

Meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee

MINUTES

Items considered confidential on the grounds of commercial or personal sensitivity have been redacted from the published minutes

Date	Wednesday 7th February 2024
Time	18:00 to 19:30
Location	Via MS Teams
Present (Governors):	Fred Gray (Committee Chair) Jesse Adekoya Craig Mahoney (Chair of Corporation) Christine Ricketts (Principal and Chief Executive) Paul Stedman
In attendance	Allan Tyrer (Chief Operating Officer) Nolan Smith (Estates Project Manager, Fusion) – item 5 Melissa Drayson (Director of Governance)
Observers	Rob Lawson (External Governance Review)
Apologies for absence	Ian Carey (Support Staff Governor)
Quorum (3)	The meeting was quorate throughout

Item	Action lead
1. Preliminary items	
1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence The Chair welcomed Jesse Adekoya to his first meeting as a Committee member. Apologies were as listed above.	
1.2 Declarations of interest There were no new declarations of interests relating to matters on the agenda. Previously declared interests were carried forward.	
1.3 Urgent other business One item of Other Business was taken at the end of the meeting	
2. Minutes	
2.1 The Resources Committee minutes of 29th November 2023 were APPROVED as an accurate record and confidential sections were confirmed.	

2.2 The Minutes of the joint meeting with the Audit Committee on 29^h November 2023 were APPROVED as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters arising

Supporting paper by the Director of Governance

It was noted that all actions from the previous meeting were on the agenda or due for report at the March meeting. The Committee was informed that the new DfE Financial Handbook had not yet been issued and that the Financial Regulations would be updated to reflect any new requirements.

3. People Termly Report

Supporting paper presented by the Head of People

The Committee considered the data for September to December 2023 for staff recruitment, absence and turnover. The breakdown of staff by age and gender was also noted.

Staff recruitment had slowed from a peak in September, but the number of leavers had increased, particularly among teaching staff. All leavers had been offered exit interviews, with a 75% take-up. The most common reasons for leaving were job change and personal reasons.

Sickness absence was highest among teaching staff. The most common reasons were colds, stress and anxiety. Governors asked whether reasons for stress were work or home-related. At present, this information was not collected, but management agreed that it would be valuable to understand levels of work-related stress. A governor asked whether repeated short-term sickness was monitored. It was confirmed that members of the People Team were working with managers to identify and support staff with a pattern of short-term absence.

Governors gave feedback from recent Curriculum Performance Reviews at which obstacles to recruitment had been discussed, including job titles.

The Committee was pleased to hear that the responses to the latest staff Pitstop survey had been positive. The roll-out of the two themed 'Values' months (We Care and We Collaborate) had been well received.

The gender pay gap data was noted. Further analysis would appear in the EDI Annual Report that was being prepared for the Corporation meeting on 27th March.

The Committee congratulated the People Team on being nominated for two awards.

AGREED: That the Summer Term HR report would include progress against the People Strategy.

Head of People

4. Estates and facilities report

Supporting paper presented by Nolan Smith, Fusion

The Committee was updated on the timeline for consideration of Section 106, which was the last approval stage before full Planning Approval would be issued. The s106 signature would trigger a six-week judicial review

period, during which any challenges to the legality of the decision process must be lodged. All issues had been worked through thoroughly with local authority partners, and assessed by King's Counsel before the submission of the planning application, so there was reasonable confidence in a positive outcome.

Completion would take place at the end of the six weeks; the first batch of funds would be transferred to the College and all property would pass to Cala Homes. The College would then be required to vacate some buildings to allow demolition to start. Some curriculum areas would be relocated as a result.

A large part of the work would be undertaken over the summer following the original phasing plan. In response to a question about internal capacity, it was confirmed that the new Director of Estates would be overseeing logistics and safety, supported by the Head of Health and Safety.

The Committee was advised of changes to the original plan arising from the need to accommodate growth in Construction, and the addition of the LSIF-funded renovation of the Theatre as a Green Skills construction space. The existing car park would be decommissioned immediately for land remediation.

Governors were given advance notice of the need to ensure governor oversight and approval of major contracts when the building works started.

AGREED: That an the updated project cash flow be brought to the next Committee meeting. **COO**

5. Health and Safety termly report

Supporting paper by the Head of H&S, presented by the Chief Operating Officer

The report was taken as read and questions were raised. Key points were:

- The Head of Health and Safety had achieved significant progress on the action plan. The H&S Link Governor was thanked for his support and expertise.
- Online software for staff training was being investigated, to cover all aspects of health and safety including risk assessment. This would support the drive to encourage greater ownership of and accountability for health and safety risk at the departmental level;
- Better use of IT systems to record Health and Safety incidents, including near misses.
- The need for a practice lockdown to ensure that all staff know what to do in such an eventuality.

Governors asked for more information on the RIDDOR incident. Clarification was sought on whether this had been reported to the Health and Safety Executive, as not all accidents requiring a hospital visit were reportable.

The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the speed of progress in addressing the issues identified in the summer.

AGREED: That future reports must include a list of accidents, incidents and near misses.

