



Approved Minutes of Finance & Resources Committee Meeting (Main Agenda)

**Held on Thursday 14 November 2024 at
5.30pm via Microsoft Teams**

Present: Tony King (Chair) David Ash (Chair of Corporation) Michelle Dowse (Principal) Adam Hall (Governor) Paul Hine (Staff Governor) Donna Gibson (Clerk)		Cherie Clements (Vice Principal, Finance & Corporate Operations) Jenni Price (Finance Manager) (Observer) Julia Breakwell (Vice Principal, Student Experience & Support) for items 4.6a to 4.6c
4.1	Welcome and Apologies	
	<p>The Clerk confirmed that apologies had been received from the Vice Principal for HE, Adult and Curriculum (Peter Robinson) and the Sustainability Report would be covered by the Vice Principal, Finance & Corporate Operations.</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the Staff Governor (Paul Hine) to his first Finance & Resources Committee meeting, and the Finance Manager (Jenni Price) who had joined the meeting as an observer.</p> <p>The Vice Principal, Student Experience & Support, Julia Breakwell, had joined the called to present the Health & Safety Items 4.6a to 4.6c.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that the papers would be taken as having been read ahead of the meeting.</p>	
4.2	Declarations of Interest	
	There were none to be recorded.	
4.3	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	The Committee accepted the minutes of the previous meeting. There were no revisions to be made.	
4.4	Matters Arising	
	The Clerk advised that all the actions had been completed.	
4.5	Determination of Any Other Business	
	<p>It was noted that the item Ofsted Impact would be covered under the confidential agenda.</p> <p>The Principal acknowledged that Governors would have a keen interest in the focus on the quality of teaching and learning. The item will be standard on all agendas moving forward to ensure that Corporation can reflect on any considerations ahead of the full monitoring inspection.</p> <p>The Chair of Corporation echoed the Principal's comments and acknowledged that Ofsted would be looking at the Corporation's response to the monitoring visit and the run up to the inspection. They would naturally expect to see a reaction post monitoring visit and it is essential that they see that Corporation have been serious in their response, have been prioritising business and getting the item across on all agendas.</p>	

4.6a	Health & Safety Update Term 3 (23/24)	
	<p>The Committee were reassured that there had been no RIDDOR incidents and that arrangements for training had been put into place.</p> <p><i>A Governor had observed that there were some minor spelling errors and some miscalculations within the document, and they would send these to the Clerk via email so that they could be rectified. Once the revisions had been made, they could be recirculated via email as a Chairs Action for final sign off.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor questioned whether there was any process that could be put in place to prevent the gaps in renewing expired first aid qualifications? They were advised that a new process had been introduced and changes made to how the training was delivered. This includes a move from training being provided internally to being provided by an external provider. This provides flexibility for the College as groups of staff can receive the training and keeps qualifications on track. The Committee were assured that the Health & Safety Manager had risk assessed and identified both the areas and staff that would attend the training as a priority. Two sessions have already been booked for those staff to attend.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor challenged whether the Health and Safety Committee in November had taken place? Management confirmed that the meeting had taken place on 8 November and had been attended by staff from multiple areas of the business.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor enquired whether the fire evacuation drills had been undertaken? They were advised that drills were planned for all sites at the end of November and dates had been revised to take events such as exams into consideration. The reporting from the drills would be included in future updates that the Committee would receive.</i></p> <p><i>The Committee requested some further information regarding the stats presented in Annex 1 - Accident Statistics and Locations. Worcester numbers appear to be steady, but Governors requested clarification whether the numbers provided for other areas were dips, trends, or random occurrences. Governors felt it would be helpful to see the background data behind the figures.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor challenged the near miss that had been reported about the spindle head on the CNC miller that had fallen. From their knowledge of the machine and the industry, they are aware that there should be standards in place to ensure that does not happen in practice. They questioned whether the machinery is too old and no longer industry compliant, and whether the compliance of all of machinery should be checked? The VPSS&E agreed to get more information from the Health & Safety Manager.</i></p> <p><i>The Committee Chair questioned the 57 staff who had not completed the mandatory training. They were assured that following a recent staff training day the completion figure was at 95.36%. Some of the 57 are on sickness absence and some are new starters. The Committee were reassured by the increase in completion and acknowledged it would be unlikely to achieve 100% completion, they suggested aiming for 95% with the rate not going below 80%.</i></p> <p>The Committee received the final update for 23/24 (subject to the revisions being made once provided).</p>	<p>VPSE&S</p> <p>Chair & Clerk</p> <p>VPSE&S</p> <p>VPSE&S</p>
4.6b	Health & Safety Annual Report 23/24	
	<i>The Committee asked what the new Health & Safety Managers views were on our health and safety processes since joining a year ago. They were advised</i>	

