

**Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held in the Innovation Centre on  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 at 5pm**

- Present:** Rob Firth (Committee Chair - Independent Member)  
Margaret Boneham (Independent Member)  
Michelle Brabner (Principal)  
Alex Gamil (Committee Vice Chair)  
Paul Walker (Corporation Chair) (\*via MS Teams)
- In Attendance:** Paris Bonwick – Vice Principal Business Services (up to item 15 noting item 10.2 was deferred to the end to exclude staff)  
Lisa Farnhill – Clerk to the Corporation  
Stephen Musa – Vice Principal Curriculum and Support (up to item 15 noting item 10.2 was deferred to the end to exclude staff)  
Paula Smith - Dir. Finance  
Kevin Williams – Vice Principal Finance and Facilities
- Apologies:** Alex Kenny (Independent Member)
- Absent:** None

Minute No.	Minutes	Action
<b>R.24.01</b>	<b>Open and Welcome</b>  The Committee Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, with brief introductions given for the benefit of the new Dir of Finance.	
<b>R.24.02</b>	<b>Item 1: Apologies for Absence</b>  The Clerk detailed the apologies for absence, which were accepted by the Committee. The meeting was confirmed as quorate.  <b><u>Item 1 - Noted:</u></b>	
<b>R.24.03</b>	<b>Item 2: Declarations of Interest</b>  Standing interests were noted, with no interests declared in relation to agenda items, however, noting staff should not be present for items where pay and duties are discussed.  <b><u>Item 2 - Noted:</u></b>	
<b>R.24.04</b>	<b>Item 3: Appointment of a Committee Vice Chair</b>  Alex Gamil confirmed she was willing to continue in the role as Vice Chair. This was unanimously approved by the Committee.	

**Item 3 - Approved:** *The Committee approved the appointment of Alex Gamil as Committee Vice Chair for the 2023/2024 academic year.*

**R.24.05      Item 4: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

The Committee Chair invited members to raise any points of inaccuracy. With none raised, the minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting.

**Item 4 - Approved:** *The Committee resolved to approve the minutes as a true record for the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023.*

**R.24.06      Item 5: Actions Summary**

The Clerk summarised the report, highlighting actions undertaken and those addressed through the meeting reports, and those outstanding.

Members discussed the actions at length, with members provided with details of the advice of the Further Education Commissioner's team in relation to requesting the loan is converted to a grant. Members noted that reclassification to a public sector organisation, meant the request would now be reviewed by The Treasury and would raise concerns and draw unnecessary negative attention to the College. Consequently, after discussion, Members agreed this did not need to be pursued further.

Members noted that benchmarking has been completed as part of the review by the Further Education Commissioner's curriculum efficiency review, with it agreed that the report, once reviewed by the Audit Committee, could be circulated with members of the Resources Committee, satisfying the action relating to fee earning and non-fee earning staffing costs.

After debate, members agreed that the review and presentation of the Financial Forecasts removing inflationary increases was no longer necessary for Committee review due to staffing changes necessitating prioritising the handover of work. Members clarified this had been suggested to support the team in understanding how external influences, outside of management control, had impacted the financial health, with the Vice Principal agreeing that if possible, ahead of leaving, he would present a short paper to this effect to the SLT.

Members concluded all outstanding actions were now considered complete.

**Item 5 – Noted:** *The Committee resolved to note the details of the actions report, concluding all previous actions are now considered complete.*

Clerk/cttee

**R.24.07      Item 6: Confidential Business**

**6.1 - Identify any minutes that need to be regarded confidential**

The Committee considered whether any of the forecast detail needed to be redacted, however, agreed that this was not sensitive and should be shared in the interests of transparency.

**6.2 - Determine whether any items of business are confidential and should be discussed in a separate part of the agenda.**

Members confirmed staff pay and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) structure updates were to be treated as confidential items, with staff expected to withdraw with the exception of Senior Post Holders (SPH) and the Dir. Of

Finance. Members agreed that marketing information may need to be considered for redaction, with the Clerk confirming that the discussions were not sensitive for those present, however the minutes could be reviewed for any potential redactions, with this to be agreed at the next meeting.

