

**Present:** Matthew Adams (Chair), James Adnett, Paul Cumming, Phil Douce, Tom Gregory, Ed Senior and Sam Wilson.

**In Attendance:** Jane Jenkins (Vice Principal), Andrew Leyland (MAT/College Accountant), Jo Payne (Clerk to the Local Governing Body).

**1. Apologies:** None.

**2. Standing Items**

- (i) There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.
- (ii) Those items referring to individual members of staff were identified as confidential.
- (iii) No urgent business was identified.

**3. Minutes**

(i) Minutes of the Finance & Resources committee: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024

The minutes of the meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record. An update was provided in relation to the action points and the following was noted:

- The Trust does not have a standalone Finance Policy only its Financial Regulations;
- The Principal and Safeguarding Officer conduct a termly risk assessment of the College site to identify any potential risks and the Trust Safeguarding Co-ordinator undertook a similar risk assessment. If there are individual students where there is concern about their own safety or the safety of others, a safety plan is completed.

**4. Finance**

(i) Finance Report

The MAT/College Accountant presented his report and made the following points:

- The College had received £853,000 in school condition allowance monies from the Trust. Allocations need to be spent by August 2025 and any balance remaining clawed back;
- The Cafeteria is likely to make an end of year surplus of £25,000;
- Bursary arrangements for 2024-25 has been confirmed with the intent to ensure that the number of students receiving it is not reduced. The daily allowance be reduced from £6 to £5, but is sufficient to get both breakfast and lunch.

In response to challenge the following points were raised:

- The bursary model agreed would not be more beneficial to students, but would be more beneficial than other models and allow as many students as possible to receive free college meals;
- The bottom line was not as positive as had been typical in recent years, but the College is close to having paid off the investment in phase 2 of the science centre which is quite an achievement, and it seems feasible that the 'loan' for phase 1 will be repaid within a couple of years.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) Three-year financial plan

The MAT Accountant advised that the assumptions included within this have been directed at Trust level, for example, that funding income increases by 2% and the pay award is 3% etc. The IT expenditure forecast is based on the ILT strategy three-year plan produced by the Trust.

The Committee noted its concern at the deficit position forecast in years two and three and there was discussion around this. The following points were noted:

- If pay awards continue to be higher than the increase in funding this was not sustainable;
- The College had not had any input into the assumptions so there is no inclusion of mitigating actions the College would take to improve the end of year position;
- The increase in costs of staff from the budget to the forecast is due to a planned recoding of employment roles with payroll to bring these in line across the Trust. It was felt that the planned reclassification of invigilators was not necessarily helpful as it did not allow a comparison;
- The IT forecasts were based on the current model and could reduce if more academies join and use the shared service model.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and their concern at the forecasted growing deficit, however, appreciated that future iterations would include the College's actions to mitigate this rather than more general assumptions.

## 5. **Update Reports**

(i) Principal's Update

The Principal presented his update report and noted the following points:

- Whilst recruitment this year was strong, it did not match the levels of the year before. Consequently, the number rolling over into year 2 will be smaller next year, so even with similar recruitment, the overall student number is likely to be lower next year. There are plans to offset this slightly with an additional Business Level 2 group and improved retention of Level 2 students may also mitigate any reduction;
- The Safeguarding Officer position has been made permanent with staff and students feeling well-supported;
- The DfE have allocated £1,137,000 to the MAT for improvements to the condition of the premises at the College. £853,000 has been allocated to the College by the MAT after the top-slice. Eligible projects have been identified, many of which the College had already committed to and attempted to get as near to the allocation amount as possible. This includes plans for phase one of the fire safety measures and replacement of the Hall, Gym and Dance Studio roofs. Whilst the roof replacement could potentially be completed in two phases, given that these spaces are used for external examinations and are at the end of their life, with the Hall already leaking, it feels pressing to complete the work this summer. The MAT have commissioned a condition survey which will be important when the MAT is considering requests for central funds in the future.

In response to governor challenge, the following was noted that:

- Governors would welcome transparency from the Trust in terms of what criteria the College would need to meet to be able to have central funds allocated in the way that Hereford SFC have been this year;
- Freedom Leisure are liable for 35% of the cost of the roof replacement of the Dance Studio and Gym due to the joint use agreement. This should reduce the overspend of completing all the proposed works by £40,000 so it is hoped that the Trust might allocate the remaining funds from the top sliced money to support this.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

(ii) HR Update

The Principal presented the personnel update and noted the following:

- There is an imbalance between the number of staff leaving and new starters which reflects attempts to make decisions now about staffing and timetabling to mitigate the probable reduction in student numbers;
- Sally Johnson, Senior Leader for Teaching and Learning, has been appointed as Deputy Head at the Chantry. Her work at the College has been fantastic, with teaching and learning identified as a strength in the Ofsted report. It is not intended to appoint a senior leader in her place, but to create modest savings and opportunities for other staff, an appointment has been made for a Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator, high school liaison and additional raising standards leads with an appointment pending for responsibility for ECTs and staff training.

The Committee **noted** the update provided.

(iii) AI Strategy

The Principal presented the College's AI strategy which has been produced by the Senior Leader for Quality Assurance. Some staff received training which was well received and are keen to experiment with its usage. There was recent discussion as to whether AI should be used to mark essays and a feeling that there should be experimentation with caution. Teachers wishing to use it for this purpose need to be clear as to how they are validating that it is accurate. An AI steering group will be established to encourage staff to experiment with its usage within a specified framework.

In response to challenge it was noted that the College are already considering how students might use AI and the need to be able to provide guidance on how it should and should not be used and also safeguards to ensure that student work is their own.

