



ST BRENDAN'S CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE
Governors' Resources Premises Human Resources Committee
MINUTES OF MEETING
Wednesday 26 June 2024
Office Team Virtual Meeting (16:00–19:00 hrs)

GOVERNORS/MEMBERS PRESENT: James Creamer [Chair], Marian Curran [Principal], Michelle Hazelwood, Peter Turner [4]

APOLOGY: Roger Bridgeman, Svetlana Bajic-Raymond [2]

ATTENDING: Shane Blackshaw [Executive Finance Director], 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)

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	1.1 Welcome: JC welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with a prayer Apologies were accepted. 1.2 Quorate: The meeting was declared quorate [4/6]	
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 6 March 2024 - The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record Agreed that minutes will be signed electronically, signed minutes will be kept in the school files and unsigned minutes uploaded to the website.	Governance Professional
4. Actions Review [Agenda not listed]	4.1 Raising Concerns Policy and Procedure (Whistleblowing) – LA confirmed that this has been renamed as the Whistleblowing policy and all changes made 4.2 Check that incidents dealt with through the student nurse team are included in the H&S report – SB confirmed that this is now integrated into one report 4.3 Review permanent fire assembly point when works complete - SB confirmed that the new meeting point will be the coach park. 4.4 Follow up on lockdown procedures - SB not all issues can be remedied immediately, due to resources. Another lockdown drill is planned and feedback from this will be fed into the estate improvement plan. The priority will be the CIF bid to add new security gates etc. to improve all round site security. There is also a need to ensure that all colleagues are following the guidance in a lockdown procedure. 4.5 Information Technology Strategy - look at priorities in context of overall budget / discuss working with UWE – MC gave an update. Bids have been submitted to the Wolfenden Foundation, the Garfield Western Foundation and MC is talking to UWE about working with them.	Governance Professional
5. Matters Arising [Agenda not listed]	None	

