**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

**Minute of the Meeting held on Thursday 28 September 2023 at 5.00pm in Seminar Room 5, Arbroath Campus, and Microsoft Teams**

***Draft***

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| **PRESENT:** | L O’Donnell (Chair) | S Middleton |
|  | D Smith | J Buchanan |
|  | N Lowden | C Cusick |
|  | S Stirling | D Fordyce |
|  | B Lawrie | C Ogilvie |
|  | R McLellan | S Hewitt |

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| **IN ATTENDANCE:** | J Grace (Vice Principal) |  |
|  | S Taylor (Vice Principal/Secretary to the Board) | |

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|  | **WELCOME**  L O’Donnell welcomed everyone to the Board Meeting and apologised for the need to change the meeting date to accommodate the Colleges Scotland Parliamentary reception. |
|  | **APOLOGIES**  Apologies were noted from M Williamson, H Honeyman, D Rosie, D Mackenzie, F Khan, and J Carnegie. |
|  | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR CONNECTION**  There were no declarations of interest. |
|  | **MINUTE OF LAST MEETING – 14 MARCH 2023**  The Minute of the Board of Management meeting held on 20 June 2023 was approved as an accurate record. |
|  | **MATTERS ARISING**  Matters arising had been closed out with the exception of the arrangements for a Board strategy session. |
|  | **NATIONAL AND NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE**  L O’Donnell stated all colleges were going through difficult times financially; however, we are now in a stronger position at D&A as a result of the actions taken over the last year. He noted the on-going national disputes and asked S Taylor to provide a summary.  S Taylor noted the continuing disputes around salary awards for 2022/23 and 20203/24 for both academic and support staff. These had resulted in strike action by EIS/FELA and Unison on 7 and 21 September 2023. This action had been undertaken by c20% of staff and further targeted action was scheduled on 2, 3 and 4 October 2023 as the College operated in the constituency of the Minister for HE and FE.  S Taylor noted that there had been discussions around the potential of a three year deal (incorporating 2024/25) as a way of breaking the deadlock, but there had been no real progress on this yet.  S Hewitt stated that discussions with the Minister by both colleges and unions had been 100% clear that there was no additional funding available to support an increased offer.  S Hewitt noted that there had been discussions with the Minister around the range of reforms proposed for the skills sector, with the formal government response to the Withers, Hayward and Purpose & Principles reviews expected around the turn of the year.  L O’Donnell noted the recent Audit Scotland report on Colleges and highlighted the key risks and challenges facing the sector outlined in the document. Each of these had been recognised and acted upon by the College and L O’Donnell noted that, whilst the future was challenging, it was good to note that the College was aware of these challenges and was seeking to control its own destiny in respect of them.  C Cusick welcomed the report as a clear outline of the challenges being faced. |
|  | **STRATEGIC ITEMS**   * 1. **Strategic Project Updates**   J Grace summarised the paper for information and noted the arrangements for the formal launch of the MSIP Skills Academy and marketing of the course offers under the ‘Advance’ branding.  Developments as part of the Tay Cities TCEP project and the creation of the EPIC centre had been the subject of a site visit by Board members in advance of the meeting and members noted that it was positive to see the development.  J Grace noted that development of other Tay Cities projects was positive, but slow. R McLellan asked about the decision to appoint skills advisors in advance of final sign off of the SME project. J Grace noted that this had been decided to allow the project to commence immediately on sign off (which was imminent) and avoid the risk of funding being reprofiled into year 10 of the city deal.  J Grace noted that the esports developments were now normal curriculum so would disappear from future reports. S Hewitt stated that STV would be in the College on 29 September to see the facility and attend the launch of the latest version of the FIFA football game.  The update was welcomed.   * 1. **Regional Outcome Agreement Timeline**   S Taylor summarised the steps and timeline required in respect of creation of the 2023/24 Outcome Agreement. It was noted that these were determined by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) timeline so had little College input.  The timeline and arrangements were noted. |
|  | **STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION**  C Ogilvie introduced the report presentation to the Board.  The 2023 Student elections closed at the end of the month with over 300 votes cast, which is the highest number in recent years. Colin Ogilive has been elected as the new Student President and Fatima Khan as the new Vice President for Gardyne Campus. Unfortunately, there were no candidates in Arbroath and Kingsway that made it to the voting stage and arrangements were being progressed to hold elections in October.  Planning and training had progressed well over the summer, with the new team now actively supporting student induction and class rep training. Over 60 reps had been trained on the first training days, with further training scheduled for the remained of that week and the following week. It was hoped that the majority of the 300 class reps would be trained by the start of the October break.  On-going support for the Thrive project was noted, with breakfast clubs up and running again and the Thrive shops also open. A number of new clubs were also now meeting and engagement in Freshers had been fantastic – back to pre-COVID levels.  Work to support ‘Feedback Fridays’ was noted and S Hewitt sated that this had provided excellent and rapid feedback on a number of areas over the past few weeks.  D Fordyce welcomed the update and noted the clear enthusiasm and determination from the team. |
|  | **PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**  S Hewitt summarised his report highlighting that he wanted to focus on some aspects of College activity that are not always shown. This included the excellent links between the construction team and employers.  The recent input to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee on employer curriculum partnerships by Caryn Gibson was noted and it was agreed that Caryn would be invited to speak to the whole Board on developments in this area. **S Taylor to progress.**  S Hewitt noted the whole College focus on early student retention and sated that he was pleased to see the number of full-time students withdrawn at week 5 had reduced from 177 in 2022 to only 44 so far in 2023. This improvement was welcomed.  Employer links in the care sector and within the non-care functions of NHS Tayside were welcomed and J Buchanan stated that similar developments could be considered with local authorities. His was recognised.  L O’Donnel noted that the wider future focus on business needs and activities was a critical one for the College. |
