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SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL

SFC Board

**Minute of the meeting held Tuesday 3 September 2024 at 10am in the Donaldson Room,
Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh and via *Teams***

PRESENT: Dr Mike Cantlay OBE (Chair); Mr. Martin Boyle (Interim Chief Executive); Ms. Lorna Jack (Vice Chair) (via *Teams*); Ms. Linda Hanna MBE (via *Teams*); Ms. Mhairi Harrington OBE (via *Teams*); Professor Ewart Keep (via *Teams*); Mr. Andy Kerr (via *Teams*); Professor Irene McAra McWilliam (via *Teams*); Professor Lesley Yellowlees (via *Teams*); Mr. David Alexander (via *Teams*); Professor Cara Aitchison; Dr Richard Armour (via *Teams*); Ms. Kate Lander (via *Teams*); Ms. Alison Nicolson (via *Teams*).

APOLOGIES: Professor John Wallace CBE ; Professor Sir Peter Mathieson ; Ms Lynne Raeside (Deputy Director External Affairs & Policy).

IN ATTENDANCE : Mr Richard Maconachie (Director of Finance); Dr Jacqui Brasted (Interim Director of Access, Learning & Outcomes); Ms Helen Cross (Director of Research & Innovation); Ms Louisa Baker (Deputy Director Governance & Planning); Ms Aoife Keenan (Assistant Director, Policy); Ms Kate Wane (Senior Policy Officer); Ms Sarah Bradley (Senior Policy Officer); Ms Gillian Phillips (Senior Governance Officer) (Clerk).

1. Welcome, Chair's Business and Opening Remarks

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and extended a particular welcome to Professor Aitchison, Dr Armour, Ms Hanna, Ms Lander and Ms Nicolson all of whom were attending their first meeting since being formally and permanently appointed to the SFC Board.

1.2 The Chair also made special mention of Ms Keenan, Ms Wane and Ms Bradley who had been working extensively on the consultation response and were attending the meeting to field relevant questions from the Board.

1.3 The relevant apologies for absence were **noted**.

2. Post Schools Education and Skills Reform Consultation

2.1 The Interim Chief Executive provided a summary of recent activity in relation to Reform. He updated the Board on how SFC colleagues were engaging with the reform programme and contributing to the process. *Discussion redacted*

2.2 *Discussion redacted*

2.3 *Discussion redacted*

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2.4 The Assistant Director, Policy provided an overview of the approach which had been adopted in preparing the response, including extensive internal and external engagement with key stakeholders. Members were informed that comments, observations and feedback provided by the Board at earlier structured conversation meetings had been duly considered and incorporated into the consultation response. It was noted that whilst the consultation was considered to be a key mechanism for informing the Scottish Government as to SFC's approach to and desired outcomes from, Reform, it was intended to complement other activities.

2.5 Board members welcomed the paper and commended the extensive and comprehensive consultative approach which had been adopted in preparing the response. Whilst the Board broadly endorsed the advocated response and option, the challenges associated with this were emphatically acknowledged.

2.6 During discussion, Board members highlighted the following:

- (i) The implementation and delivery of a programme of change would require significant resource across a broad spectrum of activity. It was agreed that this should be referenced robustly in SFC's response and regardless of the option ultimately selected, the ensuing programme of change would require significant and sustained investment.
- (ii) It was agreed that stronger reference to research and innovation was required throughout the consultation response.
- (iii) It was suggested that the tone of the response required minor adjustment to build on and reference SFC's strengths; members of the Board unanimously agreed that the organisation was experienced in and had a strong record of implementing transformational change and this should be reflected in the response.
- (iv) It was suggested that with regards to the question around additional powers, reference should be made to and reflect previous communications to the Scottish Government where SFC considered its regulatory powers could be strengthened. Board members endorsed this recommendation and agreed that this would be consistent with prior messaging to the Government.
- (v) SFC's strong relationship with the FE and HE sectors notwithstanding, it was agreed that were the organisation to take on additional functions, specialist staff expertise and on the Board would be required. It was agreed that this should be referred to in the consultation response.

2.7 Board members were reminded of the timelines associated with the response and were advised that SFC intended to submit its response on 19th September.

2.8 On behalf of the Board, the Chair took the opportunity to commend the work of the Policy team; it was remarked that the standard of the paper was of a very high quality and the extensive engagement and consultation undertaken was reflected in the response.

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2.9 Thereafter and subject to the comments and observations above, the Board endorsed the draft response and agreed to delegate final sign off of SFC's response to the Executive Team and Board Chair.

3. Date of Next Meeting

3.1 Board members were reminded that the next meeting of the Board would take place Friday 20th September and would be a hybrid meeting.