

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held on Thursday, 26 November 2009 in the Boardroom

Present: D McSweeney; M Davidson; M Stanger; J Holliday (Items 6-15);
C Richardson

Apologies: Adrian Taylor

Also present: K Wilson, Deputy Principal Finance & Corporate Services; J Murray, Clerk; J Bayliff (Items 11-13)

37/09 Election of Chair

Cllr Holliday having been detained in a Council flood-related meeting, it was proposed, seconded and agreed that D McSweeney take the Chair. On his arrival, Cllr Holliday declined to resume the Chair given the length of his prior meeting.

38/09 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

39/09 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Holliday declared an interest in Item 7 as a Member of Cumbria County Council, however he had no direct contact with the fire service and therefore this was not considered to be prejudicial in any way.

40/09 Year End Accounts

The financial statements were presented to the Committee by the Deputy Principal. These followed the prescribed format of the Learning and Skills Council.

It was noted that there was an operating surplus of £58,000 in 2008-09 once FRS17 pension adjustments had been taken into account. The underlying operating surplus was £352,000. The main difference from the outturn figures was that given that the only reasonable figure which could be used to estimate FRS17 was the previous year's figure.

It was suggested that the first bullet of the financial objectives could reflect the FRS17 adjustment and the Deputy Principal told the committee that she intended to review the financial objectives.

Overall, it was felt that it was a good document with a useful narrative.

Resolved – to recommend the year-end accounts to the Board.

41/09 Student Prize Fund Account

Given the limited use of the fund, there was agreement to try and use the fund to support reward initiatives, and to exploring the terms of reference of the fund to establish what else it could be used for.

42/09 Management Accounts

The Deputy Principal highlighted some of the pressure points contained in the update:

- The College was heavily subsidising 16-18 year-old provision again this year and the numbers were being used to fight for resources next year.
- Train to Gain funding was due again in March. It had been decided to deploy staff in other ways, such as training, until the funding came on stream again.
- With respect to Capital Expenditure, an online Key Performance Indicator software system was being explored which would provide greater interrogation of existing systems.
- There continued to be pressure on accommodation for construction. While a new build was the aim and funding was being sought, it looked as if interim temporary measures would be required.
- Investment income continued to be substantially lower owing to economic conditions.

Agreed – to note the update

43/09 Sub-Contractor Provision

The Deputy Principal reminded the Committee that this had been a growth area and that an audit had been commissioned to ensure that procedures were robust. This area had now been given an outstanding grading in the latest Financial Management and Control Evaluation return.

There were no performance issues at present.

Owing to demand, it was intended to extend the contract with Sellafield.

Two further contracts were sought on customer services and to work with the young people not in Employment, Education and Training.

It was suggested that as the low-level waste depository at Drigg was no longer part of Sellafield that there might be opportunities there.

Resolved -

- 1) That the Sellafield contract be extended.
- 2) That a contract for customer service training be awarded to Winning Ways.
- 3) That a contract for work with NEET (not in employment, education and training) young people be entered into with the fire service.

44/09 Cumbria Colleges Board

This item was withdrawn and would be tabled to the December Board meeting.

45/09 Facilities Management Annual Report

The Committee was reminded that there was a health and safety annual report to the September Board meeting. Health and safety incidents in the year to date were below the same period for last year.

There remained considerable concern about the windows and roof and the committee would be kept up to speed with action being taken to address this.

Activ Zone performance was strong and the work they were doing with hard-to-reach groups was commended by the Governor representative. It was suggested that this might be a suitable subject for a presentation to Governors.

A drive for increased flexibility in the deployment of technicians was continuing and it was acknowledged, in response to questioning, that work would continue on analysing where the demand was and how best to deliver.

Agreed – to note the report

46/09 Room Utilisation Policy

The policy had been drawn up in response to an audit recommendation to define practice and responsibilities. Work had continued to tighten the process.

In response to questioning, it was accepted that there was at times pressure on the accommodation but with the available accommodation

elsewhere on the Lillyhall site, expansion plans would be unlikely. A room was being rented from Energus.

It was felt, however, that with plans for a nuclear new build and improvements to the hospital infrastructure in the area that expansion of the construction centre would be crucial. This was a priority area.

Resolved – that the policy be adopted.

47/09 Human Resources Annual Report

The Human Resources (HR) Manager drew attention to some of the key elements in the report.

The strategy adopted to encourage applications from under-represented groups had had a positive impact with increases in the number of applications and successful applicants.

The HR team was at full strength. An upgrade to the database had allowed better monitoring of annual leave.

The contract for the payroll system, currently outsourced, was due for renewal next year. This would be subject to review.

The staff climate survey had shown an improving trend. It was questioned whether conclusions could be drawn from a 30% return rate. It was felt, however, that this was a good representative sample and an acceptable level for surveys of this nature.

The stress survey showed very positive results (69% return rate), which put Lakes College in the top quartile when benchmarked against similar organisations. There were good employee relations.

In discussing the employment figures, governors asked that there should be benchmarking information made available against colleges of a similar turnover.

Questions were raised about progression for staff, particularly when there had been a significant increase in the under 25 age group to which the modern apprentice scheme had contributed, but it was not currently considered an issue.

All staff were CRB checked and it is written into the contracts that if they are subsequently convicted and this has not been declared that this amounts to gross misconduct. Safeguarding training was being rolled out to key staff.

Governors were also informed that although they had agreed a 1.5% increase for staff pay in 2008-09 which had been implemented, one of

the unions had rejected the offer. They were due to ballot staff in December, and there was a possibility of strike action in the new year.

Agreed - to note the Annual Report.

48/09 Human Resources Strategy

Members received and noted the Human Resources Strategy Update for 2009-10.

49/09 Staff Development

The Committee was reminded that the college development plan was well regarded and seen as a key strength by assessors. Expenditure in 2008-09 had been £144k. 98% of the plan had been delivered.

Members questioned whether there might be an impact on the staff bill through the success of the plan. It was felt that any costs would have already been taken into account. Members received and noted the development plan for 2009-10.

50/09 Whistle-blowing policy

The Clerk presented the revised whistle-blowing policy. There were not huge changes, but there was a shift in emphasis towards confidentiality in the event of a whistle-blowing allegation, although there could be no guarantees. The policy had been benchmarked against similar policies in other colleges.

Resolved – to recommend the policy to the Board.

51/09 Joint Staff Consultation and Negotiation Committee minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2009 were received and noted.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm.