

West Lothian College

7 September 2023

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Minutes of Meeting of 15 June 2023

Present:

Moira Niven (Chair, Non-executive member)
Tony Sharkey (Vice Chair, Non-executive member)
Abel Aboh (Non-executive member)
Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)
Aruna Lopez (Non-executive member)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)
Karine Bourdarias (Student Association President)

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)
Karan Lamb (HR Assistant)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Abel Aboh and Aruna Lopez were welcomed to their first committee meeting. Tony Sharkey was welcomed in his new role as Vice Chair of the Committee.

There were no apologies given for this meeting.

1.1.2 Presentation from Workforce Development

Louise MacDonald and Sarah Allison, Learning and Skills Managers for Workforce Development, gave a presentation to the committee on current contracts being delivered.

The committee heard that Workforce Development delivers work-based qualifications from SVQ Level 5 through to Level 10 for employed staff across the country. The team delivers to over 1,000 students each year.

The committee was informed that much of the work done in this area comes from repeat business. The team has delivered 7,076 credits this year with a 94% success rate.

The presentation highlighted the following key points that make Workforce Development a high performing team:

- Good support
- Autonomy in the role
- Strong management
- Clearly defined job role and training
- Quality culture.

The committee was informed about Modern Apprenticeship work. There are 326 apprentices in college at the moment, including 91 new starts from May 2023. Payments to the college are on the basis of milestone payments, which are claimed as the training progresses and outcome payments which are claimed at the end of the training. The team works closely with employers and internal faculty staff to ensure trainees are well supported and have a good experience. The pricing structure is kept competitive to keep repeat business coming in.

Workforce Development proactively engages with employers to build relationships and look for new opportunities. For example, we now offer apprenticeships in new fields such as digital analytics and the spirits industry.

The committee was very impressed with the presentation and thanked the Learning and Skills Managers for their input.

Committee members suggested they should be given information to take out with them when visiting employers.

**Action 1: Vice Principal Learning and Attainment
Provide marketing information to Board members.**

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

The Chair declared a conflict of interest related to her involvement with Carers of West Lothian.

Abel Aboh declared his new position with The Data Lab Scotland.

1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting of 16 February 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

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1.4 Matters Arising

The committee noted the action with Borders and Dumfries and Galloway Colleges is still in progress.

2. Matters for Recommendation for Board Approval

2.1 Annual Budget for 2023-24

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services spoke to the budget which reflects decisions taken at the Board Strategy Event in May 2023. The committee was informed that the budget presented for 2023-24 has been set at a trading deficit of £85K. After allowing for apprenticeship levy and investment costs the deficit increases to £278K. An adjusted operating deficit of £467K is forecast in the 2023-24 budget.

The committee heard the paper reflects the staff savings and the reduced contributions expected, due to market changes, in the Business Development area.

The committee discussed the stretch targets set for income generation across college services. The Principal reflected that the college seeks out commercial income opportunities from different sources and that the college is committed to seeking to bring down the budget deficit.

The committee noted their appreciation to college staff for their hard work and approved the paper for recommendation to the Board of Governors.

2.2 Buildings and Contents Insurance Renewal

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services discussed the paper, highlighting the significant saving that has been made through the tender exercise. The committee were assured that the new provider is expected to provide the same level of service required by the college despite the reduced cost.

The committee asked that, given the additional cost of Cyber Insurance, the company should be asked if they will increase the current level of cover of £1 million.

Action 2: Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services

Level of cover with insurance provider to be reviewed and reported back to the next committee meeting.

The committee approved the paper for recommendation to the Board of Governors.

3. Matters for Committee Approval

3.1 Infrastructure Update

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services presented the update on current projects. The committee was informed that visits to the EcoHouse can be arranged.

The committee approved the budget of £447K for faculty projects.

3.2 Accounting Policies

The committee noted there is no change to accounting policies and approved the policies for the year ended 31 July 2023.

4. Matters for Committee Attention

4.1 Financial Management: April 2023 Management Accounts

The Head of Finance and Procurement spoke to the paper and informed the committee that the deficit forecast for the year will increase as the management accounts do not reflect the transfer of the estates grant into the 2023-24 budget. The committee was content to note the paper.

4.2 Business Development Report

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement informed the committee that, since the report was prepared, there are three bids in progress which may result in additional income of between £50-80K. The Principal confirmed that one of the bids will support staffing of the Cyber Drive project.

The committee heard the Children's Hearing Contract may go to a non-competitive award which may result in a 24-month extension to the contract. The committee was content to note the paper.

4.3 HR and People Development Report

The Head of HR and People Development reported that we continue to attract good quality candidates in recruitment.

The committee heard that the increased trend in sickness absence is a UK wide issue. The committee expressed a concern that continued higher staff absence could lead to budgetary problems if temporary lecturing cover is required.

The committee asked if the college can benchmark staff turnover rates. The Head of HR and People Development confirmed that our turnover figure is broadly in line with other colleges. The Principal said that turnover is something the college is cognisant of as we want to retain

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good staff and noted that staff generally leave for positive reasons such as promoted posts.

The committee asked if the college is interested in looking at Carer Positive Employer accreditation and was informed that this is already being acted upon.

The committee thanked the Head of HR and People Development for the quality of information provided and was content to note this paper.

4.4 College Employers Scotland Update

The committee was given an update on job evaluation for support staff which has still not been implemented. Negotiations are taking place to ensure funds are in place to implement the scheme.

The pay award for lecturing and support staff is in negotiation.

5. Matters for Committee Information

5.1 SFC Funding Allocation 2023-24

The committee was informed that we are still waiting confirmation on the digital poverty funding allocation from SFC.

The committee noted the paper.

5.2 Student Funds Update 2022-23

The committee noted the paper.

5.3 Credit Target Update 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement noted that the paper presented is a previous version, which was not materially different to the updated paper, and updated the committee on the current situation.

The committee noted the paper.

5.4 College Sector Performance Indicators

The committee was pleased to note the college's high performance as reflected in the performance indicators.

The committee noted the paper.

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6. Any other Business (AOB)

6.1 Revised Committee Remit for Approval

The committee agreed to change point 4.5 to Monitor and Review Cash Management.

The committee approved the revised remit.

Action 3: Board Governance Advisor
Amend 4.5 of the remit.

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 7 September 2023 at 10.30 am.

9. Committee Self-Assessment

Non-executive members remained after the formal meeting had closed to participate in a committee self-assessment workshop. The Board Governance Advisor introduced the self-assessment framework for discussion. Areas of strength and areas for development were recorded for development of the Board Development Plan 2023-24.

Note: There were two declarations of conflict of interest raised at this meeting.

It was noted that the declarations were not material to any decisions made during the meeting and did not require members to leave the meeting at any point in the agenda.

Signed
Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee

Date 15 June 2023