**The Corporation of Newham Sixth Form College**

**Finance & Resources Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2023**

**Members**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Kate Towner (Chair) | Independent Member  | Present  |
| Mandeep Gill  | Principal & Chief Executive  | Apologies – ill health  |
| Sam Mendy | Support Staff Member  | Present  |
| Martin Rosner  | Independent Member  | Present  |
| Federico Valori | Independent Member  | Present  |
| Graham Willson | Independent Member  | Present  |

**Non-Members in attendance**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Susanne Datta  | Executive Director Human Resources & Organisational Development  | Present  |
| Susanne Davies | Interim Principal  | Present  |
| Michael Gainlall | Vice Principal Finance & Operations  | Present  |
| Kevin Harmsworth  | New Build Manager  | Present  |
| Robin Jones | Head of Governance  | Present  |

**1** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Committee was sorry to learn that Mandeep Gill was still away from College due to ill health. As yet there was no indication as to when he would be able to return.

The Committee noted that Graham Willson was expected to join online shortly.

The meeting was quorate from the beginning.

**2 INTERIM PRINCIPAL**

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Susanne Davies (known in College as Davies) to her first meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee following her appointment as Interim Principal.

**3 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted that at the meeting on 11 October 2023 the Corporation had approved the following membership of the Finance & Resources Committee for 2023/24:

* Mandeep Gill
* Sam Mendy
* Martin Rosner
* Kate Towner (Chair)
* Federici Valori
* Graham Willson

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Sam Mendy to his first meeting following appointment as the Support Staff Member.

**4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The Members confirmed that there were no declarations of interest to be recorded on this occasion at this stage of the meeting based on the published Agenda.

**5** **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 JUNE 2023**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee held on 28 June 2023 were agreed to be a correct record.

**6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 JUNE 2023**

The Committee noted that, other than one issue summarised below, there were no matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee held on 28 June 2023 which were not covered by the published Agenda.

The Head of Governance advised that at the meeting on 11 October 2023 the Corporation had agreed to amend the Terms of Reference of the Finance & Resources Committee so that responsibility for reviewing and approving changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy required under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions & Savings) Regulations 2014 was delegated to the Committee.

**7 AGENDA – ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair proposed and the Committee agreed to reorder the published Agenda and take the item on the appointment of the Vice Chair after the discussion on Estates at this point of the meeting.

In addition there were 2 new items – an update on student related incidents and a proposed initial discussion on staff turnover and recruitment.

**8 STUDENT RELATED INCIDENTS**

The Interim Principal provided the Committee with an update on an incident which took place the previous day (16 October 2023) when 2 NewVIc students were stabbed outside of the College. Police and ambulance service attended and the area was cordoned off for some time.

*Post meeting note: It was subsequently found out that a third student had been stabbed but this had not been made known to the College at the time.*

It was fortunate that the stabbings were not life threatening or life changing but were still upsetting for all concerned.

It was explained that, following contact from the Department for Education, the Interim Principal made contact with the HMI for London as it appeared that the incident had been reported as a terrorist one which may trigger an Ofsted inspection. There was absolutely no evidence that this was anything more than a robbery with the students being stabbed as a result.

There was now another incident in the area but outside of the College taking place at this very moment and as a result the Interim Principal was in discussion with the police so as to seek to secure the safety of students and staff.

The Committee was interested to note that the metal arch was planned to be used by the College in November. The dangers of the carrying and use of knives was addressed as part of the College’s tutorial programme so as to raise awareness.

As a result of the current and ongoing incident the Interim Principal would need to go in and out of the meeting to support students and staff and to respond to the police as appropriate.

The Committee agreed following discussion:

1. To wish the students affected well
2. To thank the staff for the way that they responded to the incidents
3. To note that an update would be provided for all Members of the Corporation with due urgency

*Note: Graham Willson joined the meeting towards the end of the following item*

**9 ESTATES**

The Committee received with the Agenda a detailed report prepared by the Vice Principal Finance & Operations supported by the New Build Manager which addressed a wide range of issues including:

* An update to the College Masterplan
* Post 16 Capacity Fund
* High level life safety works across the College (1 fire detection and compartmentation and 2 electrical safety)
* Carbon Reduction Strategy
* Proposed Capital Programme to manage the loss of BU and G Blocks in December 2024 (end of planning permission), the changes in the curriculum and to upgrade existing buildings
* Budget costs for proposed works

The report was supported by numerous photographs and outline plans.

It was noted with concern that, as yet SLT, and the wider staff and students had not been consulted on the proposals and this was essential before any final decisions could be taken. A major consideration was to have a clear view on the future long-term course offer given likely student demand.

