

**SANDWELL COLLEGE**

**Minutes of the Finance & Strategy Committee meeting held on**  
**Thursday 17 February 2022, 4.00pm**

Present: A Taylor Independent Governor (Chair)  
K Ellis Independent Governor (Chair)  
G Pennington Principal  
P Stanaway Independent Governor

In attendance: J Bailey Exec Director, Finance and Corporate Resources  
R Barrett-Price Director of Estates Development and Capital Projects  
B Beaty Exec Director, HR and OD  
S Griffiths Exec Director, Strategy and Projects  
E Scotford Clerk to the Corporation

Apologies: D Holden Vice Principal, Curriculum  
J Stevens Principal, Cadbury College

		Action
F22.1	<b><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></b>	
	All present were welcomed to the Committee. Apologies were received from Dave Holden and Julia Stevens.	
F22.2	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b>	
	There were no declarations of interest.	
F22.3	<b><u>Minutes of the Finance &amp; Strategy Committee meeting held on 25 November 2021</u></b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair, with a minor amendment to Minute No. 38.8.	
F22.4	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b>	
22.4.1	Minute No. 33.2.2 – Governors suggested that a copy of the MOU be included in a meeting pack for the Committee or Board for future reference – actioned - included in the meeting pack and noted by Governors.	
22.4.2	Minute No. 40.7 – PS's questions would be circulated to Committee members – actioned.	
F22.5	<b><u>Strategic Update</u></b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted that a hard copy of the Strategic Plan had been posted to Governors.	
F22.6	<b><u>Capital Projects Update</u></b> Presented by Director of Estates Development and Capital Projects	
	Governors appreciated the layout of the report which enabled them to track progress.	

22.6.1	<b>Cadbury Science City - Phase 1</b> – was now complete.	
22.6.2	<b>Cadbury Science City – Phases 2 and 3 (new build)</b>	
	Funding had been received for both phases and teams appointed. Planning approval had also been secured. The tender process for the construction contract was underway with a deadline of 25 February 2022. The project was on target to start in summer 2022, with completion in summer 2023. There was a possibility that construction might start before the summer.	
22.6.3	<b>Engineering Centre, West Bromwich</b>	
22.6.3.1	The full business case had been approved by the Local Authority (LA). Next stage approval by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) was awaited.	
22.6.3.2	The project remained on course for work to start on site in July 2022 with an anticipated completion date of Easter 2023.	
22.6.3.3	Governors asked if the Phoenix Street site had been mothballed.  The College confirmed it remained a useful asset for the College from an estates' perspective.	
22.6.3.4	Governors thanked the Director of Estates Development and Capital Projects and his team for their hard work and achievements, particularly at the Cadbury site.	
22.6.4	<b>Centre of Excellence in Health</b>	
22.6.4.1	The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was being compiled with the team. This was a partnership arrangement with the NHS, the lead partner. The business case had been approved by the LA and it would be submitted to the DLUHC by March 2022. The budget challenges on the project and the solution were outlined.	
	SG arrived	
22.6.4.2	The completion date was still quoted as late 2024/early 2025 but this would be challenging.	
22.6.5	<b>Training and Education Centre, Cradley Heath</b>	
22.6.5.1	The project was progressing well. The full business case had been approved by the LA and was awaiting submission to the DLUHC for approval. The project remained on budget and the provision was set to open in late 2024/early 2025. Designs for the curriculum element of the project were being developed. Concepts were complete and the accommodation schedule was being developed.	
22.6.5.2	In answer to a Governor's request, the College agreed to share the curriculum plan for the project with Governors by the next meeting.  Governors asked that this include an outline of the use of the Centre and how its operation would be planned.	Dir of Est Devt & Cap Projs
22.6.5.3	Governors noted that monies had to be spent within certain timescales and asked whose remit that was.	

	<p>The College explained that it had secured some flexibility with the DfE which was proving helpful.</p> <p>Towns Funds were less defined. The College had taken as much action as it could but it was now in the hands of the DLUHC. The situation was being monitored closely and the College had good communication with colleagues at the LA, however, timeframes continued to be challenging.</p>	
22.6.5.4	<p>Governors referred to the current volatility within the building sector and pressures on prices and asked if the College was confident they could be maintained.</p> <p>The College mitigated risks as early as possible in the process. Its contract tender documentation included forward purchasing materials at the point of contract.</p>	
22.6.5.5	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received and monitored the Capital Projects update.	
F22.7	<b><u>Management accounts and financial update</u></b>	
22.7.1	The new proposed format to the reporting structure was outlined and discussed. The background to the change was explained. The new format better highlighted key factors and focused on headlines, a financial summary and the inclusion of KPIs.	
22.7.2	Capital programmes were rated Green because of their current phase in the project. Costs of the upcoming 2 key projects would be monitored closely.	
22.7.3	The College's cash position was very positive.	
22.7.4	Income was positive, offset by some staff costs.	
22.7.5	Free School Meal (FSM) applications had increased from 983 to 1044. This would ensure support to some of the most vulnerable learners and this funding would result in more Disadvantaged funding.	
22.7.6	Governors agreed that Appendices relating to: income and expenditure data, balance sheet and cashflow should continue to be included.	
22.7.7	Governors suggested the report provided more narrative on trends or concerns to monitor.	
22.7.8	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received and monitored the management accounts and financial report.	
F22.8	<b><u>Insurance Cover Annual Report</u></b>	
22.8.1	<p>The report highlighted levels and types of insurance which continued to be appropriate and value for money.</p> <p>The report would be shared with the Audit Committee because of its responsibilities in this area.</p>	
22.8.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Insurance Cover Annual Report.	

