



*Growing your potential in the Natural World*

**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON  
THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2015**

**Members:** Doug Fussell (Chair)  
Joy Hillyer  
Don Gratton  
Paul Jolly  
Lady Milnes Coates  
Lady Salisbury  
Sir William Stubbs

In attendance: Stephen Dowbiggin OBE, Principal  
Malcolm Goodwin, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality  
Nicholas Evans, Director of Estate and Buildings  
Damien Fallon, Director of Finance  
Simon O'Hear, Director of HR  
Clare Kendle, Clerk to the Governors

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence noted.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no new declarations of interest concerning items on the agenda.

**3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

NOTED:

- i. That the Governing Body had requested that Vice Chairs are elected for each sub-committee for a term no longer than three years.
- ii. The Chair proposed that Paul Jolly for the role of Vice Chair for the period of three years and this was unanimously supported by the Committee.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i. **Paul Jolly be elected as Vice Chair of this Committee for a term of three years (ending December 2017).**

#### **4. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES MEETINGS HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2014**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 4, minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meetings held on 26 November 2014 for decision.

NOTED:

- i. A list the college officers that were present at the meeting to be included on the minutes and agenda.
- ii. Declarations of interest amended to no 'new' declaration of interests.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i. **the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2014 be approved as a correct record with the above amended and signed by the Chair after amendments.**

#### **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 26 NOVEMBER 2014**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 5, matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings for information.

NOTED that:

- i. Regents Park planning permission has been approved.
- ii. MIS systems development is behind schedule but a new appointment has been made. The new MIS manager has experience of providing MIS for the whole institution (including Governors).
- iii. The Committee has authorised the Principal and The Director of Finance to progress the loan subject to the tender documents for the capital projects being entered into.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. A formal resolution be recorded confirming;
  - A loan for up to £1 million can be drawn down.
  - The Principal and the Director of Finance be authorised to manage the process.

#### **6. REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 6, the report of the Principal for information.

NOTED that:

- i. When using abbreviations in the reports the full names of organisations should be given for clarity the first time they are used.
- ii. Lady Salisbury has successfully engaged a number of sponsors to significantly help with the fundraising for the College's capital programme.
- iii. Liam Byrne has postponed his visit but will endeavour to visit before the election campaign begins.

## **7. UPDATE ON FUNDING MATTERS**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 7, the report of the Principal for information.

NOTED that:

- i. An indication of the Education Funding Agency funding level for 2015/16 has been received by the College (appendix II).
- ii. The way in which activity was recorded varied between the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency.
- iii. The need to differentiate between full-time equivalent and part-time students when quoting head count statistics.
- iv. Achieving the full allocation of 24+ loan allocation remains a challenge but the take up has improved.
- v. The need for the income expected from 24+ students on Level 3 courses to be noted as a total and then the take up of loans to be recorded separately so as to differentiate between changes in total 24+ level 3 student numbers and the level of uptake of the loans.

## **8. IT AND DATA SECURITY POLICY**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 8, the report of the Principal for decision.

NOTED that:

- i. This matter had been the subject of an Internal Audit and the auditors had only given the College a 'reasonable' rating in terms of how risks were being managed.
- ii. The policies and procedures proposed sought to address all the matters raised by the auditors except;
  - The need for the College to supply all memory devices used by staff.
  - That there should be a routine 'stop and search' policy covering all staff's memory devices.
- iii. The Committee would welcome Audit Committee's involvement in the process of approving the final policies.

- iv. The Acceptable use policy is still under review and will be brought back to a later Finance and General Purpose meeting but the current document was presented to give Governors assurance that a policy was in place.
- v. Once the policies are adopted there will then be training and development for all Staff so they are clear on the key points.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. **Paul Jolly is given the opportunity to 'overview' the policies and share his strategic experience in such matters.**
- ii. **Subsequent to final review and any amendments the following two policies are adopted and circulated to staff for consultation:**
  - **IT Data and Computer Environment Protection Policy**
  - **Records Management and Retention Policy and Procedure**
- iii. **The Acceptable Use Policy is reviewed and amended**
- iv. **The Internal Auditors are instructed to review the policy and comment to the next Audit Committee on whether they consider the new documents serve to manage the risk.**
- v. **The College develops a Staff Training/Induction programme on Data Security to ensure all staff are aware of, and adhere to, the policies and procedures.**

**9. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 9, the report of the Director of Finance for decision.

NOTED:

- i. The bond taken out only covers 10% of the capital cost of the building programmes but is good insurance.
- ii. The College was claiming VAT exemption on the Animal Care building and that a contingent liability needs to be included in the financial accounts to ensure this is clearly visible and any change in policy relating to the use of the building over the next ten years that may affect the exemptions is adequately provided for.
- iii. The increasing cost of employing staff in 2015/16 arising from changes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme and the removal of the national insurance rebate.
- iv. TPA payments have been made in full and problems with integrating TPA
- v. and College data are expected to be resolved by the end of April 2015.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. A clear strategy is adopted to ensure the use of the new animal care building in the next 10 years complies with VAT exemption regulations.**
- ii. The External Auditor be instructed to comment on whether it would be appropriate to include a contingent liability note to this effect in the financial accounts until this potential liability expires.**

**10. UPDATES ON PROJECTS, FRANCHISING, ACTIVITY & PARTNERSHIPS**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 10, the report of the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality for decision.

