

**Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on  
20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at  
Bedford Campus, Tower Board room and Hybrid Microsoft Teams Online  
16:00 to 19:00**

**Present:** Tom Dove-Wallington  
Faheem Mir (Online)  
Noor Nazir  
Ian Pryce (CEO)  
Allan Schofield  
Alasdair Simmons (Chair)  
Cliff Wragg

**In attendance:** Sheraz Amin (Executive Director of Digital Transformation)  
Caroline Biddle (Executive Director of Human Resources)  
Patricia Jones (Deputy CEO Finance)  
Yiannis Kouris (CEO Designate)  
Sarah Mortimer (Principal CBC) (Online)  
Rachel Nicol (Group Director of Governance)  
Natasha Stringer (Senior Governance Coordinator) (minutes)  
Robin Webber-Jones (Principal Northamptonshire) (Online)

#### **R/44/23 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

##### Apologies

Apologies were received from Scarlett Ennis, student Governor. Karen Campbell, Principal (Bedford) was invited but unable to attend.

##### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the matters on the agenda

#### **R/45/23 Matters Arising Not Covered Elsewhere on the Agenda**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

#### **R/46/23 Update On Digital Flight Path**

The Executive Director of Digital Transformation presented a PowerPoint Presentation update on the digital transformation work carried out over the summer by the IT department which included:

- The development of the architecture, rationalisation of data centres and replacements of firewalls
- CBC network currently going through Kettering to ensure Cyber Essentials (CE) is met
- Launched Corby 6<sup>th</sup> Form including implementation of network, set-up of classrooms and devices

- Re-image work completed over 10 thousand devices
- Completed CBC merger and migrated all users to the BedCol domain
- Moved from an on-premise telephony system to a cloud-based solution
- Cyber Essentials (CE) was renewed in September 2023. A recommendation will come to the Committee in the Spring or Summer Term as to whether to continue as investment would be required to upgrade devices. Some contracts rely on having Cyber Essentials

Highlighted key issues are:

- The Bandwidth is maxed out daily, waiting to hear from the supplier on an increase to 10GB.
- Windows 10 is coming to end of life in 2025, many devices across TBCG are not compatible with the upgrade.

The Executive Director of Digital Transformation highlighted to the Committee the effort and hard work the IT team have put into completing this level of work within a very tight deadline. The work done has helped prevent server, network and firewall failures and improved sustainability as less energy costs are involved. The Executive Director of Digital Transformation also updated the Committee on the development of a Digital Strategy which will include Artificial Intelligence (AI).

*Discussion and Questions:*

The Committee discussed how the cost would be balanced against risk. It had been previously discussed that an investment appraisal would be beneficial. The Executive Director of Digital Transformation is working with the Finance team on possible funding avenues.

A Committee member asked if the potential to outsource the network had been looked into, which it had been and was not the most cost-effective solution.

The Committee discussed JISC and other providers rather than a reliance on the current provider. The benefits of JISC were outlined, including the security benefits.

AI was discussed in some detail, with the Committee expressing interest in seeing the Digital Strategy.

A discussion was held regarding Cyber Essentials, device and technology security, investment cycles, and the importance of a rolling cycle approach instead of waiting five years.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Executive Director of Digital Transformation and their team for the seamless work done with minimal interruptions, and continuous improvements in the background.



## **R/47/23 Implementation Of People Strategy**

The Executive Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with the Annual People Strategy Implementation Report, which included the work and achievement across the past academic year and set out the key focus objectives for the current academic year.

Progress in the last academic year included:

- Successful merger with Central Bedfordshire College (CBC), which included the successful transfer of CBC payroll in a very short timeframe.
- Development of a Code of Conduct for staff
- Development of salary bandings around the job family matrix to remove risks around Equal Pay
- Development of managers' skills working within the Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals policy.
- The Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment rights (TUPE) on Aston was completed.

Objectives for this Academic year included:

- To develop a value-based approach to recruitment and training
- Research and develop a strategy for rewarding high performance outside of the standard pay review process.

The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that turnover has reduced and is now below the benchmark, but there is still work to be done to hit target.

