

GOVERNORS/MEMBERS PRESENT: James Creamer [Chair], Svetlana Bajic-Raymond, Roger Bridgeman, Marian Curran [Principal], Michelle Hazelwood, Peter Turner, [6]

APOLOGY: [0]

ATTENDING: Shane Blackshaw [Executive Finance Director], Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional], Luke Abrahams [Head of Human Resources], Iain Turri [Observing]

Absent Without Apology: None [0]

CIRCULATION: All Governors, College website

QUORUM REQUIRED: 3/6 (Voting Committee members)

Circulation: All Governors, Governance Professional, Principalship, & [College Website after signature].

Committee Briefing – none this meeting

ITEM	ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION	AGREED ACTION
1. Welcome	1.1 Welcome: JC welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with a prayer. Apologies were accepted.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1 Declarations of Interest: Governors confirmed there had been no change.	
4. Minutes Previous Meeting	4.1 26 June 2024: The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record	
5. Actions Review [Agenda not listed]	4.1 See Actions Report for updates	
6. Matters Arising [Agenda not listed]	None	
7. Staff Matters	<p>7.1 Staff Retention Report 2024-25: LA talked through the key points.</p> <p>Q – Is there anyone who has left where there is a gap that is difficult to fill? It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit teachers, especially in certain subjects. We have been struggling to recruit a teacher of law, but have been lucky in recruiting teachers of economics and Maths.</p> <p>Q – Are all the staff benefits mentioned in the recruitment literature? Yes, they are all on the website and included in the packs.</p> <p>Q – Are the exit interview responses fairly similar to what they have been in the past? The majority if staff have rated us as 3 or above, which is positive. There are themes around what we can do better as a college, such as workload. There has been some research around recruitment and enrolments into Teacher Training. The hardest subjects to recruit to are Business Studies, Physics, Music, DT and Engineering, Modern Foreign Languages and Computing. There are three subjects where there is no difficulty recruiting teachers: History, Classics and PE.</p> <p>Q – There are a number of, ‘maybe’ when staff are asked whether they would come back to St Brendan’s. Is the work on wellbeing supporting recruitment? Some of the maybes relate to whether the right role comes up at the college for promotion opportunities and we are looking at how we can build progression into the structure.</p>	

Wellbeing is primarily looking at retaining staff, and supporting them in work. The group looks at engagement with the college as well.

Q – What is the context of the statement about the public having a poor perception of St Brendan’s? Noted that we are rated as a 3 on Indeed, although there are only 13 reviews which are mixed. Noted that people are more likely to write a bad review than a good one. We have been proactive in the question-and-answer section on Indeed.

7.2 Staff Demographics Report 2024-25: LA talked through the key points.

Q – Do we have a number of staff on the cusp of retirement? We do know we have a few who are nearing retirement age, but also ask staff to complete intentions surveys so that we have an idea of what they are planning in the next year or two and are able to plan.

Q – When we are aware of people planning to leave, do we train up existing staff to step into the gaps? We do try to develop people where possible, though this is not always possible in teacher roles.

7.3 Staff Pay Round 2024-25 – Teacher pay and support staff: MC gave an update. There is currently a dispute between the Sec State and teachers in sixth form colleges which were not academized and did not receive the pay rise and there is a legal challenge in process. There will be industrial action on Thurs 28 Nov, Tues 3 Dec and Wed 4 Dec. The support staff rise has not been agreed as yet.

The college can only afford to pay 2%. There is also a need to be fair across other colleges, and academized sixth forms are now in a difficult position.

7.4 Staff Engagement & Wellbeing Report: LA talked through the key points.

Q – 11 staff contributed to 41% sickness; can this be broken down further? How has the impact on students’ outcomes and colleagues been monitored and mitigated against? LA talked through the breakdown. We have recently enhanced the provision for employee assistance with increased counselling provision, we have introduced safeguarding supervision for safeguarding officers, have restarted the wellbeing and engagement group and started menopause support at work.

With support staff, work is usually absorbed with staff doing extra hours or overtime. We have tried different ways to cover long-term absence. Sometimes other staff will pick up additional hours, sometimes we will use agency staff, we have tried to increase the number of casual teaching staff on our register to provide cover. SC is doing a piece of work looking at the impact on student outcomes.

Q – Is there an opportunity for students to give feedback about their experience? Yes, there will always be feedback. Students tend not to like a new teacher who comes in and does not build relationships.

We also have mental health first aiders.

