

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
Policy & Resources Committee held on Monday 8 March 2021, 4.00pm via  
Microsoft Teams**

**Present** Evelyn Carpenter (Chair of the Committee)  
Stuart Fraser (Vice-Chair)  
Yvonne Kelly (Principal/CEO)  
Forhad Altafi (FA) (Staff Governor)

**In attendance:** Wijay Pitumpe (Chief Finance & Enterprise Officer)  
Victoria Eastwood (Chief Governance Officer)  
Maxine Deslandes (Director of Finance & Estates)  
Veronica Anthony-David (Chief Transformation Officer)  
Steve Brown (SB) (Health and Safety & Sustainability Manager)

Bal Panesar (BP) (observer up to Agenda item 8)

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all present explaining the protocol for the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Carole Ditty.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Governors were reminded of their responsibility to declare an interest in relation to specific items on the Agenda if appropriate. None were anticipated.

**3. Minutes of the previous meeting – Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and the Additional Meeting held on Thursday 25 February 2021**

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 30 November 2020 and the additional meeting held on Thursday 25 February 2021, were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

An update on outstanding actions from the November 2020 Committee meeting was provided:

Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	By (deadline)	Update
8.	Committee Schedule of Business 2020/21 to include the Marketing Plan for the March 2021 meeting and Brexit and the Balance Scorecard to be included as standing agenda items going forward.	CGO	ASAP	Complete - effective from the June Meeting
11.	CGO to arrange additional P&R meeting to review H&S policies and procedures.	CGO	January 2021	Complete

It was noted that the actions from the meeting held on the 25 January 2021 would be addressed at the June meeting of the Committee when the relevant policies would be presented.

## 5. Committee Risks

The Chief Governance Officer (CGO) informed the Committee that the risks for the Policy & Resources Committee remain unchanged from the previous meeting. The revised risk register would be discussed at the Audit Committee Meeting on the 15 March and again at the March Corporation meeting. Committee risks would then feature on the Committee agenda for the June meeting.

**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

## 6. Debt Write-Off – Update 2019/20

The Director of Finance (DOFE) advised that the financial regulations stated that debt exceeding £2K must be approved by the Committee. The College could legally chase the debt for six years but there were a total of 44 learners whose debt was deemed irrecoverable. The total requiring write off was £119,256.11 with the majority of the debt from HE/student loans. There were also two Subsidiary debt write offs for Hairazors and Aspire for £109,200 and £195,000 respectively. All debts had been included in the accounts and seen by the College's Auditors.

The Vice-Chair stated that the debt write-off was a large number and asked if the College had learnt anything from this to be able to manage the situation differently going forward. The DOFE responded that it would be beneficial if the student loans company made decisions earlier as currently these were not received until January/February when learners were well into their courses. Learners applied for a loan as they could not afford the fee and the College wanted to encourage learners to take on the course but this meant they had to wait for approval of the debt. Measures were in place to undertake previous checks to ensure there were no issues with the system.

In response to a query from BP, the DOFE confirmed that all the learners affected were over 18 and an instalment plan was offered. The College started to chase debts from September onwards and all other debts has been collected. There was no recourse to collect from the student loan company.

FA questioned whether other institutions were facing a similar pattern with student loans making late decisions and if this was something that could be raised by colleges facing these issues. The DOFE advised that most colleges and universities were faced with this issue and the student loans company had made it clear that the process could not be amended. The Chief Finance & Enterprise Officer CFEO stated that the AoC were lobbying on behalf of colleges as this was a national issue. The Principal/CEO added that this had been included as part of the White Paper to change these processes.

The Chair noted that the College had worked hard to chase the debt and all Members agreed that the write off should be approved.

**Approved: The Committee unanimously approved the write off of the 2019-20 debts.**

## 7. Tuition Fees Policy 2021/22

The Chair noted that there were no changes from the previous policy.

The DOFE reported that the only changes were amendments to dates but it was possible that funding changes may apply going forward. Any future changes required would be presented to the Committee for approval.

The Principal/CEO referred to the College's reapplication to the OfS and advised that the guidance may require additional text regarding refunds and strengthening of the fee policy.

It was agreed that the Tuition Fees Policy for 2021/22 would be approved for future use subject to amendment regarding the OfS application if required. Any amendments to be brought back to the Committee.

