



For the future you want

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 23 FEBRUARY 2021

15:00 via Microsoft Teams

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

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

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 No apologies were received.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Toni McAlindin to the Policy & Resource Committee as a Member, following her appointment as a Non-Executive Board Member on 22 September 2020.

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 10 November 2020 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 an update on the Granton Waterfront Nursery would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee, subject to the implemented timescales for the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

5. 'A FUTURE PROOFED COLLEGE' REPORT

5.1 'A FUTURE PROOFED COLLEGE' UPDATE

5.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update on developments related to the delivery of a 'Future Proofed College' and the response of the College to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

5.1.2 The Committee NOTED that, immediately prior to the meeting, the First Minister had announced the Scottish Government's Roadmap towards the planned easing of lockdown restrictions. The Principal advised the Committee that under new guidance up to 5% of the total number of college students could be brought back for face-to-face teaching, that was critical to their course, from 15 March 2021.

5.1.3 The Committee NOTED that the Scottish Government had published its Draft Budget 2021/22 on 28 January 2021, which would not be finalised until it had passed through the Scottish Parliament's legislative process. The Principal advised the Committee that it was anticipated that additional financial resources for colleges to mitigate the effects of Covid-19, including the challenges of blended learning, would be made available.

5.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following with regards to the continued impact of the Pandemic and the Draft Budget 2021/22:

- (i) The timeframe for a decision by Scottish Government, and awarding bodies, on the progression of students;
- (ii) the potential sector wide impact on student funding of both progressing and deferred students beginning the next academic year;
- (iii) the additional Covid-19 funding made available across FE and HE, and the flexibility around its distribution to students;
- (iv) the differences in the planned easing of restrictions between English and Scottish Governments;
- (v) the continued high-level of engagement of the Scottish Government with the college sector.

5.1.5 The Committee NOTED that the easing of lockdown restrictions by the Scottish Government would continue to be cautious, but welcomed the broad timescales provided within the Roadmap. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked College staff for continuing to support students during this difficult period, and hoped that further clarification on the position of progressing students could be provided in the coming weeks.

5.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-22 REVIEW FRAMEWORK

5.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the Board, at its Strategy Day on 27 October 2020, had agreed that the current strategic priorities of the College remained valid. The Principal advised the Committee that the Executive Team had reflected on discussions at the Strategy Day and had produced a proposed strategic framework.

5.2.2 The Committee NOTED a draft Strategic Framework which aimed to building on the current strategic aims of the College, whilst remaining both challenge and opportunity dependant.

5.2.3 The Committee NOTED the context in which a new strategic plan for the College would be developed, included the emerging themes from Phase One of the SFC's *'Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Scotland's Colleges and Universities'*. The Principal also acknowledged the massive impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic which had undoubtedly accelerated trends and issues that were already of significance to the college sector, including financial sustainability, EU withdrawal, digital technology and demographic shifts.

5.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following aspects of the draft Strategic Framework:

- (i) Digital excellence as a key enabler for the College to move forward;
- (ii) the focus on 'challenge' and 'opportunity' within the Framework, as a means to be more proactive to changes in the sector;
- (iii) the position of vocational education within the Framework;
- (iv) use of a more encompassing terms, such as 'learner', rather than 'student';
- (v) the importance of transformation collaboration as a theme within the Framework.

5.2.5 The Committee NOTED that both the Executive Team and the Senior Management Team would consider feedback from members further, with a view to presenting a more detailed Framework to the Board at its next Strategy Day. The Committee DISCUSSED the timing of the proposed Strategy Day on 27 April 2021, and AGREED that it should rescheduled to take place towards the end of May 2021 - prior to an initial draft of the new strategic plan being considered by the Board at its meeting on 15 June 2021.

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, subject to a FES Audit, the College had achieved its 2020/21 activity target for the fifth successive year. 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 NOTED that applications for the academic year 2021/22 had opened on 01 February 2021. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills, informed the Committee that applications were slightly down on the previous year, however, it was expected that numbers would increase once progressing students had an opportunity to submit their applications.

6.4 The Committee welcomed the achievement of the 2020/21 credit target and recruitment for the 2021/22 academic year, and DISCUSSED the potential challenges posed to student recruitment by the high number of deferrals. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills advised the Committee that there were currently no immediate signs that student deferrals would impact on recruitment, although

specific courses such as Dental Nursing had been significantly affected by the postponement of teaching at universities.

7 FINANCE REPORT

7.1 2020 VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME UPDATE

7.1.1 The Committee NOTED an updated on the 2020 Voluntary Severance (VS) Scheme which was launched to all College staff on 16 November 2020, and ran until 07 December 2020. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that, further to an updated circulated to the Board by email on 18 December 2020, a total of 86 VS applications had been received.

