

## Meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee

**Venue:** via TEAMS/STC  
**Date:** 16 March 2022  
**Time:** 4.00pm – 6.15pm  
**Present:** Colin Seccombe (in the Chair)(CSe)  
 Donya Urwin  
 Malcolm Grady  
 Lindsey Whiterod

**Apologies:** Andy Walton  
 Martin Hottass

**In Attendance:** Jane Cuthbertson (Chief Operating Officer)  
 Steve Chittenden (Head of Finance)  
 Catherine Donnelly (Executive Director of HR)  
 Craig Scott (Director of IT)(CSc)  
 Scott Bays (Head of MIS)  
 Claire Pinkney (Contracts & Procurement Manager)  
 Lorna Lister (Clerk)

ITEM	ISSUES	ACTION
1.	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>The Committee approved apologies for absence received from those mentioned above after having first considered the reasons for their absence.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>The Chair reminded members to declare any conflicts of interest as they arose on the agenda.</p> <p>The members of the Committee were reminded of the standing declarations in respect of the roles held in Tyne Coast Academy Trust by LWh, CSe, JC and CP.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 were approved and to be signed by the Chair.</p> <p><b>Matters Arising not covered on the agenda</b></p> <p><u>3.1 Tyne Coast Financial Plan 2021-23 from ESFA</u>          The financial dashboard was to be presented at the next committee meeting.</p> <p><u>3.2 Learner Recruitment and Funding Update 21/22</u>          Confidential item.</p>	JC
4.	<p><b>Student Withdrawals – mid-year update</b></p> <p>Confidential item.</p>	

<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Business Continuity Plan Update</b></p> <p>The purpose of the report was to update governors on the college Business Continuity Procedures.</p> <p>The following was highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College Management Team took part in a business continuity cyber-attack scenario-based training exercise in December 2021.</li> <li>• Business Continuity Policy updated ahead of schedule to reflect lessons learnt from scenario exercise.</li> <li>• IT Services currently working with Microsoft and Jisc on a cloud solutions assessment exercise to assess feasibility of moving servers from on-premises to the cloud. This would improve the IT disaster recovery position.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair asked had internal audit ever reviewed at the Business Continuity Plan? CS stated in 2019/20 it had but it was possibly due again.</p> <p>A governor stated that he found the report very helpful and asked did all sites, for example the Marine School, have site specific information? Yes, given the resources that they had they would have policies in place for any occurring eventuality.</p> <p>The Chair asked regarding business continuity what was the biggest risk to the college? CSc stated that Covid was still present and that was the most immediate risk aside from cyber security. The impact that could have could cause sever disruption however it would be difficult to see the impact of the student experience and achievement.</p> <p>The Chair asked were there adequate resources going into planning and safeguarding measures? Yes, CSc stated that there were over 3500 computers and the IT department had to plug the vulnerabilities, an attacker only had to find one that slipped through the net.</p> <p>Following the extensive fishing exercises that were completed, the Chair asked was there reasonable awareness and respect across the organisation for what needed to be done and they did take it seriously? Yes, there was support from the senior leadership team. From a recent exercise it was benchmarked, a typical compromise percentage was 21%, the college sat at 56%, which was excellent.</p> <p>There had been processes recently implemented such as the two-factor authenticator and he felt that was the single best thing an organisation could do to protect itself.</p> <p>A governor asked because of the energy crisis was energy consumption included in this policy. CSc stated that it had not been considered but it could be included.</p> <p>An analysis by Microsoft regarding moving servers into the cloud was discussed and the cost implications attached, CSc explained that if there was an energy crisis the cloud system would be maintained in a Microsoft Data Centre and envisaged the government would make sure that they were supported as millions of businesses used their services as well as the government itself.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That the committee accept the report and recommend the Business Continuity Policy to the Board for approval.</b></p>	<p><b>CSc</b></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Human Resources Report</b></p> <p>The purpose of the report was to update the committee on key HR issues, the report included information relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid</li> </ul>	

