

College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Finance & General Purposes Committee
22 June 2022
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Present	Hein van den Wildenberg	Governor (Chair)
	Alan Measures	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gary Webb	Governor
	Donna Woodruff	Governor
Attending	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services
	Rob Petto	Assistant Principal – Funding & Performance (part)
	Michelle Blake	Marketing Manager (part)
	Paul Smith	Head of Employer Liaison, Partnerships and Commercial Training (part)
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. The Chair noted that this would be Gary Webb's last attendance at a meeting of this committee, as Gary would be retiring from the Board in the autumn term after 12 years' service. The Chair thanked Gary for his input and support for the committee.

1 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence. The Clerk advised that Paul Smith, due to present Item 5, Sub-contractor/Partnership Activities, would be late and so this item would be moved to later in the meeting.

2 Declarations of Interests

An interest was noted in Item 8, Budget 2022/23 for Donna Woodruff, Staff Governor, in which the proposed level of the pay award for 2022/23 would be discussed.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 2 March 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 were agreed as being an accurate record.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for Item 4. The Chair asked for an update on the insurance dispute for the tower block roof; the Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that assistance was being provided by Gallaghers, an ancillary service provided through Lloyds Bank. The actual repair work to be completed over the summer period was in the process of being commissioned. Governors asked about the measures in place to ensure this new work would be acceptable

and covered in the future by the insurers; the Vice Principal assured the committee that the proposed works would be agreed and covered by the insurers.

Michelle Blake joined the meeting at 8.34 am

5 CWA Annual Marketing Plan

The Head of Marketing explained that a fresh approach had been taken in the creation of annual marketing plan for 2022/23, taking inspiration from the strategic plan; the new presentation clearly identified the objectives for the Marketing department. The current process of regular monthly reporting to SMT of the key performance indicators would continue. The Chair commented positively on the link of the marketing plan to the strategic plan. Governors welcomed the new presentation. Governors noted that commercial income had historically been a difficult area to address and asked if there was sufficient focus of this within the proposed plan; the Head of Marketing agreed that there had been mixed-success previously with commercial income and that this area would be reviewed again once college plans were finalised for 2022/23, with a view to providing increased marketing support for those particular areas, and emphasising the need for flexibility within the plan to allow for this.

The Principal welcomed the plan and thanked the Marketing team for their efforts during the year and for their considerations for 2022/23. The Principal noted that the adult offer would need additional attention, particularly with regard to expanding the offer from a current focus on English & Maths and ESOL and asked how the team could address this; the Head of Marketing considered that digital marketing, much improved over the last 3 years, was probably the correct method to use when targeting adults for such campaigns. Disappointingly, a return to learning event was held in March 2022 but was not widely supported, whereas previously it had resulted in a good number of conversations to courses.

Governors recognised the good level of detail within the plan and asked about the subject-specific workshops as noted on page 4 of the plan. The Head of Marketing explained that this related to schools' liaison work resulting in workshop activities, led by the college, but actually delivered within schools. An additional method of highlighting faculties and the course offer was through creative media, particularly where a faculty had limited staffing and could not visit schools for outreach work.

Governors asked about the ability of the department to quickly run initiatives when required, such as ESOL. The Head of Marketing considered that the spring term was often lighter in respect of events and so provided an ideal time to review any urgent needs for the college and to then provide additional support and activities; it was considered that an employer survey would be carried out at that time, although it was likely that this would be outsourced for 2022/23.

Governors asked about the terminology of 'cost per click.' The Head of Marketing explained that this related to the cost of an online advertisement being divided by the number of views (clicks) it had received; the more views it received then the lower the cost per view for the college. Most courses were advertised locally, although vet nursing and access to medicine were advertised nationally.

The Chair commented on the report where it noted only 26% of the events were attended by faculty staff in the current year and asked if attendance was expected or voluntary. The Head of Marketing explained that there was a mix of expectations depending on the event; it was noted that overall success and enjoyment of the event when faculty staff were present was much improved (but accepted that teaching staff were often busy and could not support every event).

It was agreed that the committee would recommend the marketing plan for 2022/23 to the Board for approval.

Michelle Blake left the meeting at 8.52 am

Paul Smith joined the meeting at 8.53 am

6 Sub-contractor Partnership Activities

The Head of Employer Liaison, Partnerships and Commercial Training advised that performance to the R09 period had been reasonably good in the current year, although 2 providers had struggled to recruit to the numbers anticipated in the plan with explanations provided within the report.

