



ST BRENDAN'S CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Governors' Resources Premises Human Resources Committee

MINUTES OF MEETING

Wednesday 6 March 2024

Office Team Virtual Meeting (16:00–19:00 hrs)

GOVERNORS/MEMBERS PRESENT: James Creamer [Chair], Roger Bridgeman (part), Marian Curran [Principal], Michelle Hazelwood, Svetlana Bajic-Raymond (part), Peter Turner (part) [6]

APOLOGY: None

ATTENDING: Shane Blackshaw [Executive Finance Director], Peter J Harrison [Clerk to Governors], Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional], Luke Abrahams [Head of Human Resources]

Absent Without Apology: None [0]

CIRCULATION: All Governors, College website

QUORUM REQUIRED: 3/6 (Voting Committee members)

Documents Circulated/Tabled* at Meeting:

- Document [A] – '231115 Resources Premises HR Minutes [7]' – circulated previously.
- Document [B] – '240306 [10.1] Environmental Sustainability Policy DRAFT v4 PRIP revisions' – circulated previously.
- Document [C] – '240306 [11.1] Risk Register Review Extract' – circulated previously.
- Document [D] – '240306 [6.1] Staff Retention Report (Mar 24)' – circulated previously.
- Document [E] – '240306 [6.2] Staff Wellbeing Report (Mar 24)' – circulated previously.
- Document [F] – '240306 [6.3] Staff Demographics Report (Mar 24)' – circulated previously.
- Document [G] – '240306 [7.1-7.3] Student Recruitment Retention Attendance Report' – circulated previously.
- Document [H] – '240306 [7.4] Premises Report February 2024' – circulated previously.
- Document [I] – '240306 [7.5] Health and Safety and Accident Report February 2024' – circulated previously.
- Document [J] – '240306 [9.2] Management Accounts Jan 2024' – circulated previously.
- Document [K] – '240306 [9.3] Budget Forecast, Financial Planning 24-25 & Other Finance Updates' – circulated previously.
- Document [L] – '240306 [9.4] Accountability and local skills 2024 statement (003)' – circulated previously.

Circulation: All Governors, Clerk to Governors, Principalship, & [College Website after signature].

Committee Briefing – none this meeting

ITEM	ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION	AGREED ACTION
1. Welcome	11.1 Welcome: The Committee Chair welcomed Leanne Sowersby, attending her first meeting following appointment. The prayer invoking the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The meeting took place remotely using Office Teams™. 1.2 Apologies: None [0] 1.3 Absent: None [0] 1.4 Quorate: The meeting was declared quorate [6/6] 1.5 Committee Briefing: There was no Committee Briefing at this meeting.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1 Declarations of Interest: Governors confirmed there had been no change.	Next Agenda & Any Governor
3. Minutes Previous Meeting	4.1 Governors' Resources HR Committee Open Minutes [15 November 2023]: The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record and were passed for electronic signature and for publication on the web and to be uploaded to MS Office Teams <files>™. Action – Governance Professional to upload agreed signed Minutes	Governance Professional
4. Actions Review [Agenda not listed]	4.1 Committee Terms of Reference Adopted 4.2 Staff Pay Settlements 4.3 Car Leasing Scheme Adoption 4.4 Health and Safety 4.5 Financial Regulations Annual Review 4.6 Multiple Policies Adoption Confirmed all actions have been completed.	Governance Professional
5. Matters Arising [Agenda not listed]	None	

