

Policy, Sustainability & Resources Committee Minutes

TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 16.30

**Meeting room, Moulsham Road Campus, and via MS
Teams by exception**

Members: Trevor Bolton (Chair), Rachel Cornwall, Richard Davidson, Matt Dearsley, Daniel Holland, Amanda Montague, Paddy Reilly, David Warnes (Principal), Ruth Gilbert

Attendees: Debs Hurst, Beverly Mahoney, Ra Hamilton-Burns

	MATTERS		ACTION
1.	Apologies for Absence Ruth Gilbert and Richard Davidson sent apologies. The Chair welcomed Matt Dearsley and Daniel Holland to their first meeting of the Committee.		
2.	Declarations of interest and to notify any confidential items There were none.		
3.	To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 AGREED: THE PSR COMMITTEE AGREED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 18 NOVEMBER WERE A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD.		
4.	Matters/actions arising – to note		
	Action or matter arising		
D	Draft annual report and financial statements 2023/4 (including Dovedale nursery) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DH to present a summary of updates on the accounts presented to the Board. DH to add context to the comment on the difference on salary staff in section 8. DH to review the pay multiple table and report back to the next meeting 	All complete. Uploaded to the ESFA on 16 December 2024	
10	HR report -- Staff Sickness	The information requested is in the report.	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BM to see how the College can be proactive in ensuring staff are aware of sexual harassment duty and appropriate behaviours. • Senior team to meet with both Student members to discuss the items which come up regularly at each of the Committees. 	<p>BM commented that she and Paddy Reilly had received a great deal of feedback on the impact on students of staff sickness or cover teachers.</p> <p>DW has met with student governors.</p>	
	14	Health and safety report 2023/4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH to approach local nurseries to ascertain incident reporting • Dovedale nursery incidents to be reported separately going forward. • DH to circulate H and S Audit when available • Steve Hope to work with hr to create a separate section in future Health and Safety reports. • DH to arrange for Richard Davidson to speak with staff on Health and Safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH will pursue this information and noted that because it is a nursery every incident is reported. New reports will separate nursery incidents from others. • There is more demand than the nursery can accommodate currently. • H and S audit will be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. • RD spoke to staff on 3 January 2025. 	
	TO DISCUSS AND APPROVE			
5.	Gender pay report <p>The College has a mandatory duty to publish details of the college's gender pay gap by the 30th March 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mean gender pay gap for the College is 16.2% (17.8%, 19.5% and 20.1%) in previous reporting periods. • The median gender pay gap for the College is 29.7% (28%, 31.2% and 34.9%) in previous reporting periods. The median measure is more 			

