

**Present:** James Adnett, Tom Gregory, Chantal Pottage, Ed Senior and Sam Wilson.

**In Attendance:** Jane Jenkins (Vice Principal), Carl Rusby (Senior Leader for ILT, MIS & Enrichment), Andrew Leyland (College/MAT Accountant) and Jo Payne (Clerk to the Local Governing Body)

**1. Appointment of Chair:** Sam Wilson was unanimously appointed as Chair of the Committee for the academic year.

**2. Apologies:** Matthew Adams.

**3. 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.

**4. Minutes**

(i) Minutes of the Finances & Resources Committee: 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025

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 Principal raised the issue of HSFC subsidising train travel from Worcester and it had been agreed that this practice would stop. However, as it turns out this is not as easy to do as the college relies on Herefordshire County Council to issue travel passes to all students who apply for travel rather than this being administered directly by the college. They offered to provide financial reimbursement for the three students they could identify as having travelled by train to the College, but the main reason for the College's objection was around the message it sent to potential students and also staff about the College being seen less favourably than HSFC by the Trust. HSFC have, however, agreed not to advertise this on their website.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

**5. Finance**

(i) Financial Update

The College/MAT Accountant provided the following commentary:

- The 2024-25 year ended with a strong financial meaning that the College was able to repay the loan for phase 1 of the Science Centre whilst maintaining reserves of £770,000;
- The 2025-26 bursary forecast drafted last year suggested that the College would finish 2025-26 with a small surplus of £0-£10,000. In subsequent years, however, leaders will need to consider whether to restrict levels of provision or partially finance provision from general reserves, as reserves have been being wound down for the last few years. Free and discretionary meals numbers are slightly down on last year yet ravel provision is consistent with the previous year;
- In the first two months of 2025-26, income generated by the Cafeteria of £104,400 is consistent with the previous year, but suggests slightly reduced activity given price increases this year;

- In 2024-25 the Cafeteria staffing costs increased by £13.7%, due to the recruitment of additional staff, a support staff pay award of 5.5%, and minimum-wage increases over and above the pay award;
- The current year's budgeted EBITDA is £381,000 which compares favourably to the other sixth form colleges in the Trust where their budgeted income is larger due to greater student numbers;
- The SCA grant year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. Phase 2 of the fire safety improvement works falls within this grant year. As the cost of completed works exceeded the £397,000 allocated to the College after the 50% MAT top-slicing, the Trust committed to the use of central SCA funds to support the works. In the 2026-27 SCA grant year, it is expected that the College will be the same as in the previous year.

In response to governor scrutiny, the following points were noted:

- The threshold for financial support for transport is household income of £35,000. This is the same as last year and only changes to reflect any changes in the awarding thresholds for Universal Credit;
- The College receives approximately £240,000 of income for student financial support with an expenditure of £300,000, hence previous monies brought forward have been used to support students. The Principal said that there would be a moral and financial case to subsidise financial support for students if government funding was insufficient to meet demand. Governors requested that bursary forecasts be completed earlier and in time to feedback to governors in their spring term meeting so that consideration can be given to ensuring that student needs can be met;
- Various options are being considered in relation to the Cafeteria both to improve student experience and to help Cafeteria colleagues. One is an outdoor kiosk. This is a concern for the Catering Manager in that additional staffing costs would impact their financial outturn, however, if this improved students experience, it might be something the College decides to do regardless;
- The Trust top-slice of SCA monies was expected to remain at 50%. It would be as late as March before the College finds out how much money it will receive;

The Committee **noted** the information provided and tasked the College/MAT Accountant with challenging the identified inaccuracies in the Trust produced update for September 2025.

(ii) Student Union Accounts

The Committee **reviewed** the accounts and **recommended** the Student Union accounts for approval.

