

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Board of Management Meeting

Tuesday 9 June 2020



Draft, confirmed by Chair

Minute of the meeting of the Board of Management of Dundee and Angus College held on Tuesday 9 June 2020 at 5.00pm via Teams

PRESENT:

A McCusker (Chair)	G Ritchie
G Robertson	H Honeyman
M Williamson	K Keay
S Mill	S Stirling
D Fordyce	B Carmichael
P Milne	C Meldrum
D Mackenzie	A Monks
T Pirie	

IN ATTENDANCE: J Carnegie (Vice Principal) S Hewitt (Vice Principal)
S Taylor (Vice Principal/Secretary to the Board)

1. WELCOME

A McCusker welcomed members to the meeting and congratulated Simon Hewitt on his appointment to the role of Principal.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from N Lowden and G Bisset

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest. G Robertson noted his role as Chair of the Board for Gardyne Theatre Limited and D Mackenzie noted his employment with Michelin PLC in respect of the MSIP developments.

4. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2019

4.1 Adoption

The minute of the Board of Management meeting held on 11 December was approved as an accurate record.

4.2 Matters Arising

All matters arising had been closed out bar one and G Robertson noted that work to evaluate the revised arrangements around consideration of risks would be progressed in autumn 2020.

5. STRATEGIC ITEMS

5.1 National Update – COVID 19

G Ritchie provided a summary of key inputs and discussions progressing nationally around the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and the response of the college sector to this.

The need for colleges to play a leading part in the economic recovery activities that would be necessary in the wake of the pandemic was noted, and the work progressing with the Scottish Government at a national level to inform this was welcomed.

The recent ministerial letter to the Scottish Funding Council requesting that they review arrangements and approaches across the tertiary education sector was discussed and the potential for this work to result in significant change was highlighted.

G Ritchie stated that current national discussions and developments were looking at three key stages:

- responding to the current pandemic and needs of our learners and communities;
- preparing for the return to face-to-face delivery; and
- planning for the future and the anticipated economic and social recovery needs.

The update was welcomed and it was agreed that information arising through the planned Chairs Committee meetings would be shared with Board members.

5.2 Post COVID 19 Recovery Plan

G Ritchie stated that he would cover the general recovery plan paper (paper C2) and S Hewitt would outline the current work being undertaken to deliver upon this.

G Ritchie summarised the recovery plan document, highlighting that this had been developed originally for the Chairs Committee and had been updated since that meeting to cover the range of issues and actions being taken forward. It was noted that this work had helped to inform thinking in terms of required actions and had helped to inform discussions with staff and unions around priorities and next steps. G Ritchie stated that the input and engagement from staff and unions had been overwhelming and that he was amazed at the way in which staff had pulled together through the crisis.

The plan and related actions were welcomed by the Board as a positive and focused document to inform developments.

S Hewitt summarised the 'Project 2020' paper produced and noted that this project pulled together the range of important tasks required to support the College to reopen in August 2020 assuming that Phase 3 of lockdown had been met by that time.

The range of workstreams were outlined and the key tasks being undertaken by each workstream was noted, with all workstreams working together to support 'joined-up' outcomes and inform the overall communications needed.

S Hewitt noted that engagement with the unions on this work had been very positive and confirmed that there were union representatives involved in each workstream.

S Hewitt summarised the high level principles adopted for Project 2020 and stated that these had been agreed to provide a structure within which decisions and outcomes could be tested to give staff confidence in the work that was being taken forward.

The key guidance was also summarised, outlining the main expectations around limiting on-campus delivery and working to a minimum and establishing key parameters to allow staff to progress with timetabling and planning.

A McCusker asked if there were student representatives on each workstream. S Hewitt noted that there was Students' Association engagement on areas covering student facing activities/developments.

The potential for staff to be classed as permanent home workers was noted, and it was confirmed that this potential, and the resulting approaches needed in respect of this, were being taken into account.

D Fordyce noted the likelihood of extensive on-line learning and asked about support and provision of ICT access for students in respect of this. S Hewitt noted that work had been progressed to support access by students, but that significant challenges remained through a lack of access to devices and also a lack of access to broadband. Issues and challenges around the home environment for many students was also noted. It was noted that the College had around 500 devices available for issue to students, but that demand would be greater. Options around the repurposing and reuse of ICT equipment were discussed, alongside the provision of on-campus physically distanced learning spaces.

M Williamson noted that the work done to date was very thorough and well planned, and asked if the 21 September date for full-time classes was sufficient time. S Hewitt noted that there would be courses starting in advance of this, but that it was felt that the 3 week delay would work. S Hewitt stated that it was amazing to see the way in which staff had embraced the changes needed, and were working hard to meet needs although there was also an element of realism needed about what could and couldn't be done within this timeframe.

The deployment of staff, and the sufficiency of available teaching hours was discussed alongside the need for staff CPD on digital pedagogy and the effective use of digital platforms. G Ritchie noted that over 150 staff had attended CPD of this type over the previous couple of weeks, with further support and development planned.

A McCusker noted that the plans were comprehensive and noted the Board's thanks to everyone involved in the Project.

6. NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE

S Taylor summarised recent work progressing through national bargaining, including the creation of a national Further Education branch for Unison, replacing the College branches link with the two local authority branches. Work was also progressing on national job evaluation.

S Taylor noted that a national pay demand had been received from EIS-FELA for academic staff, but no demand had yet been received from the support unions and negotiations had not yet commenced.

D Mackenzie asked if there could be major changes nationally in jobs and working arrangements as a result of moving to more remote working. S Taylor stated that this was a potential change in the longer term, but wasn't under discussion currently.

7. PRINCIPALS REPORT

G Ritchie summarised his report noting the excellent work that staff were undertaking to support students and progress outcomes despite the cyber-attack and the Covid 19 situation. G Ritchie noted that this had been a challenging period and that staff had done an exceptional job despite how difficult it had been.

The pulse survey undertaken was noted and G Ritchie summarised the results and key findings. The positivity of the outcomes was noted, alongside the key steps taken to address issues/concerns raised.

The on-going support for staff (including senior staff) was discussed.

The report and developments were noted.

8. FINANCE & ESTATES ITEMS

8.1 2020/2021 Annual Budget

J Carnegie introduced the budget paper, highlighting that this was not an ordinary year and noting that the draft budget presented was not yet in a position to be approved due to the on-going uncertainty around the impact of COVID 19.

J Carnegie noted the projected cash-backed deficit within the draft budget of £1.56 million and stated that, unless there were significant recovery funds allocated by the government, very difficult decisions would have to be made to avoid running out of cash.

J Carnegie stated that the 2019/20 budget position was better than reported initially within the mid-year return, mainly due to the ability to access the UK government job retention scheme. This had helped to maintain current cash balances, and provide a reasonable platform going into 2020/21.

J Carnegie stated that SFC main grant income had been confirmed and that this would not be impacted by any shortfall in core credits. It was noted that there did remain concerns around the ESF funded activity as this was dependent upon the whole sector meeting its core credit target.

The option to utilise capital funds more flexibly was noted, and J Carnegie summarised proposals in respect of this, alongside potential options to seek a 'payment holiday' in respect of the Gardyne loan.

J Carnegie stated that the forecasting for tuition fees was a significant challenge in the current climate and noted that there were expected significant reductions in commercial, canteen and other income streams. J Carnegie stated that there had been increased provision built into the initial draft budget for variable hours teaching staff due to the likely reduction in overall class sizes due to physical distancing requirements.

J Carnegie stated that it was planned that there would be further mitigation of the deficit position through the use of capital funds to offset some elements of ICT cost and continued use of the job retention scheme alongside the potential loan repayment holiday.

The position on 2020/21 cash balances was discussed and it was confirmed that the current forecast deficit would effectively expend all available cash by the end of 2020/21.

S Mill noted that the budget was not for approval and asked when this would come to the Board for approval. J Carnegie stated that this would come back via the Finance and Property Committee to the September 2020 Board meeting. J Carnegie stated that there would also be monthly meetings with the Chair of the Finance and Property Committee and Chair of the Board to support the work needed through to then.

Discussions progressing nationally to ensure support for the college sector were noted and A McCusker noted the urgent need for a college sector financial sustainability plan on an equivalent basis to that developed for the university sector.

It was agreed that the final draft budget be brought to the September Board meeting. **J Carnegie to progress.**

8.2 Estates Development Update

J Carnegie noted that, following approval by e-mail, the bid to the D&A Foundation for funding to support the Kingsway Tower redevelopment had been submitted alongside an offer to meet with the Foundation members to discuss the redevelopment proposals. It was noted that a date for a decision on the bid had not yet been confirmed, but this would be followed up.

9. STUDENTS ASSOCIATION UPDATE

C Meldrum outlined the Students Association election results, confirming that she had been re-elected as Student President with Amy Monks also re-elected as a Vice President (Arbroath) alongside a new Vice President, Levi Hunt (Gardyne). It was noted that no candidates had stood for the Kingsway Vice President role. Board members congratulated C Meldrum and A Monks on their re-election.

C Meldrum noted significant engagement with the recent staff awards and stated that over 5,000 individual nominations had been made by students and that the Students' Association had won 5 awards overall.

Work to support students during the current lockdown was outlined, including on-going support for students and the running of the weekend 'lockdown lounge'. The Association had sought feedback on their activities from students and would use this to inform their 2019/20 Stop and Review and work plans for 2020/21.

A Monks stated that the Students' Association had written to MSPs and the Scottish government to highlight the issue of lack of ICT and broadband by many students (copy of letter enclosed). The publication of regular newsletters to students was noted.

A McCusker thanked A Monks and C Meldrum for their update and the excellent work they had undertaken to support students over the year.

Options to extend ICT availability and support for students were discussed.

10. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

10.1 Board Evaluation

S Taylor advised that the deadline for completion of the externally facilitated evaluation of the Board had been extended as a result of COVID 19 and noted that this would be planned for autumn 2020.

10.1 Board Membership

S Taylor summarised the paper on Board membership and future recruitment. The proposal to co-opt M Thomson onto the Board was approved.

G Robertson noted that the option for remote attendance at Board meetings was a valuable step in encouraging individuals to step forward for Board roles.

12.1 Board Metrics

The range of Board metrics produced were noted.

11. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The minutes of the recent round of Committee meetings were noted.

12. CORRESPONDENCE

The list of recent communications was noted.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A McCusker noted that this was G Ritchie's last Board meeting as Principal and thanked him for his service to the College and clear leadership over a difficult period. A (remote) presentation was made to G Ritchie.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Board of Management Meeting on Tuesday 29 September 2020 at 5.00pm via Teams

Action Point Summary

Action	Responsibility	Date
Final draft budget to be presented for approval	J Carnegie	29 September 2020