

Chairs Report from the Board Meeting 27th March 2017

1. This is the fifth of my Chair's Reports and it follows the spring meeting of the Board on the 27th March 2017 at South Lanarkshire College (SLC). The main items for this meeting were the minutes of the Board's committees, the Student Association Reports, a report from SLC, my Chair's Report, the evaluation report on the Board and Board Development Plan to be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and a statement from the Lanarkshire Region on Modern Slavery. There was also positive feedback from the Board's Health and Safety Training sessions in January and February 2017.
2. I was pleased to welcome the new members to the Board to their first meeting – Professor Robert Pyper, Matthew O'Hare and David Winning. They have also joined Board committees and their experience will enhance the work of the committees and the Board. The Board is now at full complement with 22 members.
3. As usual, this meeting of the Board opened with the committee Chairs reporting by exception from the draft minutes of the meetings in this Board cycle. Following this round of committees, there will be a short term working group with members from the Resources and General Purposes Committee (RGP), the Audit Committee and the Finance Committee to take forward the audit review of NCL nursery provision which has now been completed and initially considered by each committee. Another working group is being set up by the Finance Committee which will look at the processes around regional funding to ensure that regional responsibilities are fulfilled. In my last report, I wrote that the NCL accounts demonstrated a very tight financial environment for the college sector and reflected the overall constraints on public sector finance. The financial situation remains tight and we continue to operate in challenging financial circumstances. We are also continuing to meet with the SFC to press forward the need to address the financial situation and this is a key activity for the Board in the coming months.
4. The draft minutes of the last meeting of the Board were approved and the minute of SLC Board meeting of the 6th December 2016 was presented for information.
5. The Board heard from both Student Associations (SA) about the broad range of activities and events that they have undertaken, raising funding for a number of organisations and promoting a number of issues including health and well-being, environmental sustainability and LGBT rights. The SA's are preparing for the student elections in May and the Board noted this. I was very pleased, as was the Board, to hear from Zorena Shanks that the NCL SA and the Learner Engagement Team had won one of Sparqs six awards for the Be - Engaged programme.
6. The Principal of SLC updated the Board on a number of activities at SLC including SLC being the first organisation in Scotland to be recognised as a full "Investor in Diversity" and more recently as a "Leader in Diversity". The college has won awards from the national centre for diversity last year and again this year. SLC is one of Scotland's top performing colleges in a number of categories: attainment is the highest at 74% with students going into jobs or onto university and students from the 20% most deprived areas are attaining at 76% as opposed to the Scottish average of 65%. The numbers of students with positive destinations are also high at 92%. The Board received the SLC Annual Report which is set out in an accessible leaflet format and this reports on good progress on the college's three strategic priorities.

7. In my Chair's Report, I was pleased to update the Board on awards and achievements in both colleges. New College Lanarkshire Hospitality and Professional Cookery students dominated the awards board at the Scottish Culinary Championships bringing home six medals. The NCL marketing team won 3 gold and 1 silver awards at the College Development Network Awards and SLC has won the UK Green Gown Award for the Built Environment 2016 for its new teaching accommodation which is the first building in the UK to be accredited as Outstanding BREEAM (2014) for design and construction.

8. The Board received training and development in January and February with the Board's Strategic Event being held on the 9th and 10th February and Health and Safety Training in January and February 2017. The Board development that was delivered by Polley Solutions – a consultancy specialising in Board development and governance- informed the Board's evaluation and Board Development Plan along with the SFC's rigorous evaluation of the Lanarkshire Board to assess readiness for funding body status. All college boards are required to undertake evaluation by the Revised Code of Good Governance and to submit these reports to the SFC. The evaluation and plan was submitted to the SFC on the 31st March 2017 following approval by the Board at this meeting.

9. The Board noted comments made by the SFC in its letter to the Board in August 2016 awarding the Lanarkshire Regional Board with funding body status which give a conclusion to the SFC evaluation: *'Taking all of the evidence together, we are satisfied that regional structures and processes are sufficiently robust to support New College Lanarkshire's regional responsibilities, including the management of SFC funding for the region.'*

10. The Board also noted further comment on the Board which was made by Polley Solutions in its report on the strategic event as follows:

"This board has developed considerably over the last year. It has a uniquely complex role as both a college board and a regional strategic body and it is fortunate to have a range of board members and staff with the experience and maturity to manage that complexity. Everyone involved appears to have worked hard to build a culture of transparency and partnership as a means of operating a governance model that has innate tensions built into it."

"I think the board is correct to wish to build on that work and, now that fundable body status has been agreed, to focus more of their time and experience on addressing their regional responsibilities and to ask the agencies who work with them to support them in doing so. The board has a strong chair who has put considerable personal effort into building relationships across the region as well as a good mix of members, recently augmented by several new recruits. Looking ahead, if every member of the board takes responsibility for maintaining that culture of transparency and partnership while working together in the best interests of Lanarkshire's learners, the board could become a source of useful ideas for other parts of Scotland seeking to make a success of a multi-college regional governance model. "

I am very pleased to be able to report on this positive progress of the Lanarkshire Board and we will publish the Board's Development Plan on the website which shows the Board's key activities in the coming years in due course.

11. Finally, I am also very pleased to report that the Lanarkshire Board has approved a statement on Modern Slavery which sets out the Board's commitment to ensure that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in the colleges' supply chains or in any part of the business. SLC have committed to a region wide statement - although they are under the turnover threshold set for having a statement - and the Board welcomed this step.

12. I hope that you have found this report on the work of the Board and its committees useful. The next meeting of the Board will be on Monday the 19th June 2017 and I will report again after this meeting. I hope that you have a very good Easter break.

Linda McTavish CBE
Chair of The Lanarkshire Board