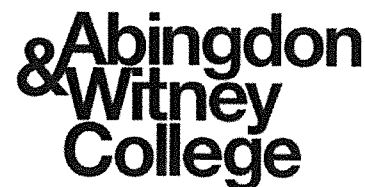


**Corporation Board
Finance and General Purposes Committee**



Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 22 November 2022 at 6pm
Board Room, Abingdon Campus

Board members:

Nick Handy (Chair)
Jacqui Canton (Principal)
Howard Dodd
Alan Bark
Edward Collett

In attendance:

Olivier Cognard (Vice Principal)
Penny Challans (Interim Head of Finance)
Mark Lay (Finance Director)
Yvonne Mortimer (H&S Manager)
Jo Milsom (Deputy Principal)
Simon Kibble (Vice Principal)
Kelly Haddrell (Head of HR)
Laura Grainger (Clerk)

Apologies:

Michael Chiyasa (Head of Estates & Capital Development)
Robert Weavers

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are in italics.

1 – Opening comments

1.1 – Apologies and any other business

Apologies were received from Robert Weavers and Michael Chiyasa. As an item of other business, the Chair advised the committee that by the next meeting he would have reached the end of his term of office as Chair. It was proposed that the Chair stand for an additional term. All members agreed.

1.2 – declarations of interest

No new declarations of interest were received.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Confirm appointment of NH as chair for third term	LG	asap

1 – Minutes of previous meetings

1.1 – Public minutes

Members approved the public minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 27 September 2022 as accurate and appropriate for signature. There were no confidential minutes from the previous committee.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Recirculate final minutes	LG	asap

2 – Matters arising, written resolutions and action points

The Finance Director confirmed that the uncompleted action regarding an alternative to the LGPS was now obsolete following the decision of the ONS to reclassify the FE sector as public sector.

The committee noted the report.

3 – Reports

3.1 – Health and Safety report

The Health and Safety Manager introduced the report. It was confirmed that some training for staff is mandatory – e.g. Safeguarding and fire awareness. The number of task based risk assessments completed has increased significantly to 429. There are more student trips take place. The number of student risk assessments completed is increasing, with the College looking at flowforma as a electronic solution to support timely completion.

- Why are individual student risk assessments required? *These are personal risk assessments, for example if an individual needs a personal emergency evacuation plan.*
- What is RIDDOR? *Injuries that we have to formally report to the Health and Safety Executive. They tend to be if someone has had an injury at work that causes them to be off work for longer than 7 days.*

The committee noted the paper.

3.2 – HR staff survey headline report

Committee members were advised that the survey took place in April 22 which was before the pay award.

- Can the low proportion of respondents be increased? *Yes we are looking how we can get more staff to fill this in. Perhaps even carving time out in the day for them to complete the survey. We are also looking at ‘you said, we did’ so that staff members can see we are acting on their feedback.*
- You highlighted some of the negatives, but the unusual one was q1 about staff not being afraid to say what they think. *Yes, we were surprised by this. We are below average which is a concern but this is being investigated internally.. A survey can only tell you part of the picture. We are following up on these with face to face discussions with staff and we are getting more feedback following these sessions.*
- Has the high level of people thinking of leaving translated into people leaving? *We discussed staff turnover at the previous F&GP, and I think it did materialise. This may not still be the issues moving forward but we are keeping an eye on this. The number of resignations has slowed down now.*
- The graph on the last page which shows college rankings show that we are above average, so should we take some comfort in that? *Yes. We give ourselves a hard time, but even our lowest scoring question is above average of other colleges.*
- It is often the focus groups and discussion groups which gives the best data on staff views and concerns along with resignation data so it will be interesting to see resignation rates now.
- We need to ensure that all actions coming out of the discussion groups actually happen.

The committee noted the report.

3.3 – Capital projects and estates report

3.3.1 – Public report

The Finance Director summarised the report. The T Level Wave 3 capital project is nearly complete. The Buttercross building project is due to complete in the next few weeks. We have declined the T Level Wave 4 Capital project as we will not be offering the qualification in this wave. We have submitted three bids for post-16 Capacity and Delivery Funding, the submission of which you approved by written resolution. T Level Wave 5 capital bids are now open for submission with a closing date of 3 Feb 2023 and we intend to submit a proposal for media and animal management again. Utility usage has reduced, in part to a change in the heating timetable and reduction to the temperature we heat to. Our insurers are paying for subsidence in Early Building which is a significant achievement from the Head of Capital Projects and Estates.

