



Minutes of the Finance & Estates Committee meeting held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 30th June 2022 at 5.30pm

GOVERNORS Charles Heaton, Chair
PRESENT: Andrew Cropley, Principal/CEO
Jane Peacock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance
Gavin Peake, Director: IT, Estates & Learning Resources
Jon Fearon, Finance Director

		ACTION by whom	DATE by when
1	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on agenda items scheduled for discussion. No declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.</p>		
2	<p><u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from David Gillies and Tony Westwater.</p>		
3	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28TH APRIL 2022</u></p> <p>The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.</p> <p>AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2022.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>		
4	<p><u>ACTION PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>The committee considered the table circulated in advance of the meeting, and an update was provided on a number of outstanding</p>		

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elements.

- Line 3 – the finance director confirmed that the contribution analysis narrative requested will be included in future sets of management accounts. He confirmed that there was only one area of concern for him.
- Line 4 – it was confirmed that the April 2022 pay report had been uploaded to the folder for the last meeting.
- Line 5 – the FD advised that it is likely that a detailed report on the Bolsover DC Green Skills Centre will be presented to the board in September/October 2022. The CEO advised that in-principle agreement has now been reached with both Bolsover District Council and the LEP, and the college is now supporting the drafting of the formal business case to the local authority.
- Line 8 – in relation to the ESFA dashboard, the FD explained that this is a tool which allows benchmarking analysis and provides comparative data. It is possible to look at a number of different criteria and compare both locally and nationally. In relation to the local comparator comparisons, it is with other key D2N2 colleges (i.e. Derby, Nottingham and Chesterfield). One example of the information that can be compared is in relation to wage costs, which appear to be fairly similar. It also gives information on apprenticeship provision, and this does appear to be a potential growth area for the college. Governors indicated that it had not been possible to open via ShareFile, and it was agreed, therefore, that this document would be circulated by email.

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AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

5 **BALANCED SCORECARD REPORTING – PROGRESS WITH ESTATES WORK**

The director of IT, estates and learning resources provided a verbal update and key matters highlighted were:

- Project has now entered RIBA stage 3, which means that the college is working with architects to establish exactly what is wanted within the building. This is a way to manage the costs.
- The team has started destructive testing, specifically in relation to asbestos.
- The college has gone out to pre-planning application and, thanks to positive colleague connections, a meeting has already been agreed with planners on site in the next two weeks.
- The team has also engaged with architects in relation to the ADMC site, with college input being to ensure that this is a 'student-friendly' site.
- The college has satisfied all ESFA enquiries regarding space utilisation. This was described as a really helpful review which will provide important information for now and the future.

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- The contract for the Chesterfield Road site has been issued at £3.9 million.
- AA Projects are helping to complete all necessary documentation.
- The confirmed level of eligible payments made is £240k, and the college will receive a 50% contribution to this.
- Mansfield's local authority is preparing to contract with the college for work up to RIBA stage 3, which should mean a £225k cash grant up to February 2023.
- The next contract condition is obtaining planning permission.
- Both partners are really 'coming good' in terms of the contracts, and this eliminates the 'at risk' position of the college.

The committee asked whether there are any concerns regarding project timescales. The director of IT, estates and learning resources confirmed that there were none and expressed the view that things seem to be moving forward at a quite efficient pace at the moment. The committee were advised that it is not possible to complete the project earlier than planned as demolition cannot start on site until July 2023. All acknowledged that securing an early meeting on site with the planners would help to significantly mitigate timescale risks.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

6 RISK REPORT

The finance director introduced this item and described it as a fairly static position, explaining that not a lot has changed since the last report. Early data in September 2022 is now key in relation to 16-18 numbers as this will inform the 2022/23 risks.

In relation to apprenticeship provision, the CEO advised that the vacancy list is now looking strong following really positive engagement with employers. There are currently circa 150 vacancies, which are supported by a strong list of applicants. The college has been able to convince employers to pay more than the minimum, and job offers are being made every day.

