



Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 20 November 2025 at 8am via Microsoft Teams

Present: John Fogarty (*Foundation Governor*) – Chair
Janet Gater (*Principal*)
Darren Melling (*Foundation Governor*)
Naheem Shafiq (*Associate Member*)

In attendance: Michelle Williams (*Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Systems*)
Ruth Potter (*Clerk to Governors*)

The Chair welcomed all attendees and opened the meeting in prayer.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Declarations of interest

Members were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter which formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at this meeting. No interests were declared.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Andrew Rannard and Brother Ben. The meeting was declared quorate.

1.3 Items to be included under urgent business

No items were submitted.

1.4 Minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee meeting held on 12 June 2025 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair in accordance with Article 12 (3) of the Articles of Government. The publication of the minutes was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.5 Matters arising from the minutes (*previously circulated*)

Committee members considered the action log prepared by the Clerk. It was noted that all actions had been closed out.

1.6 Committee risk register (*previously circulated*)

An extract from the risk register was included to provide oversight of the risks specific to Finance & Resources Committee.

Resolved:

- **That the Committee Risk Register be received and noted.**

2. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

2.1 **Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal referred to this report and advised that the College's external auditors, Murray Smith LLP, had already presented the Financial Statements to the Audit Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2025. The Audit Committee had recommended the financial statements for approval by the full Governing Body. The Vice Principal drew the Committee's attention to the following key points:

- The surplus for the year was £180k.
- The total comprehensive income for the year was positive at £2,988k.
- Impact of the Merseyside Pension Fund actuarial valuation.
- Net reserves totalled £12,198k.
- Key financial ratios over five years to 2025.
- Breakdown of variances against planned operating surplus target of £50k.
- Increase in income of just under 9%
- Increase in staffing costs of just under 11%
- Strong cash balance and strong liquidity position.
- Bank loan covenants had been met once the pension adjustment disregarded.
- External auditor's Audit Completion Report was considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2025.
- Submission of Financial Statements to Department for Education (DfE) required by 31 December 2025.

Discussion ensued on the Merseyside Pension Fund valuation and the potential impact on future contributions; it was noted that the Vice Principal was due to attend the annual pension conference later that day.

The Chair acknowledged the strong set of accounts and the assurance this provided over the financial information presented to the Committee over the course of the year. The Committee extended its appreciation to all Finance Team staff for their work throughout the year leading to the preparation of the financial statements and clean audit report.

Resolved:

- **That the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025 be received and noted.**

2.2 **Finance Update and Management Accounts – October 2025** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the College's financial performance up to the end of October 2025, which reflected the first three months of the financial year.

The following points were highlighted:

- Operating surplus – £311k, favourable variance of £136k against anticipated position.
- Headline performance – no concerns.
- Key performance indicators – most indicators RAG rated green; one amber indicator.
- Dependency on DfE – RAG rated amber due to profiling of DfE income over the course of the year.

- Final student numbers to be reported to the DfE in ILR submission due on 1 December 2025. In-year funding for over-recruitment not yet confirmed.
- College in sound financial health.

The Vice Principal reported on a recent change in DfE policy regarding Higher Education (HE) funding awarded to institutions providing HE under a franchise agreement (i.e. not independently registered with the Office for Students). The impact on the College's funding from the University of Liverpool was explained. The Vice Principal reported back on discussions with the University regarding the business case for an increase to tuition fees. It was noted that the HE institutional review – conducted every five-years – was due to commence in December.

Discussion ensued and questions from Committee members were invited.

Q – Why was catering not included in YTD budget on Summary Income and Expenditure.

A – Zero-cost catering contract in place with no direct cost to the College.

Q – Given favourable variance of £136k YTD, any change to forecasted outturn position anticipated?

A – No. Remain on track for £75k surplus outturn at end of year. NJC teaching staff pay award not yet applied, so this has had impact on positive variance.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal for her report.

Resolved:

- **That the management accounts as at the end of October 2025 be approved.**

2.3 **National Pay Agreements** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal updated members on the National Joint Council (NJC) pay agreements reached for teaching staff and support staff. Both agreements confirmed a 4% pay award, backdated to 1 September 2025, which was in line with the College's approved budget. As such, the support staff pay award had been implemented in the October payroll and the teaching staff award was due in the November payroll.

The Principal updated the Committee on the background to the NJC teaching staff pay agreement and the separation of pay and teacher workload negotiations.

Resolved:

- **That the teaching staff and support staff pay awards be noted.**

2.4 **DfE Accountability Agreement 2025-26** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal advised the Committee that the College had received and signed its Accountability Agreement from the DfE. This was the main funding document setting out all the contractual terms and conditions. The full document had been uploaded to GovernorHub for reference. The Vice Principal drew members' attention in particular to the funding summary and the appendices setting out the responsibilities of governors.

Resolved:

- **That the DfE Accountability Agreement 2025-26 be received and noted.**

3. RESOURCES & ESTATES MANAGEMENT

3.1 Staff Recruitment Annual Report *(previously circulated)*

This anonymised report was presented by the Vice Principal and included data in relation to all internal and external appointments from September 2024 to August 2025. The Vice Principal reported that certain posts had required more than one recruitment round in order to fill the vacancy, however all posts were now filled. Main recruitment issues were linked to science posts as the increase in students choosing STEM subjects had been compounded by the national shortage in science teachers.

