

**Minutes of the Resources Committee  
Wednesday 10 November 2021  
Video Conference Zoom  
4pm**

Present: Alasdair Simmons (Chair)  
Cliff Wragg (Vice Chair)  
Alan Carvell  
Olly Mills  
Ian Pryce CBE, Principal & Chief Executive  
Allan Schofield  
Vinod Tailor  
Amanda Wagstaff

In attendance  
Diane Gamble, Director of Estates & Facilities  
Pat Jones, Executive Director of Finance  
Rachel Nicol, Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation  
(Minutes)

**Action**

**R/38/21 Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were given by members of the committee.

Caroline Biddle (Executive Director of HR) was unable to attend.

**R/39/21 Declarations of interest**

Alan Carvell is a non-executive director of BCS Limited (a wholly owned subsidiary of Bedford College)

**R/40/21 Matters arising**

The Chair welcomed committee members to the first meeting of the academic year and there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**R/41/21 Digital Technology update**

The Executive Director of Finance provided an update on the current position.

An Executive Director of Digital Technology role is under advert. The agreed priorities centre around strategy, digitising business, communication and building an innovative and cohesive IT structure.

The Committee sought and was given assurance on the appropriateness of mechanisms for recruitment to attract a wide pool of candidates.

The post will report directly into the CEO and will have overall responsibility for the IT function, currently within the remit of the Executive Director of Finance.

Further discussion centred around previous conversations at the Committee and how the preliminary review of what is required in the future has been carried out. It was confirmed that experience of digital transformation and strategy delivery is the key focus. Confirmation was given that adequate provision for any infrastructure development had been considered in the capital programme and that the appointee will be supported in requirements for revenue budgets.

**The Committee noted the update.**

#### **R/42/21 Estates and capital projects review**

The Director of Estates and Facilities summarised key updates from the report.

The Committee was pleased to note a zoo licence has been issued at Shuttleworth and that the Connelly Modern Methods of Construction Centre (CMMC) has successfully opened.

Tenders are out to commission a consultancy team to oversee the Corby 6<sup>th</sup> form project with plans to open by September 2023.

Drawings are being finalised for recladding of the Tower Block and discussions are taking place over planning requirements with a public meeting to be arranged.

The Committee acknowledged the collective size of the capital projects and sought assurance on how the progress of projects is tracked against budget. A Project Accountant monitors the position closely with weekly internal meetings, meetings with contractors and reference to value engineering expertise where relevant. It was confirmed that the only project subject to some “creep” related to the mezzanine and changing rooms within the CMMC. **It was agreed that future reports to the Committee would include a rag rated summary report setting out planned verses actual costs.**

Positive feedback was received from employers at the opening of the CMMC regarding the design and quality of facilities.

Governors who had toured Wellingborough also reported a positive experience.

Resourcing of the Estates team is being reviewed with different options being looked at to ensure the ongoing ability to secure relevant expertise.

The delay in the Brundtland lift works was discussed and assurance given that the existing lift can be appropriately maintained until the replacement can take place.

The Estates and Facilities Self-Assessment Report (SAR) was referenced.

The Director highlighted the significant increase in work load of the team in relation to Covid in terms of screening requirements and other alterations.

There has been positive engagement with opportunities to enhance the student experience in terms of work experience as part of the capital programme.

A governor who had attended both the current and prior year SAR commended the effectiveness of the team and the level of work achieved.

### **The report was noted**

#### **R/43/21 Implementation of People Strategy**

The Principal & CEO introduced the report in the absence of the Executive Director of HR. Highlights included:

The significant amount of work carried out to articulate job families, reviewing fairness and harmonisation across the Group structure and in particular Bedford College and Bedford College Professional services (“BCPS”).

The transition of appraisals to a binary system in respect of pay awards with a separate focus on developmental reviews. The Committee reflected on previous conversations around the importance to staff of the “outstanding” assessment and how this will be managed under the new system. It was reiterated that management training will focus on the articulation of feedback.

***Consideration will be given to the requirement for the Board to review and approve the policy / process for appraisal as part of the framework of staff pay and conditions. (IP to discuss with the Executive Director of HR)***

Progress on utilisation of the apprenticeship levy has been supported by BCPS. The Committee sought and was provided with assurance on the level of utilisation and the nature of the apprenticeships being operated.

Results of the staff survey and general support for the College was presented. Work is continuing on wellbeing and work load. The Committee had previously discussed the response rates.

The results on the gender pay survey and positive performance of the College were outlined and there has been positive progress on the Race Equality agenda as it continues to being monitored.

Staff turnover, competition from the private sector and the challenges posed were discussed.

The Committee noted the reference in the report to the development of the employer brand of Bedford College. The Committee supported the work being done to promote the brand and potential benefits in terms of recruitment.

Further discussion took place around strategies for securing quality staff in the future and the relationship with improved productivity and technological developments.

**The report was noted.**

#### **R/44/21 Staff Framework and pay scales**

The Principal & CEO highlighted the makeup of the Group set out in the tables and the importance of the subsidiary companies.

