

## West Lothian College

16 June 2016

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### Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 25 February 2016 at 9.30am** in the Barbour Suite, in the College.

Present: Alex Linkston (Chair)  
Angela Bell  
Frank Gribben  
Mhairi Harrington  
Terry Lafferty

In attendance: Joanna Paterson - Secretary to the Board  
Sue Cook – Interim Chair of the Board  
Jennifer McLaren - Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance  
George Hotchkiss – Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Innovation  
Lindsay Seywright – Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Planning  
Diane Mitchell - Centre Head for Workforce Development Centre

#### 16.00 Welcome/Apologies

Apologies were received from Morag McKelvie. Alex Linkston had agreed to chair the meeting in her place.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

#### 16.01 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 16.02 Minute of Meeting of 19 November 2015

The Minute of the meeting of 19 November was approved as a correct record.

#### 16.03 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 19 November 2015

Members noted paper 2 detailing actions duly completed following the meeting of 19 November 2015.

It was noted that the Committee had discussed in correspondence further guidance from Audit Scotland in relation to the publication of the annual report and had agreed in the light of that update to include the information relating to the three Assistant Principals in the report.

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance provided an

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update on the treatment of loans in other colleges funded by the SFC, and the impact on their balance sheet.

It was noted that SFC's Balance Sheet showed two colleges were repaying grant but no other college had a loan.

It was noted that this information could be used to support the presentation of the College's case to write-off the loan, since any action taken by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) would not be disadvantaging any other institution. It was agreed that this might be an opportune time to raise the matter with SFC, and that the matter should be raised informally with their Chief Executive by the College's incoming Chair.

A short briefing note should be prepared summarising the main arguments in support of the College's position.

### **Action 1: Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance**

There were no other matters arising.

## **16.04 Financial Progress**

### **(i) Management Accounts**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance presented the January 2016 Management Accounts. The improved position was noted.

In relation to student support, it was noted that the available funds should meet anticipated demand, but the total allocation was not sufficient to allow the College to increase the childcare allowance.

It was noted that the question of funding for student support was being considered nationally. A long term solution was required to allow colleges to plan and forecast with confidence.

### **(ii) Key Financial Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance presented the Key Financial Performance Indicators for the 6 month period to 31 January 2016.

The report was noted.

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

Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Innovation presented the report for the period. It was noted that an 'at target' year end was currently forecast.

The Committee noted the report, and the positive developments that were evident in many areas, including the potential for further partnership working on the back of many initiatives.

#### **(iv) Shared Services**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance presented a paper providing an update on progress with the shared services work streams with West Lothian Council, and the arrangements for performance monitoring.

It was noted that savings close to the original target had already been achieved even with some areas still to be realised.

### **16.05 Organisational Well-being**

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

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance presented the report covering the period to 31 December 2015.

It was noted that the main current issue in relation to employee relations was the potential for industrial action. It was noted that a protocol was being prepared to ensure that all staff were aware of guidance in relation for example to annual leave and sickness absence.

### **16.06 Quarterly Complaints Report**

Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Innovation presented the quarterly complaints report.

It was noted that the report dealt with formal complaints. There was an emphasis within the College on shifting the resolution of problems towards the front line, and improving communication and engagement as a way of preventing and resolving issues at an early stage. High levels of engagement through the class representatives system was helping with this.

### **16.07 Committee Self-Evaluation**

The Board Secretary introduced a paper that summarised comments that had been gathered from Committee members by email, as part of the annual committee self-evaluation exercise. General issues and recommendations were noted in discussion to be fed back to the Board at its March meeting.

It was noted that the Committee's agenda and the workload of officials was largely driven by external reporting requirements. Although it was recognised that this was both a long-term and potentially intractable issue, it was worth feeding ideas and suggestions back to the Funding Council through the Regional Outcome Manager about ways to reduce the reporting burden, and to move away from a one size fits all approach.

**Action 2: Principal**

It was agreed that it might be useful to set future self-evaluations in the context of recognised good practice for finance committees, perhaps based on a recently published CIPFA guide.

**Action 3: Board Secretary**

**16.08 Any Other Business**

The Principal and Chief Executive advised the Committee of recent discussions within the sector about the possibility of changes to the funding model to reflect patterns of delivery. The specific needs of West Lothian had been raised by the Chair and Principal as part of these discussions, including the strategic regional objective of continuing to grow current levels of activity.

It was agreed that further analysis should be prepared to: set out the position in relation to regional objectives; model the potential impact of any change in the model; and identify options that could be put to the Funding Council with a view to securing consolidation of the current pattern of provision.

**Action 4: Principal; Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Planning**

Depending on the outcome of current discussions, it might be useful to invite the Funding Council to the June Board meeting for a discussion around how best to support regional objectives.

It was noted that any shift in direction would need to be presented

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carefully to stakeholders, given their support for and engagement with the regional strategy.

There were no other items of business.

### **16.10 Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers & Training Needs**

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

**16.11** The next scheduled meeting would take place on 16 June 2016 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 .....