

**Minutes of the Resources Committee  
Thursday 12 May 2022  
Video Conference-Zoom  
4pm**

Present: Alasdair Simmons (Chair)  
Cliff Wragg (Vice Chair)  
Alan Carvell  
Ian Pryce CBE, Principal & Chief Executive  
Allan Schofield

In attendance Sheraz Amin, Executive Director of Digital Transformation  
Caroline Biddle, Executive Director of HR  
Diane Gamble, Director of Estates & Facilities  
Pat Jones, Executive Director of Finance  
Rachel Nicol, Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation  
(Minutes)

**Action**

**R/15/22 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Amanda Wagstaff, Vinod Tailor and Olly Mills

**R/16/22 Declarations of interest**

Alan Carvell is a non-executive director of BCS Limited (a wholly owned subsidiary of Bedford College)

**R/17/22 Matters arising**

Sheraz Amin, Executive Director for Digital Transformation, was welcomed to the meeting.

**R/18/22 Indicative MTFS**

The Executive Director of Finance presented the report and explained the different models presented, the focus on combined forecasting beyond merger and the move to align budgeting and forecasting of the two college models.

Highlights included changes to term dates to deliver additional hours funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”), pension position based on actuarial estimates and provision for increasing utility and NI costs. It was confirmed that provision for a pay rise had been included. The cash position before and after completion of the capital programme was outlined. It was confirmed that on the key indicators set by the ESFA the College will continue to be financially outstanding.

The Committee discussed how “fewer but better paid staff” could be delivered, the risks and the planned performance measures. The Committee questioned how technological changes may impact the position and discussed how digitisation through linked and better systems could create efficiencies.

Clarification was sought around the presentation of HE fees at Central Bedfordshire College (“CBC”) in the model. This will be further reviewed as part of the due diligence exercise.

The Executive Director of HR provided additional intelligence on the management of work force risk to deliver the plan. The need to balance people hours and use of other resources was noted.

The Committee sought assurance on whether the model and the pay as a percentage of income is achievable and questioned the makeup of the pension deficit, CBC policy on provisions and planning assumptions. It was explained that a detailed review is being carried out by the Council on pensions and a prudent position has been provided for.

The current financial model, discipline around planning and funding of capital investment was discussed.

The identified challenge in order to achieve the planned surplus was raised. Assurance was given on the Executive actions to model the pay budget and identify efficiencies required. Although funding rates per learner (16-18) have increased learner numbers have reduced in particular areas and therefore related staff provision, utilisation and required group sizes are being reviewed by area.

The Adult offer and how this is delivered is being reviewed for impact, both in terms of cost and quality of experience for the learner.

The challenges in terms of pay gap, supply costs and timeline for delivering efficiencies were highlighted. The need to align models across the two entities in the event of a merger was noted to be key to delivering the planned budget.

The Executive Director of Digital Transformation outlined some early observations and confirmed his support for delivery of the agenda.

**The report was noted.**

#### **R/19/22 Capital Programme**

The Executive Director of Finance presented the report and confirmed the assurance provided on the risks around construction inflation and mitigations of increased costs to deliver the Tower Block project within budget.

It was understood that no companies will commit to fixed price contracts but the College is working closely across supply chains. Savings and efficiencies have been identified to assist budget management and delivery of projects.

An update was given on grant funding bids including status of town bids and the two T level grants applied for.

Positive support has been received locally for the Tower Block project. Clarification was sought and provided on the references to the Heat decarbonisation grants at different rounds with Salix in relation to different projects.

Projects around the Cambridge Arc and potential College involvement were discussed.

### **The update was noted**

#### **R/20/22 Estates projects update**

The Director of Estates and Facilities updated the Committee on progress in respect of capital projects.

Sixth form Centre Corby – out for tender for the main contractor with a timetable for appointment of contractors in September. A planning consultant has been appointed to manage the planning permission application.

Tower Block - working with suppliers direct to procure materials early at agreed prices. Planning has been delayed due to work levels in the planning department. It is hoped enabling work will take place at the beginning of June. The Committee discussed security provision to protect material. Assurance was given on appropriate security through use of CCTV, locked containers and on-site security.

