

**Present:** Matthew Adams, James Adnett, Phil Douce, Tom Gregory (arrived 5.43pm), Sam Wilson and Ed Senior.

**In Attendance:** Carl Rusby (Senior Leader for ILT, MIS & Enrichment), Andrew Leyland (College/MAT Accountant) and Jo Payne (Clerk to the Local Governing Body)

**1. Appointment of Chair:** Matthew Adams was unanimously appointed as Chair of the Committee for the academic year.

**2. Apologies:** Jane Jenkins (Vice Principal).

**3. Standing Items**

- (i) There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.
- (ii) No items were identified as confidential to the Committee.
- (iii) No urgent items were declared.

**4. Minutes**

(i) Minutes of the Finances & Resources Committee: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024

The minutes of the meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair. In relation to the action points, it was noted that:

- As the staff satisfaction survey questions were agreed across the colleges in the Trust for the purpose of benchmarking, there were no plans to further disaggregate the data into job role beyond splitting by teaching and support staff;
- The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS & Enrichment confirmed that a phishing simulation was conducted at the end of last academic year with staff and students issued with a password reset email. The IT team were not advised that it was a simulation so that their real time response could be tested. They were able to shut the network down for those staff and students who did click on the link within 12 minutes.

The Committee noted the information provided.

**5. Finance**

(i) Financial Update

The College/MAT Accountant presented the September 2024 update and provided the following commentary:

- Catering sales were strong at £104,000 compared to £96,000 in the same period last year;
- Payroll costs currently show a positive variance across the board. The budget includes a 5.5% pay increase which has not yet been implemented and does not, therefore, show in the actual year to date figures. Budgeted costs for teaching staff pay did not take account of a reduction in the FTE for 2024-25 resulting in the positive variance;
- Pastoral costs had allowed for additional recruitment resulting in an increased positive variance compared to next year;
- New accounting codes had been assigned to certain staff roles, such as invigilators;
- The costs of building improvements had been removed from premises cost codes as these were now being capitalised under fixed asset additions on the balance sheet. In relation to the school condition allowance, the College had spent all of the £853,000 allocated to it (after MAT

top-slicing) and in 2024-25, assuming the DfE use the same process of allocating funds, the College would receive £569,000 (after 50% top-slice).

In response to governor scrutiny, the following points were noted:

- The forecast had not been updated to account for changes in the Government's budget, e.g. increased employer NI contributions. The SFCA had suggested that the Government would be providing additional funding to support the increase in NI contributions, however, the details of this were not yet known;
- As it was anticipated that the College would have fewer students this year and, therefore, need to identify savings for next year, decisions had been made to ensure that timetabling was efficient as possible this year so as to avoid redundancies next year, hence staffing costs being below those budgeted.
- The Government abided by the School Teachers' Review Body recommendation for a 5.5% pay award and provided some funding to partially cover the costs of this. Although not fully funded, the College was in a position to pay this for teaching and support staff, however, as the Government funding did not extend to standalone sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies have been asked to show solidarity with these institutions and not implement the pay increase yet. Institutions who decide to pay the award at this time would be breaking national pay agreements and could be prosecuted. The Principal said that this had been explained to staff both electronically and in person at a staff meeting.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Student Union Accounts

The Committee **reviewed** the accounts and recommended the Student Union accounts for approval. It was challenged as to whether the Union should be carrying forward a £12,000 surplus rather than spending this for the benefit of students. It was noted that it was difficult to identify things that the Student Union would want to buy for students that the College would otherwise not buy anyway.

## 6. Management and Strategic

(i) HR Update

The Principal presented the HR update and the following points were highlighted:

- New Associate members of SLT had been appointed for two-years in the first instance to then be reviewed;
- The FTE for teaching staff had reduced by 5 which triangulates with the positive savings outlined in the finance update;
- Two Pastoral Tutors were internally promoted to Heads of Year and it was positive to see these opportunities for support staff progression;
- There was a slight increase in the support staff FTE;
- Sickness absence across the board had increased although was in line with benchmark data. The highest cause of absence was stress related absence, non-work related;
- Positive feedback was noted from those applicants who had attended recruitment interviews;
- Teachers' pay distribution indicates that most are at the top end of the pay scale.

