

**COLCHESTER INSTITUTE CORPORATION**

**Minutes of the  
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
Held on Tuesday 1 October 2024, 4.30pm  
at the Colchester Campus**

**Committee Membership:**

Richard Block – Chair  
Alison Andreas – Principal/CEO  
Stephanie Bettinson – Governor  
Steve Blake – Co-opted Governor  
Chris Donovan - Governor  
Kevin Prince - Governor  
Sally Conner – Co-opted Governor

**In attendance:**

Gary Horne – Deputy Chief Executive  
Emma Richens – Director of Finance

**Part I**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Steve Blake.

**2. Declaration of any conflicts of interest**

No one present declared any financial, or other, interest in the business to be discussed.

**3. Minutes of meeting held on 11 July 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**4. Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the Agenda**

- Update to be provided on room utilisation alongside a frequent review of the course contribution model *11/7/24 item 7* – The Deputy Chief Executive said that an update on this will follow later in the autumn term.
- To note the UCC Student Protection plan was approved by email on 19 July 2024 *11/7/24 item 15*

**5. Student Enrolments 2024/25**

The following updates were provided for information.

- FE Full Time

Funded target of 3800 learners with the definition of learners being students who have enrolled and completed at least 42 days on a programme. Currently on approximately day 28 for the first students who joined this year with early to mid November capturing confirmed numbers. The Principal explained that enrolment numbers to date have been unprecedented and, therefore, are confident that the College will be able to submit a growth case into the government (to receive additional funding in-year). The current total number of learners is 4178 with an estimate that it may end in around 300

students over target. Funding for 300 additional students could equate to an additional £750,000 funding per year.

- Apprenticeships

Full year target of 620 and Quarter 1 target (end October) of 392

Fully enrolled 249 with a total of 404 in progress.

Expect to be at or close to quarter 1 target by end of October.

- UCC

6 full time students above target and 4 part time students above target. Higher and Degree Apprenticeships are almost at target.

Governors **ASKED** how resources are being deployed with 300 plus extra students over across the college. The Principal replied that in the main groups have been made bigger. Staffing is a limiting factor in a handful of areas, and roles are being advertised.

Governors **ASKED** about the split of the enrolments between Braintree and Colchester and whether both sites have seen an increase in learners. Braintree campus has maintained the 10% of the increased numbers at the Colchester Campus with an increase in numbers on the Digital Marketing and Business courses. Beauty has a larger group as well, in addition to there being 3 apprenticeship groups.

Governors **ASKED** about the planned defunding and the numbers that had been recruited to those courses this year. It was explained that if the courses originally due for defunding in September 2024 and September 2025 are defunded in September 2025 the College could stand to lose around 600 – 700 students next academic year and far more the following year as the smaller intake progresses through the College and further courses are defunded. We still await the outcome of Labour's Pause and Review process.

## 6. Management Report and Accounts July 2024

CICFR2453, Management Report and Accounts July 2023 (P12) was received and presented by the Director of Finance. It was reported that the July 2024 management report confirmed a (pre-audit) operating surplus of £292,000, which was £181,000 over budget. The improvement in month was mainly due to a £196,000 decrease in holiday pay accrual. Governors **QUESTIONED** whether it is possible to run quarterly reports on holiday accrual to enable a year end prediction to be made. It was explained that the annual leave year runs September – August and therefore does not align with the financial year. Governors **ASKED** whether there had been anything unusual during the year that could have contributed to the change in the figure. The Deputy Chief Executive said that there had been an unusually high turnover of staff during the year. The Committee noted that the College Executive will continue to monitor and review.

A small provision was made for potential year end clawbacks following the notification of an EFSA funding audit, however at this stage it is not envisaged that will be needed. Financial health at year end was projected as 160 points 'Requires Improvement' in line with the budget. This is an improvement of 20 points from the 2022-23 position.

Governors **COMMENTED** that it was positive that the balance sheet net assets position remains in surplus after the FRS102 Pension valuation.

Governors **QUESTIONED** the funded capital projects which appear to not have had any movement. It was explained that the EV Training centre was a planned phased

implementation, however this has been delayed and would be covered under item 11. Cobot's (a robotic welding machine) manufacturer has requested this be recalled and therefore we would not be proceeding with the purchase.

7. **Essex Pension Fund FRS102 Report for Colchester Institute**

CICFRC2454, Essex Pension Fund FRS102 report as of 31 July 2024 was received and noted. The report shows the Colleges pension fund surplus had further improved in the year, increasing from 23.4m to 24.0m in year.

8. **Update of Budget Position 2024-25**

No additional updates at this point. It is hoped that growth funding will be received in early 2025 for the additional 16-19 learners recruited this year. It was too early to make a decision on staff pay at this point.

9. **Financial Regulations**

9.1 Financial Regulations 2024-25

The Committee received, considered and **APPROVED** CICFRC2455 Financial Regulations 2024-25. It was noted that there had been no changes since last year. Updates to reflect the Procurement Act 2023 will be take place and be submitted to the Committee for reapproval in due course.

9.2 Approval of Scheme of Financial Delegation (sect. 11.2)

The Committee considered and recommended to the Board for Approval of the Scheme of Financial Delegation (sect 11.2). The Committee was informed that changes to delegation limits will be brought back to be approved later in the year when additional work has taken place on this.

