

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2021 AT 17.30 VIA TELECONFERENCE.

PRESENT:

Mrs Teresa Campbell (Chair)
Mr Brian Doran
Mr Tom Redmond
Mr Kieran Swail
Mrs Judith Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Terry McGonigal, Director of Finance and Planning
Ms Joanne McGuigan, Assistant Director of Finance
Mr Brendan McGuigan, Boardroom Apprentice
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 17.39.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

A02. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The Chair reminded those present to declare at the commencement of the meeting any conflict of interests held in any matter to be discussed. No interests were declared.

A03. MINUTES OF MEETING 20 OCTOBER 2020

The Chair referred Members to the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 October 2020. These were checked for accuracy and unanimously approved on proposal from Mrs Thompson and seconded by Mr Swail.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

None.

A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

None.

A06. SRC MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

Ms McGuigan presented the Management Accounts referring Members to the summary of income and expenditure.

Ms McGuigan reported that pay administration is £162k favourable year to date and informed that this mainly due to vacant posts, particularly within the Finance department. She advised that non pay direct support is £422k favourable and informed that there are a number of awarding bodies who are delaying issuing invoices due to Covid-19

Ms McGuigan informed that non pay administration is £140k favourable, and advised that this was spread across a number of budgets areas. She confirmed that the College is expected to spend the majority of the budget allocated to non pay premises.

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In response to a query from Mrs Campbell regarding vacant posts and budget underspends, Ms McGuigan advised that new staff are due to be recruited for a number of support areas including Finance. However, she expressed concern that the salary offer is not attractive enough to retain staff and as such the College is looking to implement a trainee programme in some areas such as Finance and IT. She advised that pay levels are an issue across the sector.

In response to a query from Mrs Thompson regarding unpaid fees, Ms McGuigan advised that the majority of fees have been loaded onto the system and the concern appears to relate to a downturn in enrolment. Mr Doran informed that recruitment is down 30% in part time enrolment. He advised that there is no significant impact on curriculum and measures are being taken address recruitment to permanent posts.

Mr Saunders noted the significant impact Covid-19 is having on part time enrolments and informed on his meeting with the Permanent Secretary the previous week to discuss challenges faced by the sector.

Members discussed the importance of balancing the budget and carefully monitoring expenditure within the financial year.

Ms McGuigan referred the Committee to the summary of expenditure by budget holder and analysis of working capital. Members noted that aged debtors has gone down due to the College not invoicing as many students, and were advised that comparison anomalies within the aged creditors report relate to travel restricted costs.

Ms McGuigan referred Members to the prompt payment report, credit card expenditure summary and PTL tracker report.

Mrs Campbell remarked on good quality of reporting and transparency on income and expenditure.

A07. GOVERNING BODY BUDGET 2020-2021

Members reviewed the Governing Body budget report noting that pay administration is broadly in line and acknowledging a substantial underspend in regard to travel, office requisites and hospitality.

A08. DfE FINANCIAL RETURNS

Mr McGonigal presented the DfE Financial Returns and informed on 47% expenditure on the DEL resource against total budget. He explained that anticipated spend is behind budget profiles this year due to Covid-19, and advised that Finance would be looking to realign budgets to fully utilise available funding.

Mr McGonigal advised that year to date capital spend is 65% of the available budget. He informed that most of the remaining capital spend relates to the minor works budget.

Members noted the report.

A09. DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS

Mr McGonigal referred Members to the Direct Award Contract report detailing the purchase of acrylic Covid protection screens.

The Committee noted the report.

A10. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT

Mr McGonigal presented the Complaints and Compliments report and advised that the slight increase in complaints in August and September compared to the previous year, relates to challenges that have arisen due to the current health pandemic.

Mr McGonigal advised that of the 35 complaints received, all but one have been resolved and informed on recorded data incidents and Subject Access Requests. He explained that the near misses relate to staff inattention and informed that reminders are being regularly sent to staff to advise on best practice for on-site and remote working.

Members noted that 95.58% of staff have completed the mandatory data protection training.

A11. e-BANKING MANDATE

Ms McGuigan presented the Bank Mandate proposing an amendment to signatories to reflect new staff and leavers, and to accommodate the transfer of payroll provision to Belfast Metropolitan College.

She informed that approval of the arrangements is being sought to ensure that the College can access funds and make payments to staff and suppliers. Ms McGuigan advised on the removal of one current signatory, the implementation of a three stage process and the addition of four managers from the HR department to allow access to the payment account only.

The e-Banking mandate was approved as amended on the proposal of Mr Redmond and seconded by Mrs Campbell.

A12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr McGonigal informed that there is no information as yet available with regard to the Departmental budget allocation.

A13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 9 March 2021 at 17.30 via teleconference.

The meeting concluded at 18.19.

CHAIR

DATE