

West Lothian College

10 September 2020

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on
Thursday 11 June at 10am via zoom

Present: Moira Niven (Chair)
 Jackie Galbraith (Principal & Chief Executive)
 Frank Gribben
 Lynne Hollis
 Alex Linkston
 Sue Stahly

In attendance: Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum
 Services)
 Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise)
 Danny Duffy (Finance Manager)
 Derek O'Sullivan – (Senior HR Business Partner)
 Sandra Callan – note taker

1 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to Sue Stahly and Danny Duffy who were attending their first F&GP meeting.

Noted that Julia Simpson was unable to attend the meeting due to being furloughed.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of Meeting of 27 February 2020

The Minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2020 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting of 27 February 2020

Action 1 was noted as being in progress. The Principal gave an update and said she had met with Fiona Hyslop MSP and had made her aware of the issue the college faced regarding ITAs.

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It was also confirmed that HR Department had prepared some guidelines in relation to Special Leave Policy for the College Leadership Team.

5 Financial Progress**(i) Annual Budget 2020-21**

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services advised that there would normally be a budget presented for approval but due to the uncertainties as a result of Covid19 a short presentation would be provided on progress to date. It was noted that:-

Grant-in-Aid - there had been a slight dip in ESF credits from 773 to 707 resulting in a reduction in funding (£196,048 reduced to £193,387). Total credits for 2020-21 were 44,353.

Further work was required to achieve the target surplus of £158k. There were particular risks associated with SDS and other income as a result of Covid19. A number of work streams were progressing with the College Leadership Team to produce a robust balanced budget.

The Committee informed management that a balanced budget should be produced for 2020-21 which would be considered at an extraordinary meeting of the Committee in July 2020. The Committee asked that the key assumptions and risks be highlighted to the Committee.

Financial Forecast Return (FFR) 2020

The Principal confirmed that the college's financial forecasts had been shared with all staff.

The Committee confirmed that their aspirations were to continue to grow to meet unmet demand.

SFC assumption in relation to core credits is no change over the planning period. As the college continues to exceed its target the Principal agreed to ask to meet with Karen Watt (SFC Chief Executive) to discuss credit growth and taking a loan break to strengthen the college's cash position.

Action 1: Principal

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services to clarify assumptions to be used with SFC.

The FFR for 2020 would be considered by the Committee at the meeting scheduled for July 2020.

Action 2: Vice Principal Finance & Curriculum Services

(ii) April 2020 Management Accounts

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services, presented paper 4 and gave explanations where necessary.

It was noted that staff costs were £478k worse than budget and were forecast to outturn £666k worse by the year end. This was mainly due to the cost of replacing lecturers throughout the year who were on long-term sick leave.

The college had submitted claims under the HMRC furlough claim scheme. These claims had not yet been approved.

IT spend was approved to purchase IT equipment to support staff and students to work from home.

There would now be additional costs due to the college purchasing PPE for staff and students returning to the campus. The total cost was still to be determined.

The second Cyber Lab, accessible toilets and the refurbishment works to the construction and engineering workshops had been postponed due to Covid19 but would take place in 2020-21.

The Committee noted the management accounts and thanked the Finance Team for their work.

(iii) Accounting Policies

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services presented paper 5. There had been no changes to the Accounting Policies from 2018-19.

The Committee approved the Accounting Policies.

6 Organisational Well-being**(i) Human Resources Report**

The Senior HR Business Partner presented the report covering the quarter to 1 January 2020 – 31 March 2020 and gave explanations where necessary.

The total absence percentage for this period was 6.77% which was an increase of 1.5% compared to last year's figure of 5.27% for the same period. This was due primarily to high levels of long term sickness absence amongst lecturers. The full year absence figure was 6.21% which was an increase of 1.73% compared to last year, again due to an increase and high levels of long term sickness absence. There had been only a slight increase in short term sickness absence. It was noted that this had been an exceptional year for long term sick absence.

The Committee discussed the EIS dispute on the pilot Instructor role introduced in August 2019. Earlier in the year this dispute had moved to Stage 3 in the process. However, it had not been possible to progress with ACAS due to Covid19. The Committee was informed that the evaluation of the role demonstrated that it was working well and agreed that the Instructor role should be made permanent.

The new HR/Payroll information system (iTrent) had gone live in April 2020.

The employee turnover for this period was discussed. Although there had been an increase on the turnover from the same period last year, the HR Manager confirmed that there was no cause for concern. It was agreed that the HR Manager would expand the report to show reasons for staff turnover.

Action 3: HR Manager

The Committee thanked the HR Manager for producing the detailed HR report.

(ii) Employers Association Update

The Chair of the Board gave a verbal update.

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7 **Complaints Report**

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise presented paper 7 covering the period from 1 February 2020 to 31 May 2020.

Noted that 14 complaints had been raised compared to nine during the same period last year. One complaint was on hold and one complaint was ongoing. Of the 12 complaints closed, six were upheld and six were not upheld. All 12 complaints were resolved within the agreed deadlines.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise confirmed that the Complaints report had been adjusted and compliments were no longer included to avoid duplication as the Principal included compliments in her weekly updates.

The Committee noted the report.

8 **Committee Remit Review**

Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services presented paper 8.

The Committee members were content with the paper and recommended the revised remit to the Board of Governors for approval.

Action 4: Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services

9 **Any Other Business**

No other matters of business were raised.

10 **Self-Evaluation of Committee**

The Committee agreed to defer the self-evaluation. Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services agreed to forward the template for Committee members to complete and return to her by the end of August 2020. The responses would be collated in order to present at the September meeting.

Action 5: Vice Principal, Finance & Curriculum Services

11 **Date of Next Meeting**

Date of Extraordinary Meeting to be confirmed

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The next scheduled meeting was 10 September 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.

Signed
Chair, Finance & General Purposes Committee

Date