	<p>Q – Do we know how many staff have taken up the opportunities available? We know how many referrals to Occupational Health. There are likely to be reports from the employee assistance service, which is excellent value.</p> <p>Q – Is there a definition of mental health? This is a parent heading, with sub-categories such as depression, stress, etc. We do have more detailed data and managers will discuss with staff what triggers there have been and what support would be useful.</p> <p>MC noted that mental health is a key concern in the sector, with people finding life very difficult after Covid. It is often to do with things outside of the job.</p>	
<p>8. Principal’s Report/Information</p>	<p>8.1 Student Recruitment / 8.2 Student Retention / 8.3 Student Attendance 2024-25: MC gave an update. Current numbers are: applications 1174 (1090 2023-24) 272 offers, 109 acceptances. There have been three open events with one more to come in February.</p> <p>MC has been in contact with the FE Commissioner office to confirm that we will qualify for in-year funding, but we do not know how much.</p> <p>Retention for Access to level 3 is similar to 2022-23 and overall retention is slightly above the last three years. Attendance remains a concern and we are making sure we engage with students with lower attendance. The action for this committee is to monitor the in-year funding and next year’s budget.</p> <p>8.4 Premises Report: SB talked through the key points. Highlighted the change of utility provider to allow for both savings and longer-term budgeting.</p> <p>Q – How does the delay in grass football pitches going to affect hiring and revenue? The cost of making the grassed area into a full pitch, even with Sport England funding, would be over £60k to the college and this is not likely to be balanced out. The college teams can use the 3G pitch.</p> <p>The area will still need work to be used as a recreational area.</p> <p>Q – We have previously had a report around solar panels with a local cooperative – did this progress? No, when this was further investigated, the return on the investment was very minimal and there are likely to be better options for funding it and gaining bigger savings. This is not in the current year’s work plan.</p> <p>Q – Could we advertise on the site for electric vehicles as a way to create income? SB will investigate. The scheme for staff is through a named supplier, we can talk to them. This could be used for sporting facilities. Discussion around this.</p> <p>8.5 Health and Safety Accidents Annual Report 2023-24: SB talked through the key points. Noted the students using the vehicular exit to enter and leave the site.</p> <p>MC noted the number of first aid trained colleagues, and the work of the college nurse.</p> <p>Also noted a possible solution to the wedges being used for doors in the lockdown procedure</p>	

<p>9. Development College Estate</p>	<p>9.1 College Estate Development Plans: SB talked through the key points.</p> <p>Q – Do we identify the intruders we have? MC gave some examples. It is a mix of people socialising and other intents.</p> <p>Q – Do we get assistance from the police etc. to write the CIF bid? We can ask the police for a reference number and evidence that they have visited. This requires persistence with the police. Discussion around the local police and crime, and how they could potentially support with information for the bid.</p> <p>We have previously discussed using the bungalow to have Police based on site. The property is now vacant and a survey is needed to understand the extent of the works needed to make it ready for use.</p> <p>Noted that we are still waiting for the invoice from BCC for the land purchase for the access road.</p> <p>Q – Is there a timescale for the completion of the estates strategy? This will be the next piece of work after the IT strategy. There is a strategy in place that is a few years old and included the 3G pitch. Depending on the contents, we may need external support to refresh this.</p> <p>9.2 Information Technology Strategy: SB talked through the key points. This is the culmination of several meetings of the IT strategy group. It attempts to bring together a number of high-level goals and principles in terms of priorities for the coming years, as well as a framework to drive and guide investment.</p> <p>It is important to note that we do not have the budget to invest to reach a point where all IT equipment is less than five years old, as we would like. There are areas that are significantly older than that.</p> <p>There are increasing numbers of cyber-attacks on the college systems.</p> <p>We will need to make some significant spending decisions in the 2025-26 financial year to bring the IT up to date and to manage the risks.</p> <p>Q – Are we embracing AI? This falls under the plan to provide as much technology and emerging technology as we are able to. It is important to train people for the world of HE and employment. We also need to ensure that this is done in a controlled and safe way.</p> <p>There are further discussions with UWE.</p> <p>Q – What is the impact on teaching and access to resources of the current issues? The main issue has been around login times, which impinges on teaching and learning time. There is also an issue in terms of traffic on the Wi-Fi system from student devices (mobile phones) streaming, and this is creating pressure due to the filtering processes required. Some tweaks have improved this. It will improve further when we install the new firewall, and again when we replace the Wi-Fi.</p> <p>SB talked through Annex D. Whether this is all achieved will depend on funding. This will drive the direction of travel. The overall replacement cost over the five-year period is around £2m and we do not have that kind of funding, which is why we are looking at alternative sources of funding and support.</p>	
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	<p>MC noted the importance of engaging with local employers and is working with other colleges to investigate funding to ensure that we can equip students with high levels of digital skills.</p>	
<p>10. College Financial Matters</p>	<p>10.1 External Auditors’ Management Letter 2024 Audit Summary Report: The scoping letter was circulated. SB will send on the management letter which has just been received.</p> <p>There were two points highlighted: 1 staff contract was unsigned, and a formal review of the fixed asset register was recommended. We currently do a formal review of IT equipment disposal, but we have not done a formal review of the non-computer assets and this will be completed for next year.</p> <p>10.2 Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/2024 – recommend: SB talked through the draft report. Noted that this is a standard format. This is more for information than comment. It has been checked by the auditors. SB talked through some of the additional elements of the report this year.</p> <p>The final report will be approved by the Full Board.</p> <p>Discussion around any areas where the committee could assist, improve etc. SB highlighted some positive elements of the report.</p> <p>10.3 Management Accounts September 2024: SB talked through the key points. SB has been working on a proposal for a new format for management accounts that the FE commissioning team have been developing, to be trialled over the next few months.</p> <p>The year end position at the moment is 22 cash days in hand, although it is difficult to predict at this point. There will be a budget review in December that should identify any emerging overspends or issues.</p> <p>Noted some of the key risks, including the staff pay award, as well as the transport contract. There is also an increase in National Insurance costs from April.</p> <p>This does not include any additional in-year funding. Any additional funding will go back into reserves unless we decide to spend it on something else.</p> <p>SB talked through the KPIs. Noted that pay expenditure as a percentage of total income will change over the course of the year, as the funding is front loaded – it is likely to be much closer to the 70% by the year end – 72% is the forecast.</p> <p>10.4 Financial Updates (Budget, Transport Contract, Procurement Act 2023): SB talked through the key points. Highlighted the headlines from the Budget Statement, particularly the VAT refund scheme and employers NI rates.</p> <p>SB talked through the transport contract. Passenger numbers are very positive on the whole, though they fluctuate across the week. Noted the downward trend on the SB3 route. SB has been investigating this – it could be that it is popular with students of a local school, which might reduce the number of St Brendan’s students who are able to access it. The SB6 and SB4 route start at the same point, which should be changed for next year.</p>	<p>SB/LS</p>

