



Agenda No: 02

Finance & General Purposes Committee – Main Minutes

Monday 25 November 2024 – 9.15-11.00am

Gateshead College Boardroom

Committee Members	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Martin Hedley	Chair / Independent Corporation Member	MH		X
David Brind	Independent Corporation Member - Chair for this meeting	DB	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO Corporation Member	DA	X	
Darren Curry	Independent Corporation Member	DC	X	
Dan Wallace	Staff Governor	DW	X	
Victoria Beattie	Co-opted Governor	VB	X	
Sarah McCourt	Co-opted Governor	SMc	X	
Chris Forster	Co-opted Governor	CF		X
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Attendees				
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance & Resources	JC	X	
Ivan Jepson	Director of Business Development & Innovation	IJ	X^	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand & Learner Experience	NH	X^	
David Keetley	Financial Controller	DK	X	
Rachel Leech	Sustainability Officer	RK	X^	
Lee Jackson	External Consultant - SmartCarbon	LJ	X^	

^Attended for part of the meeting.

F/281 1. Chair's welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest

This meeting directly followed a closed session with governors only.

It was confirmed that DB would Chair this meeting in the absence of MH.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

Apologies were received from CF and MH. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate.

There were no conflicts of interest declared. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

DB declared that the law firm suggested as part of the legal services tender was the law firm used by his employer and provided reassurance that he didn't have any part in the tender process for the College.

F/282 2. Confidential Item

Item covered under a confidential minute.

The report was approved.

F/283 3. Minutes of the last meeting dated 27 September 2024

IJ joined the meeting.

A) The Committee **reviewed** the main minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate account of the meeting.

B) The Committee **reviewed** the confidential minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate account of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

F/284 4. Matters Arising / Action Log

NT presented the action log and highlighted that three actions were ongoing; however all other actions had been closed or completed.

A number of items had also been included for information which covered the ESFA's confirmation of the College's Financial Health Score, an update on the Autumn Budget and guidance relating to the Further education bodies Local Government Pension Scheme guarantee.

The reports were noted.

F/285 5. Strategic Risk Register

JC presented the report and highlighted the following key risks relating to the work of the Committee. JC noted that GLL had been appointed as the operator for Gateshead International Stadium following a procurement exercise. The College were due to meet with GLL.

Covered under a confidential minute.

The Committee **requested** for the Risk Register to be updated following the updates provided. It was confirmed this would be done in advance of the December 2024 Board meeting.

The Committee **discussed** and **queried** the following:

- Any impact on charges following the appointment of an operator – it was confirmed that the College had a lease agreement in place with the Council and were looking to gain a greater understanding of this now an operator had been appointed. There was a degree of uncertainty with future charges. It was suggested that JC report to the next Committee meeting regarding the leases in place to provide the Committee with an overall summary.

Action: JC to report to the March 2024 Committee with an overview of leases in place.

- The consideration of cyber-attacks – noting recent news stories regarding the potential heightening of this risk. It was confirmed that this was being considered internally.

The report was noted.

F/286 6. Strategies

6.1 Estate Strategy Update

JC presented the report, noting that progress wasn't as expected. A final version was due to be considered by the Committee at this meeting however further work was required. JC stated that the revised timeline would see him present the Estate Strategy at the March 2025 meeting for recommendation, with Board approval to be sought at the April 2025 meeting.

A working draft of the Estate Strategy was presented by JC and further work was required. VB noted she had attended an Estates Workshop session at the invitation of JC and this had been useful to consider estates data alongside the College's vision.

JC noted that funding was likely to be made available to colleges for capital projects however this was likely to be based on building condition, with the DfE conducting a survey of the national further education estate. The College's finalised Estate Strategy would be used to support future bids.

Due to the ONS decision to reclassify colleges, colleges were no longer able to commercially borrow to fund capital projects. The College continued to invest in projects to continually improve the student experience where possible.

The Committee **discussed and queried** the following:

- The inclusion of refurbishment and functional suitability surveys within maintenance costs – It was suggested that the costs were specific to a 10-year period of maintaining a condition of B grade, however the College would also look to spend £500k per year to ensure adaptability and responsiveness to curriculum development. These costs would need to be funded by the College and added into the estimate of future costs in the Strategy.
- The planning process for the future vision – it was confirmed planning for 2025/2026 was due to begin with Curriculum leaders presenting their curriculum intent and the requirement for this in terms of space, resource

and technology. Projects would then been prioritised based on need and availability.

- The focus of sustainability in future capital funding for colleges – it was confirmed the funding methodologies were not published at this time.
- The risk to planned maintenance costs if future learner numbers decreased – it was confirmed if learner numbers weren't sustained, the College would receive less funding and would need to consider this in terms of financial planning.

The Committee **noted** the College's focus on ensuring equity of opportunity across campuses and **queried** the current challenges relating to this – it was suggested this was due to space, scale and provision. The College were aware there were some inconsistencies across each site's offer. This was being considered as part of learner feedback with the College exploring options to support and respond.

The report was noted.

6.2 Sustainability Strategy

NH, RL and LJ joined the meeting.