<p>6. Staff Matters</p>	<p>6.1 Staff Retention Report:</p> <p>LA talked through the key points. Noted that there has been a very slight increase in turnover. This is due to removing casual workers who have been on the books but have not actually been working in the school.</p> <p>Q – Is the turnover of teaching staff typical? We have not yet had the results from the SFCA staffing survey, which is what we use to benchmark, but will be able to make this comparison when we do.</p> <p>Noted that the context of leaving is important, some have retired, and some were on fixed term contracts which have now finished – the reasons for leaving are listed in the report. MC feels this is likely to be low compared to other places nationally, due to the benefits of working in a sixth form college compared to working in a school. Have seen in surveys that colleagues are generally happy working in the college.</p> <p>Noted that we are making good progress with keeping substantive staff. Also highlighted the work being done to support staff wellbeing and reduce / manage workload.</p> <p>Noted that there was only one exit interview response of 13 leavers, and talked through why these might not have been completed. Have now implemented a mandatory exit interview with HR.</p> <p>6.2 Staff Wellbeing Report:</p> <p>Q – 1938 days lost – is this correct? This was in the system. Some of this will be due to head count changes. LA will double check the figure.</p> <p>Highlighted the fact that mental health is the most common reason for losing days to sickness and this is a key concern. Noted that many of these days are attributed to a small number of people, some of whom have already left or are due to leave soon.</p> <p>Q – Do we know whether the mental health issues are related to issues related to teaching / issues within college? There is a mix. It is often a balance of both work and home life. There is one instance where it is not work related, and some where work issues may well have contributed. The workload reduction project is aimed at supporting staff with their mental health at work. This has a key focus on teaching staff who have a higher incidence of mental health related illness.</p> <p>Discussion around some of the ways in which the college supports mental health, such as mental health first aid training etc.</p> <p>6.3 Staff Demographics Report - LA noted the age demographics – we have a high proportion of staff in the 51+ age category and therefore need to consider succession planning for people who may be considering retirement etc. LA talked through some of the measures used for this.</p> <p>Q – Is it typical to have 70% of staff that are female? Yes, this is typical of education.</p>	
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	<p>6.4 Staff Professional Associations: There have been some discussions around minimum service standards and consultation between the government and unions. This is something to watch for the future months. We have alerted both NEU and NASWT to potential disruption during the summer exam season, which would mean implementing minimum service levels – we are aiming to keep the dialogue open.</p> <p>6.5 Staff Pay 2023/2024: This has all been implemented. MC talked through the way that this is decided for the coming year and the pressures on the budgets etc.</p>	
<p>7. Principal's Report/Information</p>	<p>7.1 Student Recruitment 2023/2024: MC gave an update. Total applications received is now 2487 live as of today. Compared to this time in 2022, this is an increase. Total offers is now 1938, total acceptances is 1595. Recruitment looks buoyant.</p> <p>MC thanked staff for their work on this, student interviews and for contacting them promptly.</p> <p>Q – Will the 1595 increase much? We have around 361 telephone interviews to do, some may not answer and we will start to withdraw. We are now looking at two advertising campaigns to follow up on students who said we were second choice, and to investigate barriers where students had said they would not come to us. We will then be more certain on numbers for planning the curriculum.</p> <p>7.2 Student Retention 2023/2024: Highlighted that we have improved retention year on year. Funded retention has also slightly improved on last year, and we know where the concerns are with retention.</p> <p>7.3 Student Attendance 2023/2024: A priority from last year was a focus on attendance and this has improved from 83 to 86.8%, although the is still an issue with access to level 3 students, and we know what this is. There was a query over the accuracy of the punctuality comparison figure. This is monitored at the start of each lesson.</p> <p><i>SBR joined the meeting</i></p> <p>7.4 Premises Report: SB talked through the key points.</p> <p>Q – Are the works still required in the pavilion? Still need some works to the kitchen. To kit the building out now and staff it, as we are coming to the end of the season, would cost more than we can recoup in revenue. The changing rooms are only being properly used when there are matches between the college and other colleges, but have not been officially opened yet.</p> <p>Q – Is the levelling work in the area where future use is uncertain? If so, why level it now? Where we have emergency electrical works, they have made a mess of the grass bank between the pavilion and the 3G pitch, so Oakland have agreed to move some of the soil that is filed up to reshape the bank by the pavilion, and will</p>	

	<p>use any remaining soil to the far side of the pitch and reshape the area there. The area designated to be the pitch will be left level.</p> <p>The soil levelling and some contour changing to the exit onto Broomhill Road (a requirement of BCC) are the only things that still need to be done on this project.</p> <p>Q – Will the costs of running also increase, alongside the potential income? The main additional cost is the flood lighting, which will add to the general electricity costs. There is also the weekly brushing of the pitch and regular use of an external contractor to refresh the crumb surface.</p> <p>Q – Do we charge VAT on hire of the sports pitch? No, we are not VAT registered. Discussed the possibility of setting up a separate limited company that would allow charging VAT – this could be looked at.</p> <p>7.5 Health and Safety Accident Report: SB talked through the key points. Noted that there is a low number of call outs.</p> <p>Q – Were these investigated in terms of whether they could have been prevented? Most are not serious, some are largely unavoidable.</p> <p>Q – Is it possible to look at the student nurse data – does she have an impact on the issue that arise? This should include incidents that are dealt with through the student nurse team. SB will check that these are included.</p> <p>Q – Is there a plan for a permanent fire assembly point? This could be the coach park or the 3G. Discussion around some of the issues with using the 3G pitch – footwear may not be appropriate and being fenced in may not always be appropriate. The current area is very cramped and close to the buildings. Will review when the works are complete.</p> <p>Q – Re lockdown procedure, can the classroom that could not be locked now be locked? No. Have looked at the possibility of using door wedges, although these sometimes go missing, so are looking at other solutions. Also noted that not all classrooms have blinds – there is more work to be done on this. Noted that the rates of compliance with procedure were not consistent, so this needs to be repeated. There is also a need to practice this further, as some students did not appear to be aware of what was needed.</p>	
<p>8. Development College Estate</p>	<p>8.1 College Estate Development Plans: To be discussed at the full Board of Governors</p> <p>8.2 Information Technology Strategy: SB talked through the process behind developing the strategy. Will discuss next week the areas of priority in terms of risk and cost and will then look at these in terms of the overall budget. We have applied for funding to try to raise additional capital for the IT project.</p> <p>MC has also met with UWE to discuss working together on this project.</p>	

