



For the future you want

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 18 MAY 2021

15:00 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Lesley Drummond; Alex Killick; Ann Landels (Chair); Toni McAlindin; Nigel Paul; Fiona Riddoch

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Sue Clyne; Nick Croft; Shirley Evans (Anderson Strathern); Janyce Holmes (Observer); Jonny Pearson; Lindsay Towns; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Principal & Chief Executive.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Alex Killick to the Policy & Resource Committee as a Member, following his appointment as Chair of the Remuneration Committee on 01 March 2021.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Janyce Holmes to the Policy & Resources Committee as an observer, following her appointment to the Board as a Non-Executive Member on 15 March 2021.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed Shirley Evans to the meeting as a representative of Anderson Strathern, the College's Legal Advisors, for *Item 4.2; Edinburgh College Granton Accommodation*.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 No declarations of interested were noted.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 The Committee APPROVED the minutes from 23 February 2021 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 MATTERS ARISING REPORT

- 4.1.1 Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda, with the exception of the following:
 - 4.1.2 The Committee NOTED that a report on the financial sustainability of the Granton Waterfront Nursery would be reviewed by members in the academic year 2021/22.
- 4.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE GRANTON ACCOMMODATION
- 4.2.1 The Committee NOTED that at its previous meeting the Chief Operating Officer had advised members of a developing legal matter relating to the student accommodation at the Granton Campus. Further to this, the Chief Operating Officer informed the Committee that he wished to highlight - at the earliest opportunity - a potential breach of contract relating to its Nomination Agreement.
 - 4.2.2 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Legal Advisor which outlined the clauses within the Nomination Agreement and the potential breach of contract. The Legal Advisor informed the Committee that the College could seek to challenge the assignation by “the Company” of its interests under a clause within the Nomination Agreement.
 - 4.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the potential breach of contract and its authority, within the governance framework of the Board, to take any further action.
 - 4.2.4 The Committee AGREED that an extraordinary meeting of the Board of Management should be called on 26 May 2021, to consider the matter in timely manner. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that the Chief Operating Officer would present a paper, with a clear recommendation, to the Board - on which a decision for appropriate action could be taken.

Shirley Evans, Anderson Strathern, left the meeting

The Vice Principal Education & Skills left the meeting

5. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED an update on developments at the College since the last meeting of the Board on 23 March 2021. In the absence of the Principal, the Chief Operating Officer presented the report to the Committee.
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that the Employers Association and EIS-FELA had confirmed their formal agreement of the consensus position in regard to the national industrial action across Scotland’s colleges. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the future planned strike days had been cancelled and class continued to go ahead as normal.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that, as of May 2021, the Principal had taken over as Chair of the College Principal’s Group. The Chief Operating Officer highlighted to the Committee that a key priority of the Group would be engage with the new Government, Cabinet and relevant Ministers following the recent Scottish Parliamentary elections.

The Vice Principal Education & Skills returned to the meeting

6. RECRUITMENT & RETENTION DASHBOARD

- 6.1 The Committee NOTED an overview, from the Vice Principal, Education & Skills, of the performance of the College against its 2020/21 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the Committee that the SFC had set the College an activity target of 187,869 for the 2020/21 academic year.
- 6.2 The Committee NOTED that the current credit position, as of 04 May 2021, was 190,586. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills, advised the Committee that the College continued to liaise with colleagues at the SFC to establish whether additional in-year funding was available to support further credit activity.
- 6.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the positive improvement in retention rates in 2020/21, which had decreased year-on-year (since 2018/19) to 3.4%. The Chair commended the work of College Staff throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, to ensure that students remained engaged with their course.
- 6.4 The Committee NOTED that the College continued to perform well against 2021/22 Full-Time recruitment targets. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills, advised the Committee that, although the College continued to perform well, across the sector a number of colleges were facing challenges meeting their own student recruitment targets.
- 6.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the potential impact of student deferrals on the college sector, and NOTED that the decision to move learning online in 2020/21 had been instrumental to mitigating the impact experienced by the College. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills, advised the Committee that the College continued to consider ways to support students at the risk of deferring by offering catch-up classes.

7. FINANCE REPORT

7.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO MARCH 2021

- 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to March 2021.

7.2 INDICATIVE COLLEGE BUDGET 2021/22

- 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED an Indicative College Budget 2020/21, and a supporting presentation by the Head of Finance, which outlined the budgeting process, budgeting pressures, additional costs, budget reductions, savings, impact on cash-flow, risks and mitigations, and sensitivity analysis.
- 7.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Indicative College Budget 2020/21, and welcomed the opportunity to endorse a breakeven budget despite the significant challenges faced by the college sector. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that approval of the Indicative College Budget by the Board would depend on confirmation of the SFC

funding allocation and its impact on underlying assumptions within the Budget.

7.2.3 The Committee AGREED that the Indicative College Budget would be presented to the Board on 15 June 2021 for consideration.

