

PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 16 NOVEMBER 2023

15:00 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Sue Cook; Alex Killick (Chair); Ross Laird; Gwen Raez; Nora Senior

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Sue Clyne; Audrey Cumberland; Ian Deed; Mike Jeffrey; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

Observer: Jan Juillerat (Advance HE)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Ian McLaughlan and Luna Morrison.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Jan Juillerat (Lead Reviewer, Advance HE) to the meeting as an observer. The Chair advised the Committee that Advance HE were undertaking committee observations as part of an Effectiveness Review of Edinburgh College Board of Management, conducted in line with the requirements of the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's College.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 No declarations of interested were noted.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The Committee APPROVED the minutes from 31 August 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT

4.1 Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda, with the exception for the following:

4.2 *SFC FUNDING MODEL [REF. MINUTE 7.6/31.08.23]*

The Committee NOTED that the Chair of the Board, the Principal, and the Chief Operating Officer remained engaged in discussions with the SFC regarding changes to the extant funding model. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that due to the complexity of the sector wide SFC funding model, and

its impact on other colleges, movement towards a more equitable model would remain a long-term goal for the College.

5. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Principal on developments across both the College and the wider college sector since its last meeting on 31 August 2023.
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that EIS Headquarters had confirmed, on 23 October 2023, that a statutory ballot on local industrial action had been cancelled following the EIS-FELA Branch resolving its dispute with the College. The Principal advised the Committee that this was a positive outcome for both staff and students, however, the impact of industrial action over recent months continued to be felt by a significant number of students.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that Action Short of Strike (ASOS) had ended on 14 October 2023, with all lecturing staff returning to full duties. The Principal informed the Committee that following significant efforts by staff there were currently no outstanding 2022/23 results on the College system.
- 5.4 The Committee NOTED that a key priority for the College was its culture, as it underpinned the delivery of its strategic ambitions - along with the successful delivery of the People Strategy. The Principal advised the Committee that work with Hive HR, an external specialist supporting the delivery of a Staff Engagement Survey, was progressing well with several engagement sessions recently completed with managers and staff groups across the College - to help develop the survey and engage staff with the process.
- 5.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the following relating to both industrial relations and College culture:
 - i. The opportunity for enhanced engagement with the People & Culture priority provided by a reset in local industrial relations.
 - ii. An upcoming EIS-FELA ballot on ASOS, its potential impact on students, and the response of the college sector.
 - iii. The future position of the Board of Management depending on the outcome of an ASOS ballot.
 - iv. The work currently underway to finalise the Staff Engagement Survey questions and a timeline for their implementation.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED an update on 2022/23 National Bargaining and the Support Staff Job Evaluation Process. The Principal informed the Committee that a further update on local and national industrial relations would be presented to the Board of Management on 12 December 2023.
- 5.7 The Committee NOTED that, on 31 October 2023, the Principal and the Vice Principal Corporate Development had hosted a visit from three deputy directors in at Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning & Skills Directorate. The Principal advised the Committee that the visit focussed on the vital partnerships the College had with industry, potential alternative income, and the Digital Healthcare Hub. The Committee NOTED that the Principal had also directly raised concerns with

the deputy directors that the Cabinet were exclusively focused on schools and would be formally writing to the Cabinet Secretary to highlight this matter.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

- 6.1 The Committee NOTED the Human Resources Report that included updates on employee relations, HR operations, staff wellbeing, Health & Safety, and organisational development since its last meeting on 31 August 2023.
- 6.2 The Committee NOTED that average staff headcount had reduced by 11.1% during the academic year 2022/23, in response to the most recent round of voluntary severance and the implementation of a recruitment freeze from January to June 2023. The Director of HR & OD highlighted to the Committee that over the past 5 years headcount at the College had reduced by 13.7%.
- 6.3 The Committee NOTED that the overall turnover of College staff increased by 20.2% in the academic year 2022/23, the highest level since 2017/18. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee that voluntary turnover had decreased to 7.3% in 2022/23, due to a slowdown in what had been a buoyant recruitment market across the region.
- 6.4 The Committee NOTED that the percentage of time lost due to sickness absence in 2022/23 had risen by 1.6% to 4.7%, which was a five-year high. The Director of HR & OD informed the Committee that in comparison the national UK labour market benchmarked average stood at 2.6% in 2022, the highest level since 2004.
- 6.5 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider the range of employment data provided by the Director of HR & OD, and DISCUSSED the following:
 - i. The College's strategy to meet the demands of changing regional and staff demographics.
 - ii. Staff absences due to anxiety, stress, and depression and the College's development of a new Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
 - iii. The low conversion rate of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority applicants through the job application process - from application through to employment - and newly introduced HR policy to guarantee all Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority applicants meeting the essential role criteria an interview.
- 6.6 The Committee NOTED that the Board of Management had recently held an AI Strategy Session on 1 November 2023. The Committee DISCUSSED the utilisation of AI technologies to support staff and enhance students' learning experience.

The Director of HR & OD left the meeting

7. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & CREDITS DASHBOARD

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of the performance of the College against its 2023/24 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the

Committee that the SFC had set the College a total activity target of 164,857 credits for the academic year.

