

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 at 5.30pm**  
**Remote via online conference platform**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:**

Mr M Belfound, Foundation Governor, Chair  
Mr N Sheta, Foundation Governor, Vice Chair  
Mrs K Taylor, Foundation Governor  
Ms R Clark, Staff Governor from 5.40pm

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs M Searle, Director of Finance & Resources  
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors  
Mr C Graham, Associate Principal (observing)

**The meeting was opened by Mr Belfound at 5.30pm. It was quorate throughout and all participants could see and / hear one another.**

1. **Opening Prayer:** offered by Mr Thompson.
2. **Apologies:** No apologies for absence had been received. Mrs Taylor had given apologies to leave the meeting at 6.10pm. Ms Clark had given apologies for late arrival. Mr Freeman was not present.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** there were none
4. **Minutes of meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021:** circulated in draft on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and included in the papers for the meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record to be signed in due course.
5. **Review of confidential minutes:** The committee noted that the matter which had been the subject of confidential minutes since 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 would, as agreed at the meeting of the full Governing Body on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021, remain so classified until review again in March 2022.
6. **Matters Arising:** there were none that would not be covered by the agenda.
7. **Tracking of actions from previous meetings:** would be picked up by the agenda items
8. **Premises and Accommodation project reports and plans:** Mr Thompson introduced the "Capital Projects, Accommodation and Premises, February 2022" report which had been included in the papers for the meeting. Appended to the report were minutes of recent PMG (Project Management Group) meetings.  
Mr Thompson reviewed the strategic issues and noted that the CIF<sup>1</sup> 21/22 Boiler Works

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<sup>1</sup> Condition Improvement Fund

project was fully underway with completion planned for the end of March / beginning of April 2022. He reported that work on the T Level Business Hub construction project was progressing on schedule to achieve target completion in August. Mr Sheta asked about the award of a Specialist Equipment Allocation of £86k outlined in the report and what that money would be spent on. Mr Thompson explained it would be used to equip the facility with the latest technology including *Apple Mac* computers and high specification interactive projector boards.

Mr Thompson announced the submission of two further CIF bids to the 2022 / 2023 fund since the previous meeting. Both had been prepared by Barkers Associates on a no win no fee basis. The scope of the proposed projects was detailed in the report.

The committee noted the costs to be:

Project one: a resubmission for Fire Door Replacement at a total cost, including VAT, of £159k. The bid was for a grant of £132k with a college match funding contribution of £27k. Project two: Water and Pipework Upgrade at a total cost, including VAT, of £566k. The bid was for a grant of £537k with a college match funding contribution of £29k (5.1%).

Mr Belfourd asked whether the general process for costing CIF bids was to submit the bid on the basis of an indicative cost followed up with tenders. Mrs Searle confirmed that Barkers, as project managers, had obtained three tenders and the best value quote had been used for the bid.

Mr Belfourd asked when the results would be released. Mr Thompson explained that typically they would be announced around April but there had been delays during the Covid pandemic. He was hoping for late spring.

Mr Thompson introduced the intention to submit a bid to the latest *T Level Capital Fund 2022 – for delivery of T Levels in 2023*. He advised that he had outlined to the CSQ committee earlier in the month the introduction of two new T Level courses from autumn 2023, Education & Childcare, and Accounting to increase student recruitment and reintroduce those subjects into the curriculum. Mr Belfourd recalled the previous offer of Child Care courses at the college which had been popular and Mr Thompson agreed that many of the Health & Social Care students would choose a childcare route.

Mr Thompson explained the rationale behind the bid for funding to redevelop and repurpose the ground floor of Xavier Wing and the LRC2 to support the delivery of those two courses, as detailed in the report and shown in the plans appended to it. Mr Belfourd enquired about the change of use of the LRC2 and how this would impact on students' study space. Mr Thompson explained that the area had served several different purposes but was currently under-utilised. Adapting it to rehouse the expanding ALS<sup>2</sup> department would relieve the cramped accommodation those students were in.

