



CORPORATION BOARD Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 23rd November 2023 at 6pm

Present

Nick Handy (Chair).
Alan Bark, *Governor*.
Jacqui Canton, *Principal & CEO*.
Mackenzie Nordal, *Governor*
Edward Collett, *Staff Governor*

In attendance

Jo Milsom, Deputy Principal.
Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal of Funding, Planning & Systems Improvement.
Mark Lay, Finance Director.
Penny Challans, Head of Finance.
Kelly Haddrell, Head of HR.
Michael Chiyasa, Head of Estates and Capital Development.
Howard Stamp, Clerk and Governance Advisor (minutes).
Melissa Drayson, External Governance Reviewer (observing)

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

1. Opening Comments

1.1 Apologies, new declarations of interest and matters to be raised under AOB.

Apologies had been received from Jessica Weavers-Medina. There were no matters to be raised under AOB. No declarations of interest were made.

The Chair welcomed Melissa Drayson to the meeting, in attendance to observe the meeting as part of the External Governance Review.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023

One item was noted to be added to the minutes, for the investment appraisal to be presented as an item at the March committee meeting.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Post investment appraisal to be added to the next meeting agenda.	Clerk	March 2024

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3 Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points

The Clerk presented the actions for the previous meetings. There were no actions outstanding.

The committee noted the report.

4 Term 1 Update Reports

4.1 HR Report including Staff Survey

The Deputy Principal presented the report, highlighting that the report was focused on the HR staff survey. The committee recognised the outcomes of a staff survey can often be challenging to interpret. The college had already arranged for some staff focus group to follow up on some of the outcomes.

The committee noted that the outcomes overall were positive, understanding there are some areas where it seems improvements could be made.

- Has the survey stayed the same over the period of time in the report? *Yes, the survey questions have broadly stayed the same with some small additions*
- Regards the data, has it been shared back to the teams? *The Head of HR has shared this with Faculty and Department Heads.*
- Is there a working group that then looks into this data? *Not specifically, but there are a series of staff workshops throughout the year where we try to understand in more detail some of the themes from the survey.*

It was noted that some of the themes arising from the survey were issues already known to the SMT and work had already begun prior to the survey ending to address these issues. This includes regular feedback to all staff in the form of Principal's Briefings.

- Is there a benchmarking tool for colleges on the survey? *Yes, unfortunately our data is not included in the benchmarking tool this year, however we are able to review against other colleges, although not all colleges are part of the data set.*

The Committee noted the report.

4.2 Estates and Capital Development

The Head of Estates and Capital Development presented the report. He highlighted the key areas including an update on the T levels wave 5 animal care project, where there are still delays due to the bat survey being required in Spring. There are ongoing discussions with the DfE to seek a proactive solution to alter the project which will ensure the college can utilise the DfE grant within the deadline.

- Does this impact delivery at the campus? *We can begin delivery in September 24 and are seeking to modify the existing building to support this. We are also looking at the funds allocated from the college to support improvements at the farm to ensure T levels can still start from September 24.*

An update was provided on the pending outcome Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) bid to support Electrical Engineering workshops at Abingdon. The English and Maths hub is in procurement stage. There were a number of routine updates on the planned maintenance ongoing at the college.

- GCC Building, is that Green Construction? *Yes, it is, the construction of it required installation of a fire hydrant; the discussions are ongoing to ensure this is completed.*

There was discussion around the fire safety audit following an incident in the kiln room. The reviewers were satisfied with the college's process in place and lessons had been made from the incident. There had also been some recommendations received which were being actioned.

The committee noted the report.

4.3 Occupational Safety and Health

The Finance Director presented the report, highlighting the key points relating to the first three months of the academic year. This included the item covered in the estates report of the fire incident. Noting that the work within health and safety has varied requirements, two new staff posts have been added to the organisation structure – one to focus on staff occupational health and safety, and one to focus on student welfare and safety items, allowing the manager to focus on wider health and safety and compliance. It was also highlighted that a new Head of Health & Safety would be start in January 2024.

- There was one RIDDOR incident that seemed quite serious, how did this happen? *It has been investigated and there has been nothing identified as a concern and the staff member has been supported.*

The committee noted the report.

4.4 Enrolments

The Vice Principal of Funding, Planning & Systems Improvement provided a verbal update on enrolments. There had not been any significant changes from the update provided to the Board in October and the college remained on target for all funding streams. The 16-19 enrolments specifically remained ahead of previous years as previously reported. This would mean the college remains on track for the additional in year funding from the EFSA due to increased student numbers.

- Do we have a sense on enrolment for areas that are capable of growth or would like growth and how does this fit with the whole strategy? *Some areas have grown more than others, it can be very difficult to forecast due to the decision making of young people.*
- Is more always better in every area? Is there capacity? *Generally, yes, there are some course-by-course numbers that must be monitored. As it stands, we do have capacity for the growth.*
- Is this growth a one off for this year or do we expect similar numbers next year? *It is very early, However, with this year's growth and rising demographics we do expect similar numbers to come through for next year's cohort, at this stage it looks like the growth will be sustained.*

The Committee noted the verbal update.

