

**Minutes of the Southport Education Group Resources Committee**

**Meeting held in the Board Room (Southport Campus)**

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 4pm**

**Present:** Margaret Boneham (independent member)  
Michelle Brabner - Principal – ( Ex-Officio member) (up to and including item 11.5)  
Alex Gamil (Committee Vice Chair, acting as Chair - independent member)  
Paul Walker (Corporation Chair)

**In Attendance:** Paris Bonwick (Vice Principal - Business Services)  
Mark Burrows (Deputy Principal)  
Lisa Farnhill – Clerk to the Corporation  
Stephen Musa (Vice Principal Curriculum and Support)  
Paula Smith – Dir. Finance

**Apologies:** Rob Firth (Committee Chair - independent member)  
Rebecca Matchett (independent member)  
Claire Moffat-Lonsdale (independent member)

Minute No.	Minutes	Action
<b>R.24.85</b>	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <p>The Committee Vice Chair opened the meeting. The Clerk detailed the apologies as documented above; these were accepted by the Committee with it confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p><b><u>Item 1 - Noted:</u></b></p>	
<b>R.24.86</b>	<p><b>Item 2: Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Members noted standing interests, with no interests declared relating to agenda items.</p> <p><b><u>Item 2 - Noted:</u></b></p>	
<b>R.24.87</b>	<p><b>Item 3: Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024</b></p> <p>The Committee Vice Chair invited members to raise any points of inaccuracy, none were raised and the minutes were approved.</p> <p><b><u>Item 3 - Approved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to approve the minutes as a true record for the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024.</i></p>	
<b>R.24.88</b>	<p><b>Item 4: Review of Impact Statements, Actions and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>The Committee noted the progress made as documented in the report, clarifying where matters arising and actions would be addressed by items on the agenda for discussion, including highlighting where extra detail had been requested in the KPI</p>	

scorecard and risk register, asking members to indicate when reviewing the items if any further information needed to be added.

The Vice Principal Business Services provided an update regarding the action relating to the lack of updates to employer feedback from the ESFA surveys, with the ESFA now requesting specific examples where feedback has been provided but has not been published. Members were also advised this feedback now fed into the accountability framework, therefore a drop in satisfaction would be a trigger within the framework.

***Item 4 – Resolved:*** *The Committee resolved to note the details of the actions report and approved the impact statements.*

**R.24.89 Item 5: Confidential Business**

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

Members attention was drawn to the aspects highlighted for potential redaction, agreeing that the last paragraph of minute R.24.79 was considered to be commercially sensitive and should be redacted from the public minutes.

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

Members reviewed the agenda and confirmed nothing on the agenda needed to be discussed without the presence of staff, with the minutes to be reviewed at the next meeting to consider if any aspects needed redacting for confidentiality.

***Item 5 - Resolved:*** *The Committee resolved to redact the final paragraph from minute R.24.79 (item 15) from the record of the meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024.*

**R.24.90 Item 6: Risks Relevant to the Resources Committee**

The Dir. Finance summarised the report, providing the Committee with details of the only update since it was presented to the Committee in April.

A member indicated the current format alerted the Committee to areas of high risk, however, suggested that due to some areas having been red throughout the academic year, reduced the document's value in providing assurance to the Committee, as it failed to highlight mitigating actions and impact. Members agreed that the management of the risks, and assurances this provided, was of more interest than the risk score, with attention naturally drawn to red risks, which could be outside of the college's control.

Members discussed at length how the format could be improved, including provision of the probability and impact scores, suggesting that this would enable members to see if mitigations would result in a reduction in probability, impact, or both. Members also suggested the inclusion of controllable and uncontrollable factors, with the incorporation of a target risk score to better incorporate risk tolerance, whilst providing a measure of impact for actions undertaken. It was agreed RAG rating the target score would provide an additional layer of information and assurance, allowing some risks to remain red in terms of impact or probability, with a target risk score that is green due to having been reduced to a reasonable level, due to the residual level of risk being uncontrollable, being in line the college's risk appetite for that area, or mitigated and controlled as much as is possible based on available resources.

