

Final Version
MINUTES OF MEETING OF ARGYLL COLLEGE BOARD
Held on Friday 12 March 2021 at 1 pm
Via Microsoft Teams

Present: Andrew Campbell (AMC) Chair, Maggie Tierney (MT) Vice Chair, Martin Jones (MJ), Tony Dalgaty (TD), Jim Findlay (JF), Jennifer Swanson (JS), Faye Tudor (FT), Vicky Gunn (VG), Rosemary Allford (RA), Elodie Nowinski (EN), Billie Smith (BKS), Bettina Sizeland (BS)

Apologies: Scott Matheson (SM), HISA Depute (FD),

In attendance: Elaine Munro (EM), Ailsa Close (AEC), Vicky Daveney (VD) Board Secretary

No	Minute	Who	Action	Date
21.1.1	Welcome and apologies for absence. The Chair welcomed all governors to the meeting. Apologies were received from Scott Matheson and Filip Dabrowski.			
21.1.2	Declarations of interest & to determine any items as confidential. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JF declared his position as a local authority councillor. • BKS reported that her employer had been instructed by the college in relation to the nursery lease. BKS confirmed she is not involved in the engagement and internal safeguards are in place. • An item under 21.1.29 was deemed to be confidential. • An item under 21.1.33 was deemed to be confidential. 			
21.1.3	Minutes of the last meeting. These were approved by the board and are to be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting. MT asked MJ to update the Board on the alignment and merger options. MJ confirmed that further to the procurement process consultants have been in place for one month and meetings have been held with various stakeholders with more scheduled. The final	VD/AMC	To sign	

	report will be available the first week in May in time for the next Committee Meetings, although MJ will report to the Board as soon as the report is available. MJ added that the consultant is acutely aware that the preservation of locality is of paramount importance in any alignment or merger.			
21.1.4	Outstanding Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action deadlines to be updated. 	VD	To update	
21.1.5	Matters arising. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covid-19: MJ reported that since the last meeting lockdown has resumed. Extra measures have been put in place to support staff, as outlined in the attached paper. Local staff meetings have been held to allow staff to voice concerns and steps have been taken to reduce workloads for individuals where necessary, particularly during the home-schooling period. SAMH have provided staff wellbeing workshops. In terms of exiting lockdown, the Health & Safety Consultant has been putting systems for safe working practice in place in schools, particularly for practical activities. Some college activity is recommencing, the focus being on what cannot be networked. The priority is to get students through the assessment regime successfully and avoid having to defer activity until next academic year. 			
21.1.6	Chair's report. The chair provided a report on his recent activities:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended Regional Strategy Committee workshop on 8th January. Attended an equalities session covering what UHI reports on, although one of the biggest issues is rurality and remoteness which was not covered. Involved in discussions regarding SFC Phase 2 Review. Involved in a meeting discussing the Draft Strategic Plan. Exchanged welcomes with the new Vice Chancellor. AMC reported the two main items on the UHI agenda currently are financing of the residences and a potential link with SRUC. MJ provided some background information on the residences and the contract in place across UHI. MT asked what the distribution on the residences is. MJ reported they are across Fort William, Inverness, Elgin and Dornoch.			
RESOURCES				
21.1.7	Draft Minute of Joint Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committee Minute of 26 February 2021 Minute approved.		Approved	
21.1.8	Management accounts for period to 31 March 2021 AMC asked for any comments, none were received.		Noted	
21.1.9	Draft Internal Audit Plan AEC reported that one of the three areas chosen for the original plan, Business Development, has been replaced with Estates Maintenance. AMC asked if the Board were content with this change, all were in agreement.			