The Committee agreed following a lengthy and wide ranging discussion:

1. To note the report and supporting photos and plans as presented
2. To look forward to receiving at the meeting on 29 November 2023 a report setting out clear recommendations with projected costs of all aspects of the works (such as demolition costs), a cashflow forecast and timelines so that a recommendation could be presented to the Corporation on 13 December 2023 for approval.

*Note: Kevin Harmsworth left the meeting at this point*

**10 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 2023/24**

The Committee agreed to appoint Graham Willson as the Vice Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee for 2023/24.

**11 COLLEGE RESTRUCTURE AND REDUNDANCY PROGRAMME**

The Executive Director Human Resources & Organisational Development provided the Committee with an update on the College restructure and redundancy programme.

The points highlighted included:

* The costs and savings involved in the programme which overall provided a reduction in the staff headcount
* A Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out and it was reassuring to report that there were no “alarm bells” of the consequences of the programme
* Three members of staff had appealed against the redundancy notifications and none were upheld.

A Member asked about the balance between changes in the staff establishment and if overall initiatives had produced financial savings. The Skills Builder Team was highlighted as warranting further exploration as to the final impact given investments in new posts.

The Committee agreed following discussion:

1. to note the report on the College restructure and redundancy programme
2. to look forward to receiving at a future meeting an analysis of the costs given reductions and investments including the impact of the changes affecting what was the Skills Builder Team

*Note: Susanne Datta left the meeting at this point*

**12 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS APPROPRIATE TO THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the report relating to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the financial health and certain HR ones tracked by the Finance & Resources Committee on an ongoing basis.

The Committee AGREED:

1. to note the report on the KPIs for financial health and certain HR aspects of activity
2. to look forward to receiving further updates on the full range of KPIs at future meetings including updated and realistic targets for 2023/24 set out on one sheet of paper so that past and forecast were clear and easy to compare.

**13 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – JULY 2023**

The Committee received the comprehensive Management Accounts for July 2023 (Period 12 of 2022/23) which provided the basis for the preparation of the Financial Statements and the end of year audit.

The Vice Principal Finance & Operations reported that the annual end of year audit year was far more thorough than in previous years although so far no issues of concern had been identified. He went on to stress that the numbers quoted in the report published with the Agenda needed to be regarded as interim and there would be changes before the Financial Statements were presented to the meeting of the Committee on 29 November and, subsequently, the Corporation on 13 December 2023.

The Committee agreed following a wide ranging discussion:

1. to NOTE the Management Accounts for July 2023 which provided the basis for the end of year audit and the preparation of the Financial Statements to be presented to the Committee on 29 November and the Corporation on 13 December 2023
2. to recognise that the amounts quoted in the Management Accounts must be viewed as provisional and there was much to be done before the year end position was finalised and this included the content of the Balance Sheet.

**14 INCOME & EXPENDITURE BUDGET - 2023/24 – UPDATE**

The Committee received an update provided by the Vice Principal Finance & Operations on the Income & Expenditure Budget for 2023/24 including the cost of the pay award over and above the original projections and the receipt of additional funding from the Government for 16-18 year olds.

A Member asked about the financial impact of the restructuring and redundancy programmes and it was apparent that there needed to be a further analysis as to the final costs given the number of new appointments made. One area highlighted earlier in the meeting where there needed to be a further review of the actual savings against the investments in new staff concerned what was Skills Builder Team.

The Head of Governance drew attention to the reference from the Curriculum, Quality & Engagement Committee on 28 September 2023 with regard to possible additional funding to support those experiencing mental health and other conditions. This was being considered as to how best to respond.

A Member asked about the College’s response to those affected by the cost of living crisis and it was confirmed that breakfasts and lunches would continue to be supported in 2023/24; the lunches were provided as a supplement to the amount provided by the Government in the form of free school meals provision.

The Committee agreed:

1. to note the position statement provided by the Vice Principal Finance & Operations on the factors impacting on the Income & Expenditure Budget for 2023/24 as approved by the Corporation on 12 July 2023 including the pay award over and above the anticipated increase
2. to look forward to receiving at the meeting scheduled for 29 November 2023, if at all possible, a comprehensive update to the Budget taking into account all known and anticipated factors so that, it appropriate, a recommendation may be presented to the Corporation to amend the Budget
3. to request the presentation of a report on the operation of the College Cafeteria so as to increase the understanding of Members of the level of operation and costs involved

**15 RESERVES POLICY**

The Committee received the proposed Reserves Policy prepared by the Vice Principal Finance & Operations at the request of Members.

It was recognised that the College was in the fortunate position to have reserves to consider relative to many other colleges. Whilst the fund had been built up to support the proposed improvements in the College estate, it was considered by Members to be absolutely essential that students and staff are supported and have the resources to provide a good experience for all be it in terms of, for example, curriculum related resources or the employment of specialist staff.