**SLT**

Following a review of the publication and applicability of the document, the Committee noted how the Further Education Commissioner's Team had seen and endorsed the register and associated processes, only suggesting a review of risk appetite. Members acknowledged that whilst this indicated the processes used

were typical of risk management in FE, they could be further improved and adapted to better suit their needs, with the SLT agreeing to undertake a review of the scoring matrix, format and presentation of risk related information, taking into account the suggestions made.

SLT

***Item 6 - Resolved:*** *The Committee resolved to note and reflect on the information throughout the meeting, supporting a review of the content and format of the register as presented to the Committee .*

**R.24.91 Item 7: KPI Scorecard**

The Vice Principal Business Services summarised the information, highlighting areas that were failing to meet the targets set.

A member asked if there had been any areas of improvement, with attention drawn to the significant improvement over the last three years in 16-18 learner numbers, and the KPI for the tuition fund, where although the target had not been met, actions had reduced the deficit, resulting in an improved position, which was now close to achieving the target.

In response to a question about any areas where on reflection, there could have been more improvement than was achieved, members were given additional detail relating to apprenticeships and test and learn, with in-year mitigations outlined, and actions for improvement for 2024/2025 detailed.

***Item 7 - Resolved:*** *The Committee resolved to use the information to support and direct discussions.*

**R.24.92 Item 8: Learner Support Funds Policies**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the four policies presented for review and recommendation for approval, drawing attention to the updates made for the next academic year.

Members asked about increases to the thresholds, and were given assurances in relation to previous underspend and benchmarking information.

Members were informed of an email from the ESFA sent in error, which had indicated the policies were not compliant, with a subsequent apology and acknowledgement that not only were the policies compliant, but comprehensive and evidenced good practice.

***Item 8 - Resolved:*** *The Committee resolved to recommend the four policies to Corporation for approval.*

**R.24.93 Item 9: Marketing****9.1: Enrolment Update & Progress Report**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the data from the report, highlighting areas of improvement and decline. Members reflected on the potential impact of the Ofsted judgement, noting it was not evident in enrolment for this academic year, acknowledging that the timeframe for applications meant any impact may be more likely to be seen for enrolment into 2025/2026.

Members were informed of curriculum adjustments and campus changes to improve internal progression. While commending the overall improvements to student numbers, a member asked if staff had analysed the underlying reasons

for improvements, indicating that an understanding of what was going well was as important as interrogating any decline, to ensure this underpinned future activity. Members were given details of work to strengthen relationships, improve classroom experiences, provide tasters, marketing individual achievements, with the ability to picture themselves achieving considered to be have supported the increase.

Members asked about investment and interest in new courses and future developments, with the research, rationale, and local needs discussed. When considering applications to KGV, members asked which courses continued to attract higher numbers, with details given, along with actions to ensure demand could be met, along with an outline of options and support for students capable, but apprehensive about studying level three courses.

Members considered the impact of the Pandemic on achievement and behaviour, including parental support, and were assured by proactive steps taken to understand the expected levels of engagement and needs from the cohort, including high numbers needing to resit GCSE English and maths.

The item concluded with a summary of the predicted enrolment, with assurances over the accuracy.

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

#### **R.24.94 9.2: Marketing Strategy 2024/2025**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support confirmed the strategy had been fully rewritten the previous year, as a two-year strategy to ensure actions had the time to be embedded and evidence impact. Members noted only minor updates were recommended, which included a focused digital marketing campaign to support KGV applications and enrolment. This was endorsed and approved by the Committee.

**Item 9.2 - Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept and approve the update.*

#### **R.24.95 Item 10: Employer Engagement Strategy**

The Deputy Principal advised the Committee that the strategy had been rewritten to better align with the teaching and learning strategy and quality manual, focusing on the strength of relationships. Clarification was requested on the staff involved, with an overview of structure changes provided, and agreement to include roles and responsibilities alongside names in future reports.

