

Minutes of the Board of Management meeting held on Tuesday 8th June 2021 at 1730 hours via Microsoft Teams

Present: A Kerr (Chair), J Carratt, P Donnelly, C Gibb, L Glen,
R Harkness, P Hutchinson, Y Johnston, C McDonald, A McKechnie,
F Mullen and H Stenhouse

Apologies: S Dillett, Sean Duffy, Ronnie Smith, Chris McDowall

In Attendance: K McAllister, S McManus, B Keegan,

1 Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting. The Chair noted the resignations of both Yvonne Johnston and Paul Hughes from the Board due to significant work pressures in each case. He thanked both of them for their contribution to the work of the Board and wished them well for their future. The Chair also welcomed Fiona Mullen and Heather Stenhouse to their first Board meeting as newly co-opted members. He also welcomed Candy Munro from CDN as a guest reviewing the Board and its working as part of the External Effectiveness Review process.

2 Declaration of Members' Interests

The standing declarations of interests of members, as available on the website, were noted as current. There were no specific interests declared with regard to the items on the agenda for the meeting.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Actions Paper

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th March 2021 were approved as an accurate record. The Chair noted the improved style of the Minute and the addition of the outstanding actions paper.

Matters Arising

It was confirmed that the SLC Foundation Trust still required additional members and a volunteer Board member to support the work of the Trust. The Chair and Vice-Chair agreed to discuss the situation with the Trust and report back to the Board after the Board recruitment has taken place.

It was confirmed that terms and conditions would be issued to Board members once the recruitment of new Board members was complete and in time for the next Board meeting.

Members noted that the HR Manager would be looking for benchmarking information that may be available in the sector on staff absence and employee relations matters.

Decision: Chair and Vice Chair to discuss the Trust and report back to the Board with a forward plan.

Responsibility: Chair

Deadline: 5th October, 2021

Decision: To look for benchmarking information across the sector.

Responsibility: HR Manager

Deadline: 5th October, 2021

4 **Chair's Update**

The Chair provided an update on key issues including:

The Lanarkshire Region - To note the fact that there have been two meetings of the

Lanarkshire Liaison Group and that currently the group is made up of the chair of the RSB, the SLC Chair, SFC and Scottish Government representatives and the two college secretaries.

The meetings to date have largely discussed the process issues of advice to Ministers and next steps. The Chair noted that he had raised the matter of the Principals not being involved at this stage however it was considered that this was appropriate at this time but he will continue to express his view on the matter. The next meeting is Monday 14th June, 2021.

Annual Development Reviews - The Chair thanked all of those who took part in the review process and confirmed the process is now complete. He will feedback the details of the responses to the Interim Clerk for action to be taken.

The Chair noted that the reviews were a very positive process and there is work to do in supporting members of the board on development matters, including relating to finance. This will be supported by better use of resources such as the College Development Network (CDN).

Decision: To collate reviews/paperwork from the Chair and Vice Chair and organise appropriate training going forward.

Responsibility: Interim Clerk

Deadline: 5th October, 2021

Board workshop - The Chair thanked all of those who took part in the board workshop and provided positive feedback to Candy Munro as part of the EER.

SharePoint portal - The Chair congratulated those involved in the creation of the Board portal and noted that it gives Board members the opportunity for new ways of working, requiring fewer documents in the Board pack with all related documents available to access on the portal.

Terms and Conditions

One of the actions which is currently outstanding is the issuing of terms and conditions to Board members. The Chair and Interim Clerk agreed that the best and most appropriate way to achieve this was to await the appointment of our new board members and issue the terms and conditions to all board members at the same point in time.

Decision: To issue terms and conditions to all Board members after the Board Recruitment phase has completed.

Responsibility: Interim Clerk

Deadline: 31st October,

2021

Board recruitment

It was noted that we are embarking upon a board recruitment process and hope to have an advert out the week after the Board meeting for 6 vacancies; interviews to be held in July; all vacancies filled in time for Board Strategy Session on 24th August. A challenging timetable. Gordon Hunt, Head of Leadership, Governance and Research at CDN was approved to be our Independent Observer for the recruitment process.

Decision: Complete a Board Recruitment process in time for the Board Strategy Day.

Responsibility: Interim Clerk

Deadline: 24th August, 2021

SIM appointment – It was noted that one of the actions arising from our review of governance was the appointment of a senior independent member (SIM). Patricia Donnelly was approved as the Board's SIM.

Strike Action – Members were advised that the national strike action is over but the 3 local colleges involved are still in dispute. Industrial relations remain a sector wide risk.

