

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 28th September 2021 at 6pm

Present	In attendance	
Jacqui Canton, Principal	Mark Lay, Finance Director	John Revis, Head of Occupational Safety & Health
Nick Handy, Chair	Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal	Kelly Haddrell, Head of HR (to end of item 6)
Roger File	Stuart Hay, Head of Finance	Victoria Hazel, Assistant to the Board
Sean Wellington	Michael Chiyasa, Head of Estates & Capital Development (to end of item 6)	
Howard Dodd		
Ed Collett, Staff Governor		

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, management responses are italicized.

1. Election of Committee Chair

In error the reappointment of the Chair of this committee this was not discussed at the last meeting. The Chair withdrew from the meeting whilst the matter was discussed. The committee unanimously agreed to re-appoint Nick Handy as the Chair for a further two-year term.

2. Opening comments

2.1 Apologies, new declarations of interest, matters to be raised under Any Other Business

The Chair introduced Victoria Hazel in attendance to record the meeting minutes. The meeting was quorate. Howard Dodd declared that Ed Noble was going to spread manure on his land.

Whether Post Investment Appraisals should be included as part of the Standing Policy will be discussed under item 11 Any Other Business.

3. Minutes of previous meetings

3.1 Public minutes

Governors commented that the minutes recorded did not fully reflect the full range of the discussions on the budget as they were confidential in nature.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Comments on the budget discussed at previous meeting to be sent to Nick Handy to be recorded as a confidential minute.	The committee members in attendance at the previous meeting	Before November F&GP meeting

The committee approved the public minutes of the previous meeting.

3.2 Confidential minutes

No comments. The committee approved the confidential minutes of the previous meeting.

4. Matters arising, written resolutions & action points

All matters arising have been completed.

5. Committee Cycle of Business

The Chair recognised that many of the Terms of Reference were being duplicated across the Cycles of Business for several committees.

The Principal recognised the Committee Business Plan in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 did not match. These have been combined into one Cycle of Business for Consideration (Appendix 4).

It was agreed that the budget paper should be noted rather than recommended to the Board as this is an update on performance against the approved budget.

- Should a review of the main themes of the budget be included in the Cycle of Business in March, as part of a move towards a supportive rather than reviewing role of this committee? *This could replace the working group and look at the budget at a macro level ahead of the new financial year.*

The questions posed in Appendix 4 were considered:

- Should we again consider a joint Audit / F&GP meeting? *The role of the two chairs was slightly confused and overlapping. The chair of each committee could attend the meeting of the other rather than the full committees meet jointly. Members are allowed to attend the meetings of the other committee, this will be reminded and encouraged.*
- Do we still wish to see a high-level risk register once a year? *As this is also seen by the Audit Committee and the Board it was agreed that there is no need for this committee to also see it separately.*

Actions	By Whom	Deadline
Terms of Reference (Appendix 3) to be reviewed and separated into those relevant to specific committees and those relevant to all committees	Clerk (once appointed)	Once new Clerk is appointed
Budget review to be added to the Cycle of Business for March	Clerk (once appointed)	Once new Clerk is appointed
High-level risk register to be removed from the Cycle of Business for this committee	Clerk (once appointed)	Once new Clerk is appointed

The committee approved the Cycle of Business (Appendix 4).

6. Annual reports

6.1 Annual Occupational Safety and Health report

The Head of OSH updated the committee on 3 serious RIDDOR reportable incidents that have occurred in September 2021. Two have been reported to RIDDOR and the college insurers, the third incident occurred today and will be reported tomorrow.

These are not included in the annual report presented to the committee in this meeting as the report covers the previous academic year. It was noted that these incidents should be separately reported to the Board as they would not be included in the annual report.

The first two incidents occurred over 21 days ago and the college has not been contacted by HSE for further investigation of these incidents.

- Has there been an increase in accidents due to any issues with people being back on site and working with equipment after being off-site for large parts of the last 18 months? *This does not appear to be a contributing factor in any of these three incidents. However the OSH and SMT team are mindful of the fact that campus is now busier than it has been for some time and are refreshing training and risk assessments to reflect this.*

The Head of OSH introduced his annual report for the academic year 2020-21.

The academic year 2020-2021 was dominated by the impact of national restrictions and lockdown on the operation of the college and the demand on the Occupational Safety & Health team.

