

## Minutes of: Finance and Employment Committee

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 **Location:** Principal's Office, Hereford Campus

Present	Attending
Alan Layng (Chair) Dave Williams (Principal and CEO) Julia Evans	Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors) Clare Perez (Finance Manager, and incoming Director of Finance) Ed Gwillim (Director of Finance) Vicki Bushell (Director of HR) Joe Davey (observing)
<b>Quoracy:</b> Meeting was quorate	

1. **Apologies for Absence** - Apologies received from Toby Kinnaird
2. **Declarations of interest** - no new declarations of interest declared
3. **Minutes of last meeting held 1<sup>st</sup> July 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. **Employment** - the Director of HR presented a number of reports, highlighting key issues. She explained that a few reports will be presented at the next meeting, due to recent staff sickness in the team affecting capacity to prepare

a. **Staff Annual report** – *report to be presented at next meeting*

b. **Staff Development Annual report**

The Principal and Director of HR confirmed that the structure of this report is due to be reviewed over the coming year. The Committee was asked whether numbers of staff having received each training is useful, and after discussion the Committee agreed that it is useful to see numbers but at a level that shows trends, outcomes and input, and provides information about changes in areas of training focused on, as well as assurance that mandatory training is being covered, and whether key strategic targets around training are being reached.

The Director of HR highlighted that the structure of Health and Safety induction and ongoing training is currently under review, and that increasing management support around managing staff behaviours/disciplinary processes is also a key focus.

Committee Members asked questions about the rationale for focusing on Health and Safety training, apparent doubling of training over two consecutive years (suggested to be due to improved reporting) and about at the level at which the message regarding Health and Safety training is being devolved. Committee Members noted apparent higher confidence in managing student behaviour than staff behaviour, and also noted the need for balancing

increased confidence in disciplinary-management with the College's desired culture of support and goodwill already in place.

A further discussion was held around supporting staff and instilling compliance with training held.

**Decision:** The Committee agreed to recommend the report to Board for noting

c. **Personnel Action Plan 2024/25** – *report to be presented at next meeting*

The Director of HR reported that staff retention is a key area for focus currently. Director of Finance noted retention has increased again on risk register currently, and management accounts show more than expected for agency staff. Committee asked about areas of high vacancies (hearing that this is middle management) and asked for more work on how we develop and retain management, noting the value (for attracting staff) of being known for investment in management. The Principal also noted a need for improvement of support for internal progression, and models used to date for this were discussed. The Committee also discussed the importance of balancing the financial impacts of increased benefits of being employed at the college with the costs of carrying vacancies.

d. **Gender pay gap report** - *report to be presented at next meeting*

5. **Health and Safety**

a. **Health and Safety Annual report** – *report to be presented at next meeting*

b. **Health and Safety Committee minutes (last meeting date)** – the Committee noted the minutes. The Director of HR noted an increase in incidents and near misses reported, and that work is underway to investigate whether this is due to an improvement in reporting rather than occurrence.

A Committee member asked about two recent incidents in the same workplace (non-college) setting, and was updated by the Principal, who confirmed that all felling activity across the college has been suspended until an independent external review has been completed. The Committee asked about the support for department staff and communication with them regarding the timeline and process of the investigation, and about the message and advice being given to other employers working with the college.

A general conversation was held around implementing Health & Safety into the culture of the college, and learning from other institutions as part of this. A Committee Member asked the Director of HR if there was anything she required in terms of support from the Committee/Board in support of this area, and the Principal encouraged the Director of HR to work with the Chair of F&E to adapt future agenda structure, in order to provide a regular forum to continue these conversations at a supportive and strategic level.

6. **Annual Operating Plan 2024/25** – the Committee noted this report

7. **Financial reports** – the Director of Finance presented the financial reports to the Committee, highlighting key areas.

**a. Members' Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 (Draft)**

The Committee reviewed this report and were reminded that it is published on the college website and sent to the ESFA, and that it contributes towards the definitive view of the college's financial health provided to the FE Commissioner. The Director of Finance confirmed that there were no areas for concern. The Chair noted some minor comments, and he will liaise directly with the Director of Finance and Finance Manager regarding these.

**Decision:** the Committee agreed to recommend the report to the Board for approval

**b. Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 and consideration of 'Going Concern' status**

The Director of Finance outlined the structure of the Management Accounts report highlighting a slight improvement on the last forecast made before the end of July 2024. The Committee noted the contribution to this situation of the increase in student-number-related national funding last year and also noted a slightly higher spending level (related to matching of capital funded projects). The Director of Finance also highlighted the prudence demonstrated by a high level of cash holdings.

Committee Members asked about the awareness of cash days (noting the lack of ability to borrow), expected pension contributions increase, and the general sense of feeling around the current Government attitude towards FE funding. A conversation was held around the future of FE and HE funding, and the financial and cultural impacts on student recruitment in both areas.

Director of Finance reported his confidence, from this report, that the college remains a going concern. The Committee agreed, and thanked the Director of Finance and his team for their work in demonstrating and ensuring this.

**Decision:** the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board support the adoption of status of 'Going Concern'.

**c. Annual Treasury Management Report 2023/24**

The Director of Finance presented this report, which the Committee noted with no further comments.

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

**d. Annual Estates Report 2023/24 - for noting and recommending to Board for noting**

The Director of Finance reported that most projects are now coming to a close, with Oswestry campus works now complete. The Committee noted the value of advertising these improvements as part of staff and student recruitment marketing, the Estates Strategy still being outstanding, and noted room for more focus on sustainability within the report.

**e. Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 – The Committee noted this report**

**f. Capital Projects update - The Committee noted this report**

g. **Bank mandate signatories update** – a bank signatory update form was presented to the Committee, noting the need to remove some out of date signatories. The Committee agreed the Chair would sign to approve these following the meeting.

8. **Policies**

a. **FY25 Sub-contracting Policy** - the Committee noted this policy

The Chair noted the value of a possible sub-contracting updated for the Board at an future Board workshop.

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

b. **Draft FY25 Financial Regulations** – the Committee noted the Draft FY25 Financial Regulations

**Decision:** the Committee agreed to recommend the Financial Regulations to the Board for approval

9. **Any other business** - none raised

10. **Date and time of next meeting:** 12midday Weds 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025

**A confidential meeting then followed (see separate minute)**

Signed:



Date: 06/01/2026