

## **EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING OF 26 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**Meeting held in the Boardroom, Granton Campus**

**Start time: 14:00**

**Present:** Bruce Cassidy; Audrey Cumberland; Stewart Darling; Fiona Doring; Daniel Holland; Alan Holligan; Alex Killick; Ross Laird; Adam Lowe; Kerry McCormack; Liz McIntyre; Ian McLaughlan; Nora Senior (Chair); Eleanor Sim; Bill Troup; Charlie Whitson

**In attendance:** Jon Buglass; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

## **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

### **1.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

1.1.1 The Board NOTED apologies from Becky Duff and Mike Jeffrey.

1.1.2 The Chair welcomed Adam Lowe and Charlie Whitson, the ECSA Student President and Vice President Activities – respectively, to their first meeting as Members of the Board of Management.

1.1.3 The Board NOTED that the Health & Safety Manager, Andy Bamberry, would join the meeting for *Item 6.1; Health & Safety Annual Report 2023/24*.

1.1.4 The Board NOTED that, on 28 June 2024, Sue Cook (a Non-Executive Board Member and Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee) had stepped down from the Edinburgh College Board of Management with immediate effect – following her appointment by the Scottish Government as Chair of West Lothian College Board of Management. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Sue Cook for her contribution to the Board of Management and wished the Regional Chair well in her new role.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 The Board NOTED that Ross Laird and Gwen Raez, in relation to *Item 6.2, Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT) Memorandum of Understanding*, were members of the ECDT.

2.2 The Board NOTED that the Executive Team would be asked to leave the meeting for *Item 9, Closed Items of Business*.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SCHEDULED MEETING**

3.1 The Board APPROVED the minutes from 11 June 2024 as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT**

4.1 The Board NOTED that actions from its previous meeting(s) were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

4.2 The Board NOTED that the 2024/25 College Budget had been approved by Members via circulation on 29 July 2024. The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that the College had started 2024/25 at a deficit of £0.48m, as detailed in the Management Accounts to July 2024 (Item 7.4.2 refers).

### **5. CHAIR'S REPORT**

5.1 The Board NOTED its thanks to Liam Conway (Business Development Manager) and Michelle Skotzen (Business Development Advisor) for their pre-Board presentation on college innovation. The Chair advised the Board that points raised around the promotion and communication of innovation initiatives would be included in the College's refreshed Engagement Strategy.

5.2 The Board NOTED that a range news articles and publications had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting, highlighting the extensive coverage Edinburgh College had received over recent weeks. The Chair informed the Board that such coverage illustrated how the College was collaborating with industry and promoting innovation and support for both national and regional businesses.

5.3 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged recent national awards won by the College since the last meeting of the Board. The Board NOTED and commended the following award winners and nominees:

- i. Edinburgh College has been named finalist in five categories at the 2024 CDN Awards. This year the College has been shortlisted in the following categories:
  - Digital Learning Award, Bridging the Skills Gap: Reskilling and Upskilling for a Digital Future.
  - Health and Wellbeing Award, Halls of Residence Engagement Project.
  - Inclusive College Award, Black History and Representation in FE through Make-Up Artistry.
  - Lecturer of the Year Award, Becky Galbraith.
  - Professional Services Colleague of the Year Award, Catherine McCormack
- ii. Edinburgh College HND Visual Communication student Craig Carson achieved an extraordinary career milestone in the world of design by winning a prestigious D&AD New Blood Black Pencil.

- iii. Edinburgh College was shortlisted in the Benefitting Society category at this year's Green Gown Awards – a prestigious Sustainability-focused awards programme organised by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).
- iv. The College has been named a finalist at the Green Gown Awards for the success of its EC Sessions programme, which provides a safe and welcoming space for young people from the local community and across Edinburgh to have meaningful non-formal music-making opportunities on a weekly basis.