Internal Audit Update – The Chair updated members in strictest confidence on a number of allegations of potential staff misconduct within one of the college faculties. The allegations related to 3 separate matters:

- Systematic bullying and intimidation of a number of staff over a prolonged period
- Potential financial irregularities (of private businesses operating from college premises, using college materials and lecturing staff time).
- Potential timetabling anomalies (fabrication of hours, of students, of classes).

The College alerted the Chair; instigated an internal investigation; and discussed at a Chairs Committee meeting in November. The internal investigations identified a number of issues which merited further exploration, and advice was then sought from Internal and External Audit and SFC. NCL was also alerted given the terms of the Financial Memorandum.

It was agreed at the Audit Committee meeting in February that we would invite our internal auditors to conduct a forensic investigation into the various matters of concern. It should be

noted that this excludes the allegations of bullying and intimidation, which are being dealt with separately by the College HR team.

The investigation has uncovered a number of issues which have been captured in a report received by the College on 28th May, 2021. There are 16 recommendations for change and improvement in relation to financial and procurement controls and procedures including inventory management, and other matters including the code of conduct. The College continues to investigate the issues relating to timetabling.

Decision: The Principal will lead on next steps, which will include a special meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee to ensure it has full oversight of the issues and proposed resolution.

Responsibility: Principal

Deadline: July, 2021

5 Principal's Report

A number of points were highlighted:

- Members have been copied into the fortnightly staff update to keep them informed of college activity on a regular basis. This recognises the risk of disconnect from the College given the current remote mode of operation. Other options to improve connections to the College are also under consideration.
- The final funding allocations for the 2021-22 academic year have been published, with a regional allocation for Lanarkshire. There has been a slight increase in sectoral funding of 2.6%. Next steps are to meet with New College Lanarkshire to agree the funding split.
- The Regional Outcome Agreement has now been published and it contains the data tables which highlights the achievements of both colleges separately.
- The College continues to forecast a deficit of approximately £253K due to a higher than normal level of unpaid fees as well as payroll continuing to run marginally over budget. This was previously highlighted to the Board in March; and is being actively managed.
- On estates, a significant amount of the planned investment works have taken place or are actively in train, with a number of modified teaching spaces having been created; and the air conditioning works commenced and planned to continue across the summer.
- On COVID-response, the College has had a carefully staged and managed return to campus and has been mindful of both staff and students' well-being at all stages of the transition. Regular communications – including videos – have been used to show staff and students what to expect when they return to campus after such a long time. Because of COVID restrictions all staff/students are returning on a rota basis to ensure numbers are carefully managed and physical distancing maintained. Lateral flow testing has been introduced.
- Student recruitment is down by 16% but is improving all the time with part-time courses slower to recruit – significant effort being invested to support our recruitment drive. There is a mixed picture across the college sector with some colleges reporting a similar (up to 20%) decrease in applications whereas other colleges are reporting only a slight decrease in applications year on year.
- The Student Association elections have taken place with Gemma McClarence being reelected as Student President and Alan Mackie as Vice President.
- The second student survey has recently concluded with 89% of respondents being satisfied with their College experience; 97% positive about H&S procedures on campus; and 93% finding the digital approach accessible.
- A number of external verifications have taken place across the College and all went well.
- The Principal has met with the CEO of SQA, Fiona Robertson, and separately with Jamie Hepburn, Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training.

- The College has been awarded £150k from the SSE Sustainable Development Fund for its External Wall Insulation Academy. Lord McConnell will be visiting the College on 11th June to launch our Academy.
- The College has received confirmation that we have been selected as one of the four Scottish Pilot institutions in partnership with EmilyTest – a charity which aims to improve prevention, intervention and support concerning gender-based violence (GBV) in further and higher education – and this pilot is currently in train.
- The College recently renewed its partnership with UWS to deliver the BAcc accounting degree programme, which provides direct articulation to year 3 of the degree and the option for students to carry out their honours year at UWS.
- The College's partnership with SLCouncil to upskill and train care sector employees, now in its 4th year, has been shortlisted as a finalist in the 2021 Herald Higher Education Business Engagement Category – to be held on 17 June.

Members recognised this has been a difficult period but pointed out that great successes and awards do not happen by accident. It is important though to tie any success back to our KPIs and to deliver against outcomes.

Members were reminded that the College should be a civic anchor at the heart of our communities and that such successes are a good driver for Board recruitment.

Members were interested in exploring the possibility of a credit card size set of KPIs - an aide memoire to help with Board member messaging. Action – Principal to consider.