F22.9	<b><u>Risk Register – Committee Areas of Responsibility</u></b>	
22.9.1	Governors monitored the Risk Register.	
22.9.2	The LGPS pension score had increased because of the timing of the triennial evaluation. The College was locked into its payment levels until March 2023 but the 3 yearly review was about to start to review pension deficit. The College continued to monitor the risk closely.	
22.9.3	The apprenticeships risk had reduced because the College's investment in the function over the past couple of years had enabled progress and development of this area.	
	AT arrived	
22.9.4	Governors noted the potential risks relating to the building projects and college costs and pointed out the need to ensure they were captured in next year's budget.	
22.9.5	Governors recognised the impact of inflation on college finances, and the impact of NI increases.	
22.9.6	Governors noted the importance of budget setting for next year and asked if the controls balance was right for non-pay items.  The College clarified that building maintenance was an area that the College invested in. There was an emphasis on budget control at departmental level avoiding any detrimental effect on delivery.	
22.9.7	Governors noted the challenges facing energy and maintenance costs and asked how these could be managed in the current volatile environment.  The College explained that all capital projects were being designed beyond building regulations so they were future proofed, examples given.	
22.9.8	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received and monitored the committee areas of responsibility in the Risk Register.	
F22.10	<b><u>HR Report</u></b>	
22.10.1	Update given on recruitment. Competition for talent is intense in the marketplace but despite that some successful appointments have been made including 3 key appointments. Investment in the Skills Division continued.  A series of recruitment events to attract talent had yielded success with 9 Learning Mentors recruited. The College continued to be proactive and innovative in its approach to recruitment rather than relying on traditional approaches and by thinking more creatively regarding overall packages in certain functions where recruitment proved more challenging.	
22.10.2	Employee relations were complex, with a heavy caseload, but successfully moving forwards.	
22.10.3	Covid work continued. Insight was being collected through qualitative data. Covid care clinics had been established to understand the impact of Covid on people, e.g. long Covid. The College offered support mechanisms for those staff who might be suffering.	

22.10.4	Ofsted preparation was well underway with a newly developed communication newsletter in place providing simple, clear and practical information for staff. This ensured key messages were being conveyed to the workforce.	
22.10.5	<p>Governors noted the continued focus on Covid and asked if the College was exceeding the legal requirements.</p> <p>The College confirmed its commitment to best protecting staff and students remained. Guidance and the legal position was expected to change significantly from end February 2022, i.e. self isolation and the requirement to not go to work if tested positive were likely to be removed. The College recognised its duty to protect others and would develop its own policy and approach.</p> <p>The College's sources of information were primarily the DfE through daily updates supported by other best practice forums, e.g. AoC HR networking group.</p>	
22.10.6	<p>Governors asked what Covid numbers were at present.</p> <p>The College advised there were low staff numbers today – 13 staff positive, with a low number of them not fit for work, compared to 29/30 at the peak. Levels were monitored daily including at departmental level to identify any trends.</p>	
22.10.7	<p>Governors suggested the introduction of a congratulatory postcard from the Board in recognition of success and heroes of the College.</p> <p>The Executive Director, HR and OD, would follow up the idea.</p>	
22.10.8	<p>Governors noted some sectors were seeing an increase in interest in early retirement, some linked to Covid and work pressures, and asked if that was an issue for the College.</p> <p>The College confirmed it was not. There were pockets of retirement in curriculum areas but no significant increase in numbers retiring.</p>	
22.10.9	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the HR report.	
F22.11	<b><u>Policies</u></b>	
	11.1 Acceptable Use Policy IT and ILT Equipment and Resources 11.2 IT Security 11.3 ILT e-safety Policy and ILT Equipment and Resources 11.4 Password Policy 11.5 Penetration Testing 11.6 Social Media 11.7 Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Statement	
22.11.1	The policies had been reviewed and there were no substantive changes.	
22.11.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the policies.	
	<b><u>**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**</u></b>	
F22.12 NFP		

F22.13	<b><u>Any Other Business</u></b>	
	There was no other business.	
F22.14	<b><u>Determination of Confidential Items</u></b>	
	<b>Minute No. F22.12.</b>	
F22.15	<b><u>Date and time of next meeting</u></b> <b>Thursday 30 June 2022, 4.00pm</b>	

The meeting ended at 5.35pm