

## West Lothian College

15 June 2017

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### Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 23 February at 9.30am** in the Barbour Suite, in the College.

Present: Frank Gribben (Acting Chair)  
Alex Linkston  
Moirira Niven

In attendance: Joanna Paterson - Secretary to the Board  
Jennifer McLaren - Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance  
George Hotchkiss – Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Innovation  
Colin Miller - Head of Essential Skills and Progression  
Derek O’Sullivan – Senior HR Business Partner (item 17.05)

#### 17.01 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular Moira Niven who was attending her first meeting of the Committee.

Apologies had been received from Morag McKelvie, Richard Lockhart, Angela Bell, and Mhairi Harrington. It was noted that Frank McGraw had recently resigned from the Board and that there was now a vacant position on the Committee. Frank Gribben had agreed to chair the meeting in the absence of the Chair who was overseas on business.

It was agreed that the meeting should proceed with items for discussion and debate, although it was not quorate for any decision making purpose.

#### 17.02 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 17.03 Minute of Meeting of 24 November 2016

The Minute of the meeting of 24 November 2016 was approved as a correct record.

#### 17.04 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 24 November 2016

Members noted paper 2 detailing actions duly completed following

the meeting of 24 November 2016.

It was noted that in relation to Action 1, HR Report, the figures for reported turnover rate included employees leaving at the end of temporary contracts.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to disaggregate these figures for the next report.

### **Action 1: Senior HR Business Partner**

There was further discussion of Action 2, the inclusion of qualitative measures to gauge the impact of the occupational health service, including the views of managers. It was recognised that there was a need for care given the requirements of confidentiality and the risk of individuals being able to identify themselves from more narrative reporting.

However, it was agreed that some follow up with managers was important to gauge their perceptions of the service and the assistance it was providing, and that an initial survey after the first year of operation would be a useful point to take soundings.

### **Action 2: Senior HR Business Partner**

It was noted that the Audit Committee had asked this Committee to consider if there were additional approaches that could be considered to provide members with an overview of HR issues.

It was agreed that there was no need for additional reporting arrangements, but that it would be helpful confirm existing arrangements to Board members.

### **Action 3: Board Secretary**

There were no other matters arising that were not otherwise on the agenda.

## **17.05 Organisational Well-being**

### **(i) Human Resources Management Report**

The Senior HR Business Partner presented the report covering the period to end December 2016.

It was noted that the move to using the 'myjobscotland' recruitment portal was having a positive impact. Although there were small numbers

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applying for some specialised posts, good quality candidates were coming through.

It was noted that a new Assistant Principal had been appointed and would join the College at the end of March.

The sickness absence figures were discussed and it was noted that there had been an 1.76% increase in comparable figures for the previous year, primarily due to high levels of short term sickness absence.

It was recognised that this increase could be a seasonal effect as a result of winter illnesses. However, given the key relationship between attendance and the delivery of high quality teaching, learning and support it was agreed that sickness absence should continue to be actively managed by managers and the HR service, and that the College should look for opportunities to learn from best practice in the college and other sectors in this area.

It was noted that the absence management policy was within the sphere of the national pay bargaining framework. There was scope however within the existing policy to take forward good management practice.

It was agreed that this should continue to be a priority focus and that developments should be included within the next report.

### **Action 4: Senior HR Business Partner**

It was noted that a major Staff Survey was currently underway and that findings from the survey should help to inform work in this area. It was noted that there was a high response rate, already at 68%.

The equality monitoring report for the quarter was noted. It was agreed that it was useful to include reference to protected characteristics within the report.

### **(ii) Employers Association Update**

Alex Linkston provided an update to the Committee on the work of the Employer Association including the longer term agenda around the Workforce of the Future.

It was agreed that it would be useful for the Board to have a briefing on the Workforce of the Future at its next meeting.

It was noted that EIS had opened an indicative ballot in relation to implementation of the pay agreement reached in March 2016.

The Committee noted that the College now had two places on the Employer Association, with Sue Cook (Vice Chair) joining the Principal. Alex Linkston is also a member as Chair of the Support Staff NJNCC.

## **17.06 Financial Progress**

### **(i) January 2017 Management Accounts**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance presented the Management Accounts for the three month period ended 31 October 2017 and a forecast for the year to end July 2017.

