POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 22 AUGUST 2017

14:00 Boardroom, Milton Road Campus

Present: Alan Johnston; Ian McKay; Niki McKenzie; Nigel Paul; Fiona Riddoch; Ian Young (Chair).

In attendance: Annette Bruton; Jon Buglass, Alex Craig; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Richard Whetton; Alan Williamson.

1   WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1   Apologies were received from Stephen Dunn.

1.2   The Committee Chair advised members that Ken Rutherford and Seamus Spencer, SFC Outcome Agreement Managers, had both give their apologies for Item 5 (Business Transformation Plan) due to other commitments.

2   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1   No declarations of interests were received.

3   MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1   The Board APPROVED the minutes from 30 May 2017 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4   MATTERS ARISING

4.1 MATTERS ARISING REPORT

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

Catering Report (Minute 9.5/18.04.17 refers)

The Committee NOTED that further to the Catering Report received by members on 18 April, the Head of Resources and Facilities would bring forward a business case to the next meeting of the Committee.

4.2 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION

4.2.1 The Committee NOTED a finalised version of the Review of Committee Operation 2016/17, as agreed by Members outwith the meeting.

4.2.2 The Committee NOTED that a 'Horizon Scanning Report' would be received at future meetings of the Policy & Resources Committee - once an appropriate format was agreed. The Committee Chair advised members that the Executive would consider the alignment of the report's content with the Committee's remit, as not to duplicate a similar report received by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

5 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PLAN

5.1 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PLAN REPORT

5.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the Business Transformation Plan, which included individual overviews of progress on the four transformation programmes. Further to this, the Committee NOTED an overview of progress across year two of the transformation plan.

5.1.2 The Committee NOTED that 10 of the 19 projects within the Business Transformation Plan had now closed, with the remaining nine projects making steady progress. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee that significant progress had also been made through the associated Improvement Plan, with several further improvement measures to be implemented through new projects.

5.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED oversight arrangements for the transformation plan following the departure of the Head of Corporate Development in September 2017, and the need to ensure that appropriate rigour was maintained around management standards to maintain control over project remits.

5.1.4 The Committee NOTED that a recommendation from the Corporate Development Team that the transformation plan should cease at the end of 2017, with ongoing projects incorporated under the college's new strategic plan. The Committee DISCUSSED the recommendation and the aim of the college to reach a breakeven position by the end of 2018/19. The Committee Chair fed back written comments to the Committee, provided by the SFC Regional Outcome Agreement Manager, which noted the need for any revisions to the transformation plan to clearly articulate coherence with the original proposal and the associated impact on the financial position and projections.

5.1.5 The Committee AGREED to endorse the wind-down of the Business Transformation Plan and its twin tracking with the new Strategic Plan. The Committee Chair advised members that the Board, subject to ongoing discussions around key financial aspects of the transformation plan with the SFC, would be asked to consider this proposal when reviewing the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan 2017-22 and associated Blueprint.

5.2 RECRUITMENT & RETENTION DASHBOARD

5.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Assistant Principal, Recruitment and Retention, on the performance of the college against its 2016/17 credit targets. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that the credit positon of the college (as of 09 August) was 187,064.

5.2.2 The Committee NOTED that full-time recruitment for 2017/18 had shown a marked improvement on the previous year, with (year to date) a 1.2% increase in the total number of applications received and a 3% increase in the number of offers made.

5.2.3 The Committee NOTED the reflections of the Assistant Principal on 2016/17 recruitment and retention, following the detailed analysis of recruitment data. The Assistant Principal advised the Board that the analysis had resulted in changes to the recruitment targets for 2017/18, including a 4% increase in the projected number of students and an 18% increase in the target number of students - to account for higher than anticipated drop-out levels.

5.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters relating to the Recruitment and Retention Dashboard:

(i) The impact on student recruitment of post-1992 universities within the region lowering their entry requirements;
(ii) the ongoing national review into student pathways and the need for Colleges Scotland to continue to promote college interests;
(iii) the data stored around why early leavers choose to withdraw from the college, and developments made to the feedback form completed by leavers.

5.2.5 The Committee NOTED that the Assistant Principal would continue to develop the presentation of comparable recruitment and retention data for the Policy & Resources Committee and the Board going forward.

5.3 CURRICULUM PLANNING REVIEW

5.3.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of the configuration of the college, which included information on where increases had been made in terms of student numbers and its relationship with the skills requirements of the region. The Assistant Principal, Curriculum Design and Development, advised the Committee that the development of the curriculum review and associated changes to the curriculum and the strategic direction of the college was based on the Regional Skills Assessment and other regional priority drivers.

5.3.2 The Committee NOTED changes in student numbers at the college against key outcome measures such as skills, non-skills and national priority areas. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that the data provided was in line with the direction of the curriculum outlined within the proposed strategic plan for the next five years.

5.3.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters relating to the student numbers information provided:

(i)   The flexibility within the curriculum to change in order to meet future needs;
(ii)   the impact of modes of study on the student numbers data presented, specifically the fact that more students entered college on a part-time basis;
(iii)   opportunities to promote the work of the college to specific stakeholders.

5.3.4 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider detailed data relating to student numbers across each Faculty, especially with regards to areas of future growth in the region. The Committee NOTED that future reports on the configuration of the college should aim to illustrate areas of growth against the college's historic reduction in credits.

