

MINUTES

A&B - Public

Shetland College Board

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick

Wednesday 13 November 2019 at 10.00am

Present:

P Campbell	E Macdonald
G Smith	T Smith

Also:

M Lyall

Apologies:

A Priest

In attendance (Officers):

N Grant, Director – Development Services

J Lewis, Principal

K Adam, Solicitor

B Kerr, Communications Officer

J Thomason, Management Accountant

L Geddes, Committee Officer

Also:

T Patterson, Highlands and Islands Student Association

Chair

Mr Campbell, Chair of the Board, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

The Chair welcomed Professor Lewis, Mrs Lyall and Ms Patterson to the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

None

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2019.

12/19 **Shetland College, Principal's Update**

The Board considered a report by Professor Lewis, Principal, Shetland College and Train Shetland (SCB-149-19-F) updating Board members on activity across the tertiary sector in Shetland.

Professor Lewis summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular that although nationally enrolment figures were down, the College was reasonably confident that targets would be met locally. She highlighted the new developments in apprenticeship areas and with industry partners, and advised that the College would be hoping to build on these developments in future. With regard to the merger, she advised that staff across the institutions and other stakeholders were working hard on the merger project. The principle work over the last six weeks had focused on the ministerial merger case, and developing the narrative and financial aspects.

It was questioned if there had been any challenges in respect of recent recruitment in vocational training given the temporary nature of posts while the case for the merger was being considered, and the Director of Development Services confirmed that this had not been an issue.

Concern was expressed regarding the role and purpose of the College Board in the merger process, and the lack of information that had been forthcoming to Board members. Some Board members commented that they were having to rely on the media for updates, and that they were unsure of their role in the process. Reassurance was sought that staff and students were being kept informed of developments.

Professor Lewis explained that she had offered to provide a briefing to Board members, and that the business case would be presented to the College Board when it was finalised. A lot of the detail was included in the business case that was currently being developed and the College Board would get an opportunity to feed into that, as would the College Board's representatives on the Shadow Board. However the role of the College Board was to ensure that the day-to-day business of the College continued as strongly as it could while the merger process was ongoing. College Board members were welcome to visit the College and speak to staff and students about the process. It was fair to say that the longevity of the process had been difficult for staff, but she believed that the student experience had not been impacted. There had been some good discussions so far about how the student experience could be improved in the future.

The Chair noted that the College had maintained its very high student achievement rates over the period, and that staff had worked hard to ensure that there was no impact on students.

Mr G Smith pointed out that there were still some very important decisions to be made by the Council in respect of the merger, and the absence of a report on today's agenda was regrettable. The College Board had not received a substantial report on the project for some time, so did not have information to keep it informed and allow it to make decisions. The Shadow Board, of which he was a member, did not have decision-making powers. He was of the view that the College Board did not have adequate information to allow it to participate in the decision-making process and this also meant that its contribution to the Shadow Board was insufficient. As a member of the Shadow Board, he would be in a stronger position if the College Board had the opportunity to consider information first, and he had the opportunity to report back to the College Board. Otherwise he was operating as an individual, and there was a need to find a mechanism to allow the College Board to have a role.

Professor Lewis said that she did not realise the level of detail that the College Board would like to have presented to it, and reiterated that the business case would be presented to the College Board so that it could give it detailed consideration. However she was happy to work with the Board to look at the draft business case, and the Chair said that he felt it would be useful to have monthly meetings with College Board members on the process.

The Director of Development Services added that anything presented to the College Board needed to be helpful to the process in terms of how it fed into the Shadow Board for consideration. However he would discuss this further with the Professor Lewis and come up with a proposal.

Reassurance was sought that the College would meet its enrolment targets this year, as it was important that the current success of the College continued and that the College could demonstrate the ability to grow in the future.

Professor Lewis advised that staff were quietly confident that targets would be met and the current position was not dissimilar to previous years, but it would be monitored closely as the position was quite tight. It was important that the College could efficiently deliver its current provision, but demonstrate future growth potential that would attract more people to the College.

Decision:

The Board NOTED the content of the report and the current position in relation to FE and HE enrolments for the academic session 2019/20 and current student application figures, together with the activity levels in Train Shetland for both Vocational Training and Short Courses.

The meeting concluded at 10.25am.

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Chair