

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a Meeting of the **South West College Governing Body**
held on Wednesday 27 February 2008 at 5.30 pm in
Room CF2, Cookstown Campus

PRESENT: Mr Pat O’Kane (Chairman)
Mrs Kate Courtenay
Mr Gerry Kingston
Mr Gerard McDermott
Mr Joseph McFall
Mr Joseph Martin
Dr Nicholas O’Shiel
Mr Victor Refaussé (Director)
Mrs Diane Stevenson
Ms Gwen Stevenson

APOLOGIES: Dr Mark Kelly
Mr Adrian McCreesh

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Elizabeth McSorley, Secretary to the Governing Body

1.0 EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY AND BEST WISHES

AGREED: at the request of the Chairman, that the Secretary to the Governing Body write, on the Governing Body’s behalf, to the Principals of St Ciaran’s High School, Ballygawley, and St Mary’s Primary School, Cabragh, conveying appropriate messages of sympathy and best wishes following the tragic road traffic accident earlier in the day in which a pupil of one of the schools had died and a pupil of the other had been seriously injured.

2.0 PRESENTATION BY MRS CATHERINE BELL, DEPUTY SECRETARY, DEL

The Chairman advised members that since the agenda had issued, agreement had been reached with Mrs Bell that rather than address that evening’s Governing Body meeting, she would, instead, address a proposed strategic planning event in April 2008. He then went on to outline some of his own thoughts on the structure of the proposed event and invited comments and suggestions from members for inclusion in the Programme.

Mr Kingston entered the meeting at this juncture.

AGREED: following a short discussion, that members communicate their comments and suggestions to the Secretary to the Governing Body with a view to having a Programme in place for the next Governing Body meeting.

3.0 MINUTES OF GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2008

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 30 January 2008. It was noted that the confidential section had not been circulated to staff members.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr Martin, seconded by Dr O'Shiel, that the public section of the minutes (Pages 1-9) be accepted as a true and accurate record. They were then signed by the Chairman.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Presentation by Project Board Representatives on the Enniskillen Campus Capital Development Project – Pages 1-3, Minute Ref 1.0

The Director undertook, in response to further representations from Dr O'Shiel in relation to the cost per/m² of the Skills Centre development, to have the consultants provide additional information in this regard.

4.2 Minutes of Finance and General Purposes Committee Meetings held on Wednesday 14 December 2007 and 23 January 2008 – Page 6, Minute Ref 8.0

The Director undertook to provide Dr O'Shiel with clarification on the control protocols attached to the College's investment accounts.

5.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION, QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2008

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, report of a meeting of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee held on Tuesday 5 February 2008, together with a copy of the Committee's Terms of Reference which had been formally adopted at the previous Governing Body meeting.

The report of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee was presented by Dr O'Shiel in the absence of Dr Kelly, Committee Chairman.

Dr O'Shiel, in presenting the report, highlighted the Committee's continuing focus on the development of Higher Education provision within the South West College and, in this regard, drew members' attention to the ETI survey report on Higher Education in Further Education which highlighted the challenges experienced by Colleges in filling their MaSN places and in attracting overseas students. These, he added, were two of the areas the Committee would be concentrating its efforts on. He also drew attention to the Committee's Terms of

Reference and said that another key area of activity would be influencing the curriculum section of the College Development Plan.

Mr McDermott and Ms Gwen Stevenson requested a copy of the ETI survey report referred to by Dr O'Shiel.

AGREED: on the proposal of Dr O'Shiel, seconded by Mr McDermott, adoption of the Report of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee.

Mrs Diane Stevenson entered the meeting at this juncture.

6.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2008

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on Wednesday 13 February 2008 together with:

- (1) Audit Committee Annual Reports for the former East Tyrone, Fermanagh and Omagh Colleges; and
- (2) Internal Audit Review of the Training for Success Programme.

Mr Martin, Chairman of the Audit Committee, highlighted the key issues and recommendations from the Audit Committee report with particular reference to the Internal Audit Review of the new Training for Success Programme. Commenting on the *Limited* assurance rating for administration of the Programme, Mr Martin pointed out that the Committee had been informed that other Colleges were in a similar position.

The Director, in relation to the reimbursement of travel expenses section of the report, advised that the South West College, because of its rurality, was carrying a cost of £15-20k per annum for travel expenses over and above the DEL allowance and said that this issue had been raised with the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning during their recent visit and that representations were also being made to DEL on the matter.

Other issues highlighted by Mr Martin were the draft Corporate Risk Register, the Internal Audit Annual Reports for the three former Colleges, and the Progress Report on the Outstanding Areas of Weakness to be Addressed. He also commented on the role of audit generally and on the need for its place to be clearly defined and understood within the College structure so as to preserve its independence and integrity. It was noted, in this regard, that the Committee's Terms of Reference provided for the Committee to meet with the College's auditors at least once a year without any officers present and that the matter would be further pursued at that stage.