	<p><i>that the Manager has introduced some new initiatives such as the area focused audits, a revised action plan that goes to the H&S Committee and monthly walks with Estates staff across sites. There is now improved reporting to ELT about health and safety issues. Overall, feedback is positive and additional value has been added with the risk based approach being kept under constant review.</i></p> <p>The Committee were reassured by the recommendations contained within the report and received the report.</p>	
4.6c	Health & Safety Policy	
	<p>The policy had been updated to reflect changes in structure and changes around health and safety processes.</p> <p>The Chair had read the policy and was assured that nothing was missing.</p> <p>Management assured the Committee that the policy had been through the internal audit process with RSM, and statutory requirements are kept up to date by the Health & Safety Manager.</p> <p>A Governor had observed some minor spelling revisions that needed to be made before the policy goes to Corporation and these will be sent via email to the Clerk.</p> <p>The Chair of Corporation requested that the signature page had the full name of both the Chair and Principal added to the page.</p> <p>The Committee recommended the policy for Corporation approval (subject to the revisions being made).</p>	<p>VPSE&S</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
	The VP, Student Experience and Support left the call at this point.	
4.7	Annual Sustainability Report	
	<p>The Committee noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictions suggest that we are on track to meet the 2030 target of 50% CO2 emissions reduction. • Participation in several events and CPD opportunities • The availability of teaching staff and some facilities has meant that the Green Skills Curriculum offer has not been expanded. <p><i>A Governor questioned the stats on page 36 regarding waste, noting that 30/40% is recycled and 50% incinerated. What happens to the remaining %? They were advised that it is likely to be food waste, 60% is the target for next year to increase the amount of waste that can be incinerated.</i></p> <p>The Committee were advised that waste varies across sites depending on the provision provided there and whether there are workshops, kitchens, or cafes on site.</p> <p><i>A Governor asked what is SECR? They were advised that it is the energy and carbon reporting and that our baseline is 2018/19.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor questioned what the difference is between recycling and diversion? They were advised that diversion is when the waste is taken away and sorted manually on a conveyor belt to sort out any further recycling or disposal.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor raised the question again about green energy tariffs. They were advised that due to purchasing our supplies so far in advance there are no benefits currently available. Prices would have to drop considerably to provide</i></p>	

	<p><i>any benefits. Tariffs will be kept under review across the next two to three year window.</i></p> <p>The Committee Chair acknowledged the report is very positive and remained hopeful that it can continue and expressed their thanks to the teams for the work they do.</p> <p>The Committee received the annual report.</p> <p>The Clerk advised that the report would be added to the Governor Portal.</p>	Clerk
4.8	Financial KPIs	
	<p>23/24</p> <p>The Committee noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An improved surplus amount of £348k • Investment income has increased by £343k due to the amount placed with NatWest. • Financial Health is good. • The bank covenant has been met. <p>The Committee Chair acknowledge the figures are good and it is encouraging to see additional income being received.</p> <p>The Committee further noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A £346k reduction in apprenticeship due to learners going beyond their expected end date. • Non pay costs are higher by £1.2m but are offset against the £601k due to improved performance by partners. • EBITDA is £64k higher than budget (£1190k / 3.9% of income) • There is a big change to FRS17 – Pension Adjustments but that is beyond our control. <p><i>A Governor challenged whether the NatWest investment had been renewed? They were advised that it had gone back out for a fixed term of approx. £5m which had been helped by an early ESFA payment.</i></p> <p><i>The Principal advised that the income received from the sale of property (buildings) could be other means of funding further investment opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor observed that the position appears to be comfortable and wondered whether the income being received helps towards forecasting for next year. They were advised that the focus is on curriculum planning trends, will the expected students arrive as planned. Governors acknowledged that student numbers are a key factor in planning and an unknown factor when anticipating funding/income.</i></p> <p>The Committee were advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESFA was the biggest increase and that had come about due to a change in policy. • We have been prudent with high needs which has been kept under review but based upon a confidence in current trends will be increased for 24/25 • Project works are not budgeted for without a signed contract in place. • Apprenticeships is a lesson learnt; we must improve the processes that identify learners who are beyond their planned end date earlier. 	

