

Present: Matthew Adams (Chair), Paul Cumming, Phil Douce, Sam Lifford, Ed Senior and Gill Slater.

In Attendance: Ruth Scotson (Deputy Principal)
Sallyanne Griffiths (Heart of Mercia Finance Director)
Jo Payne (PA to the Principal/Clerk to the Local Governing Body).

1. Apologies: Abi Stephenson and Cherry Yau.

2. Standing Items

- (i) There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.
- (ii) Those items referring to individual members of staff or students were identified as confidential.
- (iii) No urgent business was identified.

3. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the Finance & Resources committee: 12th February 2020

The minutes of the meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair. An update was received on the action points arising from the minutes and those action points outstanding are recorded below.

In response to the action points it was noted that:

- There were currently 17 staff on fixed term contracts;
- The Personnel Officer would investigate whether it was possible to compare equality monitoring data with regional and national benchmarks, but there had not been an opportunity to make progress with this given other priorities;
- Shortlisted candidates are not reported on in the equality monitoring data as the College states in the equality opportunities form that details will remain anonymous. This is separated from the application before applications are shortlisted, therefore, it is then not possible to identify those being shortlisted;
- The Health and Safety auditor confirmed that the reference to wellbeing in relation to an individual with responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing did not relate to staff and student wellbeing activities.
- The ESFA had confirmed that the intervention in relation to evening class English and Maths GCSEs was formally concluded with results last year exceeding the minimum targets.

The Committee **noted** the information provided. Gill Slater offered to speak with the Personnel Officer to discuss the arrangements for equality monitoring of shortlisted applicants.

4. Finance

(i) Teaching and Support Staff Pay Awards

The Principal presented his report and advised that the negotiations had been a protracted process in relation to the teachers' pay award. Despite the NEU advocating that members vote against the employers' pay offer, it was accepted. UNISON promptly followed suit and accepted the employers' offer in relation to the support staff pay award.

The teachers' pay increase for 2019-20 would, therefore, be a 1.5% increase with effect from 1st September 2019 and 1.25% increase with effect from 1st April 2020. The in-year cost of this increase is 2.02%. The support staff increase was three-fold with an increase of 1.5% from 1st September 2019, 1.25% from 1st April 2020 and a further 2.5% from 1st January 2021. This equated to an overall increase in pay costs of 2.03%.

As the MAT Board was ultimately responsible for approving the pay award, it was proposed that the Finance and Resources Committee would be the most appropriate to make a recommendation at local level on behalf of the Local Governing Body.

In response to questions the Finance Director advised that the forecast had planned for a full year increase of 2.75% and as the agreed pay awards were below this, they were affordable.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and **recommended that the pay awards be approved by the MAT Board** for teaching and support staff.

(ii) Finance Update including Financial Forecast

The Trust's Finance Director presented her report and advised that:

- The process for setting the budget was continual and started once student numbers were known. 93% of income came from the ESFA;
- Non-pay expenditure had been significantly cut in previous years;
- The overall estimated EBITDA position at the end of the three-year forecast was £374,000;
- Whilst the 2020-21 budget was solid, the following two years' were indicative and depending on a number of factors including student numbers and continuation of the additional funding streams. It was noted that if, for example, the employers' pension contribution funding was withdrawn this would have an impact of £500,000. It was difficult to see how institutions could recover from a loss of funding of that magnitude.

In response to questions, the Trust's Finance Director confirmed that:

- It was difficult to say whether a more sizable deficit in the third year would be covered by the MAT surplus as it was uncharted territory. The College would need to aim to continue to increase student numbers whilst managing staff and non-pay costs to reduce the deficit;
- The SFCA were continuing to lobby for funding streams to continue whilst emphasising the significant implications that any withdrawal would have on institutions across the country. The College's position was strengthened by being part of the MAT. There was time to make carefully planned decisions without the need for knee-jerk responses.

The Principal noted that the College was in a greatly improved position compared to 2017-18 due to efforts all across the College, an increase in student numbers and some improvements in funding e.g. the increase in the basic funding rate. It was difficult to know what impact the virus would have on recruitment particularly as over half of the College's students used public transport and may, therefore, decide to remain at their 11-18 high school. The Deputy Principal added that students who had applied during the closure would receive an interview by telephone. The College was proactive in responding to requests from high schools to produce bridging material

In response to questions about remote learning, the Principal advised that:

- It was a huge challenge educating this age group of students given the wide range of abilities;

- The amount of online teaching had been variable and the aim was to increase this by providing staff with the tools to assist with this e.g. IT resources or training. Staff had worked incredibly hard to support students.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and **agreed to recommend** the budget for 2020-21 and three-year forecast to the Local Governing Body for approval.

