

Preston College

Redacted and Abridged¹ Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 8 February 2024 at 5.30pm on Zoom

Present:

Ms Joanne Jones	Chair
Mr Steve Browne	(from Minute 5)
Mr John Boydell	
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	

In attendance:

Mrs Karen Dunmore	Vice Principal – Finance
Mrs Clare Rayner	Clerk to the Board
Mr Iain Stott	Vice Principal - Corporate Services
Ms Gill Thornton	Head of Human Resources

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair welcomed Mrs Karen Dunmore to her first meeting since joining the College as Vice Principal – Finance in January 2024.

It was noted that a quorum was present.

The Clerk reported that Mr Browne had technical difficulties and would join the meeting as soon as possible.

The Clerk reported that the staff governor election process was ongoing and the new staff governor should be appointed at the next Board meeting.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 November 2024

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2024 as a correct record.

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters arising

The Committee noted the report on the progress of actions from previous meetings.

¹ Please note that any matters which the Corporation is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis have been removed from these minutes.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report on progress of actions from previous meetings.

Mr Steve Browne joined the meeting.

5. Roof Survey and Estates Update

Mr Iain Stott, Vice Principal Corporate Services, presented his Roof Survey and Estates Update. Mr Stott reported:

- that due to increased water ingress a survey had been completed on College roofs;
- that some of the College roofs were now 50 years old and required repair and insulation;
- that this work could be carried out during term time with minimal disruption to staff and learners;
- that additional precautions would be put in place for one of the roofs due to asbestos. However, this was not currently hazardous;
- that a second structural and technical survey would be conducted by a different company;
- on estimated spend on repair of roofs which would be paid for from transformation grant funding;
- on other estates work in train, including the redevelopment of the Visual and Performing Arts building for which procurement activity had commenced;
- that a survey was being conducted by drone to assess the external coating of the Health and Wellbeing building and options were being considered;
- that the roll out of LED lighting would continue after half term;
- on the reduction in the College's energy costs evident to date as a result of the roll out of LED lighting across the estate;
- on the background of the new Estates and Facilities Manager and Health and Safety Manager that had recently been appointed and would join the College in the spring;
- on progress of the revised Estates Strategy which could be used for future funding bids.

In response queries from members, the Committee noted:

- a breakdown of the projected cost for the roofs, the likely accuracy of project costs and that repairing a number of roofs at once was likely to reduce overall costs;
- a second survey would provide additional assurance on the accuracy of projected workload and costs;

- the condition of the roofs had already been identified as part of the Estates Strategy. However, the acute bad weather had meant that this work had been prioritised;
- that more details would be provided on the type of asbestos in one of the College roofs and whether a clear air certification would be required.

A member reiterated discussions at previous meetings on the importance of ensuring that all estates work was aligned to a curriculum led Estates Strategy rather than being driven by bid preparation. Management provided assurance that the draft estates strategy would be aligned to curriculum needs.

A member commented on the increasing impact of climate change, eg heavy rain, hotter weather, extreme winds, and that when developing the Estates Strategy, the College should considering modern cutting edge technologies to future proof the College estate even if this meant increased costs. Management thanked members for the feedback which would be considered as the Estates Strategy was developed.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Roof Survey and Estates Update report.
Action: Mr Stott to provide more details on the type of asbestos in one of the College's roofs.

6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. The Principal and Chief Executive reported that whilst the College had EDI policies and action plans in place, an overarching strategy had not been developed to date and would be beneficial. The Principal and Chief Executive referred to the draft at Appendix A which had been developed in consultation with the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group.

The Principal and Chief Executive explained that, subject to Board approval of the strategy, action plans would be developed and progress against the strategy would be monitored by the Resources Committee and the Board.

A member referred to items (a) and (d) of Employee Equality Objective 4 and queried the inclusion of wellbeing initiatives as part of the EDI strategy. During discussion, Ms Thornton, Head of Human Resources, explained that mental health could fit within the inclusion part of the EDI strategy and mental health could also part of the 'disability' protected characteristic'. The Principal and Chief Executive undertook to review the feedback with the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, whilst also recognising that the Board would approve the final EDI strategy.

A member referred to Employee Equality Objective 2, the College working with external partnership/ groups to promote diversity with a view to working towards appropriate awards and standards. He emphasised the importance of the Board, which had overall responsibility and accountability for oversight of partnership work, having a line of sight on any partnership arrangements as there was a risk that, over time, the values of the College could change as a result of partnership work. He also referred to the potential for partner organisations which the College associated with becoming controversial and the importance of due diligence and ongoing review. The Principal and Chief Executive undertook to remove this objective. The member was of the view that alternatively it could be amended to reflect the Board's role in approving key partnership work.

The Clerk suggested it would be helpful to include governance EDI objectives. The Committee agreed with this suggestion. The Clerk undertook to draft some suggested objectives, aligned with the current governance deliverables, and also share the draft with the Search and Governance Committee ahead of the Board meeting.

