



For the future you want

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 12 NOVEMBER 2019

15:00 Boardroom, Milton Road Campus

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

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

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 The Committee NOTED declarations of interest from Ann Landels and Nigel Paul in relation to Item 9, in light of their positions as members of the Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT) and the ECDT Joint Working Group - respectively. The Chair advised members that Lesley Drummond, a Non-Executive Board Member, would act as Chair for this single item of business.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The Committee APPROVED the minutes from 20 August 2019 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 *RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DASHBOARD (Minute 6.4/ 19.02.19 refers)*

The Committee NOTED that the Academic Council monitored attainment figures through its 'How Good is Our College' reportage.

5. 'A FUTURE PROOFED COLLEGE' UPDATE

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Principal on progress achieved to date in the delivery of the next phase of the Edinburgh College Blueprint 2017/22, which focused on three new transformational themes: (i) A College with a curriculum for the future; (ii) A high performing digital College; and, (iii) A resilient, agile College with reach and potential to grow.
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that given the level and speed of change in the environment in which the College operated, and the anticipated disruptive nature of that environment, the Board at its Development Day on 29 October agreed to review and refresh its Strategic Plan during the current academic year. The Committee DISCUSSED the proposal, and AGREED that any revisions to the Strategic Plan should be considered against financial forecasts for the next academic year, to ensure appropriate alignment.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that the Board, at its Development Day, has also agreed to develop a dashboard reporting format to show in-year progress against strategic KPIs, including comparative performance data from the previous year and alignment to relevant committees of the Board. The Principal advised the Committee that a KPI dashboard would be presented to the Board on 10 December.

6. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIES

6.1 DIGITAL STRATEGY 2020-2025 UPDATE

- 6.1.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation on the development of a new Digital Strategy for the College. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance advised the Committee that the Digital Strategy 2020-2025 would position the College to be a pioneer in digital learning, teaching and business operations across further and higher education, with data driven innovation at its core.
- 6.1.2 The Committee NOTED that a process of consultation had taken place with managers and staff across the College, and had yielded 232 unique responses which had been distilled into three strategic themes. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance advised the Committee that the three strategic themes were: (i) Digital and Data Skills for Staff and Student; (ii) Data Driven Innovation for Transformational Services; and, (iii) Developing a Resilient Digital Infrastructure.
- 6.1.3 The Committee welcomed the presentation provided by the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance, and DISCUSSED the following points:

- (i) The need for the College to be strategic in the use of its digital resources;
- (ii) the funding levels required to implement the strategy at a sensible rate;
- (iii) the capacity of staff going forward to develop their digital skills, and the funding available for students and staff through the City Region Deal;
- (iv) the need for the draft Digital Strategy to include a description of the College's current position;
- (v) engagement with the Digital Skills Partnership to improve digital skills with the College and develop relationships with key providers.

6.1.4 The Committee NOTED the progress made toward producing a Digital Strategy 2020-2025, and AGREED that a draft should be presented to the next meeting of the Board - for approval. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that, given the pace of change around digital innovation, the Digital Strategy (once approved) should be reviewed on a regular basis.

6.2 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2019-2024

6.2.1 The Committee NOTED a Draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2019-2024. The Head of Communications, Policy & Research advised the Committee that the Board on 24 September had highlighted its ambition for the College to be at the forefront of sustainability across the college sector, and had asked the Executive to consider the feasibility of a zero net carbon emissions target by 2030.

6.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the draft Strategy outlined an ambition for the College to be at the cutting edge of environmental sustainability through its learning, teaching, partnerships and core operations. The Head of Communications, Policy & Research informed the Committee that a key aim with the Strategy was to reduce carbon baseline emissions by 75% by 2024, with an aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030.

6.2.3 The Committee welcomed the draft Strategy and DISCUSSED the following points:

- (i) The significant reduction of carbon emissions through a shift away from a gas-based heating system;
- (ii) the support available through the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund, and the potential for further investment through the SFC;
- (iii) enhanced engagement with local sustainability partnerships;
- (iv) the role of ECSA in recruiting environmental sustainability volunteers.

6.2.4 The Committee APPROVED the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2019-2024. The Chair advised the Board that Strategy would be presented to the Board on 10 December for noting.

