

MINUTES

Meeting: Board of Governors

Date: Wednesday 23 March 2022

Location: Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline

Present: David C Watt (Chair), Shona Cochrane, Lynn Davies, Drew Connelly, Pamela Dobson, Brian Fisher, Tali Fisher, Hugh Hall, Tony Martin, Evelyn McPhail, Gordon Mole, Samantha Mowbray, Phillip Thompson, Zoe Thomson, Jim Trail OBE, Emma Wallace

Apologies: Garry Dickson, Susan Mitchell

In Attendance: Susan Dunsmuir, Iain Hawker, Dorothee Leslie, Marianne Philp

1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

2 Education Scotland Visit

Dr John Bowditch, Education Scotland, was welcomed to the meeting, and outlined the College Visit Progress Report that had been made available to members. It was noted that the report focused on six overarching themes linked to the college operational plans for 2020-21 and priorities around COVID-19 recovery. These themes were:

- Learning, teaching and assessment;
- Learner engagement;
- Learner support and wellbeing;
- Learner outcomes;
- Curriculum planning; and
- Quality improvement and enhancement arrangements.

The report confirmed that Education Scotland had concluded that the college was making satisfactory progress and the college's quality improvement and enhancement processes were identifying and addressing appropriately issues arising from the pandemic. It was confirmed that only "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" progress could be noted within the report.

Under each of the six themes, areas of positive progress and areas for further progress and actions required had been recorded. It was confirmed that an action plan was in place to take forward all further actions required, and that work on this was already underway. The actions would be reviewed by the College HMI, Janet Campbell, and would also be monitored by the Academic Quality Committee.

Executive Team members confirmed that they felt that the report gave a fair reflection of the College's current position, and Academic Quality Committee members highlighted that they had received an update at a recent meeting and were reassured that many of the actions recommended were already being taken forward by the College.

The Chair thanked Dr Bowditch for attending the meeting and for comprehensively outlining the report. Dr Bowditch left the meeting.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: December 2021

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

4 Matters Arising / Actions Outstanding

The contents of the paper that been circulated were noted.

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
- Education Scotland
- Overall performance
- Estates

Members commented that it was interesting to note the numbers of staff keen to return to campus or have a permanent hybrid working model and asked what the approach was to that. It was confirmed that the Executive Team had agreed some broad parameters, and had delegated it to Faculties and Departments to operate locally based on the business needs of their area, balanced with a sympathetic consideration of the needs and preferences of staff. It was noted that there was a shift towards more of a return to being on campus and this was being seen with more staff and students now being seen within College buildings.

It was highlighted that some students had found it difficult to deal with the level of change posted over the period of the pandemic and on the return to College. It was noted that it was essential to learn from this and to plan carefully activity to ensure timetables were learner centred and practical. Requirements may be different for different levels of students or different subject areas.

It was confirmed that the Coherence and Sustainability report findings could be discussed in more detail as part of the Board Strategy Day on 18 May 2022. Members noted that some of the themes had already been discussed and explored within the College and ideas should continue to be considered and taken forward as appropriate.

6 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:

- Significant levels of work continued to be undertaken against all FCSA aims and both Student President Manifestos.
- Feedback from students was mixed about the benefits of online learning versus a return to campus learning.
- There had been a positive uptake on social events organized by the FCSA since returning to campus. Online sessions were still made available and were also popular.

- Health and wellbeing continued to be an area of focus and support for students.

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 and for the valuable support provided to students.

7 Business Report

It was highlighted that the format of the report had been changed since the last meeting, reflecting feedback received from members. Each section now contained Strategic Highlights followed by any more detailed information, with less commentary offered and links to more detail discussed at Committee meetings. The review of the format of the report, identified as an action during the External Effectiveness Review, would be taken forward in tandem with the refresh of the College's Strategic Plan.

The contents of the report that had been circulated were noted, with the following main points discussed:

- There was a focus on student recruitment in order to close the gap towards meeting overall targets for 2021-22. Whilst there had been an uptake in employers wishing to engage in training, often bookings were having to be delayed due to staff absences.
- Progressing students would be added to the 2022-23 figures soon and were not yet included in the overall figures. It was considered that the overall position was around 12% lower than at this time last year.
- Credit and activity targets had influenced the curriculum plan for next year to maximise uptake. Staffing levels may need to be adjusted to accommodate changes in delivery areas. Curriculum planning was done in consultation with other Colleges and universities to ensure learners had choices and opportunities to ensure overall demand was being met and articulation routes remained available.
- It was projected that there would be a marginal financial surplus at the year-end. The financial position was being actively managed with scenario planning regularly undertaken and all steps being taken to keep the College in as strong a position as possible.
- Good progress was being made in relation to People and Culture, Estates and Digital, and these areas had been scrutinized in more detail at the relevant Committee meetings.

