

Present: Matthew Adams, Paul Cumming, Phil Douce, Sam Lifford, Gill Slater, Ed Senior and Cherry Yau.

In Attendance: Ruth Scotson (Deputy Principal), Andrew Leyland (College/MAT Accountant) and Jo Payne (PA to the Principal/Clerk)

1. Apologies: Abi Stephenson.

2. Standing Items

- (i) Gill Slater declared that she attends the MAT Trust Board meetings as an observer.
- (ii) Details in relation to staff pay were identified as confidential to the Committee.
- (iii) No urgent items were declared.

3. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the Finances & Resources Committee: 11th November 2020

The minutes of the meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair in due course. An update was provided on the action points and the Principal advised that the identified need for regular restores was not as a consequence of deliberate or malicious deletion of data. The Committee were reminded that the Quality and Development Plan was now redundant and was superseded by the College Quality Improvement Plan and the Strategic Development Plan.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Public minutes of the Student Exclusion Appeal Panel: 12th November 2020

The Clerk presented the recommendations of the Student Exclusion Appeal Panel and each of these were discussed in turn. The Principal advised that the Student Code of Conduct was on the website and was brought to the attention of all students at the point of enrolment. This was then further discussion in an early tutorial session. The Principal explained that he had spoken with the Learning Support Manager who was wary of discussions with parents as this potentially resulted in students disclosing a learning need or disability being treated differently from other students. Parents were involved on a basis of need, for example, if the student had an EHCP. On reflection in relation to this particular student, they had enrolled late and concerns had been noted about their suitability for a place at College.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and **agreed** to make the following **recommendations** to the Local Governing Body:

- Student attention should continue to be drawn to the Code of Conduct;
- Where individual needs suggested that it would be of benefit, discussions about learning support arrangements would involve the parents.

4. Management & Strategic

(i) Principal's Update

The Principal presented his report and made the following points:

- The PA to the Principal had worked to refine the testing arrangements in relation to registering staff and students;

- A representative of the local authority visited to inspect the test centre and arrangements and commented that they were ‘text book’ and the best of a school or college that she had seen to date;
- Two exam invigilators had been appointment on a temporary casual contract to act as test processors and oversee quality assurance. Both had significant laboratory assistance which, whilst not required, was clearly of benefit;
- The Senior Leader for Student Wellbeing had done a fantastic job in ensuring appropriate support for students and their wellbeing. There had been a huge need for support from Heads of Year, tutors and teachers;
- E-safe software was installed on all College computers and any laptops loaned to students. Whilst the College would previously be alerted to attempts to access inappropriate sites, any statements typed that caused concern for a student’s wellbeing would generate an alert;
- 140 laptops had been issued by the government, the College had purchased 40 out of bursary funds and several were donated by the Worcester Lions;
- Clarity as to how final grades would be awarded was expected at the end of February further to an Ofqual consultation;
- Parental feedback was extremely positive and the initial response in relation to areas that parents were less satisfied with was shared for information.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- A questionnaire was sent to students at the start of the year to identify those who might have IT or internet issues. This was later specifically sent to students identified as disadvantaged. As well as laptops, other equipment had been purchased in response to potential digital poverty e.g. broadband boosters. There was still concern that not all students who required support with IT had alerted the College as it was still coming to light that students were using their phones to access remote learning rather than ask for help.

The Committee **noted** that information provided and thanked all the staff involved for their efforts.

(ii) COVID Recovery

The Clerk explained that the COVID recovery document focusing on finances and physical resources had been updated. This included noting the strength of recruitment this academic year in spite of concerns around the uncertainty of COVID. Applications for September 2021 were 220 up on the equivalent time last year although concerns remained about conversion of applications to enrolment as the year 11 cohort had been unable to attend an Open Event or a year 10 event last summer.

In response to questions it was noted that governors could arrange to join a remote lesson by liaising with the Clerk. The Committee **noted** the updates.

