



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 08 APRIL 2015

15:00 Boardroom, Granton Campus

Present: Alan Johnston; Ian McKay; Robin Stimpson; Ian Young (Chair).

In attendance: Su Breadner; Penny Davis; Elaine McMahon; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson; Craig Wilson.

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Sandra Cairncross, Martin Crewe, Jan Cutting and Nigel Paul.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 None.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The Board APPROVED the Minutes from 23 March 2015 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

4.1.1 *Paragraph 4.1.1 presently exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Section 30, Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs.*

4.1.2 *Paragraph 4.1.2 presently exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Section 30, Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs.*

4.1.3 SFC LETTER (minute 5.6/23.03.15 refers)

The Committee NOTED an update on the SFC Development Plan letter submitted (to the SFC Chief Executive) by the Chair on 31 March 2015. The Deputy Principal informed Members that the letter's appendix, identifying priorities for additional funding, would be considered by the SFC's Strategic Funding Committee. A response to the additional funding request was expected from the SFC in due course.

The Committee NOTED that the Executive had received formal approval to recruit a consultant (as recommended by the SFC) to assist in the planning and implementation of the core elements of the College's structural change programme.

5 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.1 DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

5.1.1 The Committee NOTED the internal progress of key tasks within the Development Plan, as illustrated in a Gantt chart produced by the Executive. The Interim Principal commended the recent progress made by the Executive Team within key strategic areas, including; 'Improving Quality & Curriculum' and the College's 'Financial Rebased'.

5.1.2 The Committee NOTED a draft Development Action Plan and the current status of actions within each 'area of improvement'. The Deputy Principal informed Members that four actions were shown as 'Red' on the Action Plan RAG, each of these relating to financial challenges facing the College.

5.1.3 *Paragraph 5.1.3 presently exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Section 30, Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs.*

5.1.4 The Committee NOTED the importance of all compliance and governance matters within the Development Action Plan, and the Committee AGREED that corporate governance issues needed to be specifically highlighted within any information presented to the Board.

5.2 *Paragraph 5.2 presently exempt from publication under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Section 30, Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs.*

6 FINANCIAL REPORT

Julie McCran, Vice Principal Quality, Performance & Student Experience, joined the meeting

6.1 STUDENT SUPPORT FUNDS

6.1.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of the current use of the SFC student support funds, and the potential impact of the College increasing the Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) age eligibility for the academic year 2015-16. The Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience, informed Members that an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) had been conducted, which indicated that there would be no adverse impact (financial or otherwise) upon existing students.

6.1.2 The Committee NOTED circumstances in which the College awards EMA and bursary funds to student, and the financial differences between each allowance. The Committee NOTED that although the value range of bursary allowances was higher than that provided through EMA, students receiving the latter award had access to 'travel' and 'course kit' expenses, the ability to apply to the FE discretionary fund and full entitlement to DWP benefits (if appropriate).

6.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the Executive's proposed recommendation to award EMAs up to the age of 20 years for 2015-16, including the following aspects:

- (i) the need to maintain consistent funding for continuing students at the College. The Executive confirmed that they would not support a change in existing students funding arrangements;
- (ii) the arrangements (if any) required to support students affected by funding changes, for example, if an existing bursary student returned to start a different course as an EMA student;
- (iii) recent instances where EMA had been used to meet the needs of students, due to financial pressures.
- (iv) the College's current financial situation, and current funding arrangements used across the college sector. The Executive AGREED to provide more information on the current funding arrangements across the sector, for the Committee's reference.

6.1.4 The Committee APPROVED the recommendation put forward by the Executive, and AGREED that the College must continue to support genuine cases of hardship and review individual circumstance on a case-by-case basis.

Alan Johnston left the meeting

6.1.5 The Committee AGREED that the Executive must consult with ECSA over the funding changes approved under paragraph 6.1.4, and aim to sign an agreement on the use of student funds with Student Association. The Committee also AGREED that student funding was one area of activity where closer working arrangements between the College and ECSA would be beneficial.

Julie McCran, Vice Principal Quality, Performance & Student Experience, left the meeting

6.2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Committee NOTED the financial performance of the College, as highlighted in the Financial Accounts to March 2015.

6.3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING

6.3.1 The Committee NOTED a request from the Board of Management on 24 March 2015, to consider the content and format of the College's financial reporting to support effective performance monitoring.

6.3.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the scope of financial details provided to the Board, and the appropriateness of the information to effectively monitor whether the College's deficit was being appropriately addressed.

6.3.3 The Committee AGREED that the Director of Finance would liaise with individual Board Members to ascertain how best to present financial information to the Board and its committees.

6.4 PENSION SCHEME CONTRIBUTION RATE INCREASES

6.4.1 The Committee NOTED the abolition of National Insurance (NI) contracted out rates for employers, from 06 April 2016, and the recent increase in Teachers Pension Scheme (STSS) contribution rates from 14.9% to 17.2%.

6.4.2 The Committee NOTED the additional NI and STSS pension costs on the College budget over the academic and financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17. The Director of Finance confirmed that these additional costs would have a significant impact on the College's finances.

6.4.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the financial information collated by Colleges Scotland, in order to draft a sector-wide response to the SFC. The Committee AGREED that it was appropriate to progress of this matter through Colleges Scotland.

7 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

None.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held at 14:00hrs on 03 June 2015 at the Granton Campus.

9 CLOSED BUSINESS

No closed items of business were considered.

Meeting closed at 16:55