



## FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE CONFIRMED MINUTES

**Date:** 16 March 2022  
**Venue:** New Boardroom City Campus

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**Present:** Stephan Hollingshead (Chair)  
Angela Foulkes, Chief Executive and Principal and governor  
Beri Hare, governor  
John Mothersole, Chair of Governors  
Paul Senior, governor

**In attendance:** Alison Shillito, Governance Advisor and Clerk to the Governing Body.  
Martin Harrison, Executive Director Finance  
Paul Simpson, Executive Director People

**Action**  
**by**      **by**  
**whom**   **when**

### 22/2/1 Welcome, introduction and apologies

- 1.1 The committee received apologies from Holly Anderson, Novaya Bedward-Makanjuola, Richard Calvert and Andrew Hartley, Executive Director Commercial and Operations. Peter Brooks gave apologies as it had not been possible to provide videoconference facilities that would have allowed him to see and hear the meeting remotely.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Paul Senior to his first in-person meeting of the committee.
- 1.3 The meeting was quorate.

### 22/2/2 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.

### 22/2/3 Minutes of previous meetings

- 3.1 The committee confirmed the minutes of the following meetings:
  - Finance, Employment and General Purposes Committee (FEGP) meeting held on 24 November 2021
  - Joint FEGP/Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting held on 24 November 2021
  - FEGP special meeting held on 21 February 2022.

## 22/2/4 Matters Arising & Action Record

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

ARAC/FEGP Minute 21/4/3.3 refers to the Reserves Policy, the Executive Director Finance (EDF) reported that he was taking further advice on the draft policy. The committee agreed to defer the deadline for completion of the action to 22 June 2022.

EDF 22.6.22

- 4.2 The committee received the action record, agreed that it covered the matters arising from previous meetings, approved removal of the completed actions and extended the deadline for the above action.

## 22/2/5 People Report 2021-22

- 5.1 Paul Simpson, 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). The EDP highlighted the following:

- **Absence** covid-related absence had been higher in the first half term of 2022 compared to previous periods. This had led to the absence rate being above target. The college had managed the higher absence rate and it was starting to reduce.
- **Development** the college had successfully launched the Aspiring Leaders' development programme. The college had recruited two cohorts with some places targeted at staff from groups that the college equality objectives identified as under-represented in college management.
- **Go Further Reviews** the completion rate for mid-year reviews was below target. Managers had reported teething problems uploading documents to iTrent which may have contributed to a continued delay in reporting. The new People Analyst would be working to address this with the IT team. Online tracking and reporting would enable managers to monitor implementation and audit the quality of reviews to ensure they were having the desired impact on staff performance and student experience.

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

**Attraction** the committee noted recent media reports about a "crisis" in FE recruitment and asked about the college's experience of filling vacancies. The EDP said that the college was not experiencing a recruitment crisis. Challenges in recruiting to certain vacancies tended to be in those specialist roles and industries previously reported as hard to fill such as construction trades and specialist trainer/assessor roles. Amongst other actions, the college were looking at where it could progress talented people internally and had historically contacted building firms that were making redundancies to promote opportunities for experienced staff to consider a career change into FE teaching

**Reward** a member asked about progress on the 2021-22 pay claim. The EDP said that the college had received pay claims from its Recognised Trade Unions (RTUs), which included a 5% increase.

Negotiations had paused while management assessed the college's financial position following the latest business review meetings. The EDP said that colleagues seemed to be realistic about the college's financial position and the added pressure caused by the increase in employers' national insurance and pension contributions. Lower paid staff would benefit from the above inflation uplift to the Foundation Living Wage. The committee commented that increases in the cost of living would hit the lowest paid college staff hardest and that managers should consider what the college could do to address this when modelling and negotiating the pay award for 2021/22.

**People wellbeing** a member asked how the college was supporting good mental health for staff. The EDF said that the main route for monitoring mental health was via absence reports but People Business Partners were working with managers and staff to support staff who had asked for help. The college was encouraging volunteers to take the Mental Health First Aid qualification to assist colleagues in work. In addition, staff had access to confidential counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme and resources and training through the college's "A Better You" staff wellbeing website.

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

#### **22/2/6 Policy Review: Remote Working Policy**

- 6.1 The EDP presented the revised draft of the Remote Working Policy which would replace the previous Working from Home Policy. At its meeting on 15 September, the committee had considered an earlier draft of the Policy in detail and had agreed to discuss the longer-term policy once remote working due to the pandemic had been phased out. The EDP summarized the changes made in response to members' feedback, including clear expectations that managers would be on-site at least as frequently as their team members and to prioritize the student experience in determining the frequency of onsite working.
- 6.2 The committee was satisfied that managers had addressed its feedback. The committee approved the Remote Working Policy under its delegated authority to approve staff terms and conditions within the overall framework set by the Governing Body.

#### **22/2/7 Estates Capital Projects update**

- 7.1 Martin Harrison, Executive Director Finance (EDF) presented the report on behalf of the Executive Director Commercial and Operations (EDCO), on project completion and progress of the 2021-22 capital projects.
- 7.2 The meeting considered the report and the main issues discussed were as follows

**Pennine 5 Campus** the new space for adult learning, replacing Mathilda Street, was now fully fitted out and operational. The EDF said that staff and students were giving highly positive feedback on the professional setting, the flexible learning spaces, open access IT resources and informal learning spaces. The fit-out had included features from the Innovation Suites at City and Hillsborough campuses

that staff and students had said they found most useful including larger room sizes, large screens in classrooms and flexible seating. Students said that they appreciated that it was an adult space and that they were being consulted on things like food choices for the vending machines. Staff said they liked the kitchenette with social space for staff to eat lunch together. These were features that the college would consider when refurbishing other spaces.