	<p>influenced by staff movements that the mean so this is not seen as a significant change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grouping which influences the gender pay gap most is part time staff. This supports the analysis that a contributing factor to the college's gender pay gap is the number of part time staff (56% of the workforce) and the proportion of this cohort that is female is 85% • In the lowest quartile, the gender split is 80% female, but this becomes more equal as you move up the bands so that in quartile 4 only 57% of the cohort are female • The proportion of female senior and middle management post holders confirms that the College is equally likely to appoint both sexes to management positions and merit is more important than the individual's gender in making the recruitment decision. • Monitoring of the staff recruitment process reveals no obvious gender imbalance in applications received or appointments made. <p>Governors thanked the Director of People and Organisational Development for the report and asked for future reports to offer an action plan to address the pay gap going forward. She reminded colleagues that this has been discussed before with particular focus on whether a gender pay gap was always a bad thing. The following were factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of staff are female. • Many of the lower paid functions such as refectory and nursery are in-house rather than contracted out which results in a larger gender pay gap. <p>The College is vigilant on the gender issues in policies and practices. The DPOD has oversight of all recruitment. The SLT has high representation of females, . It will continue to monitor differentiation in terms of salaries and see what can be done on items such as national minimum wage.</p> <p>There will be a review of all business support roles to benchmark salaries. In conclusion there will always be a gender pay gap at Chelmsford College due to the roles and part-time staff.</p> <p>A governor commented that there will not be an eradicated pay gap for at least two hundred years, but the College must be vigilant nevertheless. Efforts should be made to attract more men to the lower-paid, part-time roles. The gender gap is higher at Chelmsford College than the national average and the education sector. Governors asked to see the sector benchmarks, and the ethnicity and disability pay gaps The College has introduced a different type of contract to attract males to some positions, but this has not been successful. CVs are reviewed 'blind' to gender and details to ensure there is no unconscious bias.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BM to include in future reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ethnicity and disability pay data ○ national sector benchmarking 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ action plan. <p>AGREED: THE PSR COMMITTEE AGREED TO RECOMMEND THE GENDER PAY GAP REPORT TO THE BOARD.</p>	
6.	<p>HR report</p> <p>The College has identified, and has in place, actions to improve areas of underperformance in relation to staff sickness, recruitment, staff turnover and staff performance. The full report was shared with governors who were invited to ask questions.</p> <p>The Director of People and Organisational Development gave an update on data since the report had been shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recruitment – the College is recruiting to three director posts which close on 28 February 2025. Applications are good. • Since 1 February – 15 appointments have been made. Academic appointments include business, IT, maths and English • There have been only two resignations this month – one retirement and one resignation both in business support. • Reducing staff sickness absence remains high on the agenda. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One more occupational referral has been made. ○ Short term absence has reduced from 14 to 13. ○ Long term absence down to 3. ○ The UCU is in discussions about concerns about reduction of sick pay for new staff. • Staff grievances – no additional complaints have been received. <p>Governors asked if the reduction in staff grievances is likely to be due to staff not raising them or as a result of the interventions the College is making. This was likely to be that HR is taking action early in discussions which prevents matters becoming full grievances. Jan Church, staff governor, commented that the staff feel that they can voice concerns and that HR is approachable.</p> <p>The Committee asked if this report represents improvement from an HR standpoint for staff performance. This is the case as highlighted in the report. As an example, at the start 100% of engineering and electrical staff were ‘developing’ and this is now down to 56%. Staff are now being retained against a position where resignations were frequent before interventions were put in.</p> <p>Completion of the staff survey has been impacted by UCU sharing their own survey at the same time. David Warnes advised that the UCU had adapted and localised the national survey, rewording questions to be ‘leading’ and not in line which would hamper benchmarking. Jan Church mentioned the use of the QR code to the survey when staff log in should increase participation.</p> <p>The inspire to Teach event resulted in 17 formal applications and the</p>	

	<p>conversion rate would be reported to the next Committee. Governors welcomed this news.</p> <p>There is another meeting with UCU planned to discuss workload. An update will come to the next PSR Committee. Governors asked why the UCU has introduced its own survey and offered support to have an independent report on workload if this would be helpful. The College does work to review concerns and find practical solutions and the working from home and cover policies are examples of this. There may be a perception that workload has increased as Chelmsford has 864 contact hours against a national average of 879 hours (against a contract which allows up to 900 hours). The College will work to publicise the fact that it has hours in the middle of the range and is not as demanding as it might be.</p>	
7.	<p>Financial update</p> <p>i. Management Accounts December 2024 The detailed management accounts were presented in the appendix. There is a positive surplus variance to year-to-date budget of £39k and the College is on target to make the surplus for the year. Most budgets are phased evenly over the year except for examination fee costs and sub-contracted AEB which are front loaded.</p> <p>The key variances are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income favourable to budget due to apprenticeship receipts ahead of budget at this stage £86k offset with AEB £42k behind budget • Favourable grant income £67k (offsetting additional salary costs £54k) • Slight overspend on other operating expenditure £13k <p>ii. Cashflow forecast 2024/25 A summary of cash flow was outlined in the management accounts. Currently actual cash flow is slightly better than forecast at this stage. The College expects to exhaust all the restricted cash brought forward from 2023/4 on capital projects. The current forecast at 31st January 2025 is £1,883k 31st July 2025. In 2022/23 there was £509k in the bank so this is a significant increase made in small increments.</p> <p>The Committee is aware that this is somewhat short of the expectation in Project Future of £3m which has been explained previously due to COVID, the war in Ukraine, inflation and energy prices which has affected the College over the last three years. Income has grown from £16.8m in 2021/2 to £21m in 2024/5 in line with the expectations in Project Future but the ability to make surpluses continues to be challenging.</p> <p>The innovate grant of £289k which will probably be spent this year will be duplicated and the College will receive an additional £289k next year. This will mean that staff employed under this scheme can be retained and offset some of the leadership costs.</p>	

