

At Glasgow and via MS Teams of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland on Wednesday 9 December 2020 at 10:45am being a meeting of the Board of Governors

PRESENT	Andrew Butcher (AB) Morag Campbell (MC) John Craig (JC) (President SU) Stuart Cross (SC) Dr Lois Fitch (LF) (Assistant Principal) Susan Lee Kidd (SLK) Professor Donald MacRae (DM) Sharon Mair (SM)	Carol Main (CM) Dorothy Miell (DXM) Zweyla Mitchell Dos Santos (VP SU) Ed Monaghan (EM) Agnes Robson (AR) Philip Rodney (PR) Jean Sangster (JS) Professor Jeffrey Sharkey (PJS) (Principal) Maria Taylor (MT)
IN ATTENDANCE	Stephen Broad (SB) Andrew Comrie (AC) Janette Harkess(JXH) Helen McVey (HM) Gordon Munro (GM) Jackie Russell (JR) Lindsey Shields (LS) Alan Smith (AS)	(Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange) (Director of Fair Access) (Director of External Relations) (Director of Business Development and Interim Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film) (Director of Music) (Director of Human Resources) (Secretary) (Director of Finance and Estates)
IN THE CHAIR	Nick Kuenssberg (NK) (Chair)	

The Chair welcomed all attendees, in particular SB, AC, HM and GM, joining for today's meeting, and thanked those who had participated in the Conservatoire's AGM which had been held by Zoom webinar earlier that morning.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Roxburgh.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting **were approved** as an accurate record. The Secretary noted a small correction. All actions agreed at the last meeting had been actioned or were in hand.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTE NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

There were no other matters arising not elsewhere on the Agenda.

5. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The recommendations from the Nominations Committee, regarding the renaming as Audit & Risk Committee and membership of the Audit Committee to include Maria Taylor, were received **and approved**.

6. SPF FINANCIAL FORECASTS 2019-20 to 2020-21

The updated Financial Forecasts 2019-20 to 2020-21 were received **and approved**. DM drew attention to the three main elements being the:

- commentary on the financial forecasts for the year ended 31 July 2020 and the surplus

of £150K compared with the previous forecast deficit of £311K;

- summary of the current year's budget (2020/21);
- return to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) which involved repackaging all of the previous information into the format required by the SFC. It was noted that the Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP) had provided insightful comments in the return and had agreed to support it.

DM invited AS for comments and attention was drawn to:

- this was the third return that the SFC has requested since April as they continue to monitor institutional short term financial health;
- all institutions across the Higher Education sector had forecasted a much bleaker prognosis in earlier returns, which had not happened, so the RCS was reflecting what has been experienced across the sector;
- the previously forecast deficit of £3.8M and the reasons for the current forecast deficit of £2.1M.

DM acknowledged the necessary F&GP extra curricula meetings, the attendance of MT and CR in meetings with Frontier Economics and the work of the Principal, the Assistant Principal, AS, the Deputy Director of Finance and the Finance team for their work in constructing the reports over the past few months.

There was general discussion amongst Governors as to the:

- implications of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union;
- the impact of the pandemic;
- the extension of the furloughing scheme until March 2021; and
- re-deploying and re-training certain front of house staff, for example, in cleaning roles and supporting isolated students.

The Board **approved** the draft Financial Forecasts for onward submission to the SFC.

7. STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The Strategic Plan update paper was received and noted. The Chair commented on the inspiring commentaries from the Principal and the Assistant Principal at the AGM. The Principal thanked everyone at the RCS for where the institution was now and drew attention to:

- supporting students and staff during the pandemic;
- the RCS having more undergraduate students than post graduate students and the need to develop innovative post graduate courses with an international appeal;
- the move in the curriculum into the three key areas of digital intervention, hybridity and genre fluidity;
- simplifying the curriculum
- evolving the RCS as a guide in teaching students to be students for life;
- the difficulties faced with the demise of SG support for EU student fees
- the need for a transformation of teaching, structure and research
- Music for Scotland Manifesto with RCS as the lynchpin for the partnership with Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG), national companies, Sistema and other groups going forward, to use the Scottish Government election to seek a commitment to invest in music training for young people and upskilling in GTC certification;
- an approach to the RCS from an entity in North East Asia seeking to create an international partnership for a music "conservatory" with the RCS in a fast-developing region and creating the potential for a new pipeline of students;

