

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
held on 21 November 2025 at 09:30  
at the Sparsholt College Campus**

**<sup>1</sup>PRESENT** J Emm (SCS) (to minute 221); N Hopkins (E) (Chair); J Milburn (P); A Neal (E); P Jordan (E); N Shorter (E)

In attendance: S Evans, Head of Finance & Procurement (to minute 221)  
S Grant, Chief Operating Officer (COO)  
E Illman, Interim Head of HR (minutes 188 to 194)  
J Payne, Director of Estates (minutes 195 to 221)  
N Heslop, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)  
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance (HCG)

**WELCOME**

156. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. There were no apologies received.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

157. There were no new interests to declare. The Board's Register of Interests records members who hold (unremunerated) directorships of the college's subsidiary companies.

**MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

158. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025 (Parts 1 and 2) be confirmed as a correct record with minute 129 corrected to record that the grant bid was for £40k (not £70k).
159. Free school meals (83/25): The COO reported that as part of the DfE funding assurance audit (PFA) which had commenced in August, the DfE's auditors had directed the college that daily reconciliation of free school meals and attendance was required. The COO had written to the DfE to set out the difficulties and administrative burden which would result.
160. Local Government Pension Scheme (85/25): The CFO reported ongoing discussions with the Department of Education (DfE) of a potential change in the FE guarantee policy rules in relation to the college and Sparsholt College Services Ltd (SCS).
161. Healthcheck KPIs (90/25): The Principal reported that the awareness raising campaign about the importance of reporting accident near misses had seen a noticeable increase in the numbers of near misses being reported, with more reported at this stage of the academic year than had been reported for the whole of the previous year. 'Near miss' data would be added to the health and safety KPIs in the Healthcheck report to give the Board regular oversight.
162. Staff pay award (105/25): The Principal confirmed that the SLT continued to plan a staff pay award in line with the 2025-26 budget forecast but would need to assess the impact of the increase to the statutory National Living Wage and any other relevant factors from the

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<sup>1</sup> (E) = External; (SCS S) = Sparsholt College Services Ltd Staff; P = Principal

Chancellor's 2025 Autumn Budget before finalising a recommendation to the Board in December.

163. Property strategy (129 & 133/25): The COO reported that the college has been awarded a £30k grant from Winchester City Council's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and that management was exploring access to further funding to support agri-tech. The Principal alerted the committee to uncertainties in relation to DfE capital funding, explaining that there was a lengthy process envisaged for the DfE to review the outcome of conditions surveys so grants were likely to be either delayed or based on a formula which did not taken the latest surveys into account.
164. The committee noted that the resolutions of the committee had been implemented and that there were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **HEALTHCHECK**

165. The committee had received and reviewed the latest College Group Healthcheck Report (2025-26 - Issue 02).
166. The committee noted that the financial health and employee related key performance indicators were all assessed as 'green'.

## **FINANCE**

### Management Accounts

167. The committee had received and reviewed the latest College Group management accounts (to 31 October 2025).
168. The CFO drew the committee's attention to key variations against budget at this point of the year, explaining the reasons and implications and confirming that the year-end forecast remained in line with budget expectations.
169. The committee noted that the college's adjusted current ratio had fallen marginally below the FE Commissioner's benchmark and was assured by discussion with the CFO that the underlying factors were understood by college management and resulted from careful strategic decision-making. The CFO confirmed that the financial plan should enable the gap to be closed by year end.
170. A member raised the update on staff costs, querying the SLT budget line and the approach taken to agency requirements and associated VAT, and the CFO explained that the SLT budget includes a vacancy provision for the whole Group and an allowance for the Group pay review changes in the second half of the year. Members understood the approach taken but emphasised that, if there were major strategic changes and/or financial issues arising, the committee would be likely to require more granular reporting.
171. A member highlighted the report of strong milk sales as the driver for the farm income being ahead of budget and cautioned that milk prices were expected to be reduced nationally from December.
172. The CFO reported that he would be undertaking a review of the format of the management accounts, for example making more use of tables and developing the traffic light system to indicate direction of travel. Members endorsed this approach.

### Financial Health

173. The committee had received and noted for assurance the letter from the DfE to the Principal of 4 November 2025, confirming the College's financial health grade for both the

2024-25 outturn forecast and the 2025/26 budget year as Good following review of the College Financial Forecasting Return.

174. The committee discussed the reasons for the change from Outstanding to Good and was satisfied that this did not present a strategic risk to the college.