5. Finance

(i) Financial Update

The MAT/College Accountant presented the Heart of Mercia MAT finance reports for December. It was noted that:

- Funding income for the College was £260,000 above budget predominantly due to the bursary funding of £119,000 brought forward from the previous year;
- £43,000 of funding received in relation to COVID expenditure was not planned for in the budget;
- Pay costs were £235,000 above budget as a result of four FTE teaching staff. Non-pay expenditure was £101,000 over budget;
- Cafeteria profits were £106,000 below budget as a consequence of students not being at College, but the staffing costs still being incurred. The variance of the forecast and budget was on the assumption that students return in March and resume the same level of normal purchases;

- The forecast deficit was £224,000, however, the ESFA preferred measure of the EBITDA reversed depreciation and the College's forecast percentage was good;
- Approximately £200,000 needed to be invested this year on the IT network. This would be depreciated over 4 years resulting in a £50,000 depreciation charge this year and for the next three. This would affect the deficit amount but not the EBITDA;
- The College would receive in-year growth funding in excess of £50,000 as a result of recruiting 113 students more than the funded number;
- It was hoped to increase capitation budgets for departments at an extra cost of £30,000 which would be covered by the increased funding due to growth in student numbers.

In response to questions the MAT/College Accountant noted that:

- The central MAT staffing in IT and Finance was still included in the College's staff costs at present. The effect of this being amended would be £70,000 being charged to the Trust and removed from the College's staffing costs;
- The difference in non-teaching staff costs and administration/finance costs was due to the way this was coded. There was a net overspend of £37,000 across these areas;
- Exam fees would not be less expensive than usual given the overheads of the exam boards.

The Committee **noted** the information provided. The Principal explained that the extra staff costs this year related to the ½ block of support/enrichment for full-time teachers aimed at improving the student experience and outcomes and mitigating staff workload. Planning for next year was taking place to identify where extra staffing might be needed to respond to growth in numbers. There were some subjects where no growth was possible as groups were at their maximum, therefore, it was hoped to appoint staff who could teach more than one subject. The Deputy Principal that in subjects such as Criminology, even if numbers remained the same, due to the year 1 to year 2 rollover, the current staffing levels would be insufficient. The Principal was asked what the future of blended learning was. In response he commented that there was no substitute for face-to-face lessons and whilst there had been some successes with remote technology e.g. parents evening which might continue to be held remotely, it was hoped that students would return as soon as possible for classroom teaching.

6. Employment

(i) Personnel Update

The Principal presented the update report and noted the following:

- There was a significant increase in stress-related absence which was distorted by two members of staff absent for the entire year. Neither of these were primarily work-related – one resulted in ill-health retirement and the other due to bereavement with the member of staff returning to College, grateful for the support they received;
- Other absence was significantly lower than in the previous year perhaps as a result of the ability to work from home;
- There was an increase in the number of full-time staff as a result of full-time staff being appointed when part-time staff had left and some part-time staff increasing to full time. This had primarily benefitted female members of staff;
- The College's teaching staff profile was expensive with the majority of teachers at the top of the main scale and in receipt of additional off-scale payments. This was the result of low staff turnover and not recruiting additional staff members as a result of cuts to funding over the years;
- Consideration was being given to extending and promoting the support offered to newly qualified teachers with the intent of encouraging more to apply;
- No appointments had been made from minority ethnic groups and consideration was being given to support from the SFCA to review our arrangements for advertising positions etc.

It was commented that the pool of applicants was actually quite diverse, therefore, reviewing shortlisting processes might be more beneficial to consider where these applicants were being lost.

The Principal advised that he, the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the Trust CEO and Quality Assurance Director had sat on the selection panel for the Vice Principal post. Although held remotely, the process was rigorous and held over two days further to initial long-listing of the 30 applicants. The process involved tasks, a presentation to which the student governor was present, and an interview. The Trust CEO decided that two appointments could be made to the post with the MAT paying any additional costs in return for one of the appointments having MAT responsibility across the three colleges. This decision ensured fairness across the colleges with each having two Vice Principals.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and were pleased with the decision to make two senior appointments. The support of the MAT in this was noted.

(ii) Staff Wellbeing

The Committee **noted** the contents of the update on staff wellbeing.