- 7.2 The Committee NOTED that the credit position of the College, as of 1 November 2023, was 149,402 The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that, based on known credit activity for Semester 2, the College currently expected to meet at least 98% of its credit target and avoid any financial clawback.
- 7.3 The Committee NOTED that the Assistant Principals Curriculum were working with Heads of School and Curriculum Team Mangers to ensure credit claims were maximised for all students. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that following the departure of an Assistant Principal Curriculum (Hospitality, Tourism and Business), the Executive Team were currently considering interim changes to line management responsibilities for the remaining three Assistant Principals Curriculum. The Committee NOTED that a further update on this matter would be provided to the Board of Management on 12 December 2023.
- 7.4 The Committee NOTED an overview of Recruitment and Enrolment Data for the academic year 2023/24, and DISCUSSED the following:
- i. The loss of students between their enrolment and start dates, and the work done by the College to keep incoming students 'warm'.
 - ii. Current best practice to keep students engaged with the College prior to the start of semester.
 - iii. The potential for a communication and engagement strategy around the student experience.
 - iv. Current reporting on apprenticeships through the Board's Corporate Development Committee.
- 7.5 The Committee AGREED that the Recruitment, Retention and Credits Dashboard should include apprenticeships data, in order to allow Members to understand the alignment between the curriculum and economic drivers.

8. FINANCE REPORT

8.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO SEPTEMBER 2023

- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED the Month 2 financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to September 2023.
- 8.1.2 The Committee NOTED that, driven by recent staff vacancy churn, the year-to-date Adjusted Operating Position (AOP) was £154k favourable to the Budget. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure informed the Committee that the financial year forecast AOP was inline with the College Budget and no significant risks or opportunities had been identified during the Month 2 period.

- 8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to the Management Accounts to September 2023:
- i. The current cash position, which mainly consisted of allocated funds - including the backdated pay award settlement and student support funds.
 - ii. Monthly cashflow reporting to the SFC and the 'pinch-points' experienced during the academic year.
 - iii. The limited headroom available to the College for investment in future-proofing activities.
 - iv. The development of a strategic investment fund to help the College enhance innovative and responsive approaches to external drivers.
- 8.1.4 The Committee AGREED that the potential development of a strategic investment fund should be considered further at its next meeting.
- 8.2 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO 31 JULY 2022 UPDATE
- 8.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements to 31 July 2023. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure advised the Committee that a draft of the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements would be presented to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 22 November 2023, prior to a final draft being recommended to the Board of Management on 12 December 2023 - for approval.
- 8.3 EDINBURGH COLLEGE ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT 2022/23
- 8.3.1 The Committee NOTED an Annual Procurement Report (APR) for the period from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that it was a Scottish Government requirement that the APR was signed off by the Executive and published on the College website.
- 8.3.2 The Committee NOTED that the College was a full member of the Edinburgh Regional Procurement Team, along with Edinburgh Napier University, which was established by APUC and member institutions to share procurement services. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that this approach provided an effective mechanism for the College to seek assurance around procurement regulations.
- 8.3.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the 2022/23 APR and the College's commitment to providing social value through its procurement activities. The Committee AGREED to endorse the Report for sign-off by the Executive and publication on the College website.
- 8.4 TUITION FEES PROPOSAL 2024/25
- 8.4.1 The Committee NOTED a proposal for the 2024/25 tuition fees, as endorsed by the Executive. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure

advised the Committee that the College proposed a 5% increase to part-time and scheduled course fees, as well as higher fees, following a market review against other colleges and local universities.

- 8.4.2 The Committee NOTED that full-time international fees had increased in 2023/24 for the first time in several years. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure informed the Committee that based on increased demand, the International Team recommended a 5% increase in fees for 2024/25.
- 8.4.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following with regards to the proposed tuition fee increase:
- i. The process of consultation with regards to the impact of fee increases on current and prospective students.
 - ii. The stance of the College towards waiving fees for SIMD10¹ students, leaving such students unaffected by tuition fee increases.
 - iii. The rationale behind blanket tuition fee increases across all part-time and scheduled courses.
- 8.4.4 The Committee APPROVED the implementation of the proposed 2024/24 tuition fee increases.

9. ESTATES & DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on ongoing Estates & Infrastructure Projects at the College as of 16 November 2023.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED that work continued on the relocation of Forthside learning, teaching and assessment facilities to the main Granton Campus. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure informed the Committee that the SFC had confirmed, in October 2023, that the College had been successful in its application for capital support funding to support the relocation of curriculum activities.
- 9.3 The Committee NOTED that the Budget for the relocation project was £900k, with £478k funded by the SFC grant and the remaining £422k coming via the main capital budget for the College.

10. HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a quarterly Health & Safety Report outlining activity over August, September, and October 2023. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that there had been no RIDDOR Reports made to the Health & Safety Executive during the period.
- 10.2 The Committee welcomed the Health & Safety Report provided and DISCUSSED the reporting of incidents related to mental health. The Chief Operating Officer

¹ [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#) is an area-based measure of relative deprivation.

reassured the Committee that mental health first aid training and absence statistics were considered in detail by the College's Health & Safety Committee.

Ross Laird left the meeting.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 None.

12. FOR INFORMATION

12.1 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2023/24

12.3.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the 2023/24 academic year.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee will take place on 29 February 2024.

Meeting closed at 17:00