

**FINANCE, STAFFING & GENERAL PURPOSE
COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20th November 2019 at Gearies Centre at 5.30pm.
This was the first meeting of the amalgamated Finance, Staffing & General Purposes Committee.**

PRESENT: Kathleen Atkins (Vice-Chair), in the Chair
Joni Cunningham, David O'Donoghue, Olive Hamilton-Andrews and Mo Rahee.

Also in attendance: Janis Lane, Clerk to Governors.

1. APOLOGIES for absence were received and accepted from Margaret Partridge (Chair) and Councillor Joyce Ryan. Apologies for late arrival from David O'Donoghue (in attendance from minute 12).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to this meeting. All Governors had completed an Annual Form of Declaration except Councillor Stuart Bellwood due to his absence.

3. FINANCE, STAFFING AND GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 10th July 2019 the Staffing Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee were amalgamated into one Committee. Governors considered the Terms of Reference for the Finance, Staffing and General Purpose Committee for 2019/20. Governors discussed the new arrangement and whether the Committee start time should be later at 6pm and also proposed that the new arrangement should be reviewed at the end of the academic year 2019/20.

ACTION:

- (i) Governors approved the Terms of Reference for the Finance, Staffing & General Purpose Committee for recommendation to the next meeting of the Full Governing Body (FGB) in December 2019 for adoption.
- (ii) the new Committee arrangement to be reviewed at the end of the academic year.
- (iii) the start time for meetings of the Committee to be considered at the next FGB meeting.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR OF THE FINANCE, STAFFING & GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair was required for the year until the first ordinary meeting of Finance, Staffing & General Purpose Committee in the Autumn term 2020. As all members of the Committee were not in attendance, it was agreed to defer election until the next Full Governing Body meeting in December 2019.

ACTION: to defer election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance, Staffing & General Purpose Committee to the next meeting of the full Governing Body in December 2019.

5. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee and minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, both held on 19th June 2019, were confirmed and signed by the Vice-Chair as a true record of each meeting.

6. PEER GROUP MODEL (Staffing Committee Matter Arising: minute 427 refers)

Governors had a lengthy discussion at the last Staffing Committee in relation to peer review with other services and the Principal updated Governors that the Institute had since given support and advice to LB Barking and Dagenham in a mock Ofsted Inspection which the service had found very helpful. As previously discussed, the way forward would need to be with a wider group of services than sharing with a limited number of local providers and in this way would be of greater challenge and benefit for the Institute. The Principal informed Governors that extending this further had started to take place where the Principal and Assistant Principal Adult Skills would be reviewing the LDD provision with Hammersmith and Fulham adult service. Further work on a future model would continue and be reported to the Governing Body.

7. PRINCIPAL OBE (Staffing Committee Matter Arising: minute 431 refers)

Governors were pleased to be informed that the Principal had received her OBE at Buckingham Palace given to her by Prince Charles and he gave his best wishes to all at Redbridge Institute.

8. GLA FUNDING (F&GP Committee Matter Arising: minute 957 refers)

Governors were aware that the ESOL for Work bid for GLA funding had not been successful and were informed that other bids in the region had not been successful and so Local London Region had recruited a bid writer to work on future strategic bids. Governors noted that the Parental Employment bid had been pulled as there had been queries around the specification and there had been indication that this would be reissued on the basis of a partnership project without any changes to the bid. This was awaited and anticipated that there would be two strands including support for parents into work and supporting parents with preparation to start work. Governors were confident that the Institute could do well with this project due to the success of the Family Learning Programme.

9. CAR PARKING CASH HANDLING (F&GP Committee Matter Arising: minute 959 refers)

Governors noted that the Car Parking Management Company had not yet established payment by card but in the meantime Institute staff had been managing cash handling in house with a good system including risk assessment and adequate personal safety and security arrangements in place. Governors asked of an anticipated time for Cashless operation to be implemented and informed that there was no timeframe for a new card system but there was less cash being used. Governors would be updated with any changes.

10. PROJECT FUNDING: BUDGET 2019/20 (F&GP Committee Matter Arising: minute 959 refers)

The Principal updated Governors that since the last meeting there had been significant development with 5 small projects underway. These were with additional funding from Good Things Foundation, which were embedding on current courses, and another bid was in progress.

