



MINUTES of the MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 07 September 2023

PRESENT: Donald MacKenzie, Russell Edwards, Chris O’Neil, Pauline Tuthill & Rojan Kumar Subramani

APOLOGIES: Stephen Sheridan

CHAIR: Donald MacKenzie

ATTENDING: Joint Finance and Audit Director
Vice Principal – Operations and External Relations
Operations and Commercial Manager
Information Systems Manager
Data Controller
Health, Safety and Sustainability Manager
Governance Officer

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

The Governance Officer confirmed that this meeting was quorate.

There were no declarations of interests, statements of connections or transparency statements noted.

The Operations and Commercial Manager joined the meeting.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

a. Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 08 June 2023

Decision: The Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 08 June 2023 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

b. Confidential Note of Meeting CN-01-062023 of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 08 June 2023

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-01-062023) of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 08 June 2023 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED**.

c. Confidential Note of Meeting CN-02-062023 of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 08 June 2023

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-02-062023) of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 08 June 2023 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED**.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

- ALF Monies – The Committee noted that this item would be discussed as part of the main agenda.

Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- Procurement Strategy – The Committee noted that this item would also be discussed as part of the main agenda.

Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- Revenue Budget – The Joint Director for Finance and Audit advised the Committee that the requested information in respect of risk analysis and best and worse case scenarios will be included within all future monitoring reports for the new Financial Year.

Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

3. BAD DEBT WRITE OFF

The Joint Director for Finance and Audit spoke to his report, which had previously been circulated via email to Committee members for approval.

The Committee discussed the provisions in place in respect of bad debts. The Committee was advised that the debts being written off were part of a tidying up exercise and that moving forward the team will put in place procedures for resolving fee issues and unpaid statuses sooner. As part of this, the Committee was advised that, Finance Staff had attended student progression boards to ensure that we are pro-active in resolving fee issues going forward.

The Committee was advised that a KPI measure around debtors has been included within this year's matrix and will be monitored monthly. The Committee noted that there will now be an annual tidying up exercise conducted at the end of each Financial Year.

Decision: The Committee **FORMALLY APPROVED** the Bad Debt Write Off.

4. FINANCE UPDATE

a.) Report by Joint Director of Finance and Audit:

Revenue Budget 01 August 2023 – 31 July 2024

Financial Forecast Return 2022/23 to 2025/26

The Joint Director for Finance and Audit spoke to his report which provided the Committee with an update to the budget which had previously been presented to the Committee and to the Board of Management in June 2023 along with an update in respect of the Financial Forecast Returns and the expected deficits which we are forecasting. The Committee was advised that we are putting in place mitigating actions to reduce our deficit to a break-even situation and that we are on target to achieve our credits.

The Committee noted that our Financial Forecast Return had been based on a 3.5% increase in staff costs. A Committee discussion around strike action took

place. The Committee discussed the operating deficit of others within the partnership.

Decision: The Committee **RECOMMENDED** the Revenue Budget 01 August 2023 – 31 July 2024 and the Financial Forecast Return for 2022/23 to 2024/26 to the Board of Management for final approval.

b.) FE Fee Waiver Policy

The Joint Director for Finance and Audit advised the Committee that minor changes had been made to the policy.

Decision: The Committee **RECOMMENDED** the FE Fee Waiver Policy to the Board of Management for final approval.

5. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Joint Director for Finance and Audit advised the Committee that our strategy had been informed by the Scottish Government Statutory Guidance and that APUC had been part of the strategy drafting process. The Committee welcomed this strategy and noted that it will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Decision: The Committee **RECOMMENDED** the Procurement Strategy to the Board of Management for final approval.

6. REVIEW OF SUB-STRATEGIES:

a. Estates and Campus Operations Strategy

b. Sustainability Strategy

c. Marketing Strategy

The Vice Principal – Operations and External Relations advised that a new approach to the review of our sub-strategies had been implemented and would align with the monitoring of KPI's. The Committee noted that all strategies would be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Committee was advised that all relevant departments had been requested to complete a template which provides an update on each strategy and sub-strategy action.

The Committee discussed sustainability and how we can link into sustainable travel plans for the community.

Action: A link to the Sub-strategy monitoring document to be provided to Board Members.

7. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

The Joint Director for Finance and Audit spoke to his report on the final position of the capital budget monitoring for 2022/23 and advised that all grant funding received has been spent.

The Committee was advised that the HE Capital Grant funding for 2023/24 has been reduced.

8. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Joint Director for Finance and Audit spoke to his report which presented the revenue budget monitoring and projected outturn for the year ended 31 July 2023. The Committee noted that due to mitigating actions which are being implemented, our forecast deficit is reducing. The Committee was advised that this reduction has been aided by additional funding which has been released to Executive Office in respect of ESIF and ELC activity.