**Approved: The Tuition Fees Policy 2021/22 was approved subject to future amendments when required and ratification by the Corporation. All amendments to be approved by the Committee.**

## 8. Covid Update

The CFEO reported that some staff had now returned to site and lateral flow testing was taking place. The numbers of both staff and learners on site had been staggered to manage the testing and there had been only a few minor issues on the first day. The College also had a raft of covid safety measures in place e.g. sanitisation stations, classroom safety kits, temperature control stations and one-way systems. It was noted that during the period that the College had been open for vulnerable learners, there had not been a positive test.

FA congratulated all staff on campus and the Estates team for their hard work and efforts. This was echoed by all of the Committee. The Principal/CEO added that the testing and return to site had gone really well with positive feedback received and this was a credit to the CFEO, DOFE, Estates Team and also the Chief Transformation Officer and Chief Operating Officer.

The Vice-Chair asked whether the College was providing information to a central source around testing. The CFEO responded that test results were issued directly to the NHS and daily updates provided to the DfE. The Principal/CEO added that regular meetings with the Unions were regularly taking place.

The Chair queried whether the College had accessed additional funding to carry out testing and whether there were extra costs for additional staff. The CFEO replied that the College was managing within the funding allocation by the DfE alongside existing resources. The Chair suggested that it would be useful to alert the Director of Public Health to the College's position alongside the school data already provided. BP agreed with the Chair and asked whether the College was sharing data on the website to provide confidence. The Principal/CEO replied that the College would pick up with LBBB to join the school data and the CTO would be asked to look at providing the data on the College website.

The Vice-Chair stated that statistics in London Boroughs indicated that the uptake of vaccinations was low and asked if the College had considered a vaccination aware programme. The Chair added that this would depend on the age and cohort of staff but it would be beneficial if the College could promote the vaccinations to staff being mindful, however, that the vaccinations were not mandatory. The Principal/CEO responded that this would be considered and reported going forward in the context of those eligible.

The Chair recorded her thanks to the staff and learners and asked the Principal/CEO to convey the thanks of the Committee for all the hard work undertaken.

**Action: Principal/CEO to discuss with CTO publishing testing data on the College website.**

**Action:** The Principal/CEO to liaise with LBBB for the College data to join the school data in being reported to the Director of Public Health

**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

*Bal Panesar left the meeting.*

## 9. Management Accounts to end January 2021

The DOFE informed the Committee that the College was currently forecasting a £1.18m deficit, however, should the £600K project income be achieved this would mitigate risk.

The Vice-Chair stated that the College had known for some time that apprenticeship income would be down and asked whether the worst-case forecast was anticipating a reduction in apprenticeships. The CFEO replied that this was a cautionary forecast and the target had been re-profiled from now until 31 July 2021. If the College did not achieve the £430K apprenticeship income then the £1.1m forecast was the worst case. The Vice-Chair asked if the College was suggesting that this income would not be achieved. The CFEO responded that there were lots of uncertainties and at present the position was unknown. There would be an increase in incentives for employers from April 2021.

The Chair stated that the doubling of the grant was a promising incentive and questioned whether this would improve the position for the College. The Principal/CEO replied that the prognosis at the moment indicated that income would be down. Employers were holding off because of the incentive and the delay in starts impacted on income. The College had, however, been allocated additional money for Level 3

entitlement extension which was a competence-based qualification and it was hoped to deliver this in a tight timeframe to be able to maximise income. The College may be able to make up some ground in apprenticeships but this was not yet in the budget. An update would be provided to the Board when the remodelling had taken place.

The Chair referred to the additional learning support funding and queried whether the figure provided was monetary or the number of learners. The CFEO responded that this was a monetary value earned by those apprenticeships where there was a learner need for support. This would be clarified in the accounts.

In response to a query from the Vice Chair, the CFEO clarified that the College received grants from the Government which were included in the balance sheet and then offset each year against depreciation.

The Chair questioned whether the staff income ratio was similar to other colleges. The CFEO responded that other colleges were in a similar picture. In normal circumstances a staff ratio of 73% would be alarming but the Covid situation had impacted. The DOFE added that the position could change for the February management accounts which may show an improved picture. The Principal/CEO advised that FEC benchmarks would be updated at the March Corporation meeting and the staff ratio would be profiled in terms of trend patterns. The College could not afford to maintain the ratio at 73% and needed to return to the previous lower percentage.

