

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2023

1. PRESENT

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Kelly Harris.

Attendance 83%

2. ACTION LOG

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

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 21 November 2022 were reviewed and, with the addition of a note on a staff utilisation query, approved.

4. FINANCE, FUNDING AND DATA CONTROL

Members received a report from the Head of Finance.

Charlotte Robinson reviewed some of the detail in the management accounts and the committee noted that the forecast is to be reviewed.

Members noted the position on funding and that AEB remained a risk. An increase in 16-19 student numbers this year will lead to improved funding for next. Debbie Holland commented that there has been improved funding for younger learners but this has been directed to achieve an increase in teaching hours.

Peter Cropley asked about the issue with 16-19 learner hours being lower than funders expected. Debbie outlined the background to this and the requirement to submit a business case to the ESFA to justify the position. David Earnshaw noted that learner numbers in some higher hour bands were increasing. Debbie explained that work experience and English and maths affects this. Claire Foster advised members that the aim is to get learners into the top band and that there is currently 50% of work experience planned where the expectation would be 100%. Directors of Learning are working with the areas where this is an issue as it needs to be resolved by Easter.

David Earnshaw asked about redundancy costs and the committee was advised that expected costs were included in the forecast. Gerry Tawton identified some inconsistency between the commentary and the detailed information. Debbie advised that this was because the initial costs attributable to the restructure were projected and are contingent on the outcomes of individual staff members. The costs will be clearer in the next report.

Charlotte advised that there had been a meeting about energy contracting. The tender for the gas supply will be out shortly and there is a feeling that costs have stabilised. David Earnshaw asked if the Association of Colleges had a role to play in negotiations. Claire advised that they are addressing the issue of increased costs generally.

Peter Croyley asked about learner income. It was noted that a table showed for Q1 was out of date and needed reforecasting but the RAG rating in the management accounts is correct. Claire suggested adding a comment to explain the differences in ratings and Gerry agreed that this was needed to give some context. ●

In response to a query from Peter about the contribution table, Claire suggested that RAG rating should reflect year to date performance. In looking at staff utilisation it was noted that 0% for some areas reflected the fact that they had no contracted staff and all staff were paid on claim. Debbie advised that areas typically have casual as well as contracted staff. It was noted that the contribution from Employability was still low and that there was an issue with their planned hours which managers were working on. This area is forecasting income later in the year to bring them back to budget. Having noted that in the last report Employability income was forecast, Peter asked what the current figures were based on and Debbie advised that it was part 'actual' and part 'forecast'.

In looking at utilisation in Health and Social Care, Claire advised that several staff in this area were leaving. To demonstrate any requirement for new posts or replacements it has to be clear that existing staffing is being used to capacity. A mix of 80% contracted to 20% casual staff was the aim. Health and Social Care financial performance was affected by learner numbers being less than expected in September. Peter commented that staff utilisation was an area which the Deputy FE Commissioner focussed on. Claire told the committee that remission is being looked at as in some areas it is inconsistently applied.

A discussion took place about increasing food costs and performance in commercial catering.

Positive feedback from an internal audit on Key financial Controls was noted. In response to a query from Gerry Tawton, it was confirmed that Financial Health was still rated as Good. It was agreed that the updated forecast should be shared with the committee. ●

Claire advised that the staff restructure was focussed on key priorities to achieve growth including in adult, HE and apprenticeship provision. David Earnshaw suggested that a different approach is needed to achieve better financial performance. Claire commented that the college was in a different place now with a reinvigorated team. Gerry suggested that the college should be looking at getting back into surplus. It was noted that there would be a presentation on the restructure to the March Corporation meeting. David Parnell suggested that different areas could present their vision on the way ahead to future Corporation meetings. ●

5. **PROPERTY**

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services on property developments.

Members noted that contractors had been shortlisted for the Mayflower development. It was also noted that the selected contractor will need to identify value engineering opportunities for the scheme.

6. **NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 27 March 2023.