In response to challenge, it was noted that:

- Teachers' being at the top end of the pay scale reflects that staff tended to remain at College for a long time. Should teachers at the top end of the scale leave, this would represent a cost saving as replacement staff would likely be appointed on the lower end of the scale;
- In terms of how managerial pay scales are shown, this does not reflect a true picture as the College tended to award additional allowances;

- National data suggests that 36% of teachers were considering leaving the profession this year, 94% citing workload as the predominant reason. The College had not struggled to recruit thus far, although the data suggests that there were few subjects nationally where there were enough qualified teachers. Similarly, the College was mostly able to appoint to support staff roles, although had struggled with some of the lowest paid roles such as cleaners. The increasing challenge with support staff was that as the living wage increases and lower pay scales are removed, there were only small differences in salary for support staff with additional responsibilities compared to those without.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Cyber Security Report

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented his report on cyber security and raised the following points:

- The College was contacted by the National Cyber Security Centre following a site they were monitoring which a student had inadvertently linked to when accidentally starting a software download. No data was transmitted although the College was alerted and was able to isolate the machine used;
- Staff training had been completed on phishing and online safety;
- College systems were robust although there were plans to upgrade the firewalls in March 2025 to maintain its resilience and effectiveness. This would cost a total of £44,000.

In response to challenge, it was noted that:

- The College along with Hereford SFC use the same firewall, whereas KEDST have moved to another provider and this was being considered as a replacement for the College;
- It was felt that HE and FE providers were more vulnerable to attack due to the number of users and resulting disruption that could be caused and also they tended to have larger budgets to respond to any blackmail attempts than primary and secondary schools;
- The College has to pass cyber security and had achieved Essentials Plus which is industry standard. The College's email provider, Jisc, also conduct audits in addition to independent testing;
- A penetration test of the systems was due;
- The College's firewall blocks sites on an excluded list rather than having an inclusion list, but installation does require administrative override.

The Committee noted the information provided. Tom Gregory offered to conduct a further link visit to provide challenge and support of the College's response to cyber security which was welcomed.

(iii) Filtering and Monitoring

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented his report on filtering and monitoring and raised the following points:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education has a requirement for particular diligence in relation to filtering and monitoring. The College is able to use information collated from the sites that students attempt to access via the firewall and also key touch strokes with associated alerts from Smoothwall to inform the tutorial programme if themes emerge;
- The most recent monitoring of this indicates that gambling and gaming sites were the most popular in terms of searches that were prevented.

In response to challenge the following was noted:

- Currently it is only College devices that can be monitored in terms of Smoothwall and Sophos alerts, however, when the College moves to another firewall provider, this will provide the ability to extend filtering and monitoring services to any device signed into the College Wi-Fi;

- The College does not currently share data on the number of alerts received or the nature of these with students as it might incite copycat behaviour;
- The College does not have a separate Wi-Fi account for guest devices and it was raised that this might be a potential vulnerability. The possibility of a guest Wi-Fi account for non-College devices will be investigated further.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(iv) Protective Security and Preparedness

The Clerk reported on the impending 'Martyn's Law' legislation and the additional duty on educational establishments to risk assess physical vulnerabilities of their site particularly in relation to largescale events. The risk assessment of the recent Open Events and action to mitigate against terrorist behaviour by hostiles was noted. The DfE have produced guidance and the College has responded to this by purchasing Public First Aid Trama kits which are in place alongside defibrillators, reviewing relative emergency policies and revisiting bomb checklists etc. In relation to the number of students with Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans it was noted that there are around 14 students with these in place, the difficulty arises with students in-year who obtain an injury which impacts their physical mobility and ensuring that the College is made aware of these.

The Committee **noted** the College's response to requirements around physical security and preparedness.

**7. Annual Reports**

(i) Equality Annual Report 2023-24 and Equality Policy

The Principal presented the Equality Annual Report as prepared by the Raising Standards Lead for Equality.

The Committee **noted** the role of the RSL in raising the profile of equality and diversity and increasing opportunities for students to be involved in a celebration of key events. The Committee **approved** the Equality Policy with the minor change as outlined.