(ii) Income and Expenditure: April 2020

The Trust's Finance Director presented her report and advised that:

- The College was predicting a surplus of £221,000 against a deficit budget of £119,000;
- The update reflected the increase in LGPS employers' contributions from 17.5% to 20%. The deficit repayment was down considerably for both Worcester and Hereford Sixth Form Colleges from approximately £100,000 per year to £18,000;
- The ESFA had ceased unnecessary reporting such as the mid-year budget return and gender reporting. There was still a requirement to comply with the Academies Financial Handbook;
- Business schemes did not apply to academies, but each college could apply for a grant of up to £75,000 to cover necessary expenses to deal with the response to COVID-19. The finance team were compiling necessary information ready for a return;
- The payroll provider had continued to operate and all staff had been paid without issues;
- HoDs had not spent as much money usual. Any additional expenditure e.g. IT equipment, would be capitalised or transferred to the MAT.

The Principal advised that the cafeteria had lost income in the region of £100,000 as a consequence of closure and, as the College was not able to furlough staff, they had continued to be paid. With physical restrictions likely to continue into next academic year this would obviously mean a reduced cafeteria service.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked the Trust's Finance Director for joining the meeting.

(Sallyanne Griffiths left the meeting at 6.20pm).

5. Principal's Updates

(i) Response to COVID-19 and College closure

The Principal presented his report and highlighted the following:

- The College ordinarily updates its pandemic plan and this was adapted and updated for COVID-19. Planning was effective in the main although there were some difficulties in getting enough hand sanitiser;
- Managing the return of the students on the German exchange was stressful, although the member of staff leading the visit responded fantastically. Regular communication with parents was appreciated and the students returned safely;
- Communication was identified by parents as an area where the College could improve and it was important to maintain clear and transparent communication with parents in the run-up to and during closure both to establish trust and to retain a sense of College community;
- Given the significant concerns around the IT systems in the weeks preceding closure, actions taken to identify the issue and take appropriate actions had meant that the IT service had been consistent and without issues. New servers had been purchased with new cabling also aimed at making the system robust. Other equipment to support remote learning such as cameras had also been purchased;

- Responses to a parental survey about remote learning had been overwhelmingly positive, although there was a recognisable theme that online learning could be improved;
- The same survey suggested that parents were unaware of the pastoral support available to their son or daughter. Whilst it was unlikely that parents would be aware of the support until needed, nevertheless, this information was now also being shared with them;
- Work on Centre Assessment Grades had gone well and was supported by the new MIS Manager who had made an extremely positive start. It was anticipated that the Applied grades would be awarded in a similar way as A Levels and GCSEs although this had yet to be clarified. The deadline for submission of these grades had been delayed from 12th to 19th June. Whilst the College followed a robust procedure which had been documented in case of challenge, there would undoubtedly be students who were disappointed once grades were known.

In response to questions it was noted that the College was not allowed to discuss the process with students or their parents. The general approach was outlined, the government guidance stipulated that there could not be discussions about individual students.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Plans for Reopening

The Principal presented the plan for reopening and advised that:

- The plans had been shared with staff and it was intended that they would also be shared with parents and students;
- The College plans went beyond what was stipulated by the government guidance. For example, physical distancing of 2 metres would be enforced and classes limited to 6 students rather than split in half as recommended;
- Before the end of the year the current plan was for students to have one session for each of their subjects with the aim of reflecting on the forthcoming assessment, progress on remote learning and any issues encountered and preparing for next year;
- Whilst the College approach sacrifices some of the educational benefits that could have been achieved through more lessons, it was a plan that ensured the College could safely reopen;
- September would prove to be a major challenge if significant restrictions and the need to physically distance were still in place;
- The assessment week was already planned for the week commencing 1st June which provided additional time ahead of a planned reopening as early as 8th June;
- The College would discourage use of public transport and where this could not be avoided students must wear masks. It was, however, difficult to know whether any public transport to the College would operate before the summer break;

In response to questions the Principal advised that:

- Teaching staff were particularly anxious about returning. Discussions with individual staff members who have a NHS letter because they fall into the relevant category or where there were other concerns were taking place. Medical evidence was being requested;
- Whilst the College was sympathetic to staff with childcare issues, as key workers schools had a responsibility to admit their children. Where children were under school age it might not be possible for childcare arrangements to be in place this side of the summer even though childminders were allowed to return to work;
- Union members were instructed not to co-operate in terms of preparing for a return although there was a positive meeting with College union representatives earlier in the week;
- The approach of the MAT was that plans could vary between institution to account for local circumstances.