### *Discussion and Questions:*

The Committee discussed the vision for the future, including becoming the employer of choice with high-performing teams and a student-centred approach, which underpins the main strategy.

The Committee inquired as to the challenges faced, and a discussion followed on recruitment challenges for the TBCG, which is also seen sector-wide. Concerns were raised over the failure to deliver because of the inability to recruit and delays in recruitment; the Committee received reassurances that it is a priority for the Executive team.

The Committee raised a question about HR systems, and The Executive Director of Human Resources shared that work had already begun and a maximum viable product had been identified. The Committee commented on the need for HR and finance systems to align.



A Committee member asked if all staff completed safeguarding training and the practicality. The Committee was assured that it is completed yearly by all staff as mandatory training.

**The Committee noted the report.**

#### **R/48/23 HR KPI Monitoring**

The Executive Director of Human Resources summarised the HR KPI report for the Committee and the position as of the end of September 2023, which included:

- Turnover overall decrease for The Bedford College Group (TBCG) with a focus on balancing the need for refreshing talent and the need for stability
- Recruitment continues to be a challenge, nationally as well
- Short-term Sickness (STS) has seen a slight increase, and long-term sickness (LTS) has seen a slight decrease
- Work on the management of STS in progress

*Discussion and Questions:*

The Committee inquired as to why (CBC) had a higher level of sickness than other campuses and was given assurances that management processes were being rolled out.

A Committee member inquiry on the headcount for the BCPS operation. The Executive Director of Human Resources provided an overview of the increase in numbers and change of contracts away from the BC, TC and CBC contracts.

**The Committee noted the report.**

#### **R/49/23 Pay Framework and Award Update**

The Executive Director of Human Resources summarised the Staff Pay Framework 2023/24 for the Committee which included:

- The move from four contracts to five, the benefits of the Job Family Matrix
- Work conducted to eliminate any overlap of the bandings for equal pay purposes
- Difference in pension contribution schemes
- Annual pay review of 6.5% across the Group with increased entry salaries.
- Staffing numbers and variances from last year

*Discussion and Questions:*

A Committee member asked for clarification on a headcount figure that did not equate and was an error, which will be updated.



Following the discussion at the end of last year, in regard to the challenges in recruiting in certain areas, the competitiveness of pay was discussed. The Executive Director of Human Resources explored the potential for individual bandings which posed a risk in Equal Pay terms. Market Rate allowance to key departments where competing with industry salaries is challenging and systematic matrices to be developed.

The Committee raised a question regarding scale 9 which is a frozen teaching scale. The remaining staff have been contacted, and informed transfers are still open.

**The Committee confirmed their recommendation of the Staff framework to the Corporation Board.**

### **R/50/23 Employee Relations**

The Executive Director of Human Resources was pleased to inform the Committee there was nothing to report.

### **R/51/23 Harmonisation Update**

The Executive Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with a verbal update on harmonisation following the mid-year merger of Central Bedfordshire College (CBC). The staff survey following the merger with CBC has received positive feedback.

The Executive Director of Human Resources provided information on the movement from existing contracts onto the BCPS contract to provide the Committee with a level of assurance on the harmonisation.

#### **Discussion and Questions:**

The Committee discussed the continued smoothness of the harmonisation, noting some differences in managed structures remain, but overall, all centralised functions are being run as central functions.

### **R/52/23 Staff Survey**

The Committee were provided with a report that summarised the results of the Bedford College (TBCG) staff survey, which closed in May 2023. The Survey measured several areas, such as purpose, structure, strategic management, communication, safeguarding, workload and overall satisfaction. The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee of changes from last year to the survey, which included a change in how the responses were classified and the move of the survey from the Quality department to the Marketing department.

The survey demonstrated overall performance shows an improvement and a positive direction of travel.

Discussion and Questions:

The Committee discussed workload, the view that potential external influences are not considering workload and the sense of immediacy within the Group.

The Committee noted the benchmarking scores were low and it was clarified that it was the first time the sector benchmarking was used and there would be a better understanding next year. The Committee received assurances that in light of the results, the Executive Team is planning to organise focus groups on key areas where the level of satisfaction needs improvement and additional questionnaires on topics such as EDI are also being arranged.