6.3 EDINBURGH COLLEGE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2019/20 / ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT

6.3.1 The Committee NOTED an Edinburgh College Procurement Strategy 2019/20. The Head of Finance advised the Committee that a review of the

current procurement strategy was required as a result of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, and the Scottish Government's procurement capability assessment.

- 6.3.2 The Committee NOTED that the College developed its Procurement Strategy in partnership with Napier University. The Head of Finance informed the Committee that the delivery of the Strategy had led to enhanced procurement processes and outcomes, and therefore improved Scottish Government assessment scores.
- 6.3.3 The Committee DISCUSSED and APPROVED the Edinburgh College Procurement Strategy 2019/20. The Committee AGREED that the College should consider the potential for other local universities, such as Queen Margaret University, to join the partnership going forward.
- 6.3.4 The Committee NOTED that the College would publish its Annual Procurement Report (APR) covering the period from 01 January 2018 to 31 July 2019. The Head of Finance advised the Committee that it was a legal requirement that the APR was signed off by the Executive and published on its website.

7. RECRUITMENT & RETENTION DASHBOARD

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED an overview, from the Vice Principal, Education & Skills, of the performance of the College against its 2019/20 recruitment and retention targets. The Vice Principal reminded the Committee that the SFC had set the College an activity target of 187,947 for the 2019/20 academic year.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED a year-to-date (YTD) increase in enrolments and the number of unique students from 2018/19 to 2019/20. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills advised the Committee that, although these figures were positive, the number of credits was currently down on last year (YTD). The Committee NOTED that the credit figures indicated were reflected across the college sector.
- 7.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to the recruitment and retention figures outlined:
 - (i) The decrease in full-time students at the College and across the wider college sector;
 - (ii) the current college sector funding model and its alignment with the increased trend in part-time modes of study;
 - (iii) the high levels of employment in the Edinburgh region, and the need to recognise that students withdrawing from college to seek gainful employment should be viewed as a positive destination;
 - (iv) the improvements made through performance reviews with curriculum teams across the College.
- 7.4 The Committee NOTED a brief demonstration of the Edinburgh College Curriculum Planning Tool. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills advised the Committee of the approach used by the College to assess the economic viability of courses within the

curriculum portfolio. The Committee DISCUSSED the planning tool used by the College and AGREED a presentation on the curriculum planning should be provided to Board members as part of their induction and development.

8 FINANCE REPORT

8.1 FINANCIAL FORECAST RETURN 2018/19 TO 2023/24

- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED the details of the Financial Forecast Return 2018/19 to 2023/24 (FFR). The Head of Finance advised the Committee that the FFR had been submitted to the SFC on 27 September 2019 as part of the Funding Council's financial sustainability monitoring framework.
- 8.1.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the financial position of the College and the wider college sector. The Committee AGREED that, in order to respond to the financial forecasts outlined and achieve a breakeven position, alternative strategies and scenario planning information should be presented to its next meeting on 25 February 2020.
- 8.1.3 The Committee NOTED the appropriate scenario planning would support the Board in its decision-making going forward, and ensure the College remained forward thinking in its approach.

8.2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO SEPTEMBER 2019

- 8.2.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to September 2019.
- 8.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the College in the first two months of the financial year was showing an adverse annual forecast movement against the full-year budget. The Head of Finance advised the Committee that a significant portion of the adverse income variation related to tuition fees (SAAS and HEFT fees), but remained in line with the profiled budget to date.
- 8.2.3 The Committee NOTED the risks flagged in relation to scheduled courses revenue, and the ongoing meetings between each Faculty and the Finance Team to offset any income shortfall. The Committee DISCUSSED the variance in financial reportage received by the Corporate Development Committee against that provided in the Management Accounts in relation to scheduled courses.
- 8.2.4 The Committee AGREED that the Executive should consider the timing of financial reportage to ensure that the Board and its committees receive the most up-to-date information going forward.

8.3 TUITION FEES 2020/21

- 8.3.1 The Committee NOTED a proposal for the 2020/21 tuition fees, as endorsed by the Executive. The Head of Finance advised the Committee

that the paper 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 8.3.2 and 8.3.3 refer).