Subject to the changes suggested, the Committee recommended the strategy to the Board for approval.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred members to the Department for Education (DfE) consultation document Gender Questioning Children Non-Statutory Guidance, at Appendix B. He reported that:

- schools and colleges could feedback to DfE on the draft and the draft would also be reviewed by the Quality and Standards Committee at its next meeting;
- whilst the guidance had been cautiously welcomed by principals, the guidance was primarily aimed at schools and it was more challenging for colleges as they could not liaise with parents without the learner's permission.

During discussion of the guidance, a member highlighted the importance of the College remaining focused on its primary role as an educator, and whilst it was appropriate for support to be provided to learners, College staff should not be expected to offer higher levels of psychological support to learners.

Members discussed with management the increased number of learners with mental health challenges in recent years and the importance of supporting learners and also signposting and referring to other agencies were appropriate.

In response to queries from members, the Committee noted:

- the College already offered mindfulness support to staff;
- the background and purpose of trauma informed approaches and the training provide to staff on this.

The Committee:

- reviewed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and recommend to the Board for approval;
- noted the DfE consultation document Gender Questioning Children Non-Statutory Guidance.

Actions: The Principal and Chief Executive to review the draft in light of feedback from members.

The Clerk to draft governance EDI objectives for review.

7. Management Accounts

Mrs Karen Dunmore, Vice Principal – Finance, referred members to the Period 5 Management Accounts report. Mrs Dunmore reported that:

- on the Period 5 Management Accounts deficit compared with the budget deficit;
- the year end forecast surplus and the main variances;

- the increase in income as a result of the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) additional grant meant and the surplus required to support a financial health rating of Good., Ms Dunmore confirmed that work would continue during the second half of the year to determine whether this would be achievable.

In response to queries from members, the Committee noted:

- background on the incorrect phasing assumptions which would have a positive impact on the 2024/25 management accounts;
- the impact of contracts on the management accounts and the impact on variance against budget and the importance of ensuring contracts were signed at the start of the year where possible;
- an update on agency costs;
- the tender process would commence for estates work and more information on costs could be provide at the next meeting.

Members commented:

- commented positively on the forecast surplus and potential further improvements;
- that the Board had taken the view that staff pay increases had to be prioritised over surplus and noted the impact of this on the Management Accounts.

The Principal and Chief Executive reported that as the College had not received the reconciliation statement in time to sign the Report and Financial Statements at the last Board meeting, the College had requested an extension from the ESFA until 31 January 2024. He reported that the reconciliation statement had now been received and the Report and Financial Statements had been signed. He reported that the College had received a small gain which was not currently included in the Management Accounts.

The Committee noted the Period 5 Management Accounts report and the commentary.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Period 5 Management Accounts.

8. **Performance Against Key Performance Indicators**

The Committee noted the Performance Against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) report.

The Committee discussed with management the KPIs which were either yellow or red and noted:

- that adult class based learning income was expected to be in line with budget by the year end;
- the 2023/24 operating costs would be corrected on the funding and income dashboard;
- that it was encouraging that only a small number of KPIs were rated red or yellow at this point in the academic year.

The Committee noted the Performance Against KPIs report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Performance Against Key Performance Indicators report.

Action: To correct the funding and income dashboard.

9. HR Policy Review

Ms Thornton presented the report on the proposed changes to the Resolution of a Grievance Policy and Resolution of a Grievance Procedure. Ms Thornton reported on headline figures on use of the policy and procedure by employees by year since it was last reviewed by the Committee and the outcomes of these grievances to date.

Ms Thornton referred to the proposed changes to the Resolution of Grievance Policy and Resolution of a Grievance Procedure which were shown as track changes at Appendix A and Appendix B and outlined in her report. Ms Thornton reported that a reference to the definition of sexual harassment had been included in preparation for upcoming changes in October 2024 which would enact The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which placed a new duty on employers to take reasonable steps to protect employees from sexual harassment in the workplace.

A member highlighted that a number of references to the informal stage remained in the revised version of the policy and procedure. Ms Thornton undertook to review before the draft was reviewed by the Board.

Subject to the amendments discussed, the Committee approved the Resolution of Grievance Policy and Resolution of Grievance Procedure for recommendation to Board.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Resolution of a Grievance Policy and Procedure for recommendation to Board.

Action: Ms Thornton to review the draft and remove references to 'informal stage' which were no longer required.

10. Workforce Profile Data Report 2022/23

Ms Thornton presented the HR Workforce Profile Data Report 2022/23 which provided an overview of the diversity of the College in 2022/23 alongside comparison with the previous year and other FE benchmarks. Ms Thornton reported:

- that the full report, by protected characteristic, was at Appendix A;
- that the deadline for submitting data to the ESFA for the FE Workforce Data for 2022/23 was the 26 January 2024. Therefore the 2022/23 data was not available for the report to make direct comparisons;
- on the key themes emerging from the workforce data for 2022/23 for staff turnover, gender split, absence rates, ethnicity profile,
- on the likelihood that more staff were comfortable declaring their sexual orientation;
- that it was expected that the age profile of teaching staff would be slightly older as many staff joined colleges as a teacher as a second career;

- that it was possible that many staff had a disability that they had not declared;
- on the number of staff on maternity had increased. Ms Thornton provided background on why this figure might be skewed;
- on the trends of ethnicity and salary levels.