11. AEB GRANT FUNDING 2019/20 (F&GP Committee Matter Arising: minute 960 refers)

Governors had noted that the GLA would not be funding for over achievement and, although would not be getting growth payment as received for 2017/18, the Institute could bid for in year growth from the GLA Innovation Fund. The Institute was currently working on this for submission by 12th December 2019. In response to Governors, the Principal informed that this was a better way of working but was difficult for providers having to manage over-achievement, forecasting accurately was vital and the Innovation Fund would be open to those providers who had performed well the previous year.

12. BUDGET 2019/20

Governors considered the mid-year forecast based on actual figures for the end of September 2019 and the Finance & Staffing Manager confirmed there would be a balanced budget by year end. However, Governors noted that year end balances were likely to be small with little to carry forward to support next year's budget and a major contributing factor was additional employer pension costs in the region of £50,000 (additional 7.2% that had been identified as a risk) that would be funded in the first year 2019/20 (September 2019 to March 2020) but would not be received by the end of the financial year in March 2020 and to be received in 2020/21.

Governors noted that measures were in place to help avoid using reserves should this result in a deficit. In response to Governors, the Finance & Staffing Manager confirmed that the current balance of Reserves was £750,000 and would be in the region of 20% of core funding - the Key Performance Indicator was to maintain reserves at a minimum of 5% of core funding at year end. Governors asked whether to expect funding from DfE for employer pension contributions next year and informed that there had been no indication of funding for this in 2020/21 as there had been no Autumn Spending Review.

Governors raised the potential for increasing class sizes and the Principal explained the negative impact on funding of over delivering on targets as last year was 14% above the Funded Value Target. In response to Governors it was further explained that this was in part due to the expansion of the Learning Support Service that increased staffing and costs significantly and needed for the range of needs/sessions but in forecasting and submitting to GLA/ESFA the additional Learning Support costs were not included and not accounted for in the submission. The Principal assured Governors that the model was sound as funded for learners but future forecasting would need to be more accurate with a comfortable margin.

Governors discussed other in year budget pressures including the Teaching Staff budget with a predicted overspend of £37,000 and this excluded the pension costs that was by far the biggest costs increase. The Finance & Staffing Manager informed Governors that adoption by the Local Authority of the London Living Wage for business support staff on relative scale points had resulted in additional cost of £8,500 for the Institute as applied to many Institute staff. Governors noted the variances between in year gains and additional sources of income and in year budget pressures that would almost balance out by year end. Furthermore, if there was a surge in income, as there had been last year, this would mitigate against the increased employer pension contributions although was not relied on as other measures were in place.

The Principal informed Governors of other measures in place to reduce additional hours paid to tutors for sickness cover whereby additional hours would be subject to additional scrutiny and authorisation to ensure necessary and the best option. Governors asked of the reaction of staff in relation to this and how this was being implemented. The Principal responded that where sessions were missed due to tutor absence there tended to be a 'make up' class at the end of the course and this was not always the best option or cost effective as would result in additional tutor and other associated costs such as premises cost. Therefore this was being reviewed for other ways of ensuring that this was not detrimental for learners, to reduce cover, be more cost effective, and managed differently. Additional hours for Tutors in this respect had previously been agreed on the basis of curriculum focus and not with financial implications in mind and efficiency measures were expected to produce the same outcomes for learners. If part of the course could not be delivered this would be considered in line with the Fees Policy that included policy on refunds to learners. Staff sickness absence was high this year and being monitored. A sessional tutor would usually be paid additional hours to contractual hours if asked to cover a class and there was cover policy across ESOL/Maths/English where staff had additional hours outside of their teaching commitments. Governors questioned where staff had been absent whether they could catch up during remaining sessions and the Principal responded that this was relevant as funding was to deliver learning aims and not a set number of hours.

Governors noted that the Building Maintenance Fund had been used for a large number of premises related items £103,000 to date and these costs had therefore not impacted on the Budget 2019/20. The work included remedial works and maintenance, security and improved facilities. Governors further noted that the photocopier contract, due for renewal at the end of December 2019, was being renegotiated directly with the Institute rather than via the Local Authority and was expected to result in an annual saving in the region of £3,500.

Governors noted that, of the instalment plans last year of 114 learners with an initial debt of £76,419, only one learner with a debt of £132 was outstanding and this was to be written off. Governors commended the Administrator for the successful outcome and hard work and follow up to collect the outstanding monies and agreed to the write off as proposed.

