

## **PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

### **APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 16 MAY 2023**

**15:00 via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** David Elder; Alex Killick (Chair); Gwen Raez; Nora Senior

**In attendance:** Jon Buglass; Sue Clyne; Audrey Cumberland; Ian Deed; Mike Jeffrey; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

#### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Sue Cook, Ross Laird, and Ian McLaughlan.

#### **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 21 February 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT**

4.1 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 across the College, and the college sector, since its last meeting on 21 February 2023.

5.2 The Committee NOTED that on 31 March 2023 the First Minister had announced his new Cabinet and Ministerial team. The Principal highlighted to the Committee that the key ministers for the college sector were:

- i) Jenny Gilruth, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.
- ii) Graeme Dey, Minister for Higher and Further Education.
- iii) Neil Gray, Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy.

- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that college principals and chairs had met with both the new Minister and the Cabinet Secretary on 9 May 2023. The Principal advised the Committee that, as Chair of the College Principals Group, a separate meeting was also held with the Minister and the Cabinet Secretary to highlight her reflections on the delivery of NSET (National Strategy for Economic Transformation Delivery Board).
- 5.4 The Committee NOTED that a significant part of the discussion held between ministers and the college sector focused on the unexpected decision by the Scottish Government to withdraw the additional transformation funding of £26m, previously announced by the Deputy First Minister in the budget. Further to this, the Principal highlighted that Skills Development Scotland (SDS) had also implemented a 13% reduction in apprenticeship funding across the sector.
- 5.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the impact of the decision taken by SDS to reduce apprenticeship funding and subsequent decisions to count year two starts as new starters (- which would directly impact on funding) and the issuing of 'roll over' contracts from 2020. The Vice Principal Corporate Development advised the Committee that a letter from the sector had been submitted to the Chief Executive Officer at SDS calling for a meeting to discuss recent funding changes further.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED that discussions continued between the college sector and both the Scottish Government and the SFC around the need to consider forms of flexibility that could support colleges to navigate paths through the challenging fiscal environment, both in the current financial year and in forthcoming financial years. The Principal informed the Committee that the Minister for Higher and Further Education had indicated that it was unlikely that colleges' ONS status would be reviewed, however, the Minister remained open to discussions around other ways to support colleges.
- 5.7 The Committee NOTED that the College was now in the closing stages of the implementation of its Business Case to achieve financial savings over the period 2021/22 to 2024/25. The Principal advised the Committee that further meetings had taken place with affected staff and, as of 16 May 2023, one member of staff continued to meet with managers and HR to discuss their options - which included redeployment if appropriate. The Committee NOTED the continued commitment of the College to avoiding compulsory redundancies - if possible.
- 5.8 The Committee welcomed the updated provided on the Phase 2 of the Business Case and DISCUSSED the following in relation to proposed local and national industrial action:
- i) The decision by EIS-FELA to suspend its scheduled local strike action from 15 May to 25 May 2023.
  - ii) The continued national EIS-FELA action short of strike (ASOS), relating to national pay.
  - iii) The withholding of students' results as part of the ASOS and the legality of such an action.
  - iv) The ongoing discussion across the sector, and the College, to mitigate the impact of the ASOS.
  - v) Progress relating to national bargaining and the 2022/23 pay claim.

- vi) The impact of ASOS and proposed future strike action on students, and the need to ensure that appropriate communications are provided to all stakeholders explaining the college sector's position.

5.9 The Committee NOTED the current position of the national bargain and industrial relations. The Principal advised the Committee that a further update on local and national matters would be provided to the Board of Management on 13 June 2023.

## **6. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & CREDITS DASHBOARD**

6.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of the performance of the College against its 2022/23 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the Committee that the SFC had set the College a total activity target of 183,174 credits for the academic year.

6.2 The Committee NOTED that the credit position of the College, as of 16 May 2023, was 176,135 (- 96% of the activity target). The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that to avoid any discussion around a 'clawback' with the SFC, the College needed to secure 98% of its activity target (- approximately 179,510 credits).

6.3 The Committee NOTED that current SFC guidance provided less flexibility in relation to credits than during the previous year. The Vice Principal Education & Skills informed the Committee that should flexibility towards credits continue to be reduced by the Funding Council, then the College would need to enrol and retain more students in the academic year 2023/24.

6.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the future size and shape of the College as outlined within the new Strategic Plan and the alignment of the curriculum with the National Strategy for Economic Transformation. The Vice Principal Education & Skills highlighted the importance of continued collaboration with local schools and the need to educate (and inspire) young people, parents, and carers to recognise the value of a college education.

6.5 The Committee welcomed the progress outlined against the 2022/23 activity target and NOTED the challenges faced by the college sector in the recruitment and retention of full-time students.

## **7. FINANCE REPORT**

### **7.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO MARCH 2023**

7.1.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to March 2023.

7.1.2 The Committee welcomed a supplementary summarised report on the financial performance of the College to March 2023 and DISCUSSED ways to develop the presentation of such reporting further. The Director of Finance & Estates AGREED to review the presentation of the summary report to further distil the level of detail provided.

