

FINANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 4.45pm
MINUTES

Chaired by: Rachel Dolby

Members Present: Ian Brabbs Neil Hughes Phil Rumsey Helen Kirk

Also Present: Lesley Clemmet – Director of Finance & Resources

Heather Campbell – Clerk to the Corporation

1. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies received and the meeting was quorate with all 5 members present.

2. **Declaration of personal conflicts of interest**

None.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting.**

a. **Agree Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024 and the Confidential and Restricted Minutes of 12 March 2024 were approved at the 16 April 2024 Corporation.

The Chair asked members if they had any comments/amendments to the minutes and there were none raised.

b. **Updates from Clerk or College Management – None.**

c. **Review of action(s) agreed**

The Chair referred to the Actions Agreed Report (Paper B) and the following was noted:

- 27-June-23 3.c and 21-Mar- 24 8. DoFR to prepare a Draft Property Strategy Policy for the next F&E meeting – this remains a WIP with the completion date previously extended to Autumn 2024 at the 21 March meeting.
- 27-June-23 3.c DoFR to prepare a Draft Value for Money Policy for the next F&E meeting – the DoFR advised she would cover this when she went through the tabled amendments to the Financial Regulations but in essence her intended recommendation was to dispense with a standalone Value for Money Policy.
- 28-Nov-23 CONF 7.c. The DoFR to look at segregation of the finance team's tasks – the DoFR advised that this had still to be considered by the Internal Auditors but had been included in their schedule of work to be done and therefore remained a WIP.
- 21-Mar-24 3.c. The DoFR to review financial policies to ensure compliant with the EFSA Financial Handbook – the DoFR advised that the Financial handbook had now been published and she had tabled her proposed amendments to the financial policies later in the meeting.

- 21-Mar-2024 5. d. The DoFR to give an update on the Bungalow's Building Control Certificate to the next meeting – the DoFR advised that the building contractors Nexus had used Martin Elwick of Assent Building Control to sign off on the Building Control Certificate, and the College had paid an invoice for the work he had been engaged to do. The College Site Manager remembers Elwick doing the final inspection. Assent have now stated that Martin Elwick no longer works for them so that the absence of the Final Certificate was not their problem. This was unacceptable and she had put in a formal complaint with Assent having paid them for the service. If nothing came of this the next step would be to go back to the Council to find out if they would be prepared to approve the completed work retrospectively although there may be a cost to have this done. The DoFR understands that the Council would apply the building regulations as they existed at the date the work was done.
- 21-Mar-24 10. DoFR to produce a Tender Log for consideration by the members as a Standing Item on the Agenda for all F&E Committee meetings – the DoFR confirmed that she had produced a Tender Log but that there were no entries for consideration by the members. The Clerk was reminded to add the Tender Log to the Standing Items on the Agenda.

ACTION AGREED

The Clerk to include the Tender Log as a Standing Item

d. Matters arising not covered in agenda

None.

4. Updates on Potential Changes in Provision, Staffing, Performance and Pay Issues

a. New Financial Risks or Opportunities

The Director of Finance & Resources advised members this was covered in the Financial update (Paper B) for consideration under item 7.

b. Pensions and Pay Awards

The DoFR advised that any relevant matters relating to Pensions and Pay Awards would be covered under item 7.

5. Standing items

a. Principal's expenses – actual and planned (for Chairman's approval)

The Principal advised the Chair that he did not have any actual or planned expenses.

b. Approval of any issues relating to planned trips overseas

- (1) Senior Staff – None planned
- (2) Family Members – None planned

c. Reporting of issues relating to quotations/tenders

The DoFR advised there were no issues to raise relating to quotations/tenders.

- d. Health & Safety Update (significant Estate related issues only)

The DoFR advised that there were no H&S updates to report relating to the Estates.

6. **Receive Estates Update (covered in the Finance update)**

See confidential minute.

7. **Receive Finance Update**

See confidential minute.

8. **Update on Student Financial Support 2023-24**

The Chair invited the DoFR to take members through the updated Student Financial Support Fund 2024-25 (Paper F).

The DoFR referred the Student Support Fund Policy Statement & Guidelines and advised that the main area of change was an increase in the Household income for Category 4: from £28,000 to £35,000 and Category 5: income is greater than £30,000 but equal to or less than £35,000.

A member noted that North Yorkshire Council (NYC) was working with York University to help parents apply to the discretionary fund in NYC schools which might be worth investigating by the College. The DoFR agreed to look into this further.

The Chair asked members if they had any comments on the Student Financial Support Fund.

The Vice Chair recommended that the name of policy should be the same as the name of the policy in the Policy Master List which referred to a Financial Support for Students Policy.

Members agreed and the Clerk agreed to update the Policy Master List to align with the heading of the document.

ACTION AGREED

Clerk to amend the Policy Master List from Financial Support for Students to Student Support Fund Policy Statement & Guidelines.

