

Paper 1

Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee Meeting held on 27 May 2025 on Campus

Present:

Alyson Tobin	Member, Board of Directors and Chair of Finance and Resources Committee
Howell Davies	Member, Board of Directors
Iain Reid	Member, Board of Directors
George Currie	Support Staff Member, Board of Directors
Roddy Henry	Principal

In attendance:

Mary Slater	Director of Operations
Ingrid Earp	Board Secretary

Apologies for absence: Colin Pritchard, Member, Board of Directors

Part A - Opening Business	
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Declaration of Interests (Chair) Apologies for absence were received from Colin Pritchard, there were no declarations of interest.
2.	Minute of Previous Meeting held on 25 February 2025 (Paper 1) The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as accurate.
3.	Matters Arising/Action and Decision (A&D) Log (Paper 1a) It was noted that with regard to the Employment Allowance the College is eligible to apply for this. Action F&R04:A3 Director of Operations to work on the financial implication of receiving the Employment Allowance.
Part B - Items for Decision	
4	Draft Budget 2025/26 (Paper 2) A surplus of £2k is currently being forecast for the year end 2025/26. There is a flat cash settlement from SFC which is a reduction in real terms and a very slight increase in capital funding. The assumptions recommended by SFC re pay awards have been included. Committee noted that the targets for non recurrent income are ambitious and significantly higher than in previous years. The Principal agreed but said this was the only way a balanced budget could be presented to the Committee. The Principal explained that achieving these targets is the responsibility of all staff in the College but agreed that there would be more additional pressure on some postholders than others. The introduction of a new Education Projects Officer post is proposed to be funded with savings made elsewhere as a result of changes in staffing. The curriculum offering will also be addressed to bring it up to date and inline with where the demand currently lies.

	<p>Committee asked that the Business Development Manager (BDM) post be revisited in terms of delivering a return on investment. It was noted that the work of the BDM will be the focus of a presentation to Board in October.</p> <p>The wisdom of presenting a balanced budget that is very likely unachievable was discussed and whilst the reasoning behind this was understood the Committee felt that it may be more helpful to see the true picture in order to be able to move forward.</p> <p>Decision F&R04:B4 Committee agreed to take the budget as is to Board accepting that there may be some amendments in the interim.</p>
5.	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Paper 3)</p> <p>Committee noted that this amended policy is a significant refresh of the previous one which was welcomed. It was noted that the recent Supreme Court decision re single sex spaces is not relevant to this policy.</p> <p>Action F&R04:B5 Board Secretary to let J Kane know of amendment to equality impact assessment for the Policy with regard to showing the impact as positive rather than neutral.</p> <p>Decision F&R04:B5 Committee approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.</p>
6.	<p>Equalities Mainstreaming Report (Paper 4)</p> <p>The Principal apologised that this report was slightly late and it was noted that this should be moved to the February agenda in order to meet the deadline in future years.</p> <p>A Member noted surprise at the 80+% of students with a disability and the Principal confirmed that a large number of the College students have a number of challenges with those declaring to be transgender or being neurodiverse increasing significantly. Another Member noted that confidentiality is potentially an issue with a small number of students.</p> <p>External feedback may be received once the report is published.</p> <p>Decision F&R04:B6 Committee approved the Equalities Mainstreaming Report.</p>
Part C – Items for discussion	
7.	<p>Budget Outturn 2024/25 (Paper 5)</p> <p>The figures in the paper are those as at end of March 2025 so some change is expected before the final outturn figure is available. The current projection is for a £111k surplus for the current 2024/25 year. The non-SFC income figures are on target to be as forecast. The collaboration with a wedding planning company is still in the early stages but there has been feedback that the prices quoted are on the high side so it may be that this relationship be reviewed at some point.</p>
8.	<p>Risk Register Update (Paper 6)</p> <p>The Principal reported that following the recent Audit and Risk Committee meeting the financial stability risk and the business continuity risk have both been increased and the commentary updated accordingly. A Member asked about the College's approach to cyber security given the recent high profile attacks. The Principal said that work is being carried out to ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of cyber security and how to spot</p>

	<p>potential attacks. With the new IT person now being in post it is also an opportunity to flesh out the disaster recovery plan in this area too.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Director of Operations Update (Paper 7)</p> <p>The Director of Operations reported that an Estates and Facilities Assistant has been recruited along with a Cook Supervisor, two posts that have been vacant for some time. They also reported that the new IT and Digital Support person had brought with them significant knowledge in the area that was proving to be very useful. A Member asked how up to date the College IT equipment is and was told that it is reasonably up to date at present however some of the equipment in the IT suite is getting old and may need replacing sooner rather than later.</p> <p>HR KPIs were included in the Director of Operations report with the Director noting that this is a first attempt to produce these figures from the College's HR toolkit and some refinement will be required going forward. It was noted that the high sickness absence figure for lecturing staff is largely the long term sickness absence of one person. Members said that whilst an absence may be understood, and at times expected, it could still prove a challenge to cover the absence for a longer period.</p> <p>Discussions are still ongoing re the job evaluation project for support staff which, when complete, will see any back pay due payable from September 2018. The cost of this is estimated to be approx. £80m which the Scottish Government have committed to underwrite. Of course, not everyone will be in receipt of back pay, some posts may be red circled and others will remain as is. It is too early in the revised process to tell if this will have a positive or negative impact at Newbattle.</p> <p>The pay award for support staff has not yet been agreed and is unlikely to be by June Board.</p> <p>There is a lot going on in the Estates area with mandatory testing and the HMO renewal ongoing. The roof repairs on the residences have been completed. The catering and residential consultancy report has been received with some good recommendations coming out of it. More detail to be shared at next F&R or future Board meeting.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Review of Terms of Reference (ToR) (Paper 8)</p> <p>The Board Secretary talked through the current ToR, noting that a significant overhaul had been carried out recently.</p> <p>The Committee were broadly happy with the ToR as they stood but noted that the College does not have a document called the Financial Plan so ToR 2.3 to be amended to 'Oversee <i>financial planning</i> and monitor associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)'. <i>financial planning</i></p> <p>Procurement thresholds to be checked in line with amendments to Procurement Policy (via A&R Committee).</p> <p>Decision F&R04:C9 Pending checking the procurement thresholds and amendment to 2.3 the Committee recommended the ToR to Board for approval.</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: Given some potential lack of clarity about the quorum for L&T and F&R it was agreed to review this over the summer and take all Committee ToRs to the October Board Meeting.</i></p>

Part D – For Information	
	No items for information.
Part E – Closing business	
11.	Any Other Business There were no items of any other business.
12.	Date of next meeting: Tuesday 15 September 2025 at 10.00am