H&S Head

6. IT Systems and Cyber Security Termly Report

6.1 Termly IT and Cyber-Security report

Supporting paper presented by the Head of Logixx IT

The Committee received an update on the volume of activity undertaken by the IT team. This had increased significantly during the December Ofsted visit. Response rates had been maintained. The volume of printing had decreased but had yet to reach the target level.

Cyber security remained an ongoing priority, as the number and type of threats changed and intensified.

Work was underway to ensure that the college portal for students to access their timetables from outside the college was secure and GDPR compliant. This would require the portal to be held on a separate server.

In response to a governor's questions, it was confirmed that action was being taken with Fusion and Cala Homes to ensure that there was no disruption to IT services when the capital works started. It was confirmed that Cala personnel would not be given access to college Wi-Fi.

6.2 Systems Integration

Verbal update by the COO

Governors were informed that all systems were working well independently but, as reported under the IT item, final work was underway to move the REMs parent portal onto a separate server. Work would start to link data and finance systems once individual systems were fully embedded.

6.3 Development of the data dashboard

Verbal update by the COO

The development of the dashboard was nearing completion. It was a user-friendly portal that would allow managers to drill down to gain more detail across a range of measures, including staff utilisation and room utilisation.

Governors fed back on recent performance reviews that they had attended where live data from REMs and Markbook had been accessed. This was viewed as very positive progress. A briefing and live demonstration of the new dashboard would be given at the March Corporation meeting.

7. Finance

7.1 Monthly Management accounts and cashflow report: December 23

Supporting papers presented by the Chief Operating Officer

Governors noted and welcomed the new format for the report. This highlighted EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax and depreciation) as a key indicator of financial health.

Headlines were:

- The predicted year-end surplus was slightly above the budgeted figure at £446k. Overall income was predicted to be above budget.
- Adult Education Budget income was currently tracking below budget as recruitment of both full-time and part-time learners was lower than planned at this stage. A task and finish group had been created to ensure targets were met. The gap was already starting beginning to be closed and the college was confident that budgeted income would be achieved.
- Apprenticeships were performing better than the budget. The current income estimate was conservative.
- Income earned from the delivery to Higher Needs students was forecast to exceed budget, negotiations were ongoing with local authorities regarding additional income.
- Pay costs budgets should be met. Considerable efforts had been made to manage the costs of agency staff.
- The Corporation would make a final decision on the additional staff pay award at its March meeting.

The Committee was advised that future reports would include a balance sheet, 12-month rolling cash flow and capital expenditure. The balance sheet would need to include the restatement value for each building. Performance against bank covenants and ESFA benchmarks would also be included. Governors stressed the need to separate capital cash flow from operational cash flow in the report.

3.2 Developing the 3 to 5-year financial plan

Supporting paper by the Chief Operating Officer

As previously reported, the draft financial plan showed an increase in EBITDA over the period. The primary purpose of the plan was to show that the College had a sustainable future as a stand-alone institution. The final version would include balance sheets and a sensitivity analysis along with a supporting commentary. The plan was to share the plan with the ESFA in March and to bring it to the Corporation for approval at the March meeting.

AGREED: that the 3 to 5-year financial plan would be brought to the Corporation for approval on 27th March. COO

8. Sustainability Report

Supporting paper presented by the Executive Director Student Services

The report was taken as read and key headlines were noted, including:

- Making sure that green compliance was considered in the design brief for the refurbishment of college buildings;
- The 2022-23 streamlined energy carbon report 2022-23 had been finalised that day and showed a positive impact of measures to reduce gas and electricity usage. This had been aided by the moth-balling of obsolete buildings.
- Data on the reduction of waste was also positive. There had been a 25% reduction in paper usage compared to the same point the previous year. The new Head of Estates would be developing on-site recycling facilities;

- Examples of collaborative initiatives included a SEND department competition and stronger partnerships with the Borough Council
- Good progress continued to be made against the AOC Climate Action Roadmap
- The College was developing more carbon literacy resources for use in tutorial and staff professional development
- A sustainability curriculum audit was in development
- A sustainability landing page on the website was being developed
- Careers guidance for students interested in engaging with the low carbon economy was being developed.

The Committee was asked to support the following recommendations:

- To publish the 2022-23 Streamlined Energy and Carbon Report (SECR) with 2021-22 comparison on the website. This would provide stakeholders with updates on progress and achievements, reinforcing accountability and promoting engagement.
- To pledge our commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 with an interim target of reducing emissions by 78% by 2035 by signing the 'Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges'.

Governors were encouraged to complete the Carbon Literacy programme hosted on the Innovation South Virtual Campus. This would strengthen their understanding of sustainability and support the College's efforts to achieve its sustainability goals. The support of the new Sustainability Link Governor, including his attendance at the Sustainability Committee, had been extremely valuable.

Governors thanked the Executive Director for a detailed and comprehensive report and endorsed the recommendations listed above.

9. Other urgent business

It was noted that this was the last governors' meeting attended by the Executive Director Student Support. The Committee extended its thanks to him for his work, particularly on the sustainability agenda, and wished him well in the next stage of his career.

10. Date of next meeting

13 March 2024 (Finance and capital only)

Approved by the Finance and Resources Committee on 13 March 2024