- What will Buttercross be used for? *Access to Learning provision. The rooms have been designed to be small, to support their delivery.*
- Are there any new t levels we are looking into? *Not at the moment.*

The committee noted the paper.

3.3.2 – Confidential report

The committee noted the paper with no matters arising.

3.3.3 – Estates maintenance annual report

The Finance Director presented the report.

- Would it be possible to merge table 3 with condition, as it would be good to see what the condition of each campus is. *Yes, we can look at doing that.*

There was discussion about reactive maintenance and the call volumes, and minor capital projects for the coming year.

The committee noted the paper.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Merge table 3 with condition in order to illustrate the condition of each campus	MCh	16 March 23

4 – Policies

4.1 – IT policy

The committee recommended the policy to Board for approval.

4.2 – Staff disciplinary policy

The Head of HR confirmed that this policy now combines the alcohol and drug policy and the policy relating to allegations against staff. There have been no fundamental changes just the merging of the policies in order to reduce the number of different policies we have.

- It is possible to see a tracked changes version? *Normally we would provide this, but because these are new policies which combine things we haven't done this. We can confirm though that there is no new content. We have just combined them into one document.*

The committee recommended the policy to Board for approval.

4.3 – Staff performance and attendance policy

The Head of HR confirmed that the main change is at 2.3.3 where we have clarified phased return to work and how we manage pay in relation to this.

The committee approved the policy.

5 – Finance matters

5.1 – Management accounts for the year to 30 September 2022

The Finance Director updated the Committee and summarised key points from the paper. The College is largely in line with the budget. Inflation has not yet started to impact the college significantly. We have added a new table showing the headcount by department in order to provide more detailed information about staffing levels. We are compliant with our bank covenants.

- Why is there a variance showing on depreciation? *We have a few capital purchases not yet added to the Fixed Asset Register which we need to add and start depreciating. These will be caught up by the next meeting.*

The committee recommended the paper to Board.

5.2 – Update on the 2022/23 financial budget

The Finance Director presented the report which provided an update on the budget for this year and was not intended to be a formal reforecast. There is a possibility that in year funding to support our increase in 16 – 19 students could be received in March 2023, but this hasn't been included as an assumption. Pay costs are slightly higher than budget at the moment, however the removal of 1.25% of NI will help with this. The number of staff vacancies is still high and we now need to cover some posts with agency staff which will increase costs. No material impact has been seen from inflation, and there has been no change on the cost of energy since the last meeting.

- Do we expect a reduction from 1720-30 of 16-18 enrolled students? Numbers are not yet finalised but it is highly likely that we will receive in *year growth*.
- Have we utilised the remaining the £100k OAL provision? *No, the continuing need for this will be reviewed at the year end.*

Cashflow is projected to be £200,000 lower than forecast by year end primarily because we had assumed that we would deliver T Level Wave 4 and we would have received the grant for the equipment this year. Our financial health grade will not be adversely affected.

- There are two versions of cash flow which is confusing. *The management accounts version is prepared before the forecast one – going forward we will ensure they are the same.*
- Apprenticeship income is a concern; HE income which is down, and the future for HE is uncertain. Will it become unviable?; and interest rates are also expected to increase further.

The committee noted the update paper.

5.3 – College energy cost update

It was confirmed that work is being undertaken to reduce the college's consumption of energy. In the new year we will start to investigate new suppliers in advance of the end of our fixed term tariff in October 2023.

- What do you think will be the increase in costs when this fixed term period ends? *It is likely that electricity costs will triple based on current rates.*

The committee noted the verbal update.

5.4 – Alternative to LGPS update

The College is waiting for the triennial actuarial valuation from the LGPS before taking this forward.

The committee noted the verbal update.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Add to agenda for next meeting.	LG	16 March 23

5.5 –Bank loans / fixed rates

The Finance Director confirmed that our current agreement with Barclays does not allow us have some of the loan fixed and some on a variable rate. Barclays have given us a quote of £3k plus vat to put the amend the agreement to allow us to do this.

The committee discussed current interest rates and the likelihood of these changing in the future.

The committee agreed that there was limited risk at present and the college should therefore keep the current loan agreements in place, but keep these under review.