**Deputy  
Principal**

Members were advised discussions around stakeholder feedback within the strategy event had been incorporated, with plans to increase the visibility of stakeholder input and feedback, and embed this into reporting.

An update on progress against the previous strategy was given, noting a static position in relation to employer satisfaction and new starts moderated in year, with members asking how the impact of the new strategy would be measured. Members attention was drawn to the outcomes section, with consideration given for incorporating strategy specific, measurable KPI's, proposing alternatively, it could be measured against KPI's on the current college scorecard, with it agreed this would be reviewed and followed up at the next meeting.

**Deputy  
Principal**

**Item 10 - Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the update and approved the updated strategy, subject to an update on how it will be measured.*

### **Item 11: Financial Reports**

#### **R.24.96 Item 11.1: Tuition Fees**

The Vice Principal Business Services confirmed that there would be no update following the release of updated ESFA information.

Members discussed the impact of changes in fees and loans and were given an update on the proposed regulation of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, with some changes announced ahead of the election being called, with the further detail now having stalled whilst in the pre-election.

Discussing enrolments for adult courses, members were informed the administration fee had been removed from leisure courses. In response to a question about the impact on take up, it was confirmed some courses had always been oversubscribed, and the fee had not affected it, however, was removed as it had not been cost effective to administer, with members discussing the positive community impact of the leisure courses.

**Item 11.1 - Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to note the verbal update.*

#### **R.24.97 Item 11.2: Management Accounts**

The Dir. Finance summarised the May Management Accounts, updating the Committee on variances, including the operating deficit, year to date income, expenditure, pay and non-pay costs.

The Committee was advised that the members with financial expertise had reviewed the accounts in detail at a Committee pre-meeting, with the financial health scores detailed, confirming the college would remain 'good', however, cash would decrease.

A member indicated concern over the cash position, with it highlighted more detail was included in the Financial Forecast paper, suggesting this was discussed further under item 11.5.

**Item 13.2 - approved:** *The Committee resolved to approve the Management Accounts for April and May.*

#### **R.24.98 Item 11.3: Benchmarking Report**

The Dir. Finance summarised the information, informing the Committee that the benchmarking was based on the 2022/23 finance record, with data provided by the ESFA.

Members were advised the college was benchmarked against 14 colleges with similar income, however, the applicability was limited, due to the size, structure and variation of student types of the colleges within the income bracket, which ranged from £6,500,000 to £15,000,000, with it proposed the benchmarking would be more robust when the college grows to be in the next income bracket.

Members were advised how the Dir. Finance had tried to draw comparisons against a single local similar college, however, although similar, being a small

college with two campuses, as a vocational only college, the lower staff costs meant it remained difficult to offer a viable comparison.

Members thanked the Dir. Finance for the report.

**Item 13.3 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to note the information.**

**R.24.99 Item 11.4: Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Review Follow Up Report**

The Vice Principal Business Services reminded the Committee of the efficiency review process and commitment to following up the recommendations from the review, with the previous meeting looking at staff utilisation, and this focusing on progress against improving group size.

When considering staff numbers, members asked about the different categories of staff, with an explanation given of the different role types, noting some were student facing support roles, others more administrative support roles, with an action noted to provide figures reflecting on the change in headcount for each area.

**VP Bus  
Serv.**

An overview of the figures was provided, linking it to the recent improvements in staff utilisation. Members asked about maximum group sizes, being advised this varied depending on the content, needing to take into account student experience, resources, room size and delivery style, being advised groups that were too small, impacted delivery for staff and students, with behaviour and experience affected.

Members discussed the change in culture which had allowed staff to embrace larger class sizes, with a supportive approach to ensure student and staff were comfortable and confident in the learning environment, with some improvements needed to the estate to ensure spaces were suitable for the larger groups.

