

Chair's Report

Purpose

1. This paper provides Council with a report from the Chair on his key external engagements and other relevant business.

Key external engagements

Meeting of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board

2. The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board met on 13 May and received an overview of the Scottish Government's policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a briefing on the work of the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery. The Advisory Group, which is chaired by Benny Higgins, has been set up with a specific remit to advise on (i) measures to support different sectoral and regional challenges the economy will face in recovery; and (ii) how business practice will change as a result of COVID-19, including opportunities to operate differently and how Government policy can help the transition towards a greener, net zero and wellbeing economy. It is expected to provide initial proposals by the end of June.
3. The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (ESSB) has set up a sub-group which has been charged with developing a response to the Advisory Group on behalf of the enterprise and skills agencies. The Chair has been appointed to this sub-group which is being jointly chaired by the chairs of the ESSB (Nora Senior) and Skills Development Scotland (Frank Mitchell).

Regular Ministerial Meetings

4. In light of the current pandemic, the Ministerial Quarterly meetings have become more frequent. The main focus of these meetings has been on financial sustainability and the recovery / reform phase. The most recent meeting also discussed the full re-opening of college and university campuses following publication of the Scottish Government's route map.
5. These meetings, which the DFM has also attended on occasion, have provided an opportunity to share detailed information in advance of the Ministerial Leadership Group meetings and the sector wide principals' meetings.

Meetings with Chairs of Governing Bodies

6. As we approach the time when many governing bodies will be meeting to make decisions about the forthcoming academic year, the Minister and SFC Chair joined meetings of the Chairs of Colleges and of the Chairs of Universities.
7. These two separate meetings provided an opportunity to discuss directly with chairs the financial sustainability briefing that SFC has prepared and provided to Scottish Ministers. The meetings also covered the support package that both sectors are seeking from Government and the role that the sectors can play in the post-COVID-19 recovery.

Risk assessment

8. The content of this paper does not change the analysis of risk contained in the Council's Risk Register.

Recommendations

9. The Council is invited to note the content of this report.

Financial implications

10. There are no direct financial implications associated with this paper.

Publication

11. This paper will be published on the Council's website.

Further information

12. Contact: Mike Cantlay, chair@sfc.ac.uk .