The Committee **noted** the strategy document and, at a future LGB meeting, Governors will be asked to consider and approve the College's policy on AI.

(iv) Staff Satisfaction

The Vice Principal presented the findings of the latest staff satisfaction survey disaggregated by teaching and support staff. Whilst responses around communication were better this time, they were less positive about communication between departments and from SLT and consideration of workload scored poorly. The other colleges in the Trust used the same set of questions so there will be a comparison on responses to benchmark the College's performance. The Committee noted the striking difference between the responses of teaching and support staff, with the latter being significantly more positive.

In response to scrutiny, it was noted that:

- 119 of 180 staff responded to the survey;
- There has been an assumption that communicating with HoDs was the best way of disseminating information to departments, although this appears to be inconsistent and will need to be addressed;
- Despite the allocation of marking days and measures to reduce workload, there was a process recently involving the Portal which required some repetition of tasks and this might have negatively impacted on the feedback from teachers;
- The Staff Satisfaction Focus Group and Workload Forum are platforms where further staff feedback will be sought to try and drill down into what the actual concerns are.

The Committee noted the information provided. It was questioned whether there was any merit in disaggregating the data by qualification level to identify if there are issues at a particular level and this will be considered for future surveys.

## 6. Governance

### (i) Update

The Clerk presented her report and noted the following:

- Governors are asked to complete the skills audit. This follows the Trust format this year to enable an overview across the Trust of the skillset of local governors;
- The Trust has asked local governors to complete a self-assessment of its performance. The Director of Governance is joining the LGB meeting on 5th June and the self-assessment framework might aid governors in formulating the questions they wish to ask in relation to their delegated roles and responsibilities;
- The annual training needs survey will be shared and will inform the training sessions at Local Governing Body meetings next academic year;
- The Committee terms of reference and cycle of business will need to be reviewed to align with the Trust cycle.

The Committee **recommended** the meeting schedule for 2024-25 for approval. In response to questions, it was advised that the skills audit should be completed by the end of the academic year. A typo in the Trust cycle of business was noted and the Clerk will relay this.

## 7. Policy Reviews

### (i) Fees & Charging Policy

The Committee **approved** the proposed policy with the changes as outlined which included removing reference to tuition fees for students aged 19 and over or those in the UK without residency as the College no longer admit students in either of these categories.

### (ii) Sustainability Action Plan

As stipulated in the Trust's Sustainability Policy, the College is required to maintain and annually review a sustainability action plan. The Committee **noted** updates to the action plan.

## 8. Annual Reports

### (i) Staff Development

The Principal advised that CPD has been robust and focused on teaching and learning strategies such as feedback. Colleagues involved in the teaching and learning team have held sharing good practice events and Raising Standards Leads have worked across College as coaches and mentors including supporting ECTs and taking part in quality assurance processes. The focus of staff training in the summer term will be on narrowing the disadvantage gap with a full day of impressive workshops planned for July. There is also a focus on student progression and AI.

### (ii) Disciplinary Report

The Principal presented the annual summary of disciplinary incidents. It was noted that last year the College permitted smoking/vaping in a designated area, but moved to being entirely non-smoking this year and this perhaps explained the increase in sanctions for this. The report also indicates how many were the result of a Smoothwall alert. The disaggregation of the data by ethnicity and disadvantage measures seemingly indicates that a disproportionate number of incidents involved Pakistani students and those identified as RONI. The Committee **noted** the report.

### (ii) GDPR

It was noted that there had been two GDPR 'near misses' in the previous 12 months both relating to a letter/email being addressed/sent to the wrong person. There had been 4 Freedom of Information requests over the same period and these had requested information on the College's management structure, agency spend and print arrangements and spend. The Committee **noted** the report.

**9. Health & Safety**

(i) Health & Safety Update and Accident Report

The Clerk presented the health and safety update report and advised that there was a soft test of the new fire alarm system to allow staff and students to familiarise themselves with it, however, both the new and old signal sounded. Contractors are returning to address the fault and there will be a fire drill later in the summer term. The accident and near miss statistics were considered and no trends identified.

It was advised that a number of staff had completed evac-chair training further to this being identified as a training need following a drill in the autumn term. The Principal outlined the improved process whereby a student informs the College of an injury or disability that reduces mobility and a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan is agreed. The member of staff responsible for this is being proactive and is considering arrangements for students with significant hearing issues. The Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

**10. Closing Standing Items**

- (i) Risk Management: The risk register will be revisited to consider that the likely decline in student numbers and forecast financial deficit for future years is reflected.
- (ii) Safeguarding: The Committee's challenge around risk assessing the risk of violence and aggression towards students and consideration of the disciplinary record was noted.
- (iii) Impact: Scrutiny and challenge around the school condition allowance was noted given that any monies spent should be to improve the safety of the site and the resources available to students.
- (iv) Any Urgent Business: None.
- (v). Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (if the schedule of meetings is approved by the Local Governing Body).

The meeting finished at 7.01p.m.

Signed:.....

Matthew Adams (Chair)

Date:.....

**FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2024**

<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	

**ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD**

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

**ACTION POINTS COMPLETED**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Action Point</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Completion</b>	<b>Check</b>
FRC/21.02.24/3(i)	Request from the Trust a plan of how academies could maintain and improve their facilities if money allocated to them is held centrally.	EYS/JJP	March 2024	✓
FRC/21.02.24/3(i)	Request from the Trust a copy of its Finance Policy.	EYS/JJP	March 2024	✓
FRC/21.02.24/5(iii)	Review whether risk to students of violence or aggression at College has been risk assessed and mitigations identified.	EYS	ASAP	✓

\* Denotes changes.