

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD: on Thursday 8 May 2025 at 16:00 in 4F34 DHB

Present	In Attendance
Bulbul Barrett (Chair)	Chris Malish (Vice Principal Finance & Corporate Services)
Lendy Ho (via MS Teams)	Sarah Cooper (Director of People Services)
John Williams (via MS Teams)	Sarah Towan (Vice Principal Recruitment & Communications)
David Merrett	Allison Booth (Governance Director)
David Fearnley	Rachel Henry (Deputy Governance Director)
Apologies	
Chris Webb	

L/J Denotes the time any individual left/ re-joined the meeting.

Item		Action
1.	<u>Introductions, Apologies for Absence and Disclosures of Interest</u>	
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
1.2	Apologies were noted for Chris Webb.	
1.3	There were no declarations of interest.	
1.4	As the VPR&C was currently interviewing, it was agreed that item 8 would be discussed further down on the agenda.	
2.	<u>Chair's action</u>	
2.1	There had been no use of Chair's actions since the last meeting.	
3.	<u>Minutes of the meeting of 13 March 2025</u>	
3.1	RESOLVED: The minutes of 13 March 2025 were approved to be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.	
4.	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
4.1	<p>The Matters Arising Report was reviewed:</p> <p>11.3 – <i>The DPS to provide a report on the changes to be introduced under the Employment Rights Bill and the potential impact on the College</i> – Update paper to be presented at the first F&GP of 2025/26.</p> <p>10.2 – <i>The VPF&CS to explore the interest rates being offered by other banks</i> – Awaiting feedback from market analysis.</p>	

	<p>9.9 – <i>The Clerk to consider where the Deep Dive could be placed on the agenda for the Strategic Planning Event</i> – The HE Curriculum Review would be presented directly to the Corporation in May.</p> <p>It was noted that all other matters had either been completed prior to, or would be addressed and closed off during the meeting.</p>	
4.2	<p>Q. Do you have an update on where we are with the additional space needed for oversubscribed areas of the College Offer?</p> <p>A. We are currently ascertaining what space will be required for expansion and exploring various options.</p>	
4.3	<p>Members agreed that any conversion of sites within the community to meet needs for additional space would represent a change in strategy and therefore requested the VPF&CS provided regular updates on progress, to enable further strategic discussion.</p>	
4.4	<p>ACTION: The VPF&CS to report on any developments on additional space requirements.</p>	VPF&CS
4.5	<p>DfE- Financial Health Grade Confirmation Letter & Dashboard</p> <p>The Chair drew members attention to the letter from the DfE to the College on its Financial Statements Review 2023 to 2024. Following the DfE’s review of the college’s financial forecasting return (CFFR), submitted in July 2024, it was concluded that the College’s financial health grade for 2023/24, based on the outturn forecast, was Good. Following a review of the College’s audited financial statements and finance record, it was subsequently concluded that the appropriate assessment grade for 2023/24 is Outstanding.</p> <p>The VPF&CS advised that a Training Session with Governors was being considered to advise members on how to access the portal to the Governing Body Finance Dashboard and how to understand the data in the reporting.</p>	
4.6	<p>Q. Is further action required on the financial control issues raised in the DfE’s letter?</p> <p>A. These issues had already been raised as part of the external audit process; progress against all audit actions is regularly monitored and reported to the Audit Committee.</p>	
4.7	<p>Q. What action is being taken to address the recognised misuse of Single Source Justification Approvals?</p> <p>A. A new Procurement Manager has been appointed who will be tightening up procurement processes. All approved SJJs are reported to the F&GP Committee and work is being done to ensure</p>	

