

## West Lothian College

15 June 2023

---

### Finance and General Purposes Committee

#### Meeting of 16 February 2023

##### Present:

Moira Niven (Chair and non-executive member)  
Tony Sharkey (Non-executive member)  
Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)  
Sue Stahly (Non-executive member)  
Karine Bourdarias (Student Association President)  
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)

##### In attendance:

Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services)  
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement)  
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)  
Hazel Brady (Staff Observer)  
Fiona Hudson (Head of Finance and Procurement)  
Derek O'Sullivan (Head of HR and People Development)  
Amy Lamont (HR Assistant)  
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

#### 1 Committee Administration

##### 1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a special welcome to Amy Lamont from the HR team who was observing at this meeting.

Apologies: no apologies were noted.

##### 1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

##### 1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting of 24 November 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as accurate with one change noted to item 4.1.1 to read: Financial Statement was presented as a late paper.

##### 1.4 Matters Arising

The Committee noted that all matters arising were completed or in progress.

**West Lothian College**15 June 2023

---

**2. Matters for Recommendation for Board Approval**

2.1 No matters were considered for Board approval.

**3. Matters for Recommendation for Audit Approval**

3.1 There were no matters to be presented for Audit approval.

**4. Matters for Attention****4.1 Financial Management****4.1.1 Management Accounts January 2023**

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented the paper and discussed the predicted deficit of £530k which was due to reduced Scottish Funding Council (SFC) grant allocations, a number of higher education courses not running, and reduced Business commercial income.

The Committee noted that the college had applied assumptions from Scottish Funding Council guidance for the current year budget which included assumptions for what would be received for the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) and the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG).

The Committee discussed the reduction in funding to colleges primarily from YPG and FWDF, the late notification of the funding and the impact of this on the college given that we are already a very lean organisation. The Principal confirmed that the college is already taking interim actions to reduce the deficit by pausing all but essential recruitment and implementing cost savings. However, this will not address the forecast deficit.

The Committee noted that our mid-year return to the Scottish Funding Council will reflect the latest forecast. The Committee heard an update on pay award negotiations for 2022-23, the outcome of which could add to the deficit.

The Committee reflected that sight of the college's scenario planning to deal with the deficit would be helpful. The Principal confirmed that the next Board Strategy Day will focus on the medium-term financial strategy to achieve and maintain financial sustainability over the next five years. The Principal confirmed that she is holding open staff meetings to engage staff in the current situation and thinking for financial sustainability. The Principal highlighted the unintended consequences of SFC providing flexibilities for larger colleges that could have a resulting negative impact on smaller colleges.

In relation to SFC funding for 2023-24 and future years, the Committee urged SFC to recognise colleges who were meeting their credit targets and how offering flexibilities to those unable to meet credit targets could disadvantage them.

The Committee discussed potential partnership working with colleges such as Borders and Dumfries and Galloway to explore a new model for growth that may be acceptable to SFC.

**Action 1:**

**The Principal to plan the financial programme for the Board Strategy Day in May/June 2023 (date to be confirmed).**

The Committee accepted this paper.

**4.1.2 College Funding 2023-24**

The Committee noted that any substantive savings to be made will be required to come from workforce savings. The high-level information and estates maintenance funding was also noted.

The Committee was informed that staff costs represented 75% of total costs and the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services agreed to show staff costs as a percentage of total costs (budget and latest forecast) in the management accounts.

The Committee was content with this paper.

**4.1.3 Student Funds Update 2022-23**

The Committee discussed the additional £500k in-year redistribution funding and the positive difference this will make to our students. The Committee was pleased to note that students, who will be returning students in 2023-24, will receive funding to support them over the summer period.

The Committee noted the paper.

**4.2 Infrastructure Update**

The Committee heard an update from the Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Services on funding allocated to infrastructure developments which will be in the region of £3 million this academic year (£2.5 million from sources other than SFC).

The Committee discussed the decarbonisation project and potential increase in material costs. The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that the contract awarded would be based on a fixed price. The Committee agreed it would be useful to have a presentation on the tender process at the June meeting of the Board of Governors.

**Action 2:**

**The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services to include this in the Net Zero Strategy presentation to the Board of Governors.**

**4.3 Business Development Report**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement highlighted the reductions in income from the FWDF but confirmed the team are confident other contracts will be realised. The Committee discussed demand for Modern Apprenticeships which we are unable to meet due to the Skills Development Scotland cap on places.

**4.3 HR and People Development****4.3.1 HR and People Development Report including Staff Experience Survey 2022**

The Head of HR and People Development presented the paper and discussed feedback gathered through the Staff Experience Survey. The Committee heard that feedback is generally very positive with responses to almost all questions even more positive than the previous survey. Workload was the biggest area of concern, with around a third of staff reporting they do not have enough time to do their job. While this has improved on the previous year, it is something that managers continue to be focused on.

The Committee discussed the paper and noted that a higher proportion of lecturers than other staff were reporting workload issues and associated stress. The Committee heard that some of these concerns were related to staff returning to on-campus working and the associated changes resulting from this, as well as changes of manager in some curriculum teams which have caused some upset as staff adjust to change. The Principal stressed that giving lecturers more time to do the job cannot be met through additional recruitment and we are looking at other ways to address this.

The Committee reflected that staff absence and turnover is quite high. The Head of HR and People Development confirmed that figures are now presented quarterly and that the increase in staff absence reflects a national picture with no specific trends identified.

The Committee reflected on the potential impact of the job evaluation exercise and the fact that this has not yet been completed.

The Committee noted the report.

#### **4.4.2 Employers Association Update**

The Chair of the Board of Governors reported that work continues between employers and unions to implement national job evaluation for support staff roles.

The Principal confirmed that the dispute regarding the introduction of Instructor role was still on-going.

### **5. Matters for Information**

#### **5.1 Credit Target Update**

The Committee heard that we are on target to meet, and exceed, the credit target. This is a positive picture given that all large colleges are reporting under target. The Committee noted this paper.

#### **5.2 Business Case**

The business case for a financial settlement to secure a voluntary departure of an employee was formally approved by the Committee.

#### **5.2 Self Evaluation of Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Committee noted that a self-evaluation exercise would be included on the agenda for the next meeting in June 2023. The Committee agreed to this agenda item.

### **6. Any other Business (AOB)**

The Principal confirmed a link to Pathways to Poverty update will be included in her next update.

# West Lothian College

15 June 2023

## 7. Review of Meeting and Supporting Papers

The Committee agreed the quality of papers presented is excellent and reflected on the usefulness of the open conversation that had taken place during the meeting.

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 15 June 2023 at 10.30 am.

**Note:** There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared any conflict of interest, or the Board Secretary and Governance Advisor was aware from the Register of Interests that discussion could give rise to such a conflict.

Signed .....  
Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee

Date .....