

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON Tuesday 15 November 2022 at 16.30

Present: Mr Stephen Avery, Mrs Ann Donoghue, Mr Graham Lawrence (via Zoom), Mr Dan Lodge, Mr Paul Mittendorfer

In attendance: Members of SMT - Mr Ian Dumbleton (FD), Mr Steve Martell (DP)
Mrs Russha Sellings (Clerk)
Staff present during relevant items: Ms Andrea John (VP Pastoral),
Ms Trish Marks (HR Director) (Items 1-5)

In the Chair: Mrs Ann Donoghue

1. Chair's Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The meeting opened as scheduled and the Chair welcomed everyone including the new HR Director. Apologies were received and accepted from Governor Mr Power and Co-optee Mr Wakefield. Mr Lawrence joined the meeting virtually.

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared with respect of the agenda items.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2022 including Part II

The minutes of the previous meeting including Part II confidential minutes were approved without amendment.

4. Matters Arising

GB Part II action: pay award scenario analysis FD (see Item 6e)

5. Strategy Developments

Papers: Notes from working parties (Oct 2022), Business KPIs, College SAR-QIP draft sections 3&4, College strat plan progress overview (initial drafts on SharePoint)

a) Updates from working parties

The Principal explained that the notes from the working parties had been included on this occasion in place of a full report received post the first working party meetings as much more additional activity had taken place between the first meetings and the F&GP meeting in June.

Part II minute: Criterion h) Information considered commercially sensitive

b) ONS reclassification update

The decision was delayed to the end of the month. There were still a number of uncertainties and the implications would not become clearer until the announcement.

c) Business KPIs

Members queried the reasons for the drop in percentage terms for payroll and the noted overall underspend reported in the management accounts. The FD believed that timing largely impacted the Q1 position both in terms of staffing levels and overtime claims and admitted there would be savings made, although not on the scale as that reported in the latest management accounts where spend often appeared artificially low in month 2. The Principal provided some background on the recruitment activity that impacted this.

d) College SAR/QIP – drafts part 3&4

The DP provided an update on the data within the SAR section 3. The growth rate maintained a stable upward trajectory, improving year on year.

Members queried the 1A conversion rates and asked what more could be done to improve this. The data didn't convey the context and the DP responded that the market was volatile with cost of living having an impact on choice which was evident from the requests for bursary at record levels. The VP (Pastoral) added that currently retention was 0.2% above the 2019 rate, however SMT were aware that there were many more causal factors post-pandemic which impact students' progression to 2A. Generally, students were not leaving to complete their course at an alternative sixth form with contributory factors more likely to arise from mental health issues and students having not experienced formal examinations. Some students were repeating the first year, however even with a comprehensive framework of student support in place, there were occasions where students felt unable to continue. The Principal believed this was a cross college issue apparent pre-pandemic and future benchmarking analysis would be needed to fully understand the complexities of retention.

In response to a question from a Governor on the planned IT restructure, the DP said this was ongoing and it was understood the College was competing in a challenging marketplace.

Regarding section 4 (Community), a Governor observed that it could be useful to be more explicit about forming relationships with employers/representative groups in objective 4.3. The Principal acknowledged that it was important to balance this with the existing and future College Strategy Plan and the importance of College's reputation as a leading A-level provider.

It was also noted under Community, 4.5, an overall strategy on sustainability would be developed in due course after work on an action plan had been finalised.

e) Initial progress on College strategy plans

The Principal spoke of the structure and cycle remaining the same and the working documents were available to members via SharePoint. Drafting of the strategy plans was challenging given the rapidly changing landscape. The format of the anticipated HR strategy was discussed, and it was reiterated that the importance of data being presented to allow for the differing workforce groups within the College. The new HR Director was invited to brief the Committee on some of the themes to be considered as part of the planning.

In terms of next steps, it was anticipated that that final draft strategy plans would be brought to the next meeting in March, with a range of consultation happening with relevant Governors in the interim.

[17.25 the HR Director and VP Pastoral departed the meeting]

6. Finance Matters

Papers: Draft Report and Financial Statements, Audit Findings Report, ESFA dashboard, Management Accounts (Sept 2022), Treasury Management report, Pay modelling and options paper

a) Reports and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2022

It was noted that there was a good set of accounts reflecting a solid financial performance. This was equally commendable with the new external auditors and the FD was recognised for his work.

i) Financial Statements

It was helpful to have comments from members in advance and any further minor observations could be sent to the Clerk following the meeting and in advance of the documents being circulated to the Audit Committee for their scrutiny.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the final Report and Financial Statements at their next meeting (subject to review at the Audit Committee).

ii) Audit Findings Report inc Going Concern

The report was also noted and due for circulation to the Audit Committee.

b) ESFA Dashboard

There were no further comments on the presentation of the latest data from the dashboard.

c) Management Accounts (ending Sept 2022)

Comments captured under Item 5d.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the first quarter Management Accounts.

d) Treasury Management Report

Following a Governor comment on the cash in hand days, it was agreed this should be consistent with the review of the College Financial Regulations which was recently increased to 60 days.

There was a question raised in advance of the meeting on key target recommendations and the approval level of reallocating funds. While this was not stated in the Financial Regulations, the rationale was to obtain the best interest rates and therefore Committee approval was unlikely to be required.

e) Pay modelling and financial options (Part II)

Part II minute: Criterion h) Information considered commercially sensitive

7. Report from the Estates Sub-Committee (ESC):

Papers: ESC minutes, CIF bid top sheet, H&S report and minutes

a) Key projects update

The ESC Chair provided a verbal summary of recent activity including the opening of the new café. There was an update on sustainability and in response to a question posed by a member in advance specifically on the possibility of installing solar panels in the event of new roofing. The Principal advised that CIF funding was only likely granted to maintenance projects and he was in the process of trying to identify a consultant to conduct an audit of the estate in order to source funding for specific sustainable estates projects. An ESC member had introduced a contact for ground source heat pumps which was being followed up.

b) CIF bid 23-24

The DP gave an update on the estimate recently received from Synergy at circa £500k. Due to the urgency of the work required across the roofing areas identified, Synergy were confident that the bid was a strong and would likely meet the criteria. Members considered the appropriate contribution rate based on affordability within current reserves and settled on £100k. Previous technical issues meant it was advisable to submit the bid by early December, it was agreed to seek approval to the Governing Body via a written resolution. **(Action: Clerk)**

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the application for CIF funding via written resolution in advance of the next meeting.

c) Report from the Health & Safety Committee (HSC)

The report was received and accepted and there were no further comments.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the H&S report as a consent item.

8. Community Update

Papers: SMCG meeting notes (29-06-22, 11-10-22)

The Principal provided additional updates following the last SMCG meeting which centred on the pay negotiations. UNISON had accepted the Support Staff pay award at 5% across the board. 53 NEU members would potentially participate in a strike of teaching staff at the end of the month after ballot met legal threshold and there was a possibility of a general strike some time in the new year coinciding with action by school teachers and other unions. The College would remain open and manage any staff absence.

9. Policies

Papers: H&S Policy inc First Aid procedures

Accepted with minimal updates to be endorsed to the Governing Body.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the H&S Policy as a consent item.

10. AOB

Nothing to report.

11. Meeting Assessment

Inviting questions in advance had led to a more effective meeting and the Chair had managed this well. Members commented on the impact of the reduction in top sheets and the future structure of agendas to allow sufficient time for discussion of key topics.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 7 March 2023, 16.30.

The meeting closed at 18.22

Chair

Date

RRS 21-11-22