



THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2023

MEMBERSHIP

Youness Abidou (Chair), Paul Butler (Vice Chair), Remi Iyun, Amir Seyyad, Leon Smith,
Janet Gardner (Principal), Darren Talbot (co-opted member)

In Attendance:

Abena Rodman-Tay Deputy Principal Finance and Resources (DPFR)

Elton D'Souza EBR Consultant

Clerk to the Corporation:

Naomi Shoffman Director of Governance (DoGov)

117. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular Ms Iyun and Mr Smith to their first meeting and Mr D'Souza. Apologies for lateness were received from Mr Butler. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Talbot due to last minute work commitments.

118. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no issues included on the agenda for the meeting in which they had a personal interest relative to the College.

119. FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

120. THE 30 SEPTEMBER 2023 MONTHLY MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND UPDATE FOR POSITION THIS YEAR

The DPFR presented the management accounts and provided summary details of the College's actual income and expenditure, balance sheet and cash flow forecast, compared with budget. She then highlighted the following points:

- The Cash balance at 30th September and cash days, against the FEC targets.
- The Financial Health Score is 'Good'.
- The key risks that may impact the financial position and the mitigation actions being taken which will be monitored by the Committee.
- The result shows a surplus for the year to date.
- Following the presentation of the treasury management proposals this is being progress with the chosen banks to achieve higher returns from the cash reserves.

The DPFR advised that most of the figures will be more meaningful in the October accounts, including T Levels and potential clawback and clarification on in year growth. A discussion ensued around the

provision made for clawback and how it is calculated and at what point it will be a concern. The Principal advised that T Levels are still a risk, as there are some challenges with one particular pathway, which will be reflected in the next risk register update. Also, its early in the year to be sure how this will pan out. T Levels issues are a sector wide issue. The Committee asked that when this is reviewed and brought to Corporation – to focus on why this a problem for our College and where our issues lie and whether or not they align with national problems, and what is the driving force behind why it is a problem for this College. This may give us insight into other areas that we may identify as risk or areas where we can improve.

The Committee:

- **Noted the Management Accounts to 30 September 2023.**
- **Noted the key financial risks being managed and the mitigating actions being taken by the College.**

121. THE AGED DEBTORS LIST

The DPFR presented the list of aged debtors which the Corporation had asked to be presented to this Committee. The DPFR advised that since this list was prepared two have already been paid. The list is reviewed on a monthly basis.

A discussion around payments for the HNS, if this was a cause of concern and what are the risks? The DPFR said this is quite usual in term 1 and LEA's do not tend to pay in a timely manner. The HNS numbers have increased year on year, so we have to put in the resources before claiming funding back from the LEA's. The DPFR reminded the Committee that at the last corporation one of bad debts that was written off was from a local authority so there is always an element of risk, but at the moment it is being managed.

The Committee Noted the Aged Debtors List.

FINANCE UPDATES

122. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

No change to the report presented to the Corporation November meeting. An update will be brought to the Corporation December meeting.

ESTATES, PROPERTY AND PLANNING

123. UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH THE CAPITAL PROJECTS

The DPFR presented the update on each of the three elements within the capital projects that the College is currently undergoing as follows:

- West Wing Project:
 - Following an enabling period of set up, works commenced on site on 4 October 2023.
 - The works consist of four phases.
 - The dates for each phase with a brief description of the areas concerned are summarised in the report.
 - Planning permission for the windows have been granted.
 - The works are progressing well and on budget.
 - The College has BI weekly meetings with the project manager and the DFE colleague to go through progress.
 - Refurbishment of the Sports Hall have been completed.
- T level capital project:
 - The Health suite was completed in August 2023.
 - T level media and digital delivery has been postponed by the Government to start in September 2024.
 - The tender recommendation for media equipment has just been received by the College for approval (see minute 124).

- Capital refurbishment will commence as soon as a contractor has been appointed to deliver the equipment.
- Post 16 Capacity Funding:
 - The college has successfully grown post 16 learners year on year leading to a capacity issue.
 - The College’s proposal to develop unused swimming pool area and adjoining storage space and transform this area to an open plan flexible teaching space and a computer suite has been approved by the DFE.
 - The project is currently progressing through RIBA Stage 4 technical design and remains on schedule.
 - The project team are working with Tenet, College procurement consultants on routes to market for the main construction.
 - In conjunction with the completion of RIBA Stage 4, project team are compiling a contractor list for evaluation and possible inclusion in a restricted tender, scheduled for issue on the 10th of January 2024.

A member asked whether there is a risk register associated with each of the projects the DPFR confirmed there is and that she will share that in the next set of reports.

A member asked whether there would be any additional costs with the delay in the T Level media suite. The DPFR explained the delay was because the government deferred the start date

The Chair asked whether we are spending capital in an area that is high risk and that has little future? The Principal advised that the suite would benefit other learners not just those on T Levels. Funding wise, there will be no clawback to the capital or equipment and funds, so long as learners on T levels use this space

The Committee Noted the report.

