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AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject: Recommendations made in the External Effectiveness Review (EER)	Purpose: For Approval <input type="checkbox"/> For Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> For Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Prepared by: Ingrid Earp – Secretary to the Board	Date: 10 May 2021	
Purpose: To inform the Committee of the Action Plan submitted to SFC, and to allow monitoring of progression of the recommendations.		
Linked to Strategic Goal: We will take a leading role in enabling an inclusive, resilient and sustainable Scotland		
Executive Summary: The highest level was achieved in Borders College EER, that of 'strong assurance' and along with four areas of good practice identified there were eight recommendations all with a level 3 low priority category. These recommendations have largely been incorporated into the Board Development and Enhancement Plan along with areas of required or desirable development that emerge from the Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire, carried out each year in May/June. The final report including the attached action plan has been submitted to SFC, and over the course of future Committee meetings will be updated as appropriate.		
Recommendation: Members to note the action plan. Members are also invited to provide comment and feedback with respect to the implementation of the recommendations.		
Previous Committee Approvals:		
For publication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	For publication with redactions <input type="checkbox"/>	Not for publication <input type="checkbox"/>

Recommendations and Actions from the External Effectiveness Review Report March 2021

From December 2020 to March 2021 work was undertaken to carry out the Borders College External Effectiveness Review (EER) with the final report being granted a level of 'strong assurance', the highest possible, with four areas of good practice identified and eight low level, priority three, recommendations made.

Below is the Action Plan from the Report submitted to SFC. For future Committee meetings an update column will be added to allow members to see what progress has been made, and to incorporate any feedback or suggestions.

	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Client Comments	Agreed Actions and Responsibility	Timeline
1.	The Regional Board Members valued the performance information they currently receive. Members were aware that with the move to 'cloud-based systems' good quality reliable data was going to be key to informing the Board's decision-making processes.	<p>We recommend that the Regional Board continue their work to develop a suite of KPI's relevant to Borders College, which provide the Regional Board with the high-level information they seek.</p> <p>Given Wylie Bisset's experience of the sector and Big Data, we can help the Regional Board facilitate the development of these measures.</p>	Priority 3 - Low	<p>Initially the Principal and Board Secretary are working on a list of KPIs which the Principal will include in their Board report, in a table format.</p> <p>Longer term plans are to have a dashboard of all College performance indicators which the Principal can share with the Board in real time at meetings.</p>	The Principal, Chair, Board Secretary and wider Board to build on the initial KPIs and ways of reporting to reach a point where a clear, concise report is available and up to date.	<p>Already started, end of June 2021 for initial list and start of Board discussion. Discussions to be held within Committees re KPIs pertinent to them.</p> <p>This ties in to the wider College plans for IT and Infrastructure changes over the next 12-18 months.</p>
2.	Our review highlighted that Regional Board Members were concerned over the quality and timeliness of some Regional Board papers.	<p>We recommend that the Regional Board Members work with the Regional Board Secretary and current Chair to specify the types of papers they wish to see and the timelines over which they wish to receive these.</p> <p>We further recommend that those tasked with creating Regional Board and Committee papers, put aside appropriate time in their diaries to ensure that papers</p>	Priority 3 - Low	The Chair and Board Secretary are aware of these concerns and action has already started to address these.	The Chair, Board Secretary and Committee Chairs to work with those that produce the papers (largely VPs, but also other members of the Senior Leadership Team) to produce quality papers that are informative and timely.	This is an ongoing process. A focus on a good Exec Summary for each paper will be a priority, allowing Board Members to have a clear summary of the issues and recommendations. Additional reading can

		<p>are comprehensive, informative and meet the known timetables for the delivery of such papers. Board Members have requested that papers should have a clear summary of what the Board are being asked for along with what the underpinning rationale for the action being requested is. In short, a 1-page A4 paper outlining exactly what the Board are being asked for and why they are being asked for it, could be produced.</p> <p>Detailed papers could still be provided as back up evidence, however Board Members tell us they would like short, sharp and succinct papers to consider.</p> <p>Again, given Wylie Bisset's sector experience in this regard, we can help facilitate the development of quality and timely Regional Board papers.</p>				be made available if required.
3.	Our review highlighted that the Student President retires at the end of session 2020/21, and the term of office of the Vice-President will also end. Resources provided to the Student Association came under scrutiny.	<p>We recommend that the College continues to support the transition of this role to ensure the new President and Vice-President can make effective contributions as soon as is practicable</p> <p>We further recommend that Student Board member training has a focus on strategic contribution. This approach should help Board discussions about the student experience thereby avoiding operational day to day matters.</p>	Priority 3 - Low	<p>The College and Board will continue to support student members.</p> <p>The Board Secretary will continue to encourage students</p>	<p>The Board will consider the appointment of an independent member as mentor for student members.</p> <p>The Board Secretary to remind student members of their availability for help and advice, and to make contact regularly with student members. Board Secretary</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>Ongoing – within two weeks of appointment beginning.</p>

