

West Lothian College

28 February 2019

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 22 November at 9.30am** in the Barbour Room, in the College.

Present: Moira Niven (Chair)
 Jackie Galbraith (Principal & Chief Executive)
 Richard Lockhart
 Claire Probert
 Alex Linkston
 Frank Gribben
 Julia Simpson

In attendance: Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services)
 George Hotchkiss (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning)
 Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise)
 Derek O'Sullivan – Senior HR Business Partner (item 18.44 only)
 Karine McNair – Secretary to the Board

18.38 Welcome/Apologies

Apologies were received from Morag McKelvie.

18.39 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

18.40 Minute of Meeting of 31 August 2018

The Minute of the meeting of 31 August 2018 was approved as a correct record.

18.41 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 31 August 2018

The Committee noted all actions as duly completed.

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18.42 Financial Progress**(i) Annual Report & Financial Statements 2017-18**

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented the Annual Report & Financial Statements 2017-18 highlighting that they were prepared in accordance with all regulatory requirements. The requirements had not significantly changed from 2016-17 however the Committee noted the addition information relating to Trade Union activity which is now a reporting requirement for all public bodies and the information will be published on the College website.

The Committee commented that it was difficult to judge the financial sustainability of the College based on the accounts since external factors such as pension revaluations had such an impact on the figures. However, the Committee appreciated the 2017 summary sheet provided by Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, since it focussed on the 'trading' position and allowed the Committee to conclude that the College had had a positive year financially.

It was noted that as a result of the good trading position the college had been able to undertake investment projects in the College and Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services confirmed that the Fiscal Year position is monitored to ensure that any surplus forecast at the end of March is re-invested in the college.

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, highlighted that the additional £1m of staff costs compared to 2016-17 included some pension revaluation costs however they mainly related to the impact of harmonisation for lecturing staff.

The Committee asked for some minor text corrections within the Performance and Accountability Report and Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services undertook to make these corrections and have a final proof read of the Report for consideration by the Audit Committee.

Action 1: Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services

The Committee recommended the Annual Report & Financial Statements 2017-18 for approval by the Audit Committee.

Action 2: Board Secretary

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(ii) Reconciliation of Final Outturn for 2017-18 with Forecast at June 2018

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 4 stating that the figures presented at the last Committee meeting had now been finalised and reconciled for the final position for 2017-18.

It was noted that the increase in the bad debt provision of £56k was due to the increase in debtors over a certain age and Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, informed the Committee that the Finance Team would have a particular focus on debt collection during 2018-19.

The Committee noted the paper.

(iii) College Certificate 2017-18

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 5 noting that the final Credit claim was 3% above target and the final Credit claim had been adjusted by only 10 credits at the yearend audit. The Committee commended the College on the accurate Credit records.

The Committee appreciated the balance to be struck between a Credit claim which reflected the funded position and also a Credit target which evidenced the College's desire for growth in Credits.

The Committee noted the report.

(iv) Management Accounts

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 6 commenting that any significant variance in fee income is being closely examined and action will be taken. Subsequent to the paper being issued, it had been confirmed that student placement costs will be met within the budget so this would no longer be an area of concern.

The Committee noted that staff should be redeployed where courses had not run rather than new staff being recruited.

The Principal highlighted an initiative which is being run by the College after feedback from the Student Association and staff to provide free soup and roll to all students at lunchtime. A small budget has been identified to fund the initiative after students and

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staff had raised concerns about students coming to afternoon classes without having eaten at all that day and the negative impact this was having on their learning. The actual costs and impact of the initiative will be monitored and reviewed at the end of the academic year.

The Committee praised the College for responding quickly to the concerns and considered future funding models to sustain the initiative, for example, fundraising or approaching local philanthropists.

The Committee noted the paper.

(v) Income Generation Report

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, presented paper 7 highlighting the aim for 26 Flexible Workforce Development Fund placements by the end of January as there could be a potential redistribution of funds if Colleges are not fully using the fund.

It was acknowledged that the Foundation Apprenticeships target of 194 learners was ambitious but Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, pointed out that many aspects of the scheme have changed. The relationships developed last year with schools are allowing more integrated working with the schools to intelligently plan for more learners.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, offered to give a brand development presentation at the next Board meeting to update all Board members on the progress of the rebranding exercise.

Action 3: Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise

The Childhood Practice event had been well received and it was likely that the model would be used for future events with other sectors. It was also noted that the Children's Hearing delivery model could be used to expand into other businesses leveraging the capabilities and skills developed within the team.

The Committee commented on the very positive report and noted the paper.

(vi) Infrastructure Update

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 8 to highlight the investment priorities within the College.

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The Principal commented that the College has had no reconfiguration since 2001 which is having a negative impact on the student experience and has not taken into account the evolution of the curriculum. Other Colleges have been visited to consider how they have used technology and existing campus layouts to improve the student experience.

The Committee encouraged the College to be ambitious in their strategy taking into account the future plans to outreach to the wider community and the need to train staff to exploit the full capability of technology. The Committee felt that the business community expected students to have been trained using the latest software and equipment. It was commented that any infrastructure strategy should be linked with any other teaching, commercial etc. strategies being developed for the College.

The Committee noted the paper.

18.43 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2017-2018

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented the KPIs noting that there has been improvement in the non-financial KPIs over three years in all four indicators.

The Committee noted the paper.

18.44 Organisational Well-being

(i) Human Resources Report

The Senior HR Business Partner presented the report covering the quarter to September and noted that absences were below the target of 4% for the first time during this period. There were no grievance procedures and employee turnover includes all leavers (retirements, fixed term contact etc.)

The Committee commented on the improved format of the report.

The Committee noted the report.

(ii) Employers Association Update

The Chair of the Board of Governors provided a verbal update

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noting that the support staff deal had been agreed to 2020 and the teaching staff were being approached for a ballot on industrial action.

The Committee were concerned that any increase to the deal offered to teaching staff would put Colleges in a difficult financial position given that the College is not funded for the cost of pay awards and the already tight finances, resulting in students suffering and less funds available for investment in infrastructure.

The Committee thanked the Chair of the Board of Governors for the report

18.45 Complaints Report

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning, presented the Complaints Report and noted the proactive early intervention of the Student Association which has prevented the escalation of 'concerns' to 'complaints' in many cases.

The Principal suggested that for balance the Committee may also like to hear about the unsolicited compliments received about College staff and Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning, undertook to include compliments into the Complaints Report in the future.

Action 4: Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning

The Committee noted the report.

18.46 Any Other Business

[REDACTED]

No other matters of business were raised.

18.47 Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers & Development Plan

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

18.48 Date of Next Meeting

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The next meeting was scheduled for 28 February 2019 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.

Visit of the Committee to the NHS Simulation Area

The College had recently been the recipient of some donated NHS equipment which was being used to create a practical learning environment for healthcare students. The Committee visited the NHS Simulation area and observed it being used by the NQ Access to Nursing course.

The Committee were impressed by the commitment shown by the returning adult learners to the course and their enthusiasm to learn. The students and staff were keen to show the difference the equipment was making to their learning experience and the staff particularly commented on the benefit using the equipment has to the students' confidence when they are on placement.

The Committee thanked Linda Brown and Annette Miller for the excellent presentation of the equipment and the students for their engagement with Committee members.

Signed
Chair, Finance & General Purposes Committee

Date

*Redacted under s.33 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002