FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 November 2025
16:30 - 18:30
Colchester Campus

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT
Ali Davies
Alison Andreas
Alison Bennett
Christopher Donovan
Lisa Blake
Mark Emerson
Martin Qwillim
Richard Block
Steve Blake

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and APPROVED from Sanjeev Arya, Gary Horne and Emma Richens.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member of the committee or staff declared a financial or other interest in the business to be discussed.

3. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4. CIC/FR/25/5/01 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2025 were received and APPROVED as a true and accurate record.

5. CIC/FR/25/5/02 - ACTION TRACKER AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The Committee NOTED that there were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

The Committee NOTED that there were no outstanding actions currently due.

6. CIC/FR/25/5/03 DFE LETTER - COLLEGE FINANCIAL FORECASTING RETURN 2025-2027

CIC/FR/25/5/03, DfE Letter - College Financial Forecasting Financial Health grading was presented by the Principal.

The document confirms the grade of Good for 2024-25 based on the CFFR submitted in July 2025. This reflects the position as shared with governors through the CFFR at the July meeting of the Board.

Governors were advised that the full dashboard, designed to provide governors with an overall picture, benchmarked to the sector, will be available in due course, and provided to the Spring Term meeting of the Committee.

7. CIC/FR/25/5/04 - MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

CIC/FR/25/5/04, Monthly Management Report, was **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

The Principal drew attention to the following inaccuracies within the financial commentary:

- Income is currently ahead of budget, contrary to what was stated.
- Non-pay costs to date should show an overspend**,** rather than an underspend, due to a number of front-loaded costs incurred at the start of the year.

Governors **ASKED** whether the current underspend on pay is expected to continue for the remainder of the year. The Principal explained that the implementation of the 5% pay award from October will result in higher pay costs for the final ten months of the year, which will reduce the underspend. It was also noted that 43 vacancies are currently being advertised, including some newly approved posts.

Governors requested that the Finance Team review the pay budget profile and confirm whether the underspend is likely to remain at year-end.

ACTION: Deputy Chief Executive to report to the Committee on whether the pay budget year-end underspend is expected to continue.

8. PROPERTY MATTERS

The Principal provided a verbal update on current property matters.

Work continues on the development of the emerging Colchester masterplan. The reconfiguration of H Block is progressing, with the building being fully converted for Art and Design provision. Plans for the EV Centre have been delayed following Anglian Water's rejection of the plans, despite the site being an existing brownfield location. The College is working with Colchester City Council and the architects to resolve the issues raised. The planning application for L Block will be submitted once the EV Centre matter has been resolved, however positive discussions have taken place with Colchester City Council regarding potential additional funding for this development.

Groundworks Phase 2: The College is in constructive discussions with a major plant hire company regarding significant sponsorship for a second groundworks training area on the College site.

Sheepen House: The College has received written pledges of financial and resource support from stakeholders. Further discussions with Essex County Council are underway before progressing to the next stage.

East Wing: Architects have been commissioned to prepare revised plans.

Spring Lane: The sale process is ongoing.

Governors **ASKED** how well prepared the College is for the introduction of devolved mayoral authorities and whether any information had been received regarding the selection process for the Further or

Higher Education representative on the mayoral authority. The Principal assured the meeting that the College will consider next steps as further information becomes available.

9. CIC/FR/25/5/05 & CIC/FR/25/5/06 - FUTURE NET ZERO STRATEGY AND CARBON REPORTING

CIC/FR/25/5/05, Future Net Zero Strategy, was **RECEIVED** and **REVIEWED.**

The Principal explained the Department for Education's requirement for colleges to develop a Future Net Zero Strategy. This new strategy enables the College to set out its current position, identify areas for improvement, and clarify future actions. Governors' comments were welcomed.

The Corporation Chair commented that the Board should be proud of the College's work in this area, highlighting the ambitious targets set and the clear commitment shown by the strategy. It was also noted that the first part of the upcoming Governor Engagement Day will focus on the College's extensive work in these areas.