(ii) Exams Report

The Principal presented the Exams Report as prepared by the Exams Manager. It was noted that 330 students required additional support for access arrangements ranging from extra time to scribes. There were five cases of malpractice in 2023-24 in relation to unauthorised materials in the exam room, misuse of AI in Extended Projects and non-submission of one piece of work from a requested sample that was later resolved. Of these instances, 1 student was disqualified from the qualification and two were awarded zero marks for the component in which the malpractice occurred.

It was noted that the College intends to reduce the number of external candidates it accepts for exam to response to the pressure it places on resources with an increasing number of students needing access arrangements.

The Committee **noted** the contents of the Exams Report and the continued efforts of the Exams Manager.

(iii) Digital Strategy Policy

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented the updates to the Digital Strategy Policy noting the inclusion of the projected expenditure. The Committee approved the revised Digital Strategy Policy as outlined.

## 8. Estates

The Principal presented the updated Estates Strategy and noted the following:

- Phase 1 of the fire safety improvement works had been completed. Phase two of the work was estimated to cost £650,000. Given that the amount of SCA the College was anticipated to receive after the MAT top-slicing, it was pleasing that the Trust had committed to awarding additional funds towards completing the work rather than the additional £100,000 projection for completing the works over a further two years;
- Work on the car park was completed to reduce the height of the speed bumps so as to facilitate buses coming back on site to drop off and pick up students;
- Roof replacement had been completed over the Hall, Gym and Dance Studio.

The Committee **noted** the updated Estates Strategy.

## 9. Health & Safety

### (i) Health & Safety Update and Accident Report

The Principal presented the health and safety update and accident report and the following points were noted:

- There was a fire drill in October with the building evacuated within 6 minutes;
- Further to a perimeter lockdown drill, the College had to enact this in response to report of an armed individual on Spetchley Road. This worked well and staff and students remained calm within the secure perimeter. The Police were unable to advise whether the College should lift the lockdown despite confirming that the incident was being responded to by Police so the College has to establish that it was safe to lift the lockdown before doing so;
- The accident report was noted in addition to the action the College was taken to provide additional first aid cover to respond to the First-Aid Co-ordinator dropping her hours.

The contents of the report was noted.

### (ii) Educational Visits Co-ordinator Report

The Senior Leader for ILT, MIS and Enrichment presented his report on Educational Visits and noted that the number of trips had returned to pre-pandemic levels. There were no foreign trips last year possibly as a result of late planning but also insufficient interest. Departments have been encouraged to plan earlier so that students and their parents have more time to make the required payment. This year, trips abroad are planned to Germany, Spain, Japan and Bali. The Committee **noted** the EVC report.

## 10. Closing Standing Items

- (i) Risk Management: The Principal referred to a number of risks within the register that had been updated. Some of these require update to reflect that there will not be the expected decline in student number, that there had been some clarity on the applied courses that could be offered in September 2025 and the risk of buses not being on site given this had been addressed. It was noted that the ESFA had conducted a funding audit, the outcome of which was a clawback of £50,000 due to discrepancies between the start and leaving dates of some students was inaccurate. It was, however, noted that this was the result of MAT policy and procedure as opposed to MIS errors. The updated risk register was **noted** and no additional risks were identified.
- (ii) Impact: The Committee noted its scrutiny of cyber security arrangements and controls to ensure that the College response was robust and also its consideration of online safety and ensuring that the College was responding appropriately to any safeguarding or wellbeing themes.
- (iii) Any Urgent Business: No urgent business was identified.

(iv). Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025

The meeting finished at 7.14pm

Signed:.....

Matthew Adams (Chair)

Date:.....

**FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 13<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>
FRC/13.11.24/6(iii)	Consider a separate Wi-Fi account for guest devices.	CR	February 2025	

**ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>

**ACTION POINTS COMPLETED**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>
FRC/22.05.24/5(iv)	Consider disaggregation of staff satisfaction responses based on role within the College.	JLJ	Autumn 2024	✓
FRC/15.11.23/10(i)	Request feedback on whether the College has considered simulating how it would respond in the event of a cyber security breach.	EYS	February 2024	✓