Variances as set out in the report were noted.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to identify if the additional costs of sickness absence (sickness cover as well as cost of time lost) could be identified within reports for the next Committee.

#### **Action 5: Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance; Senior HR Business Partner**

It was noted that in relation to student funds, £150k had been received from the SFC as part of the annual in-year redistribution exercise. This would allow the College to meet commitments to students this year.

It was noted following discussion that the most recent projections indicated that the College would be very close to the required break even position for the resource return (financial year to end March 2017).

The Committee agreed to note the accounts.

### **(ii) Capital Update**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance presented a report detailing the work that was being carried out through the additional capital maintenance funding of £0.251 million which had been received.

It was noted that planning permission for car park work had not been received in time to complete under this budget. Planning permission had however now been received and the work would go ahead, funded through the College maintenance budget.

The Committee noted the current position on the College Energy Efficiency Pathfinder (CEEP) Project. It was noted that projects funded through the scheme had to achieve a certain energy payback within a certain time period and some potential areas of investment fell outwith its scope.

It was noted that the amount allocated to the College through this project had been reduced to £382k. Information was not yet available on which projects would be taken forward. The next step would be for a contractor to undertake an investment grade proposal and agree the projects to be undertaken with the College.

The Committee noted that it would probably be the middle of April before final information was available, at which point appropriate Committee approval would be sought by correspondence, to allow works to proceed between May and July.

### **(iii) Income Generation Report**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Innovation presented the Income Generation Report.

It was noted that the Workforce Development area continued to do well in terms of both income generation and educational outcomes.

Members noted that a bid had been submitted for £410k for international study through the Erasmus Plus programme.

It was noted that a decision on the contract extension for the Children's Hearing Training Unit was expected shortly.

The Committee agreed that this was a positive report and noted the various updates provided.

## **17.07 College Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2016-17**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance introduced Paper 7 showing financial and non-financial performance indicators. Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Innovation reported on the non-financial indicators.

It was noted that the financial indicators mirrored the information provided in the financial accounts.

In relation to non-financial indicators, it was noted that further analysis was being undertaken to get a clearer understanding of the reasons behind withdrawal numbers in particular. It was noted that discussions were continuing with SFC to clarify any distinction between targets that were being monitored as part of a national picture and those that were performance targets for the Board.

It was agreed that the presentation of the report should be adjusted to show the relationship with the ROA targets and allow more effective monitoring to take place.

**Action 6: Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Innovation**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**17.08 Quarterly Complaints Report**

Head of Service STEM and Employer Engagement presented the quarterly complaints report. It was noted that various types of follow-up action were taken in response to complaints as a part of the on-going improvement of standards.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**17.09 Annual Committee Self-Evaluation**

The Board Secretary introduced a paper to support the annual committee self-evaluation exercise, including questions (repeated from the previous year), the Committee remit, and a checklist of questions drawn from the CIPFA guide for Finance Committee members, as recommended at the last self-evaluation.

General issues and recommendations were noted in discussion to be fed back both to the Board and into the Effectiveness Review that was currently being undertaken.

There was a brief discussion about one of the prompt questions from the CIPFA guide around the interface between the finance committee and the audit committee. It was agreed that the respective remits were clear, distinct and understood.

It was agreed that it might be helpful to review arrangements for Board oversight of strategic risks and that this was a question the Audit Committee might consider.

**Action 7: Board Secretary**

It was noted that arrangements had been put in place to provide briefing for new members of the Committee as part of their induction programme. It was agreed that it would be useful to supplement this individual training with occasional opportunities for a collective briefing session at a meeting of the Committee. This would provide the opportunity for discussion and debate as well as ensuring a shared understanding of some of the key and often complex issues surrounding the work of the Committee.

**Action 8: Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance; Board Secretary**

**17.10 Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

**17.11 Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers & Training Needs**

The Committee were content with the meeting, the information received and supporting papers presented.

**17.12** The next scheduled meeting would take place on 15 June 2017 at 9.30am.

**Note:** There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared any conflict of interest, or the Secretary to the Board was aware from the Register of Interests that discussion could give rise to such a conflict.

Signed .....  
Chair, Finance & General Purposes Committee

Date .....