## **6. FOR APPROVAL**

### ***The Health & Safety Manager joined the meeting***

#### **6.1 HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 & POLICY 2024/25**

- 6.1.1 The Board NOTED an Annual Health & Safety Report 2023/24 as presented by the Health & Safety Manager, which included an updated Health & Safety Policy for 2024/25.
- 6.1.2 The Board NOTED that over the reporting period the Health & Safety Team had continued to monitor the standard of health, safety, and welfare within the College. The Health & Safety Manager informed the Board that accidents to staff and students had increased slightly within the reporting year, whilst RIDDOR reportable incidents had increased to four (- up from two incidents the previous year).
- 6.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the Health & Safety Report 2023/24:
  - i. The potential to include more trend data / analysis in future annual reporting.
  - ii. The increase in the number of unwanted fire alarm signals, and the current protocol which does not require fire services to attend each time an alarm is activated.
  - iii. Health surveillance medicals, including lung function checks, and the work of the College to mitigate work related dust levels experienced by some staff and students.
  - iv. The work undertaken to remove/underpin, monitor and mitigate the impact of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).
  - v. The College's reporting on mental health and wellbeing, as covered by Health & Safety Legislation, and the reporting overlap with the HR & OD function.
- 6.1.4 The Board AGREED that the Planning & Resources Committee, which has oversight of Estates Management matters, should consider whether the Estates maintenance schedule had any impact reducing or mitigating health and safety accidents.

- 6.1.5 The Board NOTED minor material changes to the 2024/25 Health & Safety Policy, which clarified the role of the Board of Management, and APPROVED the updated Policy for publication.

***The Health & Safety Manager left the meeting***

**6.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT TRUST MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 2024/25**

- 6.2.1 The Board NOTED a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT) and the Board, for the academic year 2024/25
- 6.2.2 The Board NOTED that the MOU defined the key principles on which the relationship between the College and the ECDT were based, whilst outlining the key responsibilities of both parties to ensure good governance and effective partnership working. The Board Secretary highlighted to the Board that partnership working between the College and the ECDT would continue to benefit both students and staff at Edinburgh College.
- 6.2.3 The Board DISCUSSED the MOU and the recent approval of the Trust's Strategic Plan, which supported greater strategic focus towards future funding projects. The Board APPROVED the MOU and its implementation for 2024/25.
- 6.2.4 The Board NOTED that Ross Laird and Gwen Raez would be stepping down from the Board of Management, and therefore the Development Trust, on 8 March 2025. The Chair advised the Board that two Non-Executive Board Members would be invited to join the Trust, to ensure coherence between the two bodies.

**7. FOR DISCUSSION**

**7.1 PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

- 7.1.1 The Board NOTED an update from the Principal on developments across both the College and the wider college sector since its last meeting on 11 June 2024.
- 7.1.2 The Board NOTED that, following a series of meetings between the College Employers Scotland and EIS-FELA, and the intervention of the Minister for Further and Higher Education, a four year pay offer (to August 2026) was accepted by EIS-FELA Members on 30 August 2024. The Principal advised the Board that, as stated in previous correspondence, she welcomed the result of the ballot and the end to both the strike action and the programme of Action Short of Strike (ASOS).
- 7.1.3 The Board NOTED that the Chair of the Board had written to Graeme Dey, Minister for Higher and Further Education, on 26 June 2024, highlighting the ambition of the College and current constraints, in particular the funding inequity across the sector and its impact on the College. The Principal advised

the Board that the Minister had responded offering a meeting, but a date had yet to be confirmed.

- 7.1.4 The Board NOTED that a brief update on the latest activity relating to the national Tripartite Alignment Group. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the Scottish Government would be issuing a consultation regarding a revised approach for Assets Disposals. Discussions also focused on the possibility of SFC exploring options to support Curriculum Transformation Proposals in the Sector.
- 7.1.5 The Board NOTED that almost 100 staff from across the College had volunteered to join Collective Action Planning (CAP) groups at each of the four campuses to support and drive action for transformational culture change. The Principal informed the Board that the CAP meetings were taking place.
- 7.1.6 The Board DISCUSSED the CAP groups initial meetings and NOTED feedback from the EIS-FELA Nominated Board Member that a co-chairing arrangement between management and lecturing / support staff was being considered to support the co-design approach being taken.
- 7.1.7 The Board DISCUSSED its previous decision, taken on 11 June 2024, to serve notice on its membership of Colleges Scotland. The Principal advised the Board that the decision had been confirmed in writing to Colleges Scotland, in compliance with its 12-month notice period, however the College continued to remain in active discussions with the sector body regarding its future shape. The Board NOTED that it was hoped that both the Chair and the Principal would have an opportunity to meet with the incoming Interim Chief Executive Officer of Colleges Scotland in the coming weeks.