7.1.2 The Committee NOTED that 41 VS applications (equivalent to 30.3 FTE) had been accepted, 21 of which were submitted by academic staff. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the Net recurring gross savings generated through the VS Scheme were £1.22m, with total VS costs of £0.77m.

7.1.3 The Committee NOTED that, in total, current year savings through the Scheme were £0.26m. The Committee DISCUSSED the headline figures provided by the Chief Operating Officer, and NOTED that to date no VS funding had been made available for colleges by the SFC.

7.2 FINANCE UPDATE

7.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Head of Finance which provided an overview of the financial performance of the College during lockdown and a refreshed financial forecast.

7.2.2 The Committee NOTED that financial forecasting in 2021/22 had been positively affected by the £0.26m savings through the VS Scheme, and through the incorporation of the 2021/22 Public Sector Pay Policy which reflected an annual uplift of 1.17% (- compared to the previously forecast 2%). The Head of Finance advised the Committee that the updated financial forecast showed that savings of £2.4m were required over the period to 2024/25, compared to £3.3m in the previous forecast.

7.3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO DECEMBER 2020

7.3.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to December 2020.

7.3.2 The Committee NOTED that the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme (JRS) had been extended until the end of April 2021. The Head of Finance advised the Committee that the College had received over £175k of JRS income for the first five months of the current financial year.

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 the Head of HR & OD continued to work with the Executive Team to develop the Edinburgh College People Strategy, as part of a revised Workforce Plan 2021-24. The Head of HR & OD advised the Committee that the People Strategy aimed to guide the strategic direction of the College on future employment models, based on the changing requirements of the anticipated UK-wide recession and the future needs of students and other stakeholders.
- 8.3 The Committee NOTED that the Workforce Plan would outline actions taken so far, and planned actions for the next three years, to manage staffing costs and ensure a workforce appropriate for new curriculum delivery and operational models. The Committee DISCUSSED the proposed timescale for the development of the Workforce Plan, and NOTED that more detailed planning at faculty level remained ongoing and would not be completed until the start of the next academic year.
- 8.4 The Committee NOTED that the Covid-19 Pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the College and how its employees work. The Head of HR & OD advised the Committee an online wellbeing scheme, EC Cares, had recently been launched to all employees. EC Cares provided a package of wrap around support with a wide range of tools available that employees could tailor to their own interests and needs, and includes training options and external support from the NHS and national charities.
- 8.5 The Committee NOTED that work continued to tackle racism, with the Head of HR & OD chairing a national Advance HE led group which would consider support packages to improve the recruitment of BAME employees in colleges and universities. The Head of HR & OD informed the Committee that research into the experience of BAME employees had been commissioned and the final support package would be available at the end of the academic year.

9. EQUALITIES OUTCOME AND MAINSTREAMING REPORT 2021-25 UPDATE

The Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning and Equalities Officer joined the meeting

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED that the Board would be asked to consider and approve an Edinburgh College Equalities Outcome and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25 on 23 March 2021. The Equalities Officer advised the Committee that to support the drafting of the Outcome Report, a draft of the proposed equality indicators for inclusion in the final document had been circulated to the Board on 11 November 2020.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED that the Equalities Officer had held a session with members of the Board on 10 February 2021, to consider feedback on the proposed equality outcomes. The Chair commended the Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning and Equalities Officer for their high levels of engagement with stakeholders around the equality outcome indicators.
- 9.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the Equalities Outcome and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25, and AGREED that a draft version of the document should be circulated

to members for feedback by 02 March 2021 - prior to a final draft being considered by the Board on 23 March 2021.

The Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning and Equalities Officer left the meeting

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 GRANTON ACCOMODATION UPDATE

10.1.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from the Chief Operating Officer on a legal matter relating to the student accommodation at the Granton Campus. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that a further update on the matter would be provided to the members at its next meeting.

10.2 CONSTRUCTION & TECHNICAL INSTITUTE: OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE UPDATE

10.2.1 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.

10.3 DEPARTURE OF NON-EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER

10.3.1 The Committee NOTED that the tenure of Non-Executive Board Member, Niki McKenzie, would end on 01 March 2021. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Ms McKenzie for her significant contribution to the Policy & Resources Committees.

10.3.1 The Board NOTED the Alex Killick, a Non-Executive Board Member, would replace Ms McKenzie as Chair of the Remuneration Committee on 02 March 2021. The Chair advised the Committee that, as a committee chair, Mr Killick would become a member of the Policy & Resources Committee – in line with its Terms of Reference.

11. FOR INFORMATION

11.1 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

11.1.1 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.

11.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020/21

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

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 12.1 The next meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee will take place on 18 May 2021.

Meeting closed at 16:55