21.1.10	RAM Consultation MJ reported that the project continues, comments were submitted before Christmas which were in alignment with those of many of the partners. A concern is that whilst there was recognition of colleges having complex infrastructures and expensive models of delivery, this did not come through sufficiently in the modelling.			
21.1.11	Capital Infrastructure Investment – update: MJ reported the operational requirements of covid have eclipsed the project temporarily, but the Argyll & Bute Rural Growth Deal has now been signed by both Governments. Some projects can now be accelerated, the Maritime Training Centre will hopefully be one of them.			
21.1.12	Risk Register MJ reported that the key change is that covid risks have been separated out. MT queried whether there was a disconnect between risk 25 loss of EU funding which is red and the draft annual report which noted Brexit had little effect for Argyll College. MJ stated that the Risk Register reflects shared risks across the partnership and the loss of this funding affects other partners.			
21.1.13	Draft Union Recognition - update MJ reported that Joe Wright, seconded from NHC to help with the establishment of Union relationships, has had a several meetings and progress has been made, but we are not in a position to sign off on the document as yet.			
21.1.14	Draft Statutory Accounts AEC reported that the highlighted items are additions or changes since the committee meeting draft and noted that the auditors are still carrying out some work which may still result in some.			
21.1.15	Leasehold Properties AEC updated the Board on discussions with the Auditors as to how the properties should be classed. The Auditor has suggested that as they are leasehold the fixed assets should be reclassified as ‘improvements to leasehold property’ and proposed that the value of the fixed assets will be left for this year and looked at/valued next year to identify any potential impairment. AMC thanked AEC for her work on this and asked the Board if they were in agreement with this course of action. The Board were in agreement.			
21.1.16	CCTV Policy		Approved	
21.1.17	Health and Safety (Standing item): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly Report - MJ stated that the report and wider issues around health & safety had been discussed at the joint committee meeting, as well as the potential of sharing Inverness College’s health & safety resource. Health & Safety Policy – approved. 		Approved	
STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE				
21.1.18	Principal’s Report for Period ended 28 February 2021 MJ updated the board on recent activity;			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in internal and external meetings regarding how best to support staff. Focus has been on how to get students and staff through this academic year so that next year strategic activities can be developed. Leading the college has been a collective effort with significant work from the senior management team. Attending UHI Crisis Management meetings. Ongoing contact with Colleges Scotland and Richard Lochhead. Meetings with the consultant for the options appraisal. Rural Growth Deal is now signed off which is a key driver for strategic ambitions. Meetings ongoing regarding the Marine Training Centre as part of the deal. Met with the new Vice Chancellor. Online meeting also arranged for Vice Chancellor with the SMT, AMC, MTw/c 15th March. Engaged in dealing with local and national industrial relations, with the first strike scheduled for Tuesday 16th March. Meetings with council at senior level regarding how to work together on the schools curriculum. <p>AMC thanked MJ and the management team for their work throughout the year.</p>			
21.1.19	<p>Draft Minutes of Learning, Teaching and Engagement Committee held on 28 February 2021</p> <p>Minute approved.</p>		Approved	
21.1.20	<p>Update on final HE FTEs and FE Credit Count to date 2020/21</p> <p>a) FE Credits – EM reported that the FE credit target will not be achieved. The region will also not achieve target.</p> <p>b) HE FTEs – EM reported that the target will be exceeded by a considerable margin.</p> <p>AMC queried how some colleges have met their FE credit target. EM stated that other than UHI, the majority have a higher number of full time FE students with a lower % of part time, and other colleges claim credits for HNC and HND provision, unlike Argyll College. EN agreed that this is the case for other colleges.</p>		Noted	
21.1.21	<p>Early and further retention KPIs for full time FE courses to date 2020/21</p> <p>EM noted that retention figures were hit by covid and there has been a higher FE full time withdrawal rate which is common across the sector.</p>		Noted	
21.1.22	<p>Early student satisfaction survey (ESES) detailed report</p> <p>AMC commented that the survey was positive, students appear to be happy and time has being committed to ensure they are. MJ confirmed that much has been done to alleviate digital poverty and an individualised approach to supporting students has been taken.</p>			
21.1.23	<p>Joint shared delivery of FE/HE courses across UHI partnership for 2021/22</p> <p>AMC commented that the cooperation is very positive. EM reported that the collaboration and willingness to work together has been very good. Teaching teams were involved at the early planning stages which had a positive impact. RA commented that this will help future proof Argyll College at a partnership level.</p>			
21.1.24	<p>Update on learning, teaching and enhancement items in last quarter</p>			