There was a consensus among governors on the Committee that the College's approach provided a good balance between the educational need and ensuring the safety of staff and students.

Whilst the Committee was minded to approve the plans for reopening, given the significance of this, **it was requested that the Clerk share the documentation with all governors and invite urgent comment of feedback by the end of the week**. This would enable plans to be finalised before communicating with parents and students.

(iii) Risk Assessment for Reopening

Governors' had the opportunity to scrutinise the risk assessment and raise any issues. It was noted that this was a working document which would be updated on an ongoing basis.

The Committee **noted** the risk assessment.

(iv) Review of Management Restructure

The Principal presented his report and noted that:

- The new management structure had been successful and effective although there were some minor improvements proposed;
- New senior leader and middle management training was planned for the summer term but had been paused during closure;
- Sally Johnson had been appointed as Senior Leader for Teaching and Learning after an application and interview process. Sally was a fantastic member of staff who would take on responsibility for staff development and high school liaison;
- Paul Morris, Head of English, Film and Media Studies, was retiring after a long and esteemed teaching career. It was hoped that Paul would continue to deliver some of the Ambition Programme content;
- Edd Franklin, Head of Science, had been greatly missed this academic year. Very sadly, his wife had recently passed away. The Science department would intentionally be overstaffed in the autumn term both to support Edd in his return and to provide additional support to students.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(v) Employment Matters

The Committee **received** the employment update and **noted** the information provided.

(vi) Property

The Principal presented his report and advised that work had begun to install a glass screen in the LRC. A stud wall had been removed and the area would be ventilated to create a soundproof silent study area. Work was also being undertaken to create office space for the new MIS team.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

6. Governance

(i) Update

The Clerk presented her report and outlined the following points:

- A recent letter from the FE Commissioner was included for information;
- The Committee were invited to reflect on the governance structure after having operated with the current structure for the first year after academisation;
- The Committee reviews its terms of reference and cycles of business annually and no changes were proposed.

There was some discussion about the governance structure and the role of sub-committees. There was a consensus that the sub-committee structure enabled a higher level of scrutiny with governors more focused on areas in which they had particular expertise. It was suggested that to reduce repetition at Local Governing Body meetings documents should be taken as read and focus given to the committee minutes for recommendations to be approved. It was felt that this would facilitate more time for the Local Governing Body to debate strategic issues.

Governors' reflected on the use of Teams as the trialling of meetings and sharing documents had been a success, the Clerk was asked to populate the relevant Teams area with information that was previously available on Govweb.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and agreed to **recommend**:

- That the current sub-committee structure be retained;
- The committee terms of reference, cycle of business and draft schedule of meetings for 2020-21 of reference for approval;

7. Policy Reviews

(i) Safeguarding Policy

The Clerk outlined the key changes that were proposed. Governors were asked to consider the proposed resolution which they were asked to recommend for approval. Whilst governors would continue to review the policy on an annual basis, SLT could agree changes to the policy in-year as required without the need to await approval.

The Committee **recommended** the proposed changes to the Local Governing Body for approval.

The Committee also **recommended** that governors' endorse the resolution to enable SLT to make changes to the policy in-year without governor approval.

(ii) Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

The Committee **approved** the proposed minor changes to the Policy.

(iii) Fees Policy

The Committee **approved** the proposed minor changes to the Policy.

8. Annual Reports

(i) Safeguarding

The Principal confirmed that arrangements were in place to replace the counsellors who were leaving College and that other ways of providing support such as group therapy and online support had been identified under the new counselling arrangements. He added that support for staff who were dealing with the most significant safeguarding issues was essential. Sean Devlin in his role as designated safeguarding governor had been extremely proactive particularly in ensuring the College's DSL had identified appropriate external support.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Staff Development

The Deputy Principal presented the report and outlined the types of training undertaken and how this related to the areas for improvement identified in the Quality and Development Plan. It was noted that as there would not be any results data generated this academic year, when inspections resume the focus would be on last year's results and actions taken to bring about improvement.

