

Minutes of the Resources Committee
Monday 14 November 2022
Video Conference-Zoom
4pm

Present: Alasdair Simmons (Chair)
Cliff Wragg (Vice Chair)
Ian Pryce CBE, Principal & Chief Executive
Allan Schofield
Amanda Wagstaff

In attendance Pat Jones- Deputy CEO Finance
Caroline Biddle- Executive Director of HR
Rachel Nicol, Group Director of Governance (Minutes)

R/39/22 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Vinod Tailor.

R/40/22 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the items on the agenda.

R/41/22 Matters arising

It was explained that the scope for the planned funding briefing, to which all governors will be invited, will be determined by the Committee Chair and the Deputy CEO-Finance and a date agreed.

R/42/22 Estates review

The Director of Estates and Facilities presented the update on estates projects including:

- Finalisation of the lease and service charge arrangements for Corby Sixth form and alterations to planned work to manage the budget. Building work will commence no later than January 2023. The Committee questioned progress on the final tenders and these have been reviewed for compliance with the College's Procurement Consultant. Final figures and value engineering options are being reviewed. The Committee discussed how the wider financial and commercial variables are taken into account.
- Recladding of the Tower Block, readiness of building contracts and adjustments to the project to meet budgetary requirements. A new entrance will be created and the Tower will be connected to a river water heating system. Scaffolding has been virtually completed and the status of other areas of the project were outlined. The current rag rating was explained due to ongoing negotiations.



- Bedford Sixth Form, major works completed and progress made on rebalancing heating, projected overspend of £200k caused by additional steel work on relocation of air source heat pump apparatus but had been mitigated significantly by utilising the opportunity to carry out necessary work on the swimming pool at the same time.
- Kings Hill Farm, layout being finalised with the Director at Shuttleworth with tender planned to enable commencement of work early in the new year.
- Motor vehicle site, interest currently expressed by prospective purchasers rather than tenants. Use of an agent will be considered in due course. Governors were keen that the College remained flexible around previous decisions taken where there are changes in the market. This will be monitored by the College leadership team and options brought back to the Committee as needed.

The Committee commended the weekly updates on capital projects displayed in the Tower block lifts.

The Committee raised the issue of projects continuing without full paper work in place. Assurance was given on progress with paper work and how risks are monitored and managed at Executive level.

The Committee thanked the Director of Estates and Facilities and team.

The report was noted

The Director of Estates and Facilities left the meeting

R/43/22 Digital transformation flight path

The Executive Director of Digital Transformation attended to give a presentation setting out the IT position on joining the Group in May, from his own and the team perspective.

Progress has included a move from being reactive to being proactive.

Highlights included priorities, challenges (including pay), average FTE against comparable organisations and benchmarking. A target operating model has been implemented with groups focusing on different aspects. Additional staff are planned within the job families and the potential overlay of CBC staff in the event of merger was explained.

Identified areas of under investment and investment in the wrong activities was highlighted. The current budget has been targeted towards improvement in infrastructure.



Internet link utilisation statistics and planned improvements were explained with the load of the network being spread across campuses. All traffic is currently fed through the Bedford Campus. The use of social media, comparison between student and staff use, potential to control the volume of traffic and limit social use verses academic use is being looked at.

Positive developments and the road map were highlighted. The Committee supported the increased visibility of activity and commended the achievement of cyber essentials, providing assurance that fundamental security is in place. Microsoft will be undertaking a cloud assessment and JISC will carry out an independent infrastructure review.

The current position on cyber security was set out including dark web monitoring, training and phishing testing. The Committee questioned the policy to manage incidents noted and how individuals are supported when details are compromised.

The Techspo event and the positive engagement with students, employers and local councils was outlined.

The Committee was encouraged by the progress made and raised further questions:

-the impact of a volatile market on IT pay levels and whether allowances could be utilised? Comparisons are being made across the sector rather than the wider market.
-whether there have been any salary band changes? Some of these have been significant but followed job evaluations and increases have been managed within budget envelopes.

