

## West Lothian College

23 November 2023

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### Finance and General Purposes Committee

#### Minutes of Meeting of 7 September 2023

##### Present:

Moira Niven (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)  
Fiona Hudson (Head of Finance and Procurement)  
Derek O'Sullivan (Head of HR and People Development)  
Suzanne Rankin (HR Business Partner)  
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

#### 1 Committee Administration

##### 1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Tony Sharkey.

##### 1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

Abel Aboh's new position with The Data Lab was noted. The committee agreed there was no substantial conflict of interest with any papers.

The Chair declared an interest in Carers of West Lothian. The committee noted there was no substantial conflict of interest with any agenda items.

##### 1.3 Minutes of Previous Meeting of 15 June 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting of 15 June 2023 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

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### 1.4 Matters Arising

The committee noted all actions had been completed. Marketing materials will be issued to Board Members through a link to the website.

## 2 Matters for Recommendation for Board Approval

### 2.1 Financial Forecast Return

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services discussed the paper with the committee. The committee noted the forecast and the college aim to break-even on a trading basis by the end of 2024-25. The committee noted the college plan and the need for regular monitoring.

The committee noted concerns from trade Unions that compulsory redundancies are required in order for the college to break-even. The committee stressed that this is not the case and staff should be re-assured that the college will break-even through fair work practices. The committee stressed that no compulsory redundancies are planned. The Chair seconded this and wished to re-assure staff the committee will plan resources carefully with the aim of ensuring no redundancies take place.

The Principal referred to the Colleges Scotland Audit Report published on 7 September 2023 which refers to the lack of funding being allocated to the college sector. She made the Committee aware of the work being done by the Executive Leadership Team on how to achieve a break-even budget.

The committee asked if courses will be cut as part of the break-even plan. The Principal stated this is always a possibility if courses which are under-recruiting. Again, this would be carefully managed and brought forward for approval.

The committee was content to accept the report and agreed to recommend the paper to the Board of Governors for approval.

## 3 Matters for Committee Approval

### 3.1 Asset Values

The committee was asked to approve the carrying forward of Assets included in the year end accounts as at 31 July 2023.

The committee approved the paper.

### **3.2 Infrastructure Update Report**

The ECOHOUSE and projects within Buildings 2 and 5 have been completed within budget. The heat decarbonisation and efficiency project has been delayed due to longer than expected material supply lead times. This means that elements of the project (Air Source Heat Pump and new windows) will not be installed until October, February down week and Spring Break to minimise disruption to students.

The committee expressed surprise at the delay as there had been no indication of a potential delay at the presentation given by Amaresco in June. The committee was also concerned that February is not the best time of year to be installing windows.

The committee requested a formal response from Amaresco to be brought to the committee to explain the reasons for the delay.

#### **Action 1: Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services**

To request a formal response from Amaresco to be brought to the 23 November 2023 meeting.

The committee was reminded the launch date of the ECOHOUSE is 19 September 2023.

The committee was content to approve the indicative budget of £422k for further capital projects and the infrastructure report.

## **4 Matters for Committee Attention**

### **4.1 Financial Management**

#### **(i) June 2023 Management Accounts**

It was noted the heading on this paper should read "Management Accounts Forecast to 31 July 2023".

The committee noted the deficit is in line with that previously reported to the committee. The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services reported on key reasons for this and noted the 31 July 2023 date change.

The committee noted there are no material changes to the forecast and was content to note the management accounts.

#### **(ii) Credit Update 2022-23**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the paper and the projection that the college will be 615 credits

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above target. The committee noted the college is carefully managing the continuing over demand for places within college finances.

The FES audit is currently taking place and the college does not anticipate any major change to this figure. The committee noted that the college continues to meet the credit target, unlike most other colleges in the sector, without using the flexibilities afforded by the Scottish Funding Council guidelines.

The committee was content to note the credit update paper.

### **4.2 HR & People Development Report**

The committee heard there has been a drop in numbers of applicants for jobs, although all vacancies have been filled.

The committee noted the college has achieved Disability Confident Leader, Armed Forces Covenant and Carer Positive Employer accreditations in recent months. The Chair referred to her support for Carers of West Lothian and noted the committee's appreciation of the work that had been done to gain these accreditations.

The committee noted these are positive signposts to encourage recruitment. The Principal thanked the HR Team for their work in achieving these accreditations which have such a positive impact on attracting new staff and supporting existing staff.

The committee heard the absence rate has reduced from the same time last year. However, the Principal reinforced the importance of monitoring long term staff absence in light of the current financial situation, particularly for lecturing staff where costs of backfilling are high.

The committee asked if the staff mandatory training includes AI plagiarism training. The committee heard that all staff engaged in the delivery of learning and teaching have participated in training on the use of tools to identify where AI was being used.

The committee noted the College Leadership Team is engaging with the Fair Justice Systems Scotland Group to examine how we progress racial diversity in our workforce.

The committee noted the progress achieved by the HR team and was content to note the report.

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### 4.3 Business Development Report

The committee noted that two out of three Cyber Resilience bids have been successful. Good progress has been made on the Flexible Workforce Development Fund and the committee heard the college is confident of delivering with timescales.

The collaborative bid for international work was unsuccessful but the college will look to learn from this for future bids.

The committee heard the Children's Hearings Scotland Contract is under negotiation.

The committee heard that under-recruitment with CITB and SECTT apprenticeships is a sector-wide issue and the college is working with both agencies to recover the situation.

The committee asked how students are being supported in light of CodeClan going into administration and were informed of ongoing discussions with Codebase to see what help the college could provide.

The committee noted the Business Development Report

### 4.4 College Employers Scotland Update

The committee was given a verbal update on the current situation regarding industrial action and the support staff job evaluation scheme.

## 5 Matters for Committee Information

### 5.1 Student Funds Update 2022-23

The committee noted the report showing the financial support given to students over the summer period and noted the use of the West Lothian Council Anti-Poverty funding received.

The committee asked if the college raises funds through Alumni contributions. The Principal confirmed the college had tried to do this in the past without success but that we receive some philanthropic donations. The committee discussed additional ways to raise finance and agreed to explore possible options further in the future.

The committee asked that we show our appreciation to West Lothian Council for the Anti-Poverty funding.

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## 5.2 Fair Work Correspondence

The committee discussed and noted the correspondence from Graeme Dey MSP regarding Fair Work and the Principal’s letter in response.

## 6 Any Other Business (AOB)

The committee noted the college has been shortlisted for nine College Development Network awards and were invited to attend the awards ceremony on 30 November 2023. The committee also noted we have been shortlisted for the Green Gown awards to be held in Liverpool.

The committee suggested the college should start cataloguing these success stories on the website.

### Action 2: Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement

To progress recording success stories from awards and using these in marketing.

## 7 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The committee agreed the papers submitted were well balanced and provided suitable and sufficient information.

## 8 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee will be held on 23 November 2023, commencing at 10.30 am.

**Note:** It was noted that the declarations made 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: .....