Forth Valley College

Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review

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Final issued:

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Now, for tomorrow

Contents

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Main Report

1. Background

The updated Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges ('the Code'), published in August 2016, contained the following requirement:

"The board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness at least every three years. The board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated evaluation) and board development plan (including progress on previous year's plan) to its funding body and publish them online".

In April 2020 the Chair of the Good Governance Steering Group advised that the timescales for College boards/regional strategic bodies to complete the externally facilitated effectiveness reviews had been relaxed following consultation with the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). This extended the deadline for submitting the final reports for the externally facilitated effectiveness review to the end of April 2021. The original deadline set for submission was 31 December 2020.

This report represents the 2020/21 iteration of the externally facilitated effectiveness review described in the Code.

2. Scope, Objectives and Overall Findings

In August 2016, the College Development Network (CDN) published a Guidance Note, which provided the context and the process for conducting the Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review described in the updated Code. This guidance built on the Board Member Development Framework, published in November 2015.

This effectiveness review covers the five sections of the Code namely:

Section A - Leadership and Strategy
Section B - Quality of the Student Experience
Section C - Accountability
Section D - Effectiveness
Section E - Relationships and Collaboration

This report builds on the Governance Effectiveness Review produced by Polley Solutions Ltd in April 2017, which highlighted a number of strengths and areas of good practice in the governance framework operating within the College at that time. The April 2017 report also set out a small number of areas of governance development for 2017/18 to build on the foundations already in place.

The scope agreed with the College for the 2020/21 iteration of the review was to observe the December 2020 meeting of the Board of Management meeting, as required by the Code. In addition, it was agreed that Option 3iii, as described in the Guidance Note, would be completed; namely 'The facilitator undertakes 1 to 1 interviews with some or all Board Members and staff based on the proforma / questionnaire'. The issues arising from these interviews were triangulated and then pressure tested as part of a desktop review.

2. Scope, Objectives and Overall Findings

Overall, our review concludes that the College demonstrates a high level of compliance with the Code. Therefore, the improvement areas identified in Sections 4 and 6 in this report should be viewed in the context of further refinement and enhancement to the governance arrangements which are designed to build on the solid foundations which the College has developed.

The Board is extremely strong in terms of expertise and knowledge, with a range of expertise available to provide support and challenge for management.

The governance framework is operating effectively with clear roles and responsibilities for the Board and each of the standing sub committees.

There was a high level of Board Member engagement in this review, which reflects a high degree of engagement with the College in their role as individual Board Members.

The staff and student representatives on the Board feel that they are treated as full members of the Board and that their views are given sufficient prominence and are listened to.

The development of the new Strategic Plan for the College will be a pivotal moment for the college and therefore the input of a committed and experienced Board should ensure that the College is well placed to deliver on local, regional and national priorities.

The involvement of the College in a range of collaborative projects and initiatives demonstrates the College is willing to innovate and to work with partners to deliver shared objectives. The challenge going forward is how to capture the impact of this work in a way which can be articulated to key stakeholders such as students, trade unions, the Scottish Funding Council, Education Scotland and potential commercial, public and third sector partners.

3. Audit Approach

A scoping meeting was held on 23 November 2020 to agree on the audit approach and the timelines for completion. This meeting was attended by the facilitator, the Chair of the Audit Committee and the Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Affairs in her dual role as Board Secretary. It was agreed that the facilitator would attend the remote meeting of the Board of Management on 3 December 2020, which was conducted using Zoom. This allowed the opportunity to observe the contributions of board members on a range of agenda items, including a number of presentations on areas of strategic importance to the Board.

In advance of the one to one discussion a questionnaire was issued to each member of the Board of Management, with the topics drawn directly from the Code. The results of the completed questionnaires were then utilised to focus the subsequent one to one discussions. In total seventeen 1 to 1 meetings were held, including two separate meetings with the Principal.

The questions covered in each of the 1 to 1 discussions were tailored for the individual Board member to allow detailed discussion on the specific areas of the Code which were most pertinent to their specific role on the Board and Board sub committees.

The results of these discussions have been collated and mapped against the Code. The issues raised were then pressure tested against a raft of corporate documentation which was collated as part of this review.