<p>6. Staff Matters</p>	<p>6.1 Staff Retention Report: LA talked through the report. Noted the slight increase in turnover, there are challenges in recruitment and retention in teaching across the sector. We are trying to tap into some of the DfE initiatives around this. Compared to the SFCA, our teaching staff and support staff turnover falls quite low.</p> <p>LA talked through some of the strategies to retain staff.</p> <p>Q – Is the level of turnover having a detrimental impact? One of the areas we are having challenges with is recruitment. The differential in pay between Sixth Form Colleges and schools is significant. There is one role we have now advertised four times. Recruiting for specialist subjects is even more difficult to recruit to.</p> <p>We are considering innovative ways to reduce the impact on students, such as introducing cover supervisors to ensure that lessons are not cancelled. We have increased the number of casual workers, which reduces agency fees. We have also looked at areas where we can combine subjects within one role.</p> <p>6.2 Staff Wellbeing (Attendance/Absence) Report: LA highlighted the number of working days lost due to mental health, which is quite high, with more days lost among teaching staff. We are looking at workload and work-life balance etc, we have reviewed the academic calendar to try to reduce pinch points and provide support at such times. It is difficult to unpick how much mental health issues are linked to work or personal issues and we do not directly ask at the moment, but will be considering how to gather this information in a useful way.</p> <p>Q – Is the additional support being welcomed? We believe so. There is a still a gap between what we are doing and what employees are aware of. LA talked through some of the things that are available.</p> <p>We have specifically asked in professional development reviews about wellbeing and support for this. Mental health is a common issue across sixth form colleges and is linked to the recruitment issues. There is an inset day that will cover ethos and some of the wellbeing issues.</p> <p>Noted that recent wellbeing committee meetings have been cancelled and concern expressed that this gives the wrong impression. LA noted that attendance at these has been low and people have been unable to attend, but this is something that we do want to relaunch, and it is important that staff are involved in this. We will need to look at what the barriers are to staff being involved in these meetings. Discussion around this. Suggestion that this could be part of the regular meetings that MC has with staff. We will make some staff regular attendees at the wellbeing committee for next year.</p> <p>6.3 Staff Engagement Report: Q – Are there more positive responses from support staff because teaching staff are more aware of issues that the college is facing? Some of this will be due to workload and the time of year that the surveys are run. We will bring to the committee an overview of the surveys across the year.</p>	
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	<p>There are certainly things from this survey that we are looking to address and are already working on. Governors expressed surprise that some staff felt that the college is not welcoming to people from different backgrounds and whether people understand the vision of the college.</p> <p>This was based on 59 responses, which is a 26% response rate, so some negative responses can skew the percentages. There was a higher number of people who did understand the values at inset day. We are working on getting feedback from a higher number of staff, in order to get a better understanding of where more clarity is needed for staff.</p> <p>MC would like to be able to follow up some of the responses to have a conversation with staff about the issues that are being identified.</p> <p>6.4 Staff Unions and Professional Associations: LA gave an update. We recently met with regional union representatives around, 'workplace asks'. They have requested paid time off for religious events, job interviews etc. We have agreed to implement some of these and compromised on others. Feedback was that the format was useful and constructive.</p> <p>6.5 Teaching Staff Pay Update: MC gave an update. There have been negotiations re Teachers' pay, but no agreement, so colleges are trying to work out what to put in budgets. The sector will likely argue that pay rise should be funded. The SCFA are asking for a pay rise at, or above inflation (2%).</p>	
<p>7. Principal's Report/Information</p>	<p>7.1 Student Recruitment 2023/2024: MC gave an update.</p> <p>We have had our welcome fest over the past two days. Of total acceptance 60% of students came to the welcome fest. The aim is to be over 2000 and to hopefully recruit an additional 100 students.</p> <p>Also noted the large number of applications for 2024-25</p> <p>7.2 Student Retention 2023/2024: This is year to date in terms of where we are. In terms of the students who are withdrawing, there are a variety of reasons.</p> <p>There is a need to keep an eye on the funded retention as we are funded on 95% retention.</p> <p>7.3 Student Attendance 2023/2024: Overall attendance has improved slightly to 85.1%. Some students with early exams decided to revise at home and we will address this for next year.</p> <p>Q – Has there been any relaxation of entrance criteria? No, our entry criteria across the city are one of the lowest, which fits with the ethos of being inclusive. The access to level 3 course allows students to be with us for 3 years and make up where they might have struggled previously.</p>	

	<p>7.4 Premises Report: SB talked through the key points. Noted the reduction in utility prices. SB has cautiously assumed they will return to the higher levels for next year’s budget.</p> <p>There have been further leaks in B Building and this is likely to need a CIF bid to pro-actively manage.</p> <p>Discussed use of the area where the soil has been levelled after the sports facilities works.</p> <p>We have decided to subscribe to an online lettings software, which will significantly improve the management of lettings and allow a move to payment in advance which will help with cashflow.</p> <p>There will be KPIs for this committee around sustainability in future. The Board asked that the policy made reference to Laudato Si</p> <p>7.5 Health and Safety Accident Report: SB gave an update. We continue to have a very low number of genuine accidents in the college – noted that many first aid call-outs are related to general feeling unwell rather than accidents. Noted that the HSE do not consider sports accidents to be reportable unless they related to a failure to maintain facilities appropriately.</p> <p>Noted that students occasionally cut across the car park to use the vehicle entrance, the College will look into the use of railings to separate the pedestrian and vehicle entrances.</p>	
<p>8. Development College Estate</p>	<p>8.1 College Estate Development Plans: SB talked through the key points of the report.</p> <p>Q – How much are we paying for the land purchase? We have agreed £40k for the purchase and £5k for the legal fees.</p> <p>Noted that we have also engaged with WECA around strategic needs across the city in terms of infrastructure and capital, so that they can understand how St Brendan’s contributes to the Local Skills Agenda, and possibly gain some funding.</p> <p>8.2 Information Technology Strategy: SB talked through the key points of the report. The IT Strategy is likely to come back to the committee in November. SB talked through the priorities and the reasons for these. If more funding becomes available, we will do more sooner. We may have to take out more finance leases for the front-end infrastructure upgrades as this would otherwise take a significant cash resource in 2025-26. Any devices that we are able to have from UWE will reduce the financial burden on the college in this area.</p> <p>The competed strategy will drive how we invest in IT moving forward. Noted the ongoing risk around potential device failure in the meantime.</p> <p>Q – Is this a risk we can live with? In the context of the overall budget and cash flow, it is a risk we have to accept. It is a low risk, especially with the additional help from UWE.</p> <p>There has been an increase in cyber-attacks on education, so cyber security is a key priority.</p>	