	<p>Governors commented that expenditure on capital was a discussion at the FEC meeting. The 'pause' on much of the capital expenditure cannot continue as the estate needs to be improved. David Warnes had recently spoken to the AoC which has confirmed there is £930m set aside for Capital in 2025/6 of which £300m capital funding which will be allocated to colleges on a formula basis on condition. If the same formula is used the College might expect around £300k. There will be a DfE condition survey which will inform future rounds of capital funding and is an opportunity for the College to showcase the areas which are in need of investment.</p> <p>The Committee asked if the College might be able to get funding for its contribution to the Sports Hall refurbishment costs of £2m. The College has agreed to put £131k and then an additional £75k each year. This will depend on the wording of the funding which may be ringfenced.</p> <p>iii. Reforecast for 2024/25</p> <p>The College had been expecting to be informed on 13 February 2025 of additional income based on the formula as well as implications for funding National Insurance increases (April – July) and 2025/26. The DfE has since advised that due to the spring recess the announcement had been delayed.</p> <p>Based on calculation made to date the College may receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional formula £180k for the four months (April 2025-July 2025) • Clawback on underachievement of T Level recruitment target of £150k. • Fees for additional MI system £35k • Impact of increase in National Minimum Wage which is not funded, has been assumed in the forecast but not any other pay award. The number of staff in receipt of NMW will increase to 80 and we will need to review differentials for some staff if affordable. <p>The College has approached Essex Pension Fund and received a reduction in its pension deficit repair payments of £35k. Therefore, at this stage The College is targeting to increase the surplus from £161k to £197k for the year. This does not consider any additional funding that might may be received for National Insurance increases or a pay award at this stage due to affordability.</p> <p>The College continues to seek grant opportunities to offset current costs and is reviewing its cost base on a regular basis.</p>	
8.	<p>Risk management and risk register</p> <p>The key changes from the last report are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider Leadership Recruitment. The College has appointed Wendy Johnson as Head of Electrical and Engineering as well as BEST. It has successfully recruited to the Head of Learning Skills Academy, the Manager of Inspire and also a Business Development Manager in the business unit. The risk has therefore been mitigated, and it is 	

