

**Minutes of the
Resource Committee held in person on
Wednesday, 17th May 2023, 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm
In the Board Room at Dunstable/ Hybrid Teams meeting**

Present: Alasdair Simmons (AS) (Chair)
Cliff Wragg (CW)
Ian Pryce (Principal and Chief Executive) (Online)
Angelique Wright (AW)

In attendance: Caroline Biddle (Executive Director of Human Resources)
Pat Jones (Deputy CEO, Finance)
Diane Gamble (Director of Estates and Facilities)
Rachel Nicol (Group Director of Governance)
Natasha Stringer (Senior Governance Co-ordinator) (minutes)

R/17/23 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Allan Schofield, Amanda Wagstaff and Vinod Tailor. It was confirmed to the Committee that Emelia Mustoe has completed her course and is no longer serving as a student governor.

R/18/23 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the items on the agenda.

R/19/23 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

The Committee welcomed Angelique Wright to her first meeting.

The Committee Chair raised a question on VAT brought to the Committee by Sheraz Amin (Executive Director of Digital Transformation). The Committee discussed in detail the question raised, seeking guidance from the Deputy CEO Finance about past actions taken and future plans.

R/20/23 College Information Report

The Deputy CEO Finance summarised the report to the Committee and was happy to report that TBCG is in a good place, key performance indicators (KPIs) are sound and the College still anticipates outstanding financial health on the Education Skills Funding Association (“ESFA”) criteria.

Premises are reported as overspending, reflecting the price increases on Gas and Electric. The Committee commented on all the variances over the last year and asked about the impact of energy costs in particular. The Deputy CEO Finance commented that next year will be a challenge. All ongoing work on buildings and newer buildings utilise technology to help negate expenses, such as “automated off”

for lights and equipment but behavioral change around campuses will need to be encouraged.

The Committee has expressed concerns about the payroll forecast being underspent, the offset with vacancies and the potential impact this could have on teaching and the student experience.

The Executive Director of Human Resources has acknowledged the challenge of a shortage of industry professionals and is currently piloting a recruitment platform to address this issue.

The Committee inquired about the impact of staff shortages on morale and job satisfaction. The Executive Director of Human Resources explained the benefits of implementing a trial of a four-day teaching week starting in September. This approach was not only considered to enhance the student experience by improving class sizes and reducing travel but also to promote staff well-being and reduce turnover.

The practical challenges of this approach were also discussed, such as the services provided by teaching assistants (“Tas”) and the Learning Resource Centre (“LRC”), which will remain open for students all five days. The Committee sought clarification on whether the College will remain available for students five days a week, and it was confirmed that it would, only the timetabling will be based on a four-day week, and resources must be reviewed accordingly.

The Committee inquired about the impact of this approach on costs, and the Deputy CEO Finance explained that energy costs could be reduced by having fewer people in the building. However, staff behaviour in older buildings would also be a factor.

The report was noted

R/21/23 Capital projects update summary

The Director of Estates and Facilities joined the meeting to update the Committee regarding the progress of ongoing estate developments.

Corby Sixth Form

The Director of Estates and Facilities informed the Committee that the works are still on track to open up a section of the facility for the Open Day on June 17th, giving students and parents a chance to come and check out some of the amenities. The Director of Estates and Facilities updated the Committee of an electrical supply problem caused by a neighbour's recent upgrade, which took up most of the capacity. The issue was resolved by getting permission from the landlord to use two existing power supplies that weren't in use.

Bedford Sixth Form

All major work has been completed and IT are working to provide a secure link and increased cyber security. The Director of Estates and Facilities shared that they had received a positive Salix Audit report, which confirmed that the de-carbonisation projects were aligned with the funding received.

Kingshill Farm Development

The Director of Estates and Facilities explained ongoing communication with Shuttleworth Trust to help resolve some planning issues around the junction with Shefford Road.

Halls of Residence (Shuttleworth Campus)

Shuttleworth Campus has secured a grant for the de-carbonisation of the Halls of Residence, and a discussion was held over the timings of work starting.

Leases and Disposals

The Director of Estates and Facilities discussed with the Committee the potential leases and buildings considered for disposal to help decrease maintenance and utility costs. The Motor Vehicle Centre at Kempston is on the market with final offers due 24th May.

Over Summer, the Estates team will help relocate facilities and departments based in St Marks to the Corby Campus.

The Committee sought and was given assurance that work had been completed at Corby to make this viable.

Tower block (Bedford Campus)

The Director of Estates and Facilities updated the Committee on the progress of the work, which includes:

- windows and cladding for the sixth and fifth floors installed, some external cladding to be completed for the fourth and third floors.
- Contractors have now moved down to the second and first floors, freeing up the third and fourth floors for the staff and students to move back into.
- Exams have been moved out of the Tower Block Building, except for the three days of GCSE, where it has been agreed that work will stop.

The Director of Estates and Facilities updated the Committee on some unexpected work that was discovered during the project including:

- Asbestos and the requirement for safe removal.
- Work required to the concrete frame.
- An Audit of Fire Safety highlighted some required work to upgrade fire doors.

The Director of Estates and Facilities informed the Committee that with the mentioned unexpected works, the rise in steel prices and inflationary increases there is an anticipated overspend of circa 4%.

The Committee discussed this; and whilst some options to descope development remain, it was highlighted that keeping the student area and the corridor was important. The Committee commented on the difficulties faced and how well-managed it was.

Action: One-page document for the Board

Diane Gamble left the meeting

R/22/23 Funding briefing.

The Deputy CEO Finance presented a funding briefing for the Committee setting out the operation of the funding formula, how this is managed and the impact. A copy of the slides will be available on the portal.