Governors **ASKED** about the increase in Scope 1 emissions. The Vice Principal explained that this was primarily due to the replacement of air-conditioning equipment in one of the College data-centres. Although the new system is more efficient, it required a one-off re-gassing, which temporarily increased emissions. The natural gas usage relates mainly to the CHEFS provision and the increased student numbers. Plans are in place to replace kitchen equipment with more energy-efficient alternatives.

Governors commented on the number of tasks, in the action plan, scheduled for completion by the end of December 2025 and **ASKED** the College Executive if this was realistic in terms of deadlines. The Principal advised that the plan has been in place since 2021, and many of these tasks have been in progress for some time; therefore, the majority are expected to be underway or completed by 31 December. Governors acknowledged that this is a live, evolving document.
It was noted that the Trident Report indicates an increase in the total Scope 3 intensity growth metric per member of staff and Governors asked that an explanation for this be provided.

ACTION: Deputy Chief Executive to provide an explanation for the increase in the Trident Report's total Scope 3 intensity growth metric per member of staff.

DECISION: The Committee **APPROVED** the Future Net Zero Strategy

CIC/FR/25/5/06 – Streamlined Energy and Carbon Report: It was explained that the report, commissioned from Trident, has informed the development of the Future Net Zero Strategy.
Governors commended the College for its ongoing work and progress in this area.

10. CIC/FR/25/5/07 - STATEMENT ON MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR YEAR END 31 JULY 2025

CIC/FR/25/5/07, Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, was presented for approval ahead of being published on the College website by the end of January 2026. The Committee noted that the document had been reviewed and that no significant changes had been made since the last publication. Governors **ASKED** how the College ensures that existing suppliers are monitored for compliance. A further question was raised regarding staff training and the associated timelines. The Principal agreed to seek clarity on both points and report back at the December Board meeting.

ACTION: Principal to review how the College monitors existing suppliers for compliance with the College Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and the timelines for staff training.

Governors **ASKED** whether the College had ever raised concerns regarding any supplier and it's compliance. The Principal and Director of People and Culture confirmed they were not aware of any such cases. It was agreed that this would be verified with the Procurement Team.

ACTION: Principal to confirm with Procurement whether any reportable issues have arisen in relation to the Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking year ending 32 July 2025 and to ensure this is referenced in the coversheet for the Board.

DECISION: The Committee **AGREED** to recommend the Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking to the **BOARD FOR APPROVAL**, subject to the clarifications discussed.

11. PEOPLE AND CULTURE

11.1 CIC/FR/25/5/08 - PEOPLE AND CULTURE KEY PRIORITIES

CIC/FR/25/5/08, People and Culture Key Priorities, was presented by the Director of People and Culture.

In the two months to end October, the People and Culture team have advertised 66 vacancies and dealt with 163 cases.

There has been a keen focus on Learning and Development with a busy Environment and Sustainability Professional Development Day and Leadership Development as two of the main focuses of activity.

The Talent Recruitment Specialist tendered her resignation and the College has been successful in recruiting an equally strong candidate to replace her in the role.

The TALOS360 system continues to provide useful data on recruitment activity and application trends.

Employment relations activity remains steady, with the team progressing a number of ongoing cases.

The recent Learning and Development Day, focused on the Environment and Sustainability, received very positive feedback and will be built upon throughout the year. Additional courses continue to be introduced for staff across the College.

The DfE's Targeted Retention Initiative will now open on 2 March 2026 and close on 31 May 2026.

The search for a new Human Resources Information System (HRIS) and Payroll System is progressing. The College's requirements, as an FE provider and particularly around complex payroll, academic contracts, safeguarding, regulatory reporting, and workforce planning, mean that many mainstream systems do not offer the functionality needed. A shortlist of suitable systems has now been identified and over the past month, the team has engaged with multiple suppliers, attended detailed demonstrations, and assessed each platform against operational, compliance, and strategic criteria. The evaluation is now being refined ahead of the tender process, which will formally launch in December.