**Digital equipment** given the dependence of staff and students on information technology, a member asked if the college accounted for this within capital expenditure. The EDF said that some of the initial investment in bulk purchase/leasing of IT equipment had been treated as capital expenditure. Now that the college had equipped staff who needed IT equipment, managers had to plan for new and replacement equipment within their revenue budget. This was made easier by the work done early in the pandemic, to agree a standard specification of the IT equipment for key roles (for example, the “Going Mobile” kit provided to teachers).

**Space design** members welcomed the assurance that the college was learning from staff and student feedback in creating new spaces. Members commented that the design of new and refurbished spaces should support the college’s ambition to become the leading provider of further education and training in the region. The CEP said the college also would be using the expertise in each faculty to create industry standard learning spaces for students. The LEP funded digital skills project had delivered industry standard facilities in collaboration with employers, and other staff wanted the same for their students.

**T Level capital fund bid** the EDF said that following the discussion at the last meeting, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) had decided to prioritize bids for building and facilities improvement grants for Construction and Healthcare. Additional facilities for construction were essential because the college was fully using its current facilities. The bid for healthcare was to provide a simulated hospital space to deliver practical elements of the T Level curriculum. The bids included the maximum level of college funding to match the grant, reflecting the college’s strong cash position.

- 7.3 The committee received the Estates Capital Projects update and welcomed that the investment was having a positive impact on staff and students. The Chair commented that the summary table in Appendix A would be even better if it included dates and timescales for each project. EDCO 22.6.22

## 22/2/8 Finance update

- 8.1 The EDF presented the report on the college’s financial position at the end of Period 6. Some of the discussion is recorded in confidential minutes, the other main points discussed were as follows.
- **Financial position** the main change to the previous report was a warning that Apprenticeship income was below target because some larger employers had delayed new starts from January to September 2022. The monthly phasing of apprenticeship payments meant that the forecast would continue to reduce against target.

- **Finance department staffing** the EDF was making progress on filling vacancies with the start of a new Finance Analyst and the new head of procurement due to start on 1 April 2022. The Finance Business Partners were receiving good feedback about the support they had provided to colleagues in business planning.
- **Subsidiary companies** the committee noted the report on the board meetings on 2 February 2022.

8.3 The committee received the report and noted the current financial position.

## 22/2/9 Policy review: Tuition Fee Policy

- 9.1 The EDF presented the updated policy. This was a routine annual update and the policy continued to follow ESFA national funding rules. The fees table and eligibility for remission of fees would be updated once the ESFA had published the updated funding rules for 2022/23.
- 9.2 The committee approved the updated policy under its delegated authority to make changes to the tuition fees policy that did not affect the educational character of the college. The approval was subject to the EDF making further updates to align fees and remission arrangements with those published by the ESFA for 2022-23.

### ACTION

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|--|-------|---------|
| i) Update the Tuition Fees Policy 2022-23 in line with the ESFA funding rules, once available                      | EDF   | 23.6.22 |
| ii) Check that different fee bands for UK, EEA and other overseas students remain valid and are not discriminatory | Clerk | 23.6.22 |
| iii) Publish the updated policy for applicants.  | EDF   | 23.6.22 |

## 22/2/10 Health & Safety report

- 10.1 The CEP introduced the Health and Safety update highlighting the progress that the new Head of Health and Safety was making on tackling the agenda for cultural change that he presented to governors at the governor breakfast in September 2022. The team had recruited a new Senior Health and Safety Advisor, started setting up new engagement groups for different parts of the college and establishing new Health and Safety Champions in each team or faculty.
- 10.2 The committee considered the report and the main points discussed were as follows.

**Accident reporting** had increased compared to the last report, reflecting that there were more people working and learning on campus. The data also included near misses. The process for following up reports included a clear focus on lessons learned and, for serious incidents, a formal panel met to agree actions to avoid similar incidents in future. Members supported the importance of encouraging people to report near-misses as a way of preventing accidents. A member commented that he had seen companies providing staff with an easy-to-use app to report near-misses and this had been beneficial in reducing the number of accidents.

**Fire Risk Assessment** actions in progress had reduced to forty. The committee commented that there were actions outstanding that were recommended for completion within 6 months of the original

assessment. The CEP said that the approach to clearing actions was risk based to ensure that the college dealt with the highest threats first. There was a follow-up Fire Risk Assessment planned for summer term to check that the college had completed the actions. Members requested more detail in the next report on any actions outstanding.

10.3 The committee received the report for assurance and agreed

#### **ACTIONS**

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|---|------|---------|
| i) When appointing a consultant to undertake the next/follow-up Fire Risk Assessment, conduct checks on their qualifications and experience to ensure they are competent. | EDCO | 22.6.22 |
| ii) Add more detail as follows to the next Health and Safety update:  |      |         |
| a. include in the FRA table the date when the action was raised and the original due date   | EDCO | 22.6.22 |
| b. include more detail on any FRA actions still in progress   |      |         |
| c. provide assurance to members on how the college encourages people to report near-misses and how it responds to near-miss reports to prevent accidents.                 |      |         |
| d. Include a summary of any RIDDOR accidents.   |      |         |

#### **22/2/11 Review of meeting**

11.1 Members commented that

- It was good to see the college making progress with its ongoing claim to recover over-payment of VAT.
- In terms of impact on students, members were pleased to see that capital projects were having a positive impact on students.
- committee reports were shorter and sharper but for health and safety members wanted to see additional details so they could monitor the effectiveness of controls.
- Paul Senior commented that he would be very interested in supporting Health and Safety as a link governor.

#### **22/2/12 Date and time of next meeting**

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