

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

Meeting of 19 March 2024

Present:

Alex Linkston (Chair of the Board of Governors)
Tony Sharkey (Vice Chair of the Board of Governors)
Sue Stahly (Non-executive Member and Senior Independent Member)
Moira Niven (Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee)
Richard Lockhart (Chair, Audit Committee)
Abel Aboh (Non-executive Member)
Aruna Lopez (Non-executive Member)
Elaine Cook (Non-executive Member)
Seonaid Crosby (Non-executive Member)
Gavin Hamilton (Non-executive Member)
Rehela Hussain (Non-executive Member)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal and Chief Executive)
Karine Bourdarias (Student Association President)
Blair Stewart (Student Association President)
Shelagh Fraser (Support Staff Member)
Laura Murray (Teaching Staff Member)

In Attendance:

Simon Earp (Vice Principal, People, Performance and Improvement)
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Estates)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)
Steven Morrison (Learning and Skills Manager, Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty)
Graeme Binnie (Lecturer, Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty)
Jess Westcough (Active Campus Co-ordinator, Care, Health and Sports Faculty)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Tom Bates, non-executive member and Michael Greenhalgh, non-executive member.

1.2 Presentations from Faculty Staff: Computing, Engineering and Built Environment and Care, Health and Sport**Schools Construction Co-ordinator Project**

The Board were given a presentation by Steven Morrison, Learning and Skills Manager and Graeme Binnie, Lecturer in carpentry and joinery on the Schools Construction Co-ordinator Project.

The board heard the project had started off informally through Graeme Binnie voluntarily engaging with schools to develop practical joinery skills for young people who were less academically inclined. The board was interested to note that project is now supported through the HCI Skills Gateway which aims to support the youngest and most deprived young people. The project builds practical woodworking skills as well as other core skills in young people and schools' staff have also developed practical skills through the project.

Funding was secured for a 0.5 FTE post which allowed Graeme Binnie to be released from his normal timetable to work in schools and enable the college to maintain the core curriculum.

The board noted the college has engaged with over 60 primary schools and was recognised as good practice in the Education Scotland schools review.

The board was very interested in the presentation and discussed whether an initiative like this can encourage an improved gender balance in construction courses since only 5% of teachers have been identified as having a STEM background.

Active Campus Update

The board heard a presentation from Jess Westcough who gave an insight into the five pillars of the Active Campus Project and the range of activities have been promoted in the 7 months she has been at college.

The board noted the collaboration with faculty staff across the college to establish what people want and explore how their needs can be met. A survey had also been completed which has identified fitness and gym activities as the most popular activities.

The board noted that faculties are now inviting Jess into classes to interact with students and add physical activities to class-based learning with a view to improving mental as well as physical health.

Stress coping strategies have been employed with classes to support students during stressful periods and Jess has also developed activities for lecturers to use in curriculum delivery.

The board noted that timetabled fitness classes are in place for students and staff to access. Competitive rugby and football teams have been established and we are partnering with the West Lothian Football Academy with a view to participating in fixtures.

Many events have taken place including International Men's and Women's Day and LGBT+ History Month and Wellbeing Wednesday and the board noted we are now in the 3rd week of the BRIT challenge. Jess discussed work planned to interact with the wider community and introduce more activities that are inclusive for specific groups.

The board were impressed with the number of events and progress made in such a short period of time and thanked Jess for a very interesting presentation.

The board thanked Steven, Graeme and Jess for their very interesting and informative presentations. The Principal noted these projects depend on continued funding and the challenge the college has is maintaining that funding.

1.3 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest that were in conflict with any items under discussion during the meeting.

1.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 5 December 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.

1.5 Matters Arising from the Meeting of 5 December 2023

All actions from the meeting of 5 December 2023 were noted as completed and in progress.

2 Matters for Approval

2.1 Board Development Plan – March 2024 update

The board noted the quarterly update to the plan.

2.2 Appointment of Trade Union Board Members

The Chair gave an update on the process of appointing two new trade union members to the Board.

Chris Wood and Brian Smillie have been duly elected by college staff as the EIS Trade Union member and Unison Trade Union member respectively.

The board was asked to note the formal election of both staff from 19 March 2024. Both trade union members will committee Induction and will attend committee and board meetings in June 2024.

The Board noted the appointment of Trade Union members and welcomed both new members to the Board of Governors.

2.3 Appointment of Non-Executive Board Member

The Board was updated on the recruitment process carried out to select a new non-executive board member to replace Richard Lockhart from 1 August 2024. The Chair confirmed that Lesley McGiffen was recommended for selection by the recruitment panel and the panel have also recommended that Kevin Hentges be appointed to a co-opted position from 1 August 2024 to plan for succession for future vacancies.

The Board approved both appointments and welcomed both new members to the Board.

2.4 Induction and Development Procedure

The Board Secretary and Governance Advisor introduced the procedure and confirmed that feedback had been taken from the Chair, Vice-Chair, Senior Independent Member and other board members to inform the content.

The board agreed this procedure is well written and positive and approved the procedure.