	<p>The Committee noted that the Department Analysis is a tool used towards curriculum planning. The Principal confirmed that it had been invaluable in identifying a programme that had very low numbers and had enabled Management to make some tough but necessary decisions.</p> <p>24/25 The Committee Chair acknowledged that there are only a couple of months to report on, but it is useful to have sight of them now.</p> <p>The Committee noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deficit is £10k lower. • Income now includes £360k of income from a new partner. • Income has increased and includes £100k for the Innovate Project • Vacancy savings have been removed from pay costs. • Non pay costs includes £101k for agency spend. • Cash balance is higher due to £1m for the Term 2 and Term 3 Element claim. <p><i>A Governor asked whether any more is known about the NI increases. They were advised that September accounts had already been prepared before the budget announcement and we are awaiting any further updates.</i></p> <p>The Principal advised that it was likely the Government would cover costs, but they are not being clear on how they will do it in practice.</p> <p>The Committee received the KPIs for 23/24 and 24/25.</p>	
4.9	Financial Statements Extract	
	<p>The Committee discussed the extract and noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop Fleming had completed their 10-day audit and the 23/24 financial statements would be going to Audit Committee • The improvement on the deficit reported to July Corporation due to an operating surplus of £348k. • Unbudgeted restructure costs of £515k • A negative cost of £952k associated with FRS102 Pension Costs • A reduction in pension liability from £940k to an asset position of £2,518k, recorded as a nil balance on 31 July. <p>The Committee Chair noted the pension situation is reflective of the direction the market went in and suggested it would be useful for the Committee to receive a brief paper explaining the variations, risks, and consequences when the item is next presented.</p> <p>Information received from the ESFA had been sent to the LGPS Pension Scheme so more details may follow.</p>	VPF&CO
4.10	Learner Numbers	
	<p>The Committee monitored the numbers and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial impact in terms of an increased allocation for 25/26 • Income from funding streams being recognised in the year in which they are delivered. • Current learner numbers 16-18 are 2560 against 2495 (an increase of 65 learners) • ESFA Adult Skills Fund – for 24/25 totalling £2,184,506 with current numbers suggesting funding of £1,563,410 inc subcontracting. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMCA a budget was set of £675,000 and the claim is indicating £447,399 (100% subcontracting) • HE numbers are down by 6 for part time and 10 for full time. CIPP is at the reduced budgeted level. • Apprenticeship budget is £1.6m <p>The Committee were asked to feedback any comments on the new format which now shows all allocations in one place.</p> <p>The format was well received, and the information presented is clear.</p> <p><i>A Governor asked whether CIPP is reducing as we approach the finish? They were advised that last year's numbers had been reviewed along with the withdrawal rate. Numbers typically fluctuate year to year and the OfS funding may get adjusted in July.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor challenged that we had not reached our target for T Levels, therefore would we be reconsidering options for next year? They were advised that we would, and it is a common issue across the sector, less so where there is also A Level provision. T Levels are constantly under review and the outcome of the National Curriculum Review is eagerly awaited.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor asked whether staff teaching T Levels can teach in other areas? They were advised that T Levels are typically taught as a unique subject, some staff may be able to teach on an equivalent level 3 programme.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor with industry experience assured the Committee that T Levels are usually more successful when they are backed and supported by an industrial partner.</i></p>	
4.11	CEFSS Action Plan	
	<p>The Committee received a verbal update and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan originally had 11 themed actions, many of which are completed or are having revisions made – for example earlier curriculum planning. • The plan to cover the next two years is being refined and will be more robust. • Actions that are still red are being reviewed. • Staff utilisation will remain a focus during the year. <p><i>The Committee asked if the plan is still achievable? Management responded that we need to have accurate starting points and accurate data, this is a must with being a multi-site college and we need to ensure that staff are fully utilised. The leadership team are considered what else could be done.</i></p> <p>The Committee Chair suggested it would be useful to retain the item on the agenda going forward.</p>	
4.12	ESFA Dashboard Confirmation Letter	
	<p>The VPC&O will check the dashboard for any content and will circulate the letter when it arrives.</p> <p>The Committee were reassured that if there were any significant issues notification would have been received by now.</p>	VPF&CO
4.13	Tender Committee Update	
	<p>The Committee received the update which related to the appointment of a new partner with a contract value of £385,000 and noted only one tender had been received.</p>	