The committee considered the risk in relation to cyber-attacks and noted that it was described as a 'level risk'. They asked whether the situation was improving and/or deteriorating. The director of IT, estates and learning resources advised that the risk score was currently level and explained that a tremendous amount of work has been done; however, FE is still a high target sector. The sector is now seeing very, very sophisticated attacks and, despite all of the extra effort, the risk has increased, which means that the risk level remains static.

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The committee then asked a question in relation to income and queried whether the risk needs to be reframed to reflect inflation, pay claims, etc. The finance director confirmed that the executive have debated pay risks and that, following trade union meetings, it would seem they are to take a realistic position. They seem to acknowledge that there is a commitment to pay what can be afforded. The FD advised that there will need to be early negotiation regarding next year's pay claim for September 2023 and that this will need to be formulated early. If September 2022 student numbers are good, then it is likely that the risk score in relation to this will reduce; however, if they aren't as expected and there is less money available, then risks in relation to a pay claim will increase. A challenge from the committee was whether the risk should remain as amber or whether it should move to red. The finance director acknowledged that pay will impact upon profitability but that, at this point in time, there is no anticipation of industrial action. He acknowledged that there may be some staff who choose to leave as a result of pay but explained that it is not envisaged that this will be a significant risk.

The committee asked for an update on the staff recruitment position. The CEO advised that the college was still experiencing some challenges and that the impact of increasing costs of living will have an effect. All anticipate that turbulence will remain. The committee were advised that the highest number of vacancies are in the lowest paid areas – e.g. ALS – and that, to attempt to address this, the budget for 2022/23 tries to prioritise the lowest paid. The committee asked what the unions' views of this prioritisation are likely to be. The finance director expressed the view that the unions seem to recognise the need to support the lowest paid and that part and parcel of this is the need to avoid the erosion of the differentials in the lowest bands.

The committee were advised that the college is also trying to do everything it can to support staff other than through pay. Examples given were installation of electric car charging points, free flu jabs, etc.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 **SPACE AVAILABILITY AND UTILISATION**

The director of IT, estates and learning resources presented this report and explained that it was an annual update. He acknowledged that there were certain areas within the estate which are inefficient; however, it is difficult to do anything about some of these. Examples given were sports facilities, spa, dining, etc. The college has worked hard to consolidate a large part of the estate, and an example given was in creative arts. This has led to the frequency of use being much improved. The committee were advised that Chesterfield Road is the densest area in terms of utilisation and that provision here will need more space in the next two years; therefore, there is some work to do,

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including moving access students out to make way for additional A-Level students. Access students are moving into the area previously utilised for music practice. The college is also making room for the new e-sports provision in September 2022.

In relation to construction, the committee were advised that the college is winding down some painting and decorating activity to make room for plumbing and electrical.

In terms of the plans, the committee were advised that the summer projects will not do 'everything on the list' and that this is impacted by affordability; therefore, there will be a further review completed in September when student numbers are known.

The director of IT, estates and learning resources confirmed that the availability/utilisation position has been analysed and almost all are positive. Key matters highlighted were:

- Construction – whilst this looks to have low utilisation, this is because there is a need for large space which is very specialist and then can't be used for anything else.
- In engineering, the position has improved significantly because of a really focused review by the curriculum. Space is really tight and the college is struggling for every square metre available, with staff being desperate for more space.
- At Derby Road, things have improved but there is a little more that can be done. The staggered start and end times for students will help with this.
- In relation to exams, they now start in the middle of September and just keep running all throughout the year, and the number of controlled assessments required is having an impact. The space that is needed to be dedicated to exams is increasing.

In considering the information provided, a question and challenge from the committee was whether or not there is a way to calculate the optimum percentage rate in each area. Governors indicated that this would better indicate how well the college is doing. The director of IT, estates and learning resources committed to trying to find a way to look at utilisation in this way and stated that a good indication is Chesterfield Road. This has a really high utilisation rate at 76%. The committee all agreed that, if 76% is pretty much as high as is possible (i.e. an optimum), then it is important to compare against this and not try to always consider that 100% is the target.