The Committee commented on the response rates related to National College for Motorsport (“NC4M”), The Bedford Sixth Form (“TBSF”) and Bedford College Services (“BCS”) and whether focus on these areas is needed. The Executive Director of Human Resources gave some insights into the potential rationale.

**It was agreed that a report would be provided to the Committee to outline the actions taken and the impact.**

### R/53/23 College Information Report September 2023

The Deputy CEO Finance summarised for The Committee the College Information Report, which outlines the current and forecast financial position as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Key findings from the report were:

- Current forecast is at £1.075m deficit, which is a movement of £0.5m deficit
- The increase in 16-18 settlement, which is being used to support staff pay award
- Lower apprenticeship new start numbers compared to the previous year, although with the relaunch of the Leighton Buzzard site, the likelihood is good that apprenticeship numbers should rise as a result.
- Lower HE income due to significantly lower than target HE recruitment
- Increase in High needs numbers

Discussion and Questions:

A Committee member asked and received reassurance that systems were in place to ensure HE fees were not collected where inappropriate.

The Committee briefly discussed staffing, including if the vacancies are held in the right place, the financial benefits of holding vacancies balanced against the need to crystallise the underspend, the effect this has on the remaining staff and the effects on teaching and learning.

***The Committee discussed the need to see the Cash flow statement, it was agreed the Deputy CEO Finance will include it in the December papers for the Board. It was also requested that a cash graph for the next 12 months be included regularly in the Committee papers.***

A member of the Committee asked if there was potential to further reduce the cost of utilities and premises. The Deputy CEO Finance shared that the utilities contract had been renegotiated and a lot of work has been done to achieve zero carbon output including the use of technology to aid in further reducing the cost, and utilities are currently below budget. A portion of the supply budget had been set aside to subcontract for Adult Education. The work on Adult Education looks promising and has resulted in notable improvements, although it is still too early to confirm if it will completely eliminate the budgetary gaps.

The Committee had a discussion centred around the reason for the movement in the forecast deficit budget agreed in July. The Committee expressed concerns about the increased deficit and discussed various things that caused the effect, such as the additional funding received over the summer and the increased pay award, HE income reduced again, and the figures being from September when not all data was settled.

### **R/54/23 MTFS And Expectations of Monitoring**

The Chair of the Resource Committee informed the Committee of the change in approach to the agenda item and explained that the reports are a work in progress, and that this format is a trial approach.

The Deputy CEO Finance summarised the report and gave further information to the Committee on the three reports from the principals, which have the aim of providing the Committee with an overview of campus-based activity and providing assurances on planned actions.

#### **Discussion and Questions:**

The Committee feedback that the level of detail received was more appropriate and relevant for the Executive rather than the Governors.

A Committee member noted the Summary was incomplete. The Deputy CEO Finance explained that there are other sources of income such as centrally managed apprenticeship programs. It was suggested to provide an extended income and expenditure account, broken down by geography.

The Committee acknowledged that the timing of the information, being the end of September, was a difficult point to produce a forecast.

The Committee requested the need for visibility of the staffing model referred to in the reports and received confirmation that the model is an executive-agreed one, which determines the average group sizes and staffing levels. The model varies by provision but is the same for each college.

#### Bedford report

Provided by Karen Campbell, Principal Bedford, and summarised to the Committee by the Deputy CEO of Finance.

Report summary included:

- Forecast and budget position drawn on financial information as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023
- Student recruitment HE numbers are significantly lower than the target, and apprenticeship new starts are lower than in previous years. 16-18 numbers are slightly over plan
- Savings made at Shuttleworth College due to changes made in the staffing support for the operations of the farm
- Subcontractors have seen some increase in activity and partnership work

#### Central Bedfordshire College (CBC) report

Provided and summarised by Sarah Mortimer, Acting Principal CBC and included:

- CBC has taken a strong stance on attendance and behaviours, driving up student outcomes and ensuring retention is strong. Issues that arose early in the year have been addressed.
- ESFA 16-18 numbers are likely to fall short of the target. Competition from Barnfield could be a cause for the lack of growth.
- Apprenticeship target, confidence in hitting target since the relaunch of Leighton Buzzard, the numbers look positive
- Challenges on the alignment of CBC enrolment, which caused a delay in data
- Area of efficiency around Engineering, on target to achieve
- Challenges with room sizes

#### Northamptonshire report

Provided and summarised by Robin Webber-Jones, Principal Northamptonshire, which included:

- 16-18 recruitment is really healthy at Tresham, over the target.