7. **Property**

(i) Property Strategy

The Principal presented the property strategy and noted the following in relation to the short-term priorities:

- The renewal of the flat roof over ground floor office and tutorial rooms was being completed;
- Works to partially resurface the visitors' car park and installing cabling to install CCTV on the exit drive were also nearing completion;
- At half-term a shelter was being installed in the outdoor recreation area;
- Unfortunately the bid for a grant for the decarbonisation project was unsuccessful;
- It was the intention to install perimeter fencing next month as a measure to improve security and deter trespassers. Planting would also take place to improve the aesthetic look of the fence. Consideration was also being given to additional planting of trees and shrubs on the site;
- Discussions were ongoing with the Trust's CEO and Chief Finance Officer about the feasibility of additional external social space and whether instead, the investment in the IT network and infrastructure needed to be prioritised;
- A bid to the Wolfson Trust for a grant to refurbishment of the remaining science lab was also unsuccessful.

The Committee **noted** the update.

(ii) IT Update

The Committee **noted** the update report. In response to questions, the Principal advised that the College was better protected in relation to back ups in the event of disaster than it had been. The back-up was in a physically separate area of the building and plans were being developed with Hereford Sixth Form College for their data to be stored with us and for this to be reciprocated. Whilst there were still some weaknesses in the robustness of arrangements, steps were being taken.

8. **Policy Reviews**

(i) Fire Safety Policy

It was noted that only minor change was proposed to include the updated fire evacuation procedures. The Committee **approved** the policy as outlined.

(ii) Student Conduct Policy

The Clerk explained that the proposed changes related to the Student Exclusion Appeal Panel procedures and the inclusion of a statement that any postponed hearing must be held within one calendar month of the date of the original hearing. Any delay to appeal proceedings meant that the student was missing valuable learning and, the longer they were out of education, the more difficult it was to return should the appeal be upheld and the student permitted to return. The procedures were also revised to make specific reference to parent or carer rather than a representative. The Clerk noted that the Curriculum and Quality Committee decided that a replacement for the Independent Vice-Chair should be sought, therefore, this would remain in the panel procedures.

The Committee **agreed** that the proposed changes were sensible and **approved** the revisions to the policy.

(iii) Staff Protection from Harassment and Bullying Policy

It was noted that only minor change was proposed to make reference to the College's new Employment Assistance Programme provider. The Committee **approved** the policy as outlined.

(iv) Sustainability Policy

The Committee **approved** the policy with the minor changes as outlined.

9. Health & Safety

(i) Health & Safety Update and Accident Report

The Clerk presented the health and safety update report and the following points were noted:

- A fire drill was held in the autumn term further to confirmation that it remained an expectation of the ESFA that termly fire evacuations must take place irrespective of the COVID restrictions in place.

The Committee **noted** the contents of the report and the small number of accidents, predominantly as a result of students not having returned to College since December.

10. Closing Standing Items

(i) Risk Management:

The Principal reminded the Committee that the College was asked to adapt its risk register to take the format of that used by Hereford Sixth Form College. Due to the brief time frame in which this was required, the Principal was not satisfied that the controls, mitigations and assurances were as they should be. It was, therefore, the intention that the Principal and the Clerk, in discussion with relevant staff, would update the risk analysis and register with a view to this being shared in full with the Local Governing Body at its forthcoming meeting.

The Committee stated that they found the new format of the risk register to be less user friendly than the previous College version and noted that it was good practice for it to be clear how the probability and impact had been changed in any update of this. The Chair of the Local Governing Body agreed to feed back the comments of the Committee to the Trust Board.

- (ii) Impact: The committee noted that its scrutiny of COVID safety measures and arrangements for remote learning were to ensure the safety and success of the student body.

(iii) Any Urgent Business: No additional urgent business was identified.

(iv). Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 26th May 2021

The meeting finished at 6.43pm

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

Date:.....

FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 10th FEBRUARY 2021

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
FRC/10.02.21/10(i)	Feedback Committee comments in relation to risk register and user friendliness of this documentation.	GS	March 2021	

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD

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	

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
FRC/11.11.20/5(ii)	Confirm that need for regular restores not the result of deliberate or malicious deletion of data.	EYS	10.02.21	✓
FRC/11.11.20/6(iii)	Align headings of the Quality and Development Plan to ensure consistency with the Strategic Development Plan.	EYS/JJP	10.02.21	✓

* Denotes changes.