

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

Meetings of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Sub Group

2. The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (ESSB) sub-group on addressing the needs of the labour market met on several occasions during June before publication of its report on 3 July. The report contained a series of recommendations, including maximising the flexibility of colleges and universities with a focus on critical skills required in growth areas of the economy and expanding apprenticeship provision, including more off-the-job training.
3. In recognition of the work of this group, the Chairs and CEOs of SFC and SDS were invited to participate in a Labour Market Summit with the Deputy First Minister, Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop and Ministers Richard Lochhead and Jamie Hepburn, to discuss how colleges and universities could exercise flexibility and pivot to supporting the immediate needs of the economy.

Meeting of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board

4. The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board met on 17 June. This provided an opportunity for each of the agencies to provide an update on how they were responding to the COVID-19 emergency. A key focus of discussion was the ESSB Plan for Economic Recovery. This was an opportunity to reinforce the vital role of colleges and universities in supporting economic recovery but also to remind members of the Board of the wider role that colleges and universities play in supporting the social justice agenda and wellbeing, widening participation, and Scotland's cultural and civic society.

Meeting of the Enterprise and Skills Agency Chairs

5. The chairs of the Enterprise and Skills agencies meet in between the meetings of the full Board. This meeting focused on the agencies' response to the Sub-Group report on the labour market and in particular on the actions to retrain those

unemployed to secure jobs and to support vulnerable people into employment. SFC input focused on the role of colleges in relation to delivery of DYW and the FWDF and on the role of universities in relation to the upskilling fund.

Regular Ministerial Meetings

6. Regular meetings with the Minister continue. The most recent meeting focused on the return to campus for colleges and universities – sector readiness and how institutions will ensure compliance with rules and guidance; financial sustainability; the SFC review; and the SQA 2020 exam results (post-results day but prior to the Deputy First Minister’s announcement on 11 August).

Meetings with Chairs of Governing Bodies

7. 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.
8. 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

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

Recommendations

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

Financial implications

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

Publication

12. This paper will be published on the Council’s website.

Further information

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