	<p>now 'Green' on the register and will be removed from the dashboard at the next iteration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to changes in the Senior Leadership Team, opportunities have arisen for the College to evaluate the structure of the team. The College is now seeking to recruit to the following positions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Learner Experience and Essential Skills, Director of MIS & Digital Transformation Each campus will be supported by a new Director of Campus, Jo Styles will take on a new leadership role as Director of Campus (Moulsham Street), including strategic oversight of our Inspire provision, along with the Health, Care & Science Department and the Creative Arts, Business and Digital Industries Department. The College has reduced the risk on qualification reform from RED to AMBER due to recent Government communication. There are two new risks relating to a) assessment tracking following the Curriculum Area Review Boards and b) the successful recruitment to the Director posts as soon as possible. The MIS system risk remains a RED as this is a key information system for the College. The data from the existing system has been migrated to the new UNIT-e platform and training will begin on 17th February 2025. A new risk item 20 has also been added to the risk register to cover the risk from devolution and the AEB budget allocation. The College probably has the lowest rate of agency staff than for the past few years. 	
9.	<p>Learner numbers and financial implications</p> <p>16-19 Funding Update</p> <p>As previously reported in September 2024, the College recruited markedly above its allocation headcount for the second successive year. Based at R04, which is in December and a key ILR data return for next year's allocation, the number of funded 16–19-year-olds was 2,469. This is 88 students above allocated headcount but this unfortunately fell just below the threshold for an exceptional, in-year growth payment. It will be funded in next year's allocation.</p> <p>As previously noted, it is expected that there will be a reduction in current year allocation to take account of an under recruitment in T-levels of circa £150k. This College is likely to receive reduced monthly payments over the rest of the year from spring onwards.</p> <p>Impact on 25/26 funding allocation</p> <p>The College's 16-19 allocation is expected to be received from the DFE in March. The allocation is based on a 'lagged' model. This means that 2025/26 allocation is based on data from the 2023/24 & 2024/25 funding returns. Although formal confirmation of this year's process and associated national rates has not been published, the methodology has remained largely stable. This allows an indicative forecast of the impact of this year's recruitment on next year's allocation. The combined effect of strong full-time recruitment in 2023/24 and 2024/25 means that it is</p>	

forecast that the net effect to our core 16-19 programme funding will increase by **circa £1.3million**. As noted above there are still a few variables to be confirmed by the DFE so this figure should be taken with a **suitable caution until the final allocation** is published in March.

	22/23	23/24
Band 5 (580+ hours)	75.5%	79.7%
Band 4 (485-579 hours)	14.2%	13.2%
Band 3 (385-484 hours)	2.1%	0.2%
Band 2 (300-384 hours)	0.0%	1.4%
Band 1 (up to 299 hours)	8.1%	6.9%

T Levels

Next year's allocation includes a projection of 365 T Level students (225 new starts and 140 year 2). Consideration needs to be given if these numbers will be achieved and if it is expected they will not, a reconciliation should be planned for in spring 2026.

Governors cautioned the College should be prudent in T level forecasting for next year for internal management accounts as it has not proved popular. The College is finding that applications are currently up, and David Warnes reminded the Committee that, last year, Rishi Sunak had announced that T levels would be discontinued which had affected enrolments.

10.

Estates Update

The Estate team supports the two campuses from 05.30 to 19.00 on a daily basis and opening evenings on Tuesday and Thursday at Princes' Road until 21.30. The budgeted cost of the team is £380k.

Revenue costs of the College estateTable 1:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Sum of Amount	Sum of Amount	Sum of Budget
Salary costs	328,237	313,980	379,708
Cleaning	350,096	399,165	354,118
Furniture and Fittings Maintenance	4,778	2,761	4,500
Health and Safety	4,047	5,205	11,001
Other Operational Costs	2,914	3,769	12,000
Plant and Equipment Hire	5,441	3,678	1,149
Premises Repairs/Maintenance	109,278	76,959	88,021
Professional Fees	53,800	43,550	20,000
Rates	58,318	62,550	65,780
Security	2,872	3,662	2,320
Service Contract	56,551	120,748	99,477
Utilities	489,112	501,376	473,000
Vehicle Costs	7,063	9,169	10,000
Waste Disposal	42,179	46,844	39,300
Workwear and Safety wear	579	1,991	850
Non Recoverable VAT Account	149,565	174,154	200,000
Depreciation	721,540	734,923	817,000
Grand Total	2,386,370	2,504,483	2,578,223

Governors commented that it was very useful to see the breakdown. The fixed rate on utilities arranged last year will be helpful given the recent energy cost rises.