The Committee noted that our end of year accounts are currently being produced. The Committee noted that we exceeded our target for FE activity for 22/23 but had seen inflationary increases in respect of our costs.

9. CONFIDENTIAL DISCUSSION

- **Impact from Funding Announcements**
- **Update from Shared Finance Service**

The Committee undertook a confidential discussion (CN-FGP-01-092023) in respect of the impact from funding announcements and an update on the Shared Finance Service.

10. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The Information Systems Manager joined the meeting.

The Information Systems Manager spoke to her report which provided the Committee with an update on student activity for 22-23 and student recruitment for 23-24.

The Committee was advised that:

- we have exceeded our FE credit target for 22-23 by 947 credits
- our HE undergraduate target was not achieved but that we had achieved 89.5% of our target.
- our early withdrawals decreased by 2.7% for FE FT students
- our early withdrawals increased by 0.4% for HE FT Students.

In respect of 23/24 enrolments the Committee was provided with an update on our current enrolments noting that:

- since the time of writing the paper, we have seen a 3,000 increase in enrolments, the majority of these being apprenticeships.
- We are currently at 84% of our target for HE FTE with further enrolments expected in September and January.

The Committee discussed the reasons behind the slight increase in HE withdrawals for the previous academic year and noted the range of reasons around mental health issues and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Committee thanked the Information Systems Manager for this update.

The Information Systems Manager left the meeting.

11. KPI MATRIX

The Operations and Commercial Manager provided the Committee with sight of the final position for the 22/23 KPI Matrix highlighting the number of green rated performance indicators. The Committee noted that there were still some timing issues between when numbers and monies are received and that there may be a delay in some areas meeting their target because of this.

The Committee discussed mental health and the support offered to students, staff absence, turnover and PRD progression.

In respect of this year's KPI Matrix it was noted that more pragmatic targets had been included in respect of Health and Safety and around the efficiency of the Estate. The Committee noted that the new KPI Matrix has highlighted where there has been changes to the measure and where there are new measures now in place. The Committee was provided with the rationale for the 23/24 measures and noted that our KPI Matrix can be used as a benchmark to allow us to monitor trends going forward.

The Committee welcomed the KPI's and discussed the systems in place to ensure that these are maintained.

12. ALF MONIES UPDATE

The Vice Principal – Operations and External Relations provided the Committee with an update in respect of the ALF monies advising that we have been successful in securing the funding for all our bids and that this funding will cover activities around curriculum development, the development of Graduate Apprenticeships and equipment for the STEAM centre. The Committee noted that all our funds have now been removed from the ALF.

13. 6 MONTHLY GDPR REPORT

The Data Controller joined the meeting.

The Data Controller spoke to her report which provided the Committee with a general update on operational activity in relation to GDPR, advising that a compliance-based overview was provided to the Audit Committee on 05 September.

The Committee noted the update in respect of:

- personal records and how these, when used to discuss company business, can be included within FOI calls for information and the need to remain mindful of the channels of communication being used and how records are stored on these channels.
- the complexities of CCTV and the impact to the organisation in terms of security. The Committee noted that where cameras are required we will ensure that these are installed following the legal and due process and following an assessment of the requirement.
- the requirement for all Data Sharing Agreements to be carefully reviewed before they can be signed off.

The Committee was advised that shared procurement of the integrated HR and Payroll System was moving forward with tenders expected to be submitted this week.

The Committee thanked the Data Controller for this update.

The Data Controller left the meeting.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

The Health, Safety and Sustainability Manager joined the meeting.

The Health, Safety and Sustainability Manager spoke to his report which provided the Committee with an update on the management of our Health and Safety including RIDDOR, Incident, Accidents and Near Miss Reporting.

The Committee noted that a successful fire drill was conducted in May 2023 and was advised of changes put in place as a result of a change in policy from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee noted that we are liaising with GTFM over automating some of this process following these changes.

The Committee was advised of our training and development plan in respect of Health and Safety.

The Committee thanked the Health, Safety and Sustainability Manager for his report.

The Health, Safety and Sustainability Manager left the meeting

15. COMMITTEE EVALUATION FEEDBACK

The Governance Officer spoke to her report which provided the Committee with feedback from the Committee and Chair Evaluations. The Committee noted that response levels were low with only one response received for the Chair Evaluation and two for the Committee Evaluation. The Committee noted that no issues were highlighted as part of this, and the feedback received will be presented to the Board of Management as part of the yearly report on Evaluations.

16. AOCB

The Committee gave their thanks to the Governance Officer for her work over the past 3 years and noted that she would be leaving her role soon.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Joint Audit and Finance and General Purposes Committee – Date to be confirmed.

Signed by the Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Keefe", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Date: 07/03/2024