**Item 11.4 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the update.**

**R.24.100 Item 11.5: Financial Forecast 2024/25 to 2025/26**

The Dir. Finance provided the Committee with a detailed presentation of the key assumptions and headline figures from the Financial Forecast. Members were advised key ratios, tables, and graphs had been lifted from the CFFR, noting a new version had been released to fix errors, therefore the full and final CFFR was not yet available. Members agreed to review and recommend approval of the budget including the CFFR, subject to the Committee Chair reviewing the final CFFR to ensure it aligns with the budget approved.

**Dir.  
Finance/  
Cttee  
Chair**

Following the presentation, members interrogated the figures and assumptions, asking about contingencies and potential variances, including utility costs and estates. Members noted the newly installed solar panels and associated impact on utilities had not been included, as this was an unknown variable. Reviewing the estates budget, members were informed the ten year maintenance plan was being finalised, with contingency built in for proactive maintenance and the budget assuming there would be no capital projects.

Members reviewed predicted income and expected enrolment in detail, clarifying the budget had taken a cautious approach to growth, asking about course types, birth rates, assumed funding rates and impact on income. Members confirmed that the Ofsted report had been released, noting limited

feedback and impact to date, however, acknowledged it was more likely to impact the 2025/26 intake, due to the timing of applications and the release of the report. Members proposed the public and parental opinion of Ofsted had declined, whilst the college's had improved, which would minimise the impact of the change in grade.

Members reviewed the cash position in detail, expressing concern over the way the two-year presentation provided a false impression of static cash flow, suggesting the way colleges are funded meant the long-term picture was more critical, rather than immediate concerns over income and expenditure, asking that a five-year cash flow forecast is created to highlight any deficit in the cash position.

Dir.  
Finance

In concluding, it was highlighted that the benchmarking exercise suggested the college should aim for lower staff numbers/higher pay model and to improve quality and growth simultaneously.

Members thanked the Dir Finance for the detailed and clear presentation, endorsing the forecast for Corporation approval, again reiterating that this included approval of the budget within the format of the CFFR, subject to review by the Committee Chair.

**Item 11.5 - resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend the budget and CFFR to the Corporation for approval, subject to a review of the final version of the CFFR by the Committee Chair.**

**R.24.101 Item 11.6: ESFA Dashboard**

The Dir. Finance confirmed that the information provided, was taken from the DfE's Governor's portal, and was based on last year's finance record and CFFR submission. Members highlighted how it indicated a declining cash position, with the Dir. Finance informing the Committee this was from the submission done ahead of the uplift in pay rates, therefore was now outdated, with the forecast as recommended for approval under item 11.5, being the updated position.

**Item 11.6 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to note the information.**

**R.24.102 Item 12: Accommodation and Estates**

**12.1: Accommodation Update**

The Vice Principal Business Services summarised the report, highlighting progress with the ten-year maintenance strategy, with members querying why the condition survey had not provided the relevant detail to support with planned maintenance costs. Members were advised that only replacement costs had been incorporated into the previous strategy, aimed at securing grant funding. Members were informed recent surveys and works had brought into question some of the estimates and assumptions documented in the condition survey, therefore a consultant was being used to provide an evidence based ten-year maintenance plan, focusing on risks and priorities.

**Item 12.1 - resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the update.**

**R.24.103 Item 12.2: Projects Update**

The Vice Principal Business Services summarised the progress made against the three projects, with it clarified all were on target to complete within the agreed timeframe.

Members were advised of issues identified in the Tim Beer building which had impacted the intended design and specification. Members were informed of the action taken to adjust the specification to ensure the project remained on budget, with the risk register adjusted to reflect the issues experienced.

Members indicated that the issues, which affected the ceilings throughout the area, should have been uncovered and exposed by the condition survey, or within fire surveys. Whilst acknowledging the age of the building and variation in building regulations during the periods in which works have been carried out, members suggested it was imperative staff are careful to agree how intrusive any survey is going to be as well as sample sizes to establish the degree of reliability that can be placed on the findings.

Members were assured by action taken to assess and address any concerns relating to the condition of the surrounding areas, noting further potential options to mitigate the impact, by removing some rooms from use to ensure the project is completed on time and on budget.