***Item 6 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to publish the minutes and discuss staff pay and structures without the presence of non-essential staff.***

**R.24.08      Item 7: HR Report**

The Clerk confirmed that this report was the first of the new HR reports on data within the KPI scorecard, however, as it was too early in the year for the first set of data, this had been deferred to be included in the staffing trends report in November.

***Item 7 - deferred:***

**R.24.09      Item 8: Enrolment Report**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the report for the Committee, including targets, historic data, progression, conversion and attrition rates, highlighting the financial implications, providing up to date statistics. Members were informed the increased enrolment could potentially generate up to £500,000 of additional income, dependant on final census day data, with this paid on a lagged basis.

Members commended the improvements, thanking the Vice Principal for including the historic data, highlighting how inclusion of this supported a broader view of enrolment data, noting the increase brought applications levels back in line with pre-covid figures, with it clarified that combined enrolment was at its highest since 2015/2016.

Members challenged the data at length, clarifying birth rate impact and source of additional applications. Evidence detailed indicated increases were as a direct result of the work of the marketing and liaison teams, with the Committee commending their work as well as that of the data teams. Members discussed improved confidence in the data, highlighting how increased confidence in the data offered suitable assurances of the likely post census figures and applicability to financial targets, as well as more accurate comparisons. Members sought assurances over the implications of enrolment exceeding targets, asking which areas had increased, and if any declines had been seen, discussing how grade boundary realignment had impacted course and campus choices.

The Committee was assured that although targets had been exceeded, teams remained focused on detailed data analysis to understand where further improvements could be made to marketing campaigns and course choices to further drive-up enrolments in the coming year. Members discussed controllable and uncontrollable factors impacting student choices and considered the value of the external validation of appropriate actions, particularly around retention and progression provided by the outcomes of the FEC review of curriculum efficiency.

Members highlighted that although adult loans were in line with the previous year, the previous year had seen a significant decline. The Vice Principal Business Services explained the impact of national skills funding on the adult loan applications, resulting in a national decline in adult loans as the same courses could be accessed for free, without a loan.

Members discussed the impact of retention and award completion on the achievement rates, with it explained that this had been discussed by the Standards Committee.

In concluding, the Committee sought further assurances on actions to ensure student experience would not be impacted by growth in key areas, and considered the impact on staff and resources, with details given of planned solutions with the SLT thanked for providing details of what was described as a positive start to the year.

***Item 8 - Resolved: The Committee thanked and congratulated those involved and resolved to accept assurances provided by the report.***

**R.24.10      Item 9: Employer Engagement Strategy**

**Item 9.1: 2022/2023 Update**

The Vice Principal Business Services summarised the report, highlighting the number of reviews on the DfE site had not increased in the reporting period, with consideration being given to seeking additional feedback from employers directly. In acknowledging that duplicated feedback requests may cause an issue with some employers, members were informed this was unlikely as employers had already confirmed there had been no requests to complete the national survey. Members asked what they expected from the feedback and were advised they expected communication to be raised as an issue, with details provided of actions taken to address this.

Members asked about interactions with key employers, including the NHS, with reassurances over the close working relationships, aiming to better understand their recruitment needs and details given of the collaboration on the design of the T Level grant project.

COVID and post Pandemic incentives were considered to have caused the spike in applications in the previous year, with staffing issues in health and social care causing a delay in recruitment to some apprenticeships.

Members were advised of an expectation for increased applications in the coming year and assured there had been no financial impact from the lower recruitment in 2022/2023, due to recruiting to higher income stream apprenticeships.

***Item 9.1 - Noted: The Committee resolved to accept the update.***

**R.24.11      Item 9.2: Employer Engagement Strategy 2023/24**

The Vice Principal Business Services outlined plans to work with the Southport Learning Trust, to devise a strategy that supported a more aligned approach to employer engagement for all ages, from nursery through to college students. Members were assured this would reduce duplication,

support local skills development, whilst providing a coordinated approach across all levels.

It was clarified that the current strategy would remain in place until the collaborative strategy work concludes, with members asking about timeframes for the KPI's as presented, with it confirmed these were annual and on track, with target dates and progress to be made clear in the follow up report.

