



CORPORATION BOARD Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday, 20 June 2023 at 6pm

Present

Nick Handy (Chair);
Alan Bark;
Jacqui Canton, Principal;
Edward Collett;
Howard Dodd;
Mackenzie Nordal (18:48 onwards);

In attendance

Jo Milsom, Deputy Principal;
Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal of Funding, Planning & Systems Improvement;
Mark Lay, Finance Director;
Penny Challans, Head of Finance;
Kelly Haddrell, Head of HR;
Michael Chiyasa, Head of Estates and Capital Development;
Howard Stamp, Clerk and Governance Advisor (minutes).

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are italicized.

1. Opening Comments

1.1 Apologies and matters to be raised under AOB

The Committee welcomed Howard Stamp the new Clerk to his first Finance & General Purposes Committee. The Committee noted the apologies from Yvonne Mortimer, Health & Safety Manager. The meeting was quorate.

There were no items raised under AOB

1.2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were raised.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023

The Committee approved the minutes for signature.

3 Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points

All matters arising had been completed.

The Committee noted the report.

4 Reports

4.1 Public Capital projects and estates report

The Head of Estates and Capital Development presented the report and highlighted key areas to the committee in particular the focus on reduction on use of fossil fuels across the estate and the ongoing PPM programme management. There was positive discussion from the committee.

- Regards the low carbon skills fund, is there an intention to have solar panels?
Potentially yes if we are successful on the recent bid for funds, we could consider including solar panels as part of the spend.
- Regards the construction workshop project, has there been a challenge recruiting staff into these roles and if so, will we be able to recruit and deliver? *Yes, there has been a challenge however through innovative recruitment and advertising we have been able to attract candidates and offer a market supplement to support pay where appropriate.*

- Regards the decommissioning of science labs, what had they been used for? *Majority have been used for Access to HE programmes*
- Is there still gas at Common Leys? *No, we do not currently have gas at Common Leys, this will change for future reporting.*
- Are the EV charging numbers in line with expected numbers? *It is too early to say at this point, with new construction projects, planners are encouraging it and therefore we already have the infrastructure, however we have few EV drivers currently.*
- Is the EV scheme designed to breakeven? *Yes, as we have been charging a notional charge to get the project started.*

The Committee noted the report.

4.2 HR report

The Head of HR presented the report and outlined key notes to the committee. Recruitment remains a challenge including hard to fill vacancies however these continue to be worked through and using different recruitment methods where appropriate. Safer recruitment has now been updated to include online checks for staff. This has been updated into our policy for approval later in this meeting.

- Is there a framework against which the online checks will be run? *Yes, once we begin undertaking the checks, we will review the findings. Unfortunately, there has been no centrally set guidelines as to what to check for, therefore as we begin the checks, we will be able to consider a framework internally.*
- Regards the proposed notice period changes, does this work both ways for employer and employee? *Yes, and probation will remain outside of this.*
- Will the notice period changes be backdated or just for new contracts? *At this stage it will be for new contracts. We have informally engaged unions, and this will now become formal engagement.*
- Staff vacancies being filled at a rate of 65% - is this skewed by any outlier either way? *Potentially, we could break this down further to see if there were any particular areas with longer recruitment times it can vary as some roles are rolling adverts but recruit well while other more technical roles may take longer to fill.*
- Rather than % of vacancies filled, could we not consider a metric of weeks a role is empty? *We did look at this however it is significantly skewed by income notice periods as an additional factor.*
- Is there good engagement with the LDA? Are there any professional requirements? *There is good engagement from all college managers (approximately 30). There are other roles with professional requirements, however these are set by awarding bodies and are in the minority.*
- Do we look at the success of succession planning? *We are looking into a skills audit to help us review our succession planning requirements and help identify next steps.*

Comments were made in relation to stress related absences and the committee agreed this was covered well in the report.

The Committee noted the report.

4.3 Health & Safety report

The Finance Director presented the report highlighting keys areas, explaining there had been one RIDDOR report, that is very recent. The student is recovering well, and the investigation remains ongoing.

- *What is a behaviour related injury?* This is not an injury but a behaviour related incident. The college is ending the use of Flowforma the database system used for

Health & Safety reporting this should address some reporting anomalies, such as RTA and behaviour classifications.

- *Why has medical increased?* Difficult to tell if this is an increase in student numbers or some that should be in other categories and have been reported differently as other areas have stayed the same or decreased with increased student numbers.

The committee noted the reporting anomalies and acknowledged that Smartlog was currently being developed to help address this.

The Committee noted the report.

5. Policies

5.1 Policies cover sheet

The Clerk presented the report outlining key changes to all policies included for this committee.

The Committee noted the report and raised comments against each policy as follows.

5.1.1 Family Friendly Policy

No questions were raised for this policy.

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.2 Business Continuity Policy

No questions were raised for this policy.

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.3 Social Media Policy

The Committee noted the merger of this policy into the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

- What about students' social media usage? *This is included in the student code of conduct.*

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.4 Financial Regulations

- Should 8.1 be reinstated to include Board? *Yes, agreed, Finance Director to update.*

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.5 Health & Safety Policy

There have been minimal changes required for this policy.

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.6 Staff Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy

No questions were raised for this policy as discussion had already taken place as part of the HR report.

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.7 Staff Grievance

No questions were raised for this policy.

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

5.1.8 Treasury Management

No questions were raised for this policy.