<p>9. College Financial Matters</p>	<p>9.1 Management Accounts April 2024: Noted that the May accounts have been sent to JC as Chair. SB talked through the key points. Noted that cash reserves will drop when the July payment is received, due to the advance payment. It is likely we will need to provide weekly updates to the ESFA for 3 months.</p> <p>Noted that the predicted operating surplus will fall short of the target needed to meet the loan covenant. We expect to be around 12 days cash in hand, which will reduce in the first half of August, although we expect this to increase with the payment that is due in August.</p> <p>Noted that we are forecast to have earned £32k in interest by moving surplus into savings until it is needed to meet obligations. This highlighted the need for a treasury management policy to be agreed by governors.</p> <p>Q – We are expecting to have 20 days cash balance in hand in a year’s time? Yes, we began aspiring to have 25 days by July 2025, but we are unable to do this <u>and</u> meet our capital needs, so we have tried to achieve a balance.</p> <p>9.2 Budget Forecast 23-24, Draft Budget 24-25 & Other Finance Updates: SB talked through the key points. Noted that we have set KPI targets as measured by the ESFA and then constructed the detailed budget to move the College to a good rating.</p> <p>Noted that we cannot afford to fund a pay award that is higher than what is funded – we have assumed 2% in the budget and anything else would need to be funded, or the budget will need to be revisited. This is a key risk.</p> <p>We will not need to pay any subsidy for the new transport contract until the end of the academic year, but we will know what that is in advance.</p> <p>Q – Do the student numbers predicted allow for appropriate growth? We are aiming for an additional 100 students this year – there will be a target each year to build on each year. We also need to consider the retention of the Year 12 students into year 13.</p> <p>MC noted the amount of work that has gone into this budget, alongside the weekly forecasts that have had to be sent to the ESFA, as well as looking at the year-end position. This is highly conservative budget. We need to ensure we are making efficiencies and we are planning a two-year recovery.</p> <p>The breach of the loan approval has been referred by the ESFA to HM Treasury, but nothing has been heard so far. The auditors were minded to sign off last years’ accounts, but are obliged, in light of the cash position, to reassess their opinion on the college as a going concern, so SB has provided the forward plan and draft budgets for 2024-25.</p> <p>If at 31 of July, we do not have an operating surplus of 1.3 times the cost of loan repayments, then we are in breach of the loan covenant. If the bank does not then issue a covenant waiver, the auditors will reclassify the</p>	
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	<p>outstanding loan as a current liability, i.e., one that is due within 12 months. This affects an ESFA KPI, which would put us into requires improvement.</p> <p>The bank would normally not issue such a letter until the accounts have been closed, but the auditors need the letter before 31 July.</p> <p>There have been some minor tweaks to the figures and the final version will be provided to the Full Governors. Approval is asked for the assumptions and that the key risks have been accounted for.</p> <p>Q – How do we balance the difficulties in recruiting staff and the need to cut back on staff in the budget? This is about being clear about the areas in which staff are absolutely required and which areas of work are still required and which areas of work can be discontinued.</p> <p>The committee approved the recommendation to recommend the Draft 24-25 Budget and Cashflow Forecast to the Board of Governors for approval on 9 July (and in doing so notes the assumptions and associated risks, and proposed CapEx investment). Proposed JC, seconded MC, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>9.3 College Financial Handbook: SB has included a hyperlink to the handbook in the report. One of the requirements of the handbook is that anyone with responsibility for financial management and oversight to read the handbook.</p> <p>There is very little new content. Changes that took place due to the reclassification of colleges into the public sector have now been incorporated into the handbook.</p> <p>9.4 College Transport Arrangements – Update: The SLA has been agreed as previously discussed. We will be keeping a record of the cumulative position and will only need to pay a subsidy if there is a cumulative deficit. We will have an ongoing update on the position throughout the year.</p> <p>Q – Will this be monitored during the holidays? No, as we will not use their buses in holidays.</p> <p>Q – When will we start publicising this? We have begun doing this internally already, First Bus will now begin to update their website and bus stop information. The marketing team believe this will make a significant difference to recruitment going forward.</p>	
<p>10. Policy Review</p>	<p>Discussion around consultation with staff.</p> <p>10.1 Disciplinary Policy and Procedure: LA talked through the key changes. We have tried to move away from language around reprimands, included more information around carrying out investigations etc. We have also introduced a fast-track process to allow managers to issue warning based in information they have where appropriate (under specific circumstances) Policy approved, proposed MC, seconded MH</p>	