The Assistant Principal introduced the paper and reported that, in light of the pandemic, the main areas of priority remained the same but with prominence to be given to:

- a solid digital strategy and vision being at the centre of the RCS portfolio;
- cultivating the talent pipeline;
- income generation/fundraising to support students and to support the quality of their experience/studying at an exceptionally high level;
- students acquiring a set of skills to expand employability opportunities;
- identifying the different areas to grow into the curriculum;
- re-thinking our USP of collaboration between disciplines, including transformation of

thinking, to remain visionary and pioneering;

There was general discussion amongst Governors as to how the Board could help, the timescales to implement these changes, anticipating and planning for the post-pandemic operating environment, the necessary resource required for this and tactical opportunities with regard to pots of funding from the SFC and other budget holders such as Creative Scotland and SDS. Governors noted that the next stage of undergraduate programme was to be ready for September 2022.

The Assistant Principal invited her team for comment:

HM drew attention to the need for:

- having the right infrastructure in place in order to achieve change;
- being aware of the stress and strain on staff in terms of this work;
- (from the perspective of Interim Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film), careful planning around any transitional arrangements in terms of leadership of the School of DDPF; and
- the conversations with staff in January to be truly consultative, and having clarity on the driver for change and what the RCS wants to be post pandemic.

SB drew attention to:

- research and knowledge exchange underpinning everything and the continuing journey of development in order to keep students richly informed;
- in order to have a meaningful national or international leadership role, the RCS needs to do this from a position of working at the edge;
- the Research Excellence Framework (REF) showing clear signs of transformation over the last period of REF in 2013; and
- the challenge to move to an organisation where research and innovation informs and reflects everything the RCS does.

GM drew attention to:

- the School of Music, by being catapulted into the digital arena, had to adapt to learn new pedagogies, which in some areas work better than face to face delivery; and
- the need to implement this by taking the best of the curricular reform from ten years ago and enhancing this, by looking at the options and evaluating whether this is working in the way the RCS intended.

AC drew attention to:

- looking at this through the particular lens of widening access;
- the challenge of quality arts education in schools and the need to produce excellent candidates for undergraduate courses from deprived areas in Scotland;
- his support for the blended digitisation approach and how this has worked for widening the reach across Scotland during the pandemic.

JS commented on the coming together of the School of DDPF and the interrogation of what a blended model was going to look like for every strand of programme and how this was dynamic, modern and necessary.

MC commented on the three adjectives that should be stressed in the discussion of curriculum going forward, namely consultative, collegiate and constructive.

There was general discussion amongst Governors around:

- whether the RCS should engage more with the Scottish Government cross parliamentary groups in music and culture;
- the timescales for student recruitment being one year in advance and if changes to undergraduate programmes would apply to post graduate ones and research programmes continuing to grow in the future;
- sharp proposals being ready for offering to the Music for Scotland manifesto, for more chance of implementation.

NK thanked Governors for their helpful input to the discussion.

8. BLUE SKIES AND BLACK SWANS

The Chair reported that he was conducting a two-way appraisal with individual Governors in the new year, in preparation for the recruitment drive for new governors..

It was noted that COP 26 was a potential route for the RCS to demonstrate its multi-disciplinary skillset to a huge global audience.

It was further noted that Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music had been through a very challenging time, that income from it to the RCS had completely stopped and that it had appointed a new Chief Executive Officer of quality and gravity.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Board:

29 January 2021

23 April 2021

25 June 2021

Graduations:

Thursday 1 July 2021

Thursday 28 October 2021 tbc

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

None

11. PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

The paper for information was received and noted.