

PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 31 AUGUST 2023

15:00 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Sue Cook; Alex Killick (Chair); Ian McLaughlan; 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 Ross Laird and Luna Morrison.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Sue Cook to her first meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee, as Non-Executive Member, following her appointment as Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 28 March 2023.

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 16 May 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 both the College and the wider college sector since its last meeting on 16 May 2023.
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that a key priority for the College moving forward was its People and Culture, as both underpinned the successful delivery of the strategic ambitions agreed by the Board of Management. The Principal advised the Committee that Hive, an external HR organisation, had been contracted to work with the College with an initial priority to focus on shaping an all-staff survey.

- 5.3 The Committee NOTED details relating to the Hive platform and the accompanying support provided by their People Science Team, which consisted of several occupational psychologists. The Principal highlighted to the Committee that the all-staff survey would be bespoke to the needs of the College and the online platform, from which the survey would be hosted, controlled, and managed independently by Hive.
- 5.4 The Committee welcomed the update provided and DISCUSSED the following points:
- (i) The culture of the College and the need to engage with all staff.
 - (ii) The claims of bullying highlighted by EIS-FELA to the Board of Management on 28 March 2023, and the important role of an all-staff survey to assess staff morale.
 - (iii) The anticipated response rate to the all-staff survey, and the importance of both staff and trade union buy-in to the process.
 - (iv) The level of independence granted by using an external provider and the integrity added to the survey and its analysis.
 - (v) The proposed timeline for the all-staff survey and the planned follow-up activities over the coming 12-month period.
- 5.5 The Committee NOTED that a further update on the implementation of the all-staff survey, and the key progression milestones, would be presented to the Board of Management on 26 September 2023.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED that Education Scotland had published its Edinburgh College Progress Visit Report on 15 August 2023, following a scheduled visit by HM Inspectors in June. The Principal advised the Committee that the Board's Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee would consider the Report on 9 September 2023, and monitor progress against recommendation outlined in the Report.
- 5.7 The Committee NOTED that work continued in relation to the relocation of Forthside learning, teaching and assessment facilities to the Granton Campus. The Principal informed the Committee that the first phase of the relocation would be undertaken by the end of October 2023 - which included students from roofing and brickwork - with a second phase scheduled for completion in June 2024, to accommodate new plastering workshop spaces.
- 5.8 The Committee NOTED an update on the local EIS-FELA dispute which had resulted in EIS-FELA members employed by Edinburgh College undertaking a programme of discontinuous strike action over the months of August and September 2023. The Principal advised the Committee that curriculum management had aimed to ensure that disruption to both new and continuing students was kept to a minimum at the start of term, with all campuses remaining open.
- 5.9 The Committee NOTED an update on the National Bargaining 2022/23 Pay Claim, with EIS-FELA members continuing to undertake a programme of continuous industrial action short of strike. The Principal highlighted to the Committee that a

national strike action by EIS-FELA and support staff trade unions was expected to take place on 7 September 2023.

5.10 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to the start of the 2023/24 academic year and ongoing local and national industrial actions:

- (i) The high level of student activity on campus in the opening week of term and the impact (if any) of the local industrial action.
- (ii) Monitoring the levels of support and impacts of local industrial action.
- (iii) Communications by the College and the general awareness of staff, students, and the public around the local and national context leading to industrial action and the conflation of the contributing factors involved.
- (iv) The request for a no compulsory redundancy guarantee from both EIS-FELA and Unison as part of the ongoing 2022/23 Pay Claim negotiations.
- (v) The ongoing cost of living crisis and the potential impact of stalled national pay claim negotiations in exacerbating 'in-work' poverty.

5.11 The Committee NOTED that a further update on both the local EIS-FELA dispute and the National pay dispute would be provided to the next meeting of the Board of Management.

The Principal & Chief Executive left the meeting

6. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN: STRATEGIC PILLARS

6.1 The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan, as approved by the Board of Management on 13 December 2022, was built upon five Strategic Pillars. The Chair advised the Committee that three of these Strategies, the Finance Strategy, People Strategy, and Digital Strategy, would be considered by the Planning & Resources Committee prior to their presentation to the Board of Management.

6.2 The Committee NOTED that the Commercial Strategy had previously been endorsed by the Corporate Development Committee on 8 June 2023, and the Curriculum Strategy would be considered by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee on 9 September 2023.

6.3 FINANCE STRATEGY 2023-26

6.3.1 The Committee NOTED a draft Finance Strategy 2023-26 which outlined medium-term financial planning in support of learning and teaching, improved IT infrastructure, systems, and digital services, maintenance of the College estate, investment in non-SFC growth, and continued investment in the College workforce. The Chief Operating Officer provided the Committee with an accompanying presentation which outlined the financial gap over the next 3 years and the latest financial assumptions outlined by the SFC.

6.3.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the key risks relating to the effective implementation of the Finance Strategy, including the following:

- (i) The cost efficiencies programmes undertaken by the College in previous years.
- (ii) The potential for investment in commercial activities to grow non-SFC income.
- (iii) The future size and shape of the College, and the need to ensure service quality was not compromised.
- (iv) The role of the Committee in relation to Estates & Infrastructure planning and performance monitoring.

6.4 PEOPLE STRATEGY 2023-26

6.4.1 The Committee NOTED that the vision outlined within the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan could only be achieved through all staff reaching their full potential. The Vice Principal Corporate Development advised the Committee that the People Strategy outlined the College's aspirations to be an employer of choice, committed to enabling employee growth, responding to workforce needs, establishing a feedback culture, nurturing respectful communication, and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion.

6.4.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the People Strategy and NOTED the numerous challenges presented by the financial gap over the next 3 years (*Minute 6.3 refers*). The Vice Principal Corporate Development advised the Committee that baseline data within the Strategy would be updated once the data collection and analysis periods of the all-staff survey (*Minute 5.5 refers*) had been completed.