- Challenges operating over three sites, tension in the group model.
- 16-18 in the Sixth form is down
- Opportunity if needed, with Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) individuals, a proposal to be brought to the Executive team.

Discussion and Questions:

The Committee inquired as to the financial implication of growth for individual sites and the extent to which robust recruitment and under-recruitment in areas could cause strains overall. The Principal, Northamptonshire, shared with the Committee various avenues of work, including a three-year vision, research and work into a longer-term strategy to grow and develop and what resources are needed for delivering quality improvements.

***The Chair of The Resources Committee will work with The Deputy CEO Finance to ensure the level of detail, and consistency in the reports enable comparisons and drives accountability***

## **R/55/23 Capital Project Update**

The Director of Estates provided the Committee with an updated report on the progress of current estate developments.

### The Corby Sixth Form (TCSF)

- TCSF opened on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 with a special visit arranged for the Duke of Gloucester on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023
- Some final commissioning work to be completed
- As part of the lease, TBCG has taken on a vacant unit located at the same level as the entrance for TCSF and will be used as an indoor undercover cycle shelter

### Tower Block Recladding

- Final snagging on heating installations being completed
- Remedial paving and fencing works being completed to the North and South entrances

### The Bedford Sixth Form

- Outstanding issues are being managed under retention

### Kingshill Farm Development

- Planning approval has been received
- Classroom delays due to the need for the contractor to meet the carbon-neutral specification



- Building complete for the Mechanisation Building

#### Halls of Residence

- Secured a Salix Grant, for decarbonisation, work to be completed by September 2024
- Awareness of the tight deadline and the level of work to be completed, agreements in place to start on the unoccupied halls in January 2024.

#### St Marks relocation to Corby campus

- Due to the underuse of the facility after work conducted by the Head of Estates and Facilities, it was agreed to relocate the provisions currently held at St Marks to the Corby campus, which would also enhance the student experience. This has now been completed.

#### Leases and Disposals

- The Motor Vehicle Centre in Kempston has been sold and contracts exchanged, but delayed by an issue with the planning being credited to the previous owners

A RAC report was commissioned pre-merger. CBC could not locate records so The Director of Estates has requested DfE surveys for the Dunstable site.

#### *Discussion and Questions:*

The Committee requested an update on the status of the swimming pool at Trinity Arts Leisure. There is a joint bid with the council being considered, and there is planned funding in the capital programme for next year.

The Committee expressed their thanks to The Director of Estates and their team for the attention to communication for ongoing building works around the college.

### **R/56/23 Review Of Financial Statements and Related Documents**

The Deputy CEO Finance summarised the report for the Committee, which included:

- Outturns for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023
- Comparator information for local colleges for 2021-22
- The indicative financial health grade is outstanding

The Deputy CEO Finance outlined the different areas of work and expressed their thanks to the finance team for the work done during a particularly difficult accounting year. The Deputy CEO of Finance was pleased to inform the Committee that there were no matters on the Management Letter going to the Audit Committee on 21st November 2023.



The comparator analysis report was highlighted to the Committee.

**The Committee noted the reports.**

#### **R/57/23 Decisions Under Delegated Authority**

No decisions had been taken under delegated authority

#### **R/58/23 Support Area Sar Reports**

The Committee were provided with the following Professional SAR 2022-23 for information.

- HR & Payroll
- Recruitment
- Finance Combined

**The Committee noted the reports.**

#### **R/59/23 Modern Slavery Statement**

The Committee were provided with the Modern Slavery Statement, which is a legal requirement.

**The Committee recommended the policy to the Board for approval.**

#### **R/60/23 Minutes Of the Previous Meeting**

**The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14/06/2023 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting**

#### **R/61/23 AOB**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024

The meeting ended at 19.19