

Finance & Resources Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 24 June 2025 at 4:30 PM

Location: Riverside College Halton, Kingsway, Widnes, Cheshire

Present:	Neil McGrath Mary Murphy Susan Smith Stephen Young	External Governor Principal External Governor, Chair External Governor
In Attendance:	Dan Adams Amir Danaei Julie Holland Gordon Holmes Julia Withersby Catherine Shaw	Assistant Principal (Curriculum, Cronton) Associated Cost Manager, Drees & Sommer Deputy Principal (Finance & Resources) Assistant Principal (Finance & Estates) Assistant Principal (HR) Head of Governance

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

A presentation was delivered by Amir Danael from Drees & Sommer (appointed Property Consultants). He provided an overview of progress to date in relation to current building projects, namely:

- New Engineering Block and Substation Upgrade at the Kingsway campus
- Music Hub Extension & New Teaching Block at the Cronton campus
- Re-Cladding Scheme at Kingsway

A discussion took place. Several questions were raised by Governors which were responded to.

Amir Danael was thanked for his presentation and he left the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Chris Sikorski. Stephen Young informed the Committee that he would need to leave the meeting at 5:30pm due to a prior commitment.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 Approval of the Minutes *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

3.2 Matters Arising

Resolved: It was noted that there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda and there were no matters outstanding on the action log.

4. FINANCE AND RESOURCES UPDATE

4.1 HR Update *(previously circulated)*

The Committee reviewed the HR report which was presented by the Assistant Principal (HR). Staff absence had reduced by 0.74% compared to the previous academic year. The number of staff leaving their employment had decreased and there were no identifiable negative trends in respect of resignations.

The gender pay gap was discussed, with the College positioned in the mid-range compared to other local colleges, the local authority and school trusts. Governors were advised that the gap existed primarily due to the predominance of female support staff. The Committee received assurance that the Senior Management Team (SMT) remained committed to closing this gap through targeted interventions.

The Committee was informed that Riverside College received the Employer of the Year award at the recent annual Halton Chamber Business Awards.

Resolved: The Committee noted this update.

Congratulations were conveyed in recognition of the College being awarded 'Employer of the Year' at the recent Halton Chamber Business Awards.

4.2 Management Accounts at 30th April 2025 *(previously circulated)*

The latest management accounts were reviewed. The Deputy Principal reported a positive financial position, with income being favourable and expenditure well-managed across departments. She advised that capital programme delays had contributed to higher cash balances and the operating surplus continued to exceed forecast.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

4.3 Financial Forecast Update 2024/2027 to include budget monitoring 2024/2025 *(previously circulated)*

A forecast covering the next three academic years was presented. Within the report the Deputy Principal (F&R) advised the Committee of the following key aspects:

- Government funding uplifts had further strengthened the College's financial outlook.
- Surpluses were forecast annually, supporting investment in infrastructure and technology.
- Sensitivity testing was applied to account for variables such as pay awards and policy changes.

Governors were advised that three out of the six financial benchmarks used by the FE Commissioner in assessing the financial health of a college had changed. In using the revised benchmarks, the Committee was advised that this had no adverse impact, and the College remained in outstanding financial health.

Resolved: The Committee

- Noted the contents of the report
- Recommended approval of the three-year financial plan to the Board for submission as the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) to the DfE by 31st July 2025.

4.4 Health and Safety Update *(previously circulated)*

The Health and Safety report illustrated a decrease in minor incidents and an increase in near-miss reporting. The Committee was advised that near-miss reporting was being enhanced by the implementation of a new online recording system. Governors received assurance that the College continued to maintain full compliance with health and safety standards.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

4.5 Property Strategy *(previously circulated)*

An update was provided on the College's property strategy and was considered in conjunction with the presentation delivered by Drees & Sommer. Efforts were underway to resolve persistent water ingress issues in the Cronton Playhouse theatre. The development of a longer-term estates plan was discussed, in conjunction with the 'visioning project' which was currently taking place. The Committee was informed that it was the College's intention to raise an objection to adverse possession of land adjacent to the Cronton campus. In response to a question raised, the Assistant Principal (F&E) provided additional background information concerning the land in question.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

4.6 Partnership Update *(previously circulated)*

The Committee received the partnership update relating to Power in Partnership (PIP) and Crosby Training and noted that quality assurance visits by College Management had been positive. A strategic discussion took place in respect of the proposal to reduce sub-contracting provision from the maximum 5% to 2% of the total income received from the Department for Education

(DfE) and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA). The increase in college turnover in recent years and the continued government steer to reduce subcontracting were among the key factors discussed.

The Committee was advised that additional learner numbers and funding allocations would require contract extensions. The respective business cases were considered by the Committee. Governors received assurance that the College continued to support both providers with oversight and resources to ensure strategic alignment.

Resolved: The Committee

- Noted the partnership performance to date in the current academic year
- Recommended that the Board approved in-year contract variations for 2024/2025, as detailed in the report
- Recommended that the approval of the proposed contracts to the Board for 2025/2026

Stephen Young was thanked for his attendance and he left the meeting. The meeting remained quorate.

5. POLICIES

5.1 Procurement Policy *(previously circulated)*

5.2 Treasury Management Policy *(previously circulated)*

5.3 Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy *(previously circulated)*

5.4 Financial Regulations 2025-2026 *(previously circulated)*

5.5 Modern Slavery (Anti-Slavery & Human Trafficking) *(previously circulated)*

All policies were considered individually with the Deputy Principal (F&R) outlining any proposed amendments to each in turn.

Resolved: The Committee recommended approval to the Board of all policies presented within agenda items 5.1 to 5.5 (inc)

6. GOVERNANCE FE SECTOR UPDATE

6.1 Further education college condition allocation: 2025 to 2026 allocations and guidance *(previously circulated)*

The Head of Governance provided an overview of the key aspects of this guidance for governance purposes.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

6.2 Good Practice Guidance on Novel, Contentious and Repercussive (NCR) Transactions *(previously circulated)*

The Head of Governance provided an overview of the key aspects of this good practice guidance for governance purposes. She advised that it had also been presented to the Audit Committee at its meeting on 16th June 2025.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

8. ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD

Resolved: The Committee approved that the following items be reported to the next Board meeting:

- Management Accounts
 - Financial Performance and Three-Year Financial Forecast
 - Partnership Update
 - All policies
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9. MEETING REVIEW *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Committee noted that any comments regarding the effectiveness of the meeting were to be submitted directly to the Head of Governance by 30th June 2025.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

These were **noted** as follows:

- Board – 7th July 2025
 - Finance & Resources Committee – 3rd December 2025
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Signed.....Office copy signed by Neil McGrath.....

Committee Chair

Date.....3rd December 2025.....