	<p>10.2 Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure : LA talked through the key changes as listed and confirmed that these have been seen by the unions. Policy approved, proposed MC, seconded PT</p> <p>10.3 Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure: LA talked through the key changes. The key difference is the stages of dealing with absences, based on feedback from the unions. The number of stages has been reduced, but the trigger number of absences has increased for the first of those stages.</p> <p>Q – Is online reporting a benefit? There is a plan to move the return-to-work reporting online to better capture this information. Policy approved, proposed MC, seconded PT</p>	
11. Risk Register Review	<p>11.1 Committee Risk Register Review: SB talked through the key changes. Noted that the register is now being regularly reviewed by the principalship. Any changes are highlighted in red, and then are summarised in the additional report.</p> <p>SB talked through the risks that have increased and they ways in which the register is now being used to inform strategy decisions.</p> <p>Noted that DH has been able to successfully complete the cyber security check which has been signed off. We are awaiting the feedback from a cyber security audit, which will inform the risk on these threats.</p> <p>Q – On item 6.16, the mitigation appears to increase the risk score? This is to do with cash flow. Some of these risks do overlap. The increase to the score is due to the cash flow element.</p> <p>The cash flow element is a risk that will be kept under review for this committee.</p>	
12. Safeguarding/PREVENT Duty	<p>12.1 Safeguarding/PREVENT – Committee Duty Review: Noted that the discussion around IT security will meet this duty. We use Smoothwall as a way of monitoring what students are looking at in a retrospective way, but we do not have real time alerts for people accessing websites they should not, and this is something we need to implement. These alerts go to MC, DH and LHH.</p> <p>Discussions around site security also contribute to this duty.</p>	
13. Committee Business	<p>13.1 Nominations and Elections of Committee Chair 2024-25: JC is willing to continue. If anyone else is interested, JC is also willing to let someone else take on the role if they would like.</p> <p>13.2 Training on interrogating accounts: Discussion around this. Suggestion that training on this could be added to the governors’ day.</p>	
14. Any Other Business	<p>MC noted her thanks to the committee for their support throughout the year.</p> <p>JC thanked everyone for attending and especially those who have produced reports etc.</p>	

15. Correspondence	None	
16. Next Meeting	Wednesday 20th November 2024 at 16:00 [Subject to confirmation]	
Minutes Agreed	<p>Minutes of Meeting agreed as true and accurate record</p> <p>Wednesday, 20 November 2024</p> <p>Signed: _____ Committee Chair</p>	