	The Committee also noted that both external procurement and legal advice had been sought.	
4.15	GDPR Annual Report including FOI Requests	
	<p>The Committee noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is mandatory for all staff and refresher training is offered. • 7 Subject Access Requests had been received, down from 10 the year before. • 3 data breaches were reported but had not required reporting to the ICO. • 19 FOI requests had been received, down from 16 in the previous year. • The outcomes of the GDPR Internal Audit will be reported to the Audit Committee <p><i>The Committee Chair questioned whether we had received more or less than other colleges? They were advised that there is no available benchmarking data and most of the items are low level. Another Governor suggested they look typical for a college of our size.</i></p> <p><i>The Committee Chair asked if anything significant had come out from the internal audit? They were advised that there were some advisories but nothing significant.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor challenged whether there should be something on the risk register given that there are some external aspects? They were advised that it would be one of the controls within the register, individual items would not be included on the register unless there was a significant risk. Additionally, without any benchmarking in the sector there is nothing to say that our risk is higher than anywhere else.</i></p> <p>The Committee received the report.</p>	
41.15	Staff Survey Action Plan Update	
	<p>The Committee noted the areas of focus and improvement measures for 24/25.</p> <p>Improvement actions from 23/24 have been embedded and will continue such as the Cascade communication programme and termly coffee sessions with the Principal.</p> <p>The Committee Chair noted that participation with the survey is good at 80% (up from 30%).</p> <p><i>A Governor challenged whether 80% is an acceptable response rate as 20% of staff have not engaged with the survey. Management reassured the Committee that Management will continue to encourage engagement and to maintain the high response rate.</i></p> <p><i>The Chair asked the Staff Governor and Finance Manager what they thought about the survey. The response was that 80% appears to be an accurate reflection; there are still some staff who are not convinced that it is anonymous; overall it has been received quite positively.</i></p> <p>The Committee received the action plan update.</p>	
4.16	Policies	
	The Committee noted the policies for approval and acknowledged that it helped having the cover and the highlighted version of the document.	

	<p><i>A Governor noted some minor corrections to be made to the Financial Regulations where some deletions need to be removed.</i></p> <p>The Committee noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Harassment has been included within the Disciplinary Policy • Separate arrangements are in place for grievances about Senior Postholders and initially come via the Clerk/Chair of Corporation • The Financial Regulations are on a two-year review. <p><i>A Governor questioned how often are they used in anger, particularly the grievance process? Management advised that there are no numbers available to hand, but HR do use them regularly.</i></p> <p>The Principal assured the Committee that the culture is open, and they have conversations with staff that often can diffuse situations, so they don't often reach the grievance stage.</p> <p>The Committee recommended the approval of the policies by Corporation.</p>	VPF&CO
4.17	Committee Effectiveness	Clerk
	<p>The Clerk and Principal had rigorously reviewed the pack before it was circulated. They are keen to ensure that Governors can get everything they need from the cover papers with supporting information in the reading room.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed they had found the pack had worked well, it was concise and well presented. The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Finance Manager for their contribution and for presenting the items they had prepared.</p> <p>The Staff Governor had noted a lot of acronyms and abbreviations to be learnt. The Clerk advised they are currently working on a document that had been shared and was adding HoW related references to it and would share by email.</p> <p>The consensus was to keep policies to the reading room.</p> <p>The Clerk had also noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good questioning & challenge from Governors • Clear understanding of financial matters • Requests for more information for further assurance • Finance information was easy to follow. • Some good examples of up-to-date information being provided first hand. 	Clerk
4.18	Any Other Business	
	There were no items to be discussed.	
	The Staff Governor and Finance Manager left the call.	

