

Shetland College Board**Auditorium, Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick****Tuesday 9 February 2017 at 1.30pm****Present:**

P Campbell A Carter
G Cleaver G Smith
T Smith A Wishart
V Wishart

Apologies:

S Collins

In attendance (Officers):

N Grant, Director – Development Services
W Shannon, Interim Joint Principal
A Glen, Vice Principal – Teaching and Learning
J Belford, Executive Manager - Finance
K Adam, Solicitor
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
T Coutts, Business Development and Training Manager
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chair

Mr Campbell, Chair of the Board, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

The Chair welcomed Mr D Sandison, representing the Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust (SFTCT) Board of Trustees, to the meeting.

He advised that confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting would follow later in the agenda, in order that the Shetland Tertiary Sector Strategic Plan could be considered first.

Declarations of Interest

None

01/17 Shetland Tertiary Sector Strategic Plan

The Board considered a report by the Interim Joint Principal (SCB-124) which presented the Strategic Plan for the Tertiary Education Sector in Shetland.

The Interim Joint Principal summarised the main terms of the report, outlining the process that had started the previous summer which had involved consultation with staff across the sector and other stakeholders including UHI, Education Scotland, and HMIE. The key issue that had come out of this process was that staff were looking for strategic direction. The operational plan would be developed following on from the strategic plan, but it was important to have the strategic plan in place in order to have this strategic direction. The draft strategic plan had been discussed at the last meeting, and it had been noted that the final strategic plan would be

condensed so that it did not contain as much reference to operational matters. In Shetland there were various partners in the tertiary sector focusing on specific areas, so it was important that the strategic plan reflected this.

It noted that the representation of the SFTCT was very much welcomed at the meeting, particularly given the importance of decision-making being carried out in a sequential fashion. It was questioned if the SFTCT could extend an invitation to Shetland College Board members to attend their meeting when they would be discussing the strategic plan, so that Board members were aware of any issues that had arisen from the discussion when the report was being considered further by the Council.

Mr Sandison advised that input from College Board members would be welcomed, and he could not see that there would be a problem in extending such an invitation. It was indeed important that decision-making was carried out in a sequential manner, and he was happy to take this request to the SFTCT Board of Trustees.

It was noted that the report would be considered by the Council on 22 February, so it was important that a meeting took place before that date.

In response to a query regarding staff input into the strategic plan, the Interim Joint Principal advised that the plan had been developed on the back of a series of workshops that had taken place across the sector last summer to which all staff had been invited. Staff had also been consulted on the draft version of the plan that had been prepared. Account had been taken of comments received that a more 'distilled' version of the plan was required, and a working group had assisted with doing this. It had been made clear that there would be no further rounds of consultation as it was now for management to take things forward, and he was comfortable with this approach. However he was aware that a staff group believed that they had not been consulted on this particular version.

The Chair requested that the following amendments be made to the strategic plan in order to better reflect the content, and the Board agreed:

- Goal 2 title to read "Deliver high quality learning experiences and successful outcomes for all learners"
- Goal 3 – bullet point five to read "Nurture a scholarly spirit amongst all academic staff and students, and provide research opportunities for learners"
- Goal 4 to read "Provide high quality governance, leadership and management structures"

It was noted that it was hoped to bring operational proposals forward during the next cycle of meetings, particularly those relating to putting in place the next management tier. As there may be timing issues relating to the pre-election period, it may be necessary to call a special meeting of the Board, as it would be appropriate for this to be discussed during the term of the current Council.

Decision:

The Board recommended that the Council adopt the Strategic Plan for the Tertiary Education Sector in Shetland, subject to the undernoted amendments, and that it

form part of the Council's Policy Framework, to be managed by the Shetland College Board, in partnership with the Education and Families Committee and the NAFC.

- Goal 2 title to read "Deliver high quality learning experiences and successful outcomes for all learners"
- Goal 3 – bullet point five to read "Nurture a scholarly spirit amongst all academic staff and students, and provide research opportunities for learners"
- Goal 4 to read "Provide high quality governance, leadership and management structures"

The Chair thanked Mr Sandison for attending the meeting.

Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016 on the motion of Mr T Smith, seconded by Mr Cleaver.

02/17 2017/18 Budget and Charging Proposals – Shetland College Board

The Board considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-006-F) which presented the controllable budget proposals for the services within the Board's remit, and noted the total cost position for Shetland College.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, outlining the process that had taken place to produce the budget and charging proposals. There had been a number of challenges as the funding reduction from the Scottish Government had been greater than forecast, so other means of balancing the budget had to be identified. He drew attention to paragraph 4.8 of the report which illustrated the total budget for the College, and advised that the Council was proposing to set aside a contingency to cover the cost of pay awards and pension increases that would be applied once national negotiations had been completed.

In response to a query, he advised that the SIC contribution referred to in paragraph 4.8 of the report just related to Shetland College and did not illustrate the total investment over the tertiary sector in Shetland.

