



Halesowen College

Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee Meeting

held 24 February 2010

Present: Paul Downing (*Chair*), Alison Perks (*Vice Chair*), Keith Bate, Andy Comyn, Corinne Crannage, Alison Shipway, Pam Thomas

In attendance: Jacquie Carman (*Director of Finance and Administration*)
Jenny Jerina (*Personnel and Quality Director*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk*)

Presentation: Staff Recruitment and Deployment Arrangements

Paul Bridgewater explained the range of lecturer and teaching posts across the College giving an example of how areas deploy staff to meet course hours.

Jenny Jerina presented the recruitment process addressing replacement for vacancies, areas of growth and 'hard to fill' posts. Flexibility in recruitment including part-time appointments and developments including trainees on pathways to teaching were also explained. Jenny Jerina further detailed the timetable for annual recruitment, following safe recruitment procedures, decision making and contingency plans where appointments were not made.

Pam Thomas questioned resource costs associated with high volume applications. Jenny Jerina explained that person specifications were being made clearer to support the process and deter speculators.

Alison Shipway asked if there were additional self selection questionnaires in use and if the same application procedures were followed for internal applications. Jenny Jerina replied that self selection guidance additional to the job specification was not provided. Internal candidates followed the same procedure but were informed personally if they were not shortlisted.

In response to questions from Andy Comyn regarding application tracking, recruitment periods and calculating current year recruitment needs, Jenny Jerina explained that applications were tracked to advertisement sources and Paul Bridgewater noted that a cautious approach based on student number projections was taken including the use of fixed term contracts. Keith Bate explained that the March recruitment period addressed the requirement for school staff to provide notice of one term. Keith Bate noted that there were a number of good candidates amongst Newly Qualified Teachers.

1 Apologies

There were none.

2 Declarations of Interest

Alison Perks declared her standing interest as a member of UNISON with reference to the minutes of 11 November 2009, item 8, Framework for Pay and Conditions of Service.

Keith Bate declared his interest under the confidential minutes of 11 November 2009, item 9, Remuneration of Senior Post-holders.

3 Minutes of Meeting held 11 November and 11 December 2009 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meetings held 11 November 2009 including the confidential minute, and the confidential minute of the meeting held 11 December 2009 were approved as a true record.

All actions or matters arising were addressed by the agenda.

4 Health and Safety

The minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held 10 November 2010 were received.

5 Staff Council

The minutes of the Staff Council held 9 November 2009 were received.

6 Annual Staff Development Review

Jenny Jerina presented the annual review addressing previous and current year performance and planned future developments. The previous year's Recognition, Reflection and Reward scheme had been successful and there was a wide range of staff development events on offer with good participation in the current year. Emerging issues for 2010/2011 included differentiated learning, equality and diversity, assessment and checking, ILT and the introduction of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Andy Comyn asked about class streaming in relation to differentiation. Jenny Jerina explained that in addition to streaming differentiation is needed within classes to meet student different learning styles. Keith Bate further explained the Collegiate approach and that some cohorts were small which made it difficult to stream.

The report was received.

7 Framework for Pay and Conditions of Service

Keith Bate explained the basis for a curriculum leadership and management programme which could address emerging requirements including those of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework in addition to existing demands such as reduced variability in quality assurance across curriculum areas.

The proposed programme would be delivered over the academic year 2010/11 commencing with induction following Easter 2010. It would be open to aspiring as well as current course leaders. Staff would be rewarded for following the scheme with a one off payment in July 2011.

Members asked a number of detailed questions on numbers of staff including the role of managers, staff participation and support on the programme.

In discussing the requirements of the new QCF members requested a briefing

Action: Keith Bate

In agreeing the recommendations members asked for a follow up report and Keith Bate invited members to attend some of the sessions for the scheme.

Action: Keith Bate

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to recommend to Corporation that:

1. A curriculum leadership programme for 2010/11 be introduced linked with appraisal, development needs and a clear set of criteria relating to fulfilling the scheme.
2. All staff identified to participate in the scheme would include in their individual CPD plans fulfilment of the programme commencing with induction and initial elements June/July 2010. The agreed programme would be tailored to an individual's needs and include reference to more experienced members of staff supporting newer appointees. The programme would be monitored by line managers with a mid-year progress review. At the end of the academic year achievement of the programme would be assessed and confirmed.
3. On certification that an individual has successfully completed the programme, the individual concerned would then be eligible for an enhanced non-superannuable payment of £300 in July 2011.
4. That the Corporation set aside £45,000 from the operating surplus in 2009/10 to be earmarked as a designated reserve to fund this investment for the future.
5. The Principal considers options for the possibility of a CPD scheme which could be introduced for support staff corresponding with the curriculum leadership scheme to aid the successful delivery of transformational projects 2010/11.

8 Review of Revenue Budget 2009/10

Jacque Carman presented the review of revenue budget reporting that the College continued to forecast an operating surplus of £1,233,976.

Changes included the granting of permission by the Learning and Skills Council to proceed with the next phase of Block 0 demolition and construction of Block 9. At the point of demolition the College would conduct an impairment review. The value of the part of the block to be demolished had been incorporated into the revenue budget model.

The Learning and Skills Council had conducted a review and awarded the College funding for 400 additional learners which had been embedded into the budget model.

Under other income streams Jacquie Carman reported that investment income had declined further.

Under expenditure increased pay costs for teaching and learning support matched the levels of work. In the absence of 2009/10 information on FRS17 pension liabilities the budget had been revised to incorporate the 2008/09 actual level.

With reference to non pay expenditure the declining learner support funding from the Learning and Skills Council and the College increased budget were reported.

Risks to the budget remained unchanged.