***Item 12.2 - resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the update, agreeing to recommend the Corporation receive this as essential information.***

**R.24.104 Item 12.3: Estates Strategy to include endorsement of a new SLT lease**

The Vice Principal Business Services reminded the Committee that the existing strategy had been approved in 2022, with the college working towards the 'maintenance' option due to there being the expectation there would be no grants in the coming year.

Members were advised that on this basis, to better utilise the estate, and generate income to support with maintenance costs, options to let further space to the Southport Learning Trust were being considered.

Members reviewed the proposed conditions, asking about the rental figures, being advised a higher rent had been rejected by the trust, with these figures based on room size and cost per square metre, in line with the original lease agreement.

Members commended the work done to build relationships with the trust, advising that the proposal not only improved utilisation, and income, but supported the local community, endorsing the proposal for Corporation and DfE approval.

When reviewing the progress to date on the Sustainability Strategy a member asked about the suggested working group. It was clarified that the new strategy should incorporate stakeholder perspectives, to ensure the strategy reflected the views of the whole college community, whilst being supported and driven by governors to ensure this was a college wide approach, and that there was alignment between the overarching strategic plan.

Members were advised this was intended to be a cross-committee group, underpinned by staff and student voice, whilst considering priorities for embedding awareness into the curriculum, as well as carbon reduction. Members noted the intention was for the group to analyse survey outcomes, as well as the carbonisation plan details, which presented new information and options, including potential for private investors to support achieving net zero,



which should be considered against the college's risk appetite, and requirements for DfE approval for any novel and contentious strategies.

Members discussed the carbon payback of different aspects of the proposed net zero plan as generated by Hillside, proposing achieving net zero without significant grants or investment was unachievable. Members proposed a carbon reduction strategy was a more sensible approach, however, may be reconsidered if the investment options appeared feasible, and it was considered a priority area by the local community, with the Vice Principal Business Services outlining plans to survey staff and students in September, with the group meeting to review results once received.

Members supported the approach to fully review and rewrite the plan, agreeing to ask Corporation members to offer their time to support the working group.

***Item 12.3 - resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend the Corporation approve the new SLT lease, subject to DfE approval. The Committee agreed to alert the Corporation to the need to form a cross-Committee working party to support the drafting of a college-wide sustainability strategy.***

**R.24.105 Item 13: COMMITTEE PLANNING 2024/25**

The Clerk summarised the recommended updates to the Terms of Reference, which were supported by the Committee. The Committee reviewed the annual planner, and confirmed the timing and frequency of meetings met their needs.

***Item 13 - resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend to the Corporation the approval of the updated Terms of Reference.***

**R.24.106 Item 14: Review of Risks and Items to be Reported to the Corporation**

The Vice Chair asked the Committee to reflect on the risks related to Resources Committee Terms of Reference and propose any suggested score or wording changes as a result of their discussions. Members reflected on the extensive discussions, challenges and reassurances, concluding that these did not result in any need to amend the risks, however, asked for the format to be reviewed in line with earlier discussions.

Members agreed the attention of the Board need to be drawn to the following:

- Present item 8: Learner Support Funds Policies for approval
- Advise of the approval of the marketing and employer engagement strategies
- Present item 11.5: Financial Forecast 2024/25 to 2025/26 for approval
- Present item 12.2: Projects, as essential information (those exceeding £500,000 only)
- Present item 12.3: Estates Strategy to include endorsement of a new SLT lease, for approval, asking for members to support the sustainability working party
- Present item 13: Terms of Reference for approval

***Item 14 - resolved: The Committee resolved to note the risks remain unchanged, however, asked for the format to be reviewed. Members agreed the above needed presenting to the Corporation.***

**R.24.107 Item 15: Date Of Next Meeting (and Closing Comments)**

Members were thanked for their time, with the date of the next meeting to be circulated once approved by the Corporation.

**Item 18 - Noted**

**The meeting closed at 6.06pm**