|  | **FINANCE ITEMS**   * 1. **Financial Sustainability**   S Hewitt noted the Audit Scotland discussion and noted the importance of creating a stable financial platform for the College to work from. His had been achieved and the savings made in 2022 and 2023 had delivered a breakeven budget. The two savings plans had reduced College expenditure by c£4.5 million (10%) although it was recognised that this had only allowed the College to stand still.  S Hewitt sated that this included provision for the current levels of pay award, but that anything further was not included, neither was the impact of any potential clawback of SFC funds.  S Hewitt stated that there remained significant uncertainty around funds such as the Flexible Workforce Development Fund and even for the usual HE Discretionary funds to support our most vulnerable HE students.  The focus on stability for the current year was noted and S Hewitt sated that this was important given the wide range of course and staffing changes that had taken place.  J Grace noted that it was positive to see that the number of full-time students had remained at 2022/23 levels, despite the removal of 26 course streams. This had resulted in greater efficiency, with limited impact of student opportunities or choice. This was welcomed.  The Board welcomed the update and the achievement of the savings target without the need to consider compulsory redundancy.     * 1. **Financial Forecast Return (FFR)**   S Hewitt summarised the FFR paper, noting that this had been approved and submitted to SFC over the summer. It was noted that this showed the potential impact of current financial modelling should no steps be taken to reduce costs or increase income.  S Hewitt noted that this was a model rather than a specific forecast and noted that the underpinning assumptions given by the SFC differed in some cases from those used by the College. That said, it was noted that the FFR did highlight the continuing financial challenges facing the sector and D&A.  C Cusick asked at what point it would be considered that a college was no longer a going concern. S Taylor advised that SFC had various ‘levers’ it could use to avoid this, but noted that each of these would result in the college losing some or all control over much of its operations.  D Fordyce stated that it was important for the Board to recognise that they had a duty to maintain financial sustainability and that documents like the FFR were important in anticipating the future and encouraging a focus on the type of financial and savings plans that had been needed over the past two years. This was recognised.  J Buchanan noted the impact of demographic change on College recruitment and asked about steps being taken to address this. J Grace highlighted that this was an important part of the curriculum review process and underpinned the need for curriculum change to focus on economic and business needs. L O’Donnell noted that this also reflected a change in government policy, shifting the emphasis form 16-19 year olds onto wider age bands.   * 1. **Finance & Committee Update**   S Taylor highlighted these papers were for information only. |
|  | **GOVERNANCE ITEMS**   * 1. **Audit Assurance Response**   S Taylor summarised the paper, noting that this was a new requirement from the College auditors as part of their audit activities. S Taylor noted that the document had been discussed and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee and was presented for final approval by the Board as there were some elements of the document where assurance would be provided to other Committees and not the Audit and Risk Committee.  S Taylor stated that the auditors, Mazars, were content with the response received.  Following discussion the paper was approved.   * 1. **Membership Update**   S Taylor summarised the update, noting the range of approvals to be confirmed.  Following the expiry of their tenure as Students’ Association President and Vice President, the Board membership of Amy Monks and Lenka Strukanova will expire on 31 July 2023. The new Students’ Association President, Colin Ogilvie, had joined the Board in August 2023 alongside Fatima Khan as the second DASA nominee.  Arrangements would progress for the election of a new Support Staff member of the Board following the expiry of the period of office of Sam Stirling. L O’Donnell thanked S Stirling for her service to the Board over the past 4 years.  Arrangements and timescales for the appointment of union nominated board members were approved.   * 1. **Strategic Risk Register**   S Taylor summarised the Strategic Risk Register and the update papers considered by the Audit and Risk Committee in June and September 2023. The Risk Register was discussed and it was agreed that reference to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) be included within the text for the Disaster Recovery Risk (4.1).   * 1. **Board Metrics**   The Board metrics were noted. B Lawrie asked about completion of internal audits and S Taylor noted that one audit had been delayed due to staff absence and two were the mandatory activity and student funding audits completed in August/September each year. All were on target and would be closed out at the next meeting. |
|  | **MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**  Updates from the Committees were noted. D Fordyce summarised key points approved at the most recent meeting. |
|  | **CORRESPONDENCE**  The list of recent correspondence was noted. |
|  | **OTHER BUSINESS**  S Taylor noted that a procurement approval request had been highlighted that would require Finance and Property and Board level sign off. Given that this has arisen between meetings delegated authority was sought for this to remitted to the Chair of Finance and Property and the Chair of the Board to consider. This was approved.  **S Taylor to progress.** |
|  | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  Tuesday 12 December 2023 **at 10.00am** in the **Isla Building, Seminar Room 5, Arbroath Campus.**  The change of venue/time was noted and arrangements for a Board Christmas lunch would be circulated on the same basis as last year with a cost of £18 per head for lunch, with an additional donation to the Thrive project. |

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| **Action Point Summary** |  |  |
| **Action** | **Responsibility** | **Date** |
| C Gibson to update the Board on curriculum/employer partnership developments | S Taylor | 12 December 2023 |
| Procurement approval to be delegated to Board and FPC Chairs | S Taylor | 6 October 2023 |