Bedford Sixth Form - work completed on the classrooms, furniture installed and progress on toilet refurbishment is ongoing. Site meetings are taking place regularly with the Head of Sixth form to manage the impact on the student experience. PV panels are being relocated so as not to impact on conservation. The Committee sought and was provided with assurance on the application of the funds and achievement of planned completion.

Kings Farm - A decision on the mechanisation centre will be confirmed in June when the outcome of the T level bid is known.

### **The update was noted**

#### **R/21/22 People Strategy**

The Executive Director of HR confirmed the focus this term has been on recruitment.

The report included a summary of the objectives previously agreed and progress made.

Recruitment of staff is noted to be a challenge but in line with sector wide challenges.

Comparatives were provided pre pandemic as well as against the same time in the prior year.

Candidates in relation to campaigns was explained. Campaigns do not relate to vacancies as some positions have been promoted several times.

Vacancy levels and the requirement for further analysis of where they sit was noted.

***Associate turnover figures were not available but will be in future reports.***

The development and implementation of a new recruitment system was outlined, creating efficiencies in processing. Technical issues and requirement for management input have been reduced. Shortlisting has been completely anonymised to avoid unconscious bias, with further development of the system planned to enable automatic criteria checking. Automatic flagging of relationships has been established.

The Committee discussed the application of automatic criteria and risk of losing good candidates by automated filtering. Assurance was given that the identification of criteria will be closely monitored.

Assurance was also given that IT had been consulted on the project.

Reporting on the recruitment system and a new recruitment policy, including safer recruitment are being developed.

Other HR functions managed through I Trent will be looked at in due course.

The launch of College purpose and values will take place at the Staff Conference.

A video demonstration was given of early development of promotional material to encourage teacher recruitment. The Committee discussed the approach taken to the development of material, the impact required and numbers targeted.

The Committee further discussed the impact of staff turnover on costs and on the student experience. The areas with high use of agency staff currently were outlined. A further review will look at market rates and funding available to attract staff in hard to recruit areas. It was also agreed that retention of staff will be key. The College is looking at hybrid working and low cost / no cost rewards.

The economic climate and potential impact on recruitment was raised and discussed.

**The report was noted**

#### **R/22/22 HR KPIs**

The highlights were provided by the Executive Director of HR including overall staff numbers, turnover of staff, leavers, sickness levels and reasons.

The impact of lock down on staff absence and behaviours was questioned and discussed.

The increase in short term sickness was noted to result from Covid.

**The report was noted**

**R/23/22 Employee relations (confidential)**

[Confidential minute removed]

*Cliff Wragg left the meeting*

**R/24/22 College Information Report**

The highlights were provided by the Executive Director of Finance including:

- Overspend in pay linked to difficult to recruit areas and use of agency staff and apprentices carried over from previous years.
- Achievement levels in adult education and impact on students and funding.
- Debt collection required by partner university and impact on the College.
- Positive cash position

The different references to debt cover in the report on the debt service covenant was questioned. It was confirmed to relate to the bank loan agreement requirement verses cover in place.

[Confidential / commercially sensitive minute removed]

**The report was noted**

**R/25/22 Merger update**

The Principal & CEO provided an update on links made with CBC and participation in their staff meeting.

Consultation is being taken forward.

Benchmarking has been procured for Bedford, CBC and Tresham.

The Principals are due to meet on 23<sup>rd</sup> May and will develop the implementation plan and staff from different areas have met or are meeting to share best practice and align processes as applicable. Chairs are due to meet on 18 May

The due diligence process and areas of focus was set out with outcomes not likely to be known until September.

Thought will be given to resource requirements in coordinating the implementation plan.



**The update was noted**

**R/24/22 Decisions taken under delegated authority**

The Director of Governance provided a verbal confirmation that there had been no decisions taken under delegated authority since the last meeting.

**The report was noted**

**R/25/22 Minutes of meeting held on 31 January 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**R/26/22 Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 15 June at 4pm by zoom