

WIGAN AND LEIGH COLLEGE: GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE

TIME/DATE 5.00pm Thursday 20th August 2020
VENUE VIRTUAL – Microsoft Teams

Committee Members

Diane Brennan (Chair)
Michael Ferraby
Susan Spibey
Alison Chambers
Jennifer Cockram

Principal

Anna Dawe

Clerk

Finance Director

Vice Principal, Corporate Services

Assistant Principal IT, MIS and Subcontracting

Robert Smith

Steve Scott

Louise Brown

Dave Harrison

Italics denotes absence

MINUTES

No	Item	The meeting opened at 5.05pm and was quorate with at least 3 members present.
1	R/20/08/01	APOLOGIES An apology for absence was received from Jennifer Cockram.
2	R/20/08/02	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.
3	R/20/08/03	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH JUNE 2020 The minutes were approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.
4	R/20/08/04	MATTERS ARISING The Clerk advised that all matters on the committee's Action Sheet were now complete.
5	R/20/08/05	FUNDING & RECRUITMENT UPDATE The Finance Director reminded members of a number of difficulties in setting the 2020/21 budget, as discussed at the previous meeting. It was noted that the uncertainties created by the Covid-19 pandemic had made it difficult to estimate the impacts on income and expenditure. However, he was pleased to report that early indicators suggested that the budget approved in July may have been overly cautious and it was likely that the surplus would increase, giving the college additional opportunities to re-invest in its curriculum, equipment and estates. The Principal added that, whilst there would be improvements in a number of income lines and a number of unexpected income sources, it was important that members recognised that, for most additional income, there would be associated delivery costs, which would mean increased income would not directly improve the surplus and it would only be the income after associated costs that would deliver bottom line improvements. The Finance Director outlined a number of additional funding sources resulting from government announcements after the budget had been approved in July 2020. This included an additional £170K for T Level support and £652K to predominantly support additional Maths and English teaching for students who would have missed a lot of teaching during the lockdown period. However, the Principal advised that this funding could also be used to deliver additional teaching and learning in core subjects where

gaps in teaching and learning led to additional teaching requirements. She also reminded members that this funding would require evidence of delivery and would be offset by the associated costs, although she commented that the funding could also be used to cover some costs for catch-up learning for English and Maths that was carried out every year but was previously unfunded. The Finance Director also reported that the per capita funding rate for 16-18 learners had been slightly increased to £4K per learner, and that some funding would be made available for 19+ learners in some courses, without the need for those learners to take out a student loan. It was noted that this was likely to include engineering and other courses subject to high strategic demand.

The Principal reported that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) was likely to make some additional funding available to help cover Covid-19 related costs. She explained that this was not likely to be a substantial value and would probably not cover the actual costs associated with Covid-19. The Finance Director also explained that some recruitment estimates may have been overly cautious and that early indicators suggested that these should improve compared to budget. This included an expected improvement in the recruitment value for 'carry forward' learners.

The Finance Director also outlined expected variances in expenditure compared to budget. This included an expected additional cost of £170K to cover timetabling changes, an additional £20K in marketing costs associated with T Levels and additional cleaning costs of around £5K relating to Covid-19. He also advised that the college had agreed to pay for three additional bus routes from Chorley, Bolton and Leigh, all to Parsons Walk. It was noted that this would cost an additional £105K for the year. The Principal explained that the purpose of the additional routes was to reduce the number of learners using public transport. It was noted that these services would be subject to strict 'Covid-Safe' controls, including taking temperatures, the compulsory use of face masks and recording the names of students to assist in track and trace arrangements should this be necessary. The Principal also explained that a small amount of additional funding may be provided by Wigan Council to support these additional transport costs. She advised that, should this funding be secured, the college planned to purchase two further routes, including one picking up around Leigh and dropping off at the Leigh campus.

The Principal provided an update on the enrolment position and suggested it was still too soon to say whether planned numbers would be achieved. However, she was pleased to confirm that early indicators were positive. She added that numbers were likely to be clearer by the following week and agreed to update members at that time.

Action: Principal

The Principal also provided a number of examples that had led to her cautious approach in terms of predicting likely recruitment levels. This included a potential reduction in the number of students taking vocational courses at the college when not achieving the required grades to stay at their school to study A Levels. Members recognised that recent action by the government to accept teacher predictions for grades could easily result in more students staying on at their current schools. Similarly, the Principal highlighted the fact that the government had recently removed the enrolment cap on some higher education courses, which could mean that some students that may have enrolled at Wigan & Leigh College would be offered courses by other providers. Again, it was recognised that this issue would be heightened by the fact that A Level grades would also be based on teacher predictions, meaning more students would achieve required grades for first choice institutions. The Chair asked whether there was any early evidence of an increased number of students staying on at their current schools. The Principal responded that the early evidence was mixed and a resulting reduction in enrolment was not certain but was a clear possibility. Despite clear risks associated with enrolment, members were pleased to note that 50% of planned students were 'carry forward' students, which meant the college already knew the enrolment position for a significant proportion of overall expected recruitment.

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		<p>Members commented on the expected timetabling changes, particularly where classes would be split to achieve social distancing, and asked whether it was realistic to expect to be able to recruit the required additional staff to meet these needs. The Principal acknowledged that this was a concern but advised that mitigation plans were in place should this not be possible. This included increasing part-time hours where possible and using more agency staff if required. Members also asked for clarification of the social distancing requirements in terms of class sizes. The Vice Principal explained that the change from 2 metres to 1 metre + had helped considerably in terms of reducing the impact of social distancing. She explained that, by introducing additional controls such as all students facing forward and located side-by-side, the 1 metre distance would mean that fewer classes would need to be split. She also explained that the smaller impact would enable the college to plan the use of larger rooms to reduce the splitting of classes even further. Whilst members recognised that this was a positive picture, they also acknowledged that it would depend on actual recruitment levels for specific courses. Members also asked whether the new bus services were electric. The Principal responded that they were not. They also acknowledged that staff numbers would not become clear until enrolment progressed, resulting in the need to remain flexible in terms of expected staff costs. The Principal added that, should the eventual enrolment picture be unfavourable in terms of staff costs, the college was in a position where it could still review the use of online content to reduce costs further.</p> <p>The Principal highlighted the fact that 16-18 funding for 2020/21 would not be impacted even if enrolment was below expectations. It was noted that this was because of the lagged funding principle whereby in-year funding was based on the previous year's enrolment. It was also noted that, whilst this reduced the risk for 2020/21, it would present challenges for the following year. Members also asked for clarification that the additional Maths and English funding was for 2020/21 only. The Principal confirmed that this was the case. The Chair cautioned against relying on the additional income lines and ensuring that pre-planning for the following year accounted for this funding not being repeated. The Chair also asked for these new and additional funding lines to be reported separately in the accounts or highlighted clearly in accompanying text. The Principal confirmed that this would be done.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Finance Director</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Finance Director for his report and all college managers and staff for their efforts to ensure the college's enrolment and re-opening was a success in very challenging circumstances.</p>
6	R/20/08/06	ANY OTHER BUSINESS There was no further business.
7		DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: 5.00pm on 19 th November 2020.
		The meeting closed at 5.40pm