

## Finance and General Purposes Committee

### Minutes of Meeting of 13 June 2024

#### Present:

Moira Niven (Chair, Non-executive member)  
Abel Aboh (Non-executive member)  
Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)  
Tony Sharkey (Vice-Chair, Non-executive member)  
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)  
Brian Smillie (UNISON trade union member)

#### In attendance:

Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Estates)  
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, People, Performance and Improvement)  
Hazel Brady (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)  
Derek O'Sullivan (Head of HR and People Development)  
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 Aruna Lopez, Non-executive member, Fiona Hudson, Head of Finance, Procurement and Student Funds, and Blair Stewart, Student member.

### 1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

### 1.3 Minutes of Previous Meeting of 7 March 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting of 7 March 2024 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

### 1.4 Matters Arising from Meeting of 7 March 2024

The committee noted the action to survey ethnic staff groups is in progress.

## 2 Matters for Committee Approval

### 2.1 Accounting Policies

The Vice Principal, Finance and Estates presented the paper and noted there is no change to the Accounting Policies.

The committee approved Accounting Policies for the year ended 31 July 2024.

## **2.2 Infrastructure Update**

The Vice Principal, Finance and Estates introduced the paper giving an update on infrastructure projects.

The committee noted the college had gone out to tender and that tenderers had priced projects at double the budget which did not allow for both projects to be undertaken. The college had consulted staff on which project was the most beneficial and this feedback informed the decision to go ahead with the motor vehicle canopy project.

It was confirmed the decarbonisation project is on target to complete by August 2024 and that this is fully funded by a grant from Scottish Government.

The committee felt the college should be marketing the success of our decarbonisation work more widely. The committee positively noted the college is now seeing financial savings coming through from the improvements made to building No.3.

The committee approved the budget of £273k for the motor vehicle project to be completed in the summer of 2024.

The committee noted the update on the Heat Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency projects.

### **Action 1: Vice Principal, Finance and Estates**

The Head of Estates and Sustainability and Sustainability Project Officer to present on the financial and behavioural benefits from decarbonisation works to a future meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

## **2.3 Approval of Committee Remit**

The committee noted and approved the change to item 7.3.

The committee discussed the quorum for this committee and noted the quorum will be four based on current membership.

## **3 Matters for Recommendation for Board Approval**

### **3.1 Annual Budget for 2024-25**

The Vice Principal, Finance and Estates presented the paper and noted that the executive leadership team had undertaken detailed scrutiny before finalising the budget.

The Vice Principal, Finance and Estates gave an overview of the background to the deficit budget, explaining that this was due to a flat cash grant-in-aid settlement and the need to build in a cost of living pay award and inflationary uplift to non-staff costs.

The committee noted that while the removal of a number of HNC courses from the curriculum plan due to low demand has resulted in reduced SAAS income, there is an increase in income from students articulating to university.

The committee discussed what the college can do to support the economically inactive demographic. The Principal noted that this will be dependent on government priorities and that the college does as much as possible within available funding and continues to look for additional funding to support economic regeneration.

The committee thanked the Vice Principal, Finance and Estates and the wider finance team for their efforts on the budget.

The committee agreed to recommend approval of the Annual Budget for 2024-25 to the Board of Governors.

#### **4 Matters for Committee Information**

##### **4.1 SFC Credit and Funding Allocation 2024-25**

The committee noted the paper.

##### **4.2 Voluntary Severance Scheme 2023-24**

The Vice Principal, Finance and Estates updated the committee on the outcome of the voluntary severance scheme. The committee was informed that each application was carefully considered on a business case basis and against the criteria that the post would not be back-filled.

The UNISON trade union member confirmed that relationships with staff are very good and communications were handled well. The committee also noted the college has restated its position on no compulsory redundancies.

The committee noted the paper and congratulated the college on a well-managed scheme that has achieved positive outcomes. The committee passed thanks to the HR team for their work on this.

#### **4.3 Financial Management: April 2024 Management Accounts**

The committee noted the accounts presented are for March 2024 due to staff absence. The committee was content to note the March accounts update.

#### **4.4 Alternative Income Report**

The Vice Principal, People, Performance and Improvement introduced the report.

The committee noted an application has been made to the local authority for a 3-year funding allocation to support the training of employees in local businesses. £100k has been secured for 2024-25 with potential further funding in subsequent years.

The committee noted the college has been given an extension to the Children's Hearing Scotland (CHS) contract for 2024-25. The committee noted this contract will either go out to tender in 2025 or be delivered in-house.

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

To invite Linda Quinn to attend a future meeting of the committee to illustrate the excellent work of the CHS Learning Academy team.

The Principal highlighted the hard work on this contract by the Vice Principal, People, Performance and Improvement and Linda Quinn on the CHS contract, and Louise McDonald for her work to secure economic development funding.

The committee noted the report.

#### **4.5 Human Resources and People Development Report**

The Head of HR and People Development introduced the report. The committee noted the positive work done to manage staff absence and the positive feedback from Investors in People review, particularly given the voluntary severance scheme was running at the same time as the review.

It was noted our Carer Positive accreditation has been upgraded to 'Established' due to progress made, and the Mainstreaming Equalities Committee continues to make good progress hearing from external stakeholders such as the West Lothian African Women's Network and

students. Work is continuing to achieve the Silver Award for the Armed Forces Covenant

The committee noted the report.

#### **4.6 College Employers Scotland Update**

The committee heard an update on the current industrial action being taken by the EIS. The committee noted the 4-year pay claim that has now been submitted by the EIS.

The committee noted the update.

### **5 Matters for Information**

#### **5.1 Student Funds Update 2023-24**

The committee noted the additional payments made to FE and HE students as well as the £500 payment being made to returning students to reduce financial hardship over the summer period.

The committee was pleased to hear the college has been recognised by the Scottish Funding Council as a great example of an excellent student support department in practice.

#### **5.2 Credit Target Update 2023-24**

The committee noted the credit target update.

### **6 Any Other Business**

#### **6.1 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers**

The committee was content with the quality of papers presented and sufficiency of information.

##### **Ex-gratia payment:**

The committee agreed to make the ex-gratia payment and that this matter had been appropriately dealt with by email prior to the meeting.

##### **Thanks to the Chair of the Board:**

The committee noted the support and encouragement given by the Chair of the Board to committee business, to the college and to the West Lothian community.

**7 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be Tuesday 10 September 2024 at 10.30 am.

**8 Committee Self-Assessment**

**8.1 Finance and General Purposes Committee Self-Assessment Review 2023-24**

The committee participated in a self-assessment review of committee effectiveness for 2023-24. Areas of strength were agreed and items for development recorded for inclusion in the board development plan.

**Note: There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared a 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: .....