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Borders College

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Meeting at 17:30 Thursday 25 February 2021

MS Teams

Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility and Date	Action Status
08/21	Future DEBI reports - success rate of tender bids to be included within future reports.	VP Finance & Corporate Services	Format of papers under discussion for next scheduled report on 23/09/21.
09/21	Asset Management Strategy to be forwarded to L Mirley.	VP Finance & Corporate Services	Completed
15/21	COVID-19 – further details following scenario planning to be provided at the next Regional Board meeting on 4 March 2021.	VP Finance & Corporate Services	Completed

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Minutes

ITEM	MINUTE
Present In Attendance	Elaine Acaster (Chair) Angela Cox (Principal) Jess McBeath Lynn Mirley Liz Parkes David Peace Sally Prentice (BCSA – VP for Education) Debbie Kerr (Head of HR & Development) Hazel Robertson (Vice Principal – Finance & Corporate Services) Ingrid Earp (Regional Board Secretary) Lorraine Sulo (Minutes)
01/21	<u>Chair's Welcome</u> The Chair welcomed new Board Member, L Mirley, to her first F&GP meeting and D Kerr, Head of HR & Development. J McBeath apologised that she was unable to stay for the duration of the meeting due to another commitment.
02/21	<u>Declaration of Conflict of Interest</u> No declarations were raised.
03/21	<u>Register of Members Interest</u> No items were raised.
04/21	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> All members were present.
05/21	<u>Minutes of Meetings held on 19 November 2020 – Paper A</u> The previous minute was approved as an accurate record.
06/21	<u>Matters Arising</u> All actions were completed with the following matter arising:
83/20	Annual Health & Safety Report to December 2020 Regional Board – The VP Finance and Corporate Services advised that the College would be implementing a simpler method to record near misses.

07/21

Business Review (Paper B)

The VP Finance and Corporate Services provided an overview of the paper. The following key points were questioned by members:

- Significant savings target around restructuring, income and efficiencies had been achieved.
- FFR 3 year plan - pessimistic scenario for planning had been used, though income exceeds expectations.
- Management Accounts - positive variance of £300k with some relating to Covid19 impacts, and temporary lecturing. Support staff underspend was largely due to pay award delay.
- COVID-19 Contingency Planning – Curriculum areas were currently reviewing scenarios relating to the potential for additional activity in order to minimise student deferrals into next year. Any unused temporary staffing budget and COVID-19 related underspend could be considered for use. It was also possible that a share of the sector wider COVID-19 consequential funding may be possible. Should resources be insufficient to meet the costs of any contingency plan, the Regional Board could be asked to consider a variation to the overall budget. Further details would be provided at the next Regional Board meeting on 4 March 2021.

The Principal highlighted the possible longer term impact for 22-23 should the number of deferred students going into next academic year not be minimised.

L Mirley advised that there may be further funding opportunities for students which could be of assistance. Details would be sent to the VP Finance and Corporate Services.

- Student funding – there was a significant underspend due to less travel and childcare costs. Substantial resources had been returned to the SFC on the understanding that these were redistributed to the sector.

J McBeath left the meeting.

- Newtown St Boswells Campus – modular building was still subject to formal sign off by Building Control who have been unable to visit due to COVID-19.
- Melrose Road Site – the sale of the academy site was progressing well. It was hoped for a close on sale by the end of March.
- Debtors – negotiation with Heriot Watt remains on the Service Level Agreement. A solution has been proposed which should provide a simpler financial situation.
- Creditors – slow payments to SMEs were a concern and a key area which required improving. The amount of manual intervention was currently excessive, but improvements were being made.

The Committee noted the current financial position.

<p>12/21</p>	<p><u>HR Matters & Furlough (Paper G)</u></p> <p>The Head of HR & Development provided an overview of the paper with the following points discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Retention Scheme – Staff had been furloughed on a flexible basis through the second lockdown, which had meant staff continued to feel valued and were able to backfill when required. This was a different approach to the previous lockdown when staff had been fully furloughed, an approach which had had a detrimental effect on staff. £22.5k had been claimed back through the Job Retention Scheme for 2020/2021 up to January 2021. • EIS Dispute/Ballot – Following a national dispute a ballot to invoke strike action had been issued by EIS to its members. The Management side of the Employers Association had held a number of meetings to resolve the dispute, however, early indications indicated a majority vote for strike action which would start on 16 March 2021. • Employee Engagement Survey – Great Places to Work Survey had been launched with 79 responses received to date with a closing date of 8 March 2021. The College will be making a submission for the GPTW Culture Audit. COVID-19 specific feedback had been sought through two questionnaires and had proved very useful. Management also continue to meet with staff and union representatives every three weeks. • Digital Transformation Skills Gap Analysis – Staff survey on Office 365 would be issued on 8 March 2021. • Staff Wellbeing – supporting staff has been a priority with many new initiatives introduced. Investment had also been made through two support modules, Agile and Wellbeing, which had initially been rolled out through managers but would be extended to all staff over the next few months. <p>HR Matters would be a standing agenda item for future F&GP meetings. The results from the employee engagement survey should be available for the next meeting on 6 May 2021.</p> <p>The Committee thanked D Kerr, who then left the meeting.</p>
<p>08/21</p>	<p><u>Department for Enterprise & Business Innovation Update (Paper C)</u></p> <p>The Principal provided an overview of the update on the Department of Enterprise and Business Innovation (DEBI). The department focuses on external facing work, particularly with employers, the local authority and NHS. Despite the pandemic the department continued to perform very well in terms of income, but would not meet all of its credits, however, this was not an area of concern given that the College had oversubscribed. Apprenticeship contracts continued to do very well, along with the Flexible Workforce Development Fund which was fully committed.</p>

