

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a Meeting of the **South West College Governing Body**
held on Wednesday 27 May 2009 at 7.45 pm in the Boardroom,
Omagh Campus, 2 Mountjoy Road Omagh

PRESENT: Mr Joseph Martin (Acting Chairman)
Mrs Kate Courtenay
Mr Gerry Kingston
Mr Gerard McDermott
Councillor Thomas O'Reilly
Dr Nicholas O'Shiel
Mr Victor Refaussé (Director)
Mrs Diane Stevenson
Ms Gwen Stevenson

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

Item 1 only:

Mrs Celine McCartan, Head of Corporate Services

APOLOGIES: Mr Martin Groom
Dr Mark Kelly
Mr Adrian McCreesh
Mr Joseph McFall
Councillor Dr Philip Weir

AGREED: at the request of the Acting Chairman, that the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting be moved up the agenda to facilitate attendance by the Head of Corporate Services for discussion on the Financial Projections 2009/10 – Version 1.

1.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 2009

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, Report of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday 20 May 2009, together with the following documents:

- (a) Financial Projections 2009/10 – Version 1
- (b) Financial Management Report for 9 months to 30 April 2009
- (c) Investment Strategy, May 2009

CIRCULATED: to those members present, Investment Policy Advice prepared by Goldblatt McGuigan on behalf of Regional Colleges, dated May 2009.

Ms Gwen Stevenson, in presenting the report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, highlighted the key issues and recommendations with particular reference to the three reports at (a) – (c) above and the recommendation to grant retrospective approval for the operation of a €150k working overdraft facility in connection with the administration of European Project monies.

The Acting Chairman welcomed the Head of Corporate Services to the meeting and said that the primary purpose of her attendance was to explain the budget deficit proposal for 2009/10, adding that she would also present the sectoral report on investment policy.

1.1 Financial Projections 2009/10 – Version 1 – Page 5 and 6, Minute Ref 12.0 of 20 May 2009 Finance and General Purposes Committee Report

The Head of Corporate Services advised that the budget had been prepared against the background of a shrinking income base and increasing cost base but, on the positive side, highlighted the College's financial performance in its first two years of trading (surplus in first year and ahead of target in current year) and the fact that sound financial systems and processes were in place. This, she said, was a strong position to be in going into a difficult budgetary period. She also again highlighted the specific key factors that had influenced the 2009/10 budget preparation and the different budgetary scenarios and said that the proposal for an operational deficit in the region of £400-500k, or 1.5%, was within the 2% limit (of total income) permissible under the Financial Memorandum and would be met from the College's reserves. The objective, she added, would be to move towards a balanced budget in Year 3 of the 2009-12 College Development Plan.

The Head of Corporate Services responded to a range of questions from members in relation to the factors that had contributed to the budgetary position under discussion and the implications for a number of budgetary areas including staffing, estates maintenance and IT. The Director and the Head of Corporate Services also commented on the factors that would be central to the College's income growth and financial sustainability going forward, ie, an increase in the level of the College's full time HE allocation and delivery of student recruitment, retention and achievement targets. They also commented on the proposal for utilisation of reserves to meet exceptional expenditure, eg, redundancy costs, refurbishment costs, and certain IT investment. In relation to the latter, it was noted that a paper on the use of the College's reserves was to be presented to the next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

One member asked that an action plan for communication, management, and delivery of the budget be also presented to a future meeting.

1.2 Investment Strategy – Page 4, Minute Ref 7.0 of 20 May 2009 Finance and General Purposes Committee Report

The Head of Corporate Services advised that the Investment Policy Advice had been received earlier in the day and, at an initial reading, contained some useful

information in relation to credit ratings in particular. The advice would, she added, be used to inform investment strategy for 2009/10 and indicated that this would include a proposal for a rolling investment strategy whereby investments would mature at different times so as to ensure liquidity and cash flow. In terms of the recommendation under Part (2) of Section 7.0 of the Finance and General Purposes Committee report, she recommended that the period of investment be increased to four months from maturity to allow time for the 2009/10 investment strategy, which would be presented to the September 2009 Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting, to be put in place.