Discussions are ongoing with the Digital Team regarding the potential trial of automated note-taking tools for staff meetings.

Governors commented on the usefulness of the report and the quality of the data provided. They welcomed the reduction in the number of "hard-to-fill" roles and thanked staff involved in improving recruitment outcomes.

Governors **ASKED** for further information on the HR and Payroll systems under consideration and whether any would link to the finance system. It was explained that many systems are not sufficiently advanced to meet both HR and payroll needs, but four options have been shortlisted for further review. In relation to savings, Governors **ASKED** how the business case would be evidenced. It was noted that tools such as Otter AI could generate savings that exceed their cost, and that a project on organisational AI is underway and will be brought to a future meeting.

Governors **ASKED** whether colleges collaborate when procuring specialist systems to reduce costs. It was confirmed that JISC negotiates digital contracts across HE and FE, and the Vice Principal represents the College on that board. However, collaboration is less common for bespoke systems due to limited supplier interest, though opportunities are pursued where available.

Governors **ASKED** about managing the challenges associated with an increasingly diverse, and in particular younger, workforce. It was reported that a recruitment pack is issued to all applicants and an onboarding pack to all new staff, outlining expectations. Academic staff undertake a "New to Teaching at CI" programme, and all new employees attend an induction day.

The Principal noted that the workforce is becoming younger, and said that the College is well positioned to understand and support younger staff because their core business is working with younger people. Hybrid working remains one of the most requested benefits across the sector which can not always be accommodated but all flexible working requests are considered on an individual basis.

11.2 CIC/FR/25/5/09 PEOPLE AND CULTURE DASHBOARD REPORT

CIC/FR/25/5/09, People and Culture Dashboard report, was **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

The Committee discussed staff turnover and **ASKED** about the distinction between people leaving for another job and better career opportunities in the reporting. It was explained that these categories reflect responses provided through exit surveys, and that the categories could be improved to distinguish between reasons for leaving and where staff have gone. Whilst 'another job' could be a reason for leaving, there was something which caused an employee to seek another job. While face-to-face exit interviews are offered, an online option is also available for staff who prefer it.

The Principal welcomed the opportunity to review the information collected to ensure that the College receives meaningful, actionable data. Governors also commented on the age profile of leavers and whether any particular age group is disproportionately represented. It was commented that better career opportunities is a disappointing reason for departure and would be explored further. The Committee recognised that some level of turnover is normal and healthy.

12. POLICY REVIEW

12.1 CIC/FR/25/5/10 - UCC STUDENT CONTRACT FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES 2026-27

CIC/FR/25/5/10, UCC Student Contract for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes 2026-27, was presented for approval.

DECISION: The Committee **APPROVED** the UCC Student Contract for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes 2026-27.

12.2 CIC/FR/25/5/11 - BULLYING AND HARASSMENT (INCORPORATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT) POLICY

CIC/FR/25/5/11, Bullying and Harassment (incorporating sexual harassment) policy.

Governors **QUESTIONED** the wording relating to the frequency with which training is provided. The Director of People and Culture agreed to review and clarify this.

ACTION: Director of People and Culture to review the wording regarding the College's commitment to training around the Bullying and Harassment (incorporating sexual harassment) policy.

DECISION: The Committee **APPROVED** the Bullying and Harassment (incorporating Sexual Harassment) Policy, subject to the amendments discussed.

13. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Committee agreed that the following items should be reported to the Board:

- Monthly Management Report
- Update on property-related matters
- Future Net Zero Strategy
- People and Culture update
- Approval of policies
- Recommendation of the Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

14. MEETING DATES

The Committee noted the remaining 2025-26 meeting dates:

5 March 2026
12 May 2026
2 July 2026

15. PART II

Circulation restricted to Independent Governors, and Members of the College Executive

Recorded as Part II minutes.