

West Lothian College

25 November 2021

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 9 September 2021 at 10.30am** via zoom

For information: A pre-meeting was held with Committee Members and a representative from the CHILDREN'S HEARINGS SCOTLAND TEAM to enable Committee Members to meet the team. The committee thanked the team for providing a positive insight into their work and commented on the potential cross college learning from the transition to online learning. The committee noted the appetite for growth and ability to respond to demands from the service, across Scotland.

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

In attendance Jeanette Dobson (SA President)
 Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services)
 Simon Earp, (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement)
 Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
 Derek O'Sullivan (Head of HR and People Development) – item 6
 Fiona Hudson (Head of Finance, Procurement and Student Funding)
 Lesley Aitkenhead (Board Governance Advisor)

1 **Welcome/Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Sue Stahly and Kirsti Clark. It was also noted that Julia Simpson has moved to the Audit Committee.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3 **Minutes of Meeting of 17 June 2021**

The Minute of the meeting of 17 June 2021 was approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to one amendment.

4 **Matters Arising**

The committee noted all actions as duly completed.

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5 Financial Progress

(i) June 2021 Management Accounts

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented Paper 3 noting minor changes from the previous reporting period. Overall, the accounts reflect a successful year for the college, reporting a slightly reduced surplus.

The committee noted the overall positive position and raised a query in relation to the movement for Foundation Apprenticeships. The committee was advised that this movement reflected the impact of COVID with fewer starts and an increase in withdrawals during lockdown, resulting in reduced funding. However, Foundation Apprenticeships are moving from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) funding to SFC credits. The impact of this change will be covered under Item 9.

The committee asked if there were any potential concerns in relation to preparing the final year end accounts, impacted by access restrictions for the External Audit Team during lockdown. The committee was reassured that there were no concerns on completing on time, with adequate engagement with the External Audit team. The committee noted the paper and commented on the quality of the information.

(ii) Business Development

Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement presented Paper 4 for information. The committee noted a few key areas of development, including the reference to the work of the Children's Hearing Scotland Team, and the bids submitted to support students in poverty.

The committee asked for some additional information in future in relation to the bids, including a description, likelihood of success and potential impact. The committee discussed the bid for the Levelling Up Fund and Place Based Investment, and was provided with further detail in terms of the objectives and likelihood of success. The committee discussed the importance on including indirect costs into all bids, and to look beyond financial value, for items such as anti-poverty. The committee welcomed the report and recommended that additional information is included in future reports, to help provide a context.

Action 1 VP, P&I: The Business Development Report will be updated to include additional information on all material bids.

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(iii) Pre-Audit Credit Update 2020-21

Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement presented paper 5 for noting. The committee commented on the benefit of having a surplus or credits as a strategic tool, but also acknowledged the desire to be efficient and reduce the surplus. The committee noted the paper.

6 HR and People Development

(i) HR and People Development Report

Head of HR and People Development presented Paper 6 for discussion and noted the inclusion of an additional paper covering the age and ethnicity profile of staff. The presenter summarised the key messages, including reference to recruitment and a slight increase in leavers. The committee noted that there were no issues raised and staff continue to show high levels of engagement. The committee discussed the report on age and ethnicity profile and welcomed the range of actions that the college was taking to enhance the diversity of the college, including staff and Board members.

The committee discussed non-disclosure of ethnicity for staff, and recommended engaging with local Trade Unions to encourage capture of this data to better inform the position within the college.

The committee discussed the importance of capturing other protected characteristics in the report, to provide greater insight on diversity.

Action 2 H of HR & PD: The committee recommended engaging with Trade Unions to reduce the non-disclosure of ethnicity and encourage staff to provide this information as a source of insight on diversity.

The committee discussed the levels of completion on mandatory training and personal learning plans, acknowledging that last year was particularly challenging for staff. The committee highlighted the importance of mandatory training, particularly during periods of significant change.

Action 3 H of HR & PD: The committee requested that action is taken to ensure that all staff who did not complete mandatory training last year complete with Q1 of 2021-22 academic year and that all staff are reminded of the importance of this training.

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The committee discussed the responses to the staff Pulse survey on hybrid working and was advised that the college's newly formed Hybrid Working Group would be looking at all of the findings from the survey, including hot desking. The committee highlighted the importance of positive messages and establishing a sustainable new way of working for staff.

(ii) Employers' Association Update

The committee received a verbal update from the Board Chair on ongoing discussions with the Employers' Association. The committee was advised of plans to roll out the nationally agreed registration process for lecturers, and requested that updates on the college roll-out is included in future HR Report.

Action 4 H of HR & PD: The committee requested that progress on the roll-out of the nationally agreed registration process for lecturers is included in future HR Reports.

The committee discussed progress on negotiations on pay awards for lecturers and support staff. Negotiations are ongoing and remain sensitive.

7 Infrastructure Update

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 7 for noting, with a further update to be presented to the committee on 25 November 2021. The committee noted the positive change to the college landscape, including the new Student Association Area and thanked staff for the considerable effort to date.

9 Complaints Report

Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement presented Paper 8 for noting and highlighted the key points. All complaints are managed in accordance with the complaints procedure.

The Committee Chair questioned whether the Complaints Paper would be a better fit for the Audit Committee. The committee discussed the range of topics that were included in the report and agreed that it should remain as one report with possible updates on key areas to other committees.

Action 5 BGA: The Committee Chair will discuss the potential inclusion of complaints, GDPR and FOI¹ reports in the Audit Committee, as part of its oversight of the control environment, supported by the BGA.

¹ GDPR and FOI were not explicitly discussed at this committee, but have been discussed with the Chair of the F&GP and Chair of Audit Committee, as information that should be reported together

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10 FINANCIAL FORECAST RETURN 2020-21 to 2023-24

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 9 for noting, and advised that an exceptional meeting of the committee will be required to approve the FFR. The committee discussed the potential challenges arising from the assumptions provided by SFC particularly the assumption that funded credits for Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) would not continue beyond 2021-22 as the income and credits associated with FAs are significant for the college.

The committee discussed the importance of being prepared for a potential reduction in future income from the Scottish Government, and to complete robust scenario planning using a variety of key assumptions and mitigations. However, committee members felt strongly that the college should be committing to a financial plan based on a growth strategy, reflecting the ambitions of the college and needs of the local community. The committee were advised that the FFR would be presented for approval in October 2021.

Action 6 BGA: To arrange an exceptional meeting of the Finance and General Purpose Committee to review and recommend approval of the FFR to the Board of Governors.

11 AOB

The committee noted that the Strategic Risk Register was not included in the agenda for the F and GP Committee, as part of the agreed Risk Management Arrangements, and a new Risk Register will be presented at the 21 September Board for agreement on inherent risks and tolerance.

12 Review of Meeting, Development and Supporting Papers

The committee discussed the quality of the papers and discussion, with positive comments. Some consideration was requested on the HR Report and the committee was advised that work is ongoing, in terms of future reports.

Action 7 H of HR & PD: To present an updated version of the HR Report & People Development Report at the 25 November 2021 Committee.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the committee was Thursday 25 November 2021 at 10.30 am.

Signed

Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee

Date