The committee then discussed dining and social space at Derby Road and noted the review to see whether it is being utilised in the best way. They queried whether it would look like the college was 'taking something away' if the space were reconfigured. The committee were advised that the team currently uses ESFA models to calculate

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availability and utilisation, and this does show that there are some unutilised or low utilised areas. The aim for these is to create some small one-to-one meeting rooms around the edges. It will not mean significant changes and, in terms of improving the rates, will 'just chip away at it'. Staff commented that Derby Road does have a very generous LRC space and that students could use this more.

The committee questioned whether staff understand the way that space is calculated and the implications in relation to this. The director of IT, estates and learning resources confirmed that this is something discussed during his briefings; however, he acknowledged that, on occasion, there is limited attendance and, therefore, not a broad message across the staff population.

The committee asked for further information regarding the painting and decorating provision. Staff advised that the intention is for it to remain as part of the curriculum for one to two years and reminded that it had been moved to Chesterfield Road. Applications are reducing and there is not a high demand as an entry point. In addition, apprenticeship numbers are not large. Because of this, the college is looking more to have a multiskilled programme. Level 3 demand is almost non-existent, which supports a move to a multiskilled offer rather than painting and decorating being a specific curriculum area.

One member of the committee asked for an explanation of the note regarding the Mansfield Brewery site and flexible working space in the report. The director of IT, estates and learning resources explained that this had been explored as an option last year, but the existing tenants did not want to leave and, therefore, the option became nonviable. The college was able to fit everyone into Derby Road by making some movements and, therefore, it was not necessary to continue to consider this as an option.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

8 **HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021/22**

The director of IT, estates and learning resources introduced this item and confirmed that this is a report considered by the internal health and safety committee at its last meeting of the year, which was also attended by Rebecca Joyce the link governor. Key matters highlighted were:

- The college has now stopped with COVID advice, and it is simply considered as a respiratory incident now.
- Accident data has not really changed, and the type and frequency of incidents is as expected
- In relation to nonepileptic seizures, which were discussed in detail at the last meeting, the college has taken a much more direct approach now, including a frank conversation with

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students and parents where there is confidence that the event was not genuine (i.e. backed up by paramedic opinion). This has had an impact, with four of the seven students falling within this category no longer having the 'seizures'. The committee were given assurance that anything of this nature is followed up with mental health support as required.

- The level of RIDDOR reporting is low.
- The level of non-RIDDOR reports is also low.
- The college's own internal audits continue.
- There is some further work to do with students, particularly those who join/enrol late. The team is putting together some information materials to make sure that this is not a gap, as these students will have often missed the usual routine induction sessions.
- Training sessions for staff are now running.
- The internal audit recently completed by Haines Watts was extremely wide ranging and took 2.5 months to complete. It covered all areas of the college, and examples given were in relation to trips and visits, use of chemicals, etc. The outcome of the audit was 'adequate', with only three actions identified for improvement, including:
 - PAT testing – a need to record actions taken, e.g. destroying/disposing of the piece of kit, removing a plug, etc.
 - At Chesterfield Road, there are a number of out of date first aid boxes which have been addressed.
 - Training – the mandatory health and safety compliance position is 81% against a target of 90%. It was acknowledged that the college has to do better in relation to this and, as a consequence of a real focused campaign, the position has improved.

The committee noted the information provided in relation to workstation assessment updates and asked whether the picture could be improved. The director of IT, estates and learning resources explained that there is an online form that can be used, and this is really being pushed in terms of completion. It was acknowledged that the college didn't do as much during the pandemic as it has done in the past, but assurance was given that this is now a focus. Staff advised that, whilst the completion rate percentage is higher than in previous years, there is a desire to increase this. A question and challenge from the committee was in terms of the follow-up, i.e. how the college checks the information provided and/or that steps to improve the workstations have been taken. It was explained that the individual's line manager signs off every form; however, it is believed that there is more to do in terms of eye strain/distance from monitors, etc., as this is very easy to change individually even after an assessment has been completed. He provided assurance that his team really do monitor the

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situation and respond on a weekly basis. The committee asked what the position is in relation to workstation assessments for those who work at home. The committee were advised that there are now very few people working from home and that those who do remain have been thoroughly assessed.

