

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Staffing Committee**
held on Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 10:00 am
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

PRESENT:

- Dr David Cutting
- Mr Brian Ingram
- Ms Alana Jones Campbell, Committee Chair
- Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive (*via MS Teams*)
- Ms Anne McCleary (*from item 4.0*)
- Mrs Gillian McDowell

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mrs Camilla James, Head of People & Culture
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mrs Sharon McGrath, Director of Corporate Services (*via MS Teams*)

APOLOGIES: Mrs Libby Armstrong

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Ms Jones Campbell, Committee Chair, welcomed all present to the meeting and reflected on the impact of the Staffing Committee on all four of the strategic priorities for the College of the Learner Experience, Partnership & Collaboration, Sustainability and Governance & Culture.

An apology was tendered on behalf of Mrs Armstrong.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest were made.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 3 December 2024.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01 Strategic Planning Report
- Paper 04.02 Strategic Priorities
- Paper 04.03 People Plan Update Report.

Ms McCleary joined the meeting at this juncture.

4.1 Strategic Plan Development

Ms McCartan reported on her recent delivery of staff briefings and on the ongoing staff consultation on the draft Strategic Plan. She commented on the resourcing and workforce planning challenges facing the College and drew attention to the references made to these challenges in the Strategic Plan, the People Plan and the Quality Improvement Plan. She apprised the meeting of the related conversations held by the Strategic Leadership Team and on the potential requirement for structural change to optimise the use of existing resources to meet operational needs in light of recruitment difficulties.

ACTION: Ms McCartan to circulate the slide pack used during the Staff Briefings presented in February 2025.

During the discussion which followed, members were made aware of the limited scope for strategic development within the Human Resources team in recent months due to resourcing challenges, were apprised of the intention to review the People Plan following the development of the Strategic Plan with a particular focus on resourcing and skills development, and commented on the need for a policy framework in relation to redeployment.

4.2 Culture & Engagement

Mrs McGrath provided an update on the work of the Culture & Engagement Team detailing the action planning undertaken by the five working groups of It's The Manager, Performance Management, Communications, and Trust and Culture and went on to reference the analysis provided in paper 04.01 of the responses to the three Employee Pulse Surveys undertaken in the year to date.

In response to questions and comments from members, the meeting was apprised of the support to be provided to managers to build connections with staff in advance of the development of a coaching culture, was assured of the lack of systematic issues arising from the staff surveys, was made aware of a potential ballot of trade union members on industrial action related to workload and pay issues and acknowledged the value of the staff surveys.

ACTION: Ms McCartan to circulate the letters received from trade unions declaring a trade dispute over workload and pay issues.

4.3 Leadership & Development

Mrs James referenced the update provided in paper 04.01 on the 'Inspiring Leadership, Empowering Leaders' programme.

4.4 Social & Wellbeing

Mrs James outlined the social and wellbeing activities undertaken and planned in the second semester.

4.5 People Plan

Mrs James referenced the update provided in paper 04.03 on the progress of the 30 actions within the People Plan, noting that 21 have been achieved, eight are in progress and one is yet to commence. She added that a review of the People Plan will be undertaken prior to the year end and agreed to append detail on the barriers to full achievement of each of the actions, where applicable.

ACTION: Detail on the barriers to full achievement of each of the actions within the People Plan to be appended, where applicable.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Sickness Absence Report
- Paper 05.02 Equality Update Report
- Paper 05.03 NILGOSC Circular 08-2023
- Paper 05.04 NITPS Consultation
- Paper 05.05 EA First Aid Allowance Circular
- Paper 05.06 CEF Circular 2024 02 Non Teaching Pay Scales
- Paper 05.07 Protocol for Recruitment Panels
- Paper 05.08 Recruitment and Selection Guide.

5.1 Workforce Planning

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0

Mrs James outlined the areas of focus identified in relation to workforce development and commented on the limited scope for such developments in the short term due to resourcing challenges.

5.2 Absence Management

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 05.01

With reference to paper 05.01, Mrs James commented on the similarities in 2023/24 and 2024/25 Term 1 absence data and highlighted the most common reasons for absences, noting the low prevalence of work-related stress.

In response to questions and suggestions from members, she reported on the difficulties in accessing comprehensive Occupational Health Services, acknowledged the impact of the College's aging staff cohort on absence figures and undertook to consider the value of collaborating with other colleges to employ a dedicated sectoral occupational health resource as well as the value of capturing the underlying causes for absences due to personal stress with a view to putting mitigating wellbeing interventions in place.

5.3 Equality

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.02

Mrs James provided an overview of the activities undertaken in relation to equality, highlighting the preparations underway to fulfil the criteria for the Autism NI Impact Award for Education.

5.4 Other

5.4.1 Pension Consultations

Ref: Management Report Section 4.1 and Papers 05.03 & 05.04

Mrs James referenced the recent consultations on the NILGOSC and NITPS pension schemes.

5.4.2 First Aid / Mental Health First Aid Allowance

Ref: Management Report Section 4.2 and Paper 05.05

Mrs James explained that sectoral discussions had taken place on a proposal to align the allowance offered to First Aiders and Mental Health First Aiders to that offered by the Education Authority. Members raised concerns regarding the potential for precedent

and it was suggested that further discussions amongst college principals should take place in advance of any decision being taken on the matter.

5.4.3 Annual Leave Carryover

Ref: Management Report Section 4.3

In response to a query on the proportion of staff carrying an excess of 10 annual leave days into subsequent years, Mrs James provided assurances on the low prevalence of this amongst staff and noted specific examples where this may occur such as following a period of maternity or sickness leave.

5.4.4 Support Staff Pay Awards

Ref: Management Report Section 4.4 and Paper 05.06

Members welcomed the application of the 2024 contractual support staff pay award.

5.4.5 Recruitment & Selection

Ref: Management Report Section 4.5 and Papers 05.07 & 05.08

Members were made aware of the amendments made to the Protocol for Recruitment Panels and the Recruitment & Selection Guide. At the suggestion of the Committee Chair, Mrs James undertook to update the Recruitment & Selection Guide to reflect the introduction of anonymized shortlisting.

6.0 **REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions

Referencing the target set by the Committee that 90% of Active Directory members will have completed the corporate training modules by end February 2025, Mrs McGrath reported an 80% achievement rate to date and added that work is ongoing to filter out those staff who are not actively working for the College at present. She explained that actions have been identified to support staff in completing corporate training modules at an earlier stage in 2025/26.

ACTION: Mrs McCauley to seek governor feedback on corporate training modules to input into future versions.

It was noted that the proposal to pilot the non-requirement of Human Resources representation on Recruitment and Selection panels has been postponed and that a meeting has been held between Mr Ingram and relevant Human Resources representatives to consider the implementation of an environmental screening exercise on support for staff and students with neurodisability.

A revised list of actions is provided at Appendix A.

7.0 **ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

8.0 **REFLECTION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEETING**

Members commented on the effectiveness of the meeting.

The meeting went into confidential session.

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
2 APRIL 2025**

CHAIRPERSON 

DATE 02/04/2025

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	26/02/2025	4.1	Ms McCartan to circulate the slide pack used during the Staff Briefings presented in February 2025.
2	26/02/2025	4.2	Ms McCartan to circulate the letters received from trade unions declaring a trade dispute over workload and pay issues.
3	26/02/2025	4.5	Detail on the barriers to full achievement of each of the actions within the People Plan to be appended, where applicable.
4	26/02/2025	6.0	Mrs McCauley to seek governor feedback on Corporate Modules to input into future versions.