

West Lothian College

11 June 2020

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 27 February at 9.30am** in the Principal's Room in the College.

Present: Frank Gribben (Acting Chair)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal & Chief Executive)
Alex Linkston
Julia Simpson

In attendance: Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services)
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise)
Derek O'Sullivan – (Senior HR Business Partner) item 7
Amber Johnstone – (HR Administrator) observing item 7
Sandra Callan – note taker

Campus Visit

The meeting began with a visit to the Automotive Department to see the hybrid car. The Committee was impressed with the student feedback which had been received in relation to the evening units being offered at the college. The Committee requested that thanks be passed on to the department for the informative and interesting visit.

1 Welcome/Apologies

The Acting Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies received from Lynne Hollis, Moira Niven and Sue Stahly.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of Meeting of 21 November 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 2019 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting of 21 November 2019

Action 1 was noted as being deferred to the Board of Governors.

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Action 4 was noted as being undertaken by the Corporate Engagement Committee.

Action 6 to be implemented August 2020, when the new structure would be in place.

The Committee noted all other actions as duly completed.

5 Financial Progress

(i) January 2020 Management Accounts

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 3 explaining that the deficit forecast of £246k was a worst case scenario and due to the costs of backfilling staff on long term staff sick absence.

Staff costs were £226k worse than budget and were forecast to outturn £479k worse by the year-end. Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services stated that HR meets regularly with centre/departments to ensure appropriate management action is taken.

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services also confirmed that the Scottish Funding Council was informed that the college was forecasting a deficit given that all colleges were expected to break-even.

Staff had been advised of the college's forecast for the year and the financial forecasts for the next four years at the staff conference. Early feedback was that staff appreciated the honesty regarding the current financial position of the college.

(ii) Income Generation Report

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, presented paper 4 and informed the Committee that overall the Commercial, Workforce Development and CHS areas were forecast to be £123k ahead of target although it was noted that there had been both positive and negative variances from budgeted targets in relation to individual areas.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise informed the Committee that the online part-time application/payment process had now gone live. This was a positive for the college as it now enabled part-time students to apply earlier than in previous years (normally part-time applications opened in May). An update on part-time application

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numbers would be presented to the Learning & Teaching Committee.

It was noted that the college had used all of its allocated Flexible Workforce Development Fund (WFDF) funding and had companies on the waiting list which, again, was a positive for the college.

The college had received an additional £22,009 from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) relating to Modern Apprenticeship (MA) provision which would bring the MA spend from £184,011 to £260,610.

A discussion took place regarding the Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and the challenges presented to the college with the stop/start approach. The Principal confirmed that the sector was being proactive in lobbying Scottish Government and the college's Workforce Development Manager was also very proactive in raising concerns via the Colleges Work Based Learning Group.

As the college was one of the largest users of ITAs amongst the sector it was agreed that the Principal would write to the local MSP highlighting the issues the college faced with the start/stop approach.

Action 1: Principal

The Committee thanked the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise for the report and also noted the positive CHS Learning Academy Annual Report.

6 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2019-20

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 5, and noted an overall positive picture regarding early withdrawals. The Committee was also informed that the college was forecasting to exceed its credit target.

7 Organisational Well-being

(i) Human Resources Report

The Senior HR Business Partner presented the report covering the quarter to 31 December 2019 and gave explanations where necessary.

A discussion on absenteeism in college took place and the Senior HR Business Partner confirmed that employees who reach the absence trigger points are managed appropriately under the Your Attendance

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Matters Policy and that the college's new Occupational Health provider was very proactive in meeting with staff.

The Committee was told that there would be a few changes to the staff recognition event which was held each summer 'Celebrating Success' and this was due to feedback from a survey which had been undertaken with staff.

The Committee was informed that the college had won the recent employment tribunal hearing.

A concern was raised about the decline in applications compared to the previous quarter. The Senior HR Business Partner confirmed that the college received a healthy number of applications for each vacancy advertised which evidenced that West Lothian College remained an employer of choice but monitors the position on an ongoing basis.

The Committee noted the report.

(ii) Employers Association Update

The Chair of the Board gave a verbal update.

It was confirmed that Unions were ready to submit the next pay claim.

A short discussion on national policies took place and the Committee agreed that the college may need to review local policies to ensure they were up to date.

The Job Evaluation process was currently being held up by GDPR claims by some colleges.

A discussion on special leave took place and all agreed that it was important that guidance was issued to managers to ensure consistency across all areas of the college.

8 Infrastructure

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services presented paper 7 informing the Committee of the proposed infrastructure plans for the remainder of 2019-20.

The Committee was requested to approve a budget of £350k to reconfigure the workshop within Terrace 1/2. This reconfiguration was necessary in order to bring the learning environment up to date. The Committee noted that the college would contribute £200k to the budget

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from Estates Maintenance Grant and budget savings. The remainder would form part of a bid for funding to the Scottish Funding Council.

The Committee approved the budget of £350k and noted that a business case was being developed for the ground floor of the Street Building which would also form the basis of a bid for funding from the Scottish Funding Council.

The Committee also noted that the college would make a request to the Scottish Funding Council for strategic funding for the disabled toilets as this was an equalities issue.

9 Complaints Report

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise presented paper 8. The Committee found the paper very informative and were confident that the college had a clear robust process in place for handling complaints.

The Committee noted the paper.

10 Any Other Business

No other matters of business were raised.

11 Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers & Development Plan

The Committee were content with the meeting, the information received and the Development Plan.

Given that a board effectiveness review was being undertaken in the Spring, self-evaluation meetings were not required in 2020.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 11 June 2020 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.

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Signed
Chair, Finance & General Purposes Committee

Date