NH presented the report, noting that this included the final draft of the strategy, following initial consideration at the September 2024 meeting. The report also included the draft decarbonisation plan and suggested KPIs to monitor the progress of the strategy.

LJ provided a presentation which covered the draft decarbonisation plan, national and regional decarbonisation commitments, the difference between carbon neutral and net zero, the College's baseline figures for 2022/2023, the College's key areas of emissions, potential targets and pathways for the College to adopt, and key risks.

NH confirmed that this had been discussed with the Sustainability Link Governor, Sustainability Co-Opted Governor and the Green Steering Group which had agreed that a target for decarbonisation was important, however this was not to be at the detriment of the learner experience. Some elements of decarbonisation were also outside of the College's control and would therefore be impacted by external factors.

Although the Sustainability Co-Opted Governor wasn't able to make the meeting, he had provided NH with his thoughts and feedback regarding the College's proposed decarbonisation target.

The Committee **queried** the financial implications of the proposed target and whether financial mapping had been undertaken. It was confirmed this information was challenging and any work toward decarbonisation would need to be funded by the College. The Committee **challenged** if this would be realistic and feasible. It was noted it was difficult to financially model at this stage.

The Committee **noted the importance** of ensuring inclusivity and ethicality within initiatives to drive decarbonisation forward.

The Committee **discussed** the proposed College decarbonisation target, and options, in detail and **agreed** for the College to aim to reach net zero by 2050. The Committee **agreed** for this to be included within the College's Sustainability Strategy. This target would be reviewed annually.

The Committee recommended the Sustainability Strategy for Board approval at the December 2024 meeting.

NH noted that a range of KPIs could be considered to provide assurance at Committee level. SmartCarbon were working with the Deputy Principal Finance & Resources and the Facilities Manager to consider some realistic targets to allow the Committee to monitor the progress against the decarbonisation target.

The Committee **thanked** those involved in the work undertaken to date and noted the work of the Green Steering Group and information presented at the Decarbonisation Workshop in the summer term.

LJ and RL left the meeting.

The Committee recommended the Sustainability Strategy, and decarbonisation target, for Board approval at the December 2024 meeting.

Action: NH to present the Sustainability Strategy for Board approval at the December 2024 meeting.

The report was recommended.

6.3 Brand and Marketing Strategy

CF joined the meeting.

NH presented the report noting that no changes had been made to the Strategy following presentation at the September 2024 meeting. It was noted that strategic level KPIs were difficult to quantify. To support the monitoring and review of progress against the Strategy, the establishment of a 'critical friends' group was proposed, comprising external experts and partners including the Brand and Marketing co-opted Governor, learners and staff. This group would meet termly, and assurance would be further provided with reports to the Executive Team and Finance & General Purposes Committee as required.

The Committee **agreed** they were happy with this approach and noted developments in KPIs as requirements and priorities change through the life of the Strategy.

The Committee recommended the Brand and Marketing Strategy for Board approval at the December 2024 meeting.

Action: NH to present the Brand and Marketing Strategy for Board approval at the December 2024 meeting.

The report was recommended.

F/287 7. Strategy KPIs

7.1 Digital Strategy KPIs

IJ presented the report and highlighted that the paper included some proposed KPI areas which would be discussed by the Digital Steering Group which was meeting later in the week. The KPI areas were being shared at this stage to allow review ahead of the discussion, with the expectation that proposed KPIs would be presented at the March 2025 meeting for approval.

The Committee **agreed** that it was pleasing to see progress against AI enabled processes in the development of the strategy.

Action: CT to report back to the Committee following the Digital Steering Group's discussion of strategic KPIs and recommend KPIs for Committee monitoring.

The report was noted.

7.2 Procurement Strategy KPIs

JC presented the report, noting the Procurement Strategy had been approved by the Board in July 2023. An annual Procurement Report was submitted to the Committee but there were no specific KPIs in place. 6 KPIs had been proposed, aligning with the objectives of the strategy.

The Committee **approved** the Procurement Strategy KPIs.

The report was approved.

F/288 8. Procurement Tenders for Approval

8.1 Legal Services

JC presented the report setting out a tender recommendation for legal services. JC provided reassurance of the robust tender process. All independent panels had recommended the same firm.

The Committee **queried** the intended spend however this was difficult to confirm as was to be expected on a as and when needed basis.

The Committee approved the tender recommendation as per the report.

8.2 Rail Industry Services

JC presented the report setting out a tender recommendation for rail industry services following the current provided withdrawing from the option to extend the current contract. A tender exercise was run with two tender bids. *Covered under a confidential minute.*

The Committee **discussed** and **queried** the following:

Covered under a confidential minute.

The Committee approved the tender recommendation as per the report.

F/289 9. Streamlined Energy Carbon Reporting

JC presented the report and noted the flatline of reduction in energy usage following a period of substantial reduction.

This document would be published on the website alongside some additional context and narrative linking with the Sustainability Strategy.

Action: JC to add context and narrative to the Streamlined Energy Carbon Report ahead of publishing on the College website.

The report was noted.

F/290 10. Any Other Business

N/A

F/291 11. Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Friday 14 March 2025 at 9.00am.