6. Student Association Update

A number of points were highlighted:

- The Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA), agreed with the National Union of Students (NUS), focuses on several key working areas including student poverty, communications, support services and mental health activities.
- Collaborative working with external agencies on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention continues.
- The use of a variety of social media to keep students informed and up to date – including newsletters, videos and emails.
- The SA Job Alert to help students find part-time employment.
- The free soup and sandwiches initiative every Friday continues to be really welcome and successful.
- A Smoke Free App introduced in partnership with NHS Lanarkshire to provide additional support to students and staff who want to quit smoking.

Members were delighted to note that all of these actions demonstrate that Mental Health Wellbeing is at the heart of college life and work.

The Chair thanked Charlotte for all her work and time as Vice President and wished her well for the future as she demits office.

7 Summary of Committee Business

7.1 Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Committee provided the highlights of the recent meeting:

- The External Auditors business was a key update and discussion. Since dissolution from the Lanarkshire Regional Board will not go forward until July 2022 the requirement for additional audit work will not be needed.
- A transition plan will need to be in place with the Board updated on a new dissolution timetable.
- Members noted the risks associated with meeting the regional credit target and were advised that SLC has taken steps to mitigate the risks of a cyber attack and continues to invest in its approach to business continuity planning.
- Members discussed the HR risks associated with COVID and the initiatives in place to address these.
- Members reviewed and approved the draft Risk Policy and Procedures document subject to clarification on the approach to risk appetite.
- Members discussed the upcoming tender for Internal Audit Services and made a number of decisions:

Decision: Approved 4 plus 1 years for the contract and 40 days per year with the potential of additional days

Decision: To utilise the APUC Framework and have APUC oversee the tender assessment Process

Decision: To go out to tender via a Mini-Quota system and for the Chair of the A&R Committee to be involved in the process

Responsibility for each decision: Head of Finance

Deadline: TBC

7.2. Finance and Resources Committee

The Finance and Resources Committee Chair provided a Chair's Report to capture the highlights of the recent meeting. Three themes were noted:

- Cash flows and the need to use the College overdraft facility needs to be monitored due to the potential impact of a deficit in credit attainment
- The delegated responsibilities to budget holders seems to be empowering staff to try to make a difference and is to be welcomed.
- Estates contract management reporting is improving but we need to enhance this to demonstrate routes from red to green when performance issues arise.

The Chair also noted the value added we get from APUC and was positive about the new Board reporting format.

Members were advised the NCL Board was due to meet on 14 June and there may be more information about the impact of credit and ESF targets not being met if this proves to be the position.

7.3 Curriculum, Quality and Development Committee

The Chair provided an overview of the recent meeting. Members were advised that two new co-opted members – Heather Stenhouse and Fiona Mullen – had attended their first Committee and Board meetings and welcomed them both.

Members noted the new approach with Heads of Faculty reporting directly to the Board at the Committee meeting – a very positive opportunity for these Heads and useful for the Committee to hear directly from the senior team.

Members were advised that most of the highlights of the Curriculum, Quality and Development Committee meeting were covered in some detail by the Principal's update and the Student Association Report.

7.4 Human Resources Committee

In the absence of the HR Chair the Board Chairman provided an overview of the recent meeting. Highlights included:

- The new format of report from the HR Manager was commended, particularly the introduction of new graphical/tabular presentations.
- Members agreed to take elements from a lower tier of aims for their remit since they would be more meaningful and more appropriate e.g. people centred.
- Members discussed the impact of COVID lockdowns and factors associated with them – blended learning, home schooling and lack of physical activity - on absence and the wellbeing of staff and students. Various initiatives to support staff and students were highlighted and the need to monitor and be responsive was agreed going forward.
- Members were advised that some staff did not like remote working while others preferred a blended approach. Members were mindful that being remote for extended periods of time did bring difficulties for some; the point was made that staff can get energy from face to face interaction with students.
- Members agreed that the horizon scanning item on the agenda was very useful and leads to some excellent discussion.
- Members of the Committee approved the renewed Committee remit

Decision:

- To approve the proposed changes to the Human Resources Committee remit
- **Responsibility:** Interim Clerk **Deadline:** 30 June 2021

8. AOB

8.1 Review of meeting and papers

- Members were very positive about the move to a reduced number of papers being circulated with all back up papers being available on the new Board portal.

Decision: A commitment was given to continue to review the format of papers and to develop a template for all committee agendas and minutes. Changes would be taken forward incrementally over a period of time, with feedback being taken at each meeting.

Responsibility: Interim Clerk **Deadline:** incrementally at each meeting

9. Approval of papers for publication

Papers were approved for publication with one redacted section in the Audit and Risk Committee.

Decision: Agreed papers to be uploaded to the College website

Responsibility: Interim Clerk **Deadline:** 14th July 2021

10 Date of Next Meeting

- Board Strategy Session – Tuesday 24th August 2021 at 13.30
- Board Meeting – Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 17.30

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