4.8	<p>appropriate challenge is levelled in cases where SSJs could have been avoided, with more pre-planning and preparation in place.</p> <p>Q. Does the outstanding financial health rating have a downside? A. We do try to avoid an outstanding status as it can suggest holding too much cash and that we are restricting finances that should be spent on achieving an outstanding student experience. The main reason for the Outstanding status is due to the timings of grant income and capital funding. A lot of cash is being held for specific capital projects, which once spent, will mean our cash levels reduce significantly. The DfE's mechanism for calculating financial health does not accommodate for this.</p>	
5. 5.1	<p><u>VPF&CS Report</u></p> <p>The VPF&CS introduced his report, which served to highlight a number of areas within the other reports on the agenda.</p> <p>Key things to note were:</p> <p>Item 5. F&GP data dashboard, noting the forecast outcome position of 'Outstanding' Financial health; though year end adjustment and latest funding announcements had not yet been fully factored in, for example, the £50m one-off payment being made to the sector from April 2023. The VPF&CS advised that the College had been notified that it would receive £384k of this one-off payment which was allocated to deal with sector specific issues.</p> <p>Item 7. Management Accounts & Q2 position; the underlying position was slightly currently behind budget when adjusting for the VAT credit on utilities, however the forecast position indicates the College meeting all its key financial metrics.</p> <p>Item 8. Student recruitment update, noting the in-year position on apprenticeships.</p> <p>Item 9a. Organisational changes, noting the position following two rounds of business planning and the subsequent impact and decision required.</p> <p>AOB – As reported at the last F&GP Committee, the funding audit was now coming to a close and whilst a financial impact was expected, it would not pass materiality thresholds. This would be factored into the Q3 reforecast and subsequent reporting.</p>	

Strategic Plan Implementation		
6.	<u>F&GP Data Dashboard</u>	
6.1	The VPF&CS presented the F&GP Data Dashboard which provided the final position on Q2.	
6.2	Q. Why are the capital programme figures below target? A. This has been mainly driven by the timings of match funding being paid and delays in spending, which we have been granted an extension for. The capital allocation of £1.9m will reduce the required match for the FTC building further.	
6.3	Q. Will the capital allocation of £1.9m affect the cash flow? A. We are expecting our level of cash to gradually fall, however the College's underlying position is fine.	
6.4	Q. Has the College considered transferring 50% of the unused levy funding to other employers who are providing apprentices? A. It is not something that we have previously considered, we will start to explore this as an option. If it isn't being used, it makes sense to pass it on.	
Finance		
7.	<u>Management Accounts March and Q2 Forecast</u>	
7.1	<p>Members considered the Management Accounts for March and the Q2.</p> <p>Operating Income was £1.13m adverse to budget for the year to date.</p> <p>Staff costs were £0.19m favourable to budget for the year to date. As a percentage of income staff costs are 67.6% compared to a year-to-date budget of 66.2%, and an annual budgeted figure of 66.03%.</p> <p>Non-pay costs were £1.4m favourable to budget for the year to date, half of which was due to the one-off VAT refund of £0.6m.</p> <p>The cash position at the end of March was £0.41m higher than budget. The opening cash balance was £3.54m lower than budget. This had been offset by £4.13m lower net capital spend for the year to date.</p> <p>The EBITDA to end of March was £3.32m, which was £0.46m favourable to budget. The EBITDA percentage of income to end of March was 8.2% compared to a year-to-date budgeted figure of 6.91% and an annual budgeted figure of 7.2%.</p>	