The committee referenced a concern raised in a previous meeting regarding the potential for under-reporting and asked whether this has been addressed. The director of IT, estates and learning resources confirmed that it has and that the college has worked hard to actively recruit first aiders, and these individuals are very often the ones who complete the reports.

The committee noted the actions/implementation dates in appendix 1, where there are a number for April and May, and they asked whether they are complete. The director of IT, estates and learning resources noted that these were predominantly in relation to COSHH items and confirmed that his team were happy with the progress made. Staff are currently working through the items and ticking them off when complete.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 **FINANCE REPORT**

The finance director introduced this item and confirmed that it included a number of aspects.

- 1) May 2022 monthly management accounts – key matters highlighted were:
 - A small surplus in the month.
 - The college made a commitment to share any rebate provided by awarding organisations with staff. This had a total value of £55k. The college has now tracked down all eligible staff and, typically, they have received a £330 cash bonus. This is a voluntary payment made by the college to them.
 - In relation to AEB, the college has recognised an allowance for learners who withdrew in 2020/21. This is £112k of funding from a prior year which the ESFA could ask for. This figure has now reduced to £80k but appears in the accounts as there is a risk of repayment.
 - The college is now getting much better in terms of the accuracy (timeliness) of the ILR. Some external consultancy was recently commissioned to look at potential underclaims, and they were only able to identify £15k on income of over £25 million, which is very positive.
 - The number of apprentices who will roll forward into next year keeps rising. The team is much more confident that the data is

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up to date in relation to this.

- The college is making steady progress.
- The AEB position is still progressing, and staff are fairly confident that the 97% target will be met and the college could get over 100%. There is real momentum in this area.

In considering the accounts, one governor noted that the bad debt figure had increased and asked why this was the case. The finance director advised that it is based on the timing of invoices and, particularly, the fact that NTU are querying a number of invoices issued. The committee asked whether there was a non-payment risk or whether it was just an impact of modelling. The finance director expressed the view that there were no risks and that the position was likely to reverse at a later date. He commented that the college has quite a generous bad debt policy which is quite risk averse, which does influence the position. A challenge from the committee was to ensure that debts are paid and chased before the yearend. The committee all agreed that an assessment of the risk probability would be helpful so that the college can see the true underlying performance position.

In considering the format of the accounts, the committee all agreed that having the balanced scorecard at the front was really helpful, as was seeing the contribution analysis. A challenge from the committee was that they would like to see a breakdown by key areas/type of expenditure as well as curriculum area. The FD confirmed that, in terms of contribution analysis, he will start to report actions where there are any concerns in 2022/23.

The committee then discussed the position in relation to cash, and the finance director explained that reserves will start to pick up between the period from April to July 2022. One observation made was that payments by NTU to the college could be quicker and that the college is exploring ways that this can be improved. The committee noted that cash could go as low as £500k and asked whether there are any mitigating actions. The finance director indicated that it is possible to stretch payments if the college gets to a critical point; however, there is a need to be mindful of the fact that making payments quickly does build good relationships.

The committee asked whether the cash position was likely to negatively impact on covenants. The finance director indicated that it was likely to be the case that the worst period for cash would not coincide with a covenant period.

It was noted that the reference to the Siddhi debt in the accounts now needs to be removed.

The committee asked whether any staffing gaps in 2022/23 would lead to an increase in agency costs. The finance director confirmed that staff

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are working hard on this, and the college is in a better position regarding engineering and construction and, therefore, is hopeful. The college is paying market supplements to retain staff in key areas, which is less costly than going out to use agency staff.

AGREED: to note the content of the management accounts provided.