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4.   Summary of Findings

Our review highlighted a number of areas where the College can demonstrate particular strengths in specific aspects of the Code. Our review also highlighted specific areas where there is perhaps scope for improvement or enhancement to the current arrangements. Both strengths and areas for improvement are summarised below. These included improvement recommendations which will strengthen compliance with the Code and also other areas for consideration which will build on the existing governance arrangements. The detailed observations, recommendations and agreed management responses for each of the improvement actions is set out within Section 6 below. It is proposed that any improvement actions arising from this review should be incorporated into the rolling Board Development Plan, thereby building on any governance activity already underway. The other areas for consideration are included for transparency in order to allow Board consideration. These are summarised as 'Other areas to consider' in Section 7 below.

Strengths

Section A – Leadership and Strategy

a) The Code of Conduct for members of the Board of Management of Forth Valley College, specifically references the nine general Principles of Public Life in Scotland and signposts to the Scottish Government publication 'On Board – a guide for members of public bodies in Scotland'.

b) In general Board Members feel that they can shape the vision, direction, character and values of the College through Board meetings, facilitated workshops and in particular the Strategic Away Days which have been introduced under the stewardship of the current Chair. The introduction of these Strategic Away Days was seen as a positive development by all Board Members interviewed, with a number commenting that these sessions will be even more important in developing the next iteration of the Strategic Plan given the removal of the Strategic Development Committee and the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead for the College and for the wider HE/FE sector.

c) The role of the Chair of the Board of Management in engaging and communicating the outcomes of work with wider stakeholder groups at a national level was highlighted as a particular strength.

d) Board Members demonstrated a clear understanding of the need to monitor achievement of the Regional Outcome Agreement and to align the strategic objectives of the College with regional and national outcomes.

e) An Equalities Policy is in place which is underpinned by an Equality Outcome Plan, an Access and Inclusion Strategy and an Equalities Mainstreaming Report. The December 2020 meeting of the Board of management rece9ived a paper and a presentation on the way the College is engaging in the national project 'Tacking Racism on campus'. The Principal has demonstrated the College's commitment to race equality by signing a declaration on behalf of the Board of Management. In addition, a member of the Board of Management has agreed to act as an anti-racism lead, further demonstrating the collective commitment to this issue.

f) Work is already planned to deliver three sessions around Equalities which will allow the Board to reinforce their collective commitment to the equalities agenda and to showcase the work which will be undertaken within the college to address inequality of all types.

g) A detailed Employee Cultural Engagement Survey was conducted during 2019 and a report summarising the outcomes was considered by the Board of Management in June 2019.

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Strengths (Continued)

Section B – Quality of the Student Experience

a) Each meeting of the Board of Management receives a detailed update from the Forth Valley Student Association (FVSA).

b) The terms of reference for the Learning and Student Experience Committee also includes a requirement to receive "regular reports on the activities of the Association and their Executive" and to " Monitor student satisfaction and feedback".

c) A formal Constitution is in place for FVSA, with the latest amendments ratified by the Board of Management in June 2020.

d) There are monthly meetings between the Principal and the Student President and Student Vice President, and the Chair of the Board of Management also has regular meetings with the Student President and Vice president. Our review confirmed that these meetings do provide the opportunity for constructive dialogue between senior management, the Board and FVSA which is viewed positively by all parties involved.

e) A new FVSA Advisory Group was formed in late 2020, containing representation from the Board of Management, the Student President and Vice President and the Head of Learning and Quality.

f) The results of the twice yearly Student Surveys are reported to the Learning and Student Experience Committee and these are supplemented by the outputs of Feedback Fridays, which are collated by the FVSA and reported to the Board of Management as an integral part of the FVSA update report.

g) The mechanisms to ensure effective oversight of the quality and inclusiveness of learning were considered good or very good by all Board members surveyed.

h) In general, Board Members expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the quality and format of performance information provided to inform decision making, with the ongoing activity to develop dashboard reporting to inform the Board level discussions around Learning and Student Experience seen as a model approach which could potentially be rolled out to other areas. The development of dashboards is embedded within the existing Board Development Plan.

Section C – Accountability

a) The standing committee meetings timetable has been maintained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with meetings held virtually. A significant number of Board Members expressed the view that a return to face to face Board meetings would allow relationships to be strengthened through the discussions prior to meetings and after meetings. However, there was a recognition that the current arrangements do provide a level of convenience which contributes to higher attendance and therefore a hybrid model of Board and Board Sub Committee meetings may be the preferred option once the current restrictions allow onsite meetings in the College.

b) Board Members collectively praised the Chair and the Chairs of the Board Sub Committees for the way in which the remote meetings have been conducted and the inclusive approach which has been taken to ensure that all participants can contribute effectively.

c) Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the approach taken was to rotate the venue for Board of Management meetings around the three College campuses and most Board Members expressed a preference for a return to this arrangement once the travel and social distancing restrictions allow face to face meetings to be conducted.

d) A register of interest for all Board Members is maintained and is published on the College website.

e) Declarations of Interest are a standing agenda item for all Board committees.

f) The volume, quality and level of detail contained within Board and Board sub committee papers is considered to be good with papers received timeously. Agendas are well structured with clarity for Board Members regarding whether items are for approval, discussion or noting.

g) The consensus is that the balance between the business considered at Board of Management meetings and at Board Committees is good with adequate opportunity to ask for more detail when minutes are presented at the Board of Management.

h) A number of Board Members highlighted the professional but friendly way in which Board meetings are conducted and praised the balance between formal reports and presentations.

Strengths (Continued)

Section C – Accountability (Continued)

i) The Board has established risk management processes which allow the effective identification and monitoring of mitigating actions. This was informed by a specific risk management workshop which was arranged to examine the strategic risks in a number of educational bodies and to challenge whether the existing risks covered all of the required risk areas. We were advised that work to review the risk management framework is underway with work to revisit the Board's risk appetite scheduled for later in 2021.

j) The Strategic Risk Register is considered at each meeting of the Audit Committee and the consideration of any risks emerging from committee discussions is captured as part of a risk review standing agenda item which ensures that consideration is given to the implications on the risk register in terms of new or changed risks for the College.

k) The Audit Committee is well established, and the membership includes members with specific experience of finance, accounting or auditing as stipulated by the Code.

l) the remit specifically references the committee's responsibility around governance, risk management and the internal control framework.

m) The specific duty to review reports submitted by the College's internal auditors and to monitor progress is reflected in the terms of reference, as is the requirement to monitor the College's external auditors.

n) A closed session with the internal and external auditors is built into the Audit Committee annual workplan, in line with good practice.

o) The Audit Committee Terms of Reference specifically preclude membership on the committee by the Chair of the Board of Management or the Principal or other senior members of staff.

p) The Chair of the Finance Committee is specifically precluded from chairing the Audit Committee.

q) A Remuneration Committee is in place, in line with the requirements of the Code, which determines Senior Staff Pay Policy, the remuneration of the Principal and other appropriate senior staff.

Section D – Effectiveness

a) The relationship between the Chair of the Board of Management, the Principal and the Board Secretary is viewed by other Board members as extremely effective in delivering for the College.

b) All Board Members interviewed felt encouraged to contribute in Board meetings and did not feel inhibited in challenging the Principal and the rest of the Senior Management Team, where appropriate.

c) All Board Members interviewed advised that they feel they are treated as full members of the Board.

d) The Chair of the Board of Management conducts annual one-to-one meetings with individual Board Members to explain performance expectations. These meetings are also attended by the Board Secretary and the input provided by both the Chair and the Board Secretary was highlighted as being particularly useful by several Board Members interviewed.

e) The annual one to one discussions are supplemented by an annual Board self-evaluation exercise. The results of the last exercise were reported to the October 2020 meeting of the Board of Management.

f) A Board WhatsApp Group has been developed and this platform provides a useful mechanism for disseminating information quickly and effectively.

g) The Board is acutely aware that the current Board Secretary and Deputy Board Secretary arrangements are not strictly aligned to the Code given that both postholders are members of staff within the College and are therefore not entirely independent. Therefore, this topic is reviewed annually, with the latest consideration at the October 2020 meeting of the Board of Management where the Board ratified the decision to continue the existing arrangements. All Board Members praised the significant contribution of the Board Secretary and Deputy Board Secretary in supporting their work and in answering any queries they may have.

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Strengths (Continued)

Section D – Effectiveness (Continued)

h) There is a formal Board recruitment process in place which is aligned to a Board Member Core Skills Matrix, as described in the Guidance Notes for Boards in the College Sector – 1. A Board Development Framework, which was published in November 2015. This skills matrix which allows skills gaps to be identified and succession planning arrangements to be put in place.

i) The induction pack provided to new Board Members is extremely comprehensive and provides an excellent source of background information to help new Board Members settle into their role. It also provides a useful information source for more established Board Members who may need to access a strategically important document quickly.

j) We confirmed that CDN training is offered to Board Members, which includes the CDN induction and confirmed attendance for the last 18 months per the CDN records. This includes tailored induction for staff and student representatives on the Board. We also confirmed that all members of the Remuneration Committee have completed the mandatory CDN remuneration committee training and that the current Chair of the Audit Committee has completed the CDN audit committee training.

k) The Chair and the Principal have already recognised the significant collective expertise which the Board possesses, and work has already commenced to align Board members with specific projects and initiatives which will allow them the opportunity to utilise their skills to maximum effect. This would also allow input to be provided by Board members at an early stage in the process rather than being presented with a fully formed business case, which may not have been subject to any Board Member input or sense checking before it is presented for formal approval by the Board. The impact which this approach can deliver has already been demonstrated given the high level of strategic input around the oversight of delivery of the Falkirk Campus project.