**6. Management and Strategic**

(i) Principal's Update Report

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

- A College investigation into the recent assault on Spetchley Road has concluded that the assailant is not or never has been a student at College and that it was instigated following an earlier minor altercation in College involving his sibling and the victim which certainly did not warrant the level of violence that later took place. The Police have yet to interview the victims nor speak to the alleged assailant and witnesses for whom the College has shared details. Local PCSO's have visited College regularly, aimed to be more of a presence locally and apologise on behalf of their colleagues. College disciplinary procedures have been followed with formal sanction issued to two students who it is believed knew the assault was going to happen and a safety plan in place relating to the assailant's sibling;
- The slight increase in student numbers is pleasing, and DfE data on 16-19 funding allocations indicates that the College continues to educate over one-fifth of those in post-16 education in the county. One of the local high schools with a sixth form has seen their sixth form numbers increase by a quarter which is disappointing given their extremely poor post-16 outcomes;

- The solution to a lack of high school places in Worcester seems unlikely to be the building of a new school and will involve pupils having to travel to Malvern. It is unfortunate that the Chantry School seem unwilling to engage with this process and the investment the Council would likely make to improve their infrastructure given that their students are most likely to progress to one of the sixth form colleges in the Trust;
- The Estates Strategy has been updated in terms of current priorities. The MAT have identified a consultant and architects to undertake a master-planning exercise aimed at enabling decision makers to better prioritise MAT funds to prioritise growth and site development. It is hoped to use this as the basis of a bid for Government post-16 capacity funding of £375 million nationally. It is likely that the College's bid will be for an infill classroom block creating a net of 4 new classrooms and 32 toilet cubicles and a multi-purpose space;
- The pay award of 4% has been implemented for support staff and has now been agreed by teaching unions and will be implemented in November pay. The unions and employers have not been able to agree on issues relating to workload and negotiations in this respect will be ongoing;
- The Trust AI Policy has been drafted, but the College is unclear on the plans for implementation. Essentially, only Co-Pilot will be permitted for use on College devices and all other AI applications will be banned. The Trust has invested in 100 ChatGBT+ licences to be allocated to selected employees.

In response to challenge, it was noted that:

- The College does not have Co-Pilot Champions nor adopted a 'train the trainer' approach but there has been recent training offered for teachers and support staff and CPD in this area would be ongoing. A Technology Adoption Group involving staff from across the Trust meets with discuss DPIA's for existing and new apps with AI capabilities. Tom Gregory offered to conduct a link visit if this would be helpful.

The Committee **noted** the update and asked that a letter be drafted on behalf of Governors to the Worcester MP in relation to the inadequate response of the Police following the violent assault on College students.

(ii) HR Update

The Principal presented the HR update and the following points were highlighted:

- The teaching staff FTE has increased by 1.5 and support staff FTE by 6;
- Levels of staff absence last year were high compared to other colleges in the MAT. In relation to teaching staff absence, fewer were absent, but those that were, were absent for longer. There were also a small number of staff with lengthy long-term absence;
- Comments from staff leavers were largely positive with a hint of workload issues more related to teaching than teaching at the College;
- A new HR system will be introduced in the New Year.

In response to challenge, it was noted that:

- A number of the staff absences cited work-related stress, but it was felt that this was linked to performance management and capability processes;
- Whilst access to the outgoing HR system had ceased and the new system would not be introduced until January, staff were able to access their payslips via the Liberata platform.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Cyber Security Report

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented his report on cyber security and raised the following points:

- Data suggests that FE/HE institutions are soft targets for cyber attacks more so than UK businesses;
- The College has taken significant steps including the installation of Windows 11 on all College machines, multi-factor authentication on everything including switch gear.

In response to challenge, it was noted that:

- The last JISC audit was Christmas 2024 and the last internal penetration test conducted in February 2025. The Trust's new audit partner are not scheduled to review IT until the 2026-27 academic year.

The Committee **noted** the update and **requested** that their concern be raised about the lack of plans to conduct penetration testing, in particular, given that there had been so many changes to the firewall etc.

(iii) Filtering and Monitoring

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented his report and advised that students are using VPNs more on their phones which the College is blocking, forcing them onto the College Wi-Fi or to use their data.