	<p>CD noted that there had been 105 cases since the start of the academic year, another thirteen cases since writing the report and 3 of those in the last 24hrs. This was being monitored on a weekly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gender Pay Gap Report</b> There had been a very slight reduction of female staff who were being paid in the upper middle and upper quartiles, which was a result of a small increase in the numbers of men paid at this level, with female staff numbers remaining static.</li> <li>• <b>Sickness Absence</b> The absence data had been consistently low for a number of years, however the college, like most organisations, were facing difficult times in terms of staffing numbers caused by COVID, self-isolation and recruitment issues. This was impacting on the wellbeing of staff and sickness absence rates, which were showing an increase. Therefore, an update on sickness absence for the period 1st September 2021 to 31st January 2022 was presented.</li> <li>• <b>HIVE Wellbeing Survey</b> A short survey specifically related to wellbeing issues was given to all staff on Monday 17th January 2022 and ran for 2 weeks. The response rate was 50%.  HIVE HR were presenting the results to CMT on 10th March, this was too late for a detailed report to be presented to the committee. Therefore, CD verbally updated the committee as to the outcomes from that meeting.  A governor stated that he found the report to be valuable, he felt it would be helpful to have an action plan in place to try and address some of the concerns. The committee felt that this was an issue that should be shared with the Board. CD was to give a brief update to this committee but was asked to prepare a more in-depth paper for the Board.  CD informed the committee that a summary had been sent to the Trade Unions, there was a report being prepared whereby HIVE and the Unions would present to the staff. A governor stated that interim feedback to staff would be advantageous, which could give reassurance that the college was listening to them and responding. CD stated that HIVE had offered to come into the college and develop focus groups, which would highlight some of the issues the staff had.  There was a discussion around the increase to the National Minimum Wage to £9.50 in April 2022, which was going to affect the business support staff. The NMW was going to hit the college at the top of pay scale 3. It was noted that the differential between the lower and higher-grade roles would be less significant. Therefore, those doing a more complex role or a more supervisory role were not going to be awarded much more than those on the lower scales. The Chair highlighted that this was only going to keep on increasing year on year.  CD stated that she was developing proposals along with LWh and JC. JC had some initial thoughts about what should happen but also had to balance with what the college could afford. It could be the case that unique solutions for individuals were sought but were mindful it needed to be justified if that decision were made. <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>That the committee accept the report and acknowledge the information as presented.</b></li> <li><b>That the key issues that have been highlighted from the HIVE survey form a basis of a report which was to be presented to the Board.</b></li> </ol> </li></ul>	<p>CD</p> <p>CD</p>
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<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>The following policies were presented to the committee for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grievance Policy - reviewed and updated in accordance with good practice. There were also slight amendments to job titles.</li> <li>• Harassment and Bullying Policy – Appendix A had been included which lists the stages of hearing and the hearing officers.</li> <li>• Leave of Absence Policy - reviewed and updated in accordance with good practice. There were also slight amendments to job titles.</li> <li>• Management of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy – Reviewed but no significant changes.</li> <li>• Security Policy – the policy had been reviewed and some quite major changes had been made. It was recommended areas of red were removed and areas of blue to be included.</li> <li>• Fees Policy 2022-23 – the policy had been reviewed and recommended areas in red to be included.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>That the governors receive the report and acknowledge the information provided.</b></li> <li>ii. <b>That the Management of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy, Harassment and Bullying Policy and Leave of Absence Policy are agreed.</b></li> <li>iii. <b>That the committee recommend the Grievance Policy, Security Policy and the Fees Policy 2022-23 to the Board for approval.</b></li> </ol>	<p>LL</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Partnership Activity</b></p> <p>Confidential item</p>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Management Accounts and commentary</b></p> <p>Confidential Item</p>	
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>Funding Allocations 2022/23</b></p> <p>Confidential Item</p>	
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Budget – early indications'</b></p> <p>Confidential item</p>	
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Estates Strategy</b></p> <p>JC reported that there had been no movement regarding estates and no movement on the strategy due to the ongoing bids the college were working on. It was noted it was potentially going to be spring before any outcome would be known.</p> <p>The Chair asked was the delay causing any practical problems for the College? JC stated the College was progressing with the Levelling Up Fund Stage 2 and had received good feedback from Stage 1.</p> <p>The Chair reflected on an email that was received, which identified the damage caused by the storms the North East had been subject to, there were some large issues identified, how were these being managed? JC stated that it was about managing the health and safety aspect as well as mitigating the risks by closing sections of the college until further information regarding the bid was known.</p>	