In response to a query from the Vice-Chair concerning non-pay expenditure, the CFEO advised that only essential expenditure was being agreed. All orders in the College were being approved by the CFEO at present. The Vice-Chair noted that this was a commendable position.

The Chair asked for clarification on the FECA capital allocation. The CFEO responded that the College had been allocated the £1.2m rather than having to bid as this was based on learner numbers on the condition the monies were used to improve the College. The focus was on improving staff accommodation not currently fit for purpose, removing portacabins, bringing in prefabricated buildings behind F block and upgrading the wi-fi all through the campus. The Chair noted that the amount of capital money the College had received was impressive.

The Chair thanked the DOFE and CFEO and the Committee looked forward to receiving further updates at the next Board meeting.

**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

## **10. Capital Development Update**

The CFEO reported that the College had won most of the capital bids submitted and had also managed to negotiate a larger contribution. Developments to F Block were underway and staff consultation had taken place. The work included a sensory and break out room, communication room and improvement of the building as a whole. It was hoped the works would be completed by August 2021 and it was not expected that the overall budget figure would change.

The CFEO informed the Committee that the total cost to update the E Block into a smart construction centre was £1.4million. The College had tried to obtain 100% funding but has achieved 75% therefore needed to find £300K. The project had commenced and would be completed by March 2022.

The CFEO advised that the deadline for the FE Capital Transformation Fund had been extended and the College would be notified on 14 May 2021 if it had been successful to reach the next stage. The DfE had commissioned external consultants to produce a report on college estates and the Rush Green campus had been awarded Grade A. This was a great achievement but put obtaining funding in a difficult position.

The Chair asked how much the FE Capital Transformation Fund bid was. The CFEO replied that the bid was c£3 million but the College would need to match fund 50%. The intention was to place an initial bid then negotiate a bigger contribution. The Chair noted that it would be difficult to find half of that amount. The Principal/CEO added that other funding pots would be available.

The Vice-Chair queried to what extent the Infrastructure & Estates Strategy Group should be involved in discussions as the capital bids seemed to be driven by funding availability. The CFEO replied that in 2012 a 15 year property strategy had been created and within the last few years the College had managed to implement most of the strategy with only the completion of E-Block outstanding. Funding opportunities were announced in a short timescale and the purpose of the Infrastructure & Estates Strategy Group was to assess whether the campus was fit for purpose going forward. The Principal/CEO added that the focus of the Group should be broader than just looking at the campus.

The Vice-Chair stated that it would be helpful for the terms and conditions of the group to be reconsidered as there had been no involvement in any of the process. The Chair suggested that this should be considered and a proposal presented at the next Committee.

**Action: Infrastructure & Estates Strategy Group Terms of Reference to be reviewed and brought back to the Committee for consideration.**

**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

## **11. Partnerships Progress Report**

The CFEO reported that the proportion of subcontracting at the College was very small and discussion took place on the current partnerships in place.

The Chair thanked the CFEO report and noted it was pleasing to see that subcontracting was decreasing.

**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

## **12. People & Organisational Development Report**

The Chief Transformation Officer (CTO) advised that the report was split into the three areas: analysis of EDI (Annual EDI report); people & OD Monitoring Data and Employment Law updates. Key highlights from the EDI Annual report were provided as follows:

- How the College managed EDI and how this was embedded into teaching and learning
- Profile of learners and staff
- Planning on events this year compared to last year
- Key statements – advancing equality of opportunity
- Increase of BME staff from 40% to 66%
- EDI Committee in place – membership included Vice-Chair of the Corporation, 2 student representatives, stakeholders and trade unions
- Teaching & learning– EDI calendar to inform tutorial scheme of work and enhanced where required
- Fully accredited British Value qualification in place
- College well known for support for high needs learners – higher than average success in this area
- Largest provider of high needs
- Student representatives and surveys underway to establish feedback
- More work around digital learning taking place
- Impact of covid – catch up programmes in place
- Staffing profile – increase of 11.26% in staff under 25
- One EDI complaint registered which was not upheld

The Vice-Chair asked whether the College received support from employers on EDI issues to enable learners to be provided with the same level of support outside of the College. The CTO replied that there had not been any cause for concern. The REACH programme was embedded with employers and widening participation had ensured employers were now leading programmes for females.