Resolved:

- **That the Staff Recruitment Annual Report be received and noted.**

3.2 Staff Absence Annual Report *(previously circulated)*

This anonymised report was presented by the Vice Principal and included the percentage absence rate amongst teaching staff, support staff and cleaning staff for the period September 2024 to August 2025. Comparative data from 2023-24 was also included. The Vice Principal reported a reduction in the overall absence rate from the previous year, comprising a slight increase for teaching staff and cleaning staff and a decrease for support staff. The number of long-term individual staff absences had increased.

The Vice Principal referred to the new Staff Absence Policy (approved in May 2025) and confirmed that staff absence was monitored on a regular basis by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Members' comments and questions were invited.

Q – Any work-related issues or trends identified with absences?

A – No.

Resolved:

- **That the Staff Absence Annual Report be received and noted.**

3.3 Health and Safety Annual Report *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal referred the Committee to the report which had been prepared by the College's Estates Manager. This summarised College activity relating to Health and Safety during the 2024-25 academic year. The Vice Principal highlighted the following aspects of the report:

- Change to Health & Safety Policy review cycle
- Improvements to first aid training
- Progress on lockdown exercise
- Impact of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 – known as 'Martyn's Law' on the College
- Annual accident report for 2024-25 – data on all reported incidents involving staff, students, visitors and contractors. Comparative data from previous years.

Questions and comments were invited on the report.

Q – What are the financial implications of any modifications to address Martyn’s Law requirements?

A – In process of getting quotes so final amounts not confirmed. Would fall under capital expenditure.

Resolved:

- **That the Health & Safety Annual Report be received and noted.**

ACTION – FGB agenda item – Health and Safety Annual Report (for information)

3.4 Student Transport – contract variation (previously circulated)

The Vice Principal reported on the variation to the existing student transport contract arising as a result of the change in ownership of the incumbent provider. She confirmed that a new transport tender process was due to take place in the Spring Term.

Q – Had there been any impact on contract performance following the transfer in ownership?

A – No issues reported with the reliability of service. All vehicles, routes, drivers had remained the same.

Resolved:

- **That the student transport contract variation be approved.**

4. POLICIES

4.1 Tendering and Procurement Policy (previously circulated)

The Vice Principal presented this new draft policy which had been developed as a comprehensive update in line with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023. It was proposed that the previous two separate policies for tendering and procurement be replaced by this one, overarching policy which had been based on a best practice template.

Questions and comments were invited on the draft policy.

Q – Any significant changes to be aware of?

A – Governor involvement in tender panels was no longer a feature of the policy; the focus for governors was on ensuring that an appropriate policy was in place and having oversight of its implementation. The Clerk reported that she had taken external governance advice on this shift which had confirmed that there was no obligation for governors’ involvement on tender panels. Termly reports to the Committee would provide updates on any tender activity to ensure that governors retained oversight.

Resolved:

- **That the Tendering and Procurement Policy be received and recommended to the Governing Body for approval.**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

5. COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 Review of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2024-25 and approval of KPIs for 2025-26 (previously circulated)

The Committee was required to review its own performance annually and the Clerk presented an analysis of performance against agreed KPIs from the previous academic year. It was noted that all KPIs had been achieved.

The Clerk referred members to the draft KPIs for 2025-26 and confirmed that no amendments had been proposed.

Resolved:

- **That the analysis report on KPIs for 2024-25 be received and approved.**
- **That the KPIs for 2025-26 be approved.**

5.2 Review of Committee Skills Analysis and Training Plan (previously circulated)

The Clerk presented an anonymised analysis of the 2025 skills audit responses for Finance and Resources Committee members. It was noted that the average score for all questions was three or above. As a result, no significant skills gaps were evident on the Committee. Indeed, the strength brought to the Committee by members with professional financial qualifications and experience was acknowledged.

The Clerk reminded members of the regular training and development opportunities available via the Sixth Form College Association (SFCA) governance webinar programme and the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) Governance Development Programme. In addition, she invited any member to contact her should they identify the need for additional Committee training or personal development to support their governance role. Members noted that briefings on wider sector issues were particularly useful in order to put financial knowledge and expertise into sixth-form sector context. SFCA Governance Webinars were noted for their usefulness on this front and the Clerk indicated that recordings of past webinars were available to watch on demand. In addition, the Principal indicated that a direct update from SFCA would be requested at the next Governing Body strategic session.

Resolved:

- **That the Committee skills audit 2025 be received and noted.**

6. OTHER MATTERS

6.1 Governor Training

Members were invited to update the Clerk on any training activities they had completed since the last meeting. One member reported attendance at the recent SFCA Governance Webinar 'Sixth Form Matters'. Another member reported attendance at an Association of Colleges (AoC) online governor induction session.

ACTION – Clerk to update Governing Body training log with details of recent training and development activity

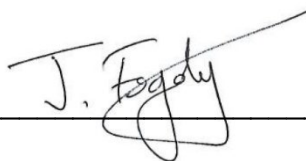
6.2 Urgent Business

None

6.3 **Date of Next Meeting**
Thursday 12 March 2026 at 8am

The Chair thanked all Members for their attendance and contribution at the meeting. There being no further business to discuss the meeting was brought to a close at 8.45am.

Signed by the Chair: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Fogarty', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

On this day: _____ 12 March 2026 _____