

West Lothian College

16 June 2022

Finance and General Purposes Committee

A pre-meeting was held with members of the HR and People Development Team, who gave an update on the priorities and current challenges facing the college.

Minute of meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on **Thursday 24 February 2022 at 10.30am** via zoom

Present: Moira Niven (Chair)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal and Chief Executive)
Alex Linkston
Sue Stahly

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 4.3
Fiona Hudson (Head of Finance, Procurement & Student Funding)
Lesley Aitkenhead (Board Governance Advisor)
Abel Aboh (New Board Member – Observer)

1 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Lynne Hollis and Frank Gribben.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of Meeting of 25 November 2021

The Minute of the meeting of 25 November 2021 was approved, with some minor amendments updated.

4 Matters Arising

The committee noted all actions as either completed or on track. Action F11 was noted as recommended to close and the committee agreed it was completed and the current format of the HR Report meets the needs of committee members.

5 Infrastructure Report

Vice Principal, Finance & Corporate Services presented Paper 3 for approval. The committee were asked to note the key points that estate plans are all on

track and on budget and approve the budget of £493k for the environmental construction skills training centre.

The committee noted the collaborative approach on the development of the Eco House, working across faculties, universities and local business partners.

The committee asked for more information on the legal agreement and was advised that the contract will be signed by the end of March and no issues were noted.

The committee approved the budget, and requested that a more detailed session was planned for Board Members to gain further insight on the Environmental Construction Skills Training Centre.

Action 1: The Board Governance Advisor will schedule an agenda item for a presentation on the Eco House Project.

6 Management Accounts – January 2022

Head of Finance, Procurement and Student Funds presented Paper 4, for the attention of the committee, with no areas of concern raised.

The Committee welcomed the revised reporting format, that included key performance indicators and enabled the committee to see trends in the key areas of spend. The committee agreed that this approach enabled the discussion to focus on the key points, supported by the commentary and underlying data, and thanked the Finance Team for the quality of reporting.

The committee asked about the cost of living increase and the rise in NI, and was advised that the cost of living increase was embedded in the management accounts. The increase in NI, that takes effect from April 2022, was not included as was a recent change but is expected to be met by other areas of underspend.

7 Business Development Report

Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement presented Paper 6 for noting. The presenter highlighted the table in page 2, showing a summary of the projects won and the conversion rate, compared with 2020-21. This shows an increase in the conversion rate, with the overall funds secured at around £670k.

The committee asked if there was feedback received from the Edge Foundation and was advised that this funding is predominately awarded in England, so the result was not unexpected. However, the information captured for the bid has been re-used in other funds, which have been successful.

The committee asked for further information on the Sports Scotland multi-use games area and was advised that this had broader benefits, and aimed to make the college campus more engaging for a wide range of students and staff.

The committee asked for future reports to include additional information on the type of grants and funds, in an accessible format.

Action 2: Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement will update the format of the report, and share a draft version with the Chair, prior to the next meeting.

8 HR and People Development

(i) HR and People Development Report

Head of HR and People Development presented Paper 6 for discussion. The presenter summarised the key messages, including reference to recruitment, sickness leave and retirement.

The committee asked if there were any underlying trends or concerns of long-term sick absence levels and was advised that the majority of absences were not directly related to work related stress.

The committee noted the report and requested that the next report includes a more detailed breakdown of sickness absence and turnover, to enable a more informed discussion on trends.

Action 3: Head of HR and People Development will update the report to include a split of long-term sick absences by lecturer and support staff; turnover by voluntary leavers or as a result of changes to the organisational design. The committee advised that it would be helpful to provide a comparison with industry, if possible.

(ii) Staff Experience Survey 2021

Head of HR and People Development presented Paper 7 for discussion. The committee welcomed the overall positive results, with a response rate on the Staff Survey of 78%.

The committee noted the key positives, and thanked the management team for their efforts in achieving a positive result during a challenging year.

The committee noted the areas for attention, particularly the feedback on issues with workload and stress and it was acknowledged that the issues were consistent across the college sector.

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The committee asked if there were particular departments or teams where workload demands and workplace stress were causing concern and was advised that these issues were highlighted more by lecturing staff, which was not surprising, given the additional demands of delivering blended learning and having to adapt the model frequently over the year in response to changing pandemic regulations. The Head of HR and People Development advised that the survey results have been shared with teams to develop local action plans.

The committee asked about the work on the hybrid working group and were advised that this is progressing well, with cross team collaboration.

Action 4: VPF and CS will provide an update on the work of the hybrid working group at the June Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Action 5: Head of HR and People Development will provide an update on progress in addressing the areas requiring attention identified in the Staff Survey at the September Finance and General Purposes Committee.

(iii) Employer Association Update

The committee received a verbal update from the Board Chair on ongoing discussions with the Employers Association and plans to expand the current management team. The committee were updated on the roll out the nationally agreed Registration Scheme, with 68% fully registered, 24% ongoing and 8% not yet engaged. Cost of registration will be deducted at source by the end of March and is expected to be fully rolled out.

The committee discussed progress on negotiations on pay awards for lecturers and support staff. Negotiations include discussions on salary increases at a National and Local scale.

9 AOB

None

10 Review of Meeting, Development and Supporting Papers

The committee discussed the quality of the papers and discussion, with positive comments and no requests for any changes.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee is Thursday 16 June 2022 at 10.30 am.

Signed

Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee

Date