

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
held on Thursday 30 March 2023

Present: - Mervyn Jones (Chair)
Abigail Appleton (Principal)
Peta Darnley (Teams)

In attendance: - Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
Tim Williams (Finance Director)

The meeting was quorate as there were three Governors present.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Clive Hodgeman, Professor Robin Baker. [Post meeting - Zara Woodhouse had resigned from the Board due to increased pressures of her work].

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Governors agreed that the Chair should sign the minutes and confidential minute of the last meeting held on 21 November 2022 as true records.

Matters arising had been addressed.

The Committee agreed: -

- To approve the minutes of the last meeting

4. Marketing and Applications Updated 2023/24 [A confidential minute was recorded]

5. Finance Report

- I. The Finance Director presented the management accounts to 28 February 2023 summarising that utility costs remains a risk. Utility contracts have just been received which have increased and will have an impact on next year's budget; these will be circulated by email. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**
- II. The budget timetable and progress 2023/24 were outlined based on applications to date and assumptions. The ESFA allocation will reduce by £56k compared to last year based on the lagged funding methodology

for 2022/23 recruitment. HE tuition fee income had been assumed based on 140 Level 4 students in September 2023; this has subsequently been reduced to budget for 130 students. The College will be notified of the OfS grant in August, anticipating £108k which is similar to last year.

Pay expenditure includes the new LPGS rates and additional Vice Principal role. An increase to utilities has been assumed with more detailed calculations to be undertaken. The lease for CRC with Herefordshire Council has been followed up by email with no progress to date which is due for revision in August 2023. The condition of the building needed to be considered regarding potential maintenance costs if the Council propose a repairing lease. A Governor asked if there is an asbestos survey which had been completed. Asbestos in the boiler room had been identified which Herefordshire Council will address. The College has protected rights for the main building at CRC.

There is a void risk for empty rooms in Station Approach accommodation. The budget will assume that the College fills all 178 rooms as Wye Valley Trust would be prepared to take surplus rooms who meet the criteria for student nurses. To date there have been 97 applications for rooms from students. It was agreed that some rooms should be released to Wye Valley. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**

There was some discussion which was deemed confidential with a separate minute recorded.

The Committee agreed: -

- To note the financial challenges facing the College with the report to be presented to the Board in May 2023
- An analysis of course costs, contribution to overheads, enrolment and viability would be undertaken with staff encouraged to reduce spend **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**
- The Principal will raise initial ideas and have conversations with the Local Ward Councillor and Service Director for Economy at Herefordshire Council to explore potential accommodation options for the future **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**

6. Premises and Accommodation Report

A written report had been issued to the Committee summarising progress of the School of Digital Futures. The Stronger Towns Deal contract had been signed by the College. There was a question about the outcome numbers which are not output numbers in the full business case but numbers submitted to Government as part of the bid. The Principal had written a report on interpretation of the numbers which would be referenced to Herefordshire Council when returning the agreement.

The Quantity Surveyor for the School of Digital Futures' project had provided an estimate of build and fitout costs including IT professional services and fees. The total project cost is £847,398. The total including professional fees is £943,398.

The total project bid is £850k equating to £650 Stronger Towns funding and £200k matched funding from the College. It is anticipated that matched funding will increase to £300k funded by the College. There is a 5% contingency.

There was discussion about costs which included a new roof in area B which is an addition to the original project. Options to reduce costs in area B will be explored to address the £100k shortfall and the Quantity Surveyor has been requested to reduce £50k of costs. Expressions of interest will be invited from contractors to commence the project in June 2023.

The Principal updated the Committee that the estates strategy had been deferred to progress next year in tandem with the College's overall strategy.

The Committee agreed: -

- Details of costings for the School of Digital Futures would be forwarded to the Committee **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**

7. **Health and Safety Report**

The health and safety mid-year report was presented. Risk assessments are being tracked weekly by the Facilities and Safety Manager and reported to SLT to ensure full compliance for events and activities. Progress of actions against the fire audit will be completed over Easter. Use of ladders is a key issue particularly in preparation for the summer show. There have been nine recorded accidents to date this academic year. A risk rating system has been introduced to record accidents to make data more meaningful and highlight areas requiring detailed investigation. Near misses reported are also being risk rated to assess the potential for harm, implement remedial actions and evaluate trends. There have not been any RIDDOR accidents to date.

The Committee agreed: -

- To note the report

8. **Student Protection Plan 2023/24**

This is a requirement by the OfS. Additional information would be added to the withdrawal of courses to enable students to complete their course. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**

An additional bullet point would be added to 3.3 to cover digital delivery in the event of closure of the campus. A partner provider facility was not provided. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**

The Committee agreed: -

- To approve the Student Protection Plan for 2023/24 with minor changes agreed as per discussion

9. **Pay and Progression Report (draft) [A confidential minute was recorded]**

10. **Policy: Course Development and Monitoring Policy and Procedure**

The draft policy had been presented in the autumn which had been revised further taking account of the DfE guidance about effective practice curriculum planning. This identified several complexities in course development. The Skills Act had implemented some legislative requirements. Board monitoring was discussed which would also be added.

The Committee agreed: -

- To approve the course development and monitoring policy and procedure subject to an amendment to build in Board monitoring between stages 3 and 4 **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**

11. Any other business

There were no items.

12. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting was arranged for Thursday 29 June 2023 commencing at 5.00 pm.