Members commented that the refined format of the report made for easier reading and thanked staff for taking time to make the changes.

8 Scottish Government Funding for Colleges and Universities 2022-23

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were outlined and noted. Board members noted that there was overall a cut in funding as highlighted in the paper. Due to work undertaken by the College in previous years to ensure efficiency, 2022-23 would be difficult but Fife remained in a comparatively strong position. Further work would be undertaken on budgets to ensure further efficiencies where possible.

Members expressed disappointment that the Scottish Government was advising that skills and training were essential in order to move the economy forward, however they were cutting funding making it impossible for colleges to deliver. It was confirmed that Chairs and Principals were discussing this at relevant meetings, including with Colleges Scotland. It was noted that Student Board members had also attended the recent NUS Rally for Education to support this position.

Members noted that innovative solutions would be required within the sector for the future and expressed the view that partnership and collaboration was essential to ensure survival. Discussions on this would continue at the Board Strategy Day on 18 May 2022.

9 Update on Membership and Governance Related Matters

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. An error was noted within the paper. The proposal was that Susan Mitchell transfer from Chair of Audit and Risk Committee to Chair of Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee with effect from 1 August 2022.

Decisions:

- To endorse the decision to appoint Phillip Thomson to the Board for the period 15 February 2022 to 31 July 2025.
- To endorse the recommendation to seek Ministerial approval to appoint Susan Mitchell to the Board for the period 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2026.
- To approve the appointment of Zoe Thomson as Chair of Academic Quality Committee and as a Chair's Committee member with effect from 1 August 2022.
- To approve the transfer of Susan Mitchell from Chair of Audit and Risk Committee to Chair of Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee with effect from 1 August 2022.
- To approve the appointment of Brian Fisher as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee and as a Chair's Committee member with effect from 1 August 2022.
- To endorse the decision taken to appoint Evelyn McPhail to the FCSA Advisory Board, initially for one year.
- To approve the proposed change to the Chair's Committee remit.
- To approve the proposed changes to the Governance Document.
- To approve the change of timescale as outlined within the External Effectiveness Review action plan.

Responsibility: Director: Governance and Compliance **Deadline:** 31 March 2022

9.1 Code of Conduct

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Main changes to the proposed Model Code of Conduct were noted, and members were encouraged to read the Advice Notes and Guidance Note available on the Standards Commission website. It was noted that members had a personal responsibility in relation to complying with the Code.

Decision: To approve the adoption of the revised Model Code and to write to Scottish Ministers for approval.

Responsibility: Chair/Director: Governance and Compliance **Deadline:** 31 March 2022

10 Dunfermline New Learning Campus

10.1 DP4 and Progress Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Members were advised of the current status of the DP4 submission and the reasons for the extension of the deadline for submitting this, which was due to the volatile external environmental resulting on supplies and pricing issues. Reassurance was given that the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council were being kept up-to-

date on matters as soon as any new information became available. Members were advised of the steps being taken to ensure that the project was kept on track in order to reduce risks to costs and timescales. It was likely that the DP4 would come to the Board for approval in June 2022, and members of the New Build Project Board would continue to meet monthly to monitor progress. Updates would be provided to the Board of Governors as required.

10.2 Land Transaction

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was confirmed that members were aware of the transaction, and this paper was just seeking formal endorsement of the decision.

Decision: To approve the land transaction as detailed within the paper.

Responsibility: Principal

Deadline: 31 March 2022

10.3 Purchase of Media Space and Garages

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Members were reminded that this decision had been taken previously by email.

Decision: To approve the purchase of Media Space and garages, on the basis outlined within the paper.

Responsibility: Principal

Deadline: 31 March 2022

11 Board Updates

11.1 Chair's Updates

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

11.2 Summary of Committee Business

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

12 Review of Meeting

The new format of business report was preferred, and positive feedback was given on hyperlinking to additional reading within the Boardpacks.

- 13 **Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 22 June 2022 at 3.30pm
Graduation Ceremonies: 30 and 31 March 2022, Kirkcaldy
Board Strategy Day: 18 May 2022, Carnegie Conference Centre.
(Members were encouraged to attend in person if possible)

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.