9. **Review Terms of Reference for the Finance & Estates Committee**

The Chair advised that the Committee's Terms of Reference were for annual review and asked members if they had any proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference .

The members considered the ToRs and the Vice Chair suggested a change of wording under The Committee: bullet point 5 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair. He proposed replacing: "The Clerk shall seek seconded nominations of members willing to undertake these duties" with 'The Committee shall appoint members of the Committee willing to undertake these duties' to reflect the practice followed by the Committee.

The Vice Chair also noted that on the second page 12. Review the College's Property Strategy should be amended to read: 12. Review the College's Estates Strategy Policy to be consistent with the name of the policy the DoFR was working on.

Members agreed.

ACTION AGREED

Clerk to update the Terms of Reference for the F&E Committee to reflect the above proposed amendments.

10. **ESFA S6F Financial Dashboard 2024**

See confidential minute.

11. **List of Policies Committee is responsible for**

The Chair referred to the master list (Paper I) and noted that all policies had either been reviewed or were due to be reviewed during the course of the meeting.

The DoFR advised that the Value for Money Policy had been removed from the list in March 2023 and that she would address this issue further when she presented her proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations under Item 13.

12. **Review Treasury Management Policy**

See confidential minute.

13. **Review Updated Financial Regulations (inc. Financial Objectives)**

See confidential minute.

14. **Review Financial Limits Appendix A**

See confidential minute.

15. **Enhanced Redundancy & Discretionary Payments Policy**

The DoFR referred members to the tabled policy and advised she had reviewed this in accordance with the provisions of the Financial Handbook with the amendments noted in blue. The main amendment was the removal of paragraph 5. relating to Confidentiality Agreements.

The Chair asked members if they had any matters to raise and as there were none she asked if they were prepared to recommend the updated policy to the Corporation for Approval.

Members agreed.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CORPORATION:

That the Corporation approve the updated Enhanced Redundancy & Discretionary Payments Policy.

16. **Fraud & Financial Irregularities Policy and Response Plan**

The DoFR referred members to the tabled Policy and advised she had also reviewed this in accordance with the provisions in the Financial Handbook with the amendments noted in blue.

A member noted that under the section headed Notifications of Suspicions all suspicions should be reported to the Director of Finance & Resources, and that her name had also been included in the Policy. The member proposed that the Policy should omit the identity of the DoFR to avoid the need to redraft the Policy in the event of a future change of DoFR.

The members agreed that the Policy should just refer to the post and DoFR agreed to update the document before its approval by the Corporation.

The Chair asked members if they had any other matters to raise in the Policy and as there were none she asked if they were prepared to recommend the updated policy to the Corporation for approval subject to the deletion of the DoFR's identity.

Members agreed.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CORPORATION

The Corporation approve the updated Fraud & Financial Irregularities Policy and Response Plan.

The DoFR highlighted that she was aware that she had tabled a number of policies for the members to review in accordance with the provisions of the Financial Handbook and proposed that the Clerk provide the members with electronic copies of the amended policies for them to consider together with a copy of the Financial Handbook but warned that any suggested amendments would need to be received before the Corporation meeting in July when the policies were due to be approved to meet the implementation date of 1 August 2024.

The Vice Chair suggested that the DoFR email the policies to members with the proposed amendments tracked and so that they can then email her with any comments they may have.

ACTION AGREED

The DoFR to email the tracked policies to members for their feedback prior to them going out to the Corporation for approval at the meeting on 9 July.

17. **Annual Review of Travel & Subsistence Rates for Staff June 2024**

The DoFR referred to the tabled Travel and Subsistence Rates for Staff She was not proposing any major changes and had checked that the proposed mileage rates were in line with the HMRC's Approved Mileage Rate and the proposed subsistence rates in line with HMRC Benchmark scale rates for subsistence expenses.

A member enquired if staff claimed for a lot of mileage and subsistence.

The DoFR replied that the majority of staff travel by train if possible and for subsistence this can be high especially for overseas trips such as a forthcoming trip to Disney Land Paris for which she has decided to include staff meal costs in the overall cost for the trip.

18. **Consider any items discussed as ‘Confidential & Restricted’**

Members considered their discussions and agreed Items 6., 7., 10., 12., 13. and 14., should be classified as confidential and noted there were no discussion items considered as confidential and restricted.

19. **Any Other Business**

The DoFR advised that annually she needed to bring the College Insurance Policy to the F&E Committee for review. The premium payable this year had gone up by £1,500 but this was fixed for the next 3 years subject to any annual increase in the level of the insurance cover. She will bring the Policy to the Autumn meeting for review.

A member asked if something happened to a student or member of staff on a foreign trip whether this would be covered by the College insurance.

The DoFR observed that the College trips abroad include travel insurance provided by the travel company used but that she would check that staff and students are adequately covered for all future trips .

ACTION AGREED

DoFR to check that the travel company used for College trips abroad arranges travel insurance to adequately cover students and staff.

No other business was raised

20. **Date of Next Meeting – November 2024 TBC**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.15pm