7.2	<p>The borrowing ratio had decreased slightly from the plan as a result of sales proceeds of Little Germany being used to repay loans.</p> <p>The current ratio had increased due to a higher than planned capital grant debtor at year end, due to a delay in completion of the major projects.</p> <p>The Quarter 2 forecast had a Financial Health at year end as 'Outstanding'.</p> <p>Q. Is the shortfall in student recruitment likely to impact our financial position?</p> <p>A. Due to the lagged funding methodology the shortfall in student recruitment will impact next year's finances. However, from a cash perspective, we are going to go into the next academic year in a strong financial position.</p>	
Resources		
9.	<p><u>People Strategy Update</u></p>	
9.1	<p>The DPS presented the People Strategy Update:</p>	
9.2	<p>Year to date Accidents</p> <p>There had been 365 accidents year to date. The DPS advised that overall, safety performance was really positive.</p>	
9.3	<p>Critical Incident Training</p> <p>The SLT and Critical Incident Team members took part in Critical Incident desktop training which was carried out in both December and January. The training included a number of scenarios which included threats listed in the Critical Incident Procedure. The Critical Incident Procedure had subsequently been reviewed and updated following the learnings from the training. The Head of Health and Safety was also working with the Learning and Development Team to develop further training for staff and students.</p>	
9.4	<p>Q. What updates have been made to the Critical Incident Procedure?</p> <p>A. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified as well as other elements related to practical processes such as the necessity of a minute taker.</p>	
9.5	<p>Q. Are we seeing any increased risk of cyber-attacks?</p> <p>A. The risk of cyber-attacks appears to be increasing across all sectors, but the College is managing this well. Annual penetration</p>	

	testing and daily patches take place. The Audit Committee have oversight of this area.	
9.6	<p>Q. Can you provide an update on the Cyber Essentials accreditation?</p> <p>The new IT HoD is working on ensuring Cyber Essentials accreditation is gained this year and Cyber Essentials Plus is achieved next year. At present, the new finance system that is due to be implemented imminently is causing some issues in this area; a solution is currently being sought.</p>	
9.7	<p>RoSPA Award Results</p> <p>The College had been awarded the RoSPA Winner of the Education and Training Services Award for Health and Safety Performance for the period 1 January to 31 December 2024, following achievement of the Gold Medal Standard. The DPS advised that the award was a fantastic achievement and great accolade for the College, particularly considering submissions had been made by 51 countries. The cross-college effort required to gain this Award was commended.</p>	
9.8	<p>Recruitment</p> <p>The recruitment position was positive, ahead of the BP3 outcomes. Recruitment levels tended to be higher in Q4 and into Q1, both to recruit for new roles and vacancies for staff turnover.</p>	
9.9	<p>Special Payments</p> <p>There had been no further special payments agreed year to date, further to the two previous cases previously reported.</p> <p>The College has three ongoing tribunal claims from current employed staff, none of which had been settled or scheduled for a hearing due to the backlog within the employment court system. The DPS advised that at least two of these could have been settled through the system that was in place prior to the Managing Public Money regulations coming into force. Current restrictions meant higher costs would now be incurred to settle in the case of tribunals. The DPS had raised this issue with the DfE at the Annual Strategic Conversation. The DfE had requested that the DPS share these examples with the DfE and the FE Commissioner.</p>	
9.10	<p>Trade Union Pay Negotiations</p> <p>The joint trade union claim was issued on 04.05.25, which requested a 10% or £3,000 pay increase whichever is greater (draft budget currently includes a 2% pay increase). Other requests included being Living Wage foundation employers, starting pay for FE lecturers to be the same as school teachers and a commitment to close gender, ethnic and disability pay gaps. Fully funded national bargaining had</p>	

