

# MINUTES

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**Meeting:** Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee

**Date:** Thursday 16 November September 2023 at 4.00pm

**Location:** Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Susan Mitchell (Chair), Taylor Edwards, Brenda Heenan, Jim Metcalfe, Gordon Mole, Phillip Thompson

**In Attendance:** Iain Hawker, James Thomson, Marianne Philp

## 1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and, in particular, welcomed Brenda Heenan who was attending for the first time.

## 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 12 September 2023

A request was made to add an additional sentence to item 4.2 on Commercial Income Profitability as follows: *“Members were asked to note that the figures reported in the paper had not been agreed with Finance.”*

Subject to this one change being made, the minutes of the previous meetings were approved as an accurate record.

## 3 Matters Arising / Actions Outstanding

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. In line with the Committee’s request at the last meeting, the cyber security internal audit had been brought forward to 2023-24. An update on the audit dates and a timeline for completing the outstanding action will be reported to the Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee meeting in March 2024.

## 4 Strategic Update Reports

### 4.1 Digital Services

The Strategic Highlights as detailed on pages 10 and 11 and the Projects as detailed on pages 12 and 13 of the Boardpack were outlined and noted.

Members commented on the value of undertaking Penetration Testing demonstrated by the findings of the recent exercise and the importance of keeping this a regular occurrence.

A comment was made on the Scottish Government’s use of “Digital Poverty” and a suggestion made that the term “Digital Inclusion” be used instead.

**Decisions:**

- To approve the Digital spending plans as outlined in the paper.
- To brief members on what we mean by “agile working” by email or in the papers for the next meeting.

**Responsibility:** Vice Principal**Deadline:** 28 February 2024**4.2 Commercial Activity**

The strategic highlights on pages 15 and 16 of the Boardpack were outlined and noted.

**4.3 Finance**

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the figures presented were as at 30 September 2023. Projections were not available at this point in the financial year, but would be included in subsequent papers.

It was confirmed that the cash balance projection was not of concern as it was above the £4m required to adequately cover the College’s financial commitments. The starting point for the year had been higher than normal due to a number of provisions still to be paid.

**4.4 Procurement and Recent and Forthcoming Tender Activity**

The contents of the paper that were circulated were noted. It was confirmed that future reporting would be on an exceptional basis and that separate papers would be provided for each procurement project.

It was noted that £500k funding had been made available from the Scottish Funding Council for Asbestos Removal and Remedial Works which had to be committed by March 2024.

**Decision:** To approve the procurement spend for the Asbestos Removal and Remedial Works project as detailed within the paper.

**Responsibility:** Deputy Principal**Deadline:** 30 November 2023**4.4.1 Procurement Annual Report**

The contents of the report that had been circulated were noted. Members were reminded that the College was required to send the report to the Scottish Funding Council and to publish it.

A few suggestions were made by Committee members:

- Paragraph 1.11: clarify the reasons for the drop in local spend from 29% to 10% to convey a more positive message
- Consider the addition of a statement about the College’s commitment to maximise local spend and any targets (amounts rather than percentages).

Members noted that all spend was compliant with the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act and asked that their thanks be passed on to all staff involved for their work over the year and for producing the draft report.

**Decision:** To recommend the approval of the Procurement Annual Report to the Board of Governors, subject to the suggested amendments being considered and included as appropriate.

**Responsibility:** Deputy Principal

**Deadline:** 7 December 2023

#### 4.4.2 Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy and Procedure

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the Statement demonstrated the actions that had been taken during the financial year just ended and the work that would continue during 2023-24. It was confirmed that the College was required to review the Statement annually and the minor changes to the November 2023 version were noted as set out on page two of the document.

Members suggested the use of an alternative word to “exploit” in the third paragraph of Section 3 of the Statement.

Members queried whether or not APUC had picked up any Slavery or Human Trafficking activity in supply chains. Members were advised that no information on this had been circulated, but that the Procurement Team could request information.

**Decision:** To approve the Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy and Procedure, subject to the suggested change being made.

**Responsibility:** Deputy Principal

**Deadline:** December 2023

## 5 SFC Funded Capital Expenditure

The contents of the report that had been circulated were noted. It was noted that the new format of the paper presented the key estates projects being undertaken in 2023-24 and reported on spend to 31 October 2023. It was reported that, to date, the College had spent £0.581m (23%) but had committed £1.916m (76%) of its allocation. As had been discussed and approved earlier in the meeting, members noted that the College had received an additional £500k from the Scottish Funding Council to remove asbestos at the Glenrothes campus. Members confirmed their endorsement of the actions as outlined within the paper and welcomed the clarity given by the new report format. It was also clarified that the projects listed were tied into the Masterplan exercise members had discussed at a previous meeting.

### 5.1 Dunfermline Learning Centre (DLC) Update

An urgent, verbal and confidential update was provided on the DLC project setting out the current cost indications and actions that had been taken. A confidential note was circulated to Project Board members on 17 November 2023 setting out the key points and is available to Finance, Commercial and Estates Committee members on Microsoft Teams as a record of the points discussed at the meeting.

Members expressed their concerns about the situation and their endorsement of the actions being taken, and offered any support that could be provided.

It was noted that a further update would be provided at the New Build Project Board meeting on 5 December 2023 and at the Board of Governors meeting on 7 December 2023.

## **6 Fife College Academic Fees for 2024-25**

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was noted that no fee increase was proposed for 2024-25.

**Decision:** To approve the academic fees for 2024-25.

**Responsibility:** Deputy Principal

**Deadline:** December 2023

## **7 Review of Meeting**

No business was transacted.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 8.30am