Resources Committee

Tue 13 February 2024, 17:00 - 18:30 MS Teams



Attendees

Present: Ann Harrison (Independent Governor, Chair), Nazia Rehman (Independent Governor), John Clarke (Independent Governor), Paul Park (Independent Governor), Julie Barnes (Co-Opted Governor)

In attendance: Joanne Platt (Director of Governance), Steve Scott (Finance Director), Louise Brown (VP Corporate Services), Dave Harrison (VP Data and Funding), Shirley Collier (External Board Reviewer, attending as an observer).

The Director of Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

The Chair welcomed John Clarke, Paul Park and Shirley Collier to the meeting.

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies for absence

RES-24-02-01

Apologies for absence had been received from Alison McKenzie-Folan, Susan Spibey and Anna Dawe.

2. Declarations of Interests

RES-24-02-02

There were no declarations of interests.

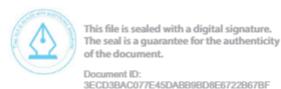
3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

RES-24-02-03

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2023 and agreed that they are an accurate record of the meeting. All actions are complete. In relation to the action for Minute number RES-23-11-11, the Committee noted that staff equality data is now included in the HR KPI dashboard considered under Item 8 below and the latest Annual Equality and Diversity Report is to be reviewed by the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee at its meeting on 27 February, following which it will be reported to the Governing Board. A copy will then be brought to the Committee at its next meeting in May.

Resolved: The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2023 for signature by the Chair.





4. Management Accounts

Julie Barnes joined the meeting at 5.10pm.

The Committee reviewed the Management Accounts to the end of December 2023, noting that the Management Accounts to the end of January would be made available to Governors within the next two weeks. The accounts show a year to date operating surplus (before FRS102 adjustments) of £386k against a budget £37k which is a positive variance of £349k.

Cash balances at the end of the period were £11.493M (117 days). This is higher than the originally budgeted £11.253M (103 days) and remains within the 30 day threshold agreed by the College and reported in the annual financial statements.

ESFA key performance indicators showed the College's financial health will a minimum grade of good and all bank covenants remain compliant with the terms of the facility agreement.

The Committee once again noted that although the management accounts show the College in a strong financial position, this is not a guarantee of long term financial stability and the financial position requires continuous management to ensure the College remains financially secure. On-going concerns remain in relation to energy prices and general cost of living inflationary costs and these are reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure the College keeps within the budget parameters in the 2023-24 budget. It was noted that the College is in the process of reviewing and updating budget forecasts for 2023-24 (see Item 5 below) and future reports and variance analysis will relate to the budget re-forecast when approved by the Governing Board

Governors noted the positive position, and in particular the additional income arising from growth and asked how many students the increase in income represented. It was agreed that this information will be provided.

Governors asked if there was an option to pay off some of the loan rather than investing reserves in the College estate and following discussion it was agreed that it was important to continue with investment of reserves in the estate to ensure that the additional students can be accommodated. The Committee also discussed the College's bank accounts all being with one bank and it was noted that there are restrictions on investments with institutions that are not related to the College's bank. The Committee noted that the College receives a good rate of interest with its current bank and that the maximum protection afforded to personal banking customers does not apply to business accounts, hence there is no advantage to spreading the College's cash assets with a number of banks.

The Committee also discussed the target to remain a minimum of 'Good' financial health with the ESFA, rather than aiming for an 'outstanding' rating, noting that aiming for 'Good' enabled the College to remain financially secure, whilst continuing to invest its cash reserves in the College estate and also remain compliant with its banking covenants. However, the ongoing reduction of debt will have a positive impact on the EBITDA, which is likely to move the College into 'outstanding' financial health later in the year.

The Committee discussed the option to capitalise some money in the income and expenditure account, but noted that this was earmarked for refurbishment works at LALC and Leigh Campuses and would be written down in-year, rather than over the 10-years it would take if it was capitalised. However, it was agreed that the Finance Director would nevertheless look at the Capitalisation Strategy to see if it was due for review.