One member, referring to a reference within the minutes that "any delay in the restructuring may impact on the implementation of the recommendations"

asked that it be noted that the restructuring was progressing in accordance with the agreed timetable.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr McFall, adoption of the Report of the Audit Committee, including acceptance of the former East Tyrone, Fermanagh and Omagh College Audit Committee Annual Reports for 2006/07.

7.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2008

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, report of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 13 February 2008.

CIRCULATED: to those members present, draft Policy on Access to Staff Personal Files for Governing Body approval.

Mr McDermott, Chairman of the Staffing Committee, highlighted the key issues and recommendations from the Staffing Committee report with particular reference to the Committee's ongoing work on policy development and its continuing scrutiny role in the areas of Health and Safety and Staff Absenteeism.

With reference to Section 5.4 of the Staffing Committee report, the Secretary to the Governing Body advised that there were two additional staff requests which required Governing Body approval, namely a Temporary Media Technical Support Officer and a Temporary Web Based Media Development Officer for the Enniskillen Campus.

Lengthy discussion then ensued in relation to the Committee's focus on absenteeism during which it was noted that the current priority was to establish a baseline for the setting of future performance targets and, alongside this, to shape and influence associated policies. Discussion also took place in relation to the respective roles and responsibilities of the Governing Body and College management in relation to the area of sickness absence.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McDermott, seconded by Mrs Courtenay, adoption of the report of the Staffing Committee including adoption of the Policy on Access to Staff Personal Files and the two additional staff requests.

8.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2008

CIRCULATED: to those members present, report of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 21 February 2008 together with copy of Financial Management Report for the 6 months to 28 February 2008.

Ms Gwen Stevenson, Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, drew members' attention to the Financial Management Report which had been

circulated and to the decision that in addition to this report being presented on a quarterly basis, the Finance Committee, and in turn the Governing Body, would, with effect from March 2008, receive a monthly exception report detailing budget variances greater than £20k. This information, she said, had been requested by the Governing Body Chairman.

The Governing Body Chairman, in adding to the comments of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Chair, explained the underlying rationale for this additional accountability requirement which, it was noted, related to a requirement imposed by DEL which was currently being challenged by the Chairs Group.

The Committee Chair also drew attention to Section 3 of the Finance and General Purposes Committee report in terms of the potential saving between the merged structure and the three College historical structure and pointed out that the exercise was to be repeated at a point in time following completion of the restructuring exercise with the South West College to be benchmarked against the best performing College of a comparable size.

During the discussion which followed the Finance Committee Chair, Governing Body Chair, and Director, responded to a range of comments and questions relating to the future direction of the College; future funding constraints; and the potential cost benefit and other gains from maximising the use of information technology to minimise the impact of the South West College's rurality.

Mr McDermott left the meeting at this juncture.

AGREED: on the proposal of Ms Stevenson, seconded by Mr McFall, adoption of the report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee including the Financial Management Report for the 6 months to 28 February 2008.

9.0 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ENNISKILLEN CAMPUS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Director advised that work on the Skills Centre contract would commence on 3 March 2008 with completion programmed for July 2009. The next stage in the capital development project would, he said, be to progress the plans for the Sports Hall proposal and additional classroom accommodation.

Mr Martin, the Governing Body's representative on the Project Board, indicated that he would not be attending site meetings associated with the Skills Centre development as he regarded this as an executive rather than a Board function. The Governing Body Chair supported this viewpoint.

In responding to members questions, the Director advised that plans were in hand to appoint a Project Manager for the Skills Centre contract and said that this had been provided for within the overall costs of the project.

10.0 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE 2007/10 COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, Review of College Development Plan 2007/10 as at February 2008.

The Director advised that the purpose of the report was to update members on the progress that had been achieved over the past six months against the actions and timescales laid down in the College Development Plan. He drew particular attention to the establishment of a Workforce Development Forum and spoke of the ongoing efforts that were being made to broaden its membership.

Members noted, with satisfaction, the contents of the review report.

11.0 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

11.1 Annual Assessment of Chairs of Colleges of Further Education

The Chairman advised Mrs Bernie O'Hare, Director of Further Education Division, DEL, would attend the March 2008 Governing Body meeting for the purposes of assessing his performance as Chair. This arrangement, he said, formed part of an annual appraisal process, adding that all members would individually be asked to undertake an assessment of his performance at the end of the academic year and said that they would be issued with an assessment form for this purpose.

