



## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Chair – Shona MacDougall

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 4.15 pm via Microsoft Teams

### Committee Members

Chris Alliston, Independent Board Member

Derek Lewis, Chair of the Board of Management

Lydia Rohmer, Principal & CEO

Shona MacDougall, Committee Chair & Senior Independent Board Member

### Also, Present

Debbie Miller, Vice Principal (Operations) & SRO North Highland

Derek Bond, Derek Bond, Interim Vice Principal – Resources & Enterprise (CFO)

Doug Rattray,

Ellen MacLean, Board Secretary

Tracy Kerr, Head of Performance & Planning

### 1.Quorum & Apologies

Apologies: Alex Macdonald, Independent Board Member

**The meeting was quorate.**

### 2. Declarations of interest

**No declarations of interest were made.**

### 3. Minutes from previous meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**Approved**

### 4. Action Tracker

**Reviewed**

## 5.0 Confidential item

### **Withheld**

1646 DM left

1646 DL rejoined.

1648 DM rejoined.

## 5.2 External Audit – NWH 2023/24 Accounts Update

where if agreed, will thereafter be presented at full Board of Management.

**Noted** The CFO and KM advised that Deloitte had turned their focus to completing the NWH 2023/24 Accounts. The finance team had asked for completion of these by end March 2025, however Deloitte had advised that completion by the end of April 2024 (Easter break) would be their achievable date. The NWH Finance team had been under a lot of pressure dealing with multiple enquiries from Deloitte but this work required to be prioritised.

The Chair advised that the NWH 2023/204 accounts will require scrutiny from both F&GP and A&RM Committees pre being considered at a joint meeting of both Committees

## 5.5 e-Sgoil AY 2023/24 retrospective invoice

The Chair queried why a retrospective invoice had been presented to this Committee.

The CFO explained that NWH subcontracted out Gaelic teaching in Stornoway, The Subcontractors had been slow in providing their invoice. The CFO received first sight of this invoice approximately one week ago. The VP Academic has been asked for projected costs for next year (2025/26).

### **Approved**

## 6.0 Confidential item

### **Withheld**

### **Noted**

## 7.0 Financial policies for review

KM advised that there had been a college wide drive to bring the approximately 20 legacy finance policies up to date and that there would be the creation of an additional few policies for NWH to be fully compliant. KM explained how he will group these policies for approval through F&GP Committee for onward to Board. The first batch would come to F&GP Committee in May 2025 for onward to Board in June 2025.

The Committee discussed and noted KM's approach and plan, agreeing on a degree of flexibility. The F&GP Committee can expect the first batch of policies to come for approval in May 2025.

**Noted**

8.0 NWH Estates strategy review

The CFO referred to a very detailed document produced by Doug Rattray which still required some work with assistance from the newly appointed Management Accountant. The document was expected to be completed for presentation to F&GP Committee in May 2025 and June 2025 Board of Management.

The chair recognised that the current document was required to be of a higher level with a strategic directional plan, supported by a delivery document and an operational document, linking into the overall strategic aims of the college.

**Action: A draft of the completed document is expected for F&GP Committee at end of May 2025.**

9.0 Confidential item

**Withheld**

**Noted**

10.0 ROV Update

The CFO advised that NWH had signed a legal contract with Drift Offshore (DO). DO provide the course material and the trainers. Media PR is underway to announce the partnership and availability of ROV training. The market has remained buoyant. DO had also been providing good contacts. Introductory courses would not require any extra spending by NWH at this time.

**Noted**

11.0 Capital Projects Doug Rattray (DR)

The Chair recognised the successful additional grant funding received by NWH through DR's applications and work (as per special F&GP Committee December 2024)

DR gave his update. Stornoway E block roof had a survey completed in November 2024; the recommendation was a suite of repairs. Due to weather conditions over the winter, only immediate temporary pairs were completed with permanent repair work only now beginning.

The Curtain wall for Fort William had secured £267k SFC funding.

The boiler replacement for Stornoway campus options are, replace like for like, or GPSED funding from Government could be applied for lower carbon emissions (this project went on pause last year and has not reopened, it may not until after April 2025).

There may be a possibility of funding through CNES as the campus boiler is also supplying the Castle. If the money is not spent on the boiler this year, it could be spent elsewhere.

CA asked if the boiler were not to be replaced now, was there a danger of catastrophic failure – what is plan B?

DR advised that a single contractor could replace the boiler as soon as possible, there were 2 boilers, so could function on 1 boiler if necessary.

### **Noted**

#### 12.0 Marketing and communications strategies

The CFO spoke to the paper produced by Helen Aird. Feedback via email was requested from this Committee over the next few weeks regarding its structure and content, prior to presentation at March Board of Management.

The Chair commented that the document had been well presented and constructed and as a basis for a strategy was very acceptable, though needed to be built on.

### **Endorsed with comments to follow from this Committee via email**

#### 13.0 Strategic projects overview

##### 13.1 NWH Energy summary for Board March 2025 (Debbie Miller)

The Chair and Committee complemented the contents of this report.

### **Noted**

##### 13.2 Peatlands summary for Board March 2025

The Chair and Committee complemented the contents of this report.

### **Noted**

##### 13.3 Islands growth deal

Joe MacPhee (JM) advised that a lot of new equipment and furniture were now on Stornoway Campus and that final expenditure was required to be completed by the end of March 2025. A formal opening had been scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025. The Creed Hydrogen project was going well, with the curriculum team keen to build on the curriculum offer to develop a further PDA. There was growing interest in hydrogen nationally, TalEntEd is due to start in April 2025, with a pan island-based approach.

Recruitment of two staff was underway for work-based learnings with new curriculum offers for the market.

The Chair, Principal and CFO acknowledged all the work and excellent project management of JM, delivering grant funding on time and on budget. These projects had delivered high profile and significant success.

Both JM and DM papers showed the range of opportunities available on our doorstep.

**Noted**

1825 DL left

14.0 Internal / external grants for approval (DM)

A Caithness grant is available of £80k to update the café and canteen in Thurso, along with improvements to the library. The request to this Committee is for acceptance of the grant as it is over £50k.

**Approved**

14.1 Harris & Barra Unearthed

A verbal report was given to the Committee by Debbie Miller pending a paper to be produced for circulation.

The Chair and Committee agreed subject to scrutiny of the paper and convening of a Special F&GP Committee if required.

**Approved subject to scrutiny of paper to be produced by Debbie Miller**

1825 DL back in

15.0 Confidential item

Withheld

**Noted**

16.0 AOB

1. Enquiries – departmental budgets and members expenses process

The Chair & CFO agreed to discuss the question offline and to issue a written note to the requestor.

**Meeting closed 1834**