R/23/23 Indicative MTFS

The Deputy CEO Finance provided a report on the progress of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) development to the Committee.

The 2023/24 approach focuses on allocating resources based on college priorities first. Fundamental Principles set out to ensure a resilient budget include:

- Community-led curriculum to meet learner and employers' needs
- Average class size of 18, planning for 20 to cater for withdrawals
- Timetabling for four-day teaching weeks
- Savings through recruitment, through the removal of vacancies
- Use of apprenticeship levy to offer professional development as a recruitment aid.
- Improve recruitment at Wellingborough, TCSF and Leighton Buzzard

The Committee asked about the risk to subsidiary companies with the four-day timetable, and the Deputy CEO Finance responded that there would be challenges and risks and that they are aware.

Current student numbers indicate a shortfall against the Adult Education Budget (AEB) contract. Work, including reviewing the curriculum offered and the demand in communities, is underway to see how the shortfall can be addressed.

HE recruitment numbers are down, aligning with national HE figures in FE.

The Committee discussed in detail the maintenance and security at CBC, which is currently outsourced. It was highlighted that the security, in particular, was thought highly of and worked well, and a discussion around outsourcing and the limitations ensued.

The Committee requested an update on loans; the Deputy CEO provided an update and informed the Committee that the CBC loans had been settled on the merger.

The Committee noted the report and a further update will be presented at the June meeting.

R/24/23 Indicative Capital Programme

The Deputy CEO Finance provided a report outlining the indicative capital programme.

A further Salix grant has been awarded for heat de-carbonisation. The Deputy CEO Finance informed the Committee that this is the third Salix grant and a testament to our performance. The Committee asked if there was a league table to see where we sat in the country.

Since the last report to the Committee, a further grant of £1.68m has been awarded for transformation work, which is buildings only and centres around sustainability.

The Deputy CEO seeks grants to support funding projects and reduce the impact on reserves. Within the report, the Deputy CEO Finance highlighted a table to the Committee, which gave an update on the grants the College has been successful in and anticipated grants becoming available that might be tendered for.

R/25/23 People Strategy update

The Executive Director of Human Resources provided a report to the Committee, including an update on the internal recruitment audit and the recent TUPE through the merger with CBC.

The report covered vital policies and procedures being put in place to support the college in meeting the requirements of the Departments of Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance (KSCIE)

The Executive Director of Human Resources included two policies for the Committee to note, Safer Recruitment & Selection and the Employment of Ex-offenders.

The Executive Director of Human Resources updated the Committee on the outcome of the internal audits on relevant areas from the end of 2022. The internal

audit actions implemented were:

- A managers' guide for safer recruitment has been produced
- Working with Professional development to review training records for Safer Recruitment training, and those still to complete will receive a chaser.
- All adverts now include a reference to paragraph 212 of the DFE Guidance
- Working with the recruitment system, Blue Octopus, to check for duplication and proper transfer from onboarding once candidates are in the post.
- Regular checks to ensure the Single Central Record ("SCR") is complete

The Executive Director of Human Resources spoke about the cost involved in registering with the DBS update service, this includes a yearly fee. The Executive Director of Human Resources advised that the current KCSIE regulation does not require rechecking at present, so the likelihood of receiving funding is low.

A monitoring visit from Ofsted happened on 18th April 2023, and the inspectors were interested in Safer Recruitment and Safeguarding. The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that the inspection was found to have significant improvements from last year.

The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee about a new recruitment trial through Blue Octopus. This trial targets two areas where it has proven difficult to fill vacancies. The Committee inquired about the contingency plan if the positions remain unfilled. ***The results of the trial will be reported to the Autumn Resources Committee meeting.***

The Executive Director of Human Resources updated the Committee on the CBC merger, including consultations with union and staff representatives and regular FAQs. The Executive Director of Human Resources was happy to inform the Committee that the process went smoothly.

No new CBC contracts are being issued. The Bedford College and CBC contracts are almost identical, so the absorption and management have been straightforward. The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that the HR team had been issued guidance on any contract changes and implications. The Executive Director of Human Resources was happy to note to the Committee that whilst still in a period of adjustment, the transfer has been received positively by staff.

The Committee noted the update

R/26/23

HR KPIs

The Executive Director of Human Resources presented a report which included the following:

- Workforce numbers and recruitment numbers
- New starter data
- Turnover data
- Sickness, both long-term and short-term.

The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee of an error found in the sickness data from CBC, and ways to improve the data are being looked into. It was noted that mental health sickness is still below the national average, and the well-being group is leading with awareness.

The Committee asked if the data could be presented over 13 months for comparison, and a discussion was held on the worth of having subsidiary data presented separately; ***it was agreed that this would be done.***

The Committee requested an update about the ongoing staff survey. The survey will be active until the end of the month, making it unlikely that the results will be available for the next committee meeting. However, the Executive Director of Human Resources will provide a verbal update. The Committee inquired about the survey's comparability to last year's, and the Executive Director confirmed that it is comparable with a few new focus areas.

The Committee noted the update

R/27/23 Employee relations

The Executive Director of Human Resources had no employee relation updates for the Committee.

R/28/23 Policies and processes -amendments to financial regulations

The Committee reviewed the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations, largely centred on changes to the management structure and to reflect the ONS decision to reclassify colleges as public sector.

The Committee supported the recommendation of the Financial Regulations to the Corporation for approval.

R/29/23 Decisions taken under delegated authority

The Committee noted the decisions taken by the Chair of the Corporation under delegated authority.

R/30/23 Minutes of the last meeting (30.01.23)

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.