In response to challenge the following was noted:

- Students are not necessarily subject to disciplinary action if they try to access blocked sites. Their service is denied and they would be spoken to and, if they had been accessing inappropriate sites which would constitute a breach of the student code of conduct, disciplinary processes followed.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(iv) DfE Technology Standards and Action Plan

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment advised that the completion of the DfE Technology Standards was an annual exercise which requires the uploading of Trust and College policies but which is somewhat flawed. In response to concern raised by the actions identified in the action plan, it was confirmed that the Trust does have an IT Business Continuity Plan. The Committee **noted** the information provided.

## 7. Annual Reports

(i) Equality Annual Report 2024-25

The Principal presented the Equality Annual Report as prepared by the Raising Standards Lead for Equality. It was noted that the RSL works with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer and the Student Union to collaborate in putting on activities for students. Given the references throughout the report to equality being embedded within the curriculum, consideration is being given to the line management of this role and this possibly being the new Senior Leader for SEND which is being advertised. The Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

(ii) Exams Report

The Principal presented the Exams Report as prepared by the Exams Manager and commented on the excellent job she does in managing such a large number of entries and access arrangements. In 2024-25 there were 554 students with some form of access arrangement compared to 330 in the previous year. The Committee **noted** the contents of the Exams Report.

(iii) Digital Strategy Policy

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented the updates to the Digital Strategy Policy noting the inclusion reference to AI and the trialling of some marking software which the Trust has invested in.

The Committee **approved** the revised Digital Strategy Policy as outlined. The Committee was reassured of the teacher oversight that would remain in place in relation to the marking software and noted the benefits of students perhaps being asked to do more work if teachers were not having to mark everything.

**8. Health & Safety**

(i) Health & Safety Update and Accident Report

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

- Both a fire evacuation and lockdown drill have been successfully completed this term. In relation to the fire drill, there was a parental concern that her son, who has mobility issues and who was escorted to a refuge point, was not then evacuated. It was noted that the Evac-Chair would only be used when there was no alternative, e.g. someone was unconscious in the event of a real fire, given the risk of injury that this created. Feedback about the audibility of the fire bell and lockdown signal has been reported to the Estates Manager;
- The College has completed a health and safety action plan following a proforma requested by the Trust;
- Latest accident data does not suggest any particular concerns or trends.

The contents of the report was **noted**.

(ii) Educational Visits Co-ordinator Report

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented his report on Educational Visits and noted that the number of trips had once again increased and this had included more trips abroad including to Japan and Bali. The increasing number of opportunities for students to visit HE institutions was also noted. The Committee **noted** the EVC report. The Principal updated the Committee on the issue when Geologists visited the Isle of Arran and a teacher was cautioned for not having the appropriate licence (D1) to drive the minibus (minibus lite). Following consultation with the Scottish Transport Police after the College had purchased a flight and accommodation for a staff member to support the group on their return visit, the caution was lifted.

**9. Closing Standing Items**

- (i) Risk Management: The Clerk advised that further to governor feedback, whilst she would continue to update the risk register on the Trust's Portal, this would be duplicated in the format preferred by governors with the addition of a comments column to make clear which risks had been updated and the reason for any rescoreing.
- (ii) Impact: The Committee noted its scrutiny of student both physical and online safety, IT systems and also student bursary and financial support.
- (iii) Any Urgent Business: No urgent business was identified.
- (iv). Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026

The meeting finished at 7.28pm

Signed:.....

Sam Wilson (Chair)

Date:.....

**FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2025**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>
F&R/12.11.25/5(i)	Bursary forecasts be completed earlier and feedback provided to ensure that student needs can be met.	EYS/APL	February 2026	
F&R/12.11.25/6(i)	Write to Worcester MP on behalf of Governors in relation to lack of Police action.	JJP	ASAP	
F&R/12.11.25/6(ii)	Feedback concern in relation to lack of plans to conduct penetration testing.	EYS	ASAP	

**ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>

**ACTION POINTS COMPLETED**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>
F&R/12.05.25/5(i)	Request clarification from the Trust around its decision making criteria, process and the indicative timescales re the allocation of central SCA funds.	EYS/JJP	ASAP	✓
F&R/12.05.25/5(i)	Raise governors' concerns about the use of Trust funds to subsidise travel from Worcester to HSFC/KEDST.	JJP	ASAP	✓