

Minutes of: Finance and General Purposes Committee

Date: 4.30pm Monday 30 September 2024 Location: A10 College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
Mervyn Jones (Chair) John Auckland Peta Darnley Abigail Appleton (Principal/CE) Clive Hodgeman	Charlotte Godsall (Acting Clerk)
Quoracy: The meeting was quorate	

1. **Apologies for Absence** – apologies were received from Tim Williams.
2. **Declarations of interest** – no new declarations were noted
3. **Minutes of the last meeting**
 - a. **Approval of minutes of last meeting held on 24th June 2024**
Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.
 - b. **Matters Arising**
Actions outstanding not already included on the main agenda were discussed by the Committee:
 - The Principal had sent an e-mail to members confirming outstanding actions.
 - The Principal confirmed the new website was now live but not fully complete. The Principal would include a note in the e-mail sending out board papers to advise that website was live giving members an opportunity to look before the meeting.

4. **Student Recruitment & Marketing**

The Principal reported that position had not changed greatly since last discussions, advising we'll should hit target in 16-18, although figures are still fluid. Level 4 enrolments were around 100, which is lower than target. The Principal commented that the degree Games Design course was looking strong and the new course leader had brought a cohort with him to study at level 5. Digital Content Creation had not started so strongly but work being done by the Course Leader to fully show what course entails. Significant issues identified in marketing but new website should help improve that. Staffing issues within marketing and recruitment team had caused a degree of instability which remains an ongoing risk. The Principal advised she was meeting with UKADIA and would get a sense of general numbers across the board. Members discussed ensuring basic recruitment activity is maintained to include school contacts, recruitment events, marketing tools, keeping warm e-mails. A question was raised around internal progression.

5. Finance Reports

a. Management Accounts

The members reviewed the report, which indicates an EBITDA forecast of £80K worse than budget. The Principal commented as numbers were still fluid, this wasn't a confirmed figure. Definitive answer on student numbers should be known by next meeting. Members discussed speculation about student fees being increased in line with inflation. The Principal commented that we were unable to increase fees currently as we don't have a TEF. The Principal said she was looking at further cost control and reduction should that be needed

Decision: *The Committee noted the report and recommended to Board for noting*

b. Current Budget Risks 2024/25 -

Decision: *The Committee noted the report and recommended to Board for noting*

6. Health & Safety Annual Report –

The Principal commented that this report was normally submitted to the November meeting but she had brought forward and aimed to get some annual reports to this meeting in future. She confirmed that the Facilities and H&S Manager had updated a significant number of policies which SLT were reviewing. The Principal confirmed that H&S is a standing agenda item on both HEMT and FEMT and that the H&S committee was made up of representatives from across college teams.

A Governor queried the Riddor report from 17 May as there was no outcome reported. They asked if the college had addressed the underlying issue that caused the accident. The Principal confirmed that the outcome knowledge would exist but agreed it should be recorded within the document and would discuss with the Facilities and H&S Manager. The Principal said follow up actions were usually included in Health and Safety Committee reports and she would follow up and update the report accordingly for submission to board

Action: *The Principal to follow up the outcomes of the Riddor report*

Decision: *The Committee noted the report and recommended to Board for noting*

7. Estates Annual Report 2023/24

The Principal commented that the report had been written by the Operations Manager but lacked detail in some areas which would be presented to the next committee. It was intended that a detailed forward plan would be ready for the next meeting. The Principal confirmed that Somerset Futures had been engaged to help project manage the ESFA funding. The committee discussed energy costs and how savings could be made and the Principal advised that she was looking at the costs of having a meter installed at the Folly Lane campus. A Governor suggested contacting E Energy who deal with education establishments to look at energy efficiency. A Governor asked if we display an energy statement as they thought all public buildings needed to do this. The Principal agreed to look into this.

Action: *The Principal to look into guidance on displaying an energy statement*

Decision: *The Committee noted the report and recommended to Board for noting*

8. Capital, Estates and Operations 2024/25

i. Digital Skills Centre

The Principal confirmed that building works were complete and that the college now needed to ensure it monitored use and to evidence impact and meet the funding agreement outcomes.

ii. Student Accommodation Development

The Principal commented that this was temporarily paused whilst Herefordshire Council is reviewing numbers with CityHeart. Sites of interest for future development included the football ground and College Road campus. The Principal had raised concerns with the council about the number of units they were proposing as didn't want to be accused of misleading them on future numbers.

iii. CRC Leases

The Principal commented that whilst discussions were ongoing about building student residential accommodation on the site, the council had realised they couldn't progress College Road campus lease conversations. She added that the current lease gives a better position on the debate issue of repairs. The committee discussed the consequence of a 6 month break on the short leases being implemented and the Principal added that the main hall had previously been used for Foundation and could be used in this way again should the need arise. A Governor commented that the length of lease may hinder future grant applications.

9. Sustainability Annual Report

The Principal reported the college was looking to change contractor for removing rubbish. The Principal noted the need to share data on rubbish with staff and that the Facilities and Health and Safety manager is working on improving the data collected. The committee discussed the need to communicate better to students, staff and stakeholders about the good things that were being done. A Governor suggested looking at BCorp and the Principal agreed she would look into whether education facilities are eligible to join. The Principal also commented that the current statement around sustainability and this would be brought to the December Board.

Action: *Sustainability statement to be reviewed at December Board*

Decision: *The Committee noted the report and recommended to Board for noting*

10. HCA People Report

i. Staff Survey Feedback and Actions

The committee reviewed the report and discussed the findings. The Principal commented that there was lots of staff concern over levels of pay and that the lack of automatic annual increments was a particular issue. The Principal advised she was working on a pay policy. She continued that the results had been shared with both the Wider Leadership group and

the Staff Consultative group and that communication was still highlighted as a problem. The committee recognised there were lots of areas where improvements had been made.

ii. Staff Grievance (verbal update)

The Principal updated the committee on a significant current staff issue.

iii. Staff Sickness Policy

The Principal requested the removal of the highlighted paragraph around extending sick pay in exceptional circumstances. This had been discussed with the Staff Consultative group and the Union Rep before he left the college and they had understood and agreed to the removal. The committee discussed and agreed to remove this clause.

11. Any Other Business

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Monday 25th November at 4.30pm