

## Minutes of: Finance and General Purposes Committee

**Date:** 5pm 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024 **Location:** A10 College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
Mervyn Jones (Chair) John Auckland Peta Darnley Abigail Appleton (Principal/CE)	Tim Williams (Finance Director) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors) David Hawkins (BDSE) (attended 5 – 6pm)
<b>Quoracy:</b> The meeting was quorate	

1. **Apologies for Absence** – apologies were received from Clive Hodgeman
2. **Declarations of interest** – no new declarations noted
3. **Minutes of the last meeting**
  - a. **Approval of minutes of last meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 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 updated around the action regarding Clause 2.2.4 of Sickness and Absence policy: the Staff union rep has been consulted by the Principal, who understood concerns, and was supportive of removing this clause. The Principal proposes raising this at an upcoming Staff Consultation Group meeting, and to remove clause if no objections are raised.
    - The Finance Director updated on benchmarking of Validating Body fees, which is still in progress due to ongoing conversations and internal reorganisation within validating organisation
4. **Marketing and Recruitment Strategy**  
The Vice Principal (Business Development and Student Experience) joined the Committee for this update given by the Principal. The update was given via a presentation, which covered: development of the Marketing team in terms of recruitment and revised roles, new processes (eg. data, asset organisation, communication with SLT, application processes), a new Marketing Strategy (including staff training to support their ambassador role), the new website (work is underway for an early August go-live), and summer marketing and recruitment actions. The Committee heard that the team are maintain daily awareness of courses/over-recruitment by external competitors in order to maximise opportunities for focused marketing.  
Members of the Committee asked questions about: the skills and experience of new appointments to the team, payment and conditions of student ambassadors, line

management responsibilities of Marketing Team members, requests for Board to receive screenshots of early website pages, the development of the new Marketing Strategy and when the Board will have visibility of it, the college's approach to the use of social media, internal staff/student communication strategy, the use of physical marketing alongside digital approaches,

The Committee commended the team on the Marketing Strategy and its ambitions, and noted the success of the data-driven marketing and the seeking of appropriate new media channels. The Vice Principal (Business Development and Student Experience) gave the Committee further detail on how the team are now working in order to deliver the Strategy. The Principal noted that consultation of a Marketing company is being considered, before the Strategy is finalised, particularly to enhance the distinctiveness of the college's offer/reputation.

**Action:** Clerk to obtain screenshots of new website for next Board Meeting

A Committee Member asked about overseas recruitment (which the Principal noted as a potential for the Foundation course in future, due to the infrastructure needed to support it) and the population bulge currently at around age 13/14, and asked whether the team were aware of this. The Principal updated that the Council are currently addressing this financially at high school level, and noted this incoming increase in demographic as an upcoming opportunity for FE. She also noted the impact of this on the market-share figures for FE recruitment.

The Committee expressed a wish for Governors to meet the Marketing team to offer support and interest in the hard work that is being undertaken, which the Principal noted. The Committee requested the draft Strategy to be available to Board for the July 2024 meeting.

## 5. Finance Reports

- a. **Management Accounts** – The Finance Director presented this report, noting that a Pension figure is yet to be added. The Committee noted that the financial position is roughly similar to over the past year, with no major changes to report.

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

- b. **Budget 24-25 and Financial Plan 2025-26** - The Finance Director presented this report and talked through the detail given with the Committee, clarifying areas around recruitment numbers and capital spend, among others. The Committee noted an improvement in expected figures since the last meeting, which was reported as being partly due to more accurate recruitment numbers, improved utility assumptions, and some staff role revisions. The Principal confirmed that further clarity around the reasons for improvement will be analysed and presented to Board in July.

The Committee asked about the impact on delivery of revision of some staff roles, and the Principal gave some examples of this as well as how she feels some flexibility in roles will help to deliver the new College Strategy. The potential impact of reducing resource on being able to achieve other financially-fruitful targets were discussed by the Committee, as well as how timing is crucial in this, and agreed that now is not the time to be making dramatic cost-cutting decisions. The Committee commended the management team for some considered re-use of resource in order to achieve the current situation, and the value of continual renewal of this approach was discussed. The Committee discussed the various elements of a potential narrative which would support the current position in the event of potential concerns raised by DfE. The possible impacts of a change in government on HE funding were also briefly discussed.

The Finance Director highlighted to the Committee that the Financial Plan 2025/26 currently comes out with a positive EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization).

The Principal and Financial Director noted current financial risks as being ongoing negotiations around Validating Body fees, the Blacksmithing course and ongoing discussions around the Council lease of College Road (under a fast-changing council personnel).

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

- c. **ESFA Governors Financial Dashboard** – Committee noted this report.

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

- d. **Course costings** – a course costings document for HE was presented to the Committee by the Finance Director. The Committee noted this for further discussion at the September F&GP meeting, along with FE course costings, due to time pressure.

- 6. **Estates Report** – Finance Director presented this report from the Estates Manager, highlighting key points, including that an external company have now been awarded the project management of Capital Projects. Work will commence in Autumn, with a large amount in Summer 2025. The IT update includes standard cyber-security measures being implemented, such as the use of servers for back up of data and multi-factorial authentication.

## 7. Health and Safety Reports

- a. **Health and Safety report** – the Principal presented this interim report from the Health & Safety and Facilities Manager, highlighting that a full re-write of a code of conduct for contractors is now underway, as requested by Committee in April 2024. Fire safety has been a main focus, with various policy re-writes also being in process. An F&GP member noted that he attended a recent Health and Safety meeting.

The Committee asked for email confirmation of completion of the outstanding actions that are due by end of July.

**Action:** Principal to confirm completion to Committee by email

- b. **Health and Safety meeting minutes** - the committee noted these for information

## 8. Policies

- a. **Professional Conduct Policy (for Committee approval)** - the Committee noted some minor changes made to this policy, particularly around relationships between staff and ex-students, and social relationships with students where staff are also parents of students. The Committee noted the policy and the importance of ensuring staff awareness of it. The potential role of a policy that covers relationships between staff members was discussed by the Committee, who asked the College management team to consider where this might sit. It was noted that the Annual Declaration of Interest covers this to some extent.

**Decision:** *the Committee agreed to approve this policy*

- b. **Harassment and bullying at work policy (for Committee approval):** the Committee noted that there have been no changes proposed since last approval.

**Decision:** *the Committee agreed to approve this policy*

- c. **Health and Safety Statement (for review, prior to Board approval):** this statement was noted by the Committee as reviewed with no changes made since last approval.

**Decision:** *the Committee agreed to recommend this statement to Board for approval*

9. **Annual items for Committee**

- a. **Election of Chair 2024/25** – The Current Chair of Committee was proposed and seconded by the Committee to continue as Chair.
- b. **Self-assessment of Committee** – this was noted as a reasonable assessment of the Committee’s current performance
- c. **Review of Terms of Reference** – the Committee agreed that no changes to the Terms of Reference were required.

10. **AOB** – none raised

11. **Date of next meeting:** Mon 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 4.30pm

Minutes approved: ..... Date: .....