-Whether strategically the College needs to look beyond sector averages and how this might be managed within financial constraints? This is part of the wider picture and People Strategy.

-How capital and operational spending might be managed to enable investment in technology after the next 18 months? This was discussed in the context of completion of building projects and anticipated changes in spending.

-Whether we can articulate a 3 to 5 year strategy in the summer Resources meeting?
It was agreed that the Committee will be updated on the long term strategy in the summer.

-The significance of the printing services element of the structure. SA confirmed the nature of these areas, current use and potential future changes.

The presentation will be shared with all governors.



The Executive Director of HR presented the report and confirmed the review was of 2021-2022.

The People Strategy had originally been set in 2019. The change in context and requirement for new disciplinary and grievance processes was explained. Values based recruitment could not be progressed until the values had been confirmed. This work and the promotion of volunteering has been carried over into the current year. Links between the strategy, objectives and impact measurements, as well as the relevance of benchmarking, have been considered. Headlines from the staff survey, in particular around satisfaction were explained, with ongoing work to improve the engagement.

The Committee raised questions:

-How is the appraisal process managed to ensure the quality of those appraising and the management of consistency? The new Director of Quality will oversee professional development from December. A second review will be carried out on the quality of the exercise. The manager's toolkit will include additional guidance to support line managers but it has been agreed that this needs to be followed up with focus groups.

-Is the strategy aspirational enough, for example whether there is a need to articulate how the College achieves smaller but better paid numbers of staff, whether secondments with employers are considered? The strategy supports the overall group strategic plan with the need to improve balance and trust within the workforce.

-In the midst of the recession, how will the College manage natural turnover if staff don't leave naturally because of the recession? The approach taken to different areas of the workforce and need to align different elements of the strategy, such as the digital strategy, was explained.

-Whether there can be the inclusion of some milestones within the strategy? CB will review this.

The report was noted

R/45/22 Staff framework

The Executive Director of HR confirmed no significant changes since the framework was previously reviewed.

Job families have been developed to visually align roles and manage equal pay and discrimination risk, transparency of roles and progression possibilities.

The pay award will be a single award across the organisation. Harmonisation of the Head roles and BCPS contracts has taken place.

The appraisal policy and manager guidance had been included in the pack for information.

Questions included:

-BCPS the Peoples pension, what is the employer contribution? The Committee discussed requirements and assurance was given that BCPS is legally compliant.

-How many Tresham contracts remain? It was noted that 91 Tresham contracts remain but that there are none remaining following the Shuttleworth historic transfer

The update was noted.

R/46/22 Indicative out turn

The Deputy CEO-Finance presented the report and projected surplus for 2021-2022. The auditors have carried out a thorough review. Outstanding financial health based on ESFA ratios was confirmed.

The return to the ESFA has included additional information to facilitate further benchmarking information for the sector.

A competitor analysis was included for the Committee (based on last year's accounts) and on a Group basis.

The College Financial Forecasting Return ("CFFR") planning document was explained as the comprehensive return for the regulator based on the financial information approved by the Board in the summer meeting. The trend analysis is included in the dashboard produced by the ESFA.

Further questions from the Committee included:

-accuracy and presentation of the data relating to some groups in the competitor analysis? It was noted that there are likely to be swings in performance resulting from acquisitions.

-How the pension release has been arrived at? The College ensures assumptions are reviewed to give assurance in the figures presented. The tri annual review is underway and it is understood that post balance sheet events will be taken into account.

The report was noted.

R/47/22 Capital programme



It was noted that the Capital programme has not changed since the Board's approval in the summer. The College continues to work on projects and apply for grants as appropriate.

R/48/22 College information report

The Deputy CEO-Finance presented the report and highlighted:

- Pension adjustments and actuarial position
- Reduction in HE learners, review being carried out by the Director responsible
- Utilities, expectations of £2.5 to £3 million increase, mechanical solutions on refurbishments but also a recognised need for a behavioural campaign.

