

West Lothian College

17 June 2021

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 25 February 2021 at 10am** via zoom

Present: Moira Niven (Chair)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal and Chief Executive)
Frank Gribben
Lynne Hollis
Alex Linkston
Julia Simpson
Sue Stahly
Kirsti Clark (SA Vice President)

In attendance Jinty Dobson (SA President)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services)
Simon Earp, (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement) joined at 11am
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
Derek O'Sullivan (Head of HR and People Development) - agenda items 8 (i) and 8 (ii) only
Sandra Callan (Executive Secretary)

1 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. The Principal would leave the meeting at 11am to attend a ministerial meeting,

It was agreed that agenda item 5 (ii) would be addressed once Simon Earp joined the meeting at 11am.

2 Declarations of interest

Alex Linkston made a declaration of interest in relation to the Princes Trust.

3 Minutes of Meeting of 25 November 2020

The Minute of the meeting of 25 November 2020 was approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to one amendment. Agenda item 5 (v) - It had been noted that the Business Development report would be treated as being commercially sensitive.

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4 Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting of 25 November 2020

The committee noted all actions as duly completed.

5 Financial Progress

(i) January 2021 Management Accounts

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 3.

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services gave explanations where necessary

The committee noted the provision for investment spend. The £158k surplus target had been moved to the investment line and would be allocated to the expansion of the construction and engineering workshop.

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that where the college had lost income due to COVID-19 the college also had cost reductions, the refectory being a good example.

In addition, the college had furloughed staff and income had been reflected within the management accounts.

Another key area, which had been an issue for the college last year, was staff costs. This year the college was forecasting an underspend due to vacancies that were assumed to be filled from the start of the financial year being filled later in the year. It was also noted that the college long and short-term sick absence figures were considerably better.

The Principal confirmed that SDS income was looking quite strong and our overall target for Modern Apprenticeships had been met. The college had been awarded more contracts from SDS, for example, for Pathway Apprenticeships. Although there was a decline in Foundation Apprenticeship income this was a direct impact of COVID-19 and the college was hopeful that in the year ahead the uptake of places would improve.

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services advised that there were no concerns regarding the college's cashflow. The committee was reminded that the 31 July projected balance of £750k was the position

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the Scottish Funding Council expected the college to be at the year-end.

The committee noted the positive report.

6 College Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2019-20

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 5 and informed the committee that the executive leadership team was reviewing the KPIs (at the request of the Board of Governors). This work was ongoing and a paper would be brought back to the June Board meeting.

The committee noted the paper and were pleased to see a decrease in student withdrawals particularly in these difficult times.

7 Infrastructure Update

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 6, which gave an update on the infrastructure plans for 2020-21.

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that good progress was being made on the expansion of the construction and engineering workshop and the project was expected to be completed by 31 March 2021.

The committee had approved £300k budget for the Street Building project. Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services indicated that the budget requirement was likely to increase but figures were still being finalised. A final approved budget for this project would be agreed by email or at the June meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

A short discussion on the appointment of a local company carrying out this project took place and it was confirmed that the tender had been awarded through a national Framework Agreement overseen by a representative from Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges (APUC) to ensure a robust procurement exercise.

The Principal highlighted the advantages of both these projects.

The faculty directors were working with the head of estates on a 5-year estates plan. It was suggested that the college think about defining principles to help assess the prioritisation of projects.

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Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that the college has the funding for the two projects. If the college received additional capital funds from the Scottish Funding Council then it would go towards the workshop expansion as it is a capital project which would release money to increase the budget for the Street Building.

The committee noted the progress being made and looked forward to seeing the 5-year estates plan.

8 (i) HR and People Development Report Complaints Report

The HR and People Development Manager presented paper 7 and gave explanations where necessary.

The Principal gave an update on the college's values and behaviours and how teams were being encouraged to discuss these behaviours and their expectations of one another and their managers. A lot of work was underway and the Principal thanked Sue Stahly for her help with this work. The Principal advised that she was pleased with the positive feedback being received from staff.

A short discussion on staff absence took place and although it was acknowledged that good progress was being made the process for coming back to work at the campus could be challenging for staff. The Principal advised that discussions were ongoing at the moment regarding the possible challenges. Informal drop in sessions were being held with staff which included conversations on how do we prepare for coming back to campus.

The committee noted the positive report and the amount of work currently being undertaken.

(ii) Employer Association Update

The Chair of the Board gave a verbal update on the annual pay increase for support staff.

A verbal update was also given on the EIS dispute regarding assessor training roles. It was noted that a national ballot for strike action had been undertaken and it was expected that colleges would be officially advised of the ballot results tomorrow (Friday 26 February).

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9 Complaints Report

Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment presented paper 8 and gave an update on the complaint pertaining to student placements. Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment informed the committee that although there was an issue with placements due to COVID-19, the college was confident that it had a fair and equitable process in place.

West Lothian College was one of a few colleges that had still managed to put students out on placement from last August, an example being 60 early learning and childcare students and this was due to the excellent relationship the college had with West Lothian Council.

The college was also currently working with those who coordinate college articulation agreements at universities to have a position statement saying, for this year only, they would accept fewer hours on placement.

The committee noted the paper.

10 Lothian Pension Fund – 2020 actuarial evaluation

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 9.

The employer's contribution rate for the period 1 April 2021-31 March 2024 would be 19.8% (unchanged from the rate paid in the period 1 April 2020-31 March 2021).

The committee noted this positive outcome.

5 (ii) Business Development Report

Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement presented paper 4 and key highlights were discussed.

It was agreed that the header in the third column be amended to remove the word surplus as it had been agreed that contribution was the correct term.

Action 1: Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement

The committee noted the very positive paper and asked that their appreciation be passed to the teams across the college for all the good work.

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11 Strategic Risk Register

Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented paper 10 which was the first risk register update taking on board feedback from the committee.

Risk 3.5 – the GDPR risk had been reworded following feedback from the board to add in the words “reputational damage”.

Risk 4.2 had been increased taking into account the risk of a potential strike. Although the role of the committee is not to review scores but to focus on whether risks were being adequately mitigated, the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services agreed to amend the score of risk 4.2 so that the likelihood was increased to 5 and the impact to 3. The word ‘escalate’ would be changed and replaced with ‘increased’.

Risk 4.4 was also discussed and it was agreed that the positive feedback the college was receiving from both staff and student surveys would be included in the risk paper as this was a key mitigation.

The above amendments would be made to the risk paper being presented to the board meeting.

Action 2: Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services

12 Any Other Business

Cyber Security session - The committee agreed that it would be beneficial for the board to hold a cyber security session at a future board meeting. The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee agreed to raise this at the June board meeting under the Finance and General Purposes update.

Action 3: Chair Finance and General Purposes Committee

13 Review of Meeting and Development Plan and Supporting Papers

The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee expressed her interest in virtually attending a Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting at Forth Valley College.

Action 4: Secretary to the Board

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Any other training requests to be forwarded to Sandra Callan.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the committee was Thursday 17 June 2021 at 10am.

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 and General Purposes Committee

Date