The committee were advised that the College currently has funds on deposit earning interest. The Finance Director also advised that due to the forecasted timing of receipts and payments he had asked Barclays to temporarily increase the overdraft facility in early 2023 as there is a potential risk that the current £500k facility will not be high enough.

5.6 – ESFA confirmation of Financial Forecasting returns

The Finance Director advised that this report shows us where the College is in relation to the sector. It continues to be the case that a Requires Improvement grade does not generate intervention from the ESFA.

The committee noted this report.

6 – General purposes

6.1 – FOI update

The committee reviewed the FOI requests and noted the paper.

6.2 – Student numbers enrolment update

The Vice Principal Funding, Planning and Systems Improvement outlined the current enrolment position. We currently have c. 1745 of 16-18 enrolments and the number used for funding allocations for next year will be finalised in a few weeks. The largest increase is in construction and all others are above target. The lowest increase is in land-based industries which did not recruit as well as we had hoped.

- What is the reason for low land based recruitment? *We are looking at it now. We had overestimated growth in equine as they increased in previous years and we had no reason to assume this increase would not continue. Some faculties have also recruited later starters but the farm faculty has been less inclined to do this.*
- Can we show last year's recruitment levels in the same report, as well as the target? *Yes, we can do this.*
- What are the trends in relation to land-based industries? What are students thinking? *It's a low paid sector so it's always been challenging to recruit for that reason. Not sure people understand the opportunities in this section with high tech. There is a perception piece we can do. Also, quite difficult to get to the farm despite the bus we run from Witney campus. We need to do a more detailed piece of work to understand this more fully.*

The Vice Principal Commercial and Adult Provision provided an update. The Adult Education Budget income stream is being target and we are working with Heads of Faculty to develop new provision for this year and next. Opportunities to meet target through subcontract are now limited. Higher Education numbers continue to decline in line with the national picture. Apprenticeship income is also being target and we are working to address this. We continue to see challenges particularly due to the cost of living and the apprenticeship wage. We are in the development stage of a project with a groundworks company. We need to recruit a plumbing lecturer urgently as apprenticeship recruitment is currently not possible without additional staff.

- What has happened to the Oxford football academy? *This would be 16 to 18 full time students not apprenticeships, but the academy is currently on hold for this year, will a plan to restart in September 2023.*
- Are we attracting apprentices and cannot take them, or are there not enough apprentices? *There are plenty of opportunities for companies to take apprentices but we need to attract apprentices into these places. We currently have vacancies in our business development team which also impacts our ability to attract employers to work with.*
- This is the most in depth information we have had of the state of play at this time of the year. The VP Funding, Planning and Systems Improvement should be congratulated on being able to provide this level of detail.

The committee noted the paper.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Add comparison to last year into the Power BI report	OC	16 March 23

7 – Financial statements

7.1 – Financial statements 2021/22

Some of the numbers have had slight adjustments on page 4. The Committee Chair had also provided some feedback in relation to the detail included in the report, and this feedback would be actioned prior to the submission of the statements to the Board.

- Is the reference to Stonewall necessary? *Yes, we understand your concerns but it is still an award that is recognised positively by students.*

The committee recommend the statement to Audit committee and Board.

7.2 – Accounting estimates overview

The committee discussed the report.

- Has anything changed from last year? *LGPS assumptions – column 3, we could have asked the actuaries to amend the assumptions but it decided it was not necessary*
- How much is involved in the photocopier leases? *About £4k.*

The committee noted the report.

7.3 – Self-assessment of financial propriety and regularity

The committee agreed that this paper should be the remit of the Audit Committee.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Remove from the business plan.	Clerk	ASAP

8 – Any other Business

None

9 – Future business and reflection

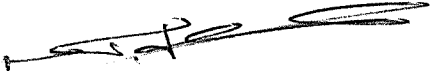
- There appears to be a 6 monthly password reset on governor IT accounts – can we look at amending this college rule without exposure to unnecessary risk? *We will investigate.*
- There was a problem accessing the PDF version of the papers this time. *Apologies, we will investigate.*

Action	By whom	Deadline
Check the PDFs issue – why didn't it work for some people	Clerk	ASAP
Check the password issue – you cannot log on remotely	Clerk	ASAP

10 - Date of next meeting – Thursday 16 March 2023

The meeting closed at 19.35

Approved for signature..... N HARDY

Signature..... 

Date..... 28/3/23