

Present: Matthew Adams, James Adnett, Chantal Pottage, Sam Wilson and Ed Senior.

In Attendance: Jo Payne (Clerk to the Local Governing Body)

1. Apologies: Tom Gregory, Jane Jenkins (Vice Principal) and Andrew Leyland (MAT/College Accountant)

2. Standing Items

- (i) There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.
- (ii) No items were identified as confidential to the Committee.
- (iii) No urgent items were declared.

3. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the Finances & Resources Committee: 13th November 2024

The minutes of the meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair. In relation to the action points, it was noted that the College does have separate guest Wi-Fi but this is set up on an adhoc basis for particular events after which the password is changed. The Committee noted the information provided.

4. Finance

(i) Financial Update

The Principal presented the December 2024 update produced by the Trust in the absence of the MAT/College Accountant, and provided the following commentary:

- The College is changing its cashless catering system to a cheaper alternative with fewer hardware requirements and reduced security vulnerabilities;
- Cafeteria prices were increased to offset an increase in staffing costs;
- The College is in danger of spending beyond what is given by way of bursary funding. The extent of this is dependent on how much transport costs increase. To ensure that students eligible for financial support still receive a £5 daily allowance which enables them to purchase breakfast and lunch, the College will no longer pay the meal allowance during College holidays;
- Approximately £165,000 of IT spend will be brought forward into the current academic year. This will help in relation to a challenging financial picture for next year as well as enabling the College's computers to be compatible with Windows 11 which is a condition of funding;
- The current EBITDA of £554,000 takes account of the 5.5% pay award and will still be significantly positive even after the brought forward IT spend;
- The small growth in student numbers this year providing only a small increase in funding next year combined with the efficiency of timetabling this year, means that even a small increase in student numbers next year were mean more groups. It is currently estimated that five additional teachers will be needed;
- If the loan for phase 1 of the science centre could be paid off, that would mean saving £55,000 per year.

In response to governor scrutiny, it was noted that typically the College works on the basis of 24 students in a group before another would be put on. There was an increase in the average class size this academic year which again reflects the efficiency of the timetabling.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

5. **Management and Strategic**

(i) Principal's Update Report

The Principal presented his update report and noted the following points:

- In light of the most recent data, it is predicted that there will be a significant increase in the county demographic, with all things being equal, will result in the College benefitting from some of that increase. Given the higher in-year retention so far this year, it seems likely that there will be improved rollover into year 2. If similar numbers are enrolled this would result in a larger student body and based on similar assumptions going forward, the revised forecast student number for 2028/29 is 1989;
- Although the teaching unions have not settled the pay negotiations, they have agreed to 5.5% for teachers in 16-19 academies and 3.5% for teachers in independent sixth form colleges (increasing to 5.5% from April) being implemented and backdated to September. In relation to support staff pay, UNISON have agreed to put the employers offer of 5.5% (6.7% at the bottom pay points) to their members. The increase at the bottom end of the pay scales will ensure that pay remains above the new national living wage. The 5.5% pay award for support staff mitigates concerns about pay differentials for those with additional responsibilities and those without;
- A new duty came into force in October which requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees. The College conducted a survey of staff and two colleagues said they had experienced historical, verbal sexual harassment at College but one, who was willing to come forward, felt that current recording of low level concerns mitigated against this. The College has completed a risk assessment and identified actions that look to mitigate any risk to an acceptable level;
- The College has formed two working groups, one to consider the College calendar and another to review teaching staff administrative tasks, both with a view to responding to concerns that staff workload isn't considered.

In response to challenge, it was noted that the College used the guidance from the EHRC upon which to base its risk assessment. There was also discussion around the seriousness with which verbal as well as physical forms of harassment should be viewed and the liability that exists in this respect. The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Strategic Update

The Principal presented the Strategic Update and noted both what the College had been able to achieve through being in a strong financial position. The current challenges were referred to, most of which will be discussed at other points of the agenda in relation to facilities and pay etc.

The Committee received the Strategic Update and **noted** its contents.