- 8.3.2 The Committee NOTED that commercial tuition fees increased by 2%, unless otherwise advised by Faculty Heads. The Head of Finance outlined six courses where fees would not be increased from 2019/20.
- 8.3.3 The Committee NOTED that the International Team had recommended that full-time international fees remained the same in 2019/20, following an increase of approximately 10% in the 2018/19.
- 8.3.4 The Committee DISCUSSED proposed 2020/21 tuition fees and the level of information provided to members. The Chair advised the Committee that the reportage provided appropriate assurances around the pricing of courses.
- 8.3.5 The Committee APPROVED the 2020/21 tuition fees as outlined by the Head of Finance.

9. EDINBURGH COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT: JOINT WORKING GROUP REPORT

Julie Forester, Interim Development Trust Manager, joined the meeting

Lesley Drummond assumed the role of Chair

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED the findings and recommendations of the joint Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT) and College working group on the future operating structure of the ECDT and the functions associated with its work.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED a recommendation of the Working Group that the College developed fundraising and alumni outreach functions within the Corporate Development directorate, to enable efficient and effective marketing and communications to support fundraising appeals. The Interim Development Trust Manager informed the Committee that the Working Group also encouraged collaborative working with commercial development, project development, policy development, events and external relations functions.
- 9.3 The Committee NOTED that the model reflected the operations of most other educational institutions with a successful arms-length entity. The Interim Development Trust Manager advised the Committee that the ECDT would remain the legal entity providing governance on the acceptance and distribution of philanthropic funds, ensuring transparency, whilst protecting the College from any real or perceived undue influence as a result of donations.
- 9.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the recommendations of the Working Group and NOTED that no new funding would be required to support the ECDT in the 2019/20 budget.

- 9.5 The Committee AGREED that prior to a Joint Working Group Report being submitted to the Board on 10 December, the Vice Principal Corporate Development and the Interim Development Trust Manager review the terminology used within the report.

The Interim Development Trust Manager and the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance left the meeting

Ann Landels resumed the role of Chair

10. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a Human Resources Report which included updates on employee relations, HR operations and organisational development.
- 10.2 The Committee NOTED that the implementation of revised and updated policies remained challenging when consulting with EIS-FELA. The Head of HR & OD advised the Committee that it was imperative that policies and procedures continued to be updated and introduced in order to provide an up-to-date framework for all staff.
- 10.3 The Committee NOTED that staff absence in Quarter 1 of 2019/20 had seen an increase from previous quarters in 2018/19. The Head of HR & OD advised the Committee that the marked increase was due to improved reporting of absence, however, members were informed that absence levels would continue to be monitored closely.
- 10.4 The Committee NOTED that the Head of HR & OD had been appointed as Chair of the Strategic HR Group for the sector and was now leading a number of sector wide projects, including closer working between college HR leads and Colleges Scotland.

Nigel Paul left the meeting

11 CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

11.1 OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE FOR CONSTRUCTION FACILITY UPDATE

- 11.1.1 The Committee NOTED that, following discussions with the SFC, the College had received confirmation of funding to develop an outline business case for a new Construction facility at the Granton Campus. The Principal advised the Committee that prior to the development of a business case the College would engage with City of Edinburgh Council to ensure appropriate alignment with the wider Granton Waterfront Development.

11.2 GATHER & GATHER: SIX MONTH CATERING REVIEW.

- 11.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the implementation of the current outsourced catering contract. The Chair advised the Committee that it had previously requested a six-month review of catering arrangements

following Gather & Gather appointment as catering contractor in early 2019.

- 11.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the report provided by Gather & Gather and welcomed their flexible approach to delivering catering services within the College. The Principal advised the Committee that the College and Gather & Gather would continue to working closely together to ensure that a high-level of service was provided to students and staff.
- 11.2.3 The Committee AGREED that a 12-month review of catering should be provided to members at its meeting on 19 May 2020.

12 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

- 12.1 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. The Head of Communications, Policy and Research advised the Committee that further to this, the report also indicated what the College was doing to address these impacts.

13 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

- 13.1 None.

14 CLOSED ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS

- 14.1 A closed item of business was considered by the Policy & Resources Committee as part of a closed session. Closed items were recorded under a separate minute (*Closed minutes 14/12.19 refers*).

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 15.1 The next meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee will take place on 25 February 2020, in the Boardroom, Milton Road Campus.

Meeting closed at 17:50