1.3 Adoption of Report

AGREED: on the proposal of Ms Gwen Stevenson, seconded by Dr O’Shiel, adoption of the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee subject to the amendment that the proposed investments with the Ulster Bank, First Trust Bank, and Bank of Ireland, be for a period of four months.

The Head of Corporate Services left the meeting at this juncture.

2.0 MINUTES OF GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2009

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 25 March 2009.

It was noted that the confidential section of the above minutes had not been circulated to staff members and would be dealt with under the confidential section of the Governing Body meeting.

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

Dr O’Shiel, at this stage in the meeting, registered an apology for the June 2009 Governing Body meeting.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Visit to Skills Centre, Enniskillen – Page 4, Minute Ref 3.2

The Acting Chairman advised that the rescheduled visit to the Enniskillen Skills Centre, which was to have taken place immediately prior to the meeting, had had to be postponed in order to accommodate a meeting of the Governing Body Selection Panel for the post of Director and Chief Executive.

AGREED: that the June 2009 Governing Body meeting be switched from Dungannon to the Enniskillen Campus commencing at 5.30 pm and be preceded by a visit to the Skills Centre at 4.30 pm.

3.2 Fees and Charges Policy – Pages 6 and 7, Minute Ref 10.0

Members were advised that the outstanding Higher Education fees had now been confirmed and that it was intended that the fees for Priority Skills Area courses would be on the basis of 30% discount if paid in full by 1 September rather than the flat fee of £100 previously proposed for courses at Level 2 and 3. Some other minor amendments to the Fees and Charges Schedule were also noted.

AGREED: that the Policy be approved for signing on the above basis.

3.3 Student Governor – Page 7, Item 11.0

The Acting Chairman advised that he had received a proposal from Mr McFall relating to student participation in meetings pending the appointment of the student governor and suggested that consideration of this be deferred pending the outcome of DEL's review of FE governance which was currently ongoing.

AGREED: support for the above course of action.

4.0 **REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2009**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, Report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on Wednesday 25 March 2009.

It was noted that a verbal report of this meeting had been given by the Committee Chair to the March Governing Body meeting.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mrs Diane Stevenson, seconded by Mrs Courtenay, adoption of the report of the Audit Committee.

5.0 **REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION, QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 5 MAY 2009**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, Report of a meeting of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee held on Tuesday 5 May 2009.

The report of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee was presented by Councillor O'Reilly in the absence of the Committee Chairman who advised that the main topic of discussion had been the Scoping Paper on International Students. The other business, he added, had been deferred to the June meeting due to the meeting becoming inquorate.

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

6.0 REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 MAY 2009

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: to all members, Report of a meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 13 May 2009, together with:

- (a) Draft Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- (b) Draft Good Relations/Cultural Diversity Policy

It was noted that the confidential section of the Staffing Committee report had not been circulated to staff members and would be dealt with under the confidential section of the Governing Body meeting.

Mr McDermott, in presenting the public section of the Staffing Committee report, highlighted the key issues and recommendations including the proposed introduction of a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and a Good Relations/Cultural Diversity Policy, as well as the current situation in terms of sickness absence.

The Secretary to the Governing Body, with reference to the draft Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, advised that an additional paragraph had been added to Section 1, as follows:

“The South West College will, in accordance with the requirements of the Order, make arrangements for consultation with the appropriate Trade Unions and nominated Safety Representatives on all matters relevant to health, safety and wellbeing at work of its employees.”

The Director, in response to a comment by Mr Kingston, advised that the potential academic voluntary redundancies had been reported to the Committee previously.