Governors were concerned of the impact on the budget of the increasing staff costs and that the overall Salaries Budget had increased substantially representing 77% of the planned budget and anticipated to be in the region of 80% by financial year end. Governors' further concern was that this would increase even more with additional increases including employer pension costs that would be a full cost in the next financial year with no guaranteed funding and this would need to

be maintained under review even more closely and cautiously. There were increasing numbers of learners who did not pay any fees and therefore a squeeze on income and good for outcomes but not for income. Governors further questioned at what point action would need to be considered in view of the significant increasing staff costs. The Finance & Staffing Manager responded that the budget setting for March 2020 would be a relevant time and by then there should be an indication of the outcome of potential Innovation Funding for growth bid as confirmation was expected in February 2020 – minimum £100,000 growth bid.

ACTION:

- (i) a balanced budget would be achieved if the additional employer pension costs reimbursement was received by the financial year end 31st March 2020
- (ii) measures would be taken to mitigate against the risk of non-payment.
- (iii) Governors agreed to write off £132 instalment fee debt
- (iv) to review tutor cover arrangements.

13. POLICIES

(a) FEES POLICY 2020/21

Fee Charges - Governors considered the Fees Policy for annual review along with the Scale of Charges for the Academic Year 2020/21. Governors discussed the proposals for change that included an increase of 5% in fees for standard courses and other charges to be introduced from Easter 2020 for new courses; a decrease in subsidy for learners claiming concession from 60% to 50%; introduction of an administration fee for Level 3 learners; increase in car parking charges; and a revised scale of charges for hire of premises. Governors noted that the concessionary rate has been 60 % subsidy for some time and higher than other organisations that averaged 50%. Governors discussed the impact of the recommended changes and considered modest for full fee and although a bigger impact for concessionary fee was still good value for money.

LDD Learners - Governors considered fees for Learners with learning difficulties and /or disabilities (LDD learners) and noted had been heavily subsidised over previous years and this year it was being recommended to charge a fee of £40 for one term for those learners. Governors noted that LDD learners on English, Maths and IT related courses were free provision and those who took Maths and English with another creative course would still have free provision for the basic skills courses. Governors asked of comparison in this respect with other similar providers and whether a change in this way would result in barriers to inclusion for the learner or affordability. The Principal responded that there had not been any negative feedback when fees originally introduced for creative courses and the Institute had returning learners. Waltham Forest had cut their LDD provision completely as too expensive. It was noted that there was no concessionary fee mechanism for these learners on creative courses and this would be reviewed but would need to take account where some learners were attending multiple courses and would include additional LSA staffing costs. Governors recognised that there was no intention to compromise affordability but learners should pay where they could afford.

Governors asked whether there were other local opportunities for LDD learners and informed Woodbine Place, Uniting Friends and the New City College had very good offers. The Principal and the Assistant Principal Adult Services were meeting with the Vice-Principal and the LDD Manager of New City College next week as the College had a very comprehensive LDD provision and would look to see how the Institute offer may fit in with this. In response to Governors, the Principal further informed that the College had progression support with younger LDD adults, supported internship and had good links with businesses.

Refund Policy - Governors noted the revision in relation to the refund policy regarding tutor sickness or other absence as discussed in relation to the Budget 2019/20 and recommendation that refunds were only payable where more than 10% of the course was missed and no alternative provided. In response to Governors the Principal advised that the refund policy in this respect was reasonable.

Discounts for 2020/21 – Governors noted the Early Bird discount introduced 2 years ago would not continue as not successful and caused confusion and complaints from learners. Managers were looking at other ways to promote courses.

Parking Charges – Governors discussed the proposed options across the hourly bands. It was confirmed to Governors that car parking at the Institute was significantly cheaper than local car parking charges and the Institute charges had remained the same since introduced in 2011. The car park was the Institute's responsibility as recognised by the Borough. Governors asked of the impact on learners regarding the options and informed that on average the lower band of 0-3 hours would usually cover the course for the learner with some wrap around for the café and social time and not aware of many learners using the upper band. Annual Permits were a good option for longer courses and this could be publicised further. It was noted that permits continued to be given to Gearies School (12 permits per year) on the grounds of maintaining a good working relationship. In response to Governors it was confirmed that there was a total of 52 car parking spaces. Governors considered the recommended options, including environmental issues, and agreed with option 2 on the basis that charges were competitive and learners on long courses could buy a permit that would be cost effective long term.

Lettings Price Scales – Governors noted that an increase in lettings was needed to compensate for the loss of income since BEP partners ceased hiring; the hire prices for short lettings of 2-4 hours were competitive but more expensive for longer lettings. The recommendation was for the standard hourly rate to remain for a minimum of 4 hours and a reduced hourly rate for bookings over 4 hours.

