performances by students
- Presentations on Professional Learning in a Changing Society, the Step Up programme, North-South Exchange and Research
- Singings performed by the Alumni and College choirs
- Presentations on international activities in India and Uganda

The event was intentionally student focused and it was excellent to hear of the wonderful activities and experiences that our students have had this year, beyond class. There was excellent attendance including from students, staff, Members of the Governing Body, parents / family / friends as well as representatives from DfE, the Education Authority and other organisations.

Thanks are due to all who contributed through song, music, presentation, video and discussion, and to all who worked so hard behind the scenes to plan for the event and to ensure that everything worked so well on the evening. Thanks to all for sharing their creative and artistic talents in curating such an enjoyable and inspiring evening which both informed and entertained in equal measure.

### **2/24/8.4 Stranmillis University College Honorary Fellow**

The University College has one Honorary Fellow, Dr Norman Richardson who was appointed an Honorary Fellow based on his outstanding voluntary service to the College in the field of Music and the Performing Arts. Dr Richardson is involved in all of the College's major events throughout the year and even composed a new piece for the University College's centenary celebrations.

The title of Honorary Fellow may be conferred upon persons of appropriate academic distinction and standing and are contributing to the work of the University College in a voluntary capacity. They must have an ongoing relationship with the College and the title of Honorary Fellow will be available to former members of University College

academic staff. Honorary Academic engagements are typically open-ended, but the University College Honorary Fellow engagement is to be reviewed every three years from the start date, to ensure the title holder continues to contribute to the work of the College.

In relation to Dr Richardson, the next date for extension of this title is early September 2024. The Senior Leadership Team have reviewed Dr Richardson's ongoing contribution to the University College and wholeheartedly recommend another three-year extension. Dr Richardson continues to be heavily involved with the College and brings a wealth of experience, commitment, creativity and enthusiasm to everything that he is involved in.

It was therefore requested that the Governing Body consider approval of this and the Principal informs Dr Richardson, on behalf of the College Management and the Governing Body of the decision before the end of the academic year.

This was approved by the Governing Body.

#### **2/24/8.5 Update on Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) with QUB**

Discussions continue to take place between senior Queens University Belfast and Stranmillis staff in relation to a new MOA. Stranmillis has authored an early Partnership Agreement which has been used to initiate further discussion. This Partnership Agreement reflects older MOAs which supported better collaboration and partnership than the most recent version, 2019-2024. A significant draft of the new MOA will be presented to the Governing Body when available.

#### **2/24/8.6 Update on College Management Committee Meetings**

An effective and robust system of corporate governance and management is essential to the running of the University College. It provides the framework for establishing and sustaining quality and integrity in the College's provision and ensuring quality learning outcomes for students as well as the successful operation of the institution.

A number of operational academic and corporate committees exist to support the management and administration of the University College and to fulfil the requirements for effective management and governance. These committees report into higher committees which then ultimately report into the Governing Body through reports, verbal and written, from College management.

Over the last three years, the current Directorate structure has been established and it is appropriate that the academic and corporate committees reflect this reorganised structure. It is important to note that the lines of reporting have not changed, other than the Director of

Corporate Services and Development is in attendance when one of his direct reports is updating the Governing Body. Where it has been deemed appropriate, some similar meetings have been merged given the duplication in meeting content and membership.

The new single document outlining the Management Committee Meeting structure was presented and the previous version for academic meetings was provided in and for corporate meetings.

The Governing Body was asked to note this change in management meetings structure. The outworking of these changes will be monitored and reviewed in the coming year and any adjustments will be made as necessary to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

#### **GB/2/24/9 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

2/24/9.1 The Principal presented an updated Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee who were content to recommend its approval by the Governing Body.

2/24/9.2 It was noted that two risks had been downgraded and a new three-year plan would be developed and the Risk Register would be amended in line with the plan when completed.

#### **GB/2/24/10 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK**

2/24/10.1 The Department's assessment of Institutional Risk was noted. The assessment was deemed to be 'Not at high risk'.

#### **GB/2/24/11 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

2/24/11.1 The Chair noted that following the appointment of Lindsay Armstrong as Secretary to the Governing Body, Mr Sam Snodden would return to his previous role as Governor and Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Chair thanked Mr Snodden, Ms Corrigan and Ms Leitch for the temporary arrangements they had carried out.

#### **GB/2/24/12 SCHEDULE OF GOVERNING BODY AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

2/24/12.1 The Governing Body approved the schedule of Governing Body and Committee meetings for the 2024-2025 year together with the Core Work Programme for the year.

#### **GB/2/24/13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

2/24/13.1 There were no items of any other business to be included.



**GB/2/24/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

2/24/14.1 The next meeting of the Governing Body will be Wednesday 25 September 2024 and will start at 15.00.

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

Minutes of reserved business are included in a separate document.