(iii) Prevent Risk Assessment

The Principal presented the updated Prevent Risk Assessment and raised the following points:

- The Safeguarding Officer attended a meeting with the West Midlands Prevent Lead who advised that Worcester was currently flagged as red for the risk of both Islamic and right-wing terrorism. This has been incorporated into the updated risk assessment;
- The College continues to engage with the Worcester City Council Speak Up initiative which encourages challenge of inappropriate language and behaviour.

In response to challenge the following was noted:

- No other or specific risks have been shared with the College and this has been the case over the years;
- The College continues to use Smoothwall for the monitoring of user activity on College devices.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

6. Estates

The Principal presented the updated Estates Strategy action plan and priority options document and noted the following:

- The College is 50 toilets short of what it should have for the number of staff and students. At a meeting with the MAT earlier in the day, there was an opportunity to outline proposals for how to address this and other priorities and how this would be funded i.e. using the SCA allowance after top slicing and what Trust investment would be required;
- Renovating classrooms into toilets creates another issue around capacity as the student number grows and, therefore, new classroom space would be required;
- This summer, SCA would be used to complete stage 2 of the fire safety improvement work and the refurbishment of cupboard space into 4 toilet cubicles. The intention would be to use next year's SCA to convert one classroom into toilets and, hopefully, to be able to evidence further growth in numbers to put forward a case for the need to create additional classroom space;
- Medium to longer term plans for SCA would be to address the issues in relation to the kitchen and servery and an outline of this was provided.

In response to challenge it was noted that:

- There are more female than male cubicles which is reflective of the gender split of the student body;
- The next stage of the process following the meeting with the MAT is to receive a condition and decarbonisation survey which would be followed by discussions of what needed to be prioritised.

The Committee **noted** the updated Estates Strategy action plan and were supportive of the options being considered to address areas of priority concern.

7. Policy Reviews

(i) Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy

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

(ii) Fire Safety Policy

The Committee noted the update to the Fire Safety Policy to make reference to the role of the Radiation Protection Supervisor and **approved** the policy with the changes as outlined.

(iii) Student Conduct Policy

The proposed changes to the policy related to clarity around sharing of documentation pertaining to disciplinary meetings. A minor change to the section on search was also proposed. The Committee **approved** the policy with the changes as outlined.

(iv) Young Persons at Work Policy

The College had not previously had need for such a policy, but with the appointment of an apprentice under the age of 18, it was now felt to be sensible to implement this policy which makes clear that a risk assessment should be undertaken to mitigate against the risk of a young person being friends with current students or from a possible increased risk of harassment or bullying. The Committee **approved** the introduction of the Young Persons at Work Policy.

8. Health and Safety

The latest health and safety update was provided and the following was noted:

- The College conducted an internal lockdown drill using the sounding of an intermittent bell and an electronic notification to raise the alarm. The process worked well and enabled the College to identify rooms with Paxton locks, but without thumb locks;
- The Trust is looking to appoint a Compliance and General Administrator for Health and Safety, Estates and Sustainability. The appointed person will work with the Trust's academies to monitor and assist with compliance with statutory obligations, accident reporting etc;
- The latest accident data and comparisons was reviewed.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

9. Closing Standing Items

(i) Risk Management

The Principal provided an update on relevant risks where the score had been increased or a new risk identified. There was some discussion in relation to student concerns about car park safety and whether preventing parents from coming onsite or perhaps considering opening the back gate for pedestrians at key times might help to address these concerns.

(ii) Impact: The Committee noted its scrutiny of the lack of student toilets, the response to preventing sexual harassment and road safety as looking to positively impact the quality of student experience at College.

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

(iv) Date of Next Meeting: Consultation to take place on an alternative to Wednesday, 21st May 2025 given the apologies already received.

The meeting finished at 6.48pm

Signed:.....

Matthew Adams (Chair)

Date:.....

FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2025

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
N/A				

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
FRC/13.11.24/6(iii)	Consider a separate Wi-Fi account for guest devices.	CR	February 2025	✓