## 7.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ECSA) REPORT

- 7.2.1 The Board NOTED a report from ECSA covering a range of activities at the College since the three full-time Sabbatical Officers were appointed on 1 July 2024.
- 7.2.2 The Board NOTED the ECSA Priority Objectives for 2024/25 as formulated and agreed by the new Sabbatical Team. The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the key priorities outlined:
  - i. The continuation of the Reverse Shadowing Scheme for Board Members, plus the broadening of the Scheme to include the Senior Management.
  - ii. The introduction of a middle tier to support the Class Reps structure, to ensure that feedback is discussed and analysed with Curriculum Team Managers and Heads of School.
  - iii. The strategic focus placed on wellbeing initiatives including work to tackle student loneliness and the creation of an engaged community on campus – through enhanced use of existing spaces.
- 7.2.3 The Board welcomed the ECSA Report and wished the Team well in achieving their targets over the course of the year. The Chair advised both Student Board Members to ask those Board and Senior Management colleagues who

participate in the Reverse Shadowing Scheme what they can do to support ECSA.

***Bruce Cassidy joined the meeting***

**7.3 DEEP DIVE: EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2023/24 AND FUTURE DIRECTION**

7.3.1 The Board NOTED that, given developments in the tertiary education environment over the past two years, and recent discussions held as part of the Board's Committee Restructure Working Group, it was agreed that the Principal would provide an update on progress against the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan and begin the process of refining the College's strategic ambitions.

7.3.2 The Board NOTED a presentation from the Principal outlining how Edinburgh College could redefine college education in Scotland through its focus on innovation, transformation and collaboration. The Principal highlighted to the Board her vision to become sector leading in areas including; Net Zero (e.g. EV maintenance and renewable energy); technology, (e.g. cybersecurity, data innovation and digital): and, digital innovation within health and social care.

7.3.3 The Board NOTED an overview from the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance on progress to date against Key Performance Indicators (KPI) previously agreed by the Board. The Principal advised the Board that given that the Strategic Plan would be moving into its third year, it presented an opportunity to revisit the strategic ambitions of the College and its KPI reporting.

7.3.4 The Board welcomed the drive of the Principal to evolve the strategic ambitions of the College around the themes of People, Place, and Performance. The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the presentation provided:

- i. The potential for SFC investment in response to several high-level reports on the future of the college sector.
- ii. The development of a business case to support the proposed strategic refinement.
- iii. The evidence base demonstrating that the College understands the markets it operates in, the demand levels,, and the future direction of travel.
- iv. The need to ensure that the College has credibility in curriculum areas it wishes to develop.
- v. The concept of centres of specialisms being explored.
- vi. The relationship between innovation and risk, and the need for the Board to be fully aware of associated strategic risks.
- vii. The need to ensure that, as the strategic plan and associated priorities evolve that College staff are appropriately engaged with the process.
- viii. Recent changes to colleges quality arrangement and how this could impact on the development of the curriculum (Minute 7.4.5 refers).

7.3.5 The Board AGREED that the points raised through the Principal's presentation required further discussion in more detail at the next Board Strategy Session on 23 October 2024. The Principal advised the Board that perpetuating the status

quo misses an opportunity to re shape the College in response to what we believe meets the future needs of our region.

- 7.3.6 The Board NOTED a draft Committee Restructure Proposal which aligned with recommendations put forward in the 2024/25 Board Improvement Plan. The Board DISCUSSED the Proposal and AGREED that further deliberation should take place at the upcoming Board Strategy Session.