	<b>Resolved: That the committee accept the report and acknowledge the information as presented.</b>	
<b>13.</b>	<b>FE Capital Transformation and Fund Update</b>  Confidential item	
<b>14.</b>	<b>Approval of Contracts and Planned Expenditure in Excess of 125k</b>  Confidential item	
<b>15.</b>	<b>Econocom leasing update paper</b>  Confidential item	
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>Energy Contract update</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the current position of Gas and Electricity contracts across the Tyne Coast College (TCC) portfolio.</p> <p>The following was presented to the committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The current energy market was extremely volatile owing to several global factors, combining to an increase in wholesale prices. This was having an impact on gas and electricity costs creating a significant risk for those contracts that had expired or were due for renewal.</li> <li>2. Greener Solutions Group Limited (GSG) were energy broker's acting on behalf of Tyne Coast College (TCC) and had been supporting TCC to mitigate the risk of increasing costs.</li> <li>3. Across TCC gas and electric portfolio of meters 87% were in contract until at least 2023 and therefore not an immediate risk. There were three meters out of contract and on deemed (out of contract) rates. These rates were variable and dependent on the market, so costs were considerably higher than those meters in contract. It was important to note that consumption for the meters out of contract was relatively low compared to the combination of the portfolio.</li> <li>4. Several options were being explored to mitigate the risk for the meters out of contract including renegotiating new contracts where possible.</li> </ol> <p>JC stated that the forecast out-turn would be looked at again following the information CP had presented today.</p> <p>The Chair felt reading the report that the brokers, Greener Solutions, knew what they were doing and felt confident that they were achieving the best outcome regarding the ever-changing climate for the college. CP agreed and stated they were constantly assessing the climate looking for deals for the meters that required attention.</p> <p>CP stated that 87% of the meters were on good rates the risk increased when those meters start to fall off contract next year. This would be reviewed in 6-10 months' time before the contracts expired, the first being April 2023.</p> <p>The Chair stated that this was a complicated area and was forever changing. A governor stated that it was an area for concern and another governor stated that this was only the start of the issues but thanked CP for her hard work.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>That the committee receive the report and acknowledge the information as provided.</b></li> </ol>	<b>JC</b>

	<p>ii. That an Annual Reflection paper on contracts and procurement was to be presented to the next committee</p>	CP
17.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked the committee and the staff for preparing the papers.</p>	
18.	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting</b></p> <p>Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 at 4.00pm</p>	
19.	<p><b>Identification Confidential Items</b></p> <p><b>Resolved: That the following items are to remain confidential:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item 3 – Matters arising (3.2)</li> <li>• Item 4 – Student Withdrawals – mid-year update</li> <li>• Item 8 – Partnership Activity</li> <li>• Item 9 – Management Accounts</li> <li>• Item 10 – Funding Allocations 2022/23</li> <li>• Item 11 – Budget – early indications’</li> <li>• Item 13 – FE Capital Transformation Fund update</li> <li>• Item 14 - Approval of Contracts and Planned Expenditure in Excess of 125k</li> <li>• Item 15 - Econocom leasing update paper</li> </ul>	

Signed: ..... Date: .....