	also been requested, with binding outcomes for the FE sector and meaningful action on workload.	
9.11	<p>Updated AWAM</p> <p>The new AWAM terms and conditions had been agreed and signed off at the latest Joint Consultative Committee Meeting. The roll out would begin ahead of the next academic year.</p>	
9.12	<p>Recognition Agreement</p> <p>The college was negotiating with the trade unions on an updated recognition agreement and disputes policy. A series of timebound meetings had been scheduled.</p>	
9.13	<p>Staff Survey</p> <p>The DPS advised that the results of the staff survey had now been received and a report would be presented at the next F&GP meeting in July.</p>	
9.14	<p>Organisational Changes</p> <p><i>A separate confidential minute was recorded – see annex.</i></p>	
10.	<u>Estates Plan Update</u>	
10.1	<p>The VPF&CS advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work on fire remedial action was continuing with the completion fire door rectifications and replacements in DHB. The next phase of works would start in the summer and would be to rectify fire compartmentation within DHB. ATC and Trinity Green rectifications were being planned for future works, which would form part of the 3-year capital budget plans. • The sale of Appleton had stalled as the proposed buyer had gone silent again, despite a recent visit and valuation review. It was expected this would therefore need to return to the market for sale; alternative options were also being considered. • The CTS building in Little Germany remained vacant, with the sale progressing and the transfer of the car park expected in May. Once complete, the sale would be progressed and the buyer was aware. • The work continued on the tendering for cleaning services provided to the College, with four companies having visited the site at the end of April with a view to submitting full tenders by the 9 May, with a date of the 16 June set to inform all candidates of the outcome. The VPF&CS advised that a Written Resolution would be required to approve the award of the tender. • Work had begun on retendering the Facilities Management (FM) contract by engaging with FM consultants. Litmus had been 	

	<p>selected and would visit the site at the end of April to start the review of current service. Work to retender was due to be completed by the end of 2025, with the expectation of the date for the new FM contract starting in April 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIAA had recently completed an audit of the department. The department had received a score of reasonable assurance with recommendations to split the Health & Safety policy from the Estate's policies and to include further detail to Committees about estates compliance checks. • A capital allocation of £1.9m had been made to the College, in order to support the maintenance and improvement of the College's estate condition. This had been accepted and would be used to reduce the internally funded element to the Future Technology Centre build. This would be received in June 2025. 	
11.	<u>Capital Projects Update</u>	
11.1	The College currently had the following Estates Capital projects open and in train, which were:	
11.2	FTC (Future Technology Centre) – Revised Budget £19,322k (Inc. £3,432k match), £5,590k spent to date. The car park purchase was progressing very slowly with the Council, however, drainage had been installed (which had been considered the main risk with the purchase), following an email of comfort from the Council's CEO and Head of Estates. A review of the risk register would be taking place, now that the ground risk could be quantified, and the project had progressed significantly.	
11.3	Salix (Heat District Network) – Budget £2,657k and £364k Match, £1,379k spent to date. This project had continued to progress at pace, with works both internally and externally.	
11.4	T levels Wave 5 – Building Project - Budget £3,046k, with £338k match, 100% spent. The project was complete and full budget expended. The Post Project Review had commenced following final completion of project over Easter.	
11.5	<p>The VPF&CS advised that at its meeting on 28 April, the CSIG had approved the closure of the following projects at its last meeting, during which the post-project reviews had been presented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Garden Mills - Funding via OFS Capital 2. T-Levels Wave 5 Specialist Equipment Allocation (DfE) – £690,570 3. Local Skills Improvement Fund (WYCA) – £987,225 4. Energy Efficiency Fund (DfE) – £356,310 	