ACTION: Governors approved

- (i) a 5% increase in standard course fees, with a corresponding increase to other charges where appropriate
- (ii) a decrease in subsidy for concessionary fee payers to 50%
- (iii) an increase in parking charges based on Option 2 and to target longer courses to publicise the annual permit.
- (iv) the revised lettings charges
- (v) the revised Fees Policy
- (vi) a proposed charge for a creative course for LDD learners subject to further feedback to FGB.

Governors considered the following 3 policies for renewal and noted these were based on the Council's policies:

- (b) GIFTS & HOSPITALITY GUIDANCE** – Governors considered renewal and no changes were required.
- (c) PECUNIARY & NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS DECLARATION GUIDANCE** – Governors considered renewal and no changes were required.
- (d) FINANCE POLICY** – Governors noted that the Finance Policy was not due for annual review until 2020 but needed to be updated to cover new cash handling arrangements and a new Section 7.15 had been included in to reference the Whistleblowing Policy. Governors agreed the changes as proposed.

ACTION: Governors approved the following policies

- (i) Gifts & Hospitality Policy
- (ii) Pecuniary Interests Policy
- (iii) the revised Finance Policy.

14. APPOINTMENTS, RESIGNATIONS & STAFF CHANGES – June 2019 to November 2019

Governors noted appointments and that the Principal had been impressed with the number of people with relevant experience and more with good teaching experience and also beginning to see a more diverse workforce to reflect Borough demographics. Governors noted that with each vacancy the post had been considered carefully for the best way forward and resulted in some natural savings of £12,000. The Principal informed that the number of new appointments brought more work with recruitment and in terms of communication and induction needed for new staff. The additional staff had included more LSA's and this had not been due to staff turnover but existing staff had reduced hours so had to recruit more numbers of LSA's. Governors asked whether there had been difficulty with recruiting and informed that LSA salaries were competitive with schools and so had not been difficult but other Specialist posts were not so easy to fill. The Tutor for clothes making could not give any more time as was needed and a new tutor would take up the additional work which was a positive way forward to have 2 tutors in that area. Governors noted resignations reported and other staffing matters.

ACTION: Governors noted the Report.

15. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORTS

H&S Accidents and Incidents – Governors noted that there were no accidents or incidents at Gearies Centre to report.

Fire Safety – Governors noted that although a low risk building a full Fire Risk Assessment had been carried out by an external company to ensure full compliance. Governors noted the sound report and Action Plan and the Facilities Manager had ensured that most recommended points had already been actioned.

Car Park Safety – Governors had discussed cash handling arrangements and assured that measures were in place for staff personal safety and security and that ongoing risk assessment would monitor the situation.

IT & Internet Safety – Governors noted further measures in progress including the new upgraded Firewall that would be supported in house and be a cost saving.

Risk Assessments – Governors noted that all risk assessments in the teaching rooms and offices at Gearies were in the process of being updated to include emergency situation and terrorist threat. The Personal Emergency Evacuation Procedure (PEEP) form and procedure had been revised and improved.

Security – Governors noted the security measures in place including the new CCTV system at Gearies costing £10,000 and some work being considered for Mildmay Centre.

Training – Governors noted Health & Safety induction training for new members of staff, Safeguarding training with more dates were being planned and Google classroom training for Facilities and IT staff.

ACTION: Governor to receive a progress report on the Fire Risk Assessment Action Plan at the next meeting of Finance, Staffing and General Purpose Committee.

H&S LDD Risk Assessment - Governors noted the risk assessments outside of the usual teaching assessments used by staff to design programmes for LDD Learners. Governors noted numbers of LDD learners by LD category (total of 80 LDD learners), that there were 44 learners supported by LSA's so almost half of the total LDD learners and found the data very informative. Governors noted assessments covered personal risk assessments, medical protocol and care plans. The Principal advised that staff were very aware now of needing to know any tendencies /trigger points of learners so important to review regularly. There could also be a concern for an LDD learner to abscond and there was a protocol for this and Governors noted that the new lobby area, built using BMF funds, would enable facilities staff to see both entrances more clearly. In response to Governors it was confirmed that there had been no incidents over the last 3 years but there had been previously due to behaviour linked to change of medication or due to an altercation at their home that had spilled over into the classroom.

ACTION: Governors noted the Report on LDD Risk Assessment and Care Plans.

16. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2019/20

Governors considered the CPD Plan across the 5 priorities and linked to the key strategic objectives and performance indicators. Governors noted that for the third year 15 staff were being given an opportunity to become members of the Society for Education and Training (SET) and this would commit those staff to undertake a minimum of 2 CPD that would have an impact on their practice. Governors noted that the part time Digital Learning Leaders (DLL) posts had been reviewed and reduced and focused on targeted support, training and mentoring opportunities for all staff. Governors noted the Summary of Staff Training needs analysis as at September 2019 and that the overall CPD Budget was £19,600.

Governors noted that the Summary of Staff Training Needs analysis September 2019 had been a good exercise with a range of opportunities. Governors noted identified skills gaps for Digital Skills were fairly high and informed that the Education Training Foundation website offered a whole range of training that staff could access.

Governors asked for further information relating to the 15 staff given the opportunity and how they were selected and why the annual professional fee was being paid by the Institute. The Principal responded that the professional membership to this organisation used to be free and there had been some debate when the fee was introduced but the decision had been made a few years ago that in view of the on line resources and training was value for money and furthermore the manager could build a portfolio to get recognised teacher status. Those staff would be expected to maximise use of the membership and this would be monitored. An example of selection was given where an internal candidate had not been successful at interview and needed to develop skills and prepare for a future management role so had been selected as one of the 15. The Principal wanted each person to write a brief report to give feedback to colleagues. Furthermore, the selection/application process could be more competitive and expect the member of staff to give reasons for wanting to participate, how this would benefit their learners and this would be followed up with the PRB.

ACTION: Governors noted

- (i) the CPD themes for 2019/20
- (ii) that individual members of staff (15) supported with SET membership would be expected to report on the impact on their practice and how they shared their learning.

17. STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY 2019

Governors noted that overall staff satisfaction was excellent (99%) as all except one respondent would recommend the Institute as a good place to work (compared to 77% in 2014); levels of staff satisfaction 'strongly agreeing responses' had increased in all areas with the exception of 'encouragement to identify own learning and development needs where scores had dropped'; staff were very positive about what they valued most working with the Institute.

Governors noted that staff dissatisfaction rates were highest with reasonable workload (10%) and skills of managers to manage and develop people reporting to them (9%). Levels of staff satisfaction with line managers had increased across all 5 questions in this area and notably 65% of staff strongly agreed that they were trusted to do a good job. Governors noted responses from New Staff for the 3 additional statements and that the scores to 2 questions were higher and 1 lower than the 2017 survey. Staff satisfaction with reasonable workload was 66% and the same as last year but being supported in balancing work and personal life had dropped to 64% (70% in 2017) and these were areas that Ofsted had now included in the new EIF with questions in a staff questionnaire that would be circulated prior to an inspection.

Governors asked of any issues to be made aware of. The Principal responded that the qualitative feedback and common theme that had emerged around CPD related to Communication and the various ways that this could be more effective between managers, staff and teams. Governors noted that the Principal and Assistant Principal Quality and Student Services were looking more closely at this and considering in relation to the next Staff Away Day. Governors thought that more staff should be encouraged to participate in the Survey as only just half of the workforce had responded and would be interesting to find out reasons why those staff had not responded to the Survey. The Principal informed that it was difficult to get staff to participate as many staff were part time sessional staff. In response to Governors, there was no breakdown between academic staff responses and non-academic staff responses. Governors noted numerous comments and suggestions for improvement and were pleased that the survey results confirmed that overall the Institute was a great place to work with high rates of job satisfaction and there had been a lot of high scores and positive responses.

The Principal informed Governors of a Marketing Intern working with the Institute for 14 weeks and her work had been exceptional so far having already produced the Health and Wellbeing flyer and set up an Exhibition in Gearies to celebrate 100 years Adult Education in Redbridge.

ACTION: Governors agreed

- (i) Feedback for the Staff Satisfaction Survey to inform the CPD Plan 2019/20.
- (ii) Staff Satisfaction Survey results to be considered by the Staff Consultative Forum.
- (iii) Managers to review communication within the organisation, agree a strategy and actions.
- (iv) Ways to improve staff participation in the Staff Satisfaction Survey to be explored.

18. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Governors noted:

- (i) that the next meeting of Finance, Staffing & General Purpose Committee was due to be held on **Wednesday 11th March 2020 at 5.30pm**
- (ii) the start time would be confirmed following further consideration by Governors at the Full Governing Body meeting due to be held on 12th December 2019.

Meeting Closed 7.45pm

Chair..... **Date**.....