



For the future you want

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 17 NOVEMBER 2022

14:00 Granton Campus

Present: Lesley Drummond; David Elder; Alex Killick; Ann Landels (Chair); Gwen Raez; Nora Senior; Jeanette Stevenson

In attendance: Nick Croft; Jon Buglass; Sue Clyne; Audrey Cumberford; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 No apologies were received.
- 1.2 The Committee NOTED that Sue Clyne, Lesley Drummond and Gwen Raez joined the meeting remotely, via Microsoft Teams.
- 1.3 The Committee NOTED its thanks to the Assistant Principal Engineering & Built Environment, Scott Warden, for providing a tour of the WorldSkills UK 2022 National Competition Finals held at the Granton Campus. The Chair commended the College on being the only Scottish college to host the UK-wide event, which provided a great opportunity to showcase the College and engage with its staff, students and the wider community.

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 1 September 2022 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.

4.2 HEALTH & SAFETY REPORTING

- 4.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the Board of Management, on 27 September 2022, had reviewed its Annual Health & Safety Report and agreed that the Policy & Resources Committee should consider whether any further reportage should be reviewed by the Board and/or its committees during the academic year.
- 4.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the reports currently provided to the Board of Management and AGREED that one of its membership should be invited to quarterly meetings of the Health & Safety Group, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that the minutes of the Health & Safety Group should be provided to members for information.

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 1 September 2022.
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP, had announced an Emergency Budget Review in the Scottish Parliament on 2 November 2022. The Principal advised the Committee that Colleges Scotland was liaising with the SFC regarding possible implications for the college sector, including, for example, funding associated with the Young Person's Guarantee and the Flexible Workforce Development Fund.
- 5.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the estimated cuts to the Scottish Government Budget for the financial year 2022/23 and their potential impact on the College. The Principal highlighted that the Scottish Government had made it clear that there would be no more money to fund public sector pay awards, which would have implications for both national bargaining and future industrial relations.
- 5.4 The Committee NOTED that the College continued to make progress towards its savings target for 2022/23, although the financial position remained challenging. The Principal informed the Committee that the Executive Team were now progressing the implementation of 'Phase 2' of the Business Case previously approved by the SFC, in May 2022.
- 5.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the second phase of the Voluntary Severance Scheme to address the forecast financial deficit. The Committee AGREED that, to ensure that all Non-Executive Board Members were fully briefed on 'Phase 2' of the Business Case, a briefing session led by the Principal, the Chief Operating, and the Vice Principal Education & Skills would be held in-advance of the Board of Management on 13 December 2022.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED that ECSA and the College had launched a Breakfast Club across all four campuses which provided free breakfasts to students. The Principal advised the Committee that the Breakfast Club was open to all students every Tuesday to Thursday across all campuses. The Committee DISCUSSED the Breakfast Club and commended both ECSA and the College on its efforts to provide such a valued service to students during particularly challenging times.

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 Innovation, Performance & Planning 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, as of 17 November 2022, the College had accumulated 83% of its core credits target. The Vice Principal advised the Committee that although there was a one percent improvement (year-to-date) on 2021/22, the overall number of credits achieved was slightly down - due to the lower credit target for the current academic year.
- 6.3 The Committee NOTED that the College was awaiting an update on flexibilities from the SFC regarding credits. The Vice Principal informed the Committee that should the Funding Council decide to remove the 25% student retention cut-off date for funding, this would increase the level of credits against target.
- 6.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the performance of the College against its 2022/23 credit target and the potential impact of reductions in overall full-time enrolments. The Vice Principal advised the Committee that Heads of School continued to make efficiencies through proactive actions, around class sizes and course cancellations, to ensure the College achieved its credit target.

7. FINANCE REPORT

- 7.1 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO 31 JULY 2022 UPDATE
 - 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements to 31 July 2022. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that a draft of the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements would be presented to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 22 November 2022, prior to a final draft being recommended to the Board of Management on 13 December 2022 - for approval.
- 7.2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO SEPTEMBER 2022
 - 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to September 2022.
 - 7.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the Financial Forecast Return (FFR) to June 2022, as submitted to the SFC, illustrated a £1.9m Adjusted Operating Position (AOP) deficit. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the AOP had improved by £0.9m in comparison to the FFR submitted to the SFC in September 2022.
 - 7.2.3 The Committee NOTED that the updated forecast AOP out-turn of £1m deficit was in line with the 2022/23 College Budget.

7.3 EDINBURGH COLLEGE ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT 2021/22

- 7.3.1 The Committee NOTED an Annual Procurement Report (APR) for the period from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that it was a Scottish Government requirement that the APR was signed off by the Executive and published on the College website.
- 7.3.2 The Committee NOTED that the College was a full member of the Edinburgh Regional Procurement Team, along with Edinburgh Napier University, which was established by APUC and member institutions to identify collaborative approaches to procurement. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that this approach provided an effective mechanism for the College to seek assurance around procurement regulations and also provided a shared service.
- 7.3.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the 2021/22 APR and AGREED to endorse the Report for sign-off by the Executive.