**DECISION:** Scheme of Financial Delegation was **APPROVED** for recommendation to the Board for approval.

10. **UCC Fee Proposals 2025-26**

CICFRC2456, UCC Fee Proposals was received and considered. It was explained that following a large increase in fees last year the intention is for fees to rise by a smaller increment each year.

Governors **COMMENTED** that the 2024-25 increase had matched the rate of inflation, however proposed 2025-26 increase is much lower than the current rate of inflation. The Principal replied that those students who started courses last year may have noticed the increase due to the lower-than-average number of students who take student loans to fund the study. Governors **ASKED** how much the cost base has increased. Costs are reducing due to an increase in efficiencies. Governors felt that there would be a greater reputational risk to a greater increase than the increase it would make to the College bottom line.

**DECISION:** It was **AGREED** to recommend the UCC Fee Proposals 2025-26 to the Board for approval.

11. **Property Matters**

The Deputy Chief Executive gave a verbal update on property matters. It was reported that the Net Zero Centre opened on 10 September and the event was well attended by partner organisations. Other programmes of works continue across the College and an update on works undertaken this year will be shared with Governors at a future meeting.

Electric vehicle centre plans have stalled following a survey of the building. Summer works are mostly completed, including water mains infrastructure work and the window replacement programme through blocks H and C. Discussions with consultants have started to look at how the College can move forward with further programmes of work under the Colchester masterplan. Also awaiting information on capital grants that may be made available. Governors **COMMENTED** on the College's readiness to take on additional opportunities.

## 12. HR Key Priorities

CICFRC2457, Key Priorities paper was received and presented by the Deputy Chief Executive. The following was reported:

- Continued work on the file audit to ensure compliance.
- A reasonable assurance (Positive) outcome from the recent Safeguarding Audit. The report will go to the next Audit & Risk Committee.
- Onboarding of 72 members of staff over the summer period. Strive to address the staff turnover by ensuring the staff induction process ensures new recruits feel part of the college.
- Moving ahead with the College staff learning and development programmes

Governors commended the People & Culture (P&C) team on the onboarding of 72 new starters despite a reduction in staff in the P&C team. Governors **ASKED** about the mentioned reduction in staff in the P&C team. It was explained that there is a member of staff who is off on long term sickness however the Director of P&C has been very involved in operational matters. A Governor made the committee aware that of the worker protection that is potentially being introduced later in the year which would mean the induction and recruitment process is all the more important as employees would be entitled to employment rights from day 1. The Deputy Chief Executive replied that the Director of P&C is encouraging the P&C Business Partners and line managers to be more proactive during the probation period. Governors **ASKED** about the audit and whether any issues were raised. There were 3 low level recommendations all of which the College was already aware, and are easily achieved to ensure the correct data set is on file. The Committee commented on the high staff turnover and asked that this be brought back to a future meeting for further discussion.

**ACTION:** Staff turnover to be discussed at next meeting

## 13. HR Dashboard

CICFRC2458, HR Dashboard, was received and considered. It was agreed that the report would be updated for the next meeting. This included the exclusion of those on long term sickness from the mandatory training figures as previously discussed.

Governor **ASKED** about casual workers and staff on hourly paid roles. It was explained that in the main those staff are on fixed hour contracts however there are some seasonal requirements, such as exam invigilators, for which zero hour contracts are used as a minimum number of hours cannot be guaranteed. Casual contracts should only be used for specific projects and not for any contracts longer than 12 weeks.

## 14. Policy Review

14.1. CICFRC2459, Pay and Reward Policy

All changes had been highlighted through the document and it was noted that the Levelling Up Premiums now called the Targeted Retention Incentive.

**DECISION:** The committee received, considered and **APPROVED** the Pay and Reward Policy

14.2. CICFRC24510, Reserves Policy

This is a new policy and is a formal requirement of the College Financial Handbook.

**DECISION:** The Committee received, considered and **APPROVED** the Reserves Policy

14.2. CICFRC24511, Sickness Absence Policy

Changes to the policy reflect how sickness absence management is approached across the College resulting in a more workable policy for the P&C team to take forward whilst still aiming to reduce sickness absence in the organisation. It was explained that the policy is being tested and consulted on as part of the training being carried out with managers. Governors **ASKED** why there are differing sick pay schemes depending on the start date of the employee. The Principal replied that the scheme was reviewed in 2020/21 but in order to not detrimentally effect existing employees the new scheme was introduced for new staff only. Governor **COMMENTED** that the policy made no mention of the Bradford factor and **ASKED** whether it is used. It was agreed that the P&C Director would provide a response to this at next meeting but that Bradford had previously been used, but discontinued some years ago.

**ACTION:** P&C Director to provide response on whether the Bradford Factor has been considered for use in Sickness Management.

Governors noted that when a member of staff starts the formal process the review period is only 3 months and **QUESTIONED** whether this should be increased to a minimum of 6 months as standard.

**DECISION:** Sickness Absence Management Policy to be brought back to the next meeting.

15. **Review of Meeting**

The Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the meeting, agreed items to be treated confidentially, and agreed the items to be referred to the Board.

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 28 November 2024

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Tuesday 20 May 2025

Tuesday 15 July 2025

All meetings to take place at 4.30pm at the Colchester Campus

17. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None