

PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 29 FEBRUARY 2024

15:00 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Alex Killick (Chair); Ross Laird; Ian McLaughlan; Luna Morrison; Gwen Raez; Nora Senior

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

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Sue Cook.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Luna Morrison, ECSA Vice President (Welfare), to her first meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee as a Member.

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 16 November 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT

- 4.1 The Committee NOTED that actions arising from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

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 16 November 2023. The Principal advised the Committee that the Scottish Government's Draft Budget for 2024/25, announced on 19 December 2023, had outlined unprecedented financial pressures for Scotland's colleges – including the removal of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF).

- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that both the Scottish Government and the SFC recognised the need for a sustainable and impactful college sector, however, it remained unclear what form (if any) changes to skills planning / delivery and the funding model would take. The Principal advised the Committee that, at present, there were no clear transitional plans or available funds to support long-term sustainable change within the college sector or beyond.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that the Principal had written to the SFC to reiterate the disparity of credit funding for Edinburgh College. The Principal informed the Committee that although a response had been received, no change to the status quo being considered. The Committee NOTED that the Chair and the Principal would continue to raise this matter with both the SFC and the Scottish Government.
- 5.4 The Committee NOTED that a key priority for the College was its culture, as it underpinned the delivery of our strategic ambitions along with the successful delivery of the People Strategy. The Principal highlighted that the College's staff survey, as conducted by Hive HR, had launched on 15 January 2024, and closed on 12 February 2024.
- 5.5 The Committee NOTED that 76% of staff had completed the Hive survey. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed the positive level of engagement by staff with the survey. The Committee DISCUSSED the timescale for analysing and reporting on the results of the survey and NOTED that Hive HR would present the initial high-level outcomes of the survey to the Board of Management directly on 26 March 2024.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED that Education Scotland undertook an Annual Engagement Visit (AEV) at the College, over two days on 31 January and 1 February 2024, which explored the following themes: (i) Learner progress and outcomes; (ii) Approaches to assuring and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching; and (iii) Learner engagement. Further to this, the Principal advised the Committee that Education Scotland also reviewed progress against actions arising from its June 2023 Visit.
- 5.7 The Committee NOTED that initial feedback from the Education Scotland AEV had been extremely positive and would be considered in further details by the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee on 22 March 2024.
- 5.8 The Committee NOTED that the outcome of a recent EIS-FELA ballot had been received, with 85.3% voting (from a 58.7% turnout) in favour of Action Short of Strike (ASOS), from 12 February 2024 until 15 July 2024, in pursuit of the national college pay dispute 2022/23. The Principal advised the Committee that a collective decision had been made by Scotland's colleges to deduct pay as a result of the EIS-FELA ASOS.
- 5.9 The Committee DISCUSSED the collective decision to deduct pay and its communication to College staff. The Principal advised the Committee that the ASOS held in the academic year 2022/23 had negatively impacted on students across the college sector.

6. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & CREDITS DASHBOARD

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The Committee NOTED that the credit position of the College, as of 29 February 2024, was 158,760. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that, based on expected credit activity in Semester 2, the College was confident that it would meet its 98% credit target and avoid any financial clawback.
- 6.3 The Committee DISCUSSED (year-to-date) withdrawal rates and the impact of strike actions undertaken during Semester 1. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that Early Withdrawal (EW) rates had decreased due to national changes relating to the EW deadline, which had moved from 9-weeks to 5-weeks to align with the university sector. Further to this, the Committee NOTED that Further Withdrawals (FW), after the 5-week deadline, had also decreased due to the positive work undertaken by curriculum teams to support students and reduced the burden of overassessment.
- 6.4 The Committee NOTED that a decision had been taken by the Executive Team to not fill the one vacant Assistant Principal Curriculum post, following the departure of the previous post holder over the summer period. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that the College continued to operate effectively with three Assistant Principals Curriculum, however, it was expected this approach would be reviewed and a long-term curriculum structure would be presented to the Board of Management in due course.

7. FINANCE REPORT

7.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO JANUARY 2024

- 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED the Month 2 financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to January 2024.

7.2 CDEL TO REDEL SWITCH – FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

- 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on the proposed transfer of Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) to Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL) for the Financial Year 2024/25. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure advised the Committee that the SFC had communicated its intention, on 20 February 2024, to end its current policy arrangements towards the use of Capital lifecycle maintenance and high priority backlog funding.
- 7.2.2 The Committee NOTED that - given that the proposed change to an extant policy which did not align with the SFC's prior annual funding allocation guidance – further written clarification was being sought by the Chief Operating Officer (as Chair of the College Finance Directors Network). The Chief Operating Officer highlighted to the Committee

that expenditure on planned maintenance, routine maintenance, and debt servicing associated with capital developments across the sector equated to approximately £17m.

7.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the impact of transferring from CDEL to RDEL in 2024/25, including the potential consequences that such a change could have towards accelerating the decline of buildings and financial sustainability across the whole sector. The Committee NOTED assurances from the Chief Operating Officer that, as a College priority, any changes to capital funding would not impact on Health & Safety compliance.