Section E – Relationships and Collaboration

a) Community Engagement and the expansion of the College's 'social impact footprint' is viewed as a particular focus by the Board with the need to leverage the new Falkirk Campus and the work to achieve 'Net Zero' highlighted as collective aspirations for the future. The positive contribution of the Chair in working with partners and trade unions to develop industrial partnerships and to remove the barriers to expansion of the social impact footprint was highlighted.

b) The work of the Chair to work collaboratively with the Employers Association and the ongoing work with the Chairs Group around regional economic forums demonstrates a commendable commitment to building effective relationships in order to drive forward the aspirations of the College.

c) It is clear that the Principal has devoted significant energy to forge effective relationships with the local authorities in Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire as well as with NHS Forth Valley.

d) The Principal attends the Falkirk and Stirling Partnership Boards, and this connects into the initiatives being taken forward as part of the City Deal for Stirling and Clackmannanshire and the Growth Deal for Falkirk which includes the Investment Zone for Falkirk and Grangemouth.

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Areas for improvement

Section A – Leadership and Strategy

a) A subgroup of the Board was formed to review the Regional Outcome Agreement and this sub group received a vast array of data. However, the volume and complexity of the data was viewed by some Board members as a barrier to accessing the key outcomes and translating this into focused messages for the wider Board. Therefore, it was felt that a distillation exercise would be useful to translate the ROA into an accessible format which would set out for Board Members the key priorities and what these mean for the College. This was seen as an important step in shaping the Strategic Plan and in successfully managing and delivering on the College's Futures Programme of transformational change, including the aspirations to lead nationally in areas such as digital pedagogy.

b) As part of the work to develop the College's new Strategic Plan there is a need to clearly articulate the way in which the various initiatives which are ongoing or are planned link into the local, regional and national priorities and to develop performance measures which will allow the impact of this range of activity to be captured. This will allow a more cohesive approach to demonstrating impact and allow the story of success to be presented in a meaningful way to multiple stakeholders.

Section B – Student Experience

a) Although the feedback from student surveys is considered by the Learning and Student Experience Committee and the Board there is a perception that the feedback loop would be improved by the production of a "You said – We did" feedback document which would demonstrate to the wider student body the actions arising from the feedback provided, which could in turn improve completion rates for the surveys. There is also an opportunity to link the outback from the Feedback Fridays into the current reporting mechanisms to committee and to incorporate these into the feedback reporting highlighted above.

b) Although a Corporate Parenting Planning Group exists the activity of this group has dropped off during the COVID-19 pandemic. This group was highlighted as an important platform for discussing issues around care experienced students and therefore the reinvigoration of this group should be a focus going forward.

Section C – Accountability

a) There is a feeling amongst executive and Non-Executive Board Members that a refresh of the College risk appetite is required, which will build on the work already considered by the Audit Committee and allow appropriate discussion at the Board of Management about the College's appetite for different categories of risk.

Section D – Effectiveness

a) Although the performance of the Principal against agreed objectives forms part of the regular one to one discussion between the Principal and the Chair, there is currently no formal mechanism for staff or student input to the setting of performance measures for the Principal.

b) The feedback provided by Board Sub Committee Chairs to the full Board of Management was consistently praised but a number of Board Members expressed the view that a brief written report from each Sub Committee Chair, containing bullet points on the key areas which will be brought to the attention of the Board, should form part of the Board agenda to supplement the minutes. The key benefit of this approach would be to allow additional time for Board members to formulate questions and this would also pave the way for increased dashboard reporting on key performance indicators over time in order to provide enhanced information for the Board on learning and student experience and the HR metrics within the People Strategy in particular.

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Areas for improvement (Continued)

Section E – Relationships and Collaboration

a) As part of the review of the College's Strategic Plan there is a need to clearly set out the College's ethical position around collaborative working with companies who are involved in fossil fuels and doing this in such a way that this explains how such activity can be aligned with the Net Zero and decarbonisation agenda which the College aims to pursue.