124. T LEVEL EQUIPMENT TENDER RECOMMENDATION

The DPFR presented the proposal and advised that:

- Tenet conducted an Invitation to Tender (ITT) for a Creative Design, Broadcasting and Postproduction Suite on behalf of Waltham Forest College.
- This was the second time of conducting this tender, as the first tender was abandoned due to the T-Level course being postponed by the government and the first round of tendering resulting in a single expensive tender being received. The College subsequently received confirmation of the extension of funding, earlier on this year, for the course to start in September 2024, so took the opportunity to run the tender again.
- The tender was advertised using Tenet’s Multiquote portal.
- Two suppliers submitted proposal and based on the tender evaluation we are recommending that Jigsaw Systems Ltd is appointed to deliver the T level media suite.

A member asked about the limited number of responses. The Principal explained this was due to the specialist nature of the project. And in response to a further question the DPFR said there is no way of knowing what other tenders have been placed on the portal from other organisations, but she knows that a college nearby has used Jigsaw to complete their project and were very happy with them. She added that because of the deferment it was quite reassuring that we had to go out to tender a second time because the first time the pricing was too high.

In response to another question the Principal explained more about the project, the timing and quality of the tender submissions. She reiterated that the suite will be multifunctional and available for use to the rest of the college.

In response to a question the Principal expanded on the launch of the T Level qualifications, which are a priority both from a funding and government policy stance, and the current and future pathways which will be on offer.

The Committee agreed to recommend Approval to the Corporation (Via Chairs Action) to appoint Jigsaw Systems Ltd to deliver the T level media suite per the Financial Regulation as the value of this contract is above £150k.

125. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE

The DPFR presented the Health and Safety Update for Term1 highlighting the following:

- The number of accidents involving staff and students were reported.
- Mandatory health and safety training undertaken by all new employees.
- In-house health and safety training delivered for relevant staff including first aid, fire marshal, duty manager and risk assessments have been updated.
- Termly fire drill and Health and Safety meetings have been held.
- Health and safety management plan which covers risk assessment (including those carried out for capital works) and other processes and procedures.
- The next review will be in March 2024

The Committee noted the report.

126. UTILITIES CONTRACT UPDATE

The DPFR presented the reports and went through the options prepared by the energy brokers to determine whether we should fix our electricity prices now to give us an advantage in in the future. The brokers have gone out to market mainly because of what has happened in the Middle East which could potentially impact on oil and gas, which then will trickle down to the UK. Having carried out that exercise the brokers have come back and suggested that we should fix our electricity from September 2024 for 12 months, which will achieve £200K of savings (39%). In terms of the gas contract that is fixed up to a point in time and the savings on there is quite minimal, so it is probably less of an advantage in in changing that.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of fixing the contract now or waiting to see what happens in the market. Also, if there is any chance that potentially we could go for six or nine months rather than 12 and still maybe be able to achieve some of savings. The DPFR said she would ask the question but added that it ties into the end dates for the other contract which would make it more attractive when we go out to market in future. There was some further discussion around other risks. It was decided that the majority of the committee were in favour of the proposal to fix the electricity contract for one year fixed and leave the gas contract for now.

The Committee to recommend via Chairs action a new contract with EDF for electricity for 12 months from 1st October 2024 to September 2025.

127. REVIEW OF RISK REGISTER – FINANCE RISKS

The DPFR presented the College Risk Register, highlighting the changes since the last report.

A discussion around the impact of one of the highlighted risks on the College's finances and reputation. The Principal advised that it is not an immediate significant financial risk, it is more of a reputational risk, which could have eventually an impact on the finances, but not an immediate one but more because of recruitment and potential on future finances.

The Principal added that in the instance of some risks the College tries to be proactive for example changing the curriculum and diversifying provision in light of funding policy changes and qualification reforms to try and mitigate the different risk scenarios. We did a number of different scenario testing as to what the landscape may look like, what the impact on the College would be from a financial risk as well as from a student outcome and experience risk. Another issue is the College is nearing capacity for the site, so to mitigate this there is a plan to try and secure some land which we will build on once capital funding is available.

A member asked whether some risks such as those around staffing, could be quantified and there followed a discussion around this and the type of quantification and the impact of it on management accounts. It was agreed that quantifying risk would be more straightforward with some but not others such as reputation. The Principal explained why reputation has been highlighted and why it may be more difficult to quantify. Another point discussed was whether the risk would have to crystallise before it could be quantified. It was agreed this is something that we could start thinking about going forward.

The Committee received and noted the updated College Risk Register.

128. COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT 2022-23

The DoGov presented the report which details the areas of impact the Committee had made through its work in the last twelve months and those that require improvements.

The Committee discussed the responses at length and the proposed grade of – 2 – Good. Members observed that the expertise of the membership along with the work the Committee had carried out during the year particularly around capital projects, utility contracts and investment strategies was in their opinion of a very high standard. A discussion ensued as to what the Committee would need to do to get to outstanding. New members discussed some of the areas where they would benefit from some training and development to support their role on the Committee. Having discussed all these factors, it was agreed to revise the grade to Good with elements of Outstanding.

The Committee Agreed To Recommend To The Corporation The Committee Self-Assessment Grade Of Good With Elements Of Outstanding For Its Performance And Effectiveness During 2022-23.

129. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

A member asked what the position with respect to the investment strategy was agreed following the presentations made to the Committee last month. The DPFR advised this is being progressed and where we are in the process.

130. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

19 March 2024, 14 May 2024, 25 June 2024

131. ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to note that the agendas for future meetings will include the following items: As per agreed business cycle for 2023/24.

132. ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

These were noted

18.55 finish

These minutes have been approved by the Finance and Resources Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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Signed

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Date