**VP Bus.  
Serv.**

In concluding, members asked when Apprenticeship and T Level weeks were and confirmed activities were being held to celebrate them.

**Item 9.2 - Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the ongoing use of the current strategy.**

**R.24.12 Item 10: Financial Reports**

**Item 10.1: Management Accounts (July)**

The Vice Principal Finance and Facilities summarised the July Management Accounts, confirming the financial statements were also close to completion, with a report to be presented in November providing a full overview of movements.

Members were advised of the expectation to end the year with 'good' financial health as a result of the FRS adjustment, noting the improvement in staff pay as a percentage of income.

Variances were outlined, highlighting a favourable movement in staff pay with details of the pension adjustment, with attention drawn to large variances in non-pay. Members were informed non-pay budgets needed to be tightened, with the Vice Principal Finance and Facilities advising the experiences gained in 2022/2023 needed to be used to align budgets in 2023/2024.

Members confirmed the first loan instalment had been paid, however, noted it was not included in the paper, as this preceded the payment. Members asked about the implications of rising interest rates and were advised it resulted in an approximate annual increase of £95,000.

Members were advised the increased funding rates had been applied, however, the increase as a result of successful enrolment would be applied from 2024 onwards due to lagged funding.

Members highlighted ongoing concerns over cashflow, asking when an updated projection would be provided. The Vice Principal Finance and Facilities confirmed this was scheduled to be included in the half year update to be presented in January, however, as work on the spreadsheet for this would form part of the handover with the new Dir. of Finance, the VP Finance and Facilities would review the information and consider the availability of a short update paper to the Committee ahead of leaving in November. Members reiterated the need for assurances due to the concerns projected in future years, asking if this would be alleviated by the recent funding rate increase. The Committee discussed the funding increases announced in summer, accepting pay increases were essential and would erode benefits in terms of cash flow, with the Principal confirming there remained work to do to balance future risks to cash-flow.

**VP F&F/  
Dir.  
Finance**

Members discussed risks relating to energy costs, staffing utilisation and curriculum efficiency, concluding the management accounts were in line with expectations, however, had provided a more positive end of year position than initially expected, with 'good' achieved without compulsory redundancies.

Members recommended the approval of the July management accounts, acknowledging these superseded the June position, with staff changes having prevented the drafting and circulation of management accounts in June.

***Item 10.1 - Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the management accounts for July, accepting these superseded June.***

**R.24.13**    **Item 10.2: Staff Pay Award**

**REDACTED**

**R.24.14**    **Item 11: Estates Report**

The Vice Principal Finance and Facilities advised the Committee there were a number of projects now underway or about to commence, highlighting the importance of oversight of the capital projects as well as having an overview of some of the estates activities initiated as a result of internal area restructures and moves.

The amounts, timeframes, and project outlines were detailed, highlighting the involvement of link governors in the planning stages, highlighting how works were focusing on areas of highest need as identified in the condition survey.

Risks relating to time frames and the need to move at pace were discussed, with it proposed the College continues to work with Tenant, with the support of Fusion as technical advisors, appointed for oversight on a day a month basis. Members acknowledged their considerable experience of the sector, and the College, agreeing that achievement of the tight timeframes would be supported by the companies that were familiar with the College and project requirements, endorsing the ongoing engagement of the two firms, clarifying value for money was evident. The Committee approved the appointment of 10 Architect as project manager and architect, noting the positive endorsement by Fusion.

Members were provided with details of the tender process for the quantitative surveyor, being advised that the recommended supplier as detailed in the paper, had since withdrawn, with the second highest scoring tender being from Futureserv Consulting Engineers. Members were assured the second highest scoring tender remained strong, with initial interactions evidencing a strong communication style, initiating confidence they could deliver within the specified timescales. Whilst noting the amount would be within the approval limits of the SLT, they offered their support of the process.

Members clarified there was no commitment from the College towards the projects, with 100% grant coverage, however, were advised equipment would need to be funded, which was anticipated to be in the region of £150,000.

Members discussed improved room utilisation as a result of the projects, noting the College currently had too much classroom space across the sites.