Accidents reported during 2020-21 were down on the previous year, partly due to the fact that there were minimal staff and students on site for parts of the year. No incidents required reporting to RIDDOR.

- Can graphs be provided with year-on-year tracking in future? *Governors can have access to see the dashboard with all the data from previous years.*
- Does the college use dashcams on college vehicles? *These have not been used previously but will be considered as could protect the driver in the event of an incident.*
- Is there a college policy on the maximum age or milage of college vehicles in use? *Not a policy at the moment but this will be considered as it is recognised that driving is one of the most potentially dangerous activities carried out by the college.*

- Why is the report of Near Misses so low? *The OSH team is having a focus on raising awareness amongst staff of recording Near Miss incidents through training, reminders and new recording systems.* It was noted that the creation of a “budget” for near misses would highlight low reporting to the responsible managers.

The Annual Occupational Health and Safety Report was approved for recommendation to the Board.

Actions	By Whom	Deadline
Bring the recent RIDDOR reportable accidents to the attention of the Board	Member of F&GP Committee reporting results of meeting to Board	October Board Meeting
Review the creation of near miss budgets to increase reporting of near misses	Head of OHS	By the next report

6.2 Annual HR report

The Head of HR introduced her annual report for the academic year 2020-21, highlighting an increase in staff turnover (although still within sector averages), decreased sickness absence and increase in HR casework.

- Could we have an update on the recruitment of staff for Bicester Construction Centre? *Construction trades remain difficult to recruit for due to the difference in salary compared to industry roles. An incentive payment is available for offer where necessary. A new focus on the wording of vacancies has recently been adopted.*
- Why do we have sickness recorded separately for anxiety, depression and stress? *This is due to the way that the reason for absence is recorded by doctors on fitness for work notes.*
- Does the college record ‘near miss’ incidents for health and wellbeing such as stress? *We don’t report data on near misses but information is available in files notes from staff discussions so that a proactive approach can be taken.*
- The cost implications of staff sickness and absence could have more impact on the college financially than RIDDOR reportable incidences but are possibly not recognised as seriously? *Mental health first aiders and wellbeing champions across the organisation. Monthly meetings are held with department heads to address any areas of concern in the team. Support and training is available for roles recognised to have a high likelihood of involvement in mental health issues.*
- Is staff turnover likely to get worse? *It is difficult to predict. There is scope for further work to be done on retention. Pay is recognised as a significant factor as many other local employers are raising wages for hard-to-fill roles such as cleaners and adopting the Oxford Living Wage.*

The Annual HR Report was approved for recommendation to the Board.

6.3.1 Estates and Capital Resources

The Head of Estates and Capital Resources introduced the report ‘Estates Management and Capital Projects report – public matters’. The report highlighted that work has commenced on the Green Construction Skills site and the T Levels wave 2 project construction phase was delivered during the summer break.

- What ‘green tech’ is being fitted at the Green Construction Skills Centre? *Solar panels and two rooms (demonstration and renewables) will be readied for equipment, which will be provided by industry. The Capital Estates budget could not extend to fitting out the equipment inside.*
- What is the current situation with the Buttercross Building in Witney? *The first floor has been closed off from use and a bid has been submitted for works to repair to a level suitable for use as a teaching space again.*
- Is there any clawback on capital funding? *The Head of Finance for the college has to report on any unspent funds. There is little likelihood of any spare funds from capital grants.*

The report was approved for recommendation to the Board.

6.3.2 Estates and Capital Resources – confidential report

Confidential minutes were taken in relation to this item.

6.4 Annual Report Ongoing Estates Maintenance and Refurbishment

The Head of Estates and Capital Resources introduced the Annual Report on Ongoing Estates Maintenance and Refurbishment.

No comments or questions on the report.

The report was approved for recommendation to the Board.

7. Student numbers and funding matters

7.1 Enrolment update

Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal, gave an update on enrolment. The report highlighted that enrolment on core provision and adult education is on track, whilst enrolment on HE is below expected. Apprenticeship recruitment is ahead of expectation for core provision and for Bicester recruitment is on track for number of students but forecasting a financial shortfall due to the lower value courses most candidates have enrolled on.