2.5 Recruitment and Succession Planning Procedure

The Board Secretary and Governance Advisor introduced the procedure and confirmed that feedback had been taken from the Chair, Vice-Chair, Senior Independent Member and other board members to inform the content.

The board agreed this procedure is well written and positive and approved the procedure.

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3 Matters for Attention

3.1 Student Association Report

Karine Bourdarias highlighted this is her last meeting as she will be leaving the college to take up a new job. She thanked the board for the advice and support she has received during the 2 years of her appointment.

The board congratulated the Student Association on their shortlisting for two new awards.

The board noted the number of referrals and support given to students.

The board noted that SPARKLE feedback responses were improved by extending the deadline but that it is hoped this will not always be necessary.

The board noted the comprehensive 3-year plan which will give incoming Presidents a good baseline to work from. The board asked what support will be given to new Presidents and were informed a toolkit has been developed and “How To” videos have been created.

The board noted that new Presidents will be elected by the end of May and will have the opportunity to attend the board meeting in June and to shadow current Presidents.

The Chair acknowledged that both Presidents have been excellent role models for our students and have contributed well to the work of the college and the board. The board congratulated Karine on her new appointment and wished her every success.

3.2 Chief Executive Report

The Principal acknowledged the intensity of the last 3 months for all college staff and noted the presentations given today as examples of the excellent work still being achieved.

The Principal noted the Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment will be leaving to take up a new post with Fife College as Chief Academic Officer. The Principal acknowledged the enormous commitment Sarah-Jane has given to the college and the positive impact she had made to college success. The Chair of the Board congratulated Sarah-Jane on behalf of the board and thanked her for her hard work. Sarah-Jane noted “this is the best college I have ever worked in”.

3.2.1 **Industrial Action**

The board noted the paper giving an update on Industrial Action and noted the discussions that have taken place in other committees on the college response to planned actions.

3.3 **Regional Board Chair's Feedback**

The Chair updated members on meetings and discussions held on the budget. It was noted that a new funding model is being worked on which may be of benefit to the college.

The board noted this feedback.

3.4 **Strategic Risk Register Review**

The Chair of Audit Committee introduced the risk register paper and drew attention to the impact of funding and industrial action on heatmap ratings.

The board agreed with the scoring but noted some risks are out with our control. The board noted the lack of funding and agreed that deferring refurbishment of the hospitality area is the right approach at this time.

The Chair noted that difficult financial times will pass and the board confirmed their confidence that the college is prudently and carefully managed.

The board noted the risk register review.

3.5 **Board Strategy Event: Thursday 2 May 2024**

Board members were asked to note the Board Strategy Event date of 2 May 2024 in their diaries.

Further information on the event will follow.

3.6 **Board Interim Review: Azets Internal Auditor's Report**

The Board Secretary and Governance Advisor confirmed this is an interim Board Review, pending our full review in March 2026.

The Board noted the report is largely positive and confirms that our governance procedures are generally sound.

The board noted the 3 recommendations for improvement and approved the action points.

4 Committee Matters for Information

4.1 Learning and Teaching Committee Update

The board heard that SPARKLE survey feedback was the main point of discussion at this meeting and there had been a good discussion on the responses to student feedback taken by the college and by individual faculties.

The committee had also discussed the impact of potential industrial action and the board noted the committee had considered the staff view presented by the teaching staff members. The committee had agreed the college response to withholding student results was appropriate.

The board noted the update from the Learning and Teaching Committee.

4.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee Update

The board heard the committee was given a presentation on staff wellbeing. The board noted that 95% of staff agree the college acts on survey feedback. The board noted results overall were positive and that the college is acting to address challenging student behaviours which was the main point of concern.

Matters for committee approval had focused on consideration and approval of the proposed voluntary severance scheme as well as the current financial situation. The board noted the importance of individual business cases that will be considered when making decisions on approving voluntary severance submissions. The board noted the committee had approved a maximum payment to staff of up to 9 months voluntary severance within a payback period of 12 months.

Industrial action was discussed and the board noted the committee agreed with the college decision to deduct 100% of salary from the end of block 3 where student results are withheld. The board heard the staff view on this had been presented to the committee and had been considered.

The committee discussed the budget situation and management accounts and noted work planned for decarbonisation projects.

The board noted the update from Finance and General Purposes Committee.

4.3 Audit Committee Update

The board heard about continuing progress being made on college cyber security and noted the Scottish Funding Council plan to visit the college to learn from our developments. The board noted that Boxphish training is now available for staff.

It was noted that an event will be held with Dr Elaine Cook, Depute Chief Executive Education, West Lothian Council Education Services to share learning from the handling of business continuity events experienced in West Lothian schools.

4.3.1 Health and Safety Quarterly Report

The committee noted the health and safety quarterly report was comprehensive and gave reassurance the college has robust processes in place.

4.3.2 Health and Safety Annual Report

It was noted the health and safety annual report will, in future, be presented to the September meetings of Audit Committee.

4.4 Chairs Committee Update

All items from the Chairs Committee had been discussed previously. There were no other points of update.

5 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

6 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The Board was content with the quality of papers presented.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 18 June 2024 commencing at 16.30 pm in rooms G4 and G5, No 3 on the Square.