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5.   Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board Members and staff at the College who helped us during the course of our audit.

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Action Plan

Section A: Leadership and Strategy			
Observation	**Risk**	**Recommendation**	**Management Response**
A subgroup of the Board was formed to review the Regional Outcome Agreement and this subgroup received a vast array of data. However, the volume and complexity of the data was viewed by some Board members as a barrier to accessing the key outcomes and translating this into focused messages for the wider Board. Therefore, it was felt that a distillation exercise would be useful to translate the ROA into an accessible format which would set out for Board Members the key priorities and what these mean for the College. This was seen as an important step in shaping the Strategic Plan and in successfully managing and delivering on the College's Futures Programme of transformational change, including the aspirations to lead nationally in areas such as digital pedagogy.	Without a collective understanding of the key outcomes contained in the ROA Board members may not be in a position to contribute effectively to the discussions around planning and delivery to meet these objectives.	**R1** A distillation exercise should be conducted to translate the ROA into an accessible format which would set out for all Board Members the key priorities in the ROA and what these mean for the College going forward.	ROA Dashboard will be presented to Learning and Student Experience Committee and attached to minute which is reviewed by the Board. **To be actioned by: David Allison** **No later than: Completed**

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Section A: Leadership and Strategy (Continued)

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
As part of the work to develop the College's new Strategic Plan there is a need to clearly articulate the way in which the various initiatives which are ongoing (or are planned) link into the local, regional and national priorities and to develop performance measures which will allow the impact of this range of activity to be captured. This will allow a more cohesive approach to demonstrating impact and allow the story of success to be presented in a meaningful way to multiple stakeholders.	There is a risk that the impact of initiatives and projects are not aligned to local, regional and national projects and that the impact of these projects will not be captured in a way which can be meaningfully reported to stakeholders.	**R2** As part of the strategic planning process which is scheduled for later in 2021 the Board should consider mapping the ongoing and planned initiatives and projects with local, regional and national priorities and defining performance metrics which will allow internal and external reporting on the impact which these initiatives and projects are delivering. .	Mapping exercise to be conducted and workshop to be included in Strategic planning session scheduled for October 21. **To be actioned by: SMT** **No later than: 30 October 2021**

Section B: Quality of the Student Experience

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
Although the feedback from student surveys is considered by the Learning and Student Experience Committee and the Board there is a perception that the feedback loop would be improved by the production of a "You said – We did" feedback document which would demonstrate to the wider student body the actions arising from the feedback provided, which could in turn improve completion rates for the surveys. There is also an opportunity to link the outback from the Feedback Fridays into the current reporting mechanisms to committee and to incorporate these into the feedback reporting highlighted above.	There is a risk that if students do not receive feedback on the work which will be progressed to address issues raised in student surveys then there will be a loss of trust in the process and an increased perception that the surveys are not acted upon.	**R3** Consideration should be given to the production of a "You said – We did" feedback document which would capture the outputs from the student surveys and Feedback Fridays and would showcase the work which is being progressed to address the issues raised.	Feedback mechanisms (including recurring timescales) to be developed. These will be presented to the Learning & Student Experience Committee and thereafter distributed to students by FVSA. **To be actioned by: Kenny MacInnes** **No later than: 30 November 21**

Section B: Quality of the Student Experience (Continued)

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
Although a Corporate Parenting Planning Group exists the activity of this group has dropped off during the COVID-19 pandemic. This Group was highlighted as an important platform for discussing issues around care experienced students and therefore the reinvigoration of this Group should be a focus going forward.	Without an effective forum to discuss issues pertaining to care experienced students there is an increased risk that pertinent issues will not be raised or addressed.	**R4** The role and remit of the Corporate Parenting Planning Group should be revisited to ensure that it is fit for purpose and an explicit reporting line to the Learning and Student Experience Committee should be established.	Remit will be reviewed and reporting link to Learning & Student Experience Committee established. **To be actioned by: Kenny MacInnes** **No later than: 30 October 2021**

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Section C – Accountability

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
There is a feeling amongst Executive and Non-Executive Board Members that a refresh of the College risk appetite is required, which will build on the work already considered by the Audit Committee and allow appropriate discussion at the Board of Management about the College's appetite for different categories of risk.	Without a shared understanding of the Board's attitude to different categories of risk there may be a lack of focus around risk discussions.	**R5** An exercise should be conducted, ideally as an integral part of the strategic planning exercise, to revisit the Board's risk appetite for the various categories of risk on the College's Strategic Risk register. This should be done in such a way that future reporting to the Audit Committee can highlight residual risks which are sitting above the stated risk appetite level.	A risk workshop regarding risk appetite will be held and the risk register will be considered at the strategic planning session in October 21. **To be actioned by: Board Secretary** **No later than: 30 October 2021**

