

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting of 26 January 2016

The meeting commenced at 0900 hours.

PRESENT: I Gossip (Chair), J Henderson, S Masson, K Milroy, A Smith, R Wallen, K Wetherall

IN ATTENDANCE: R Scott, P May, P Kesson

OBSERVER: J Kirkwood

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from S Brimmer and J Harper.

2. Minute of previous Meeting

The Minute of Meeting held on 17 November 2015 was approved.

3. Matters arising from previous Meeting

3.1 Macduff Learning Centre

Mr Wallen informed the Committee that discussions are still ongoing with Aberdeenshire Council. It was noted that a further report will be presented to the March meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

3.2 Site of former Balgownie Centre

Mr Scott provided an update on recent developments with the sale of the site of the former Balgownie Centre. Members were informed that advisers from Burness Paull will present a paper on the current situation to the Board at its meeting in February.

4. Report by the Principal

The Committee noted a report providing information on: audited financial statements for 2014-15; audit; funding for 2016-17; and Engineering Technologies at Fraserburgh Campus.

Mr Wallen provided further information on funding for 2016-17 and said that senior management and middle managers are working to identify areas where costs can be reduced for next year.

Mr Wallen drew Members' attention to the tabled update to page 21 of the Post-Merger Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

Mr Wallen also provided updated information on the position relating to National Collective Bargaining. Members were informed that the EIS had not accepted the pay offer and had indicated that they would be balloting their membership formally on strike action.

5. Matters for Decision

5.1 Review of Financial Regulations and Policies

The Committee undertook a review of the College's Financial Regulations.

In considering the proposed amendments Members noted that the College's established Financial Regulations have proved to operate successfully and are compliant with the most recent versions of the Financial Memorandum and the Scottish Public Finance Manual.

Members approved the Financial Regulations, and agreed that the Regulations would next be reviewed in January 2017.

5.2 Course Fees – AY2016-17 (except for Overseas Students)

The Committee considered course fee rates for the academic year beginning 01 August 2016 (AY2016-17).

Members were informed that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had yet to publish details of the fee rates that the Scottish Government has set for full-time programmes. The Committee also noted that it is understood that the SFC will decide to continue to require colleges to comply with the National Fee Waiver Policy introduced in AY2000-01, and that the SFC no longer reimburses colleges for fees waived in accordance with the Policy.

After some discussion the Committee resolved to:

- Increase part-time course fee rates for AY2016-17 by 1%;
- set advanced course fees for students from the rest of the UK at the same rate as those for students from Scotland and other parts of the EU;
- reaffirm the policy on the establishment of fees for non-vocational programmes and full cost recovery/non-fundable courses.

5.3 Course Fees – AY2016-17 – (overseas students)

The Committee considered the establishment of fee rates for overseas students for the forthcoming academic year. In considering these matters Members noted that the SFC does not advise colleges on fee rates for overseas students.

After some discussion the Committee resolved that the level of full-time course fees for overseas students be increased by 1% for AY2016-17.

6. Matters for Discussion

6.1 Environmental Sustainability

The Committee considered a report providing information relating to environmental sustainability issues in the College.

Information was provided on: background and context; EAUC Scotland Mandatory Reporting 2015; BSI EMS ISO14001 Accreditation; Energy Monitoring System; Monitoring Information; and a commentary on the reduction and segregation of 'general waste'.

Mr Scott said that the award of the ISO14001 showed the well-established energy management systems within the College and said that work was now in hand towards gaining the ISO50001 accreditation. Mr Scott commented that external feedback indicated that the College is well ahead of the rest of the FE sector in terms of environmental sustainability.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and it was agreed that it would be beneficial for the College's Environmental and Sustainability Manager to give a presentation to a future meeting of the Board.

6.2 Procurement

The Committee considered a paper providing information on procurement activities.

Members noted that no contracts that require to be reported to the Committee have been awarded since the last meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Members also noted that procurements are being undertaken for advertisement and marketing services, and janitorial and security guarding services.

Mr Scott informed the Committee that guidance is still awaited from the Scottish Government on the forthcoming Community Empowerment Act.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

6.3 Student Activity AY2015-16

The Committee considered a paper providing information on the current status of student activity and early student withdrawal rates for academic year 2015-16.

Members noted the current favourable position attained in the generation of 90% of the required activity for the year. In response to a query, Mr Wallen confirmed that he was confident that Business and Community Development would achieve the Department's agreed credits target for AY2015-16.

Mr Wallen assured Members that the SMT were monitoring activity levels on a regular basis.

Mr Wallen agreed to prepare a paper summarising the new credit funding model for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Summation of Business and date and time of next Meeting

The Secretary gave a summation of the business conducted. The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 15 March 2016 at 0900 hours.

Reserved Items of Business

8. Matters for Discussion

8.1 Financial Monitoring

8.2 Outreach Learning Centres Update

9. Summation of Reserved Items of Business

The Secretary gave a summation of the reserved items of business.

The meeting concluded at 0950 hours.