Mr Thompson advised that AET Education (Andy Taylor) had been engaged to write the bid having been successful with previous bids and MEB Design would draw up the initial plans. Due to the tight turnaround time to meet the application deadline of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Mr Thompson advised that it would not be possible to undertake a tender process and instead a Quantity Surveyor (Donal Connal Partnership) would provide costings for the purposes of the application. The Quantity Surveyor had indicated costs in the region of £400 to £500k to complete the project. Mr Thompson explained that, typically a bid would include a 50% match funding contribution but over the last year quite a few awards had been made to colleges who had offered below the match funding requirement and, therefore, this bid

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<sup>2</sup> Additional Learning Support

would propose a 20% match funding contribution (£80k - £100k) which would reduce the financial liability on the college. His expectation was that this strategy would not cause the bid to fail but might raise an enquiry about affordability.

Mr Thompson asked whether governors were, in principle, in agreement with submission of the application. It was acknowledged that the opportunities for capital funding could be finite. Mr Belfour consulted the governors on the committee and all were in favour of submitting the bid whilst the opportunity was there to support the delivery of T Level courses.

**Covid:** Mr Thompson reported no further expenditure had been needed so far this year. He said that seven carbon dioxide monitors had been received from the DfE and installed in poorly ventilated areas of the college and were showing that the air was within the recommended tolerance of CO2 levels.

Mr Belfour asked what the impact of the Government's lifting of the testing requirements in England would be. Mr Thompson said there would be an impact and that the position he would adopt would be to encourage those with symptoms to take a lateral flow test and, if positive, self-isolate. He confirmed that the college still had a stock of about 400 boxes of lateral flow tests which would be reserved for that purpose. Ms Clark made the point that the challenge would be that many people would not have a test at home when they fell ill. Mr Thompson confirmed that SEND staff and students are still encouraged to test twice a week in line with government guidance.

Mr Belfour asked about the approach to facemasks. Mr Thompson said that whilst this had not been a requirement since 26<sup>th</sup> January, college policy had been to accept whatever staff and students felt most comfortable with, individually, including in the classroom.

Mr Thompson confirmed that Dukes Education had purchased Oliver House although there was no sign of activity in the buildings as yet. He would be meeting the CEO later in the week and was looking forward to developing a positive relationship with the organisation.

The report noted the appointment of a new Health and Safety Officer and that the mill lathe was now operational in the engineering department. There had been no health and safety audits since the fire risk assessment in April 2021 – the required action had been implemented.

### **Annual Programme of Works 2021 - 2022**

The committee noted the costed progress report against the plan. Mr Thompson explained that some of the planned works overlap with the CIF projects and would be delayed pending the outcome of those bids. He advised that the biggest project in progress was the CCTV infrastructure work and explained why this had gone over budget.

## **9. Financial Report: Mrs Searle**

- 9.1. **Monthly commentary and accounts:** Mr Belfour confirmed that monthly accounts with commentary and cashflow reports, ratio, pay expenditure and financial health status up to and including January 2022 had been circulated to all governors. The monthly accounts were as expected and continued to be shared with the ESFA territorial team. Mrs Searle advised that the major variance was extra funding for Free School Meals and Bursary students. She confirmed that the agreed 1% pay rise for staff had been applied effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 and commented that whilst this was slightly lower than budgeted, the increase in National Insurance would take effect

in April. Additional staff had been employed via the Covid top-up tuition fund. Expenditure on accommodation works was the most significant at present.

**Accounts noted.**

- 9.2. **Treasury Monitoring Report:** Mr Belfour highlighted from the report which had been included in the papers for the meeting, the changes resulting from the closure of accounts with the Allied Irish Bank (AIB) and move to Barclays. There were no fixed term investments at present. £1,063,533 was invested with Scottish Widows. The report explained that cash reserves would be reviewed once the switch from AIB to Barclays had been completed. Mrs Searle confirmed that the transition was progressing supported by an extension on the closure of the AIB accounts to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
- 9.3. **Rateable value:** Mrs Searle had nothing to report. She thought there might be another challenge to the rateable value of Nightingale's Nursery but suspected these would cease.
- 9.4. **Banking review / transfer of accounts:** Mrs Searle said that the ESFA monies had been successfully received in the right account and salaries would be paid from the Barclays account for the first time this month. Accounts with AIB would all be closed before the next meeting. Mrs Searle reported that Barclays had supported the transition well and that a named Relationship Manager was now in place. The college credit card had been with Barclays prior to the transition. Thanks were extended to Mrs Searle and the finance team for the hard work transferring all the bank accounts.
- 9.5. **Friends of St Francis Xavier Fund:** Mrs Searle confirmed that this fund (£742) had been transferred across to Barclays.
- 9.6. **Staff pay** The agreed 1% increase effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 was up to date.

**10. Funding update & financial projections / plan and returns:** Mrs Searle

- 10.1. Mrs Searle reported that the provisional funding allocation for 2022 – 2023 had been received and was increased substantially due to the growth in student recruitment and the uplift in funding rate. She explained that the extra 40 hours of teaching requirement rolled up in the uplift would add to the staffing budget. Confirmation of extension of the TPA grant and continuation of the tuition fund would provide stability. Mr Belfour concurred with Mrs Searle that, despite the extra costs and pressure for better pay rises the funding for next year was a good position.

[Mrs Taylor left the meeting at 6.09pm]

- 10.2. Mr Thompson said there was no official update on the status of the college in the early intervention process, but it had been suggested to him that the college would be taken off the watch list shortly. He reminded the committee that "early intervention" categorisation would likely be removed in an update due in the spring. Mr Belfour commented that the recent review of the ESFA and arising reorganisation and redefinition would lead to changes from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

Mrs Searle referred to the expected changes to financial health scoring. She warned that the formula was faulty and needed to be corrected but the proposed ratio methodology could lower the financial health rating

Mrs Searle confirmed that the next financial return would accompany the T Level application as part of the capital bid. The next scheduled return would be in July 2022.

**11. Catering Contract Re-tendering:** As a point of information, the committee was informed that the process of retendering the Catering contract had started. It would be due for renewal in July 2022. Mrs Searle advised that Tenet Education Services would manage the tendering process using the Crescent Purchasing Consortium via an approved website. Mrs Searle said that the new contract would be for four years this time.

Mr Belfourd asked whether there had been any relevant changes to public sector tendering following Britain's exit from the EU. Mrs Searle confirmed that she would be checking this but expected that the consortium framework would take account of the rules.

Mrs Lewis confirmed that the opening of the tenders via the "MultiQuote" website would replicate the college Financial Regulations.

**12. Non-Core business / income generation update:** The "Trading Subsidiary – Business Plan Summary – 21/22" report covering SFX Corporate Services and the Nursery had been included in the papers for the meeting. The report followed the most recent meeting of the Board of Directors of the company and was introduced by Mrs Lewis. The content was taken as read. Mrs Lewis highlighted the Board's intention to change strategy and reinvest some or all of the profit from the current year's trading (2021 – 2022) in the company to fund the engagement of someone with relevant experience in selling, on a performance-related basis, to maximise the potential earnings from spaces that are available to be let, including the new Business Hub. This would potentially reduce the amount gift-aided to the college. The committee accepted the proposal.

**13. Tuition and other Fees: (ref Article of Government 20, fees framework):** Mr Thompson introduced the "Charging Policy" updated for 2022 – 2023 which had been included in the papers for the meeting. Changes to the current version had been highlighted or crossed through and were explained by Mr Thompson. He advised the committee of the essential difference being introduced to replace the IT fee with a Digital Device Fee which would be a fairer and more justifiable charge linked to purchase of iPads. Ms Clark commented that the income from the fee would be missed. Mrs Searle agreed and explained that it is used towards the provision of essential services but collection was difficult. Ms Clark asked what other colleges do and Mr Thompson said that there were many and varied practices. **The revised policy was accepted and would be recommended to the full Governing Body for approval on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022.**

**14. FMCE improvement plan:** The RAG rated monitoring report monitoring of progress against the improvements from the FMCE, November 2021 were noted to be on track.

**15. Any other business:** There was none.

**16. Risk management:** The current Risk Register and policy had been included in the papers for the meeting. The committee considered whether the matters discussed had highlighted the emergence of any new risks or modifications to existing risks / mitigation on the register. Mrs Lewis informed the meeting of an emerging risk which the Audit Committee would be discussing, concerning the provision of an internal Audit Service. RSM, incumbent internal auditors, had given notice of disengagement due to the size of the contract no longer being viable.

Mr Belfourd confirmed that there were no other matters in respect of risks to the college.

17. **Review of meeting:** The meeting and all matters on the agenda had been supported by appropriate reports and information and discussed accordingly.

18. **Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022.

**The meeting closed at 6.36pm**

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_