

**Minutes of the  
Resource Committee held in-person at CBC on  
Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023, 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm  
Online Teams meeting**

**Present:** Alasdair Simmons (AS) (Chair)  
Ian Pryce (Chief Executive) (Online)  
Allan Schofield (Asch)  
Vinod Tailor (VT)  
Amanda Wagstaff (AW)  
Cliff Wragg (CW)

**In attendance:** Sheraz Amin (Executive Director of Digital Transformation)  
Caroline Biddle (Executive Director of Human Resources)  
Pat Jones (Deputy CEO, Finance)  
Rachel Nicol (Group Director of Governance)  
Natasha Stringer (Minutes)

**R/31/23 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Angelique Wright.

**R/32/23 Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were received from those present relevant to the matters on the agenda.

**R/33/23 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**R/34/23 Digital Flightpath - An Update**

The Executive Director of Digital Transformation presented a digital infrastructure and flightpath update to the Committee.

Key messages from the presentation included:

- The current network architecture is overly complicated, with numerous data centres.
- Work to be completed in stages, beginning with the reduction of data centres to three, which will decrease power costs.
- To ensure adequate bandwidth, the lines will be upgraded.
- The tender process for line infrastructure improvements has been completed and the Executive Director of Digital Transformation is working with the finance team.

- Current backup solutions are nearing the end of their lifespan. Considerations are in place to transition to a cloud-based backup solution, but it is noted that it may not be cost-effective to move to fully cloud-based solutions at this time.
- By October 2025, Windows 10 will become redundant, which will require devices to be replaced.
- Timeline for significant work to be carried out over the summer. This includes migrating all CBC users to the domain, replacing a considerable amount of IT infrastructure, and consolidating the number of data centres.
- Renewal of the Cyber Essentials certification.

The Committee questioned whether the suggested digital infrastructure updates were sufficient or merely the first step in light of the upcoming digital advancements. The Executive Director of Digital Transformation clarified that the planned work will provide the foundation necessary to be able to utilise technological advancements like artificial intelligence (“AI”) and ensure preparedness for the next five years.

The Committee discussed future-proofing and expressed concern that five years may not be enough. The Executive Director of Digital Transformation assured the Committee that due to the pace of technological advances, the inability to project further than ten years is almost impossible.

A Committee member expressed concerns over the amount of work needed, and they suggested using it as a case study for the upcoming Governance review to reflect on the adequacy of the board's responsibility and involvement.

A discussion was had on cost, budgets and the benefits of obtaining comparisons to give a more rounded picture of IT infrastructure within the sector, given the financial circumstances around FE.

The Committee raised concerns about the workload scheduled for the summer timeline and received assurances that the new infrastructure will be done in phases, and the old infrastructure will not be shut down until the new one is fully operational.

The Committee thanked the Executive Director of Digital Transformation for the work and progress made and ***asked if they would return in the Autumn term to provide an update on the work over the summer.***

*The Executive Director of Digital Transformation leaves the meeting 16:36*

### **R/35/23 Staff Survey 2023 (Verbal)**

The Executive Director of Human Resources provided the Committee with a verbal update on the staff survey results, they explained that the data for the full report was delayed. The survey was divided into sections: purpose, structure and directions,

strategic management, communications and, overall satisfaction. The Executive Director of Human Resources clarified that CBC results were collected separately.

Highlights from the verbal report included:

- There has been a 49% increase in respondents.
- 63% of respondents had a positive impression of the College's culture and leadership.
- Staff members reported that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has high expectations, though communication saw a 1% decline from last year.
- The College's reputation and overall satisfaction ratings are higher than last year.
- The majority of respondents felt well-informed about the Merger.
- The launch of new values was successful, with 92% of respondents aware of them.

The Committee discussed the verbal update with consideration given to the industrial unrest in the sector, inflation pressures, and attendance rates. Despite these challenges, the Committee was pleased to note that the results were surprisingly positive and reassuring.

The Committee reflected on the positive results from CBC, and agreed the Colleges approach to merging was good.

The Committee discussed the verbal feedback received in comparison to the results. Especially around communication, The Executive Director of Human Resources explained that timing could be a factor as the approach to communication had been changed in light of feedback in the latter half of the academic year.

The Committee praised the quality of communication from the Estates' department regarding the ongoing construction work at Bedford, Caudwell Street.

The Executive Director of Human Resources informed the Committee that this year's survey included the questions asked by Ofsted during their inspection.

The full survey results will be available for the Corporation meeting on 06/07/2023 [post meeting note- postponed to Autumn term Resources Committee]

**The Committee noted the update.**

### **R/36/23 Employee Relations (Verbal)**

The Executive Director of Human Resources gave a verbal update on Employee Relations and was happy to inform the Committee that there were no current appeals or grievances to be addressed.

The Committee raised concerns about the morale of the group across different sites, particularly regarding pay and inquired into trade union activity. The Executive Director of Human Resources reported that there has been a minor rise in trade union activity, and mentioned the appointment of a new union branch representative.

**The Committee noted the update.**

### **R/37/23 College Information Report**

The Deputy CEO Finance presented a report to the Committee.

The Committee asked for clarification on the combined forecast for the earning before taxes, which was explained as the gain on the merger, which will be fully written up in the financial statements.

