

Board of Management Meeting
Friday 24th April 2020 at 1000 hours (on Teams)

Present A Kerr (Chair), A McKechnie, R Smith, C McDowall, R Harkness, L Newlands, K Dougans-Haining, C Gibb, T Donnelly, P Hughes.

Apologies Y Johnston, S Duffy, L Glen, S Dillett, J Carratt, P Hutchinson.

In Attendance A Allan, K McAllister and A Martin

1. Declarations of Members Interests

Membership of The Lanarkshire Board was declared by A Kerr, A McKechnie, R Smith, R Harkness and L Newlands. Mr Kerr also declared his membership of the Board of the Scottish Funding Council.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minute of the meeting held 10th April 2020 was approved by the Board.

3. Matters Arising

Regional Allocation of Grant-in-Aid – the total allocation has been passed to the Lanarkshire Region by the SFC. We have reached out to NCL to arrange a dialogue on the regional allocation but no progress at this stage. Ms McKechnie informed members that the process of allocating funds was one of the areas to be considered as part of a wider Governance paper she had been tasked to prepare with the Principal of NCL for discussion at future QUAD meetings with the two Lanarkshire Principals and Chairs.

National Disputes – Unison’s national collective dispute on annual leave remains live. The EIS position on the continuation of remote teaching and assessment also continues. A JNC meeting is arranged for later today and the Board will be updated on this ongoing dialogue.

Digital Poverty – under present restrictions the College remains unable to offer out any additional equipment. Laptops are being set up for distribution whenever this becomes possible. Hardship funding can be awarded to assist students with IT and these requests are being assessed on an individual basis.

4. Chair’s Welcome

Mr Kerr expressed his thanks to members for their attendance. He outlined the structure of the meeting with members noting the update to be given on finance.

5. Principal’s Update

Ms McKechnie thanked members for their continued support. The Board was then provided with an update by Ms McKechnie on the following key areas:

Staffing and staff absence

Absence figures are at the lowest recorded level for this time of year. Two cases of suspected COVID-19 have been reported and two members of staff continue to self-isolate due to long-term health issues. Human Resources are collating a comprehensive picture of staffing contracts. This will also consider the possible re-deployment of staff who are unable to carry out present job roles virtually.

Staff Health and Wellbeing

Staff across the College remained engaged and motivated. Managers continued to reach out to all staff on at least a weekly basis to sense check on wellbeing and any assistance that may be needed. Work is almost complete on a Wellbeing Booklet for distribution to all staff. This will outline different approaches to supporting wellbeing during lockdown and highlight the various clubs, classes, on-line training and counselling and advice on offer to staff.

Student Engagement

Overall engagement levels continue to be extremely positive. Across the three faculties varying from 63% to 82%.

Student Support Funds

As previously reported, the funding for travel and childcare had been re-routed to a central Hardship Fund. There had been great demand from students to access this fund and over the last week - this funding is assessed on a case by case basis. The majority of these awards had been to our most vulnerable students.

Assessment and Certification

It is our ambition to continue with learning and teaching as long as is practicable and to provide our students with the best possible educational experience and outcome. The Quality Unit is working on a succinct set of guidelines for staff and students based on the most recent advice from SQA and other awarding bodies. It is hoped that this information will be with managers in the coming week.

Recruitment

Applications are down 5% on this time last year and offers up by 19%. Staff are working incredibly hard, carrying out virtual interviews and progressing offers. We are mindful of the content of our marketing campaign and ensuring appropriate messaging is going out. All of this is under constant review by our Management Team. Planning had begun for Virtual Open Evenings and the Faculties and Student Services are looking at the best possible options for this provision.

Scenario Planning

This is one of the main areas of focus for the College Management Team at present. Early dialogue had begun with managers on individual departmental plans and deep dive meetings have been agreed for the College Management Team. A report will come to the Board of Management in due course.

Members enquired as to how assessment would be possible for practical courses and what provision was currently in place. Ms McKechnie assured members that where possible virtual teaching

continued to take place in practical subjects: for example, manikin heads had been provided to hairdressing students to carry out cutting assessments. She added that those students who could not be assessed would be amongst the first to be brought back into the building and indeed this discussion was being progressed through the scenario planning piece. Discussion then took place on assessment and resulting and on the appeals process being put in place. All agreed that clarity on the process was extremely important to both students and staff.

6. Update – Finance

The following paperwork had been distributed to members in advance of the meeting:

- Commentary on the updated financial position
- Updated management financial forecast for the year
- Comparison of management forecast as at February and April 2020
- Mid-Year Return to Scottish Funding Council
- Cashflow drawdown submitted to Scottish Funding Council

Mr McAllister stated that the main purpose of his report was to present the College's management forecast for the 12 months to July 2020 in light of the COVID-19 situation and other most recent submissions to the Funding Council. It would also highlight key areas from Finance and Risk which were pertinent to the members at this point.

