

Finance & General Purposes Committee

MINUTES

Meeting reference: F&GP 2019-20/04

Date and time: Wednesday 27 May 2020 at 5:30pm

Location: Online

Members present: David Littlejohn, Board Member
Brian Crichton, Board Chair
Craig Ritchie, Board Member
Debbie Hutchison, Board Member
Katrina Hodgson, Board Member
John Dare, Board Member (Staff)
Margaret Cook, Principal

In attendance: Lorenz Cairns, Depute Principal (Academic)
Veronica Lynch, Vice Principal (External)
Katy Lees, Head of HR & Organisational Development
Graham Little, Interim Head of Finance
Henry Nicholson, Financial Accountant
Ian McCartney, Clerk to the Board of Management

Apologies: Amy Studders (HISA Perth President)

Chair: **David Littlejohn**

Minute Taker: Ian McCartney

Quorum: 3

Summary of Action Items

Ref	Action	Responsibility	Time Line
5	10 – Policies Amended policy to be aligned with Terms of Reference and Schedules of Delegation within Governance Manual to be tabled at June Board Meeting	Clerk	June Board
10.1	Risk Register Concern was raised over some Residual Risk scores being greater than the Gross Risk score in that area. Clerk to amend as appropriate	Clerk	June Board
10.1	Risk Register Review Risk 25 given current circumstances affecting AST.	Clerk	June Board
11.1	Whistleblowing Policy Update amendments as notified prior to publication of Policy	Head of HR	ASAP

Minutes:

Item		Action
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced Financial Accountant to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Amy Studders, HISA Perth President.</p>	
2	<p>Additions to the Agenda</p> <p>There were no additions to the Agenda</p>	
3	<p>Declaration of Interest in any Agenda Item</p> <p>There were no declarations of a conflict of interest.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 04 March 2020</p> <p>Pending corrections to some minor typographical errors, the Minutes were accepted as an accurate record.</p>	
5	<p>Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</p>	
	<p><u>6 – Estates Update</u></p> <p>Action: Depute Principal (Academic) to prepare brief based on Paper 3 for a competitive procurement process re Estates Strategy, inclusive of options appraisal.</p> <p>Action Update: On Agenda – Item 7.1</p> <p><u>9 - HR Update</u></p> <p>Action: Progression Plan re mandatory training to be presented to next F&GP meeting</p> <p>Action Update: Response covered under Item 9.1</p> <p><u>Ref 9 - HR Update</u></p> <p>Action: Investigate useful comparators for staff turnover analysis</p> <p>Action Update: Response covered within Item 9.1</p> <p><u>10 - Policies</u></p>	

	<p>Action: Corrections and amendments re Procurement Strategy to be advised to APUC</p> <p>Action Update: Completed</p> <p><u>10 - Policies</u></p> <p>Action: Align amended policy with Terms of Reference and Schedules of Delegation within Governance Manual</p> <p>Action Update: To be tabled at June Board Meeting</p> <p><u>11 - Review of Risk Register</u></p> <p>Action: Update minor amendments against Risks 5, 6, 7 & 9.</p> <p>Action Update: Completed</p>	Clerk
6	Financial Performance	
6.1	<p>Perth College Management Accounts – 9 months to 30 April 2020</p> <p>Interim Head of Finance presented Paper 2 for information and noted key point of £604k deficit position, this being £306k ahead of budget. In addition, Interim Head of Finance noted that, despite tuition fee income and other Funding being well down on budget, overall position reported Income as £64k ahead of budget YTD.</p> <p>Chair commended layout as being much more useful in terms of presentation for use by the Committee.</p> <p>Principal noted that Colleges had been encouraged to spend Estates monies where possible, connected with return to work procedures.</p>	
6.2	<p>Mid Year Return 2019/20</p> <p>Financial Accountant presented Paper 3, which is an iteration of the previous Return and considers impacts of COVID-19 and the latest underlying assumptions, and provides an adjusted operating position. A conservative position had been adopted re ESIF funding in case clawback is required.</p> <p>Chair noted that the Paper is a sobering one, but the same impacts will be felt across the Sector.</p> <p>Chair of Board queried whether guidance had yet emerged from Government and/or Funding Council re deficit positions. Principal responded that no guidance had yet been issued regarding deficit positions for 2019/20 accounts or 2020/21 budgets.</p>	

	<p>Committee recognised that the College remains in uncharted waters and awaits further guidance and instruction from Government and Funding Council on these issues.</p> <p>Board Member requested clarification around items 1.24 and 1.34. Financial Accountant noted that error in 1.24 goes back to an incorrect entry in previous year's budget which is rather small therefore possibly not picked up at the time. The collaboration referred to in 1.34 relates to the new Symmetry system allowing local budget holders to view relevant information.</p> <p>The Mid Year Return was APPROVED.</p>	
6.3	<p>Perth College Indicative Budget 2020/21 & Future Financial Forecast – CLOSED ITEM</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	

	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
6.4	<p>National Insurance Settlement – CLOSED Item</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	