The Committee also discussed the teachers pension grant, noting that the projected £750k increase will not become effective until April 2024. As the figure wasn't known at the time the December management accounts were complied, it isn't yet included, but has been factored into the Budget Reforecast considered under Item 5

Governors asked if the College is being over cautious in its budgeting, but agreed that waiting until projected income arising from growth is confirmed by census data, is a prudent approach to take.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Management Accounts to the end of December 2023.





The Committee considered a report providing a mid-year budget update, noting that the original budget approved by the Governing Board in July 2023 had forecast an operating surplus of £531k and a reporting deficit after FRS102 adjustments of £783k. Following a review of the original assumptions together with clarification on previous expectations, the re-forecast predicts that the College's position will improve by the end of the year, with an anticipated operating surplus of £788k and a reporting surplus of £1.040M. This will allow the College to maintain a minimum ESFA financial heath grading of 'good' whilst continuing to operate within the terms of the College's banking covenants.

As discussed under the previous item, the Committee noted that although the management accounts show the College in a strong financial position, this is not a guarantee of long term financial stability and the financial position requires continuous management to ensure the College remains financially secure.

Governors agreed that the College was in a good position financially and noted the planned investment of reserves in the College estates as discussed under the previous item. Looking at costs for signage, Governors asked the College to look at its external signage to ensure a uniform branding on the outside of all the College's buildings.

Governors discussed the deferment of the Powerhouse to 2025-26 and noted that this was due to the urgent need to acquire additional premises to accommodate growth, but that the College continues to work with architects on the design for the Powerhouse so that it can move swiftly to seek full planning permission and proceed with the Powerhouse, should funds become available earlier than 2025-26.

Nazia Rehman left the meeting at 5.45pm.

The Committee discussed the impact of growth on the staffing budget, noting that much had been absorbed by existing staff as the College's approach to staff utilisation gave it some capacity and headroom. It was noted that whilst staff utilisation rates are higher than the College would like, this is being worked through and it is anticipated that the target will be met. Governors asked if the College was investing enough in its staff and it was confirmed that the College runs a very efficient staffing model, which includes the upskilling of technical staff to provide cover when needed, rather than the use of agency staff, which ensures both staff development and the quality of delivery during staff absences.

Vacancies were also discussed and it was noted that whilst some challenges remain for some very specialised posts, the College is getting ahead of the curve in relation to this in comparison to other colleges. It was also confirmed that the College has a number of policies to address market forces for hard to recruit to posts.

Resolved: The Committee agreed to recommend the budget re-forecast for 2023-24 to the Governing Board for approval.

6. Fees Policy RES-24-02-06

The Committee reviewed the Fees Policy for 2024-25, which had been updated taking into account the latest available guidance and policy changes issues by the ESFA and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

Changes noted include dates to reflect correct year and an updating off all hyperlinks. The Committee noted that there are no impacts in terms of equality and diversity. However, it was also noted that impending changes to funding rules for adults by both the ESFA and the GMCA have not yet been finalised and are not therefore reflected in the Policy. Further changes will therefore be made when the new rules are issued and it was agreed that the Board would be asked to delegate approval of those changes to the Executive Team. It was also noted that the final policy, when approved will be uploaded to the Board Portal.





Resolved: The Committee agreed to recommend the Fees Policy for 2024-25 to the Governing Board for approval.

7. Finance Report and KPI Dashboard

RES-24-02-07

The Committee reviewed the Finance KPI dashboard to the end of December 2023, which includes a review of financial health and learner performance KPIs and projections against target, an update on subcontracting and employer training costs and a new section showing compliance with new Managing Public Money (MPM) regulations introduced by re-classification of Colleges as public sector bodies.

The Committee focused its attention on KPIs showing an amber RAG rating, noting that there were no red KPIs at the end of December 2023. HE total funding to the end of December showed a £2k negative variance, but the Committee was advised that the position has already improved, with a projected total year income of £1.716M which is above target.

Other amber KPIs including EBITDA, liquidity, borrowing as a percentage of income and additional AEB funding, all of which were marginally below the 2023-24 target but all of which are projected to meet target by year end.