The Chair asked whether the EDI objectives for 2022 had been considered. The CTO replied that these had not yet been captured but the College was aware of what would need to be considered.

The Chair stated that the update had been a very useful summary of issues for the Committee to focus on and queried whether it would be difficult to achieve becoming a London Living Wage employer in the current climate. The CTO responded that the London Living Wage was in discussion but the Executive Team wanted to improve the College brand and be a good employer so did really want to achieve this. The Chair

added that there was a reputational risk in the area and it was hoped that this could be action by the end of this year. The Principal/CEO stated that not a huge proportion of staff needed to be aligned to the London Living Wage and this was already in place for apprenticeships.

The CTO referred to the monitoring data and employment law updates updating the Committee on the following:

- Increase in number of jobs advertised – switched systems had affected application data
- Performance objectives
- Staff development day moved to staff development week to ensure part-time staff were included
- Summary of employment legislation changes
- No detrimental impact from Brexit
- Age for National Living wage dropped to 23
- Gender Pay Gap published by first week in April
- IR35 – procedures in place
- Changes to working time directive and agency regulations are anticipated and being monitored.

The Chair referred to the figures for employee relations and questioned whether the disciplinary and capability proceedings were cross referenced in some way. The CTO replied that this was just the current position. Disciplinary measures had been tightened in some areas and the College had a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and harassment. The HR Team were working closely with managers regarding sickness absence.

In response to a query from the Chair, the CTO advised that three members of staff on long term sick had been carried over from the previous year but the figures in the report were a combination of new and existing issues. A more rigorous approach to short term persistent absence had caused numbers to increase.

The Vice-Chair referred to the teaching and learning triad discussed at the Performance & Standards Committee. The CTO advised that the focus was on improving the quality of delivery and improving peer learning. Staff were asked to observe and use a set framework to measure and provide constructive feedback.

The Chair thanked the CTO for the report.

**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

### **13. Health & Safety Report**

SB presented the Health & Safety (H&S) termly report informing the Committee that there was currently one FTE H&S specialist vacancy and an interim replacement was being sought. The following key points were discussed:

- H&S Committee meet termly
- Coronavirus – good work undertaken by the team and highlight letter received from the DfE
- Risk assessments
- H&S inspection process enhanced
- Health and wellbeing support
- Accident numbers – no RIDDOR
- Training – better take up from staff

In response to a query from the Chair, SB confirmed that schedules inspections by Zurich had continued to take place during Covid.

The Vice-Chair asked if any of the near miss incidents were significant. SB responded that the incidents had not been significant and the intention was to encourage staff to report near misses to enable measures to be put in place to prevent major incidents. The Chair suggested that near misses be included in future reports. This was agreed.

SB advised the Committee that the priorities were to keep going with the current position, improve inspections, continue working through near misses, improve compliance levels, increase training levels, introduce H&S champions and a big push on sustainability and recycling.

The Vice-Chair advised that he did not feel that sustainability issues were to the fore as they could be and asked whether the College should be doing more to highlight the measure in place. SB responded that actions were in place for sustainability and identified some of the work that had been undertaken. The College was actively sourcing members to join the H&S action group and was keen to ensure staff and learners were involved in the working group.

FA asked whether the H&S Sustainability action plan was a working document. SB confirmed that this was a working document and would form the basis of the action plan to decide priorities going forward.

The Chair thanked SB for an interesting and useful report and thanks were recorded to SB and the Estates team.

**Action: Accident near misses to be included in future Health & Safety reports.**  
**Agreed: That the current position be noted.**

**Any Other Business**

There was no further business.

**Date and time of next meeting – Monday 14 June 2021, 4pm**

The Chair thanked all those in attendance for their contributions and reports. The meeting concluded at 17.47pm.

Signed.....  
Evelyn Carpenter (Chair)

Date.....

**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
ACTIONS**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>By (deadline)</b>	<b>Update</b>
8.	Principal/CEO to discuss with CTO publishing testing data on the College website.	Principal/CEO	ASAP	
8.	The Principal/CEO to liaise with LBBB for the College data to join the school data in being reported to the Director of Public Health	Principal/CEO	ASAP	
10.	Infrastructure & Estates Strategy Group Terms of Reference to be reviewed and brought back to the Committee for consideration.	CFEO	June 2021	
13.	Accident near misses to be included in future Health & Safety reports.	DOFE/SB	June 2021	