	EM stated that the paper gave the Board some good examples of the breadth of what is being done in terms of enhancement of learning and teaching.		Noted	
21.1.25	<p>UHI Draft Recovery Plan Blueprint</p> <p>MJ reported that the Court of UHI had set a challenge to the partnership to save £20m because a) EO other partners are in deficit and b) there is a requirement to work more efficiently. The paper is at developmental stage and is not about individual institutions but how we work collectively, along with broader change management, eg aligning finance services and working more effectively within curriculum and resource allocation. MT commented that there is no recognition of the financial investment required to achieve streamlining, it is only shown as a saving thereby leading to optimism bias. BS added that it will be difficult to achieve savings and asked MJ where he saw these being most easily realised and what would be the least harmful impact on Argyll College. MJ stated that MT's point is key, it is ambitious and it is unclear whether the expertise to drive this forward exists or is available within UHI. While there could be efficiencies in FE curriculum made at local level, this still requires staff to provide education in as many locations as possible which is our core mission. There could be alignment of core services, but some of these we may currently pay less for than by using EO.</p>			
21.1.26	<p>Strategy Development Update</p> <p>MJ reported that the underlying themes of the strategy development plan will develop, but the report contains the key themes which staff will be consulted on in a workshop context. Development has stalled due to covid, but this will be restarted. Staff will be engaged in the process which will also involve a number of local stakeholders around the key themes.</p>			
21.1.27	<p>Policies for approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Malpractice policy - approved • Staff/Centre Malpractice and Maladministration policy – approved 		Approved Approved	
PEOPLE				
21.1.28	<p>Draft HR & R Committee Minute 26 February 2021</p> <p>Minute approved.</p>		Approved	
21.1.29	<p>Confidential item – Summary of HR and Recruitment in last quarter</p>		Noted	
21.1.30	<p>Policies for approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Handling – approved 		Approved	
BOARD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT				
21.1.31	<p>Board Paper Coversheet</p> <p>MJ stated that the attached coversheet is based on that used by others in the partnership. Not only is it good practice but it provides a useful synopsis of the paper.</p>		Approved	

21.1.32	<p>External Effectiveness Review</p> <p>AMC reported that there is a requirement to carry this out every three years and asked VD to update the Board on progress to date. VD reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the original plan was to use the company recommended by UHI, however it transpired that the procurement process had to followed. • A meeting with APUC took place, the APUC representative then contacted four companies to ask if they would like to be included in the tender. • A 'Request for Information' form is currently being completed prior to the tender being issued. • Intention is to have the successful company observe the June Board Meeting, with the final report complete in August. 			
21.1.33	<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidential item: Redundancy/EIS – see confidential minute <p>AMC asked those present for any other comments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VG – nothing to add. • AEC – added that the reference to covert camera recording has been removed from the CCTV policy. • RA – nothing to add. • BS – acknowledged the pressure the management team are under and recognised the variety of work ongoing and thanked them for keeping the Board up to date. • BS – added her support in relation to the redundancy situation. • EM – nothing to add. • EN – added her support in relation to the redundancy situation and was impressed with the student satisfaction survey results and accounts. • FT – nothing to add. • JS – thanked the management team and staff for their work. • JF – thanked the management team for the educational and pastoral work undertaken. • MT – thanked the management team and expressed interest in having a meeting to discuss the strategy development paper in more detail. • MJ – stated that as soon as the options appraisal for the partnership alignment is received it will be circulated to the Board and added a brief update on the UHI cyber-attack; work is ongoing to mitigate disruption, the VLE is still working, our finance and HR services are not networked. • VD – mentioned a notice of the AGM had been sent to board members for 26th March. • AEC – added that a brief board meeting would take place prior to the AGM. 			
21.1.34	<p>Date of next meeting.</p> <p>Committee meetings – Friday 21st May MS Teams</p> <p>Board meeting – Friday 4th June MS Teams</p>			

 Signed by Chair of meeting	Date.....		
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Outstanding Actions

		Responsibility	Deadline
September 2020			
Chair's Report	<i>AMC to put in writing the Board's concern over Aligned Finance Service</i>	AMC	<i>*ON HOLD*</i>
Chair's Report	FD to pass on thanks to student body.	FD	Dec 20
December 2020			
RAM Consultation	Response to be provided.	MJ/JC/AMC	Jan 21
Developing the Young Workforce Secondary Schools Pilot Project	<i>VAT implications to be investigated.</i>	AEC	<i>Jan 21</i>
March 2021			
Developing the Young Workforce Secondary Schools Pilot Project	VAT implications to be investigated. (VD check with AEC if ongoing)	AEC	ASAP
Partnership Alignment	MJ to update Board as soon as report is received.	MJ	May 21