

Public Audit Committee
Room T3.60
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

7 July 2023

By email only

Dear Mr Leonard MSP

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2023, which noted that South Lanarkshire College (SLC) had improved its governance arrangements and was fully compliant with the code of good governance by the end of academic year 2021-22. In addition, the letter sought further information regarding the progress of South Lanarkshire College against the auditor's recommendations, therefore please find additional information below.

Progress Against the Auditor's Recommendations

- **the reporting timetable of the board and its committees so that there is timely reporting to the Lanarkshire regional Board following meetings.**

The timetables of SLC and the Lanarkshire Regional Strategic Body (LRSB) are as fully aligned as possible given that the meetings for SLC are planned according to the academic year, in accordance with standard academic practice, whereas LRSB meetings are timetabled by calendar year. The Schedules of the two Boards are fully aligned in that the sequence of meetings of the two Boards is a matter of agreement between the respective Clerks (Governance Professionals).

The SLC Schedule for the first semester is driven by the published LRSB Schedule, and the SLC Schedule for the second semester year contains provisional dates based on the best information available as provided by the LRSB and which are intimated in advance to the LRSB.

Representatives of the LRSB are invited to all of the substantive committee meetings of SLC and detailed papers are issued in advance of the meetings. Representatives of SLC attend the equivalent LRSB / New College Lanarkshire committee meetings as well as attending the LRSB Board meetings.

Any historic issues have therefore been fully addressed.

- **the monitoring of progress on reviews' recommendations, particularly in relation to the need to "ensure that robust monitoring and reporting processes are in place and maintained, and that challenge, scrutiny and escalation arrangements are in place to drive the improvements required to the college governance framework", as recommended by external reviews undertaken during 2021.**

The published Governance Improvement Plan (the GIP), which led to an acceptance that the College was fully code-compliant by July 2022 and beyond, fully addressed any historic issues.

To maintain high standards and to ensure robust monitoring and scrutiny was in place, a template for the “Governance Rolling Review” was agreed with the internal audit service and approved by the SLC Board. This template was placed before the four main committees for comment and discussion. A draft, incorporating input from the committees and also from the Student Association and the Trade Union Representatives, was placed before the 2023 June Board for further comment and discussion. In consultation with the Principal and the Chairing Member, the College Governance Professional will work with the internal audit service to produce a definitive version to lay before the Board early in the academic year 2023/24 for formal adoption.

This is believed to be a sector leading initiative, which not only goes beyond the statutory requirements, but goes beyond the current benchmarks of best practice.

- **the tenure of board members, following the recruitment of six new board members. [It is understood that the recruitment process commenced in May 2023.]**

As SLC was aware that members were coming to the end of their tenure or through personal reasons may not be able to fulfil their full term, vacancies for Board members were advertised in May 2023. In order to secure effective succession planning, SLC, with the advice and support of the Governance Professional, is adopting a phased approach whereby Board Members approaching the end of their term of office may choose to stand down early so that fresh appointments can be made avoiding the clustering of appointments / renewals.

A panel has been convened and is currently considering the latest tranche of applicants. One appointment has already been made, in June 2023, and a second appointment is expected in due course. Other appointments are likely to be made in the latter part of 2023, as SLC has received a number of applications which appear to be suitable.

As such SLC fully meets the recommendation in this regard.

Clerk to the Board

- **The Committee seeks an update on the progress that has been made in appointing a new permanent clerk to the board.**

Due to SLC having other vacant posts, it sought through a tender process to use a recruitment agency to support with the recruitment of these roles which included the Governance Professional, therefore this post is currently being advertised. The new Code of Good Governance requires colleges to have in post a qualified Governance Professional, and the current interim postholder is a qualified and experienced Governance Professional, who is committed to remaining in post until the role is permanently filled.

In addition, he has also offered to provide mentoring of any new post-holder if that is required.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further information or clarification is required.

Your sincerely

Stella McManus
Principal and Chief Executive