6   STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

6.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the development of the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan 2017-22. The Head of Corporate Development informed the Committee that the stakeholder consultation on the Draft Strategic Plan had concluded and that comments received were largely supportive of the document. The Committee NOTED that an updated version of the Strategic Plan, with minor amendments, would be presented to the Board on 19 September 2017.

6.2 The Committee NOTED that Strategic Planning Working Group had considered an updated draft Edinburgh College Blueprint, which included a summary of the strategic plan and sections on the transformation portfolio 2017-22 and its management. The Deputy Principal informed the Committee that in light of the Strategic Planning Working Group's comments a further revisions would be made to the Blueprint before its presentation to the next meeting of the Board – for approval.

The Deputy Principal left the meeting.

8   FINANCE REPORT

The Head of Finance joined the meeting

8.1   SECTION 22 UPDATE

8.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update on matters relating to the Public Audit and Post Legislative Committee held on 29 June 2017.

8.1.2 The Committee NOTED a letter dated 07 July from Jackie Baillie MSP, Acting Convener of the Public Audit and Post Legislative Committee, to the Principal

which highlighted specific issues raised by the Committee and welcomed a future update. Further to this, the Committee NOTED a letter dated 10 August from the Principal in response to the Acting Convener's initial correspondence.

8.2   MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO JUNE 2017

8.2.1 The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to June 2017

8.3   FINANCIAL FORECAST RETURN 2017

8.3.1 The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Financial Forecast Return 2017, based upon the figures included in the most recently updated Business Transformation Plan financial forecasts.

8.3.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to the Financial Forecast Return 2017:

(i)   Changes in the accounting treatment required by the SFC and its impact on the presentation of accounts;
(ii)   the saving assumptions made around staff salaries and the reassurances provided by the Executive Team;
(iii)   the potential impact of the NJNC agreement and the assumptions made by the college;
(iv)   the need to give prominence to the college's underlying operating position following positive changes made through the transformational plan.

8.3.3 The Committee APPROVED the Financial Forecast Return 2017 for submission to the SFC. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that the Return should be circulated to Board members with a narrative picking up on discussions highlighted under Paragraph 8.3.2.

The Head of Finance left the meeting

9   CAPITAL & INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

The Head of Resources and Facilities joined the meeting

9.1   CAPITAL & INFRASTUCTURE UPDATE

9.1.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on progress towards promoting a discussion on the future of education in the Edinburgh 'west corridor' with partners in the region.

9.1.2 The Committee NOTED an updated communication with Edinburgh Napier University on the college estates strategy.

9.2   COLLEGE CLADDING MATERIAL REVIEW

9.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the college cladding systems used in relation to the tragic events surrounding the Grenfell fire on 14 June 2017, and the subsequent SFC call for information.

9.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the findings of an external review confirmed that no Aluminum Composite Cladding (ACM) had been used by Edinburgh College and, at present, no further action was required by the college. The Head of Resources and Facilities provided assurances to the Committee that all college buildings met current safety regulations.

9.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the report and AGREED that an update confirming the level of fire resistance that the college's existing cladding delivers would be provided to the Committee in due course.

The Head of Resources and Facilities left the meeting

10   ORGANISATIONAL & STAFF REPORT

The Head of HR & OD joined the meeting

10.1 HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

10.1.1   The Committee NOTED that the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) had reached an agreement with support staff unions on a pay and benefits award for 2017, which would be back dated to 01 April 2017. The Head of HR & OD informed the Committee that the agreement, which had been implemented, applied a fixed rate increase of £425 and increased annual leave from 41 to 44 days (pro-rata for part time staff) - in line with the NJNC agreement for support staff.

10.1.2   The Committee DISCUSSED a proposal from the Principal to extend the award covered by the national recognition pay agreement (NRPA), outlined in Paragraph 10.1.1, to staff on personal contracts not covered by the local RPA. The Chief Operating Officer informed the Committee that proposal was reflected within the agreed 2017/18 College Budget. The Committee AGREED to the application of the proposal, in pay and benefits, as soon as practically possible.

10.1.3   The Committee NOTED an updated Human Resources Dashboard to Quarter 4 of the academic year 2016/17, which included data on turnover, headcount, vacancies and absence. The Committee DISCUSSED the shown reduction in staff absences across the period, and AGREED that it would be beneficial if such information could be benchmarked across the college sector.

10.2 CAREER TRANSITION POLICY

10.2.1   The Committee NOTED that, at its meeting on 20 June 2017, the Board had agreed to implement a Career Transition Policy. Further to this, the Head of HR & OD presented a Draft Career Transition Policy and Procedures to the Committee for further consideration.

10.2.2   The Committee DISCUSSED the Policy, and AGREED that a revised draft of the Career Transition Policy should be circulated to the Committee Chair and the Chair of the Board for final approval and to be progressed accordingly.

11   CLOSED ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS

11.1 CLOSED MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

11.1.1   The Committee APPROVED the closed minutes from 30 May 2017 as an accurate record of the meeting.

12   ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

12.1   POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE REMIT

12.1.1   The Committee DISCUSSED the scope of the Policy & Resources Committee and AGREED that its remit should be streamlined, wherever possible, to allow members' to focus more on strategic matters and horizon scanning.

12.2   HEAD OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

12.2.1   The Committee NOTED that the Head of Corporate Development, Richard Whetton, would be leaving the college on 07 September 2017 to start a new role at Police Scotland. The Committee Chair, on behalf of members, thanked the Head of Corporate Development for his support of the Committee over the past year.

13   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1   The next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee will take place on 14 November 2017, in the Boardroom, Milton Road Campus.

Meeting closed at 17:00