Whilst the ESFA dashboard shows the College in a strong financial position, the Committee noted again that this is not a guarantee of long term financial stability and that the financial position is therefore continually monitored to ensure financial security.

The Committee agreed that there are no KPIs of concern that need to be brought to the attention of the Governing Board.

The Committee noted the report.



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The Committee reviewed the HR Report and KPI dashboard up to and inclusive of data for December 2023, which includes data for all the agreed HR key measures across the College. It was noted that the staff absence rate is currently 2.71% which is in line with the target of 2.7%.

The Committee noted ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff particularly in specialist and skill shortage areas such as food and drink manufacturing, engineering and professional business areas.

The turnover rates currently stand at 15.27% for overall turnover and 17.4% for leavers within the first year, both of which remain below the national benchmarks of 25% for leavers in the first year of employment and 17.8% for overall turnover. The Committee discussed the range of measures in place to address this and asked for numbers of staff as well as percentages, and reasons for resignations, to be provided in relation to attrition rates in future reports.

The Committee noted the plans in relation to the College's Future Skills and Talent Strategy, developed to continue to address these recruitment and retention challenges and the activities taking place this academic year to support staff engagement and well-being, including measures to assist staff with the cost of living challenges that are being experienced nationally.

Governors asked if vacancies impacted on staff wellbeing and it was confirmed that although staff utilisation rates are higher than the College would like, that it is closely monitored and that regular focus groups are held with staff.

The Committee noted that the College's Apprenticeship Team had been nominated for the Engineering and Manufacturing Apprenticeship Provider of the Year award and that the HR Team had been nominated for the Personnel Today Awards in the category for Health and Wellbeing, and congratulated staff for these nominations

National challenges relating to attrition rates and the highly competitive private sector salaries are impacting on attracting and retaining quality candidates with the current national position being more vacancies than staff available for work. It was also noted that there has been increased union activity across the FE sector in relation to next academic year's pay award and workload, although to date the College is not adversely affected by this and that intelligence shows that staff are generally happy and that the College is closing the gap between school and college pay.

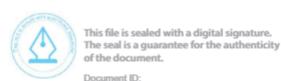
All but two KPIs are on target at the end of December 2023 and there are no KPIs rated as 'red'. Two amber KPIs relate to the gender pay gap and the number of apprentices as a percentage of the workforce.

Governors were impressed with the range of activities to support staff and to attract and retain staff and the Committee discussed how these are promoted both within and outside the College.

The Committee asked that the Committee's concerns over attrition rates be brought to the attention of the Governing Board in the Committee Chair's report to the Board.

The Committee noted the report.





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The Committee considered a report on estates and sustainability, including a review of the KPIs in the estates and sustainability KPI dashboard.

It was noted that the School for the Arts was vacated and handed over to the DfE contractor, Wilmott Dixon in October 2023. Assurances by way of indemnities and warranties have been provided and the strip out works have commenced in preparation for the demolition. The full right hand side of the campus is due to be handed over to Willmott Dixon next week when demolition works are expected to commence. The Committee was pleased to note that planning permission for the new build was granted on 23 January 2024 and it was noted that regular meetings are being held with Wilmott Dixon and the DfE project managers to ensure that the health and safety of students and staff during this period remains the highest priority.

Following the growth in student numbers a number of new rooms have been brought into commission at Parsons Walk and the Centre for Advanced Technical Studies to support with the increase in students on site since the start of the academic year. Negotiations and due diligence are also underway to secure additional space within the locality to address the increasing pressures on space due to the growth and also in anticipation of space norms in the new build at Parsons Walk.

It was noted that the College was subject to Fire Inspections by GM Fire Service at both its Parsons Walk and Pagefield sites. These routine inspections were undertaken by a Chief Fire Officer for Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The outcome of both inspections was positive, and the Chief Fire Officer was satisfied that the necessary fire safety arrangements and provisions put in place are compliant and that the College is meeting its obligations to comply with the Fire Safety Order.