7.3 FINANCIAL FORECAST 2020/21 TO 2025/26

7.3.1 The Committee NOTED a five-year financial forecast aligned with the 2020/21 Indicative College Budget, to help members assess the future financial position of the College. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the financial forecast was based against assumptions outlined by the SFC for 2020/21, and highlighted the savings/budget reductions required in order to achieve a break-even underlying operating position.

7.3.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to the five-year financial forecast:

- (i) The impact of staff pay awards, and the subsequent savings required in 2021/22;
- (ii) The adverse effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on commercial income, and the potential impact on income future academic years;
- (iii) The assumptions made around a reduction in the number of EU students, and an overall increase in domestic student recruitment;
- (iv) The size of the College Estate going forward, and the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Estates Strategy.

7.3.3 The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Finance Team for the opportunity to review the financial forecast information and sensitivity analysis provided.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

8.1 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

8.1.1 The Committee NOTED a Human Resources Report which included updates on employee relations, HR operations and organisational development.

8.1.2 The Committee NOTED that an Employee Wellbeing Survey had been launched on 17 May 2021. The Head of HR & OD advised the Committee that the Survey would allow all staff to feedback about their experience of the past year, and their preferences for working arrangements going forward.

8.1.3 The Committee NOTED that sickness absence had decreased between Quarters 2 & 3, however, it remained difficult to accurately assess anticipated absence levels whilst Covid-19 restrictions continued. The Head of HR & OD advised the Committee that indications suggested that absence levels could settle at around 50% lower than pre-

pandemic levels, particularly if longer term working from home continues in some form for the majority of employees.

- 8.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED progress towards, the personal development tool, Enhance becoming accessible on iTrent. The Head of HR & OD informed the Committee that it was expected that the process would be completed during the summer.

8.2 DRAFT WORKFORCE PLAN 2021-23

- 8.2.1 The Committee NOTED a Draft Workforce Plan 2021-23 which outlined the business process to align the changing operational needs of the College with its People Strategy (2021-24). The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee of the need for effective workforce planning to provide agile people solutions to compliment the future direction of the College.

- 8.2.2 The Committee NOTED the following strategic objectives of the Workforce Plan:

- (i) Transitional and transformational change;
- (ii) Digital enabled redesign for learning and teaching, and back-office operations;
- (iii) A sustainable and valued workforce;
- (iv) A financially sustainable College.

- 8.2.3 The Committee NOTED that the Workforce Plan provided a number of options to achieve the strategic aims of the College, whilst providing a model for reviewing progress against planned actions to ensure their completion. The Chief Operating Officer informed the Committee that the Workforce Plan aligned with the Vision and Mission of the College, as set out in our 2017-22 Strategic Plan.

- 8.2.4 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the Draft Workforce Plan, and DISCUSSED the following points:

- (i) The two-year lifespan of the Strategy, and its alignment with the College Strategy Plan and other strategic documents;
- (ii) The potential for a diagram of strategies to be developed, which also outlined their links to the College curriculum;
- (iii) The ongoing consultation with staff members, such as Learning Development Tutors, to ensure that such roles reflect future needs.

- 8.2.5 The Committee AGREED to endorse the Draft Workforce Plan 2021-23 for further discussion with the Board and other relevant stakeholders.

9 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

9.1 CONSTRUCTION & TECHNICAL INSTITUTE: OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE UPDATE

- 9.1.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on progress relating to the Construction & Technical Institute Outline Business Case which had

been submitted to the SFC on 08 June 2020. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the College remained in discussions with Edinburgh Council regarding a suitable site for the proposed Institute, as well as considering whether the build scale of the new construction facility could be incorporated into the existing College footprint at Granton campus.

9.2 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION 2020/21

- 9.2.1 The Committee NOTED that at the end of each academic year the Committee is required to review its annual activity. The Committee Chair advised the Committee that the same evaluation form, which asked members to consider the committee's operation and its performance monitoring and strategic roles, would be completed by all committees of the Board.
- 9.2.2 The Committee AGREED that its operation was compliant with its terms of reference, as outlined in 'Part 1' of the evaluation form.
- 9.2.3 The Committee APPROVED the Review of Committee Operation 2020/21 Form, based on the draft received by members.

9.3 TACKLING CHILD POVERTY DELIVERY PLAN

- 9.3.1 The Committee NOTED the SFC had published a call for proposals to support approaches to help young people who had grown up in poverty to have a route to a positive destination, and out of poverty. The Chair advised the Committee that it was expected that the College would engage with the proposal process, and further updates would be provided through the Corporate Development Committee.

10. FOR INFORMATION

10.1 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

- 10.1.1 The Committee NOTED a Horizon Scanning Report which outlined major political, economic, social, technological, legal and/or environmental developments that could impact on the five strategic plan aims of the College.

10.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020/21

- 10.2.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The next meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee will take place on 31 August 2021.

Meeting closed at 17:45