The Committee questioned:

-whether there would be any priority of colleges in Government measures? The Estates strategy is being reviewed in light of the pressures but no support has been pledged to colleges at this time.

-why there is overspend on an HR software contract? The licence ran out in November and an extension agreed for 3 years but with an upfront cost added in by the provider. Assurance was given that an internal review is being carried out.

-whether the cash variance should be negative? It should be and this was explained in relation to grants applied for and not received on the Tower Block. Grants are still being applied for and the position being carefully managed.

-How the merger may have an impact? Detailed forecasting is being carried out and further modelling will be presented to the Board in due course.

-How the banks' attitude may change due to colleges struggling because of lack of support around utilities? Work is taking place to put forward a business plan to the bank around merger.

*-Whether it would be prudent to know the lower bands of the ESFA financial health ratios so that governors can assess where the college is on the scale? **This will be added in to future reports.***

-Given the further efficiencies required and the vacancy gap, what is the efficiency gap we're trying to close? At the moment the position on apprenticeships and AEB is positive with a new partnership approved. The College is looking at a new contract with SSG and formal approval will be sought when due diligence is concluded

The report was noted.

R/49/22 HR KPIs

The Executive Director of HR presented the report and the position as at the end of September.



Variances were explained in terms of new starters with 847.95 being the overall FTE guideline figure. Agency numbers had been carefully managed and were noted to not be significant.

Staff turnover is still high but starting to stabilise with BCPS turnover now below 30%.

Sickness has reduced with a comparison given to the pre Covid position. There has been a slight improvement on sickness levels due to non-Covid illnesses. 5 employees were noted to have long Covid but with no significant impact on working. Mental health sickness has fallen slightly.

The Committee raised questions:

-Is there any analysis to explain whether mental health illness relates to work?

Figures include mental health and stress incidents but it was accepted that there may be some mis-categorisation. Long term relates to a small number of individuals with the majority relating to personal circumstances. They are dispersed across a range of areas so no pattern has been identified.

-How is the measure of “personal” verses “work” cause categorised on the system?

HR has additional information which is not disclosed more widely as sensitive data, particularly in relation to long term sickness.

-Two long term sickness graphs (on pages 6 and 7) what is the long-term sick trend on BCS? It was explained that the trend has been impacted by lower overall staff numbers

The report was noted

R/50/22 Pay award

The Committee noted that the pay award has been confirmed at 3% across the College.

The CEO confirmed the position and feedback received.

R/51/22 Support area SAR reports

The Committee had reviewed the reports for Finance, HR and Estates

The Chair of the Corporation highlighted to the Committee the discussion at the Governance Committee on how the Board is assured that the internal review process is truly reflective. SARs and internal audit process:

The Governance Committee had considered the operation of the self-assessment report and internal audit and raised two additional questions:

-How does our performance compare with comparable services within colleges and how to we know?

-How does the performance compare with best practice and how do we know?

Assurance was given that the appropriateness of measures for professional services had been recognised and is being taken forward internally. It is planned to review the process and the Resources Committee will consider any forthcoming proposals in the first instance. It is intended that the focus will be on how the functions support teaching and learning and keep students at the centre of college operations.

The Committee noted the professional area SAR reports.

R/52/22 Decisions under delegated authority

The paper was presented by the Group Director of Governance.

The Committee noted the decision taken on 10 August to approve a multi-year transport contract for Shuttleworth following assurances received on the financial health of the supplier and precautions taken around inflation and notice periods.

R/53/22 Employee relations

The Executive Director HR confirmed that no matters required reporting

The update was noted

R/54/22 Minutes 15 June 2022

The minutes of the meeting on 15 June 2022 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

R/55/22 Any other business

There was no other business not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

R/56/22 Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Monday 30 January at 4pm