

**FINANCE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF 21 MARCH 2025**

**09:30 via Microsoft Teams**

**Present**: Fiona Doring (Chair); Stewart Darling; Derek Hynds; Adam Lowe; Nora Senior

**In attendance**: Audrey Cumberford; Ian Deed; Gordon Hope; Michael Jeffrey; Shona Pettigrew; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

* 1. No apologies were received.
  2. The Chair welcomed all attendees to the first meeting of the new Finance, Business Development & Resources (FBDR) Committee.
  3. The Committee NOTED that Gordon Hope (Digital Infrastructure Service Lead) would join the meeting for *Item 8.2, IT Infrastructure Update*.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 No declarations of interested were noted.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)**

3.1 The Committee NOTED the minutes of the Planning & Resources Committee on 14 November 2024 and the Corporate Development Committee on 5 December 2024. The Chair advised Members that key elements of both Committees’ remits had now been incorporated within the terms of reference of the FBDR Committee.

3.2 The Committee NOTED that minutes of prior meetings had been approved, via circulation, and reported to the Board of Management on 10 December 2024.

**4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT**

4.1 The Committee NOTED that actions arising from the previous meeting of the Corporate Development Committee were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

4.2 The Committee NOTED that the action arising from the previous meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee would be considered by the People & Remuneration Committee at its first meeting.

**5. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

5.1 The Committee NOTED its Terms of Reference as approved by the Board of Management on 10 December 2024. The Chair advised the Committee that its remit included the monitoring of pillar strategies relating to Finance and Commercial, and other strategic matters including procurement, estates and external engagement.

5.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the cadence of meetings to address the various responsibilities outlined within the Terms of Reference, and its direct reporting to the Board of Management. The Chair of the Board highlighted points within the Terms of Reference identified for further consideration with the Chair and the Clerk, including the oversight of Health & Safety matters between committees of the Board.

5.3 The Committee NOTED that following discussion between the Chair of the Board, the Chair, and the Clerk, potential amendments to the Terms of Reference would be put forward for consideration by the Committee.

**6. FINANCE & PROCUREMENT REPORT**

6.1 FINANCE & ESTATES INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE OVERVIEW

6.1.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure on matters relating to Finance and Estates. The Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure provided an overview of the Directorate structure, its core purposes, annual performance, and current priorities.

6.1.2 The Committee welcomed the overview provided and DISCUSSED the following points:

1. The outsourcing of the Total Facilities Management contract.
2. The use of AI within the Directorate, specifically relating to Estates Management.
3. Current funding relating to Estates, IT, and Capital Investment, and the associated top-level risks.
4. The potential for external funding through Business Development for Capital projects.
5. The historically limited benchmarking data collated by the sector in relation to Finance and Estates, due to its limited value for driving financial efficiencies within the sector.

6.1.3 The Committee NOTED that, under *Item 8, Resource*, a more detailed overview of current Estates Management and IT Infrastructure would be provided by Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure and the Digital Infrastructure Service Lead.

6.2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO JANUARY 2025

6.2.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to January 2025.

6.2.2 The Committee NOTED that it had been anticipated that the Scottish Government would support public bodies to cover the National Insurance (NI) increase outlined in the UK Government’s Autumn Budget, The Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure informed the Committee that, in February 2025, it was communicated to the College that only partial funding (60%) for the NI employer increase would be received for 2025/26 which will cost £1m, with no increase for the period April to July 2025, leaving a £350k shortfall against the College Budget.

6.2.3 The Committee NOTED that a lease signed with Telecom Infrastructure Partners for telecom mast sites at both the Sighthill and Milton Road campuses provided an upfront payment, for a 30-year lease, which would offset some of the pressure on cash.

6.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the year-to-date position against the College Budget and the current forecasting around whether the budgeted year-end position could be achieved. The Chief Operating Officer highlighted the challenges associated with the Scottish Government’s in-year decision to not to fully fund increased NI costs, and saving cash for Voluntary Severance payments. This has resulted in a year-end forecast deficit of £750k in February’s Management Accounts, an increase of £270k from the start of the year £480k deficit.

6.2.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the current cash position of the College and NOTED expected ‘pinch-points’ within the academic year. The Committee AGREED that the Executive should consider how cash pinch-points might affect the delivery of the College Transformation Plan and provide appropriate assurance to the Board of Management on 26 March 2025.

6.2.6 The Committee NOTED that Voluntary Severance Scheme had opened to all College staff on 4 March 2025. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the Scheme would close on 28 March 2025, at which point applications would be considered by the Executive Team.

