



**FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
CONFIRMED MINUTES**

Date: 24 November 2021
Venue: New Boardroom City Campus

Clerk to the Corporation
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Present: Stephan Hollingshead (Chair)
Peter Brooks, governor
Angela Foulkes, Chief Executive and Principal and governor
Beri Hare, governor
John Mothersole, Chair of Governors
Holly Anderson, staff governor

In attendance: Alison Shillito, Governance Advisor and Clerk to the Governing Body.
Andrew Hartley, Executive Director Commercial and Operations
Martin Harrison, Executive Director Finance
Paul Simpson, Executive Director People
Kris Watson, Executive Assistant

**Action
by whom by when**

21/5/1 Welcome, introduction and apologies

- 1.1 The committee received apologies from Novaya Bedward-Makanjuola, student governor, Richard Calvert, governor and Anita Straffon, Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Principal.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Ian Falconer, chair of ARAC, to observe.

21/5/2 Declaration of interest

- 2.1 The committee noted the following standing interests.
 - Angela Foulkes, Chief Executive and Principal (CEP) as a director of college subsidiary companies would not be eligible to vote in any resolution concerning the companies.
 - Holly Anderson, staff governor, as Head of Marketing in relation to the marketing report. This was an assurance report and did not require a vote.

21/5/3 Minutes of the meeting on 15 September 2021

- 3.1 The committee approved the minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting which took place on 15 September 2021.

21/5/4 Matters Arising & Action Record

- 4.1 The committee considered progress on ongoing actions not otherwise included on the agenda as follows.

Minute 21/4/16 refers, UCU notification of an industrial dispute

The committee noted that the pay award discussed at the last meeting had been agreed with UCU, averting strike action. The committee endorsed the final award, which was within the budget approved by the Governing Body (GB).

Minute 21/4/6 refers, Capability Policy, the Chair confirmed that he had reviewed and approved the final version of the policy.

Minute 21/4/11 refers, changes to loans, the Executive Director of Finance (EDF) reported that the GB had approved the change to the base rate for calculating interest on Barclays loans but the college was awaiting correspondence from AIB on refinancing AIB loans. The committee discussed this further later in the meeting in the context of the “going concern” of the college.

[**Post meeting note**, AIB confirmed it would be offering a new loan to the college based on the most recent valuation of secured property.]

- 4.2 The committee received the Action Record, agreed that it covered the matters arising from the last meeting and approved removal of the completed actions.

21/5/5 People Report 2021-22

- 5.1 The Executive Director of People (EDP) introduced the report, which provided the committee with an in-year update for 2021-22 on the implementation of the People policies and performance against the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) agreed by governors. The EDP highlighted the following issues.

- **Extending the functionality of iTrent** for managing staff absence and Go Further Reviews (GFR) which would help managers to manage performance and have a positive impact on data reporting and manager workloads.
- **KPI targets** are on schedule except there seems to be a lag in reporting completion of GFR, which is being addressed via iTrent, and staff absence is higher than target.

- 5.2 Members considered the report and the main points discussed were as follows.

Staff absence, members asked about the causes of the increase in the absence rate in the first quarter and action being taken to address this. The EDP said that the increase was mainly due to direct or indirect impact of the covid pandemic including positive cases, self-isolation and anxiety. The main type of absence continued to be long term absence often linked to long term conditions and case work.

Career progression members welcomed that the college was responding to feedback from the Employee Engagement Survey by providing Career Maps identifying opportunities for progression. It was noted that the Vice Principal for Technical and Vocational Skills (16-19) was working alongside the People team to map roles and the skills and qualifications that staff need to progress to that role.

Mandatory training was commended for the very high rate of completion. It was also confirmed that all governors had completed the requirement to read and acknowledge receipt of the latest version of

Keeping Children Safe in Education and the CEP thanked governors for completing this action.

- 5.3 The committee received the report and members were assured that the college continued to implement its People policies effectively.