NOTED that:

- i. The partnership with the Royal Agricultural University continues to move forward positively and validation is underway for the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of students from September 2015.
- ii. A new National partner has expressing interest in joining the partnership between Capel Manor and English Heritage/Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh.
- iii. Joint working collaboration with Birkbeck University, The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Enfield Borough Council as the 'Enfield Thinks' project (to engage the public in further education).
- iv. It was explained that Stephen Dowbiggin has been nominated as a Director for the Proposed National Agri-Technology College which has been established by LANDEX.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. The College participates as a founding member in the exploratory discussions concerning the possible creation of a National Specialist College for the land based industries.**

**11. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE SIX MONTHS TO 31 JANUARY 2015**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 11, the report of the Director of Finance for decision.

NOTED that:

- i. The key Performance Indicators remain within the criteria set by the governing body.
- ii. The College is giving priority to credit control.
- iii. The target for educational contract income remains a challenge to achieve but a recent grant for Forty Hall Farm will make a major contribution.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. **The six month management accounts are received.**

**12. REVISED BUDGET AND CASH FLOW FOR 2014/15**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 12, the report of the Director of Finance for decision.

NOTED that:

- i. Cash balance – the current position and projections are on target and that all of the negotiated bank loan will need to be drawn down as planned.
- ii. The cash flow of estimated expenditure in April/May is based on historical data due to a host of reasons.
- iii. Overall there is a £229k increase from the original estimate in the bottom line (but this depends upon delivering the challenging £304k SFA funding increase).

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. **the revised income and expenditure budget for 2014/2015 detailed in Appendix 1, column B, be approved.**
- ii. **the revised cash flow forecast for the remainder of 2014/2015 detailed in Appendix 2 be approved;**

**NB i: The revised income and expenditure budget results in a £229k increase in the original planned surplus of £25k.**

**NB ii: The proposed change in budget requires approval as the movement in several of the absolute figures is in excess of £75,000.**

**13. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ESTATES AND BUILDINGS**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 13, the report of the Director of Estates and Buildings for information.

NOTED that:

- i. Developments at Forty Hall Farm continue to progress well and the visitor centre and the shop project is on target to be opened on 17<sup>th</sup> March by Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles.
- ii. The College has received a grant from the Greater London Authority allowing the construction of a new poly tunnel at Forty Hall Farm.
- iii. Capital works on the Enfield site are going well with stage 1 implemented. Stage 2 – is underway and being closely aligned to the College's expectations in terms of time and quality.
- iv. The build of the new Arboriculture centre is on programme.

- v. The failure to receive a formal letter confirming planning permission has been a concern but the college has received an email from the local authority that all the outstanding conditions are met or achievable.
- vi. Countryside and arboriculture students are fundraising for this project.

#### **14. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 14, the report of the Director of Human Resources for decision.

NOTED that:

- i. As discussed and agreed Manor Matters had been moved to part 1 of the agenda.
- ii. F&GP to be updated on progress with the Human Resources Annual Plan 2015 and the achievements of the objectives within the Plan at the Autumn term 2015 meeting and a final report on its progress at the Spring 2016 meeting.
- iii. There will be changes made in 2016 to a number of policies to reflect changing legislation but current policies comply and therefore there is no need to report major amendments.
- iv. The Government is introducing a 'Fit for Work' service which will be set up and run by the same company that runs the occupational health service for the College. The potential conflict of interest has been clarified and resolved.
- v. The Staff conference reviewed the staff satisfaction survey (where some results had been disappointing). 150 returns were received which were much more positive than had been indicated on the original survey.
- vi. Partial changes to the mission statement were proposed during the Staff Conference. Alongside this the Marketing Dept. has been asked to look at the best way to visualise the College's image both on the prospectus and leaflets. Staff are fully engaged in this matter.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i. The HR Annual Plan (2015) (Appendix II) be approved and adopted.**

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. The amended Mission Statement and Guiding Principles leaflet be approved with any amendments agreed by F&GP for full Governing Body approval on 25th March 2015 (Attached as Appendix III).**

#### **15. STAFF EQUALITY ANNUAL DATA REPORT FOR 2014**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 15, the report of the Director of Human Resources for information.

NOTED that:

- i. Section 3 gives a conclusion and an executive summary.
- ii. The policy has been published to align with Government requirements.
- iii. The Equality and Diversity Group will review the plan and any actions necessary.
- iv. The range of staff training undertaken was included even though in several cases sessions were only attended by one or two staff (who then cascade their knowledge to others).

## **16. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Committee RECEIVED paper 16, the report of the Director of Human Resources for decision.

NOTED that:

- i. Changes in parental leave policies, (which means that shared parental leave can be taken in blocks and at different levels of pay, the enhanced package will be paid and that time off for adoption and appointments can be taken by either parent.
- ii. Changes the Shared parental Leave and the Shared parental Pay entitlement.
- iii. Adoption leave and pay has been brought in line with maternity leave.
- iv. The changes to the Unpaid Parental Leave means that time off has expanded to 18 weeks and continues to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i. The revised Parental Leave Provisions (Appendix I) be adopted.**
- ii. The revised Flexible Working Policy & Procedure is circulated to all staff for consultation for 2 weeks. (Staff will be advised that the revised Parental Leave Provisions will be live during the consultation period);**

**RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY that:**

- i. Any material changes arising following the consultation with staff and verification of equality analysis is reported to the next F&GP Committee.**

## **17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 25 June 2015 at 5pm**

Chair – Doug Fussell