



For the future you want

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING OF 22 FEBRUARY 2022

15:00 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Rose Dodgson; Lesley Drummond; Alex Killick; Ann Landels (Chair); Nigel Paul; Jeanette Stevenson

In attendance: Sue Clyne; Audrey Cumberland; Jonny Pearson; Lindsay Towns; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

Observers: Stewart Darling; Fiona Riddoch; Kerry McCormack

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 No apologies were received.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed new Non-Executive Board Members, Stewart Darling and Kerry McCormack, to the Policy & Resource Committee as observers - following their appointment to the Board of Management on 15 December 2021.
- 1.3 The Committee NOTED that Fiona Riddoch, a Non-Executive Board Member, had been invited to observe the meeting prior to becoming Interim Vice Chair of the Board on 2 March 2022.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were noted.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 The Committee APPROVED the minutes from 16 November 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.

5. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Principal on developments at the College since its last meeting on 16 November 2021.
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that the College continued to take a phased approach to safely introducing more student activity to its campuses. The Principal advised the Committee that by the Easter break it was expected that on campus classes for all courses would take place in some capacity, enabling students to experience on-campus learning for at least part of their course.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that, following the announcement of the Scottish Government Draft Budget, the Principal had held one of her regular briefing sessions with local politicians to highlight the serious implications facing Edinburgh College. The Principal informed the Committee that she had followed up the briefings by submitting a formal letter to MPs and MSPs for the Edinburgh and the Lothians region.
- 5.4 The Committee NOTED that both the Principal and the Interim Chair, through the College Principals Group and the College Chair Group - respectively, had attended national meetings with the Cabinet Secretary for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training and continued to highlight the funding concerns of the sector.
- 5.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the implications of the Draft Budget and the need to engage with stakeholders to ensure their awareness of the potential funding implications for the College. Further to this, the Principal advised the Committee that she would be holding an online Q&A session with College staff on 9 March 2022.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED that a business case had been developed to move the Employers' Association towards a more effective, sustainable, and impactful business model, which was fully resourced and fit-for-purpose. The Committee DISCUSSED the recommendations contained within the business case and welcomed the proposals for a more professional and adequately resourced operation.

Jeanette Stevenson joined the meeting

- 5.7 The Committee NOTED updates on both the Support Side and Lecturing 2021/22 Pay Claims following recent National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) meetings in December 2021. The Principal advised the Committee that whilst Support Side discussions remained ongoing a formal dispute letter had been submitted by EIS-FELA regarding the Lecturing Pay Claim.
- 5.8 The Committee NOTED the financial impact on Edinburgh College of increased recurring staff costs, based on the tabled Support and Lecturing Pay Awards, and upcoming changes to National Insurance. The Committee DISCUSSED the financial pressure placed upon the College and the need to communicate its long-term implications in terms of tackling both regional poverty and post pandemic economic regeneration to the Scottish Government.

6. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & CREDITS DASHBOARD

- 6.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of the performance of the College against its 2021/22 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the Committee that the SFC had set the College a total activity target of 192,349 for the academic year.
- 6.2 The Committee NOTED that, as of 22 February 2022, the College had accumulated 189,559 credits. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that although the College had performed well, under difficult circumstances, there was no guarantee that it would reach its total credit target by the end of the academic year.
- 6.3 The Committee NOTED that full-time courses for the academic year 2022/23 opened for applications on 1 February 2022. The Vice Principal Education & Skills informed the Committee that (to date) 1,180 full-time applications had been received, 17% fewer than at the same point last year. The Committee DISCUSSED contributing factors to the drop in recruitment, including the buoyant job market in the Edinburgh and Lothians region.
- 6.4 The Committee NOTED that the issues highlighted around enrolments and credits were sector-wide, and that the College continued to work closely with the SFC to mitigate the drop in full-time enrolments to safeguard credit funding. The Vice Principal reiterated to the Committee that the average combined credit price differential between the College and other Scottish colleges was financially significant, and although this had been raised again with the SFC there was unlikely to be a major shift in the national funding model due to the potential financial impact on other colleges.

7. FINANCE REPORT

7.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO DECEMBER 2021

- 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to December 2021.
- 7.1.2 The Committee NOTED that during February 2022 there were scheduled Department / Faculty performance review meetings, together with a mid-year performance review with the Executive Team and Directors / Assistant Principals. The Director of Finance advised the Committee that at these meetings the latest income and expenditure positions would be discussed and changes to some full year's forecasts were expected.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

- 8.1 The Committee NOTED a Human Resources Report which included updates on employee relations, HR operations and organisational development.
- 8.2 The Committee NOTED that recent workforce planning arrangements relating to the restructuring of Curriculum Manager and Curriculum Leader roles had progressed according to plan, with all those involved in the process content with the outcome. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that two

members of staff had applied for voluntary severance (on same terms as previous scheme) and both applications had been accepted (at a cost £81k). The SFC had been advised by the College that full payback might not be possible for this capacity change, however the new structure would significantly enhance the managerial capacity and flexibility of curriculum teams.

- 8.3 The Committee NOTED that, following the lifting of social distancing measures implemented to reduce the spread of Covid-19, employees and students were beginning to return to campuses in greater numbers. The Director of HR & OD informed the Committee that an agile working procedure had been launched as part of the EC People campaign and transitional plans were in place across all faculties and departments.
- 8.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the return to campuses of a greater number of staff and acknowledged the challenges of returning to work following the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee that some employees mental health issues were being impacted by the return and that such cases were being supported and managed on an individual basis.
- 8.5 The Committee NOTED that the completion rates of mandatory training during Quarter 2 of the academic year had dropped due to many staff reaching the expiry date of their 3-year cycle for individual modules. The Director of HR & OD highlighted to the Committee that the OD Team were working with managers to ensure training was completed in a timely manner.
- 8.6 The Committee DISCUSSED the importance of mandatory training, in areas such as cyber-security, Health & Safety and Safeguarding, and the need to highlight to both academic and support staff the risks posed by lower levels of compliance.

9. ESTATES & DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on key estates and IT infrastructure matters from the Chief Operating Officer, which highlighted that the current annual phase of capital funding was due to end in March 2022.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 DEPARTURE OF A NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBER

- 10.1.1 The Committee NOTED that the tenure of the Interim Vice Chair, Nigel Paul, as a Non-Executive Board Member would end on 1 March 2022. The Chair, on behalf of the Policy & Resources Committee, thanked Mr Paul for his significant contribution to the Committee over the past eight years.

11. FOR INFORMATION

11.1 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2021/22

- 11.1.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the 2021/22 academic year.

Alex Killick left the meeting

12. CLOSED ITEMS OF BUSINESS

12.1 Items of business were considered by the Board as part of a closed session. Closed items were recorded under a separate minute (Closed Minutes 12/21.02.22 refers).

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee will take place on 17 May 2022.

Meeting closed at 17:15