6.5 DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022-25

6.5.1 The Committee NOTED that, in 2020, the Board of Management had approved a Digital Strategy 2020-25, which outlined a vision for the College "to be a leading College in the UK for digital learning, teaching and operations, with data driven innovation at its core". The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the Digital Strategy had been refreshed to align with the new Edinburgh College Strategic Plan and recognise the wider pace of change in an increasingly technologically driven environment.

6.5.2 The Committee welcomed the refreshed Digital Strategy and DISCUSSED the significant developments around AI technologies since 2020. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that although there remained a number of unknowns and risks associated with the embedding of AI in college activities, there was no doubt that such technologies would drive greater innovation across further and higher education.

6.6 The Committee AGREED to endorse the Finance, People, and Digital Strategies to the Board of Management for approval on 26 September 2023. The Vice Principal Corporate Development advised the Committee that, to ensure coherence between all Pillar Strategies, a copy writer would be commissioned to review the Strategic Plan and associated documentation.

7. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & CREDITS DASHBOARD

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED that, subject to the completion of the annual FES audit, the College had accumulated 179,648 credits. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that since the College had achieved 98% of its annual activity target it would not be subject to a funding clawback from the SFC.
- 7.3 The Committee welcomed the update provided by the Vice Principal Education & Skills and NOTED its thanks to the MIS Manager, and her team, for their efforts to verify credits in line with SFC guidance.
- 7.4 The Committee NOTED that Edinburgh College's activity target for 2023/24 had been confirmed as 164,856. The Vice Principal Education & Skills informed the Committee that this represented a 10% cut in credits, although overall credit funding remained unchanged.
- 7.5 The Committee DISCUSSED recruitment and enrolment, to date, for the academic year 2023/24.
- 7.6 The Committee NOTED that despite significant issues with the current funding model no changes to existing arrangements had been proposed by the SFC. The Committee AGREED that the Chair of the Board and the Chief Operating Officer should consider this matter further, out-with the meeting, and write to both the Chair and the Chief Executive of the SFC to highlight the College's continued concerns.

8. FINANCE REPORT

8.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO JUNE 2023

- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED the Month 11 financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to June 2023.
- 8.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Year-to-Date Adjusted Operating Position illustrated a £430k deficit, which was a favourable variance of £452k against the profiled budget deficit.
- 8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the presentation of the Monthly Management Accounts and AGREED that feedback, if any, should be submitted to the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure directly via correspondence.

8.2 FINANCIAL FORECAST RETURN - JUNE 2023

- 8.2.1 The Committee NOTED the Financial Forecast Return (FFR) to June 2023, as presented by the Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure.

The Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure informed the Committee that the Return had been submitted to the SFC on 30 June 2023 on the understanding that it would be formally considered by the Planning & Resources Committee at its next scheduled meeting.

- 8.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the FFR to June 2023 and AGREED that it was content with both the Return and its prior submission to the SFC.

8.3 EDINBURGH COLLEGE BUDGET 2023/24 UPDATE

- 8.3.1 The Committee NOTED the College Budget for 2023/24 had been approved by the Board of Management (via correspondence) on 28 July 2023. The Chief Operating Officer provided a brief presentation on the Final Budget 2023/24 and outlined plans for in-year savings of £0.7m through a range of options.

- 8.3.2 The Committee NOTED that the Chief Operating Officer would provide a further update to the Board of Management on 26 September 2023, in relation to the Final Budget 2023/24.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED a Human Resources Report which included updates on employee relations, HR operations, staff wellbeing, Health & Safety, and organisational development since its last meeting on 16 May 2023.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED that the All-Staff Wellbeing Day 2023, which was planned for the last week of term in June, had been cancelled on health & safety grounds due to industrial action by EIS-FELA as part of their opposition to the curriculum reshaping exercise. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee that three of the planned 25 workshops were run in August as part of an employee development activity.
- 9.3 The Committee DISCUSSED data provided within a quarterly update on occupational health, safety, and welfare within Edinburgh College, covering the month of May, June and July 2023. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review Health & Safety data in detail and AGREED that members should provide feedback to the Director of HR & OD outlining any further information that could be included within the quarterly HR Dashboard.

The Principal & Chief Executive re-joined the meeting

10. ESTATES & DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on ongoing Estates & Infrastructure Projects at the College as of August 2023.
- 10.2 The Committee NOTED that the Solar Meadow, at the Midlothian Campus, was awaiting options from SSE Energy Solutions to potentially rejuvenate the site and to secure long-term energy efficiency for the College.

10.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the Solar Meadow Project and AGREED that it would welcome an opportunity to learn more about the Project, pending options from SEE Energy Solutions, at a future meeting.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 BOARD PAPER TEMPLATE

11.1.1 The Committee NOTED that the Board paper template had been updated to clearly illustrate links between individual papers and the new Strategic Plan / Strategic Pillars, associated KPIs, and top-level strategic risks. The Chair advised members to contact the Board Secretary directly if they wished to provide feedback on the template.

12. FOR INFORMATION

12.1 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

12.1.1 The Committee NOTED its Terms of Reference which had been previously reviewed on 21 February 2023. The Chair advised the Committee that since no changes were proposed, the Terms of Reference was provided for information only.

12.2 HEALTH & SAFETY GROUP MINUTES 14.06.23

12.2.1 The Committee NOTED the draft minutes of the Health & Safety Group held on 14 June 2023.

12.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the Chair of the Planning & Resources Committee would attend the next meeting of the Health & Safety Group on 6 September 2023.

12.3 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2023/24

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

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee will take place on 16 November 2023.

Meeting closed at 17:05