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to recommend to Corporation the approval of the revised Revenue Budget.

9 Review of Budgeting Policy

Jacquie Carman presented the report outlining the roles, responsibilities and timescales for the budget process highlighting the move from the Learning and Skills Council to the Young People's Learning Agency and the Skills Funding Agency.

Jacquie Carman further reported on budget arrangements for contracts and pay.

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to recommend to Corporation the approval of the Budgeting Policy.

10 Tuition Fees and Fee Remission Policy 2010/11

With reference to the Skills Investment Strategy 2010/11, Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Jacquie Carman explained that colleges were expected to raise the fee contribution to 50% as part of a robust fee strategy.

Jacquie Carman detailed the course costs per hour for part-time students over 19, fee remission categories and fees for overseas students. Jacquie Carman further explained the course bandings under Economic Activities, Guidelines and Rules in relation to non government funded activities with the introduction of a new band F for professional level courses.

Members discussed the impact of the change whereby discretionary learner support funds could no longer be used to meet course fees.

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to approve the Tuition Fees and Fee Remission Policy 2010/11.

11 Data Protection Policy

Jacquie Carman referred to the publication of a new good practice guide, informed members that the Information Commissioner had been given extended powers and that penalties for infringement had been significantly increased. In reviewing policy and guidelines Jacquie Carman highlighted the relevant legislation listed and emphasised that the College must consider how the law and safeguarding guidance should inform responses to parental requests for information.

Guidelines for staff including data security were provided, staff development had been undertaken in February of the current year and was accessible on the intranet.

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to approve the revised Data Protection Policy.

12 Train to Gain Risk Assessment and Contract Performance

Jacquie Carman reported that demand for places had risen above Learning and Skills Council capacity. The College had to comply with the Minimum Contract Value (MCV). Two new 'cash envelopes' were made available from the Learning and Skills Council to undertake further work. The College had little scope for the August to March envelope due to current student carry over but the second envelope from April to July gave scope for new learners. The College would discuss the practical proposal to profile a contract over a 16 month period.

Train to Gain success rates were strong. Risks remained the same with the area set at a budget neutral position.

The report was received.

13 Funding 2010/11

Keith Bate outlined the current funding prognosis subject to new arrangements with the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency and local authorities. Consolidated figures revealed significant increases in student numbers but this baseline was subject to reduction by an adjustments process.

Both Adult Learner Responsive and Employer Responsive funding had been reduced with further restrictions meaning those already possessing a Level 2 qualification no longer qualified for funding.

Higher Education was varied with Halesowen College maintaining relationships with current partners.

Keith Bate stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy operating surplus to mitigate future uncertainties within the sector.

The report was received.

14 Capital Developments

Keith Bate reported that Greswolde Construction Limited had emerged as the preferred contractor for Block 9 with a further £50,000 being saved through the use of a further review process.

A bid for the Masonic Hall had been unsuccessful and therefore placed on hold as a future potential option.

The College could seek consent from the Skills Funding Agency to pursue construction of Block 10 with consideration of this and campus transition arrangements being brought before the Corporation in March 2010.

Members asked questions relating to interim accommodation arrangements in particular arrangements for training kitchens. Keith Bate explained the plan to place temporary kitchens in place of the current staff centre with various adjustments to address accommodation needs. Members were also informed of a potential to lease space from the Earls High School.

The Finance and Resources Committee noted the report and recommended that proposals relating to future capital adjustments with particular regard to Block 10 be considered at the Corporation meeting In March 2010.

Action: Keith Bate

15 Treasury Management and Investment

Jacque Carman reported the investment interest received and that following the policy review the College now had investment in four banks as agreed. No change to institutions was proposed.

Jacque Carman had monitored the banks against standards such as Fitch, Standard and Poor or Dunn and Bradstreet ratings to ensure they continued to meet minimum standards and the minimum requirements of the Treasury Management Policy.

The Finance and Resources Committee noted the report and resolved to approve Appendix A of the Treasury Management Policy.

16 Review of Procurement Policy and Standing Orders Relating to Contracts

Jacque Carman informed members that significant change to European procurement law introduced further risk to colleges as it shifted power from purchasers to suppliers. Purchasers would need to provide very clear tender documentation, observe a fifteen day 'stand still' period, and supply bespoke feedback to unsuccessful bidders. The process was open to more challenge from companies and therefore provided a higher risk.

Andy Comyn asked if insurance was in place. Jacque Carman responded that the College had written to the insurers but that there were potentially wider costs of disruption to tender processes, awarding contracts and carrying on key business functions.

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to approve the revised Procurement Policy and Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

17 Purchasing Update

The final report on the action plan following the Gershon Efficiency Review was received. Members agreed that there had been very good progress in College and that future information would be received through an annual procurement report.

The Finance and Resources Committee resolved to approve the inclusion of an annual procurement report in the Finance and Resources Committee cycle of business.

18 Value for Money Annual Report

Jacque Carman presented a report addressing the wider remit of value for money across the College.

Purchasing arrangements had been considered and using the Learning and Skills Council calculator a positive conclusion on realising savings was determined.

Ofsted had judged value for money on all factors across the College in the 2009 inspection as outstanding which had been sustained in the current year.

The report was received.

19 Functional Plans

Keith Bate explained that the Functional Plans comprised business plans for which each member of the College Executive were responsible. The plans had been updated in January indicating a positive position with no major new risks for the current year identified.

Alison Perks asked for clarification on digital developments.

In response to questions from Alison Shipway members discussed the format and use of the Functional Strategies by governors particularly the use of actions and aims and the clarification of measurable targets.

The updated Functional Plans were received.

20 Any Other Business

There was none

21 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 22 June 2010.

Closed: 8.15pm