*Liz McIntyre left the meeting*

## 7.4 COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### 7.4.1 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE 05.09.24

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Planning & Resources Committee on matters considered at its meeting on 5 September 2024. The Chair of the Planning & Resources Committee informed the Board that:

- i. Progress against the Finance and People Strategies, as endorsed by the Committee last year, had been discussed and noted.
- ii. The Financial Forecast Return to June 2024, which highlighted that the forecast deficit for 2023/24 remained at £704k deficit (- subject to final accounts), had been endorsed by the Committee for submission to the SFC.
- iii. The position on staff absence noted at 3.7% and the prevalence of mental health related ill health at 40% of all absences.
- iv. An update on RAAC had demonstrated that risk mitigations were in place, and regular remediation work had been undertaken.

### 7.4.2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS SUMMARY TO JULY 2024

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to July 2024.

### 7.4.3 RECRUITMENT RETENTION & CREDITS DASHBOARD

The Board NOTED the final credits position of the College for the academic year 2023/24 was 162,744. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Board that, following the conclusion of fieldwork for the FES Audit, the College had achieved 98.7% of its credit target and therefore would avoid any financial clawback.

The Board welcomed the achievement of the 2023/24 credit target and commended both the Vice Principal Education & Skills and the MIS Team on their work to ensure that all activity was counted and verified.

The Board NOTED enrolment activity for 2024/25 for both full-time FE and full-time HE courses. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Board that full-time FE enrolments were up 3%, whilst full-time HE enrolments were down 6%.

#### 7.4.4 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 19.09.24

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Corporate Development Committee on matters considered at its meeting on 19 September 2024. The Chair of the Corporate Development Committee highlighted to the Board that:

- i. A 2023/24 annual update on Commercial, International and Alternative Income had widely demonstrated a positive performance across the commercial portfolio.
- ii. Despite colleges losing Flexible Workforce Development Funding, Edinburgh College's bespoke commercial income targets had been exceeded in 2023/24, illustrating that the College had managed to maintain its relationships with employers.
- iii. Operating model options for the Granton Waterfront Nursery had been considered by the Committee, and work was currently being undertaken to produce a profit and loss statement to support a strategic discussion.

#### 7.4.5 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE 20.09.24

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the LTSE Committee on matters considered at its meeting on 20 September 2024. The Chair of the LTSE Development Committee informed the Board that:

- i. New quality arrangements have been developed to deliver on the vision of a more coherent and streamlined tertiary education system that delivers the best learning experience for students.
- ii. The Committee approved the Early Experience Student Satisfaction Survey 2024, which will be launched to students in October 2024
- iii. The 2024 Learning & Teaching Survey showed that average score across themed questions was: 4.2 (out of 5 stars), with a 94% satisfaction rate for the key question "Overall, I am satisfied with my college experience".
- iv. The regional Access Centre continued to receive high volumes of referrals from local education providers, and it was agreed the Committee would conduct a deep dive into this matter at its next meeting.

### 7.5 GOVERNANCE REPORT

7.5.1 The Board NOTED that, further to Sue Cook's departure from the Board (Minute 1.1.4 refers), it had been agreed by the Board of Management – via correspondence – that Bill Troup, a Non-Executive Member, would act as Interim Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. The Board Secretary advised Members that a decision on longer-term arrangements would be taken following the implementation of the proposed committee restructure.

7.5.2 The Board NOTED that both Stewart Darling and Kerry McCormack's initial terms as Non-Executive Members would end on 16 December 2024. The Board Secretary informed the Board that, due to work commitments, Kerry McCormack had decided not to seek a second term as a Non-Executive Member.

***Stewart Darling left the meeting***



- 7.5.3 The Board NOTED that Stewart Darling was eligible for a second term as a Non-Executive Member. The Board DISCUSSED Stewart Darling's reappointment and AGREED to endorse a further 3-year term.