**7. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

7.1 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE OVERVIEW

7.1.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Director of Enterprise & Knowledge Exchange on matters relating to Business Development. The Director of Enterprise & Knowledge Exchange provided an overview of the Directorate structure, its core purpose, annual performance, and current priorities.

7.1.2 The Committee welcomed the overview provided and DISCUSSED the 2025/26 planning cycle for Business Development activities, including its key priorities.

7.1.3 The Committee AGREED that it would welcome a deep dive into plans and priorities for Business Development in 2025/26 at its next meeting. The Chair advised the Committee that the deep dive should be outcome led and focus on strategic key performance indicators and associated risks.

7.2 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT TO MARCH 2025

7.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on commercial, international, and alternative funding performance at the College to March 2025.

7.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED gym membership fees at The Club and NOTED that the unaffordability of some College facilities for students had been highlighted by the Student Success Committee on 6 March 2025. The Director of Enterprise & Knowledge Exchange advised the Committee that the College was in the process of reviewing its pricing structure, following a benchmarking exercise against other local providers, and would report back to a future meeting of the Committee on any changes.

7.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the format of the Business Development Report and AGREED that it should be reviewed by the Vice Principal Corporate Development and the Director of Enterprise & Knowledge Exchange, in partnership with the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Finance & Infrastructure. The Chair requested that the new reporting template provide a more visual overview of performance metrics, including financial reporting, target income, volume of engagement, and both market and risk indicators. The Committee AGREED that the draft reporting template should be circulated in advance of its next meeting – to allow Members with an opportunity to feedback comments.

7.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED a supplementary paper on the Granton Waterfront Nursery and the current format of financial reporting. The Committee AGREED that, as part of the wider review of Business Development reporting, consideration should be given to benchmarking against other local nurseries, staff costs associated with the College sector’s national pay bargaining structure, and future financial projections.

7.2.5 The Committee AGREED that the proposed review of the Nursery’s operating model in 2027 should be brought forward into the next academic year.

7.3 EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

7.3.1 The Committee NOTED that a new Director of Communications, Marketing & Research had been appointed and was expected to join the College on 22 April 2025. The Vice Principal informed the Committee that the new Director’s immediate priority would be to work closely with the Vice Principal to develop an External Engagement Plan.

7.3.2 The Committee NOTED that a draft External Engagement Plan would be brought forward to its next meeting.

**8. RESOURCES REPORT**

8.1 ESTATES MANAGEMENT UPDATE

8.1.1 The Committee NOTED an Estates Management Update which outlined major developments across the area within the past 12-months and a list of current and future projects.

8.1.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the area affected by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) at the Sighthill Campus, within the facilities used by the Automative and Electrical departments. The Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure advised the Committee that the College was compliant with all Scottish Government related RAAC guidance and affected areas had been underpinned over past years. The Committee NOTED that contingency plans remained in place to move affected curriculum areas in case of any change in regulatory guidance.

8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the long-term planning for Estates Management and welcomed the development of a new Estates Strategy. The Committee AGREED that the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Finance & Estate Infrastructure should consider a draft timeline for the development of the Strategy, which should include discussion with the Committee.

***The Digital Infrastructure Service Lead joined the meeting***

8.2 IT INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

8.2.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation on IT Infrastructure which showed key areas of investment, future strategic investment, along with current plans, priorities and risks. The Digital Infrastructure Service Lead informed the Committee that the IT Infrastructure Team included 17 staff members and were supported by HEFESTIS, a shared service delivering information and change management for Higher and Further Education, a Security Operations Centre and JISC when required.

8.2.2 The Committee welcomed the presentation provided and DISCUSSED the College’s evaluation of emerging technologies for adoption and its medium to long term planning.

8.2.3 The Committee AGREED that due to the time restrictions placed on the presentation, and subsequent discussions, any additional questions should be submitted to the Clerk via email.

***Nora Senior, Chair of the Board, left the meeting.***

**9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

9.1 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

9.1.1 The Committee NOTED the range of wide information and reports it had received from College management and DISCUSSED the content and presentation of future reporting.

9.1.2 The Committee AGREED that any feedback on reporting and KPIs information should be submitted to the Chair and the Clerk, for consideration in advance of the next FDBR Committee.

**10.** **FOR INFORMATION**

10.1 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2025/26

10.1.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the academic year 2025/26.

**11.** **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11.1 To be confirmed.

***The meeting closed at 11:50***