**The Committee noted the report**

#### **R/45/21 Indicative Financial out turn 2020-2021**

The Executive Director of Finance highlighted the tables, indicative out turn and comparisons with previous years.

Commercial income and apprenticeships were particularly impacted by Covid

The Committee was pleased to note that the ESFA has confirmed the College's position as financially outstanding.

The Committee discussed the report reviewed at their meeting in May on pension contributions and the outcome of the work of the actuaries. The final position was noted to be above budget but under the forecast position. It was confirmed that the 3 year review is due next year and it is expected that this will result in some cash movement.

The forecast position of Aston in the current year given the expected deficit in 2020-2021 was raised. It was noted that the results have been affected by the impact of Covid on apprenticeships. Discussions are taking place on recruitment of learners and how Aston will be supported to manage the position.

**The Committee noted the position and the Board will receive the financial statements in the December meeting.**

#### **R/46/21 Capital programme update 2021-2022**

The Executive Director of Finance outlined the report and changes since the summer meeting when the programme was approved.

Funding for the Corby Sixth Form and Bedford Town Fund has been secured but the application to the Education and Skills Funding Agency ("ESFA") to support the

transformation of the Tower Block and dilapidations was not successful, with greater needs in the sector being identified.

Further funding has however been received to manage the increase in learner numbers and to support decarbonisation at the Bedford Sixth Form. Conditions require work to be completed by Summer 2022. The Committee sought to understand the difference between the funds received and those applied for. Assurance was received on how the difference will be managed and the impact on planned works.

Revenue and capital funding have been received to support technical qualifications, in particular supporting work on computer labs, reducing the impact on cash.

The Committee discussed the level of investment and how this is benchmarked against other local colleges, the management and treatment of costs related to leases and the requirements for work at different campuses.

It was clarified that the Committee in the summer approved a funding envelope in relation to the Bedford campus works, including a discussion of potential options. A concept of linking the Tower block and Engineering building had been referred to but it was noted that this is not a priority and would only be considered if funding is available.

Likely movement in terms of cash, likely future funding, distribution and priorities were outlined. This included support for T levels, the government's levelling up agenda and transformation funding.

The capital programme annexed to the report was noted to reflect the changes in the programme since approval in the summer.

**The Committee recommended the updated capital programme to the Board for approval.**

## **R/47/21 College Information Report (September)**

The Board approved the MTFS and KPIs in July. Performance against the indicators was highlighted, in particular in respect of pay percentages and the estimate in respect of pension provision.

The Committee noted that national policy changes are resulting in movement of income as well as the impact of TAG grades on student numbers, in particularly in vocational areas.

Catch up funding and plans to recruit staff to support students were outlined. The restrictions in terms of criteria for compliance were noted and will be monitored carefully.

Assurance was given that debtors will reduce during the year as direct debits and loan payments are collected. The potential for changes to contracts with partners, where debt collection has proved problematic historically, will be reviewed.

The Committee discussed the operation of funding of 16-18 year olds and the impact of cost of staffing in different settings, in particular in 6<sup>th</sup> form settings. The Executive is reviewing pay structures in areas where the College competes with schools for staffing.

The Committee sought to understand how the costs of recruitment are managed and where these are included (*PJ to confirm*)

### **The College Information Report was noted**

#### **R/48/21 HR KPIs**

The Principal & CEO outlined key points from the report including staff turnover and sickness levels.

The College was noted to have managed Covid well.

The Chair commended the HR KPI report and the development of the dashboard. Separately the Executive are looking at more detailed analysis for management purposes.

***It was agreed that the references to Tresham and Bedford College will be looked at to ensure continued relevance (CB).***

### **The Committee noted the report**

#### **R/49/21 Confirmation of pay award**

It was confirmed that the budget has been assessed and distribution considered. It had been recognised that government policies will have a disproportionate impact on lower paid staff. It is therefore planned to provide a pay award of 2% with 3% being paid to staff on lower grades. Contractual incremental awards will be managed.

Feedback was given that the provision of further information to staff on how buildings are funded and how pay rises are managed may assist in communication.

**The Committee was content that the planned award is within the budget.**

**The Committee was content to endorse the approach being taken by the Executive**

#### **R/50/21 Self-assessment reports for professional areas**

The Principal outlined the discussions that had taken place at Executive. This had included reflections on the process, the value achieved and the impact on improvement, in particular in respect of support areas.



Governors who had attended the reviews gave their feedback. This included comments on written reports, progression year on year and value from verbal discussion. The process was considered to be generally collaborative and supportive. Further suggestions were made on potential approaches and priorities for support areas. Further discussions will take place at QSA Committee.

### **The reports were noted**

*Vinod Tailor left the meeting*

#### **R/51/21 Decisions taken under delegated authorities**

The report was presented.

The Committee noted that no decisions had been taken under delegated authorities.

#### **R/52/21 Employee relations**

No update was available in the absence of the Executive Director of HR.

#### **R/53/21 Minutes of meeting held on 16 June 2021 and work plan**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **R/54/21 Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on 31 January 2022.