Plans for the 2022/23 were being finalised, although little had been heard from the ESFA to confirm the correct interpretation of the reforms to reduce provision to 25% of sub-contracted activity per income stream, affecting CWA's non-devolved AEB income line. The college had interpreted the reforms to apply to learner numbers rather than financial values. This would reduce the number of starters from 418 in 2021/22 to 180 in 2022/23, and would result in a reduction of income from £897,473 to £588,101.

The Chair noted that some providers would receive a much-reduced allocation of learners and asked about the effect of this on those providers. The Head of Department noted the disappointment expressed by providers, who were fully informed of the circumstances for the reduction and explained that in some cases providers were moving into commercial activities to cover some of the shortfall. Governors asked if other neighbouring colleges would be looking to take on the activity being released by CWA, and if they would gain our students. The Head of Department was not aware that other colleges had made contact with the providers and explained that the other colleges themselves were also in the same position as CWA and were looking to reduce their subcontract provision, so it was unlikely that they would be looking to take on new providers, or CWA's former students. The Head of Department was concerned that for the providers for 2022/23, there was a risk that they would have to turn away enrolments if over-subscribed.

The Principal added that providers have been affected by a number of government initiatives in recent times, noting the 'Kickstart' scheme. The Principal assure the committee that providers were fully aware that the planned reduction in provision was as a result of the impositions from the DfE/ESFA, and not from decisions made by the college.

The Sub-contractor Partnership Plan for 2022/23 was agreed by the committee.

The Supply-Chain Fees & Charges policy for 2022/23 was agreed by the committee.

Paul Smith left the meeting at 9.06 am

7 Management Accounts – April 2022

This item was deemed 'Confidential.'

8 Budget 2022/23

This item was deemed 'Confidential.'

9 Medium Term Financial Plan

This item was deemed 'Confidential.'

10 Capital Programme

The Vice Principal Corporate Services reported that the current state of the buildings across the campuses were considered to be good. There had been recent investment in IT within the classrooms with most now having the latest high-specification presentation screens. From the report, there had been slight overspends on some of the projects. There had been some re-timing of expenditure with previous grants slipping into the current year.

Governors asked if it was possible to reduce the overall level of the capital programme, particularly with regard to buildings and IT expenditure. The Vice Principal responded that following a recent survey there were now some necessary works planned to be carried out to the boilers and so any reduction would be unlikely. The Principal added that it would be necessary for the college to continue to invest in curriculum areas, such as animal care where additional space was now required at the Wisbech campus due to increased students; other necessary works included the King's Lynn tower block roof and replacement fencing around the equine facility at the Cambridge campus.

The Vice Principal advised that future capital expenditure would relate to carbon reduction initiatives.

The report was noted.

11 ESFA Dashboard – April 2022

The committee reviewed the ESFA dashboard from April 2022. There were no concerns or questions raised.

The report was noted.

Rob Petto joined the meeting at 10.13 am

12 Funding Position and Data Control

The Assistant Principal reported that he had now received confirmation of all of the allocations, with no changes necessary to the figures within his report.

The Assistant Principal highlighted the apprenticeship funding audit where action was progressing to work through the issues identified to improve the security of funding against this income stream. Governors noted the particular difficulties in the recording of 'Off the Job' activities. Governors asked if there was an expected liability to consider against this income stream, in light of the issues identified. The Assistant Principal assured the committee that a full review of the data was progressing, with each issue being addressed; at this time it would be difficult to ascertain a liability value or if indeed an external auditor would take into consideration where retrospective action was being taken to correct the issues. If selected, notification of the request of an external audit would likely be received within the next 6-8 weeks. An update on the progress of the actions was being presented to the Audit Committee at its next meeting planned for 29 June, 2022.

Governors asked about the use of digital accounts and how these had improved systems. The Assistant Principal noted that the introduction of digital accounts had made allocations easier to manage and monitor; further, income lines were now more streamlined than previously, thus aiding monitoring and reporting. The Assistant Principal added that unlimited levels of business were possible with employers now in full control of apprenticeship funding, including non-levy employers; also, the college was working with businesses to ensure they gained the most benefit from their digital accounts.

The report was noted.

13 IT Update Report – Operations & Strategy

The Assistant Principal Funding & Performance reminded the committee that the current managed service contract with RM would be ending on 31 July 2022. The actions to ensure a smooth changeover to the in-house service were progressing well. The Assistant Principal considered that the college was ready for the launch of the new provision on 1 August 2022.

The Chair asked about the recruitment of staff to the new service. The Assistant Principal advised that 3 positions were currently out to advert with competitive salaries being offered for those posts. For the position of server manager it was likely that the recruitment to this post would take longer; measures to cover this post via an agency were being considered.

The report was noted.

Rob Petto left the meeting at 10.27 am

14 Contracts £100k-£500k & Single Payments > £1m

There were no items to note on this return for this meeting.

The report was noted.

15 College Insurance Policies/Cover – Annual Review

Governors noted the report and asked how latest premiums compared to the previous year. The Vice Principal Corporate Services reported that there had been a significant increase to premiums, caused in part to current inflation levels and also by a revaluation of the college estate.

Governors noted that the current 3-year contract had been extended to 5 years, with agreement from the Senior Management Team. The Vice Principal advised that, when the renewal next becomes due, the college would use the services of an insurance broker. Governors asked about the possibility of changing to another provider. The Vice Principal explained that this would be possible when the contract was next re-tendered.

Governors raised the issue of flood cover within the insurance contract. The Vice Principal advised that flood cover had been fixed in the current contract, although this could change in future contracts as environmental conditions changed; the Vice Principal added that he was assured when reviewing flood maps of the 3 campuses that there was low risk to the college.

The Chair asked for details of the current premium cost and the cost for the following year to be circulated to the committee for information. **ACTION-VPCS**

The report was noted.

16 Fees Policy 2022/23

The committee noted the proposed fees policy for 2022/23. There were no questions or comments raised.

The committee approved the Fees Policy 2022/23.

17 ESFA Funding Agreement – Review of Contract

The committee had previously asked to review one example funding contract on an annual basis. The Vice Principal Corporate Services introduced the ESFA Advanced Learner Loans

Agreement for 2022/23. The Vice Principal highlighted that for the time being, Schedule 10 relating to sub-contracting had been removed, to be provided in a future version of the agreement.

There were no questions or comments raised.

The report was noted.

18 Strategic Targets 2021/22 Progress Review

The committee reviewed the progress on targets in the summer term. The Chair queried 2 items:

1.4 HE student targets – the commentary suggested that numbers had improved on the previous year, whereas previous discussions regarding HE had suggested that numbers had declined in 2022/23. The Chair asked for clarification on this. **ACTION-CLERK**

2.8 Commercial Activity – income was behind plan with little chance of catching up before the end of the year, however, the RAG rating indicated that ‘Reasonable Progress’ was being made. The Chair asked for the rating to be reviewed. **ACTION-CLERK**

The report was noted.

19 Committee Performance, Terms of Reference & Future Business Agenda Plan

The committee reviewed the committee review proforma as prepared by the Clerk and concluded that it provided a fair and accurate summary of the Committee’s performance during the past year, with no changes to the report necessary.

The Terms of Reference were considered with no changes proposed.

The proposed future business agenda plan was reviewed. The Chair asked for an update on the provision of IT services to be provided at all future meetings for the time being, to allow governors oversight of the change from the managed services to the in-house provision. The Clerk advised that he would add this to the agenda plan. **ACTION-CLERK**

The report was noted.

20 Any Other Business

Governors noted the detailed discussions during the meeting, particularly with regard to the budget, and expressed the view that it would have been beneficial to have held this meeting on campus, rather than remotely via Microsoft Teams. The Chair would review this feedback with the Clerk. **ACTION- CHAIR/CLERK**

The Chair asked the committee to consider if appropriate consideration had been given to all items on the agenda for the meeting.

Mr. Measures noted that he would welcome further guidance on contribution analysis. The Vice Principal offered to meet with Mr. Measures when he was next on campus.

ACTION-AM/VPCS

21 Chair’s items for briefing to the Corporation

- i. Approval of the sub-contractor / partnership arrangements for the next academic year, and the Supply Chain Fees & Charges policy.

- ii. Review of the annual marketing plan.
- iii. Review of the management accounts for April 2022 with an expectation that the May 2022 accounts would be presented at the next Board meeting.
- iv. Review of the proposed budget and medium-term financial plan. The committee had asked for a review of the budget before final presentation to the Board.
- v. Approval of the fees policy.
- vi. Update on the IT provision for the college, moving to an in-house service from 1 August 2022.

22 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 28 September 2022, 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.39 am