The Committee also noted that the College's internal auditors had recently undertaken a health and safety audit at the College and had given a 'Substantial' assurance rating.

The Committee discussed the unannounced inspection of the Leigh College Refectory kitchen in November 2023, which identified an issue, followed by a re-inspection in December 2023, which resulted in a 4-Star Rating. As a result of these inspections, additional measures have been put in place for all catering facilities across the College sites which includes a new Pest Control contract with another provider, additional internal inspections half termly, half termly deep cleans and engaging an external consultant to undertake periodic unannounced mock inspections of the facilities. In addition managers and team leaders across the catering services have undertaken the L3 certificate in Food Hygiene again.

The Committee noted the disruption across the Parson's Walk campus during the demolition and building works for the new College including alternative arrangements being made for student parking and some alternative arrangements in place for staff parking. Governors asked that the Committee's concerns in relation to parking for staff be brought to the attention of the Governing Board in the Committee Chair's report to the Board. Governors also asked that the situation is monitored and that any incidents of delayed lessons arising from staff's inability to park be brought to Governors' attention.

The Committee also asked that the Governing Board's attention be brought to the progress being made by the College in terms of its target to achieve net zero, including plans to install solar panels on the new premises being secured to accommodate growth.

The Committee noted the report.

10. Strategic Chapter: Mid-Year Update

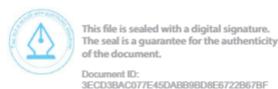
10.1. Investment for the Future

RES-24-02-10

The Committee considered a report providing a mid-year update in relation to the strategic chapter 'Investment for the Future, noting that many aspects had already been discussed under previous items on the agenda (i.e. the Finance, HR and Estates and Sustainability KPI dashboards).

In relation to the Workforce Strategy it was noted that the pay award agreed by the Governing Board had been





implemented with effect from 1 January 2024 back dated to September 2023 as an initiative to support with the cost of living crisis. It was noted that the College remains competitive in the region with its pay and reward package, which is regularly checked and monitored using relevant benchmarks. Implementation of the Future Skills and Talent Strategy has commenced and a review of HR on-boarding and recruitment processes has been completed. An applicant management system has been agreed and implementation is in progress. A Technician pathway to teaching has been identified and advertised, as well as a retirement / redundant pathway with targeted approaches to employers in the relevant skill shortage sectors.

An early talent identification process is in place for all students on Teacher Education Courses and an early offer process has been implemented. The first recruitment event was completed in January 2023, with 12 attendees and four interviews arranged. An initial recruitment video has also been completed for inclusion in campaigns.

Introduction of the Medicash non-contributory healthcare cashback scheme in September 23 allows all staff to claim back specific costs of everyday health care including dental, physio and optical treatment as well as access to online 24/7/365 GP appointments, an annual health check and alternative and specialist therapies. Specific promotions have highlighted for example, access to free flu jabs and menopause specialists. There have been 200 claims so far, 62 staff have utilised online physio, 53 have accessed online GP, and 161 staff have accessing gym deals either at gyms or online.

Cost of living initiatives continue with regular bake sales, offers from hair and beauty, floristry, Costco, the Wheel restaurant and discounts negotiated with a local fruit and vegetable supplier, and there have been events with the HSBC financial wellbeing team including access to a personal financial health check. Financial Friday has been introduced to ensure a weekly focus on the cost of living, Stribe questions have focused on sustainability and wellbeing with more specific usage for feedback on customer service levels as well as its introduction for induction feedback. Stribe will be utilised to gather ideas and plans for Green Week as well as during the week itself and it continues to be utilised to check the wellbeing of the workforce throughout the year.

The staff survey return rate was 82% with 97% of respondents saying they are proud to be a member of staff at the College, 87% of respondents saying that leaders motivate them to take pride in their work and do their best, 88% saying that the College is well lead and well managed and 95% saying that the College has a reputation for the high quality of its provision.