7.2.4 The Committee AGREED that the Chief Operating Officer would provide a further update on this matter to both the Committee and the Board of Management at their next meetings.

7.3 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25 UPDATE

7.3.1 The Committee NOTED a Financial Forecast 2022/23 to 2026/27 presentation from the Chief Operating Officer. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that the financial forecast was based on projected funding outlined in the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2024/25 (*Minute 5.1 refers*).

7.3.2 The Committee NOTED that a Major Projects Group, consisting of members of the Senior Management Team, had met five times since 11 January 2024 to consider the impact of the Draft Budget and discuss Priority Based Budget options.

7.3.3. The Committee welcomed the information provided and NOTED that a strategic discussion on the implication of the Scottish Government Budget 2024/25, and the College's potential response, would be held by the Board of Management on 26 March 2024.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

8.1 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 16 November 2023.

8.2 The Committee NOTED an update on the National Job Evaluation (NJE) project, which was now in its sixth year. The Director of HR & OD advised the Committee that the partial outcome data shared with colleges was now outdated and therefore approximately 40% of support staff employed in colleges were now excluded from the remit of the project. The Committee DISCUSSED that NJE project and the potential risks it presented for the college sector.

8.3 The Committee NOTED that an update on the College's Black Leadership Group (BLG) Action Plan. The Director of HR & OD informed the Committee that an Anti-

Racist Team Day was being considered for the summer to highlight and publicise the work carried out through the BLG Action Plan.

- 8.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the College's use of the term 'BME' as the preferred nomenclature agreed in consultation with Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority staff and students. The Committee welcomed engagement with staff and students on this matter and AGREED that to ensure clear language such terms should be written out in full.
- 8.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the extensive Quarter 2 (2023/24) employment data provided within the report. The Committee AGREED that once the result of the staff survey - conducted by Hive HR (*Minute 5.4 refers*) - had been fully analysed the outcomes should be triangulated with HR datasets to help contextualise the information provided to Members.

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 all temporary reinforcement works to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) roofing in affected areas of the Sighthill Campus had been completed, with courses continuing as normal pending further announcements from the Scottish Government. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure advised the Committee that the SFC, on 27 February 2024, had publicly disclosed a list of 18 institutions where RAAC roofing was present, which included Edinburgh College.

10. HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a quarterly Health & Safety Report outlining activity over Quarter 2 of the academic year 2023/24. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that there had been two RIDDOR Reports made to the Health & Safety Executive during the period.
- 10.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the RIDDOR Report and NOTED that appropriate risk assessments had been undertaken by the College in both instances.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2019-24 PROGRESS UPDATE

- 11.1 The Committee NOTED progress against the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2019-24. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure advised the Committee that the central ambition for the College was to be carbon neutral by 2030, with a 75% reduction in emissions by 2024.
- 11.2 The Committee NOTED the key priority of the College over the next year was to prepare a replacement for the current Environmental Sustainability Strategy to ensure it complied with updated requirements outlined by the Scottish Government. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure advised the Committee that

the College was also keen to identify further financial resources to reduce carbon emissions and develop its partnership work on decarbonised heat.

11.3 The Committee NOTED that the Scottish Government required the College to report annually on climate change and carbon reductions, as part of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties. The Director of Finance & Infrastructure advised the Committee that the 'operational' carbon footprint of the College had increased by 3% from 3453 t/CO₂e in 2021/22 to 3,631 t/CO₂e in 2022/23, due to the continued increase of on campus activity post-covid.

11.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the progress made to implement the Strategy, and its central importance to ensure the College responded to the climate crisis declared by Scottish Government. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed the progress report provided but recognised the impending challenges ahead for the College to balance its environmental sustainability commitments within the current financial landscape.

12. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS ACTIVITY REPORT 2022/23

12.1 The Committee NOTED an annual report on complaints activity as presented by the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance.

12.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Complaints Activity Annual Report and the number of complaints recorded in 2022/23. The Vice Principal Innovation, Performance & Planning informed the Committee that there had been a decrease in the number of upheld Stage 1 & 2 complaints at the College in comparison to 2021/22. The Committee NOTED that the decrease in upheld complaints was likely due the significant impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on data collected during the academic year 2021/22.

12.3 The Committee NOTED the College had an effective Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure, which provided assurance that complaints were being handled appropriately. The Chair welcomed the highlighted process for recording compliments at the College, to record instances of both outstanding service and best practice.

13. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

13.1 None.

14. FOR INFORMATION

14.1 EDINBURGH COLLEGE POLICIES & PROCEDURES UPDATE

14.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update relating to an ongoing process to review and streamline all College policies and procedures. The Board Secretary advised the Committee that a progress update on the review process would be provided to its next meeting.

14.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2023/24

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

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee will take place on 16 May 2024.

Meeting closed at 16:55