

Minutes of Finance & Resources Committee Meeting
Held on Tuesday 11 March 2025
at 5:30pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Tony King (Chair)
David Ash (Governor & Chair of Corporation)
Michelle Dowse (Principal)
Steve Smith (Governor)
Donna Gibson (Clerk)

In Attendance:

Cherie Clements, Vice Principal Corporate & Finance Operations
Jenni Price, Head of Finance (Items 5.7 to 5.12)
Julia Breakwell, Vice Principal Student Experience & Support (Items 5.6 a&b)

No:	Item	Action For:
5.1	Welcome & Apologies Apologies were received from Muj Rahman and Paul Hine. Steve Smith was welcomed to the Committee. Jenni Price joined the meeting for the financial items.	
5.2	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations to note.	
5.3	Approved Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 14 November 2024 The minutes from the November meeting were received.	
5.4	Matters Arising All the actions were recorded as complete. Responses had been received for all the health and safety items.	
5.5	Determination of Any Other Business There was no other business to be noted. Ofsted Impact The Committee noted that any considerations relating to Ofsted would be considered under the Confidential Agenda.	
5.6	a) Health & Safety Update Term 1 (24/25 Academic Year) The Committee received the update and noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The items that had been queried at the previous meeting had been investigated and responses had been provided. There had been no follow up from the HSE in relation to the RIDDOR reported incident. The Health & Safety newsletter had been included for information. Completion of Health & Safety training was currently at 93%. There appeared to be no upward trends, the near misses reporting was noted. <i>The Committee noted that it would be useful to know what the cross-college Health & Safety Committee considers at its meetings.</i> <i>Governors agreed that the annual analysis in annex 3 was very useful but questioned the totals, which appeared different to the data in the table and asked that those be revisited and checked for accuracy.</i> <i>Governors requested that the summary sheet be slimmed down for the next meeting, noting that it contains a lot of detail, and a more concise summary would be more efficient.</i> The Committee noted that the accidents and near misses typically take place in the	VPSES

same areas – Construction, Motor Vehicle and Hospitality.

A Governor observed that the reporting is very clear and asked how does it fit in with Ofsted, is there any link with inspection? In response Management confirmed that in their experience Ofsted have never asked, or queried, directly anything to do with health and safety. If inspectors saw anything that would be a cause for concern, they would raise this at the time. They would be looking to see if the buildings are safe and managed effectively and this would link to safeguarding. Health & Safety and Safeguarding are currently under Leadership and Management, a question could be asked of how health and safety is reported to the governing body.

The Chair stated that all Governors understand that they are responsible for health and safety. They take reassurance from the reporting that they receive, and the level of detail included.

b) Verbal Update on Lockdown Desktop Exercise December 2024

Management provided an update on the exercise which had focused on what would happen if an incident took place. The Committee noted:

- That a named person would support the College in the event, in line with the SLA with Worcestershire County Council.
- The exercise had covered what would happen if an intruder was on site, how would communication protocols work, and how would the incident be managed internally. Management confirmed that several safe spaces were being identified.
- The College is most at risk from a blade incident or a vehicle attack.

The Committee were reassured that Management had found the exercise useful and that it was good to see support from an external source.

Management stated that it is difficult to foresee all possible incidents and if a building could be evacuated then that would be the course of action followed. However, if an evacuation could not take place how would Governors receive communications that a major incident was taking place.

The Principal would be responsible for communications with the Board, however, in the event of a critical incident there may be a delay in communications coming out of the College for safety reasons. Governors would need to be mindful that there could be a delay in communications reaching them and they would be briefed when it was appropriate to do so. The Committee confirmed that this was reasonable in the circumstances.

A Governor observed that the priority would be to deal with any incidents to a satisfactory conclusion. Such incidents would be operational and depending on the nature of the incident the Police would deal with communications.

A further assurance taken from the exercise was that the appointed staff member at WCC has responsibility for these incidents as their main role. Having the support from WCC is an extra assurance and ensures that an action taken are appropriate and practical.

A Governor stated that in their experience of such incidents the actions outlined were appropriate and what would be expected.

The Committee noted that the Emergency Business Continuity Plan had been updated as a result and was on the agenda for recommended approval. The plan may require further update when revised legislation is introduced later in the year.

The Committee looked at item 5.15c – Emergency Business Continuity Plan and noted that it had been updated in line with the lockdown exercise and agreed to recommend to Corporation for approval.

