

Boston College

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 MARCH 2022

1. PRESENT

Gerry Tawton (Chair), Peter Cropley, David Earnshaw, Claire Foster and Kelly Harris.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Jen Durrant (Executive Director: People), (Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services) and Charlotte Robinson (Head of Finance).

Apologies for absence were received from David Parnell.

Attendance 83%

2. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress made against items in the committee's action log.

It was noted that the curriculum review was commencing imminently. David Earnshaw asked about staff utilisation. Claire Foster and Kelly Harris gave information about how teaching staff time is managed and the intention is to ensure that existing staff are fully utilised. There will be an update on the review at the next meeting.

Jen Durrant advised members that the college is working with a software supplier on a system which would track and monitor staff appraisals and quality targets.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 31 January 2022 were reviewed and approved.

4. FINANCE

Members received a report from the Head of Finance on the college's financial performance.

Charlotte Robinson told members that the forecast deficit took the college close to Requires Improvement financial health. The forecast includes provision for AEB clawback but this figure is expected to rise. Peter Cropley asked whether the difference was capable of being mitigated. Charlotte stated that the final position is likely to be very close to Requires Improvement. Gerry Tawton asked whether anything could be done to improve AEB performance and Claire Foster advised that a meeting had been held with college managers to look at ways of earning more and spending less. Some ideas had come forward and the college is approaching large employers to look at ways in which the AEB funds could be used to meet their training needs. Claire told members that the Association of Colleges anticipates that a college of Boston's size is likely to face increased costs of £1.3-£1.5 million. Charlotte provided information about the college's fuel contracts and costs. Claire noted that the most significant cost for the college is staffing.

In response to a query from David Earnshaw, it was confirmed that the challenge arises from a combination of a collapse in AEB and increased cost base. Claire advised that the college was taking action and balancing production and capacity but needs to ensure that any changes do not have a negative impact on learners. The college is trying to refocus

resources to generate income and has to match offers made by competing national providers.

Peter Cropley asked about the impact in terms of missed opportunities of falling into Requires Improvement and Claire gave some examples of how the college might have to work through more collaborative bids if its status debarred it from stand-alone bidding. In response to a question from David, Claire told members that colleges were differently affected by the challenges because of their differing income mix.

Gerry Tawton confirmed that further information would need to be provided at the next Corporation meeting including information on mitigation action.

The committee noted that the February accounts were in the revised format which had been agreed. It was suggested that challenges to the college's debt collection could rise as living costs increase.

David asked about staff utilisation and class sizes. Debbie Holland advised that the data was not currently 100% accurate and that staff utilisation should be confirmed by the end of April. Claire and Kelly Harris advised that this was being looked at through PMRs and any concerns would be pursued.

Charlotte told members that a new calculation of Financial Health was being considered and may be introduced next year. Gerry commented the college had a good position on borrowing but the proposal is to remove this measure from the calculation which could therefore worsen the reported financial health position of the College.

5. HUMAN RESOURCES

Members received a report from the Executive Director: People on performance in the first six months of the academic year.

Jen Durrant advised that sickness absences were high with COVID being the second highest reason for absence. Hospitalisation remains the highest cause. Peter Cropley asked about the increase in long term absence and it was confirmed that this is closely monitored. David Earnshaw suggested that the college reviews whether the absence trends have been affected by NHS service. The college is reviewing its occupational health provision and whether any long term absentees should be moving onto pensions.

It was explained that all vacancies were being reviewed to see if the posts were essential. Claire Foster confirmed that there is a huge shortage of staff in the further education sector. The college is trying to attract staff but in some areas this is challenging. Discrepancies between the numbers of starters and leavers identified by David Earnshaw were confirmed to be due to timing issues rather than growth.

6. FUNDING, DATA CONTROL AND COMPLIANCE

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services on funding, data control and compliance.

Debbie Holland provided information of current year performance and the 16-18 allocation for 2022-23. A discussion took place about the impact of and conditions relating to increased 16-18 funding and its potential effect on union claims for a pay award. An example of PDSats data checking was also provided.

7. MAYFLOWER

Claire Foster advised members that the business case for the Mayflower development had been approved for submission. It was agreed that a meeting of the Property Group should be convened after Easter to increase members' understanding of the proposals

and also to look at the Estates Strategy. David Parnell and Sandra Williamson are to be asked if they wish to join the group. ●

8. **NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 13 June 2022. There would also be a budget briefing meeting open to all Governors in May, timing to be confirmed.