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RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 7 June 2022
Time: 5.00pm
Venue: Boardroom / Video Conference

Present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Bill Webster (Principal)
Kate Flood

In Attendance:

Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)
Jane Marsh (Executive Director of HR)
Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)
Tim Openshaw (Asst. Vice Chancellor, UoB)
Jill Hebden (Minute Taker)

1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

1.1 Welcome to Members

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, which commenced at 5.10pm.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Professor George Holmes and Tony Unsworth.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed.

1.4 Request for an item to be unstarred

No requests were made.

1.5 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March 2022

The minutes of the meeting held 22 March 2022 had been previously circulated to members for consideration.

Agreed: that the minutes are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication.

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1.6 Matters arising from the Minutes and Action Progress Log

The Clerk presented the action progress log and confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed with an update provided by the Principal on the following item:

(i) Nursery:

The College did not have capacity within its current footprint to accommodate an increase in numbers. There was potential scope off site as a long-term plan.

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

2.1 ESFA Financial Health Update and Dashboard

The annual financial health dashboard, issued to governing bodies, OfS, Ofsted and GMCA was reported on by the Executive Director of Finance. The following points were noted:

- The report showed the College's improved financial health and cash strength with further positive improvements in relation to solvency, profitability and borrowing.
- The College exceeded the sector average for staffing costs although this was slightly distorted due to the learner high needs provision.
- Settlement of the smaller bank loan facility in July 2023 would further improve the College financial position.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the ESFA financial health update and dashboard provided.

2.2 Financial Update – LEO2 Forecast / Draft 2022/23 Budget

The following update was provided by the Executive Director of Finance:

- The operating surplus had been set at £0.5m for 2022-23 that ensured compliance with covenants and maintained the College financial health as 'outstanding'.
- One budget caveat was GMCA funding; although the adult provision position had improved since last year the College would not meet the target set. There would likely be a legacy effect into the next academic year and a recovery period for adult learners with increasing ongoing costs for mental health, particularly for learners.
- Apprenticeship provision continued to improve with the move towards frameworks reflecting an increase in tariff.
- Provision had been made in the 2022-23 budget for a pay increment.
- An increase in the cost of utilities was expected with projections from September anticipated to be £300-£500 additional costs.

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- In 2022-23, there were the £800k commitments to the Wave 3 bid, the current Wave 4 bid and repayment of the bank loan facility at in July 2023.
- The College had received confirmation that the Community Learning funding would be integrated from 2022-23, which would reduce the audit burden.
- The biggest concern the College faced was the staffing for T Levels in construction, digital and health that would affect the College's ability to deliver T Levels next year.
- The bank would relax the operating leverage to 4% that would be presented to the Board on 28 June and would be in place for year-end.
- The Office for National Statistics would undertake a review of the classification of colleges in England. The consequence of reclassification would be that colleges would become public sector bodies with new financial accounting years.

Governor Questions:

Why is the College moving away from its current energy supplier?

The current contract ends in September and the College will continue to seek the best price.

Can anything further be done to bring adult learners back to the College?

Marketing for adult provision had increased. There were also additional ESOL, English and maths classes running.

Have any surveys been completed to ascertain why adults are not returning?

In the main, it is a response to the pandemic and a hesitance to return to a public setting and getting out of the habit of learning. Speculatively, the job market is such now that it is easier to gain well-paid employment without the qualifications, with less thought to further development.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the financial update provided.

2.3 College KPI Dashboard

The KPI dashboard was reviewed and the following points noted:

- The adult education financial forecast was RAG rated as amber due to potential funding clawback.
- English and maths risk remained rated as red although a lot of activity had been undertaken in this area with the rating to be reviewed in autumn.
- A failure to recruit tutors in key areas had been included in the risk register.

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Governor Questions:

What was the College plan going forward for Higher Education?

HTQ's are a growth area for the College with further clarity sought on what will benefit the College and University. Discussions were underway with the College potentially delivering lower level entry programmes ie. Levels 4 and 5 that could be attractive to market.

Should the curriculum self-assessment be RAG rated green considering the areas of concern?

The overall assessment was good with three areas receiving intensive support to aid improvement. Overall the College was good with the curriculum self-assessment receiving due rigour at the Standards and Performance Committee. It would take time for English and maths to see improvements with a task and finish group that met every six weeks.

It was noted that one of the benefits of the merger was the work undertaken in English and maths and the progress being made in this area.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the contents of the KPI Dashboard.

2.4 College Strategic and Operating Plan 2022-23

The annual statement detailed a draft set of priorities for consideration by the College when formulating its Annual Strategic and Operating Plan for the year following discussions between the College and University and would be presented to both College and University Boards.

- The assumptions related to COVID-19 had been removed with the legacy impact of the pandemic remaining. For example, an increase in mental health referrals due to increased levels of anxiety.
- Work was underway on College environmental and sustainability objectives. An external consultant had been contracted to undertake baseline work across the Group that would assist the College develop its strategy to achieve a net zero target by 2038.
- Improvements had been made on digital provision and resources.

Governor Questions:

Should the operating plan be more explicit regarding the challenges of staff recruitment and retention?

An explicit reference on the recruitment challenge and spend would be included.

What learner feedback had the College received to its IT investment during the pandemic?

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There was less negative feedback on laptops with more in relation to connectivity issues. A working group had been set up that would look at hardwire solutions in targeted areas within the College and the purchase of new servers. The College would receive further feedback at the next Learner Voice forum.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted and agreed the College Strategic and Operating Plan for recommendation to the Board following further amendment.

ACTIONS:

- Principal to amend College Strategic and Operating Plan
- Clerk / Board Agenda

2.5 Health and Safety Update

The Executive Director of HR presented the report and the following points were highlighted:

- There was strong leadership and governance over health and safety with staff appropriately inducted.
- PwC had conducted an internal audit that reflected some best practice actions to work towards that included logging health and safety updates for staff.
- The College would explore additional health and safety training software.
- Termly health and safety committee meetings took place to review site matters.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the contents of the Health and Safety Update.

ACTION:

Kate Flood to be invited to future health and safety committee meetings.

2.6* Financial Regulations Review

The Executive Director of Finance presented the financial regulations and noted that the only update reflected the changes to job titles.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the contents of the Financial Regulations Review and recommended them for approval by the Board.

ACTION:

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Clerk / Board Agenda

2.7 HR Equality & Diversity Annual Report

The Executive Director of HR presented the report and the following points were highlighted:

- There had been significant mental health and wellbeing issues over the last 12 months with the Executive Director of HR taking the lead on mental health for staff and learners. There were 40 mental health first aiders with a view to increase this number.
- A new pastoral and wellbeing team would be created within support services.
- 17 diversity champions had been involved in promoting EDI at key cross College events.
- EDI training had continued in a wide range of subjects such as adverse childhood experiences, transition from FE to HE, tutorials on sexual violence and abuse etc.
- The College had an aging workforce with an average age of 49 and 70% being female. The College would develop further work on menopause and men's health over the next academic year.
- Work continued on the Rainbow Flag award as part of the College commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.

Governor Questions:

Was there a target date for achievement of the Rainbow Flag Award?

The College had an action plan and was working through the various stages.

Was 40 mental health first aiders the target?

Pre-pandemic the aim was for 50 mental health first aiders. With the next tranche of training, the College will achieve 50 at the end of the academic year.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED

No business was raised.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There had been changes in the College senior management team with an updated organisational chart to follow in due course.

ACTION:

Organisational chart to be circulated when updated.

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5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 27th September 2022 at 5.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 6.45pm

Chair's Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Allott'.

Date: 17 October 2022