Members discussed staff and student impact and were assured the project time frames would seek to minimise disruption for learners. Members were told the teams were working closely with curriculum staff during planning, to ensure theory and practical elements are well timed to take account of the works and room availability.

***Item 11 - Noted: The Committee resolved to note the update, endorsing the ongoing engagement of Tenant and Fusion. The Committee approved the appointment of 10 Architect and endorsed the outcomes of tender processes below their delegated authority for approval. The Committee endorsed the pursual of the LSIF Solar/Thermal Project, noting when agreed, the project size would be within scope for Corporation oversight.***

**R.24.15 Item 12: IT Strategy 2023/2024**

The Vice Principal Finance and Facilities presented the report as drafted by the Head of ICT.

Members attention was drawn to issues relating to staffing and the complexities of the system, with members discussing the challenges and cost implications of the intricate system as well as seeking assurances around staff retention. Strategies for system simplification and improvement were noted by the Committee, who agreed that although a long-term strategy, it should be reviewed annually due to the pace at which technology develops.

Improved system stability was discussed, with members asking about testing, security and timescales. Members discussed the team and support structure, noting the intention to review the support model, with it anticipated external support costs would reduce when the streamlining of the system is complete, potentially making outsourcing of support a more cost-effective option in the future.

Members asked about cyber security risks and were assured by information around testing and backing up of information, with an offer made to introduce members to the Head of IT for more technical and detailed assurances.

***Item 12 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept assurances provided by the updated strategy, agreeing to review it annually.***

**R.24.16 Item 13: Risks Related to Resources**

The Vice Principal Finance and Facilities provided an overview of the register, including the number of risks in each category, and changes since the last Corporation meeting. Members discussed in detail changes in rating for areas of delegated authority of the Committee, with consideration given to health and safety, noting the current vacancy with members assured by the positive response to the advertised vacancy.

Members highlighted the quality of the report, indicating it provided a succinct overview, with colour coding that enabled members to easily see the direction of travel with attention drawn to areas members needed to focus on.



**Item 13 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to note the update, commending the quality of the report.**

**R.24.17 Item 14: Reports of the Internal Auditors**

The Vice Principal Finance and Facilities explained the marketing review by the internal audit service had not reported on part of the initial scope, as the level of detail required to analyse this was not collected in a way that would facilitate an accurate review of targeted spend.

The VP Business Services explained that it was the College that was marketed, not a particular course or level, therefore the internal audit scope that indicated a review of successful targeting, was not possible, with the report instead focusing on the second part of the scope, as previously reported to the Committee.

Members were given an outline of forthcoming reviews, which would be reported to the Audit Committee in December. Members asked about progress so far on the review of risk management, and were told about how the review was looking at how the planning and formulation of the risk appetite statements fed into the application and oversight of risks in the College.

**Item 14 - Noted: The Committee resolved to accept the update.**

**R.24.18 Item 15: Committee Performance in 2022/2023**

Members agreed the report accurately reflected the work undertaken and committed to addressing the targeted areas for improvement.

Members asked to formally record their thanks to the Clerk for her advice and support, in always ensuring the Committee was on track, and compliant.

**Item 15 - Approved: The Committee approved report and action plan for 2023/2024**

**Staff were thanked for their time and withdrew from the meeting**

**R.24.19 Item 16: Staff Structure and Costings**

**REDACTED**

**R.24.20 Item 17: Items to be Reported to the Corporation**

The Chair confirmed there would be another meeting ahead of presenting to the Corporation, with the Clerk clarifying that only the information within the Estates report, in line with financial regulations for oversight of large projects, needed to be presented to the Corporation.

Members agreed in the interests of document minimisation, no other items needed to be recommended for information.



**Item 17 - Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to present the information to the Corporation as detailed above.*

**R.24.21 Item 17: Date Of Next Meeting (And Closing Comments)**

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for their time and attendance, with a warm welcome to Paula. On behalf of the Committee, the Committee Chair took the opportunity to highlight this would be the last meeting of the Vice Principal Finance and Facilities, thanking him for his expertise, transparency and patience, wishing him well with his future plans.

It was confirmed that the next meeting was due to be held on site on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

**Item 17 - Noted:**

**The meeting closed at 7.20pm**