The Vice Principal, Student Experience and Support left the call,

5.7	<p>Financial KPIs 24/25 The Committee noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficit £715k vs £687k budget for the year • Financial Health is good. • Bank covenants are being met. • That several Curriculum Departments with Contributions rated as RED are being reviewed via the Curriculum Development Review (CDR) meetings. • That the decision at the last meeting to support the recruitment of more staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning was reflected, noting that the appointments had been added to the staffing information. • The deficit had not increased significantly. <p><i>A Governor stated that they found the reporting to be very informative and the executive summary was useful. They asked about the RED indicators for EBITDA and Pay Costs. Management responded that there had been no change since the previous reporting and noted that a 5% variance is built in.</i></p> <p>The Committee appreciated the way the new format in which the narrative was being presented.</p>	
5.8	<p>Learner Numbers The Committee reviewed the learner numbers and noted:</p> <p>The revised format allows for more information to be reported for the ESFA Adult Skills Fund and WMCA.</p> <p>The Committees attention was drawn to the tailored learning (community learning) which was a reduced projection of £300k that reflects the new rules for the funding allocation. Management advised that some claw back may be likely, and plans were being worked on that would continue to be prudent but still utilise the fund.</p> <p><i>A Governor asked Management how concerned they were about the prospect of any clawback. Management responded that the Adult Skills Fund tends to be under delivered. ELT recognise that tailored learning is going to be an area of challenge.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor asked whether T Levels are a concern. Management responded that they are a common problem across the sector and still cause issues.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor asked about WMCA. They were advised that ELT have submitted growth requests to the WMCA for subcontract delivery from the 50% flexibility allowance (in allocation). This could lead to an increase in delivery if agreed.</i></p> <p>£280k had been budgeted for subcontracting and the projection was at £208,816k.</p> <p>The Committee were informed that several funding announcements are expected and cuts in adult funding is expected.</p>	
5.9	<p>CEFSS Action Plan The Committee were advised that most of the actions are complete or have been embedded somewhere else in the day-to-day business of the College. Management was recommending that the item be closed and no longer reported to the Committee.</p> <p><i>The Committee agreed but requested a report be provided at the next meeting to provide a summary to support the request.</i></p> <p>For the benefit of any newer Governors', the CEFSS process was briefly explained.</p>	VPCFO
5.10	<p>Tender Committee Update The Committee noted the update for information provided for the windows and roofing works at various sites. They were assured that the decision and actions taken by the Tender Committee are being reported appropriately across various meetings.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the selections had considered value for money and procurement regulations into consideration. The works were being funded by the DfE capital grants.</p>	

5.11	<p>Verbal Update on Projects & Current Bids</p> <p>Innovate Project The project was likely to continue for 25/26. There is funding to continue with a manager and two staff members.</p> <p>Newer Governors were given a brief explanation of the scope of the project that looks at AI and how organisations can benefit. The Committee had previously received a very informative presentation about the project.</p> <p><i>A Governor asked about the use of AI within College.</i> They were advised that a few options are being explored to see what products are most suitable and how they can be used.</p> <p>The Committee suggested that a refreshed presentation be brought forward at a later date. However, it was agreed that this was not a current priority and should be scheduled at an appropriate time.</p> <p>WLEP Energy BID Management advised that £140k is available to bid for and the College is considering entering a bid.</p> <p>An additional bid any be made to do some work with the NHS as a pilot.</p> <p>The Head of Finance left the call.</p>	Principal/ Clerk
5.12	<p>Sub-Contractors The Committee noted that one sub-contractor is not a new partner, and that the College has maintained a longstanding relationship with them over many years. Management confirmed that due diligence and best practices are being applied to ensure the partnership is aligned with the College's approach to other subcontracting arrangements. Previously, the partnership had operated under a memorandum of understanding.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the circumstances, noting the funding stream (Tailored Learning – Adult Skills) and the contract value and agreed to recommend the approval to Corporation.</p>	Clerk
5.13	<p>KPIs for Place, Planet & People The Committee felt that the paper was clear and self-explanatory and accepted the position as of 1 February 2025 and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An amendment in the target for 2024/25 on Staff Satisfaction "I am proud to be a member of staff at HOWC" from 95% to 88%. Further noting that it reflects the results from the 2024 staff survey and is considered low and remains challenging. • Room utilisation is showing as RED, reflecting a change in timetabling for 2024/25 particularly around English and Maths. This will be addressed through the estates review. • Planet targets monitor the actual achievement of reducing the carbon footprint of the College. <p><i>Governors recalled from the strategic planning day that some learners had expressed some dissatisfaction of having classes moved from Alliance House to Peakman.</i> Management advised that this was an example of a timetabling change that had been made.</p>	
5.14	<p>Staff Survey Action Plan Update The Committee noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >75% indicated they strongly agree/agree that the College communicates on matters that are important to them. • >65% indicated they strongly agree/agree that the resources, equipment, systems, and processes in place allow them to be effective in their role. • >64% indicated they strongly agree/agree that ELT are accessible and approachable. • That by the end of 2024/25 over 75% of departments are represented through the Staff voice group. • There are 2 AMBER actions on the action plan that are not yet fully completed. <p>The Committee were advised that a Wellbeing Pulse Survey had been issued to staff</p>	

	and the outcomes and responses from the would be reported at a later date.	
5.15	<p>a) Expenses Payments for Staff & Governors The Committee approved the policy, noting that there were no significant changes, except for an increase in the evening meal allowance.</p> <p><i>A Governor asked about the frequency of staff using public transport, particularly trains. Management responded that while staff are encouraged to use public transport, the internal culture is gradually shifting in that direction. They noted that travel decisions are typically driven by the purpose of the trip, with location and timing being the main considerations.</i></p> <p>b) HE Fees Policy The Committee noted the revisions and agreed to recommend the policy to Corporation for approval.</p> <p>c) Emergency Business Continuity Policy The policy had been covered earlier in the meeting and the Committee were reminded that it would be recommended to Corporation for approval.</p> <p>d) Data Protection Policy/ UK GDPR The Committee agreed that the policy should be recommended to Corporation for approval.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
5.16	<p>Committee Effectiveness & Reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good discussion had taken place around the lockdown exercise. • Reports were prepared to a good standard. • The reporting was easy to follow. • The direction to, and the use of the reading room ensured that papers were easy to navigate. • The shorter pack of main papers was welcome. 	
5.17	<p>Any Other Business Several members of the Committee had attended the Managing Public Money webinars.</p> <p>The Principal reported that ELT had been asked to consider the culture and spirit of MPM when making decisions involving finances.</p>	
	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting: 10 June 2025 via Teams at 5.30pm</p>	