7.4 TUITION FEES PROPOSAL 2023/24

- 7.4.1 The Committee NOTED a proposal for the 2023/24 tuition fees, as endorsed by the Executive. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the College proposed a 2% increase to part-time course fees based on a market review against other colleges and local universities (with the exception of some commercial, managing agent and international course fees, minutes 7.4.2 and 7.4.3 refer).
- 7.4.2 The Committee NOTED that commercial tuition fees increased by 2%, unless otherwise advised by the relevant Assistant Principal. The Chief Operating Officer outlined five courses where fees would not be increased from 202/23.
- 7.4.3 The Committee NOTED that the International Team had recommended a small increase to full-time international fees, which had remained unchanged for several years due to low student numbers and uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken against other colleges prior to the determination of a fee increase.
- 7.4.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the proposed 2023/24 tuition fees and APPROVED their implementation.

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 College had achieved the Silver Award Level for the Employer Recognition Scheme, having previously attained the Bronze Award in 2021. The Director of HR & OD informed the Committee that the award was in recognition of the College's work to target veterans for education and training, and its commitment to guarantee an interview to all veterans who applied for jobs at

the College - subject to meeting the essential criteria for the post. The Committee NOTED that the same guarantee of an interview also existed for applicants with a disability and for those from a care background.

- 8.3 The Committee NOTED that an Employee Engagement Survey would be launched in February 2023, which focussed on wellbeing, agile working practices, management effectiveness, culture, and College values and behaviours.
- 8.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to a survey of College staff:
- (i) The decision of the Board of Management not to conduct an all-staff survey during, or immediately after, the Covid-19 Pandemic.
 - (ii) The methodology for a staff survey and the potential for deep dives.
 - (iii) The surveying software available to the College.
 - (iv) The benefits and drawbacks associated with the involvement of an external survey providers.
 - (v) The need to secure a significant response rate, at least over 60% of all staff.
- 8.5 The Committee AGREED that the Executive Team should consider feedback from members relating to the scope and methodology of the Employee Engagement Survey, prior to the Survey's implementation.

Jeanette Stevenson left the meeting

The Director of Communications, Policy & Research joined the meeting

9. ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2020-25 PROGRESS REPORT

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED progress against the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2020-25, which was approved by the Board in December 2019. The Director of Communications, Policy & Research advised the Committee that the central ambition for the College was to be carbon neutral by 2030, with a 75% reduction in emissions by 2024.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED the College had signed up to several climate change leadership commitments, in response to the climate crisis and COP26. The Director of Communications, Policy & Research specifically highlighted the College Development Network led *College Climate Emergency Statement* signed by all of Scotland's colleges and the *Edinburgh Climate Compact*, a regional commitment to work with other stakeholders on climate issues.
- 9.3 The Committee NOTED that the Scottish Government required the College to report annually on climate change and carbon reductions, as part of the *Public Bodies Climate Change Duties*. The Director of Communications, Policy & Research advised the Committee that the 'operational' carbon footprint of the College had reduced by 53% from 7271 t/CO₂e in 2013/14 (baseline) to 3453 t/CO₂e in 2021/22.
- 9.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the progress made to implement the Strategy, and its central importance to ensure the College responded to the climate crisis declared by Scottish Government. The Director of Communications, Policy & Research highlighted that, given the additional reporting and action required by the Scottish Government and the expiration of the current Environmental

Sustainability Strategy in 2024, a Future Planning Strategy Meeting would be held early in 2023 to develop the College's approach to Net Zero and sustainability.

- 9.5 The Committee welcomed the update provided and NOTED that significant progress against the Strategy had been achieved through the College's partnership working with ECSA.

The Director of Communications, Policy & Research left the meeting

10. COMPLAINTS ACTIVITY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED an annual report on complaints activity as provided by the Quality Enhancement Team. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the report was received by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 13 October 2022, and it was agreed that the report should be presented to the Policy & Resources Committee to determine whether any further action was required.
- 10.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Complaints Activity Annual Report and the increased number of complaints recorded in 2021/22. The Vice Principal Innovation, Performance & Planning informed the Committee that the increase in recorded complaints was attributed to challenges raised by the Covid-19 Pandemic during the period, including class cancellations and changes to SQA examinations.
- 10.3 The Committee NOTED the College had an effective Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure, which provided assurance that complaints were being handled appropriately. The Chair welcomed the highlighted process for recording compliments at the College, to record instances of both outstanding service and best practice.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 GATHER & GATHER CATERING CONTRACT UPDATE

- 11.1.1 The Committee NOTED that an update on the current catering contract between the College and its external provider, Gather & Gather would be provided to the Board of Management on 13 December 2022.

11.2 DEPARTURE OF NON-EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER

- 11.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the tenure of non-executive Board member and Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee, Ann Landels, would end on 9 February 2023. The Chair of the Board, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Ms Landels for her significant contribution to the Policy & Resources Committee as Chair over the past 3-years.

12. FOR INFORMATION

12.1 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2022/23

- 12.1.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the 2022/23 academic year.

13. CLOSED ITEMS OF BUSINESS

13.1 CLOSED MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 13.1.1 The Committee APPROVED the closed minutes from 1 September 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee will take place on 21 February 2022.

Meeting closed at 15:55