		We also recommend that the Board continues to review the levels of resources available to the Student Association to ensure they are in line with best practice within the sector.		to attend training as early as possible in their term of office. The Board reviews all College resources and will be given the opportunity to see how BCSA compares, when benchmarked against other College Student Associations, with regard to funding.	Board Secretary/Student President/VP Finance and Corporate Services	Immediate
4.	Our review highlighted the ongoing development of Governance Practice at Borders College	We recognise that the Regional Board is on a developmental journey in relation to how it operates, considers business and makes decisions. Indeed, the relatively recent appointment of the Regional Board Secretary presents the Regional Board with an opportunity to consider what information it wants, when it wants it and the quality of information it receives. Refer to Recommendation 2 . We recommend, therefore, that this work continues, and that appropriate tools and technologies are considered to ensure that the Regional Board are as effective as they can be.	Priority 3– Low	Board development and progression is always evolving and the Chair and Board Secretary are keen to embrace new approaches and tools to enable Board Member contributions, and their experiences, to be as useful and fulfilling as possible.	Chair and Board Secretary to work with Board Members	Ongoing, all matters identified for 20/21 to be completed by end of June 21 where ever possible.
5.	At our meeting on 8 th December 2020, the Interim Chair confirmed their resignation as Chair and will step down once the Scottish Government appoint a permanent Chair.	We recommend that the Regional Board ensure there is absolute continuity during the transition period. The Interim Chair, given their experience of the College is well placed to provide this stability in the short term, as they will be stepping back into the role to Chair the Finance Committee and can provide support to the new appointee where necessary.	Priority 3 - Low	The aim would always be to have a smooth transition between Chairs.	The current interim Chair will work with the Board Secretary and the incoming Chair to ensure a smooth handover.	When the process to appointment a new Chair is started by Scottish Government.

6.	The Regional Board Secretary is relatively new into post and although they bring a wealth of experience from elsewhere, seems to be already benefiting from peer to peer support from sector colleagues.	We recommend that the Regional Board Secretary continues to develop their network of support within the sector, as we have found this appears to be already paying dividends for the College.	Priority 3 - Low	The Board Secretary has already participated in a number of Board Secretary Network (BSN) events and meetings and feels that good support and advice is always available from the Network. The Board Secretary also has a mentor in the form of a very experienced Board Secretary and Governance specialist from another College.	The Board Secretary will continue to network with the other Secretaries, undertake training and attend information events as appropriate.	Ongoing, BSN meetings approximately four times per year.
7.	Regional Board Member Training and Development opportunities suggested that physically attending events may be more beneficial than using video conference, however everyone was very mindful of current COVID-19 restrictions, which has curtailed social gatherings out with family bubbles.	<p>We recommend that Regional Board Members are encouraged to participate in training events, and that where time and budgets allow, that attendance online and or on site is encouraged when it is safe to do so.</p> <p>We further recommend that the Board training issues identified in the 2020/21 Board Enhancement Plans are taken forward as soon as it practical to do so.</p>	Priority 3 - Low	<p>All Board Members are welcome to attend training as and when it is necessary.</p> <p>The Board Enhancement Plans evolve, develop and change according to the College, Sector and individual Member requirements.</p>	<p>The Board Secretary will promote training opportunities and the Chair will continue to identify any training and development requirements during annual reviews. The Board Secretary collates all training requirements from Board Member reviews as they are completed.</p> <p>The Chair and Board Secretary will continue to progress the Plans.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Board Secretary to raise, as part of their report and update to Board, on a regular basis.</p> <p>Ongoing, the intention is to complete actions within the relevant AY and if there are actions carried forward these will be clearly identified.</p>
8.	The review of the Regional Board Self Evaluation indicated that the annual Collective Evaluation took place for session 2019/20.	We recommend that Collective self-evaluation for 2020/21 take places at the earliest opportunity. We recognise matters are more problematic this session due to COVID-19, however the College seems to have a good virtual environment in place to conduct its	Priority 3 - Low	The Board Self-Evaluation takes place towards the end of summer term each year to allow for reflection over the preceding year and for the majority of meetings to have been held.	The Board Secretary will issue the questionnaire towards the end of May and collate and analyse responses for discussion at Board.	May/June each AY

		business. As they are currently running smaller workshops for other matters [Risk Management for example] this approach could provide a good model for considering Board Effectiveness and contribution each member has to its mission.		Part of ongoing plans for Board Development, and resulting from the Self-Evaluation, is that regular strategic sessions will be held to examine and discuss key areas for the College such as a curriculum area or changes in SFC strategy. There will also be sessions with key stakeholders allowing for more in-depth discussion.	The Board Secretary will continue to work on a plan for subjects to discuss and stakeholders to engage with in conjunction with the Chair and Principal.	Ongoing. Committee and meeting schedule as well as planning day and strategic sessions to be timetabled before the start of each new AY.
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