The Benefits platform continues to be well utilised with more than 90% of staff remaining actively engaged with the platform realising savings of 5.41% on an overall spend of £80k. The Green car scheme continues to grow with six electric / hybrid vehicles delivered and one on order. 27 staff are part of the car share group which will continue to be advertised as parking restrictions come into place with the new build. 11 staff have bikes through the cycle to work scheme.

The Health and Wellbeing strategy continues to develop. Christmas activities included carols, Christmas Jumper day and charity collections for Daffodil Dreams. Staff Awards took place at Christmas with a further event planned for the Summer. Initiatives planned include yoga, meditation, essential oils Walking events with the Wigan Be Well Team. Wigan Run Festival and a further planned Staff Wellbeing afternoon in the Summer.

There has been strong engagement with the GM Good Employment Charter team including attendance at webinars, network events, a recently released podcast and appearances on their webinar programmes.

Further priority actions for the remainder of the year include Trade Union pay negotiations later this year following recommendations from the AoC, a further recruitment event at Easter 2024, a focus on new pathways as well as utilisation of new applicant management system to allow more direct approaches, further promotions of specific benefits of Medicash to ensure full utilisation, planning for sessions from both pensions schemes for staff, and plans for Green week for April 2024 continue with the Colleges in the Greater Manchester College's Group as well as with partners across the Borough.

In terms of leadership development, there is a further cohort of managers about to embark on the 'Leading from the Middle' development programme starting in April 2024 in conjunction with Hopwood Hall College and a specific cohort of Leading from the Middle attendees have been updated as 'Leading for the Future' in line with the work with the Local Skills Improvement Fund. There was a successful summer conference session for CMT delivered by Hitten Batt, and a Coaching Strategy led by an NLP qualified coach is in place for future senior leaders as part of the College's approach to succession planning. The FREDIE programme continues to be embedded with all staff receiving initial training through the summer staff development days and team specific activities. A FREDIE mailbox has been set up for feedback from staff and regular updates are provided through the Equality and Diversity meeting structure.





In terms of the Estate's Strategy, the Transformation project continues with Wilmott Dixon having taken control of the School for the Arts Building in October 2023 and site handover due in February half term. Planning permission for the new build has now been granted. The T-Level Animal Management capital project at Leigh is being planned with the Design team working with a specialist and work on site is due to commence in the summer term. There has been a refresh of Leigh refectory, increasing seating capacity and improving the student experience, work on Future Energy (Green Renewables Rooms) has commenced on site with completion due after February half term and the design has been developed for the remodeling of the motor vehicle workshop to bring it in line with Green Technology and electric vehicles. Work has commenced on the top floor of LALC in line with the Care Academy strategy and partnership with the Council and Wigan Family Welfare, and a review of available space across college sites has been undertaken, with a view to increasing teaching room capacity to meet the increase in student numbers.

A number of new rooms have also been brought into commission at Parsons Walk and the Centre for Advanced Technical Studies to support with the increase in student numbers since the start of the academic year.

Negotiations and due diligence are currently underway to secure additional space within the locality to address the increasing pressures on space due to student growth and also in anticipation of space in the new build at Parsons Walk

Following the installation of solar panels at Parsons Walk, LALC and Leigh campuses, data is now available on the production of power from their usage and will be displayed on boards throughout the College.

Hybrid working brought in during the Pandemic is to be kept under close review to use as a strategy to address space pressures and a recruitment and retention tool has been developed to ensure that operations meet business need. Feedback on the flexible and hybrid approaches remains positive and enabling to more modern agile methods of working. These approaches will continue to be reviewed, monitored and utilised as widely as possible as pressure on space increases with the new build works commencing.

Future priority actions for 2023-24 include working with Willmott Dixon on internal layout and FFE for the new build, continuing early stage planning for designs for the Power House at Pagefield, and continued work on all ongoing projects.

In terms of finance, income for the year is currently on track to deliver £2.159M ahead of the original budget which is in the main due to increased funding allocations for 16-18 learners, gains in 16-18 and adult apprenticeships, funded over delivery of the AEB, increased high needs funding for element three learners and interest receivable. An additional £150k was included in the pay budget to provide headroom for early appointments and a review of staffing levels for business support and teaching.