The Committee **noted** the contents of the report and the information provided.

(iii) Learning Support

The Committee **noted** the contents of the report and the information provided.

(iv) Disciplinary Report

The Deputy Principal presented the report and noted that:

- The way in which the information was collated had been updated to reflect the request of the Committee last academic year;
- Whilst the College's approach to drugs misuse had not changed, there was more consideration on an individual basis of contextual safeguarding;
- The College no longer issued fines and minor misdemeanours would result in a warning letter being issued.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- It was not felt that there had necessarily been more incidents and perhaps previous years had been under-reported;
- A full complement of senior leaders had assisted with dealing with all disciplinary matters;
- In previous years it was more likely that students likely to be excluded due to breaking an academic contract, for example, would be given the opportunity to withdraw rather than attend a disciplinary hearing where exclusion was a likely outcome. The Principal was keen that all students at risk of leaving College had the right of an appeal.

The Committee **noted** the contents of the report and the information provided.

9. **Health & Safety**

(i) Health & Safety Update and Accident Report

The Principal presented his report and referred to the audit recommendation action plan which had been updated.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

10. **Closing Standing Items**

(i) Risk Management

The Principal advised that the Risk Register and Assurance Map had been updated and outlined where there had been changes. He reported that:

- The risk of reduced operational effectiveness as a result of loss of key personnel was increased due to staff members who might not even be able to return in September due to being classed as clinically extremely vulnerable or similar. This could be mitigated by part-time staff increasing hours or recruiting additional staff to support subjects only taught by one staff member. It was felt that this was not always the best solution particularly in niche subjects;
- The virus also placed uncertainty as to whether the College would recruit its target number of students;
- Two bus services from Bewdley and Kidderminster had been permanently discontinued. Support of local MPs and councillors had been sought and urgent responses requested from the local authority and the bus company. It was added that there had been no consultation around this decision.

The Committee **noted** updated to the Risk Register.

(ii) Impact: The Committee agreed that scrutiny of the health and safety implications of reopening and the instruction to include all governors in the decision making process demonstrated impact.

(iii) Any Urgent Business: None.

(iv). Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 12th November 2020 (if the schedule of meetings is approved by the Local Governing Body).

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked the College team for their efforts at such a difficult time and the hard work that continued to go in to plans for safe reopening.

The meeting finished at 7.34 p.m.

Signed:.....
Matthew Adams (Chair)

Date:.....

FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 20TH MAY 2020

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
FRC/20.05.20/3	Discuss the arrangements for equality monitoring of shortlisted applicants with the Personnel Officer.	GS	12.11.20	
FRC/20.05.20/5(ii)	Circulate plans for reopening and risk assessment with governors on the Curriculum & Quality Committee with feedback to be requested by the end of the week.	JJP	ASAP	
FRC/20.05.20/6(i)	Populate the Governors Shared area of Teams.	JJP	June 2020	

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
FRC/12.02.20/3(i)	Check that adult students enrolled on Functional Skills have alternative arrangements in place to enrol on GCSE courses.	EYS	20.05.20	✓
FRC/12.02.20/4(i)	Share latest financial forecast as soon as it is available.	SAGR	ASAP	✓
FRC/12.02.20/5(i)	Confirm the number of staff on fixed term contracts.	EYS	20.05.20	
FRC/12.02.20/5(i)	Find out why equality monitoring of shortlisted candidates is not reported in the same way as applicants and those appointed.	EYS	20.05.20	
FRC/12.02.20/5(i)	Find out whether it is possible to compare equality monitoring data with national or regional comparators.	EYS	20.05.20	
FRC/12.02.20/7(i)	Circulate relevant minutes where cladding had been discussed.	JJP	ASAP	
FRC/12.02.20/8(i)	Confirm the definition of 'wellbeing' in relation to the recommendation for a named individual to have responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing.	EYS	ASAP	
FRC/12.02.20/8(i)	Add update column to health and safety audit to enable governors to monitor updates ahead of the next inspection.	JJP	04.03.20	
RC/20.03.19/4(i)	Confirm with the ESFA if Early Intervention in relation to 19+ GCSE Maths and English had been concluded.*	JJP*	27.11.19*	

* Denotes changes.