

West College Scotland Board of Management

Minute of Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2024

Present:

Hilary Cameron (HC)
Liz Connolly (LC)
George Cooper (GC)
Jillian Couto-Pheonix (JCP)
Terry Dillon (TD)
Dave Donaldson (DD)
Waiyin Hatton (WH) **(Chair)**
Gordon Hunt (GH)
Linda Johnston (LJ)
John Leburn (JL)
Ronald Leitch (RL)
Jane McKie (JM)
Fiona McLaren (FM)
George Rice (GR)
Jackie Russell (JR)
John Scott (JS)

In attendance:

Nicola Connelly (NC), Director of Finance & Estates
Stephanie Gunn (SG), Vice Principal Educational Leadership
David Leese (DL), Vice Principal Operations
Susan McDonald (SM), Governance Manager (Minutes)
Joe Rafferty (JR), Director of HR & OD
Nathan Tyler (NT), Director Communications, Engagement & Student Experience (TEAMS)

| | |
|---------------|--|
| BM1061 | Welcome & Apologies Apologies were noted from Danny McMahon and Jamie McNicol. Welcome was given to Dave Donaldson and David Leese who were both joining for their first meeting. Round table introductions were given. |
| BM1062 | Declaration of Interest The standing declarations of interests of members, as available on the Register of Interests on the College website, were noted as current. There were no specific interests declared regarding the items on the agenda for the meeting. |
| BM1063 | Minutes of Meetings held on 7 October 2024 The Board approved the Minutes of the meetings held on 7 October 2024 as accurate records of discussions at both meetings. |
| BM1064 | Actions from the Minute & Matters Arising The Board noted the updated actions since the last meeting. |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| BM1065 | <p>Student Association Report</p> <p>In the absence of JM, a summary paper was submitted, written by Grant Taylor, Head of Sector, giving the Board an update on the actions of the Students Association since the last meeting. The following was highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Meutzelfeldt recently appointed as Student Liaison Support Officer, to provide dedicated support to the Students Association, and initial focus will be on supporting the recruitment of Student Representatives. Laura will attend the next Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee (LTQC) meeting to give an update on her role. Action: SG/SM • Two new Presidents elected on a job-share basis (Eloise Jones and Karam Mohamed). • An ex-President of another large college has now agreed to provide mentorship to the Student Presidents. <p>The Board noted the update provided.</p> |
| BM1067 | <p>Chair’s Report</p> <p>The Chair highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Members were praised and thanked for their constructive challenges, input and support during 2024. • The amazing students Fashion Show that had taken place at Greenock campus. • Congratulations offered to the College and individuals who were successful at the CDN Awards. <p>The Board noted the update provided.</p> |
| BM1069 | <p>ROA & Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) Report</p> <p>SG highlighted the following from the paper, issued for Board information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Regional Outcome Agreement self-evaluation and the Self Evaluation & Action Plan (SEAP) had been fully discussed and with minor amendments, approved at LTQC for submission to SFC. • The ROA self-evaluation report has been submitted to SFC along with two case studies, no feedback has yet been received. • Feedback has been received from Quality Assurance Authority (QAA) on the SEAP who noted they were happy with the succinct document and that it covers all principles. Additional feedback on how to develop for next year was also received. It was noted that work is needed to prepare for the review session, due to take place in May 2026. <p>The Board noted the reports provided and the updates given. They commended the great work of the team on these submissions.</p> |
| BM1070 | <p>2023/2024 Annual Report from the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)</p> |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| | <p>Taking the detailed report issued as read, the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee thanked Committee Members and staff involved in preparations of the work conducted by the Committee during the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.</p> <p>He noted the recent changes in senior staff posts and the initial nervousness of the Committee in completion of the year end audits, however, this did not materialise, with strong reports provided by both Internal and External Auditors, and the staff appointments made.</p> <p>He noted that at the joint meeting of ARC and Corporate Development Committee (CDC), Azets were unable to conclude on the audit due to the sector wide issue on job evaluation. NC advised that this had now been resolved and Azets had confirmed an unqualified opinion on the annual report for the year ending 31 July 2024.</p> <p>RL further noted that Risk Management scrutiny continues, with the session held on 4 November with Board Members and Wylie & Bisset, and further work on the Strategic Risk Register to take place on the Strategy Day on 27 January 2025.</p> <p>The Chair of the Committee advised he was happy to note that the Audit & Risk Committee had satisfactorily discharged its duties and responsibilities to the Board.</p> <p>The Board approved the 2023/2024 Audit & Risk Committee Report provided and thanked ARC members for their rigour, diligence and input.</p> |
| <p>BM1071</p> | <p>2023/2024 External Auditors Annual Report & Letter of Representation</p> <p>Having been fully discussed at the recent joint meeting of Audit & Risk and Corporate Development Committee, NC updated on the following:</p> <p>In considering the report, the College highlighted that the auditors have delivered an unqualified opinion concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2024. • The regularity of income and expenditure (in all material respects the expenditure and income recognised in the financial statements have been applied for the purposes intended). • The remuneration and staff report, performance report and governance statement. <p>The external auditors also concluded that the College has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective arrangements, including budgetary control, that help the Board members scrutinise finances. • adequate financial planning arrangements in place, although there remains a challenging funding environment going forward, with further efficiencies required to achieve an adjusted breakeven financial position. • a need for significant capital investment to maintain building standards and therefore ensure continued revenue income based on student numbers. There has been no development in obtaining funding from the SFC to support |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p>significant College estates developments during the year - and thus the risk of reduced performance because of a deteriorating estate remains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governance arrangements in place that provide appropriate scrutiny of decisions made by the Board. • an effective performance management framework in place that supports progress towards the achievement of value for money. • The College exceeded its student credit target, delivering 140,810 credits against a target of 140,450. • The fee for the audit service provision for 2024/25 was noted. <p>NC updated the Board on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recording of job evaluation, with further information awaited from Scottish Government and SFC. • The addition of further robust wording on the need for Scottish Government to provide funding. • The addition of a strategic risk on budgeted deficit. • RDEL/CDEL (Revenue/ Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits) implications being more material for 2024/2025. • The financial sustainability on the wider scope of the audit being noted as 'amber' due to the ongoing financial pressures with flat funding, inflation and staff costs and the cumulative savings required. • One unadjusted misstatement relating to leased asset (Abercorn). • Management review of the improvements required relating to IT Controls, Capital Strategy and KPIs which are all being taken forward. <p>The Board raised and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College intends to comply with the Capital expenditure; however, information was received so late, there was no time to react or update in accounts. NC advised that communications are ongoing with SFC. • In relation to the completion of Job Evaluation it was noted this had been ongoing for 6 years. The issues were noted as around the scoring. LC noted a short briefing paper would be provided to the next Board to understand background and context. The validity of the data was also questioned having been in place since 2018. Action: LC <p>The Board of Management commended the 'unqualified' report and approved the External Audit Annual Report for the year ended 31 July 2024 and for the Chair to sign off the Letter of Representation.</p> |
| <p>BM1072</p> | <p>2023/2024 WCS Annual Report & Financial Statements</p> <p>NC spoke to the paper provided advising that some updates had been made. An updated version of the report would be uploaded to the Board Teams. The amendments noted were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional risk had been added for Job Evaluation (Page 7). • The wording on job evaluation had been updated slightly. • The Remuneration and Pension Interests for senior staff had been updated. |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| | <p>The report provided an overview of the 2023-24 Financial Statements and encompassed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial reporting requirements. • The College’s underlying adjusted operating position as of 31 July 2024. • An overview of the final year end position, reconciling the College 2023-24 budget to the audited position as of 31 July 2024. <p>NC confirmed that the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2024 had been audited by Azets and referred to the 2023-2024 Annual Audit Report and associated Letter of Representation that had been considered earlier.</p> <p>Following recommendation from the Joint Audit & Risk / Corporate Development Committee, and subject to the amendments noted above, the Board of Management approved the 2023/2024 WCS Annual Report & Financial Statements.</p> |
| BM1074 | <p>Corporate Strategy</p> <p>LC advised that following discussions at the last Board meeting, the Corporate Strategy was updated to reflect the comments made. It was noted that this will act as the parent document from which more succinct visual documents, suitable for different audiences will be developed.</p> <p>The Board, agreeing with the amendments made, approved the revised Corporate Strategy provided.</p> |
| BM1077 | <p>Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD) Annual Report</p> <p>JR spoke to the report, having been fully discussed and recommended by CDC. He noted the change of format of the report providing members with a more dashboard style reporting on all HR & OD activities throughout the last year.</p> <p>The Board approved the new style report and agreed this could now be published.</p> |
| BM1089 | <p>Health & Safety Annual Statement</p> <p>The Board approved the annual Health & Safety Policy Statement which was provided as part of the overall Health & Safety Policy, a revision of which will be brought to the next cycle of meetings for approval. Action: JR</p> |
| BM1090 | <p>Sustainability Strategy Update</p> <p>The paper provided the Board with an update on the work undertaken over the last two months as well as an overview of projects planned for the remainder of 2024/2025.</p> |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| | Having been discussed at the recent CDC meeting, the Board noted the update provided. |
| BM1091 | <p>Governance Update</p> <p>The paper provided the Board with an update on governance activities since the last meeting. This included the mid-year review of Board Development Action Plan and Governance Compliance Report.</p> <p>The Board noted the updates provided.</p> |
| BM1092 | <p>Committee Chair Updates</p> <p>Papers were provided on Chair's updates of the recent Committee cycle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All items from ARC and CDC had been previously covered on agenda. • GH brought to the Board's attention that the College had exceeded its target set for Alternative Income, as noted and discussed at the recent LTQC meeting. <p>The Board noted the updates provided and thanked Executive and staff for the work undertaken over the year.</p> |
| | Items for Information: |
| BM1093 | <p>Committee Minutes</p> <p>LTQC – 13 November 2024 (Draft) CDC – 19 November 2024 (Draft) Joint Meeting of CDC and Audit & Risk Committees – 19 November 2024 (Draft)</p> <p>The draft minute of the LTQC meeting was provided for information to the Board. The draft minutes of the CDC and the joint meeting of ARC/CDC would be uploaded to the Board Teams Library for Members information. Action: SM</p> |
| BM1094 | <p>Schedule of Business & Updated Membership List</p> <p>The Board noted the Schedule of Business and the updated Membership list provided.</p> |
| BM1095 | <p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Monday 27 January 2025, Board Strategy Day, Abercorn 1, Paisley Campus Monday 24 March 2025, Board Meeting, (venue tbc)</p> |
| BM1096 | <p>AOCB</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for the succinct and focussed papers provided for the items noted.</p> |