	<p>Following a discussion on tendering, members agreed that it would be of benefit for the success rate of tender bids to be included in future reports.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ACTION: VP F&CS</p> <p>The Committee noted the progress of DEBI in relation to budget performance and planned activity.</p> <p>S Prentice left the meeting.</p>
09/21	<p><u>Asset Management Strategy Update (Paper D)</u></p> <p>The VP Finance and Corporate Services provided members with an overview of activity in relation to Asset Management, following approval of the strategy at the Regional Board meeting in December 2020.</p> <p>Permission to retain the capital receipt from the sale of Melrose Road would be sought from SFC, with funds being used for a combination of digital advancement and sustainability/net zero. Backlog maintenance/PPM/sinking fund works had fallen slightly behind due to the pandemic, but plans to recover the position had been put in place. Timelines would be established once further work had been completed.</p> <p>A copy of the strategy would be forwarded to L Mirley.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ACTION: VP F&CS</p> <p>The Committee noted the progress being made.</p>
10/21	<p><u>Digital Transformation Programme (Paper E)</u></p> <p>The VP Finance and Corporate Services provided members with an overview of activity in relation to the Digital Transformation Programme.</p> <p>This was a critical phase for the procurement contract for the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) workstream. The infrastructure workstream would see the replacement of IT infrastructure moved to the Cloud before the new academic year. Timescale for the new MIS system would be tight but there was confidence that this would be achievable.</p> <p>An addendum to the paper seeking approval for the award of the contract for the Virtual Learning Environment was discussed. Only one company had responded to the mini competition, however the bid was of a very high quality. The costs were slightly higher than the parameters of the funding model, due to the adoption of additional functionality which would provide more resilience in the system with 24 hour support to students. Both the old and new VLE systems would run together through the transferring over period.</p> <p>Following a detailed discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the award of the contract to the recommended supplier.</p>
11/21	<p><u>Strategic Risk Register (Paper F)</u></p> <p>The VP Finance and Corporate Services advised the Committee on the two risk scores, 5c and 5l, which had changed. Feedback from the Risk Register</p>

	workshops had been positive and had endorsed the approach to the strategic discussion sessions. The Committee approved the changes to the risk scores of 5c and 5l.
13/21	<u>Equality, Diversity & Innovation (Standing item)</u> No items were raised.
14/21	<u>Papers for Publication (Standing item)</u> No draft papers or commercially sensitive papers would be published.
15/21	<u>Any Other Business</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Ministerial Letter dated 23 February 2021 <p>A copy of the letter had been issued to the Committee earlier in the day. The VP Finance and Corporate Services outlined the key points from the letter in regards to the return of students to colleges. Under the Government's refreshed strategic framework, colleges could bring back a small number of students for whom face to face learning was critical for the completion of their studies. No more than 5% of students should be on campus. Scenarios were currently being worked through by curriculum areas with more detail to be provided at the next Regional Board meeting on 4 March 2021.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ACTION: VP F&CS</p> <p>The Principal advised that anecdotal feedback from staff had indicated that there was a greater anxiety on returning due to the new variants and having worked from home for such a lengthy time. Concerns continued to be listened to, and a carefully balanced view taken, to ensure students would be on campus to continue their studies and achieve their goals.</p> <p>J McBeath re-joined the meeting.</p> <p>Initial discussions with Heriot Watt University regarding lateral flow monitoring were being held. Such tests were twice a week and on a voluntary basis. Any purchasing of tests would require to be funded by the College.</p>
16/21	<u>Date of Next Meeting</u> The next F&GP Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 6 May 2021 at 17:30.

Signed.....
Chair

Signed.....
Board Secretary