AGREED: on the proposal of Mr McDermott, seconded by Mrs Courtenay, adoption of Pages 1-6 of the Staffing Committee Report including the two draft Policies at (a) and (b) above subject to the foregoing amendment to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

7.0 COMMITTEE VACANCIES

It was noted that the following Committee vacancies remained to be filled:

- (a) Finance and General Purposes Committee – one co-option to meet skills gap requirement (finance or accounting background)
- (b) Audit Committee – one co-option to meet skills gap requirement (auditing, finance, or accounting background)

AGREED: following a short discussion, that the vacancies be advertised in the CIPFA magazine.

8.0 ACTING CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Acting Chairman again paid tribute to the Director for his performance at the recent Public Accounts Committee hearing.

9.0 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

The Director reported on a range of issues as follows:

- (1) **Public Accounts Committee hearing** – this had taken place on 7 May 2009. The next stage in the process would be that a report of the hearing would be issued and DEL would make a response.

The Director further reported that he had issued an open invitation to the Public Accounts Committee to visit the South West College and referred to some of the publicity that the hearing had attracted.

- (2) **Launch of InnoTech Centre** – this had taken place on 5 May 2009 with the keynote speakers being Dr Aideen McGinley, Permanent Secretary, and Mr Sean Gallagher of RTE's Dragons' Den.
- (3) **Tourism and Hospitality initiative** – a three year action plan should be completed by the end of May 2009 and would then be put out to industry for consultation.
- (4) **DEL Governance Review** – the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) was currently undertaking a review of governance in the Northern Ireland FE sector on behalf of DEL and the Acting Chairman, the Secretary to the Governing Body, and himself had been interviewed by a representative of LSIS earlier in the month in this regard. Review areas included remuneration of the Chair and Governing Body members; Director's appraisal; length of appointment; roles and responsibilities; and the powers of the Department. LSIS were due to report to the Department at the end of June 2009.
- (5) **Public Service Training College at Cookstown** – a presentation had been given to the design team for the new Public Service Training College who had shown a keen interest in the area of sustainability.
- (6) **Swine Flu** – information had been given to all staff and students and a helpline had been set up with the Public Health Agency for Northern Ireland.
- (7) **Industrial Relations** – management and staff were working at drawing up the new lecturers' contract which it was hoped to have completed by the end of June 2009.
- (8) **New Skills Centre** – this was on target for completion at the end of July 2009. All old buildings would be demolished.

- (9) **ETI Inspection of Priority Skills at Level 2** – ETI Inspectors would present their findings at the June 2009 meeting of the Education, Quality and Performance Committee. This would be the process for feedback on future inspections.
- (10) **Higher Education Review** – a review of the College’s Higher Education provision had been undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency and the report of their findings was expected in July 2009.

10.0 REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Secretary to the Governing Body advised that all returns for the 2008/09 Register were now complete and said that, going forward, governors would need to declare the name of their employer or business under the “business interests held” section as this information was required in relation to preparation of the “Related Party Transactions” section of the College’s annual accounts.

11.0 DECLARATION OF ANY HOSPITALITY OR GIFTS RECEIVED OR OFFERED

No declarations were made.

12.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to report.

13.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

13.1 Insurance Claim Declaration

The Secretary to the Governing Body, with reference to a letter dated 22 May 2009 sent to all governors, reminded those present of the request from the College’s Insurance Brokers that governors be asked whether “*they were aware of any circumstances which could give rise to a claim and which should be notified to insurers*”.

It was noted that a response was required by 4 June 2009.

13.2 Prizegiving Ceremony and Training Opportunity

The Secretary to the Governing Body, also with reference to her letter of 22 May 2009, reminded governors of the Annual Prizegiving Ceremony for the Training Department to be held on Wednesday 17 June 2009 in the Omagh Campus and the Equality Awareness training sessions for staff to be held on 1, 11 and 15 June across the three Campuses which were open to interested and available governors.

The staff representative, Mr Kingston, left the meeting at this juncture. The meeting then went into private session.

The meeting concluded at 9.05 pm

CHAIRMAN _____ **DATE** _____