	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
6.5	<p>AST Management Accounts: 9 months to 30 April 2020 – CLOSED ITEM</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
6.6	<p>AST Business Plan 2020/21 – CLOSED ITEM</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	

	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
7	Estates	
	<p>7.1 Estates Strategy</p> <p>Depute Principal summarised Paper 8 which provided a brief for use by architects pulled together by consultants who would not be tendering for the project. Depute Principal noted the pros and cons of pursuing such a strategy at the current time.</p> <p>Board Member asked if there was space in the budget for the tender work, which would likely be fairly significant. It was noted that the Procurement team would be able to advise on the likely budgetary requirements.</p> <p>Board Member suggested that the brief should take account of future-proofing around the recent pandemic, eg socially-distanced toilets, etc.</p> <p>Board Chair enquired about any potential indications from the Council re Goodlyburn Primary School. Following further discussion, it was AGREED that consultants should seek to clarify situation with Council before progressing.</p>	
7.2	Estates Update	
	<p>Depute Principal summarised Paper 9, highlighting the preparatory work being done on requirements for restart procedures across the campus, and noting that a Short Life Working Group had been pulled together to take this work on.</p> <p>Board Member enquired whether the digital estate was coping. Depute Principal noted the significant numbers of laptops distributed to students, but advised that digital poverty was a clear factor. Vice Principal noted that capital funds were being sought from SFC for digital capital for next academic session.</p> <p>Principal noted that clarification is required on what capital monies from sale of Kinross property can be spent on.</p>	
8	Procurement	

<p>8.1</p>	<p>Procurement Extension Proposals</p> <p>Vice Principal summarised proposals for extensions to contracts for Catering, Finance and Internal Audit, as briefed in Paper 10, noting that all 3 proposals comply with guidelines from Audit Scotland.</p> <p>Board Chair sought clarification on Finance System upgrade. Vice Principal noted that there were 2 elements within the proposal, ie a platform fee and a 1-off software cost, and that the Value For Money assessment had indicated that the improvements made would result in the upgrades paying for themselves within 12 months due to cost savings. Vice Principal further noted that a request had been submitted to UHI under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding and feedback was awaited – should anything be raised via this process, Board will be advised.</p> <p>Vice Principal informed Committee that the proposals would not impact on the assessment of the TechOne option available via UHI, and would help to ensure that the bar was raised at Perth College with respect to functionality.</p> <p>The proposals laid out in Paper 10 were APPROVED.</p>	
<p>8.2 8.3</p>	<p>Residences Contract Tender & Insurance Tender</p> <p>Depute Principal advised that 1 organisation had tendered for each project and that the Procurement team were currently evaluating these bids.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	
<p>9.1</p>	<p>HR Update</p> <p>Head of HR & Organisational Development presented Paper 13, highlighting that mandatory training figures were now all above 72%.</p> <p>Board Member enquired whether staff turnover figure was of concern. Head of HR advised that this figure was below sector average due to impact of nature of contracts offered within sector.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Compliance</p>	
<p>10.1</p>	<p>Review of Risk Register</p> <p>Committee reviewed items on Risk Register within the remit of the Committee.</p>	

	<p>Concern was raised over some Residual Risk scores being greater than the Gross Risk score in that area. Clerk to amend as appropriate</p> <p>Board Member highlighted need to review Risk 25 given current circumstances affecting AST.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
11	Policies & Procedures	
11.1	<p>Whistleblowing Policy</p> <p>Head of HR presented Paper 15, which formed part of a standard review of all policies and procedures.</p> <p>The following items were noted for correction within the document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Section 6 – bullet point should be a separate paragraph, and clarification required re hierarchy of decision-making; * Contact details referring to Clerk to be amended to generic email address <p>Subject to these amendments being made, the updated Whistleblowing Policy was APPROVED</p>	<p>Head of HR</p>
12	<p>Committee Minutes</p> <p>The minutes for the following meetings were received and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JNC Support Staff, 12 December 2019 ● JNC Lecturing Staff, 22 January 2020 ● JNC Consultation meetings 03 December 2019, 11 December 2019 & 15 January 2020 (Summary only) 	
13	<p>Date & Time of next meeting</p> <p>Meeting date tbc, pending Board approval of the full Committee Schedule for 2020/21</p>	
14	<p>Review of Meeting</p> <p>The Committee agreed the meeting had covered its Terms of Reference.</p>	

Information recorded in College minutes are subject to release under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOI(S)A). Certain exemptions apply: financial information relating to procurement items still under tender, legal advice from College lawyers, items related to national security.

Notes taken to help record minutes are also subject to Freedom of Information requests, and should be destroyed as soon as minutes are approved.

Status of Minutes – Open* Closed
* Excepting Items 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 & 6.6

An **open** item is one over which there would be no issues for the College in releasing the information to the public in response to a freedom of information request.

A **closed** item is one that contains information that could be withheld from release to the public because an exemption under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 applies.

The College may also be asked for information contained in minutes about living individuals, under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018. It is important that fact, rather than opinion, is recorded.

Do the minutes contain items which may be contentious under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998?

Yes
No