	<p>5. Reclassification Fund (DfE) – £892,376</p> <p>6. Skills Injection Fund 2 (DfE) – £351,983</p> <p>CSIG members had acknowledged that the improvement to the estate due to the projects was now clearly visible and presented excellent learning environments. It had been noted that staff and students had been heavily engaged in the projects and had provided extremely positive feedback. The CSIG Chair had commended the College on the hard work done to secure the external funding needed to achieve the projects. It was noted that a separate report on the project closures had been requested by the CSIG, to be presented at the next Corporation meeting, which would showcase the excellent achievements across the projects.</p>	
11.6	<p>ACTION: The VPF&CS to present a project closure report at the next Corporation meeting.</p> <p>The Chair and Committee commended the teams on all of their hard work and acknowledged that some of the achievements had been extraordinary. Members agreed that a report being presented to Corporation to showcase the success on the Projects was an excellent idea.</p>	VPF&CS
8.	<u>Student Recruitment update</u> <i>ST/J</i>	
8.1	Members had been provided with a report which provided an update on the forecast student recruitment position for 2025-26.	
8.2	<p>16-18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16-18 recruitment in year at RO8 was currently at 4,237 versus an allocation of 4,242. This continuing improving picture would have a positive impact on the College's funding position for 2026-27. Recruitment figures were significantly higher than at the same point last year. However, there were anticipated capacity issues in the areas of construction and engineering; specifically, the workshop space needed to accommodate these students. The College was lobbying WYCA and the DfE for extra space for this provision and was exploring the option of applying to become a Centre of Excellence for Construction. Collaboration with the Council, MPs, WYCA and the Mayor was taking place. 	
8.3	<p>HE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Higher Education position would remain unchanged for the year. Applications for next year were on track against reduced portfolio targets. Members would be kept updated on the visions for the new HE Offer going forward. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE recruitment levels for next year would become clearer following UCAS application deadline in June. Applications for the School of Art were looking catastrophically low, with the market being completely saturated. Further consideration of the future direction of this offer would take place in early June and would inform Business Planning round 3. 	
8.4	<p>Q. Once an offer of a course has been made to a student, are we obligated to provide this?</p> <p>A. Yes, we adhere to the CMA guidance which sets out OfS's regulatory requirements and one of those requirements is that we must provide a course if students accept the offer made.</p>	
8.5	<p>Q. Do we expect to overrecruit SEND/High Needs students above our funding allocation?</p> <p>A. Over 400 students have expressed an interest, however if we can't meet the need, we will not be able to accept them. We have legal representation to ensure that we are not left in a compromised position. We are liaising with the Local Authority to determine where there might be growth, and where we feel it is appropriate, we feel confident that we could pursue requesting an increased funding allocation, providing we could prove demand. This will be an evolving picture until September, regular updates will be provided to the Committee.</p>	
8.6	<p><u>Update on opportunities for growth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WYCA have adjusted their allocation of funding to allow for a larger Free Courses for Jobs allocation. This has opened a lot of opportunities for growth in the area of L3 - upskilling and reskilling for adults. • Bradford currently has the highest number of Universal Credit claimants in the 18-24 bracket in the country. As a result, the Council and WYCA are investing heavily in funding courses for training for those learners. • There has been an uplift in applications particularly in the area of construction, electrical and plumbing skills. • WYCA's 10-year growth plan identifies construction as a dominant area for skills, with a 7% growth forecast in this area in the next 4 years versus 4% nationally. Developments such as the new trainline and urban regeneration are likely to bring many opportunities for growth in the areas of construction, engineering and plant works. • The College has submitted growth claims for Free Courses for Jobs and AEB and has received confirmation on one but are yet to receive the contract. 	

Policies and Statements		
12.	None	
Governance and Risk		
13.	<u>Strategic Risk Monitoring</u>	
13.1	The Committee reviewed the strategic risks for which it has oversight. The VPF&CS advised that an update to the commentary had been added to the Risk Register and that there were no proposed changes to the scoring.	
Any Other Business		
14.	<u>Items for report to the Corporation</u>	
14.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of meeting – 8 May 2025 - for information • Management Accounts and Q2 Forecast • People Strategy Confidential Report • CSIG Report – Capital Project Closures 	
15.	Any other business	
15.1	There was no other business.	
15.2	The Chair closed the meeting at 17:41.	
16.	Meeting Evaluation	
16.1	ACTION: To be circulated by the Deputy Governance Director.	DGD

Approved by the Committee:

.....B. Barrett.....

.....03.07.25.....

Signed by the Chair

Date

Agreed actions

No	Minute	Action	Who?
1	4.4	The VPF&CS to report on any developments on additional space requirements.	VPF&CS
2	11.6	The VPF&CS to present a project closure report at the next Corporation meeting.	VPF&CS
3	16.1	Meeting Evaluation to be circulated by the Deputy Governance Director.	DGD