Management Forecast – 12 months to July 2020

The Management Forecast had been updated to take account of the external information available to the College, allied to the internal estimates in regard to our financial outturn for the year. This update was projecting a deficit in the region of £142K. This figure may be subject to change if impacted by variances in the projected income and expenditure lines. A full commentary had been provided to members on each income and expenditure line. This also included detail on the present cashflow situation.

Members noted the projected overdraft stating that although unfortunate, it was entirely understandable under the present circumstances. It was noted that the College did not anticipate having to utilise its overdraft facility in the period to 31st July 2020 but it was too early to say if this would remain the case in the new financial year.

Members noted the content of the papers outlining the management forecast for the year compared to budget and to the previous year. Mr McAllister took members through the detail on the College's income streams and the improved position for SLC in comparison to other organisations due to our mix of delivery: fees from CITB, SNIPEF, levels of full-time HN provision. The College had also reached its credit target and we would therefore not be subject to clawback of core funding. In regard to expenditure, the College had relatively fixed asks and was not anticipating any great increases. Additional expenditure due to COVID-19 was being recorded under a separate cost code.

Members reviewed and noted the Management Forecast to July 2020 and the cashflow position.

Report to the Funding Council – Mid-Year Return (MYR)

Colleges are required by the Funding Council to prepare a mid-year financial forecast. The original submission date had been March 2020 but updated guidance had been issued to take account of the potential implications of the COVID-19 situation and the submission had now to be returned by the

end of April 2020. The Return reflects the management forecast figures, adjusted to include the SFC instructions on the treatment of non-cash items. It also incorporates note on variances from budget and as requested an indication of lost income and additional cost that may accrue due to COVID-19. We have also been asked to comment on our current cashflow situation.

This return is now complete and will be passed to New College Lanarkshire who had been instructed by the Funding Council to consolidate the figures for the Region. The variance analysis for each college will be submitted separately. Members noted the Return, including the notes on variances for submission to SFC as part of the Regional return.

Report to the Funding Council – Cash Drawdown for April 2020

The College submits a monthly cash drawdown request to SFC. Whilst the table shows the situation to the end of the month, it should be noted that the ‘pinch-point’ for cash is immediately prior to SFC’s distribution of monthly grant-in-aid which falls around the 14th of the month. As previously mentioned, the report would indicate that the College will not require to utilise the overdraft facility in the period to 31st July 2020. Members discussed the importance of maintaining the overdraft facility at the agreed cost. Mr McAllister stated that he would take this forward and report back.

Members then noted the content of the report.

Indicative Grant-in-Aid Allocation for 2020/21 – issued 5th April 2020

Members noted the detail in the indicative allocation document and the impact on Regional finances as set out in the report. Mr McAllister highlighted that no contact had been made by NCL with regard to the apportioning of the monies for the Region as of today. Mr Allan would make further enquires with his colleagues at NCL as to when this would take place.

Risk

The College continues to monitor its Risk Register. The Risk Management Group had also been tasked to produce a report focussing on the main risks for the College under the present circumstances. This report would be scrutinised by the Senior Leadership Team and brought back to the Board via the Audit Update on 22nd May 2020. Members stressed the importance of this work, more especially during this period and welcomed the new format to be presented. Discussion took place on the link to scenario planning and Ms McKechnie gave assurances that this was very much part of the College’s thinking and that the document would be subject to Board scrutiny.

Members noted the arrangements in place regarding risk mitigation.

Student Support

Members noted the shifts in funding allocations, and ensuing impact on students and on staff workload, due to the recent changes in student support. Discussion ensued around the parameters for awarding support and the importance of reaching out to our most vulnerable students. Ms McKechnie explained that a system of assessment was in place but that every case was assessed on an individual basis and that the team involved were always mindful of the particular student’s needs.

Review of Payment to Contractors

The College is reviewing its contracts to assess where contractors could be approached to discuss moderating their charges for services which will now not be delivered. Members enquired if the College was ensuring that during these unprecedented times, the contractors we were engaging with were upholding strong ethical standards. Mr Allan updated members on the work which had taken place with our two on-site contractors: Inspire Catering and Bertram Nursery. The College engaged very early on with these organisations, agreeing terms to ensure that all staff involved would continue to receive income supported by some flexibilities in the college relationship with the contractor. The agreements reached were until the end of May 2020 - further engagement will be required in advance of this date.

Members welcomed this information and asked to be kept abreast of any changes.

7. Student Association

Ms Newlands stated that she continued to have high levels of contact with students and in particular with our most vulnerable student groups. For many students this contact is extremely important to allow a continued feeling of connection to the wider College community. The SA continued to promote and host virtual social events and clubs and to push out links for free exercise classes, quizzes, films etc.

The Student Association Elections were now open and being advertised to encourage students to come forward. A number of students have already shown interest and packs were available for all candidates. Those wishing to stand will be asked to draw up a manifesto and record a short video for their campaign.

Ms Newlands alerted Board members that the college had recently been awarded the *Going Further for Student Carers Recognition Award*. This recognises the significant effort invested right across the college in supporting our student carers to achieve their ambitions.

Members welcomed this information and thanked Ms Newlands for her continued dedication and efforts.

There being no further competent business the Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance.