

Finance & Assets Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting held on

Tuesday 21st September 2021

via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Andrew Unitt (Chair)	(AU))
	Andrew Simpson	(AS)) External Governors
	Carole Thorogood	(CT)) <i>from 4.40PM</i>
In attendance:	Martin Sim	(MS)	Interim Principal/CEO
	Andy Comyn	(AC)	CFO/Deputy Principal
	Gary McGinty	(GM)	Director of Estates and Facilities
	Robert Griffiths	(RG)	Transformation Director
	Rachel Robson	(RR)	Director of Governance
	Mike Firth	(MF)	ESFA

1	<p>WELCOME & APOLOGIES</p> <p>001 AU welcomed all to the first meeting of the new committee. Apologies were received from John van de Laarschot, Mike Green and Andy Griffin (AG). RR confirmed that CT would be late joining and that the meeting would be quorate when CT joined. Until then all those present agreed to continue with the meeting and to work through the items of the agenda that did not require decisions, for this reason items were taken in an order different to the agenda.</p>
2	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>002 No declarations of interest were received (<i>confirmed by CT on joining</i>)</p>
5	<p>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS</p> <p>003 AC presented the July management accounts (distributed as F&A.210921.003). He confirmed that the first accounts produced in year would be for p2 to the end of September. AC highlighted the key variations against the Recovery Plan as set out in the commentary on page 2. A governor noted the overall balance sheet clean up and questioned whether any further risks remained. AC confirmed that he was satisfied that the balance sheet was now clean and without any material risk but noted that some areas remained uncertain, such as exam fees and utilities, and could lead to year end accruals. A governor queried whether there were any anticipated risks or issues at year end, AC confirmed he was not anticipating any issues. A pension payment previously made in advance was questioned, a governor sought confirmation no other such payments were being made. AC confirmed that no payment would be made in August to correct the advance payment position with future payments being made as required not in advance. A governor asked if any</p>

	<p>other payments had been paid in advance. Both RG and AC confirmed that no other such payments had been identified.</p> <p>004 AU noted that management accounts would be a standing item on the committee agenda moving forward. He suggested that it would be helpful to the committee if future management included an analysis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff cost ratio, the need to address this in a way that made sense for the college was noted • Performance against budget and any subsequent forecast. • variance analysis, to highlight if significant variances were ‘one off’ events, timing issues or real variances where action was required • EBITDA – which items impact cash and which are non-cash balance sheet items. <p>AC confirmed that he would add the detail requested in a graphical format with analysis.</p> <p>Action: AC to include analysis as requested by the committee in future management accounts</p> <p>005 MF confirmed that the PowerPoint presentation of the management accounts compared very favourably with other colleges. The Committee noted the significant steps made in the content and presentation of the management accounts.</p>
6	<p>ANNUAL STATEMENTS AND ACCOUNTS</p> <p>006 AC updated on the preparation of the Annual Statements and Accounts. He confirmed that the work of the external auditors had begun in August with onsite work to commence on 27th September. He noted the funding audit that had taken place in year and the resulting adjustments required. It was noted that Audit Committee have agreed to a little more work being undertaken as required in the update Post-16 Audit Code of Practice. AC confirmed that the timetable was set and was not under pressure.</p> <p><i>The remainder of discussion on this item has been included in confidential minutes</i></p> <p><i>4.40 CT joined the meeting</i></p>
7	<p>RECOVERY PLAN</p> <p><i>This item has been included in the confidential minutes</i></p>
3	<p>ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR</p> <p>007 The committee resolved to appoint AU as Chair and AS as Vice Chair for 21/22</p>
4	<p>TERMS OF REFERENCE AND BUSINESS SCHEDULE</p> <p>008 The committee reviewed the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) and business schedule (distributed as F&A.210921.002). The segregation between the responsibilities of this committee and the Audit Committee around the Annual Statements and Accounts was noted. AC confirmed that the business schedule was light at this stage in the development of the committee. Governors noted that the schedule enabled room for flexibility and for the committee to take items that were demanding of attention as such issues arose.</p> <p>The committee resolved to recommend the TOR and the business schedule to the Board for approval.</p>
8	<p>IT STRATEGY</p>

	<p>009 The committee received the IT Strategy (distributed as F&A.210921.005). AC noted that this had been developed from the discussion document previously taken to Board and now included an action plan to enable delivery of the strategy. AC confirmed that AG had been in discussions with the IT team but had not yet given feedback. He highlighted that the spend required to deliver the plan was included in the Recovery Plan.</p> <p>010 The committee confirmed that it would be keen to hear feedback from AG on the plan. A governor queried the implication in the plan that devices may not be sufficiently up to date to deliver the learner and teacher experience needed. AC confirmed feedback from staff and learners was the need to move from the current system to one that worked and that did so at a faster speed, some new devices would be purchased within the budget. A governor queried the order of the delivery of aspects of the plan. AC confirmed that significant infrastructure work would be undertaken in 21/22 with more to follow in 22/23. The need for IT to work more closely with curriculum was acknowledged. Governors questioned what was needed in the Hub, AC confirmed that work has been undertaken recently on improving the Wi-Fi with more work planned. AC advised that Rich Williams, Director of MIS, will also take on the role of Director of IT until July 2022. Further recruitment is continuing to ensure IT has sufficient capacity to deliver the plan. A governor questioned the use of consultants within IT noting previous significant consultant spend in this area. AC confirmed that no consultants were engaged in top level roles but that some agency staff were being used pending permanent recruitment.</p> <p>011 A governor raised questions on the available budget and the risk of over and under spend. AC confirmed that an underspend within the staffing budget would offset the required agency spend as the college moved towards permanent recruitment. He also emphasised that the spend on infrastructure and devices would need to fall within the budget set in the Recovery Plan. A governor asked if work would be outsourced. AC confirmed that most of the work would be delivered in house. The governor suggested that thought be given to outsourcing if delivery of the plan was an issue through difficulty in recruitment.</p> <p>012 The Chair noted that the plan contained a lot of positives but was concerned by an action plan containing in excess of 50 actions. He suggested that it would be helpful if the plan set out the current position in terms of what the college is providing for learners, what needs to be done and what the priorities are over the next 12 months and 24 months to provide a better environment for learners and for teachers. He asked for attention to be given on the Cyber Security position. In terms of an action plan the Chair suggested that 10 priorities should be highlighted; the actions that would create the most impact for teaching, learning and security. The committee requested that an updated strategy be brought back to the next meeting for review and recommendation to Board for approval. The Chair confirmed that AC and the IT team should feel able to engage with governors from the committee ahead of the next meeting on this topic as required.</p> <p>Action: AC to bring back a revised IT Strategy to the next meeting for review and recommendation to Board</p>
9	<p>ESTATES <i>This item has been included in the confidential minutes</i></p> <p><i>GM left the meeting</i></p>
10	<p>POLICIES</p>

	<p>013 AC shared the updated Procurement Policy (distributed as F&A.210921.008), he noted the impact of the new procurement manager in updating the policy. The committee resolved to recommend the policy to the Board for approval.</p>
11	<p>AOB 014 The Chair thanked MF for his attendance</p>
12	<p>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING 015 The date of the next scheduled meeting will be brought forward to reflect the requirements of the committee TOR in relation to the approval process for the Annual Statements and Accounts. The new date to be circulated.</p> <p>The Chair closed the meeting at 5.40pm</p>