

# MINUTES

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**Meeting:** Board of Governors

**Date:** Thursday 28 September 2023 at 3.30pm

**Location:** Boardroom, HMP and YOI Polmont

**Present:** David C Watt (Chair), Mike Boyle, Drew Connelly, Pamela Dobson, Taylor Edwards, Garry Dickson, Brian Fisher, Kayleigh Gallacher, Stacey Fleming, Tony Martin, Jim Metcalfe, Evelyn McPhail, Gordon Mole, Zoe Thomson

**Apologies:** Susan Mitchell, Samantha Mowbray, Phillip Thompson, Lorraine Wilkinson

**In Attendance:** Iain Hawker, Brenda Heenan, Dorothée Leslie, James Thomson, Marianne Philp

## 1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting. It was noted that this was Drew Connelly's last Board meeting and the Chair extended his thanks, on behalf of all Board members, for all he had contributed. Kayleigh Gallacher, Taylor Edwards and Brenda Heenan were introduced and welcomed to their first meeting.

There was a brief discussion about the visit to the Learning Centre at Polmont prior to the start of the meeting. Members commented on the enthusiasm of staff and the approach that they took to engaging learners at the right time and following-up on progress with them and queried whether this would work as well if extended to other parts of College activity. It was confirmed that sharing of good practice is encouraged at all meetings. Members also queried what the College's role was in the community for individuals not sentenced and also post-release and it was noted that this might also involve engagement with other Colleges as it affected people more widely than in the Fife Region. The student Board members confirmed that they would like to revisit the learning centre to talk to students as they represented all areas of the College in their role as Student Presidents.

## 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 22 June 2023

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

## 3 Matters Arising / Actions Outstanding

The contents of the paper that been circulated were noted.

## 4 Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. The Student Board members outlined the local and national issues of relevance to students, as detailed on pages 8 and 9 of the Boardpack.

Gordon Mole offered support offline with regards to transport links and accessing information already available. The Principal also advised that he was going to travel from Kincardine to Levenmouth using only public transport and bicycle and would

It was noted that processing of results had had a significant impact on learners and communication was key to ensuring that they understood what this meant to them. Some learners remained unclear about when they would graduate and this was having a significant detrimental impact on them.

Members were also advised that the FCSA was being asked to support lecturers with strike action. To date, the FCSA had tried to remain impartial, but views would be sought from the Student Council on this.

Steps were being taken to improve students' knowledge of funding and student loans using class talks, funding sessions and SAAS online videos and information.

Members were also updated on FCSA staffing changes, and being shortlisted for two awards.

## **5 Principal and Chief Executive's Update Report**

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were outlined and noted. Highlights included updates on:

- Staff engagement
- PIs and Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit
- Strategic development
- Forth Green Freeport and Rosyth
- Dunfermline Learning Campus
- Withers review and Scottish Government policy
- College Principals' Group
- Contributions
- Scholarships

Members were updated on staff ideas coming forward which had been grouped into themes as follows:

- Food (10%)
- Innovation/cost savings (16%)
- Communications/systems/processes (17%)
- Student experience/curriculum (18%)
- Culture/team culture/working together (36%)

All of these were being investigated and taken forward as appropriate. It was noted that there would also be an all staff event on 1 February 2024 in the Atrium, Kirkcaldy campus and all members would be invited to attend. This would be an opportunity for staff to meet one another and participate in practical workshops.

It was highlighted that the Forth Green Port and Rosyth item had been flagged as red as it was becoming time sensitive. Whilst there Freeport was a huge area of opportunity, there remained a lack of clarity. Support on key issues had been requested from the Scottish Government. It was anticipated that approval would be sought from the Board of Governors at the meeting in December 2023 on recommendations.

Recent discussions with Ministers were outlined. It was noted that there was a need to showcase the sector more and evidence what Colleges could deliver upon, which could then help to shape policy moving forward.