<p>9. College Financial Matters</p>	<p>9.1 Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022/2023: Reported that the ESFA believe we have breached the original loan agreement, and the Auditors will not sign off the accounts until the know what the ESFA will do about this.</p> <p>SB has sent further information to the ESFA to explain the situation – there was an arrangement fee of £26,000 and, if this had been paid at the time, it would have been a revenue cost, but it was somehow rolled up into the load, thus breaching the agreement.</p> <p>Hopefully this will allow the ESFA to finalise action and the auditors to sign off the accounts.</p> <p>9.2 Management Accounts January 2024: SB talked through the key points.</p> <p>Noted the reduction in cash flow, attributable primarily to the payments for the 3G project.</p> <p>This highlights that the cash flow balance is too low and this needs to increase. Next year’s provisional budgets are promising in this regard, with recruitment being up, but need to ensure this is robust.</p> <p>Q – How much cash should we have? This is relative to income and expenditure – the ESFA target is about 25 days in hand, which is nearer to £800k for us.</p> <p>Discussed in further detail below.</p> <p>Q – There are interest earning accounts with no interest? There are some current accounts with no interest (catering etc). There is also an account earning interest at 4% where the 3G money has been. We can continue to use this account to earn interest and avoid going into overdraft in our current account.</p> <p>Q – There are some items expected to have been received, are these not reflected in the projections? These are reflected in the projections, and this is why there is a variance as they were not included in the budget.</p> <p><i>PT joined the meeting</i></p> <p>9.3 College Current Cash Position: SB talked through the key points of the report.</p> <p>The cash issue has highlighted a weakness in some of the control measures and the scrutiny of management accounts.</p> <p>This would take us into a critical cash flow position by year end. SB talked through the measures being taken to ensure we do not go overdrawn at any point.</p> <p>Q – Does the plan to recover include the deferral of payments? This is only for the next couple of months in order to avoid deferring indefinitely, as we would want to avoid the reputational damage associated with this. This would be while we reduce actual spending.</p> <p>MC noted the amount of work that SB has done on this, to ensure that the college moves into a good position. Also, that this has been a highly stressful time for the college as well.</p>	
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The college has not previously had any negative financial ratings. The recruitment and retention profile of students is good and we will be explaining to the ESFA that this is a blip and we can recover moving forward. We have also asked for support from the FE commissioner around managing issues. The FE commissioner will then discuss with the ESFA.

We are planning to ask that the ESFA payments come in slightly earlier than usual for April, by a few days. If this were to happen, it might get us through the year. We may need to do this for May and June. We need time for reductions in spending to take hold.

Discussion around the possibility of gaining external income from sources such as the Merchant Venturers or other sources. MC has written to a number of organisations and would be happy to have a contact with the Venturers. Further discussion around possible sources of income.

Noted the high costs of agency fees and relating this to the mental health issues. LA talked through some of the issues with using agencies and the difficulty in getting staff when we need cover, which sometimes means that we have little choice in what we end up paying. We have started to create a casual worker register for teachers who do not want to work through agencies, who will work for us when needed. Are also working on advertising costs, by creating a bank of people who are interested in working at St Brendan's in the future.

Q – How do we manage if we cannot get agency staff? One of the mitigations is to find ways to provide cover internally. We have also split classes across teachers who are in. Areas where we may have concerns, we may move towards a more shared class scenario.

Discussion around the new transport contract. The current coach provider is withdrawing from the end of this academic year. We have been working with First Bus to put together a network, to support students where the availability of transport is a factor in whether they attend St Brendan's. The idea is that investing in this will bring in more students and increase funding.

It is important for the committee to note that the college has been proactively working with the FE Commissioner and the ESFA to put measures in place. MC also has a meeting with the SFCA as well.

SB highlighted the revised planning process for 2024-25, which will address any similar issues in future.

There are two key KPIs to get right – minimum cash balance and minimum in-year operating surplus – and we should work out from there what budget can we afford.

The other fundamental change is the move to a departmental funding by formula, based on student numbers.

2024-25 budget – need to model what would happen if the pay award is more than the 2% we can afford.

