

MINUTES

Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Wednesday 29 September 2021 from 3.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

Present: David C Watt (Chair), Shona Cochrane, Lynn Davis, Pamela Dobson, Garry Dickson, Brian Fisher, Tali Fisher, Hugh Hall, Tony Martin, Evelyn McPhail, Susan Mitchell, Gordon Mole, Samantha Mowbray, Zoe Thomson, Jim Trail OBE, Emma Wallace

Apologies: Drew Connelly

In Attendance: Susan Dunsmuir, Dorothée Leslie, Sue Reekie, Marianne Philp

1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting. It was noted that since the last meeting, Jen Anderson, Joseph Harney and Patrick Carnie had resigned from the Board. Lynn Davis and Drew Connelly had been elected as staff Board Members. It was also noted that Tali Fisher and Emma Wallace were the new Student Board Members. All new members were welcomed to the Board and to their first meeting.

The Chair reminded Board members of the protocols in place for Teams meetings, and these were also posted into the chat as a reminder.

2 Minutes of the:

2.1 Previous Meeting: 23 June 2021

2.2 Extraordinary Meeting: 5 August 2021

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved as an accurate record.

3 Matters Arising / Actions Outstanding

The contents of the paper that been circulated were noted.

4 Strategic Discussion: Coherence Review Response

The contents of the papers that had been circulated were noted. An overview was given of the recent report and the College's response and slides (available on [Microsoft Teams](#)) were displayed to prompt discussion. It was noted that a Ministerial response was expected, although this had been delayed. Key discussion focused on:

- The direction of travel was supported and encouraged by the Board
- Strong leadership by the Scottish Government was required, together with clarity over roles and responsibilities and some prioritisation of activity
- The College should drive forward with priorities and not await a response
- Implications for Fife College might include international markets and alumni links



Fife College

- Tensions between national v regional or local responsibilities
- Whether the widening access agenda should be national or locally led

Members commended the College on the response which was positive and constructive and gave some thought-provoking ideas for consideration. Members agreed that it would be useful to discuss the report again once the Ministerial response had been issued.

5 Principal's Update Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated by email were outlined and noted.

Highlights included updates on:

- Strategic sector-wide issues
- Covid update
- Overall performance
- Estates
- Recent awards

It was confirmed that whilst the student satisfaction rates were lower than last year, this was expected due to the pandemic situation. Many students had not easily adapted to learning remotely. It was anticipated that levels would improve again this year. The satisfaction rate was still considered to be positive with this in mind and in comparison, to other Colleges. Feedback from the student and staff Board members present was that student feedback related to concerns with bubbling arrangements and missing the social aspect of courses.

Reassurance was given that student recruitment numbers were not of concern as some courses were not expected to have recruited by this time of the year.

6 Business Report

The contents of the report that had been circulated were noted. The bullet points in the Executive Summary were outlined in turn, with highlights as follows:

- Student satisfaction had declined by 9% in 2020-21, and participation in the survey had declined by 2%. This was considered a good response given the pandemic situation and compared with other colleges
- 97% of the FT FE credit target had been met. 88% of the FT HE targets had been met and mitigating strategies were being put in place for this. The PT targets were on track for this point of the year. It was anticipated that the overall credit target would be met for the year.
- The yearend external audit as part of the annual account process for 2020-21 had commenced. A year-end underlying surplus of £1,740k was projected. The variances within this were briefly outlined, and it was confirmed that the Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee had reviewed these in detail.
- Health and wellbeing were a particular focus with a new staff member being appointed and additional funding having been secured to support staff in this area.
- A decision was awaited from the Scottish Government on the Full Business Case approval for the new Dunfermline campus. This had been recommended for approval by the Scottish Funding Council. A decision was also awaited on the outline business case for the project at Glenrothes campus.
- Estates and Digital Services projects were outlined, and it was noted these had been reviewed in detail by the Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee.



7 Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. The Student Board Members outlined the progress made against FCSA aims and commitments, and against the Student Presidents' elected aims. Discussion included:

- Any support required in setting up a Trustee Board could be sought from the Chair, Director: Governance and Compliance and the Board of Governors
- The importance of ensuring FCSA activity is tied into College activity to streamline and ensure the best possible support for students and staff
- Board members would be interested in having access to the deaf awareness sessions (possibly at the Board Development Day in November)
- Fife Council was also looking at developing a family approach to sign language training and Zoe Thomson offered to provide contact details if linkages to this would be useful
- The format of new report was welcomed by members.

The FCSA was commended for the amount of work undertaken since the last meeting, and the Student Board Members were thanked for the helpful update provided.

8 Strategic Risk Register 2021-22

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the Audit and Risk Committee had recently reviewed the risk register for the year ahead and recommended it to the Board of Governors for approval. The format had changed in order to make it more visual and to avoid duplication of entry. Members were reminded that, whilst the Audit and Risk Committee monitors the risk register quarterly, the responsibility for risk overall is with the Board of Governors. Members commented that the new visual style of reporting was a positive step forward.

Decision: To approve the Strategic Risk Register for 2021-22.

Responsibility: Chief Financial Officer

Deadline: 30 September 2021

9 Three Year Financial Forecast

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was confirmed that the underlying assumptions as issued by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had been applied, and that the Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee had reviewed the scenarios in detail. It was noted that a breakeven position was predicted across the three-year period. There was a discussion about the scenarios, and which one was more realistic, and it was noted that the College could only progress on the basis of information currently available. It was noted that the Finance Team constantly reviews the financial position based on actual income and information that becomes available in order that any decisions required can be taken as early as possible. It was noted that the Board would continue to be advised of risks and opportunities as they occur throughout the year.

Decision: To approve the three-year financial forecast for submission to the Scottish Funding Council.

Responsibility: Chief Financial Officer

Deadline: October 2021



10 Update on Governance Matters

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Approval was given to the recommendations within the paper. It was noted that the Chair's Committee had delegated authority for Board recruitment and would take forward the current non-executive vacancy as and when most appropriate.

Decisions:

- To approve the appointment of Evelyn McPhail as Senior Independent Member, Brian Fisher as Depute Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, and Gordon Mole as Depute Chair of Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee.
- To appoint members to the Committee as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.
- To endorse the appointments of the two new staff Board Members as detailed in the paper.

Responsibility: Director: Governance and Compliance **Deadline:** 1 October 2021

11 Annual Reports from Committees

11.1 Audit and Risk

11.2 Academic Quality

11.3 Finance, Commercial and Estates

11.4 People and Culture

11.5 Chair's

The contents of each of the Annual Reports was noted. Members agreed that the introduction of these reports was useful, and the importance of engagement of all Committee members in the process was emphasised. Any further feedback on the reports or the process should be provided to the Director: Governance and Compliance.

12 Performance and Effectiveness Review

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted.

Decision: To further review the feedback to identify training and development needs and any other action as appropriate.

Responsibility: Chair/Director Governance and Compliance **Deadline:** 8 December 2021

13 Board Updates

13.1 Chair's Updates

13.2 Dunfermline New Campus: Progress Report

13.3 Summary of Committee Business

13.4 Education Scotland Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted.

14 Review of Meeting

No business was transacted.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 3.30pm

Board Development Day: Tuesday 2 November 2021 from 9am, Dunfermline Campus