The Committee agreed following discussion:

1. to receive and note the proposed Reserves Policy and to adopt it as a working document with the proviso that it is continued to be updated in the light of experience and feedback from Members
2. to look forward to receiving at a future meeting an estimate of the costs of improving the College estate so that there was a clear understanding of the amount available for other purposes
3. to place on record the view of the Committee that investments need to continue to be made in the curriculum and wider life of the College to improve the student and staff experience

**16 HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT – 2022/23**

The Committee received the Health & Safety Annual Report for 2022/23.

The immediate comment by Members was that it was thought that the Annual Report as presented was too brief although it did cover key aspects such as the number of reported accidents and incidents (ie 135) although there was limited comparative data provided for the type of accident / incident or area of the College other than, overall, there was a large increase in reports (ie 59 in 2021/22 to 135 in 2022/23). It was explained in the report that the increase in numbers were thought to be due to the introduction of a more user friendly and accurate reporting system and the increase in the number of students within the Learner Support Department of the College.

A Member asked about the accident reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the RIDDOR arrangements. It was explained that this had been investigated – it involved a member of staff pushing against a window which was shut – with remedial action taken with measures implemented to try to avoid in the future. The HSE decided to take no action against the College.

Members were particularly interested in the health and safety related training provided for staff. The Vice Principal Finance & Operations advised the Committee that mandatory training was tracked by the College and time was reserved for the development session taking place later in the week for staff to take the online modules. For new members of staff it was confirmed that health and safety training was part of their induction programme.

The Committee agreed after discussion:

1. to receive and note the Health & Safety Annual Report for 2022/23
2. to ask the Executive to take into account the observations made by the Committee during the review of the Annual Report so as to improve on the usefulness of the document in future years
3. to request that the Executive ensure that in future the Link Member for Health & Safety has an opportunity to review and comment on the draft report before it is presented to the Committee.

**17 HEALTH & SAFETY – INTRODUCTION OF KPIs**

The Committee received the report prepared by the Vice Principal Finance & Operations at the request of Members at an earlier meeting setting out proposed KPIs for health and safety.

The KPIs as presented were thought to be a good starting point although it was thought in the case of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) the target for completion and maintaining them as up-to-date documents must be 100%. It also followed that there needed to be clear arrangements in place to support members of staff who may need assistance in evacuating the buildings in the event of an emergency.

For risk assessments it was proposed that there needed to a target for the number carried out and the number sampled on a rolling programme of termly and annual reviews given the assessed level of risks involved for an area or activity.

The Committee AGREED, following discussion:

1. to welcome the proposed KPIs for health and safety for 2023/24 and to adopt these subject to ongoing review and the incorporation of the points made with regard to PEEPs and risk assessments
2. to look forward to receiving in future health and safety updates and in the Annual Reports the actual performance against the KPIs as well as any proposed additions and refinements in the light of experience and new developments

**18 STAFF RECRUITMENT AND TURNOVER**

The Committee noted that the Support Staff Member had suggested, following his first attendance at a meeting of the Corporation (ie on 11 October 2023), that there would be value in discussing staff recruitment and turnover.

The Committee agreed, following a brief discussion, to request the Executive Director Human Resources & Organisational Development to present to the next meeting a report outlining the College’s approach to recruitment and the extent of staff turnover drawing on any national data that may be available for comparison purposes.

The final comment at this time was that the engagement of agency workers was not ideal but it was necessary for the College to cover classes and services where there were hard to fill posts plus covering for unplanned absences.

**19 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – 2023/24**

The Committee NOTED that, based on Calendar approved by the Corporation on 12 July 2023, the dates of the planned meetings of the Finance & Resources Committee were as follows:

* Wednesday 29 November 2023 at 4 pm
* Wednesday 13 March 2024 at 4 pm
* Monday 1 July 2024 at 4 pm

It was recognised that other meetings will be arranged if and when thought to be appropriate to address issues.

*Note: Sam Mendy and Micael Gainlall left the meeting at this point and Sussanne Datta returned*

**20 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM OF BUSINESS – NEU INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

The Committee received a brief update on issues relating to the NEU industrial action which had affected the College to such a great extent over the last two years and, in particular, in 2022/23.

Following the Special Meeting of the Corporation on 13 September 2023 the Agreement between the NEU and the College had been signed and appropriate issues were being addressed. This included reviewing appropriate policies and procedures with recommendations being presented to future meetings of the Committee where Member approval was required. A meeting involving ACAS was scheduled for 22 November 2023 and, notwithstanding the absence of the Principal & Chief Executive, it was thought by Members that it was important that the meeting with the NEU representatives and the College took place as planned.

It was very much hoped that industrial action could be avoided in the future with good working relationships in place.

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