

Minutes of: Finance and Employment Committee -

Date: 26th March 2025 **Location:** Principal's Office, Hereford Campus

Present	Attending
Alan Layng (Chair) David Williams (Principal and CEO) Julia Evans Toby Kinnaird	Sam Tomkins (Acting Clerk to Governors) Clare Perez (Director of Finance) Vicki Bushell (Director of HR)
Quoracy: Meeting was quorate	

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies received from Ian Scott Bell
2. **Declarations of Interest** – no new declarations of interest
3. **Minutes of last meeting held 27th November 2024**
 - a. Approval of minutes – minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.
 - b. Matters arising – no matters arising to discuss that were not already on the agenda.
4. **Annual Operating Plan 2024/5** – It was reported that there is an ongoing process for items recorded and there was nothing new to raise.
5. **HR Reports**
 - a. **Staff report** – The Director of HR reported a reduction of over half for staff using the Employee Assistance Programme. The main group of callers were 40-49 years old and female. Data is reflective of what is going on nationally. Committee members questioned the service being provided and if staff have given any feedback. A question is to be added to the staff survey about quality of service.
Decision: Director of HR to request data on categories of calls.

It was reported that National Insurance is increasing from 1st April with thresholds being reduced. The National Minimum Wage will also increase from 1st April. This will impact on those on higher scales as gaps will decrease. The Committee suggested that job adverts could include hidden costs and benefits within salaries such as pension, NI, counselling, childcare vouchers.

The Director of HR reported that the College had switched provider for Mental Health support with a reduction in costs. The main reasons for staff using this service were bereavement, personal related stress, personal and work-related stress, and work-related stress.

- b. **Gender pay gap report** – The Director of HR reported that the gap had decreased for the third year between male and female employees. There are good progression models within management. Part time roles continue to be predominantly female.
Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend the report to the Board for approval

- c. **Staff Annual Report** – The Director of HR reported an increase in head count. Analysed turnover is below the national average at 8.2 as opposed to 16. There has been a mixture of voluntary and involuntary leavers. Largest age profile is 51–60-year-olds so the College is looking at specific training such as menopause and retirement awareness training. In terms of ethnicity, staff continue to be predominantly white, and E&D Training has been completed by most staff. Committee members questioned working with students to enable them to have a better understanding of the wider world.
Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend the report to the Board for approval

6. Health and Safety Reports

- a. **Health and Safety Report** – The Director of HR reported that Committee meetings have been taking place. There have been five RIDDOR reports. The total number of incidents shows an increase, but staff are reporting more. Figures for Hereford include the nursery data. The College currently has one H&S advisor as opposed to two and is looking to recruit like for like.
There is a push on training, which has been provided externally. In the future, this will be provided in house due to the current skills set available.
The College is developing a H&S induction for all staff to give consistency.

- b. **Minutes from last Health and Safety meeting** – The Committee noted these minutes

- c. **Health and Safety Annual report** – The Director of HR reported that a review of all risk assessments and audits was underway, starting in Blacksmithing. The North H&S Advisor is helping the South one day a week until a new member of staff has been recruited.
No consistently with reporting on nursery incidents. Higher rates in Walford as opposed to Holme Lacy. The committee questioned the data regarding fall from height for the North campuses, which the Director of HR will report back at the next committee.
Action: Director of HR to report back on fall from height data in the North.
Action: Director of HR to speak to ISB regarding ex-military staff joining the work force
Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend the report to the Board for approval

7. Finance Reports

- a. **Management Accounts Feb 2025** – The Director of Finance gave an outline of the forecast YTD advising that originally the budget showed a £400K accounting deficit but a prudent forecast now suggests that this is likely to be a £500 deficit (£100 worse). Beneficial updates include reduction in payment of pension and employer contribution down 1.6%. There is an increase expenditure on projects. Increase in

funding for 16-18 which will help to cover NI increase. Cash is the same to date. To date there has been no update on covering the NI increase.

Income and expenditure have been discussed at length at CMT. Non-teaching costs shows collations and budgets that were not sent at the beginning of the year. Next year it will be more reflective. There have also been large agency costs.

For the future, committee and board to look at non-teaching businesses as a business and how much do they cost to run.

Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend the report to the Board

- b. **Revised FY25 Sub-contract Paper** – The Director of Finance requested an uplift in head room with 97% threshold. Permission requested to go up to £800K.

Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend for the Board to approve

- c. **College Financial Data** – The Committee noted this report. College status shows 'Requires improvement' for EBITDAR. It was noted that it is more beneficial to be in requires improvement for funding.

8. Estates Report

- a. **Capital Projects update** – The Director of Finance presented this report advising that the College had recently capitalised £3.6 m on projects with grants, £0.5 million of which was college contribution. Reception at North Shropshire College has been completed and Hereford receptions are due to be completed this summer. Tenders are out. Last capital project.

The Committee questioned how much has been spent since the pandemic and the Director of Finance will add to next report.

Part of Strategic plan will include Estates strategy with college development plans for each campus.

Action: Director of Finance to report on Estates expenditure since the pandemic

9. Policies due for review

- a. **Tuition Fee and Remission policy** – The Committee noted this policy. Fees have been updated to reflect funding rules.

Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend the policy to the Board for approval

- b. **Probation policy** – The Committee noted this policy. There have been no legislative changes, and right to appeal has been removed.

Decision: the Committee agreed to recommend the policy to the Board for approval

10. Board Assurance Framework

- a. **Review of appropriate elements of current BAF** – The Chair noted that three risk areas have been allocated to the committee. Going forward the actions will be included in the papers for the committee

- b. **Agreement to add BAF review as a standing item** – this was agreed by the Committee

11. Confirmation of items to report to Board for noting/approval –

Employment: Costs increase on NI, recruitment issues, and focus on driving HR and H&S processes down to middle manager.

Finance: Change to predicted forecast from £400 to £500 deficit, uplift on 16-18 rates, capital expenditure, and running lower on cash flow so trying to increase.

12. **Any other business** – The Principal reported that the draft report from the CEFFS review had been received, demonstrating that the college is efficient and that there are some qualitative points. A meeting is to be arranged to go through the points.

13. **Date and time of next meeting** – 25th June 2025 12.00

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A J Layng'.

Date: 06/01/2026