- Do we have any data on where the withdrawals go instead? *We do attempt to contact all withdrawals but it is not always possible to make contact with them.*
- Which is the highest value course offered at Bicester? *Gas Engineer as a shorter duration and higher funding value.*
- Can we focus recruitment onto this higher value course? *We are focusing on this but the course entry requirements mean a smaller pool of eligible applicants. Bucks College Group have delayed their start for this course until Jan so we are carrying out some targeted marketing in response to this.*
- What is the capacity at Bicester and what are the current learner numbers? *The site has a total capacity of approx. 260 learners in total. We currently have approx. 100 active learners.*

The principal asked the committee whether it was useful to see student numbers as an enrolment update as has not been previously included in this committee's meetings. Governors agreed that it was useful to be included regularly going forwards as vital for income stream.

The report was approved for recommendation to the Board.

8. Finance

8.1 Management Accounts to 31 July 2021 and provisional out-turn 2020-21

The Head of Finance introduced the Management Accounts to 31 July 2021 and provisional out-turn 2020-21.

Due to the increased cash holdings, the College's financial health grade for 2020/21 is "Good" and all bank covenants have been met.

- What were the staff settlements mentioned in the accounts? *Contractual obligations in respect of staff who left. One case has been settled, the other is about to be. Staff cost as a proportion of overall income will be looked at as part of the strategy day on 6th October.*
- Would it be useful to carry out some variance analysis to identify what is contributing to shortfall, including revisiting original projections for large expenditure projects rather than reviewing them against the current years' budget? *This is being prepared for the strategy day on 6th October but we could schedule this to happen on an ongoing basis.*

The report was noted by the committee.

8.2 Update on 2021-22 Budget

The Finance Director introduced the Update on the 2021-22 Budget. As the date is still very early in the academic year the forecast reflects only a few known changes.

No comments or question were raised by the committee.

The report was noted by the committee.

8.3 Major Capital Projects Pipeline

The Finance Director introduced the report on Major Capital Projects Pipeline.

- Is repair the most sensible option for the Buttercross Building and are there any potential liabilities with neighbours for consequential damage? *Demolishing and rebuilding not practical due to the way the building adjoins others and borders premises not belonging to the college.*
- Do we have a structural report for the Buttercross Building so we can manage any potential liabilities? *The building has been structurally assessed and a report is available. The report will be updated annually. If we are not successful with the funding for repairs, an update on the structural report will become a part of regular reporting from the Head of Estates and Capital Development.*

The report was noted by the committee.

8.4 Construction Skills Academy update

The Principal presented an update on the Construction Skills Academy.

The report was noted by the committee.

9. Committee self-assessment

The committee reflected on function over the previous academic year and concluded that the committee had operated as well as possible in the circumstances of the pandemic and had met their objectives, but with scope to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the committee given the changing Covid environment.

Face-to-face meetings were agreed as preferable but with the option of holding a virtual meeting should some members be unable to attend in-person.

- Do we have the technology to hold hybrid meetings? *Yes we have 'roundtable' technology for holding hybrid meetings.*

Governors considered whether the full reports to the Board need to be included in the papers for this committee or only the headline key issues. A sub-committee could be agreed to review the management accounts information and select the key information required to be presented to this committee.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Review whether full reports need to be presented to this committee or reduced to key headlines.	Clerk (once appointed)	Once new Clerk appointed

10. Policies and other matters

10.1 Tuition Fees Policy 2022/23

A minor alteration was identified as required under section 2. 'Fee principles by category of learner'. For apprentices materials and fees, under the Apprenticeship Funding Rules the cost of 19+ professional body fees should not be paid by the learner.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Edit the apprentice materials and fees to clarify that professional body fees should be paid by the employer.	Mark Lay	November meeting of the F&GP Committee

The report was approved for recommendation to the Board.

11. Any other Business

A proposal was made for a post-investment appraisal review to be held 1 and 3 years after a major capital spend to examine how the college has achieved against initial objectives.

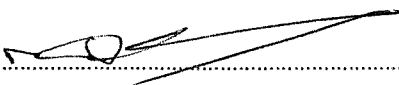
12. Future Business and Reflection

No comments or concerns were raised by the committee.

13. Date of next meeting – 23rd November 2021

The meeting ended at 8.25pm.

Approved for signature..... N. HANDY

Signature..... 

Date..... 28/3/23