5. Finance Matters

5.1 Management accounts to 31 October 2023

The Head of Finance presented the report, focusing on the results for the first 3 months of the year. The KPIs following the audit are good and are on target. The operational tracker has now been updated for the current financial year.

- What are the funds for European Social Fund? *It is a project we have been working on with SMEs offering apprenticeship and employment skills.*
- Who funds this? *European Social Fund, this is the last bit of EU funding.*
- What is LSIF? *Locals Skills Improvement Fund, this is replacing European Social Fund*

It was highlighted that the payroll costs remain above budget even though the FTEs remain below, however this is due to the agreed pay increase that was above that included in the original budget.

The committee asked for some comparison information on payroll against other colleges if it is available.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Head of Finance to carry out benchmarking analysis of pay against other colleges where the data is available.	Clerk	March 2024

The committee recommended the accounts to the Board.

5.2 Update on 23-24 Budget

The Finance Director presented the update on the 2023/24 budget, highlighting updates that include changes to income that were expected for the year following the 16-19 increased enrolments and including the approved changes regards pay increases.

It was noted that the ESFA have historically paid the in-year funding to colleges where there has been a large increase in student numbers, however it was brought to the committee's attention that there are more colleges in a similar position, and this could mean a risk that the ESFA does not pay in the same way they have before. This is not a high risk but should be noted..

The high needs income from Oxfordshire County Council was outlined. This is expected to increase for this year compared to what was included in the budget. As enrolments are still taking place, the process is ongoing.

The committee commented that the budget is reasonable with the knowledge held by the college as it stands. It was agreed the increase in income was a welcome picture but should be approached prudently as had been outlined in the budget paper.

5.3 ESFA letter on CFFR financial health

The Finance Director presented the report, highlighting to the committee the annual return required by ESFA. It was noted that the return matches the previous reports to both the ESFA and the Board.

The committee recommended the report to the Board.

6. Financial Statements

6.1 Financial Statements including:

- **Strategic Report**
- **Governance and members' report**
- **Financial Statements and supporting notes to the accounts**

The Chair outlined the role of the committee in the review of the financial statements, requiring the committee to focus on the numbers, which would then be presented to the Audit committee who would look at the systems and process role in preparation of the statements.

The Finance Director presented the financial statements. A review of the accounts had already taken place between the Chair of F&GP and the Finance Director. The Chair supported the accounts outlining to the committee some points that had been raised as part of the review and amendments made as necessary.

The key points were outlined to the committee, including a key point around the pensions asset that is unusual to have and explaining therefore how this has been accounted for.

There was good discussion from the committee around the accounts presented. The committee agreed the strategic report matched the information that had been presented across the year and they were therefore assured of the statements.

The committee recommended the accounts to be presented to the Audit committee and to the Board for approval.

6.2 Accounting estimates overview

The Finance Director presented the papers that support the financial statements, explaining that this paper was a requirement of the ESFA to explain how the college reaches the accounting estimates used within the accounts.

The committee recommended the document to the Audit committee.

6.3 Self-assessment of Financial Propriety and Regularity

The Finance Director presented the papers that support the financial statements, explaining that this report is a set questions from the ESFA that allows the college to highlight how the standards for propriety and regularity are met.

The committee recommended the document to the Audit committee.

7. Policies – Covering Paper

7.1 Freedom of information Policy

The Clerk presented the policy to the committee, outlining this is a refreshed policy that remains in line with the colleges requirement to meet the Freedom of Information Act.

The committee recommended the policy to the Board.

7.2 Expenses Policy

The Finance Director presented the policy to the committee, highlighting that the main change was an increase to the meal allowances. Information had also been added to clarify the college’s intention to reduce travel where possible and travel using the most sustainable option.

The committee recommended the policy to the Board.

8. General Purposes

8.1 Freedom of Information Requests

The Clerk presented the paper outlining the two requests that have been received since the previous report all that had been actioned within the timeframe.

The committee noted the report.

8.2 Committee self-assessment

The Clerk presented the paper that combined comments received from all committee members as part of the self-assessment review. There was positive discussion from the committee, and they agreed that the committee continues to have good impact and decision making, and that there was positive discussion.

The committee noted the report.

9. Any Other Business

There were no items raised for any other business.

10. Future Business


It was agreed the post investment appraisal would be added to the future meeting. There were no other items raised outside the agreed business cycle.

The next F&GP Committee meeting was scheduled for Thursday 14th March 2024 at 6pm.

Approved for signature:

F&GP Committee 2022-23

A Bark
28/Feb/2025 13:28:02

Signature 

Date

28/02/2025



This Document has been Signed with a **secure electronic signature** via E-Sign.

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