2) June 2022 pay report

The finance director advised that it had not been possible to finalise this yet, and it was agreed that he would circulate outside the meeting.

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3) Debtor report

The committee were happy to note the content of the update provided, and the finance director confirmed that there were no issues.

4) Yearend financial forecast 2021/22

The committee acknowledged that this information was provided within the May 2022 management accounts, and the finance director confirmed that the midyear reforecast position still remains.

10

CURRICULUM PLAN 22/23 - CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

The finance director drew the committee's attention to the written report and indicated that there were a number of areas of concern which are a focus. These are:

- Motor vehicle – the position is entirely driven by student recruitment numbers. The intention is to review staffing resources when the 2022/23 numbers are known. The college will manage staff vacancies if required, and this provision is very much based on demand. The college is looking to try to expand the offer/curriculum, and an example given was the plant market. There are some opportunities for partnership with Mansfield and Ashfield local authorities via the learning companies.
- Access – the college is trying to broaden the offer, with more part-time available. This could improve retention and recruitment. The college has introduced a new programme in computing, which may also assist.
- Catering – the issue here is the scale and numbers on programme. The college is looking at the curriculum to be more innovative and commercially focused, particularly for adults and apprentices. If funds can be secured, there is a really exciting opportunity in relation to a town centre venue. The finance director advised that, whilst the college wants to maximise revenue, it does not want to lose the quality of what

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is currently done; therefore, a low-risk approach is being taken, certainly until after the next inspection.

- The committee were given assurance that staff really own their student numbers in this curriculum plan.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 2022/23 DRAFT BUDGET AND 2-YEAR FINANCIAL FORECAST

The finance director drew the committee's attention to the information provided. A number of points were highlighted in terms of income, including:

- Assumption of a flat position in relation to 16-18
- Slight reduction in relation to AEB
- The key area for consideration next year is pay.

When considering the proposals, other matters highlighted included:

- The budget is pretty flat for 2022/23
- Student numbers are critical, as is improving and increasing class sizes
- The college is not considering an unconsolidated pay increase.

In general discussion, the committee raised a question in relation to 'income from commercial premises' (i.e. NTU, predominantly). They noted that the 2021/22 position is £428k but that the budget for 2022/23 is £255k. The finance director advised that he was taking a prudent approach and has also separated out the service charges to give greater clarity. Rent is a pure gain, but this is not the case in relation to service charges. The intention is to split out these two at yearend so there is a really clear picture.

The finance director reminded that the sector did receive an 8% increase on 16-18 funding; however, this came with a requirement to deliver 40 hours more. This is not really an issue for the college as the delivery position is already circa 630 hours. The committee were reminded that there is a reduction on maths and English funding next year of circa £500k, which has had an impact. The committee were given assurance that the college is working hard to identify all of the little extras it can do, both in terms of increasing income and reducing costs.

AGREED: to recommend that the board approve the 2022/23 draft budget and 2-year financial forecast as presented.

12 SUBCONTRACTING UPDATE

The finance director presented a number of aspects, including:

- a) an update on the 2021/22 position

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- b) 2022/23 proposals
- c) Fees and Charges Policy for 2022/23.

The finance director presented his detailed report, and key matters highlighted were:

- There is a need to cap subcontracted activity next year.
- The intention is to maintain subcontractors, but the list is not being opened up beyond this.
- The largest contract reduction is with White Rose.
- There is a little bit more activity planned with ATT(FE), an increase from £80k-£90k. The committee were reminded that their contract for 2021/22 has increased in-year.
- In relation to Chameleon, the college is really pleased with the construction work that they do and, therefore, is trying to protect their contract. This is proposed at £380k next year.
- In relation to Qualitrain, the proposal is to see whether it is possible for them to increase their activity. There may be some pent-up demand as they did not hit target figures for 2021/22.
- In relation to Trackwork, they found it difficult to recruit in 2021/22.
- A significant reduction to the Inspire and Achieve Foundation. The committee were reminded that student progress and the organisation's collaboration with the college is the issue. The college will not be issuing a contract for 16-18-year-olds with them but will retain some adult. The college will need to be assured regarding their financial stability.

