

Empowering Success, Enriching Communities, Supporting Industry

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD REMOTELY ON WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH 2025

Present: Gill Banks, Paul Gaskell (Chair), Ian Evans, Paul Smith

In attendance: Kevin Williams, Vice Principal – Finance, Estates & MIS
Lesley Venables, Governance Professional
Jo-Anne Tam, Director of Finance

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

165 Apologies for absence were received from Joanne Henney and Simon Price.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

166 A standing declaration of interest was received from Paul Smith in respect of his employment at Wirral Council and as his spouse works at the College.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2023/2024

167 Governors were reminded of the clawback of apprenticeship funding by the ESFA following a recent funding assurance audit, which had been discussed at previous Committee and Board meetings. This had resulted in a delay in the Board approving the Financial Statements for 2023/2024.

168 The College had now received the final funding assurance audit report and it had been recommended that, rather than re-opening the 2023/2024 accounts, the clawback issue would be included in the 2024/2025 Financial Statements.

169 The Vice-Principal Finance & Resources presented the draft Financial Statements for 2023/2024, which had not changed since they had been considered by the Board at its December 2024 meeting. Governors also received for information the Finance Record which had to be submitted to the ESFA at the same time as the Financial Statements. It was noted that the External Auditor's Management Letter made reference to the clawback of apprenticeship funding.

170 The overall operating surplus was £2,377k (compared to £3,286k in 2022/2023). After accounting for an actuarial loss of £287k (2023: £3,303k gain) in respect of the pension schemes, total comprehensive income for the year was £2,090k (2023: £6,589k). The overall balance sheet position at the year-end showed net assets of £23,544k (compared to £21,454k in the previous year).

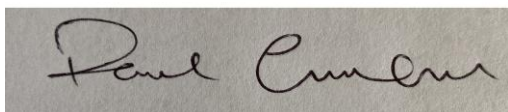
171 Income had increased by £1,764k in 2023/2024, mainly due to higher funding body grants of £1,730k. The College had received a revised allocation for 16-18 provision, which included higher rates across funding bands and increases in Apprenticeship and High Needs income.

- 172 Investment income was £350k higher than 2022/2023 and cash balances were positive.
- 173 Expenditure had increased by £2,673k compared to the previous year, mainly due to higher staff costs of £2,244k, which included a rise in the staffing complement and the 7.5% pay award given to all staff in August 2023. Other Operating Expenses had increased by £748k, the majority of which was facility costs, particularly the impact of higher utilities and expenditure on improvements across the estate.
- 174 At the end of July 2024 the College had a cash balance of £23.70m compared to £17.82m at 31st July 2023. This included capital grant monies of £8m and an allocation of £6.3m from reserves to finance capital projects.
- 175 A governor questioned the level of compliance with safeguarding training requirements and was advised that this had now increased to 94%. The issue was discussed on a regular basis at SLT meetings and was being addressed in terms of the disciplinary policy by the new Director of People and Organisational Development. From September 2025 all staff needed to understand that they were expected to complete mandatory training as part of their roles, particularly given the potential impact of non-compliance on any future Ofsted grading.
- 176 In response to a question as to whether the 50% completion rate for internal audit actions was an appropriate level of performance, the Vice-Principal Finance & Resources reported that some of the actions had been inherited from previous members of staff. This had been a particular issue within the Estates Department, where a high turnover of employees had meant that progressing actions had been slower than anticipated, together with poor record-keeping and a lack of knowledge of the original recommendations. Many of the issues had now either been resolved or were in train and there would be a further review by internal audit over the summer to check the level of progress.
- 175 **Resolved -** That the Board **be RECOMMENDED** to approve the Financial Statements for 2023/2024

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

25th June 2025, 4.30 p.m.

It was agreed that meetings would be held in person at least once a year (November/December – Financial Statements), with all remaining meetings on Teams.



Signed: _____
Chair

Dated: 2nd July 2025