DD advised Board Members that being in broadcasting, he had won over forty awards for a film he had produced and would share the link to Members. He also suggested getting Board Members on video to provide some visibility and insight for staff. These would be shared across the College intranet. Further information and requests would be issued in the New Year. **Action: DD/SM**

The Chair noted this was the last meeting for Linda Johnston and John Leburn, who both had completed two terms on the Board. On behalf of the Board, she thanked them both for their dedication, input, support and guidance over the years across the Committees and the Board of Management, as well as the additional challenges and tasks they had helped with. The Board wished them both well for the future.

The Vice Chair updated Members on the recent annual appraisal set for the Chair. The Chair of the Board and staff members left the room for this **restricted** item.

The Vice Chair confirmed with Members that, along with the Senior Independent Member, they had conducted the Chair's annual appraisal. She advised the Board of the positive insightful discussions to look at the year past and priorities going forward. Discussions included:

- The highlight of the Development Day held in January 2024 and the positive discussions, outcomes and aspirations for the College going forward.
- The leadership provided by the Chair.
- The Chair being a huge ambassador for the College.
- The effective governance and financial management arrangements in place.
- All Board Member contributions and the Board's relationship with the Executive Team.
- Support and development provided to Board Members, including 1-2-1s.
- The development of KPIs, including balance scorecard to evidence effective performance.
- The appointment of two new Vice Principals, with one now in place and the other starting mid-March 2025.
- The upset caused by the recent vote of no-confidence submitted by EIS, particularly with the language used. She ensured the Board discussed fully to find a positive way forward for the College.

LJ advised that the Chair was well informed and energised as Chair of the Board, as well as at a national and personal level, continuing to advocate on behalf of and for the sector and West College Scotland. JL added that the Chair's open style ensures everyone is heard, allowing for good full discussions on all items. Both Members noted the great discussions at the meeting.

LC added that the Chair, as her line manager was hugely supportive, while still challenging. She also noted her energy, enthusiasm and passion for the College.

The Chair re-entered the meeting and with no further business raised, closed the meeting.