Dovedale Sports Centre

	<p>As the Committee is aware Chelmsford City Council and Chelmsford College are progressing the redevelopment of the Sports Hall and therefore some costs may increase in the future due to greater use e.g. cleaning but these are shared on a 50/50 basis. However, the introduction of new plant including heating and water systems and air source heat pumps will reduce running and maintenance costs.</p> <p>The legal agreements are being drawn up to ensure that the College is protected in the future in terms of warranties which also includes a revised Joint Use Agreement for the next 25 years. The Council will get greater use of the facility for the 75% of the investment.</p> <p>Capital plans</p> <p>Whilst the College awaits DfE funding announcements, it continues to develop 'shovel ready' plans for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redeveloping the student social and learning spaces at Princes Road to create a larger refectory area, • Moving the Learning Resource Centre downstairs • Creating a 'self-contained' HE area on the 1st floor. <p>It is likely this work will go ahead in Summer 2026. There will be some minor changes in 2025 to enable use of the mothballed production kitchen to create a large classroom in the interim. (The catering curriculum is being reduced to a small Level 1 and level 2 offer, requiring less space, equipment and achieving a saving on ingredient costs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outside covered area for brickwork is planned for completion during half-term to allow for increased capacity, and there are plans being prepared to create a second plumbing workshop for September 2025. • A review of capital requests from the Curriculum planning cycle is being considered and costed for Moulsham Street • The DfE will conduct a condition survey this year. <p>The College has a toolkit for applying for sponsorship, grants and funding. Each department will approach one supplier to forge a partnership model hoping that they will come in and support learners with CV writing, interview practice etc.</p>	
11.	<p>Sustainability Strategy update</p> <p>The Association of College's Climate and Sustainability Roadmap has been redesigned and includes several new measures (Appendix 1). The Roadmap continues to use 'Emerging', 'Established' and 'Leading' as its milestones, but is no longer presented as a linear journey, and instead uses five categories with actions against each.</p> <p>The College continues to aim to complete all actions and become 'Leading' by July 2025 and is part of numerous networks. The College came a close second in the Green Gown awards.</p> <p>. Table 1 shows progress to date.</p>	

Summary of completed actions of the Climate Action Roadmap (24/25)

Reporting level	Leadership and governance	Teaching, learning and research	Estates and operations	Partnership and engagement	Data collection and reporting	Completion rate of reporting level (%)
Emerging	3	1	3	2	2	69%
Established	3	1	3	2	0	64%
Leading	0	1	0	3	1	50%
Total count of actions	6	3	6	7	3	63%
Completion rate per category (%)	86%	33%	67%	78%	50%	

It is [Green colleges' week](#) on 17 March and the College has a number of initiatives and has a number of activities in the study centres:

- The Green Skills commercial courses are launching this month.
- [Global goals](#) teaching and students are participating in May
- The College is focussing on increasing its biodiversity and is one of only two national nature park participants in Chelmsford
- The College has completed staff and student surveys on travel and it will be reviewed.
- For procurement there may be a social and sustainable element in College contracts with large suppliers.

David Warnes is speaking at various colleges and is a national climate ambassador going into schools and is speaking at a number of events . The College has had both an audit report on environmental and social responsibilities and a 'let's go zero' sustainability report.

The new climate sustainability stakeholder forum is a subgroup of the Stakeholder Scrutiny Committee. This ensures the College focusses on its targets, the forum scrutinises the plans and guards against green washing.

Governors thanked the College group for the significant amount of work and progress made which was both impressive and set best practice examples for many institutions. The Committee commented that, whilst initiatives are to be welcomed, changing behaviours of staff and students is a real test and asked if there is evidence of this. There is a core group of committed staff but there is work to do and this is reflected in the student cohort. There is now a student changemaker for sustainability who attends meetings and is committed to change. The formal work continues and last year all students did a mandatory qualification, and this was successful but can't be repeated. The College continues to focus on raising awareness. The Nexus app is working well but needs to be validated further to ensure staff and students are doing what they pledge to do. The College is sixth on the leaderboard on [Planet Earth Games](#) combining

	both physical and project activity. Students at Princes' Road are rewarded with cash on their card.	
12.	Any other business notified to the Clerk in advance of the meeting There was none. The meeting ended at 17.55	
13.	Date of Next Meeting 10 June 2025 at 16.30	