

News release

For immediate release, 5 June 2023

South Lanarkshire College improves governance

South Lanarkshire College has addressed weaknesses in how it is governed but has spent around £800,000 responding to leadership issues.

Auditors found that the college's governance arrangements were not satisfactory for a period during 2021/22. In late 2021 the college also commissioned two independent investigations into complaints and grievances against the chair of the board, and the principal and the interim clerk to the board. It is these investigations and their associated costs that have proved costly.

The college has since improved governance arrangements and there is now appropriate scrutiny of its board's decisions. Following consideration of the investigation reports, the board agreed to terminate the employment of the principal and the interim clerk to the board at an extraordinary board meeting in January 2023. The chair of the board's tenure ended in May 2022.

A new chair and principal are now in post. However, the investigations, legal advice and the employment costs of interim staff had cost South Lanarkshire College around £800,000 by 19 April 2023.

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

"It is encouraging to see that South Lanarkshire College has improved its governance arrangements.

"The college, like many in Scotland, faces risks to its financial sustainability. It is therefore regrettable that it spent around £800,000 of public money responding to complaints against senior leaders, which also led to a long period of uncertainty around governance and leadership.

"The college's board is committed to making further governance improvements and that is welcome. I will be tracking its progress."

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Notes to Editor:

1. The Auditor General has prepared the report on South Lanarkshire College's audited accounts for 2021/22 under Section 22 of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. This allows the Auditor General to bring to the Parliament's and the public's attention matters of public interest related to the financial statements of public bodies.

2. Section 22 reports are submitted to Scottish Ministers for laying in the Parliament along with the accounts of the relevant body. While there are statutory deadlines for these reports, the actual timing of publication is determined by when the report is laid in the Scottish Parliament by Scottish Ministers.

3. A timeline of key events relating to the independent investigations can be found in Exhibit 1 of the Auditor General's report.

4. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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