21/5/6 Policy Review: Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

The EDP introduced the periodic review of the Staff Disciplinary Policy. He explained that this was a fully revised version intended to modernize the process and reformat it to make it more user friendly. The main changes to the policy highlighted were:

- including an option of “agreed sanctions” for minor conduct issues
- clearer regulations and process on periods of suspension from duties and
- a revised appeals process.

The Joint Consultative Committee have been consulted on the changes and had said they would wish governors to continue to hear appeals against dismissal as they thought this would ensure independence.

- 6.2 The committee discussed the policy review and the main points were,

Governor panels, members acknowledged the difficulty of convening governor panels particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic and that this had led to delays in hearing appeals. This was undesirable for appellants and managers.

Impartiality, members agreed that appeal panels needed to be independent from the original dismissal decision. It was suggested that ensuring fairness and impartiality was more important than whether members were governors or managers. There might be cases where a completely independent person would be needed for a fair and impartial hearing and the policy needed to be sufficiently flexible to allow for this.

Training for appeal panel members, it was noted that some issues in college were more important than in other walks of life, such as safeguarding, and therefore members of appeal panels needed to understand the issues in managing a college as well as the process. Managers and governors involved in appeal hearings might benefit from training.

Informal disciplinary process, members recommended that informal disciplinary meetings and the outcome should be recorded for future reference with clear guidance on the circumstances when the information could be used.

Time periods for action under the policy, seemed quite long in some cases. The EDP said that cases getting to formal stage tended to be quite complex. The time scales reflected capacity within the People team to process notes, letters and actions. As far as possible, staff aimed to complete the work faster than the maximum period.

- 6.3 The committee agreed to recommend approval to the Governing Body of the Staff Disciplinary Policy, subject to the amendments agreed in the meeting and the updated draft being approved by the FEGP Chair.

ACTIONS

Amend the policy to reflect the comments on impartiality and that appeal panels may include governors and senior managers. EDP 26.11.21

FEGP chair to consider the revised policy for sign-off on behalf of the committee before it is submitted to the Governing Body for approval on 8 December 2021. FEGP Chair 30.11.21

21/5/7 Learner recruitment update

7.1 James Smythe, Vice Principal Student Experience (VPSE) joined the meeting to present the update on learner recruitment. It was noted that the RAG ratings were based on the Year-End Forecast as some funding streams recruit through the year.

7.2 The meeting considered the report and the main issue discussed was the state of the recruitment market for apprentices and other in-year recruitment.

Apprentice vacancies, the VPSE confirmed that the number of vacancies was somewhat lower than usual for the time of year but was better than at the same point in 2020-21. Employers were also contacting the college about new apprentice starts in January 2022 resulting in a positive forecast over the year, albeit with some delay.

Adult recruitment this was a positive picture with Prince's Trust provision already at full capacity. The college had also already met and exceeded the plan for adult student enrolments on level 3 qualifications, which is important as this is the type of provision in which the Combined Mayoral Authority would like to fund growth.

Young People recruitment remained above target, which should result in more funding for this stream in 2022-23.

7.3 The committee received the learner recruitment update for assurance. It was noted that for the remainder of the college year, members would monitor this via income reporting in termly finance reports.

21/5/8 Marketing update

8.1 The Executive Director Commercial and Operations (EDCO) presented an annual update on the college's marketing activity and plan for supporting recruitment, internal communications, college reputation and celebration events. Members discussed the report and noted amongst other things the important work being done by the Marketing Team supporting internal communications with staff and students currently and during pandemic lockdowns.

8.2 It was also noted that the team would be supporting the college to reapply for continued membership of the ESFA Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. Members noted the application deadline of 31 December and asked if the department had sufficient resource to prepare a high quality application in the timescale. The EDCO said that the ELT had commissioned additional external advice and support for the application as it was complex and time-consuming.

8.3 The committee received the report and congratulated the team on the high quality of campaigns, collateral and communications it provided.