11.2 Chairs Meeting with Sir Reg Empey, Minister for the Department for Employment and Learning

The Chairman reported on a recent meeting with Sir Reg Empey, the Minister for the Department for Employment and Learning, which had been attended by the Governing Body Chairs, the Chief Executive of ANIC, and DEL senior officials including the Permanent Secretary, and said that the agenda had included the following issues:

- (1) **The Programme for Government and DEL budget** – thanks had been recorded to the Minister for his work in achieving an increase on the draft budget. Although relatively static over the next three years, the budget secured was to be welcomed;
- (2) **The ongoing industrial action** – following rejection of Sir Joseph Pilling's pay proposal, discussions were to be initiated with the UCU in an effort to find a way forward;
- (3) **The accountability relationship between Colleges as incorporated bodies and the Department** – one example of relationship problems was the lack of formal consultation with Governing Bodies and the Chairs Group on the draft Financial Memorandum and Audit Code which DEL had agreed to rectify retrospectively;

- (4) **Remuneration for Chairs** – representations had been made by his colleagues in this regard in recognition of the significant workload attached to the position of Governing Body Chair.

11.3 LSDA NI Annual Conference

The Chairman, in referring to the LSDA NI Annual Conference to be held at the Galgorm Manor Resort and Spa, Ballymena, on Tuesday 22 April 2008, read a synopsis for the proposed workshop session entitled “The Challenge of Governance in the New FE Landscape” and asked members to communicate any comments on the draft statement to the Secretary to the Governing Body. In terms of his own views, the Chairman described the draft statement as fair comment.

11.4 Visit by Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning

The Chairman paid tribute to the Director and his staff for their preparations and the quality of their presentations to members of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning during a recent visit to the Omagh Campus. The visit, he added, had been the Committee’s first experience of a working College.

12.0 DIRECTOR’S BUSINESS

12.1 Contract between Sligo Institute of Technology and the former Fermanagh College for refurbishment of premises and delivery of a Level 4 Plumbing Apprentice Contract

The Director, in reporting on a £200k contract with Sligo Institute of Technology for the refurbishment of premises at the Enniskillen Skills Centre, known as the Dutch Barn, to facilitate delivery of a three year Level 4 Plumbing Apprentice contract, advised that work on the refurbishment had commenced and that the premises should be ready for occupation by 1 April 2008.

The Director further advised that the refurbishment work, and the training provision, were being undertaken on a full cost recovery basis.

12.2 Proposed Hydro Project

The Director, with reference to recent local press reports, briefed members on the background to the proposed hydro project which the College had been developing over the past three years and the difficulties that had emerged in its negotiations with the local Council, as landowner, which had led to the College’s decision to withdraw from the project. Members were assured that all costs incurred to date would be met by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

AGREED: following a short discussion, that the Governing Body formally endorse the course of action taken by the Director in this matter and that it record its appreciation to those members of staff involved in the development of the project for their respective contributions.

13.0 AMENDMENTS TO THE REGISTER OF INTERESTS 2007/08

The Secretary to the Governing Body reminded members of their responsibility under the Instrument of Government to declare any amendments to the Register of Interests.

No amendments were reported.

14.0 CORRESPONDENCE

14.1 Ballot for Industrial Action Amongst Lecturers

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, copy of letter dated 18 February 2008 from the UCU (University and College Union) addressed to the Director advising that it would be balloting its members on taking part in industrial action including strike action and action short of strike action and that the ballot would close on Wednesday 12 March 2008.

The contents of the above correspondence was noted.

15.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

15.1 Training Update

The Secretary to the Governing Body provided members with the following training update:

- (1) Health and Safety training for senior staff and governors to take place on Wednesday 28 May 2008 from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm prior to the May Governing Body meeting;
- (2) Equality training for senior staff and governors to take place on Wednesday 25 June 2008 (provisional date) from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm prior to the June Governing Body meeting;
- (3) Training for Audit Committee members to be delivered by CIPFA was being organised by DEL;
- (4) Training for Audit Committee members was also included in the Internal Auditor's Internal Audit Plan for 2007/08;
- (5) Governance Healthcheck to be conducted by LSDA in May or June 2008 which would further inform training needs.

The Chairman advised that he had asked that training for Committee Chairs also be explored.

AGREED: at the request of Dr O'Shiel, that the training for Audit Committee members should also be made available to other interested members.

15.2 Date for March 2008 Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting

AGREED: by the Finance and General Purposes Committee members, that the March meeting be rescheduled for Tuesday 18 March 2008 at a time to be agreed in conjunction with the Secretary to the Governing Body.

The Staff representatives left the meeting at this juncture (7.30 pm) and the meeting then went into private session.

The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm

CHAIRMAN _____ **DATE** _____