## 6 Business Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. The strategic highlights within the paper were outlined in turn. Main points noted by members included:

- A £250k end year surplus was predicted, and the external audit was now under way.
- The Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee had agreed to remove the F1 process so all updates provided would be against the original budgeted position.
- The New Build Project Board were having a workshop on 5 October to look at some key issues to help costs without impacting on the strategy to provide a first class student experience.
- Surveys had been commissioned to take place over the October holidays to ascertain whether any of our buildings had RAAC. Whilst there were no immediate concerns, this would give us an informed position. Scottish Government were requesting weekly updates on this issue.
- Student recruitment targets for 2022-23 and were on track for being achieved in 2023-24. Curriculum activity was being monitored and would be rebalanced to ensure targets would be met. HE remained more challenging than other areas.
- Early withdrawals were currently at 1.42% (compared with 7.1% at this time last year).
- Commercial income was approximately 20% of our income and was seen as a key priority for us during a period of flat cash. Members requested additional details on where we currently are and where we aspire to be, and a comparison with others in the sector. It was noted that there was likely to be an increase in competition in commercial activity due to the external environment, which would mean an ongoing focus on quality and profitability.
- Whilst staff absences had increased, the number of long serving members of staff indicated that the College was a good place to work – contrary to the ongoing national disputes and recent media coverage. A brief update was given on national bargaining and job evaluation.

**Decision:** To update Board members in more detail on commercial activity levels and aspirations at the next meeting.

**Responsibility:** Deputy Principal/Vice Principal

**Deadline:** 7 December 2023

## 7 Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was noted that several areas of good practice had been identified, together with areas for development and one main recommendation. A draft action plan was available and had been discussed at the Learning and Teaching Committee and would be presented at the next Academic Quality Committee. There was a short discussion about attendance management, withdrawals and quality assurance.

## 8 Strategic Risk Register 2023-24

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was noted that four risks were outwith tolerance levels. It was noted that risk is reviewed quarterly by the Audit and Risk Committee with the Executive Team reviewing more regularly.

**Decision:** To approve the strategic risk register for 2023-24.

**Responsibility:** Deputy Principal

**Deadline:** 31 October 2023

## 9 Update on Outcome Agreement Process for 2023/24

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

**Decision:** To circulate the Outcome Agreement to members for approval by email correspondence during October, prior to submitting to the Scottish Funding Council.

**Responsibility:** Vice Principal: Academic Strategy

**Deadline:** 31 October 2023

## 10 Proposal to Introduce a Board Scholarship

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Members supported the options as outlined in the paper and agreed to proceed as per the recommendations. An additional suggestion was put forward that funding could be used to hire gowns for students participating in Graduation Ceremonies. It was clarified that Scholarships would not be announced until after funding levels had been secured to avoid disappointment. The idea of a pilot for one year, linked to the 125 birthday celebrations, was also supported.

Members were also reminded about and encouraged to use Easyfundraising ([link here](#)) when shopping online to raise funds at no cost to individual members.

**Decision:** To issue a communication seeking a commitment from Board members on levels of funding, and to draft a donor agreement outlining terms and conditions and emphasizing this is optional and not a condition of being a Board member.

**Responsibility:** Director: Governance and Compliance

**Deadline:** 7 December 2023

## 11 Governance Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was noted that Scottish Government had advised that the date for appointing Trade Union Board members would require to change from 1 January as they could not use a public holiday date. This would have little or no impact as no Board meetings were scheduled during January.

### Decisions:

- To endorse the appointment of Brenda Heenan as the non-teaching staff Board member for a period of 4 years commencing 2 October 2023.
- To appoint Brenda Heenan to the People and Culture Committee and the Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee commencing 2 October 2023.
- To approve the adoption of the exemplar election regulations for Trade Union Board members and Staff Board members with immediate effect (subject to approval by the Joint Consultative Committee).
- To agree that no changes are required to the Standing Orders and to approve the proposed change to the Scheme of Delegation, and to review these again in a further two years.
- To approve the Committee calendar for 2024-25 and the changes to the calendar for 2023-24.

**Responsibility:** Marianne Philp

**Deadline:** 31 October 2023

## 12 Self Evaluation 2022-23 and Annual Development Plan 2023-24

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

### Decisions:

- To approve the Annual Development Plan for 2023-24.
- To confirm to Scottish Funding Council that self-evaluation had been undertaken during 2022-23 as required by the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges.
- To agree to the self-evaluation activity for 2023-24 as detailed in the paper.
- To agree to the recommendation that the next External Effectiveness Review takes place in early 2025.

**Responsibility:** Director: Governance and Compliance

**Deadline:** 31 October 2023

**13 Five Year Financial Forecast**

It was noted that this paper had been included for information and for completeness, as it had been circulated previously by email correspondence to members for approval.

**14 Chair's Updates**

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. The Chair gave a more detailed update on Colleges Scotland membership, and on national bargaining discussions.

**15 Summary of Committee Business**

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

**16 Review of Meeting**

No business was transacted.

**17 Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 7 December 2023 at 3.30pm, Carnegie Conference Centre  
Board Development Day: Tuesday 31 October 2023, Levenmouth Campus