#### ***Stewart Darling re-joined the meeting***

- 7.5.4 The Board NOTED that the tenure of Bruce Cassidy, the Support Staff Board Member, would end on 1 December 2024. The Board Secretary advised Members that the Nominations Committee would meet on 8 October 2024 to consider arrangements for an upcoming support staff election.
- 7.5.5 The Board NOTED its thanks to Bruce Cassidy for his significant contribution to the Board of Management over his 8 years as a Member. The Chair informed the Board that there would be further opportunities to thank the Support Staff Board Member over the coming months, prior to his tenure ending.
- 7.5.6 The Board NOTED a recruitment round seeking two non-executive members with "*a professional qualification and/or equivalent experience in the fields of Accountancy, financial management, audit, risk management and internal controls, compliance and/or corporate governance*" would conclude on 30 September 2024. The Chair advised the Board that proposed candidates would be put forward to members of the Board in due course, prior to their submission to the Scottish Government – for approval.
- 7.5.7 The Board NOTED a Top-Level Risk Register (TLRR) Summary, as agreed by the Risk Management & Assurance Group on 20 August 2024. The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that the TLRR would be considered by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, in further detail, on 2 October 2024.
- 7.5.8 The Board NOTED progress against its 2024/25 Improvement Plan. The Board Secretary highlighted to Members that a several actions were directly linked to the proposed committee restructure, which remained in-progress.
- 7.5.9 The Board NOTED an update on the launch of the College Development Network (CDN) 2024/25 Governance Programme. The Board Secretary informed Members that, in addition to the online training provided, CDN had offered an opportunity to participate in a committee chairing skills pilot, jointly facilitated with the Institute of Directors Scotland. The Board DISCUSSED this opportunity and AGREED that Members interested in such training should contact the Board Secretary directly.

## **8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

### **8.1 AMBASSADOR AWARD NOMINATION 2024**

- 8.1.1 The Board NOTED a proposal put forward by the Chair and the Principal to nominate James Thomson OBE DL, one of Scotland's best-known independent restaurateurs and hoteliers, for the Edinburgh College Ambassador Award - which was to be presented at the Graduation Ceremony on 8 November 2024. The Chair advised the Board that the

nominee had for many years supported hospitality students at Edinburgh College, whilst sponsoring numerous international exchanges and creating the James Thomson Award for Customer Excellence.

- 8.1.2 The Board welcomed James Thomson's nomination for the Edinburgh College Ambassador Award and unanimously AGREED to endorse the proposal.

## 8.2 BOARD REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

- 8.2.1 The Board NOTED that it had received the opportunity to consider important matters, in detail, at the meeting - such as Health & Safety and progress against the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan.

*The Executive Team left the meeting*

## 9. CLOSED ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS

### 9.1 CLOSED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 9.1.1 The Board APPROVED the closed minutes from 11 June 2024 as an accurate record of the meeting.

## 10. FOR INFORMATION

### 10.1 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

- 10.1.1 The Board NOTED a Freedom of Information (FOI) Annual Report 2023/24, which outlined FOI activity over the academic year.

### 10.2 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES 05.09.24

- 10.2.1 The Board NOTED the Planning & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 5 September 2024.

### 10.3 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES 19.09.24

- 10.3.1 The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 19 September 2024.

### 10.4 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 20.09.24

- 10.4.1 The Board NOTED the LTSE Committee minutes from the meeting held on 20 September 2024

## **11. FOR CIRCULATION**

### **11.1 REGISTER OF INTERESTS 2024/25**

- 11.1.1 The Board NOTED its Members registerable interests as published on the Edinburgh College website.

### **11.2 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT**

- 11.2.1 The Board NOTED a Risk Management Summary Report and the Top-Level Risk Register to August 2024.

### **11.3 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2024/25**

- 11.3.1 The Board NOTED an agenda planner for the 2024/25 academic year, which aimed to provide members with an opportunity to review upcoming items of business.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 12.1 The Board NOTED that its next meeting would take place on 10 December 2024.

***Meeting closed at 17:00***