In commenting that the budget was in investment in the future of Shetland which should give the College a chance to deliver what was important, Mr G Smith moved that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Ms Wishart seconded.

Decision:

The Board recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee and the Council that they approve the budget proposals for 2017/18 included in the report and as set out in detail in the Budget Activity Sheet and Charging Sheet (Appendices 2 and 3 of the report).

03/17 Shetland College Joint Principal's Update

The Board considered a report by the Interim Joint Principal (SCB-123-F) which provided an update on a range of issues of interest and importance to Shetland College and the tertiary sector of Shetland.

The Board noted that a meeting had taken place with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Education Scotland regarding the new self-evaluation process which was going to be very different from the previous system. There were a number of policies which would require to be updated and approved, and work was ongoing to get everything in place by September. The template which had been produced in “How Good is your College” would be used, and an academic associate would be allocated to Shetland to provide support.

Decision:

The Board noted the contents of the report.

04/17

Tertiary Education Student Enrolments Update

The Board considered a report by the Vice Principal - Teaching and Learning (SCB-122-F) which provided information relating to the number of enrolments recorded for all tertiary education providers in Shetland to date in the academic session 2016/17, and gave an early indication of HE enrolments for academic year 2017/18.

The Vice Principal Teaching and Learning summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the figures were very encouraging at this stage, and that the FE credit target set by the SFC had increased slightly by 123 credits. There was no doubt that the College would be in a position of overtrading, so there was a need for the target to be realigned and a good argument put forward to the SFC in respect of this, although there was no guarantee that additional credits would be allocated. He cautioned the Board that the figures for the next academic year were early predictions at this stage, but it would be a record high for the College if the predicted number of full time equivalent students enrolled.

The Interim Joint Principal pointed out that whilst the activity levels were encouraging and completion rates were the highest in Scotland, this meant that the College was in a position of overtrading. It was important to try and achieve a balance, but this was difficult when activity that was being provided was activity that the community was looking for, and it was activity that was supporting the local economy. This argument was being advanced to the SFC and discussions were taking place.

It was questioned if any analysis had been done regarding the College’s capacity to absorb fee-only students in classes which were not fully subscribed, as there may be some ability to have fee-only students in classes with no effect on the costs.

The Vice Principal – Teaching and Learning explained that this was something that could be looked at. Fees were set by UHI for some courses so these could not be changed, but certain courses could be made fee only. Full cost delivery in fees would mean that credits could not be claimed.

It was noted that changes in which the way funding was being applied in respect of Modern Apprentices was causing some difficulties. This was currently being pursued by officers and may end up requiring some political persuasion, so the Board would be kept informed.

The Business Development and Training Manager advised that the current contract for Modern Apprentices included a value related to travel and accommodation for apprentices. Currently travel is booked by Train Shetland and claimed back from Skills Development Scotland (SDS), with any deficit being picked up by the employer. However a new methodology was being used for the 2017/18 contract

whereby apprentices in certain programmes would attract an enhanced contribution in rural areas, and all apprentices in certain rural areas (including Shetland) would attract a Rural Uplift payment. Funds received through these enhancements could then be used to cover costs of travel and accommodation for programmes requiring travel outwith Shetland. This would rely on recruiting in high value programmes to cover the cost, so would leave Shetland vulnerable if key sectors did not meet targets, or if costs of training increased, and any deficit would have to be passed on to employers. Currently Train Shetland visited employers to take them through the costs of the programme and advise them of the funding that would be available, so employers knew in advance what the deficit would be. Under the new arrangements, it was not possible to tell in advance how much employers would have to pay, and they may end up with a substantial bill at the end of the programme. So there was a limit to the information that would be available to employers in advance, and this could be considered bad practice. Train Shetland had explained its concerns to SDS and it was hoped that there would be room for negotiation on this matter. A paper was currently being prepared to present an alternative solution, and any updates would be reported back to the Board. He added that achievement rates for Modern Apprentices were joint highest in Scotland, so it was important to protect this.

Mr G Smith requested that it was recorded that the Board supported staff in their continued discussions with SFC and SDS with regard to these two issues. It was important that the Board's position that Modern Apprentices should not be disadvantaged under the new system was made clear when discussions were taking place, and that the Interim Joint Principal was supported in his discussions with the SFC and UHI in securing more credits for the activity being delivered.

It was suggested that it was important that the Council acknowledged the value of its investment in tertiary education in Shetland and the resulting contribution to the community, as this was clearly illustrated in the figures that were being presented to the Board.

The Chair said that the Board were all in agreement that investment was the way forward, and he paid tribute to the teaching and dedication of staff and students in achieving these good results.

Decision:

The Board noted the current position in relation to FE and HE enrolments at this stage in academic session 2016/17, and noted that regular updates would be provided throughout the remainder of the session.

The meeting concluded at 2.30pm.