Non-pay expenditure has been increased in line with the additional income to support the College's normal practice of re-investment in the estate and general infrastructure. Spend has increased in central computer costs, curriculum areas, premises costs and professional fees. The College is in a position where it will deliver a balanced budget for the year with an out-turn forecast operating position of £755k which is an improvement of £257k on the original approved budget. Cash balances remain strong with £11.5M (116 days) at the end of December 2023 and a forecast year-end total of £11.5M which is within parameters agreed by the Board. £3.28m of in-year capital expenditure has been agreed and planned for and the College is in the process of commencing its annual resource bid programme which is where managers can bid for funding for projects which were not in their original plans. This year, £150k has been set aside for this initiative. The College also achieved an ESFA 'Outstanding' financial health classification based on its 2022-23 audited financial statements.

Future priority actions for 2023-24 include proactively reviewing and managing budgets and expenditure position for the remainder of the year and ensuring cash balances are available to provide the necessary funding for capital projects.

In terms of ICT, The College completed the upgrade of its external internet connections, increasing the current available bandwidth to 10Gbps across all sites, has increased the availability of laptop caddies, to ensure the use of IT in teaching and learning can be facilitated in standard classrooms, 280 laptops have been added to the College estate, including self service laptop lockers in the Pagefield LRC and nine additional laptop caddies across all sites.

The VDI infrastructure has been upgraded with the core capacity doubled. This has resulted in more learners and staff being able to access high end apps from anywhere in College and from home and the College has





engaged with GM colleges including multiple visits and shared CPD. The LSIP project is gathering momentum with the shared investment in teaching tools and materials.

Future priority actions for the remainder of 2023-24 include engaging with JISC to implement Microsoft Intune to manage and control external connections in relation to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), to increasing resilience to cyber events from external devices, implementing and extending laptop booking to incorporate the increased laptop caddy resources across all campuses and further embedding the IOT resources at Pagefield to ensure the return on investment.

Governors asked about cyber security and discussed the biggest risk of 'phishing', noting a recent exercise undertaken to test out staff's response to this, underpinned by additional training where necessary. It was noted that the College's arrangements for addressing cyber security had recently identified a potential risk being experienced in other colleges, and that the mitigating actions in place had enabled the College to address a potential weakness and prevent any breaches. In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that the College has Cyber Essentials in place and is currently working towards Cyber Essentials Plus.

The Committee noted the report.

11. Capital Projects - verbal update

RES-24-02-11

This item was discussed under Item 9 above.

Steven Scott, Louise Brown and Dave Harrison left the meeting at 6.46pm.

12. Items to be included in the Committee Chair's Report to the Governing Board

RES-24-02-12

The Committee agreed the items to be included in the Committee Chair's Report to the Governing Board.

13. Any other business

RES-24-02-13

There were no items of other business.

14. Date and time of next meeting: Tuesday 21 May 2024 at 5.00pm

RES-24-02-14

The Committee noted the date and time of its next meeting and the Director of Governance reminded Governors of the date, time and venue for the next meeting of the Governing Board, noting that the meeting was due to start at 4.30pm to facilitate a Board Development session.

The meeting ended at 6.50pm.





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15. Actions

RES-24-02-04: Provide information in relation to the number of students the increased income represents.

Action by: VP Data and Funding

RES-24-02-04: Review Capitalisation Strategy to see if this is due for a review.

Action by: Finance Director

RES-24-02-05: Look at external signage to ensure a common branding on the outside of all College

buildings.

Action by: VP Corporate Services

RES-24-02-06: Seek approval for the Governing Board to delegate final approval of the Fees Policy to the

Executive Team and ensure the final policy is made available to Governors on the Board Portal.

Action by: Director of Governance.

RES-24-02-08: Include numbers of staff as well as percentages and reasons for resignations in future reports

in relation to attrition rates.

Action by: VP Corporate Services.

RES-24-02-10: Bring any incidents of delayed lessons arising from staff's inability to park to Governors'

attention.

Action by: VP Corporate Services.