The committee's attention was then drawn to the Fees and Charges Policy proposed, and it was explained that only minor amendments are recommended. A challenge from the committee was whether the section on EBITDA is right in terms of presentation (i.e. should it be the first consideration?). The finance director confirmed that he would reorder in the final version. Subject to this minor change, the committee were happy to recommend to board.

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AGREED:

- a) To note the update provided in relation to 2021/22.
- b) To recommend that the board approve the 2022/23 proposals as presented.
- c) To recommend that the board approve the Fees and Charges Policy 2022/23.

13 **BID UPDATES**

The CEO provided a verbal update, including:

- SDF – the college has still not heard anything on this.
- Everything else is in a holding pattern.
- The sector is expecting an announcement soon in relation to

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equipment required for T Levels.

- A submission has been made to the ESFA in relation to alterations that the college wants to make to buildings over the summer.
- The college has had a final decision on the capital transformation bid, with £4 million being agreed.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14 **MILEAGE ALLOWANCE INCREASE PROPOSAL**

The finance director provided a verbal update and confirmed that the HMRC maximum is 45 pence; however, the college has held its payment position at 40 pence. The desire now is to increase to 45 pence, as this is considered essential for those members of staff who do go out to visit employers. The finance director expressed the view that the government may increase the 45 pence maximum, given national financial challenges; however, this does depend on how long there is a spike in the increased cost of fuel prices. The committee were advised that there is no member of staff who claims over 10,000 miles per annum.

AGREED: to approve the mileage allowance increase from 40 pence to 45 pence with immediate effect.

15 **COMMITTEE REVIEW**

The director of governance introduced her report and confirmed that this was an opportunity to reflect upon:

- Terms of Reference
- committee operational arrangements and performance for the year
- draft work plan for 2022/23
- committee membership for 2022/23.

In relation to the Terms of Reference, the committee discussed appendix 1, and there were a number of comments and observations:

- No. 10 – in relation to the Students' Union, this is now included within the management accounts. The college does not have a separate SU legal entity.
- No. 19 – to delete as this is historic
- No. 21 – to be deleted.

In relation to the work plan, the committee felt that there was more that could be specifically referenced in terms of:

- green/carbon/sustainability
- insurance
- environmental social governance generally.

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The director of governance confirmed that she would make the proposed amendments to the terms of reference and would then present an updated version to the board for approval. In relation to the work plan, she confirmed that she would update for her own records and then use that as the basis for agenda planning next year. In terms of self-assessment, the committee felt that they had completed all of the elements required in the terms of reference.

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The committee then discussed membership for 2022/23 and noted that an additional member would need to be recruited following the departure of Tony Westwater. The director of governance advised that there is also potential for Kate Truscott to re-join this meeting if, as requested, David Gillies is prepared to join the Standards Committee so that he can give employer contributions to the curriculum planning focus envisaged for next academic year.

AGREED:

A. To note the outcome of the annual review undertaken.

B. To recommend that the board approve updated Terms of Reference for the committee.

C. To recommend that the board approve slight amendments to the committee membership for 2022/23.

16 **LEARNER AGREEMENT – STUDENT FEES POLICY AND PRIVACY NOTICE 2022/23**

The finance director presented this and confirmed that there were no significant changes proposed. He advised that the privacy notice is required by the ESFA and is on a template provided by them. A question from the CEO was whether or not it is possible to give the college more powers in relation to data within this document. It was agreed that the director of IT, estates and learning resources would review this and then make a recommendation.

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AGREED: to recommend that the board approve the 2022/23 Student Fees Policy and Privacy Notice.

17 **AOB**

There were no items of additional business.

18 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Because of annual leave commitments, it was agreed that the next meeting date would be changed and rescheduled for week commencing 10th October 2022.

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19

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28TH APRIL 2022

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to note the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2022.

There were no matters arising.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed :  _____ Chair

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