The Committee approved the policy and recommended it to Board.

[McKensie Nordal joined the meeting. The Chair asked for declarations of interest and any comments on previous items. No declarations or comments were raised.]

6. Finance matters

6.1 Management Accounts to 30 April 2023

The Head of Finance presented the report highlighting a strong financial position forecast to exceed budget.

- Can we have a previous year comparator for future reports? *Yes, agreed.*
- Do we still have an overdraft facility? *No this has been removed.*

The committee recommended the report to the Board.

6.2 2023/24 budget and pay award

The Finance Director presented the report noting there had been very few changes since the governor budget drop-in session on 8 June. An increased turnover budget was proposed, and it was highlighted that based on budget this would put the college in 'Good' financial health with the ESFA.

The increased budget is based on various increases. The main movements outlined were attributed to 16-19 funding and student numbers, ensuing no clawback of AEB funds, and continued increase in apprenticeship growth.

- How much is it down to changes in student numbers? *It is all down to changes in student numbers.*
- What are the main drivers for enrolment growth? *Majority looks to come from construction combined with some demographic changes. And changes in our progression and retention of learners, also particularly in construction.*
- Are other colleges seeing the same level of growth? *No, national recruitment of 16 – 19 year olds was flat this year.*
- How much of the SEND provision is continuing students or new? *Difficult to say at this stage. We are still discussing numbers with the Local Authority for next year. There is potential for growth but as this is not confirmed we have budgeted for the same student numbers as this year.*
- Are we confident in receiving the non-profiled High Needs payments? *Yes, it will be a timing issue, but we are receiving regular payments on account, and this will then be reconciled at the end of the year.*
- Regards the pay award, have we got a number that will trigger the additional 1%? *Yes, £200,000 of additional 16-19 income as included in the budget. We are currently on target for this based on application levels.*
- Has the pay award been shared with unions? *Yes*
- Is there any indication from other colleges of their pay award offer? *The AoC are not currently providing any advice or steer on this. Conversations with other colleges give*

a range, some offering no pay award, majority in the 2%-4% region and some offering 5%

The Committee recommended the pay award to the Board

The increase in the non-pay budget was discussed and highlighted by the Finance Director as largely due to electricity. Although electricity costs are higher, they are however not as high as expected. Higher costs are also being budgeted for in sub-contracting to ensure our AEB contracts are delivered using providers in line with college strategy and delivery model. Capital expenditure and pension costs were also highlighted.

The Committee recommended the 2023/24 budget to the Board.

6.3 Draft ESFA Financial Planning Model

The Finance Director presented the report highlighting the 3-year plan and drawing particular attention to 16-19 lagged funding, apprenticeship growth & reduction in HE income. It was explained that the financial health grade may move back to Requires Improvement during these three years, however this is not a cause for concern at this stage.

The Committee recommended the report to the Board.

6.4 ESFA Correspondence

The Finance Director presented the report and letters to bring to the committee's attention. This is the standard annual letter and benchmarking tool.

The committee commented that the benchmarking tool provides good data but recognised it is difficult to use for adding value due to the differences in interpretation of each college.

The committee noted the report.

6.5 College electricity costs

The Finance Director presented the report and outlined the move to a new supplier that has been fixed for 4 years.

- Do we know how other colleges have managed this? *No, and it really comes down to the timing of your renewal and the costs at the point.*

The committee noted the report.

6.6 Bank Loans

The Finance Director provided a verbal update on our bank loans highlighting no substantial change to report.

The committee commented that well performing colleges are likely to be given repeat commercial borrowing but that it would be prudent to continue to liaise with both banks and the ESFA to gauge the best options available.

- What is the advantage of keeping our loans with commercial lenders and not the ESFA? *None particularly to us, so we will monitor any options provided by the ESFA.*

The committee noted the update.

6.7 Capital Grant Plans

The Finance Director presented the report outlining some areas that had already been touched upon in previous reports and subsequent discussions. All in year grants received are planned to be fully delivered against college objectives.

The committee noted the report.

7. General purposes

7.1 Freedom of information requests update

The Clerk presented the report outlining the six freedom of information requests received, prior to the new Clerk taking up post. These had all been responded to but not within the timeframe. Now with a clerk in post and with access to these, there should be no further delays.

The Committee noted the report.

7.2 Review of Underpinning Strategies in support of the College Strategic Plan

The Principal presented the report highlighting good progress against the plan; some of the more ambitious targets have been realigned to new timescales.

- Is there more information available to the committee for the Marketing activities of the college? *Yes, this can be made available, or marketing invited to a board meeting to provide a presentation. Our marketing analytics are now well developed and can provide valuable information of the customer experience. This is also helping with admissions and providing us with much more sophisticated analytics.*

The committee welcomed the option for the Marketing team to provide a presentation at a board meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Marketing to be invited to a Corporation Board meeting as appropriate	Clerk	October 2023

8. Any Other Business

There were no items raised for AOB.

9. Future Business and Reflection

9.1 Proposed Cycle of Business 2023/24

The Principal presented the report and highlighted this would now be followed up by the newly in post Clerk.

The committee agreed for items 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 to be removed from the Term 1 agenda.

The Committee approved the report.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Cycle of Business to be updated	Clerk	July 2023

The next F&GP Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 28th September 2023 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 7:50pm.

Approved for signature: September 28th 2023

Signature *N Handy*
23/01/2024 16:51:54

Date 23/01/2024



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