The Committee discussed with management the importance of the College's staff profile being representative of the local community and whether there were any potential barriers. The Committee noted the increase in Asian or Asian British staff at the College, which was representative of the 2021 census, and an acknowledgement that as these staff were at the start of their careers, it would take some time before staff progressed to more senior roles at the College.

The Committee noted the Workforce Profile Report for the Academic Year 2022/23.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Workforce Profile Report for the Academic Year 2022/23.

11. Gender Gap Pay Update

Ms Thornton presented her Gender Pay Gap (GPG) Report. She reported that:

- the Gender Pay Gap Report 2024 for publication was at Appendix A;
- as a public sector body, the College was required to publish its Gender Pay Gap (GPG) data on the Government and College website by 31 March 2024 using a snapshot of data based on the staffing establishment on the 31 March 2023;
- the mean College GPG for 2023 was 5.05%, a decrease from 6.15% in 2022. The median GPG was 11.12% compared with 16.4% in 2021;
- the Office for National Statistics (ONS) confirmed that nationally the gender pay gap for all employees inclusive of both full time and part time staff was 14.3%;
- the gender profile of the College workforce had changed slightly with 61% female and 39% male compared to 63% female and 37% male in 2022. This was slightly better than a typical FE College of 64% female and 36% male reported in the Association of Colleges (AoC) Workforce Survey 2020/21, which was currently the most recent survey available;
- many of the female employees in the bottom two earning quartiles were part time, term time only or both, which impacted on the mean earnings. In contrast, there were fewer males who have part time or term time contracts;
- the upper middle quartile showed a difference in the proportion of females (56%) and males (44%) with a slight move away from a more even split compared with 51% female and 49% male in 2022;

- the change in the upper quartile 58% female and 43% male compared with 61% female and 39% male in 2022. The quartile was still more favourable towards women even with the inclusion of the most senior appointment within the College being held by a male within the reporting period.

The Committee noted and discussed the report with management. During discussion members noted that no consolidated bonuses had been paid, however a one off payment had been made to all staff following the successful Ofsted inspection.

The Committee recommend to the Board the approval the Gender Pay Gap Report, at Appendix A, for publication within the legislative timeframe.

Resolved: The Committee:

- **agreed to recommend to the Board the approval the Gender Pay Gap Report, at Appendix A, for publication within the legislative timeframe; and**
- **noted the proposed actions arising from the Gender Pay Gap data contained within the Continuous Improvement Action Plan.**

12. **Review of Fees Policy**

Mr Stott outlined the proposed changes to the Fees Policy 2024/25 which were shown in track changes at Appendix A. The Committee approved the Fees Policy 2024/25 for recommendation to the Board.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Fees Policy 2024/25 for recommendation to the Board.

13. **Employee Engagement Including Staff Voice – November Cycle**

The Principal and Chief Executive and Ms Thornton presented Employee Engagement Including Staff Voice – November Cycle report. They reported:

- the rationale for not conducting a staff survey in 2023 as staff had already completed questionnaires for Ofsted and Investors in People;
- the Principal and Chief Executive had met with all teams before the Christmas break. The Principal outlined common themes which had been raised at this meetings, particularly workload and staff safety. He reported that Executive Leadership Team were reviewing feedback and responses would be provided to staff, including suggestions which could not be progressed;
- the feedback from the Staff Voice November Cycle.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Employee Engagement Including Staff Voice – November Cycle report.

14. **People Strategy Update – Development of a People Strategy 2024/27**

Ms Thornton presented her People Strategy Update report. Ms Thornton reported that workshops with the College Management Team had shifted thinking on the development of the key themes of the People Strategy and consideration was now being given to progressing four themes rather than five.

Ms Thornton reported that during the workshop staff had suggested some interesting ideas to address workload issues, including extending the academic year to allow time for more fun in the curriculum, and these ideas would be explored.

Following discussion, it was agreed that it might be helpful to repeat the workshop with governors as a deep dive session. Members agreed and suggested it would also be helpful to consider future 'people' trends over the next five years which might shape future ways of working.

The Committee noted the People Strategy Action Plan Update.

Resolved: The Committee noted the People Strategy Action Plan Update Report – Development of a People Strategy 2024/27.

Action: The Clerk to add a Deep Dive on People Strategy to the list of future Board Deep Dive sessions.

15. **Environmental Reporting**

Mr Stott presented his Environmental Reporting update which outlined gas and electric use by the College from 2020 onwards. He reported that:

- the College's environmental reporting was at an early stage. However, in time, the intention was for the College to publish data on the College's website;
- the College had access to a new portal which provided information on waste and recycling.

In response to a query on the reason for the spike of gas use in November 2021, Mr Stott confirmed that he was currently querying this.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee note Environmental Reporting report.

Action: Mr Stott to provide an update on the reason for the spike in gas use in November 2021.

16. **Any other Business**

The Clerk reported that she had used the College's new template for item 11 and asked members to send any feedback.

17. **Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 2 May 2024.