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Section D – Effectiveness

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
Although the performance of the Principal against agreed objectives forms part of the regular one to one discussion between the Principal and the Chair, there is currently no formal mechanism for staff or student input to the setting of performance measures for the Principal.	There is a risk that staff and students may not have ownership of the objectives agreed annually with the Principal.	**R6** The Chair of the Board of Management should explore ways in which staff and student input can be captured and fed into the process to set the annual objectives for the Principal.	The Chair will have this in place by the end of the current academic year **To be actioned by: Chair** **No later than: 30 August 2021**

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Section D – Effectiveness (Continued)

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
The feedback provided by Board Sub Committee Chairs to the full Board of Management was consistently praised but a number of Board Members expressed the view that a brief written report from each Sub Committee Chair, containing bullet points on the key areas which will be brought to the attention of the Board, should form part of the Board agenda to supplement the minutes. The key benefit of this approach would be to allow additional time for Board members to formulate questions and this would also pave the way for increased dashboard reporting on key performance indicators over time in order to provide enhanced information for the Board on learning and student experience and the HR metrics within the People Strategy in particular.	There is a risk that Board members who were not part of the discussions at Board Sub Committees may not have sufficient time to consider a question if they are reacting to a verbal update at the Board rather than being provided with a written prompt as part of the papers.	**R7** Consideration should be given to the introduction of a short written report by Board Sub Committee Chairs which will set out in bullet point format the key issues which will be highlighted for further discussion at the Board. Consideration should also be given to the introduction of high level dashboard reporting as part of these Sub Committee Chair updates in order to highlight key points.	Do not believe there is a requirement for an additional report as the minute provides the detail of committee discussions. Relevant dashboards presented to Committees will be attached to minutes for members information such as is done for the Learning & Student Experience Committee. The Chairs also have the opportunity to highlight matters of importance to members. **To be actioned by: Committee Chair** **No later than: 30 August 2021**

Section E: Relationships and Collaboration

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response
As part of the review of the College's Strategic Plan there is a need to clearly set out the College's ethical position around collaborative working with companies who are involved in fossil fuels and to do this in such a way that this explains how such activity can be aligned with the Net Zero and decarbonisation agenda which the College aims to pursue.	Without clarity on the College position around working with specific groups of companies there may be a lack of understanding amongst stakeholders around the motivations for developing and maintaining these partnerships and collaborations.	**R8** As part of the development of the Strategic Plan the Board should develop a consensus around partnerships and collaborations with entities who are involved in fossil fuels and explain this in a way which makes it clear to stakeholders how this stance can be aligned with the Net Zero and decarbonisation agenda.	The Board will discuss this at the next strategic planning session and develop an Ethical Policy. **To be actioned by: Board of Management** **No later than: 30 October 2021**

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7. Other areas to consider

a) A theme emerged around diversity on the Board and the need to capture additional details on applicants' softer skills and their personal traits and background rather than focusing solely on their skills and expertise in relating to Education and/or governance. It was recognised that this would require dialogue with Scottish Government, to amend the current Board Member recruitment guidance, but it was felt that the appropriate route to progress this issue was via the Good Governance Steering Group. The external facilitator agreed to raise this issue directly with the Chair of the Good Governance Steering Group.

b) Members of the Audit Committee highlighted the challenges of joining the Committee in the middle of the three year internal audit planning cycle and it was agreed that a meeting with the Head of Internal Audit, prior to attendance at the first meeting, would be beneficial in explaining the rationale behind the internal audit planning process; the meaning of the gradings in internal audit reports; and the way in which internal audit work together with external audit to avoid duplication of effort and to share information.

c) Although a skills matrix is in place this is not shared with the Board of Management. Therefore, there is a perception that this information is not accessible in a way which would allow Board members to fully understands and leverage the skills and expertise which their fellow Board members possess.

d) Although the variety of presentations made to the Board were viewed positively it has been highlighted that the quality of the presentation content and delivery is variable and therefore staff training to improve presentation skills was seen as a worthwhile investment which would provide a development opportunity for staff as well as improving the quality of the discussions around the presentations.

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