## 7.2 INDICATIVE COLLEGE BUDGET 2023/24

- 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED an Indicative College Budget 2023/24, and a supporting presentation by the Chief Operating Officer, 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 2023/24 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 a savings target of £1.31m would need to be achieved to enable the College to operate at a breakeven adjusted operating position and would be achieved through further efficiencies and/or a voluntary severance scheme.
- 7.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the Indicative College Budget 2023/24 and the need to ensure its alignment with the pillars of the Strategic Plan (i.e., People; Performance; Place). The Committee NOTED that, although the College needed to be prudent, it must explore how best to position itself financially to deliver on the aims within its Strategic Plan.
- 7.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the Indicative College Budget 2023/24 in relation to Health & Safety and Estates matters. The Committee NOTED assurances from the Chief Operating Officer that appropriate levels investment and regulatory compliance were maintained through the proposed Indicative Budget.
- 7.2.5 The Committee AGREED that a summary report should be presented to its next meeting outlining compliance, and levels of investment, in relation to Health & Safety at the College.
- 7.2.6 The Committee AGREED that the Indicative College Budget would be presented to the Board on 13 June 2023 for consideration, subject to further consideration of points raised under Minutes 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 by the Executive Team.

## 7.3 REVISED FINANCIAL FORECAST TO 2022/23 to 2025/26

- 7.3.1 The Committee NOTED a revised financial forecast from 2022/23 to 2025/26 based on flat-cash funding. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that flat cash would mean that the College would be required to self-fund pay awards and voluntary severance payments, whilst also responding to inflationary increases for supplies and services.

## **8. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT**

- 8.1 The Committee NOTED a Human Resources Report which included updates on employee relations, HR operations, staff wellbeing, and organisational development since its last meeting on 21 February 2023.
- 8.2 The Committee NOTED that research had been conducted around the outsourcing, and feasibility on timescales, in relation to an Employee Survey. The Director of HR & OD informed the Committee that, inline with College procurement protocols, two providers had subsequently been shortlisted and an appointed provider would be confirmed to the Committee in due course.
- 8.3 The Committee NOTED the Principal, and other senior staff, had met with EIS-FELA representatives on 26 April 2023, to discuss the findings of a recent bullying survey conducted by the local EIS-FELA branch. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee, that despite not knowing the number of employees who participated in the survey, there was a comprehensive discussion around the reported findings and the establishment of core acceptable behaviours for all employees.
- 8.4 The Committee welcomed the discussions held between management and EIS-FELA representatives and NOTED that engagement would continue, with a focus on the all-staff survey (Minute 8.2 refers) and the inclusion of questions around wellbeing.
- 8.5 The Committee NOTED that, during Quarter 3 (2022/23), there had been an increase in the overall completion figures relating to the online Health & Safety mandatory training module. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee that, whilst such progress was welcomed, the completion rates in this area remained the lowest across the full suite of mandatory training modules.
- 8.6 The Committee DISCUSSED the statutory responsibilities placed on the College, and its employees, to complete appropriate Health & Safety training and AGREED that all staff, through encouragement from their line managers, should be reminded to complete any outstanding mandatory training modules.
- 8.7 The Committee NOTED that planning for the Working Well Conference 2023, which would be held on 29 June 2023 at the Granton Campus, was in its final stages. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee that Gail Porter, a well-known Scottish Presenter and Campaigner, and Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Chancellor of Herriot Watt University and a world renown advocate of human rights, had been booked as keynote speakers.

## **9. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION UPDATE**

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED that following its approval by the Board of Management, the College had published its Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report on 25 April 2023. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that to accompany the Report, an infographic summary had been produced and promoted across the College's social media platforms.

- 9.2 The Committee NOTED an update on progress relating to the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report, including the promotion of a hate incidents reporting campaign. The Chair welcomed the verbal update provided and the reporting of future progress to both the Committee and the Board of Management – as appropriate.

*Nora Senior Left the meeting.*

## **10. ESTATES & DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT**

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on ongoing Estates & Infrastructure projects. The Director of Finance & Estates advised the Committee that the report on matters within these areas would be developed further to include campus specific details on running costs, student footfall, classroom use, and refurbishment / development spend.

*David Elder left the meeting.*

## **11. REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION 2022/23**

### **11.1 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION 2022/23**

- 11.1.1 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.
- 11.1.2 The Committee AGREED that its operation was compliant with its terms of reference, as outlined in 'Part 1' of the evaluation form.
- 11.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED its performance over the academic year and AGREED that members' feedback should be relayed directly to the Chair and the Clerk, prior to a finalised version of the report being recirculated to the Committee (outwith the meeting cycle) for approval.

### **11.2 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

- 11.2.1 The Committee NOTED that it had been asked by the Board to present an annual report to the Board on 13 June 2023. The Chair advised the Committee that the report would highlight key matters of business considered by the Committee and future areas of development.
- 11.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED and AGREED that a finalised version of the Annual Report would be reviewed the Chair, prior to its presentation to the Board.

**12. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

12.1 DEPARTURE OF A STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

- 12.1.1 The Committee NOTED that the tenure of the Student Board Member, David Elder, would end on 30 June 2023. The Chair, on behalf of the Planning & Resources Committee, thanked Mr Elder for his significant contribution to the Committee throughout the academic year.

**13. FOR INFORMATION**

13.1 HEALTH & SAFETY GROUP MINUTES 19.04.23

- 13.1.1 The Committee NOTED the draft minutes of the Health & Safety Group held on 19 April 2023.

13.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2023/24

- 13.2.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the 2023/24 academic year.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee will take place on 31 August 2023.

***Meeting closed at 17:00***