The Committee questioned the readiness of being able to model the next year's budget appropriately, The Deputy CEO, Finance, explained they are still waiting for some statements and contracts to come in but are reasonably confident, considering the nature of the part-year merger makes it more difficult.

The Committee asked for an update on the directorships for Central Bedfordshire College (CBC) subsidiaries. It was confirmed that work is still ongoing for this.

**The Committee noted the report.**

### **R/38/23 Capital Programme**

The Deputy CEO, Finance, presented a report to the Committee, which included the update that the Motor Vehicle Centre on Triumph Way had been sold at a higher price than the original estimate. The additional proceeds have been incorporated to reduce the draw on reserves.

The Deputy CEO Finance informed the Committee that mechanical and electrical engineers have had a look at the Pool at Trinity Arts and Leisure. Some significant repairs will be needed within the next 12 to 18 months. Assurances were given to the Committee that there are no real risks at this stage, but work will be needed down the line.

The Group Director of Governance brought to the Committee's attention concerns raised through the BCS Board on the timing of structural work on the swimming pool. The Deputy CEO Finance informed the Committee about the inspections and surveys carried out to ensure the pool was safe and will provide a report in six months. The Committee questioned if the work was needed because of general wear

and tear over the years, and the Deputy CEO Finance confirmed it was.

The Committee raised concerns over the amount of investment needed for the IT structure work presented earlier at the meeting. The Deputy CEO Finance, covered the timeframe the work would be done over and informed the Committee they are still awaiting tender bids. ***The Committee requested a cost-benefit appraisal for the benefits of the investment to justify the spend.***

The Committee discussed the benefits of doing more cost-benefit appraisals and the idea of having more consultations with students.

**The Committee noted the report.**

### **R/39/23 MTFS**

The Deputy CEO Finance, summarised the MTFS to the Committee and the KPIs planned for next year to bring us back to outstanding financial health.

The Committee questioned why we are still aiming for financially outstanding within EFSA criteria now that FE colleges are in the public sector. The Deputy CEO Finance gave reassurances on the reasoning behind the approach and how it falls into general good accountancy. A discussion around surplus, borrowing, the risk, and the rationale of being financially outstanding followed. A Committee member asked for clarification on the term "outstanding" and if having an outstanding rating means lower borrowing costs, The Deputy CEO Finance clarified that the rating is based on our financial sustainability, which the Funding Agency uses to measure us.

The Committee discussed the finance scores for each year and the boundaries for the three metrics used, along with how EFSA scores could be affected, which the Committee felt was good background information for making future plans and decisions. It was noted that the models and capital program are based on a surplus, it is possible to model without a surplus, but implications of this would need to be considered.

The CEO informed the Board that the MTFS is still in progress and the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) has now issued a statement regarding adult education, which may lead to additional modifications. As a result, the MTFS's position is expected to shift prior to being presented to the Board in July. ***The CEO will write a cover note for the Board for transparency that there has been movement since this Committee meeting.***

The Committee asked for clarification on the uplift for 2025/2026, and the Deputy CEO Finance confirmed that it was due to funding rates.

## **The Committee noted the report.**

### **R/40/23 Pay Award (Verbal)**

The CEO explained the history of the College's efforts to keep up with inflation, but in the last couple of years, they have been unable to do so.

The College will continue to look at the affordability of pay raises and the Committee discussed the advantages of putting an emphasis on culture, reputation and values having weight and meaning, putting effort into managing expectations and ensuring people can understand the total remuneration package.

In previous years there has been understanding from the staff on where the College sits financially and the pressure faced, but with inflation and pressure externally, it was considered there may be a shift in mindset.

A discussion was held around what else can be offered, such as looking into the amount of leave, continued professional development, qualifications and career progression. The discussion also included the option to change from the one size fits all approach as it affects individuals differently. It was considered that a marked change in approach would require full board for approval. ***It was agreed that a strategy paper should come back in the autumn term.***

The Committee discussed work from home (WFH) and its effect on recruitment as within many areas, it is not something that can be offered during term time. The Committee mentioned the possibility of a premium if WFH cannot be offered.

A Committee member commented on the pay review percentage advised by UCU and AoC and advised the significance of maintaining effective communication channels.

The Committee discussed the FE sector as a whole and the dispute with UCU and media coverage. The Committee questioned if there might be necessary discussions around potential changes to the standardised one-pay award for staff, especially for Sixth Forms, once schools met an agreed percentage for pay rises. The Committee acknowledged this could cause a recruitment issue, but the College is part of a group and needs to devise ways to distinguish the College as an attractive employer.

## **The Committee noted the update.**

### **R/41/23 Decisions Under Delegated Authorities**

The Group Director of Governance provided the Committee with two decisions made under delegated authority.

The first was the Chair of the Corporation's approval on the AEB budget for a new subcontractor.

The second was the approval from the Chair of the Corporation and the Chair of the Resources Committee to proceed with the highest tender for the sale of the asset in Kempston.

**The Committee noted the decisions.**

#### **R/42/23 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting on 17.05.2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **R/43/23 AOB**

The Committee noted that it was Amanda Wagstaff's last meeting on the Committee as her extended term in office as Staff Governor was coming to an end, and they warmly thanked her for all her contributions.

*The meeting ended at 18.11*