Key point to note re the transport, is that the benefit of additional students recruited will not be realised until 2025-26 due to lagged funding. It will be important to get as many students on the busses as possible.

	<p>Q – Re Transport, is there an incentive to the transport provider if they gain a certain number of additional students? Have discussed this. In order for the network to be advertised on the bus stops etc, it needs to be priced at what it would be charged to a member of the public. Without this it becomes a St Brendan’s only network. The routes are only viable due to students and other people using the busses. There is a discussion around, if we are underwriting the subsidy, how we benefit if they are making significant profit.</p> <p>Q – Would WECA pay anything towards transport to get people from the poorer areas of Bristol to the college? We have asked for this, and continue to campaign and are working with City of Bristol and SGS on provision of transport.</p> <p>Governors thanked SB for his work on this.</p> <p>The Cash flow report will also go to the Strategy meeting, with an update on the ESFA conversation.</p> <p>9.4 Local Authority Accountability Agreement /Local Needs Duty: this needs to be written by May and agreed by the Full Board and published on the website.</p> <p>Need to say how we are meeting the local skills needs and how this links to strategic priorities MC talked through the key parts of the document.</p> <p>This also coincides with the new strategic objectives which will also come to the board.</p>	
<p>10. Policy Review</p>	<p>10.1 College Environmental Policy [draft]: SB talked through the background of this policy - it was first identified in an internal audit - and the reasons it has taken some time to be completed.</p> <p>The wording is largely from the model policy provided by the auditor. We have identified eleven different themes to work on. SB talked through some of the quick wins vs longer term plans. Some areas will require financial investment which will need to be considered in the context of the overall budget.</p> <p>Q – Are there possible cost implications? Yes, there is a very detailed spreadsheet of actions that sits behind this. Some actions are free but require time. Others are intended to invest money to save money, others will cost to reduce the carbon footprint. None of these will be implemented without being considered in the context of the wider budget.</p> <p>Noted that contractors may be looking to reduce their environmental impact and this may also have an indirect impact on our costs.</p> <p>Would like this to go to Full Governors’ next meeting.</p> <p>Q – Are there any government grants? Possibly, part of the Environmental Sustainability and Project Manager role is to identify grants and sources of funding.</p>	

	<p>Q – Where does becoming paper-light fit in? This would fall under some of the headings – procurement, operations, and waste and recycling. This is on the list of priorities over the next six months. MC proposed, RB seconded, all voted in favour.</p> <p>Policy recommended for approval to the full board</p>	
11. Risk Register Review	<p>11.1 Committee Risk Register Review: This will be updated again in April. The areas around good financial health will need to be updated.</p> <p>Under 2.9 staff absence, LA has investigated insurance around this, but this needs to be reviewed in the light of current restraints.</p> <p>Will also need to update potentially re new providers.</p> <p>SB noted it was appropriate to move the review of the register to four times per year, rather than two. Would like to review it monthly to sense check – what to be sure we are using this as a tool to help manage risk rather than focus on the register.</p> <p>There is another layer of risk ownership, where members of staff should be contributing to the mitigation and management of risks, and they should be contributing to the detail that sits in the register.</p> <p>Q – Can we mitigate against the potential risk of reduction in student numbers with a new school opening? Yes, there are ways to do this.</p> <p>Q -Are we risk averse, or do we embrace risk?</p> <p>Q – What is Moodle – this used to be a platform used for storing resources, but we now use it very little.</p>	
12. Safeguarding/PREVENT Duty	<p>12.1 Safeguarding/PREVENT – Committee Duty Review: Discussion around safeguarding and prevent. We have made a CIF bid to update security in and around the college, so are looking at this to improve safety on the site.</p>	
13. Committee Business	<p>13.1 External Governance Review: JC talked through the interviews with the reviewer and what was discussed. JC felt there is sometimes duplication of work across the governing body. The reviewer will be at the FGB in person.</p> <p>13.2 Committee Briefing Next Meeting: to discuss people strategy at the next meeting.</p> <p>13.3 Reports to Board of Governors: Financial Situation, Estate development plans, Environmental Policy SB proposed taking pertinent parts of financial report from tonight, with updates re the cash flow section to provide an updated report.</p>	

14. Any Other Business	Thanked LS for her first meeting. Thanked PH for his work over the years and his support for the board.	
15. Correspondence	None	
16. Next Meeting	Wednesday, 26 June 2024 at 16:00 [Subject to confirmation]	Clerk/ All Governors
Minutes of Meeting Prepared	Monday, 20 November 2023 Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional]	
Minutes Agreed	Minutes of Meeting agreed as true and accurate record Wednesday, 26 June 2024 Signed: Committee Chair	