21/5/9 Finance Report

- 9.1 The EDF presented the report on the college's financial position at the end of the first quarter and the main points discussed were as follows.
- **VAT case** the claim for a refund was still ongoing with HMRC. The amount was not included in the budget and ELT would bring proposals to the committee for using the amount, if successful.
 - **Finance department staffing**, since the last meeting, a new head of procurement had been appointed and would be starting shortly. The college was re-advertising the Finance Analyst role, which was delaying some reporting developments.
 - **Adult provision**, the college had submitted a business case to retain funding used during the lockdowns when it had not been possible to deliver the full allocation for adult provision. The college was awaiting the outcome of the ESFA process.
 - **Finance Record** was still being prepared. It was agreed this should be submitted directly to GB for approval with the final version of the financial statements.
 - **Pensions Statement 2020-21**, it was noted that the valuation of the fund changed significantly each year. The EDF confirmed that any refunds of pension contributions are treated as contingency funds and are not relied on for recurrent expenditure.
- 9.2 The committee received the report and noted the current position, which continued to be strong in terms of cash generation and performance against income targets.

21/5/10 Policy review: Modern Slavery Policy and Statement 2020-21

- 10.1 The EDF presented a new policy on preventing modern slavery, developed as good practice on the recommendation of the Open University during institutional re-approval. The policy provided a steer to the ongoing work to ensure the college's supply chains are free of slavery and people trafficking. The EDF said that the pace of implementing best practice in procurement would increase with the arrival of a new Head of Procurement to work with Estates colleagues.
- 10.2 The committee recommended approval by the Governing Body of the Modern Slavery Policy and the Modern Slavery Statement 2020-21, noting that FEGP would be monitoring progress on implementation.

21/5/11 Estates and sustainability update

- 11.1 The EDCO introduced the report on capital projects completed since the last meeting, projects in progress, planned maintenance and development of a new environmental strategy. It was noted that the EDCO would be completing a post implementation review of projects with value over £250K (as required by the financial regulations).
- ACTION:** schedule post implementation review for relevant projects.

EDCO TBC
/Clerk

- 11.2 In response to a member's request at the last meeting, the report included an update on overdue maintenance works. It had come to light, in responding to the query, that there were issues with a contractor's reporting system for flagging and reporting works. The

college and contractor had improved the process, which would increase efficiency in completing works and the accuracy of reporting in future.

- 11.3 The committee received the report, noted the assurance on planned maintenance and the progress on developing the Estates and Sustainability Strategy, which would be presented to GB in December.

21/5/12 Health & Safety report

- 12.1 The EDCO introduced the Health and Safety update including amendments to the Health and Safety Policy for 2021-22 and updates on:

- incidents in the first quarter of 2021-22,
- Health and Safety campaigns to prevent incidents,
- mitigating actions to manage the risk of transmission of Covid-19,
- completion of actions from the Fire Risk Assessment,
- Health and Safety management under the Interim Head of Health and Safety.

The EDCO said that Covid-19 continued to be the focus of health and safety activity. There had been a sudden increase in case numbers after the half term break but the rate had dropped to a steady small number per week. The college continued to monitor cases, promote regular asymptomatic testing and use of face coverings in communal spaces.

- 12.2 The committee received the report for assurance and approved the updates to the Health and Safety Policy, as proposed in the report.

21/5/13 Review of meeting

- 13.1 Members said that it had been an efficient meeting that had a positive impact on students for example, via the implementation of the revised Staff Disciplinary policy, which had been influenced by governor feedback. Students and staff would also benefit from the improvements to the process for planned maintenance works, which had resulted from a governor question about backlog. Regular governor attention to health and safety also had a positive impact maintaining visibility of this issue for other leaders and managers.

21/5/14 Date and time of next meeting

16 March 2022 at 0830-10.30 in the New Boardroom City Campus
22 June 2022 at 0830-10.30 in the New Boardroom City Campus