	<p>10.5 Financial Regulations Annual Review: SB updated. There is no change to the regulations at this point but noted that they will need to be updated in the light of the Procurement Act 2023.</p> <p>10.6 ESFA Financial Health Assessment: MC talked through the key points. Noted that 2024-25 is projected as good. SB explained that the loan covenant requires our operating surplus to be 1.3 times the loan financing costs. Having not met this, we required a letter from the bank to waive not meeting this element of the covenant in order to avoid the loan being re-classified as needing to be repaid within 12 months.</p> <p>This meant we would have finished the year with a grading of Inadequate.</p>	
<p>11. Policy Review</p>	<p>Q – Are staff consulted on policies? They are discussed with union reps and added to the college Sharepoint for comments.</p> <p>The majority of the policies are minor refreshes, although the New parent and Family Policy combines five previous policies.</p> <p>Q – Is there a treasury management policy? We have not had one previously due to not investing any of our revenue. We are now doing this in order to earn interest where we can, but moving elements of funding into a savings account. We will need a policy around this.</p> <p>Noted that many policies are an enhancement on the minimum requirements. For example our policies have already allowed two requests for flexible working per year and from</p> <p>11.1 Supporting Performance and capability Policy:</p> <p>11.2 New Parent and Family Policy:</p> <p>11.3 Flexible Working Policy:</p> <p>11.4 Special Leave Policy</p> <p>11.5 Dignity and Respect at Work Policy</p> <p>All Policies approved, proposed JC, seconded RB</p>	
<p>3. Committee Annual Business</p>	<p>3.1 Election of Chair: JC Elected unopposed</p> <p>3.2 Committee Structure for 2024-25: SBR talked through the proposals for the structure for this year. The FE Commissioner has suggested that the Resources and Finance committees are separated. This will be discussed with the Strategy Committee and brought to FGB for approval.</p> <p>3.3 Committee Terms of Reference: To be discussed after the structure for the coming year is agreed.</p> <p>3.4 Committee Briefing next meeting: Staff wellbeing.</p>	

<p>12. Risk Register Review</p>	<p>12.1 Committee Risk Register Review: MC talked through key points. Updates are highlighted in red, and the dates of updates are in the final column.</p> <p>SB noted that this is an extract from the full register showing risks relevant to this committee.</p> <p>SB talked through the key changes and the reasons for them. The risk register is very much a live document and is effectively informing risk management, with new control measures being put in place.</p> <p>Discussion around risk 6.16 (potential insolvency). It is important to ensure that this is closely monitored and therefore the level of risk has not been reduced.</p> <p>12.2 Business Continuity Update: SB gave an update. There are elements of the plan that are still to be resolved to ensure that they can be deployed. SB will circulate the plan when it is complete.</p> <p><i>LA left the meeting</i></p>	<p>SB/LS</p>
<p>13. Safeguarding/ PREVENT Duty</p>	<p>13.1 Safeguarding/PREVENT – Committee Duty Review: Addressed in the discussions around the safety of the site, as well as IT related safety.</p>	
<p>14. Any Other Business</p>	<p>14.1 List Committee Items for Report to Board of Governors: Annual Report, Policy Reviews, Finances.</p>	
<p>15. Correspondence</p>	<p>None</p>	
<p>16. Next Meeting</p>	<p>Wednesday 5 March 2025 at 16:00 [Subject to confirmation]</p>	
<p>Minutes Agreed</p>	<p>Minutes of Meeting agreed as true and accurate record</p> <p>Wednesday, 5 March 2025</p> <p>Signed: _____ Committee Chair</p>	