

Board Secretary's Report

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

For information

- 1.1 To inform the Board of any changes in governance guidelines, governance discussions across the sector and useful training or reading.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report covers discussions at the latest Governance Professional Network (GPN) meeting around trade union Board Members and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to Board papers.
- 2.2 It also covers training from the College Development Network (CDN).

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

- 3.1 I recommend that the Regional Board: -
 - 3.1.1 note the report and address any questions directly to the Board Secretary out with the meeting.

4.0 BACKGROUND/MAIN PAPER

- 4.1 The GPN meet four times a year to discuss matters relating to college governance and to share concerns, successes and experiences. At the most recent meeting a large item for discussion was the inclusion of trade union Board Members.
- 4.2 Having trade union Board Members as well as staff Board Members has been under discussion and moving towards implementation for a number of years, finally going through the Scottish Parliament late 2023/early 2024. Since then there has been varying degrees of success across colleges with appointment of these Members and also with the involvement of the Members with Boards. A number of Boards are now expressing concern that the potential for conflict of interest placed on these Members is not appropriate or fair to these members, potentially being in excess of other Members and particularly at a time when many colleges are facing significant financial challenges and potential restructuring and reduction in staff numbers.

- 4.3 Concern has also been raised about the balance on Boards with potentially seven staff and student members and up to 13 independent members (and a number of colleges are rarely at full complement of independent members given difficulties in recruiting) making a majority of independent members whether for a vote or a quorum more difficult.
- 4.4 Having said the above a number of colleges are also reporting that the trade union Board Members are working out well with views from all parties being taken on board and constructive discussions being held while bearing in mind the strategic role of the Board as opposed to concern over operational detail.
- 4.5 Use of AI - The use of AI by Board Members to summarise papers for them was also discussed and the concern expressed that should users have particular settings or be unaware of different settings then any confidential data could potentially be accessible to others via the Cloud. One of the Board Secretaries is looking into this issue for their college and will share the findings.
- 4.6 Training - CDN has a number of online courses available for Board Members, some of which are mandatory such as the New Board Member Induction and the Remuneration Committee training for members of that Committee. A full list of the online training available can be found [here](#) .
- 4.7 CDN are also beginning to introduce a number of 'Governance Shorts' for a quick refresher on various items, currently there is one on Collective Responsibility and another on Conflict of Interest. They can be found inside the CDN Governance Hub [here](#).
- 4.8 If anyone has any feedback on the CDN training or would like to see training on something that isn't currently provided please contact the Board Secretary directly, iearp@borderscollege.ac.uk .

5.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications of this paper

5.2 Learner Implications

There are no direct learner implications of this paper.

5.3 Staff Implications

There are no direct staff implications of this paper.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

There are no direct equality and diversity implications of this paper.

5.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

There are no direct sustainability/environmental implications of this paper.

6.0 RISK COMMENTARY

- 6.1 The paper is for information, there are no proposed actions or decisions required.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Any queries or questions please do contact Ingrid directly.

I Earp

Board Secretary

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals: None

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