#### Financial Statements

175. The committee had received the draft report and accounts for the year ended 31 July 2025, together with a commentary from the CFO.
176. The CFO reported that Buzzacott had presented the external auditor's Post-audit Management Report to the Audit Committee and expected to give an unqualified audit opinion and confirmed that the report and financial statements complied with regulatory, funding and accountancy standards requirements. The bank loan covenants were met and the DfE financial health grade was expected to be confirmed as Good.
177. The CFO explained that there were some minor updates to be made to the annual report and financial statements prior to submission to the Board.
178. Members sought additional information about the approach to providing a detailed description of risk and controls, which was confirmed to be on the advice of the auditors, and to the description of future prospects, noting that the number of FE agriculture students had increased, albeit that there were challenges for the agriculture sector as a whole, and that the introduction of a new viticulture offer was aligned to skills needs in the vineyard/ tourism sector in the region.
179. The committee commended the work of the teams involved in producing the annual report and financial statements.
180. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025.

#### Capital Expenditure

181. The committee had received and reviewed the report of the CFO and Head of Finance & Procurement providing a statement of capital expenditure in 2024-25 and confirmation of processes to obtain value for money in the acquisition of assets. It was noted that additional information to complete Appendix 2 of the report would be circulated separately for the committee's information.
182. The committee noted the total capital expenditure during 2024-25 of £11.2m was significantly higher than in past years due to the number of major capital and grant funded projects and commended college management for the successful delivery of projects and management of budgets.
183. Responding to the Chair's challenge, the CFO summarised for the assurance of the committee the strategies and processes in place to ensure that the priorities for allocating capital spend were appropriately identified. This included the college-wide budget planning process and development of the property strategy investment matrices, informed by condition surveys and stakeholder feedback, as well as the strategic plan priorities and risk management.
184. The committee noted that the CFO was giving consideration to ongoing capital expenditure reporting to the committee and whether any changes would be beneficial to the current reporting regime.

### Modern Slavery

185. The committee had received the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025 drafted by the CFO for review.
186. The CFO highlighted the activities undertaken to identify, prevent and mitigate the risk of modern slavery or human trafficking in the college's operations and supply chains, confirming the risks around outsourced services and contractors were understood and actions had been taken to mitigate these. Members emphasised the importance of due diligence processes and being vigilant about new risks arising due to new areas of activity.
187. **Resolved** – the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025 be recommended to the Board for approval and publication.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

188. The committee had received and reviewed the report of the Principal and Interim Head of HR updating on HR matters, together with the HR policies which had been reviewed.
189. Members reviewed and discussed a range of matters, including employee relations, the staff pay award review, the latest position in relation to staff vacancies and the headline findings of a survey by the AoC about recruitment and retention incentives used in the FE sector, an update on the employment legislation landscape and the timing of changes being introduced by the Employment Rights Bill, and employee engagement activities.
190. Responding to a member's question about employment contracts and probation periods, the Interim Head of HR confirmed that contracts would require review as a result of employment law changes being introduced and undertook to consider whether a separate policy on probation would be beneficial.
191. The committee noted that the college had signed up to the government's Disability Confident employer scheme and discussed accessibility challenges relating to the topography of the Sparsholt campus, noting that the Director of Estates was leading work to deliver accessible routes for a range of disabilities on both campuses.
192. The committee reviewed and discussed the headline analysis of the outcomes of the staff survey undertaken in June, in particular the review by the Interim Head of HR of the participation rate and how to raise this in the future, and endorsed the plan to focus the survey on the staff experience and seek feedback on the two learner related questions through other mechanisms going forward.
193. The committee reviewed the proposed updates to HR policies and agreed that a small correction to the Criminal Records Policy and that further revisions would be made to the Staff Recruitment Policy to respond to feedback from one of the members before the policies were presented to the Board.
194. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the following policies with the further updates outlined in minute 193:
  - a. Criminal Records Policy
  - b. Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
  - c. Staff Recruitment Policy
  - d. Staff Grievance Policy
  - e. Staff Disciplinary Policy

## PROPERTY & SUSTAINABILITY

### Property Strategy

195. The committee had received and reviewed the report of the Principal on progress with delivering the Property Strategy to 2026-27, together with the draft Property Strategy 2025-30 and updated staff and student accommodation policies.
196. The committee noted that the Future Skills Centre extension on the Andover campus had been completed and was fully operational, providing excellent learning facilities for the growing Construction department.
197. The Director of Estates gave a detailed progress report on the small works capital projects programme and an update on delivery of infrastructure and other works funded through a range of grants to evidence the care and expertise with which the projects were being planned and delivered to comply with grant conditions and to support the college's strategic plan and operations.
198. The committee recognised the challenges presented maintaining and developing the campuses, in particular the scale and complexity of a land-based estate, and that this case continued to be made to the DfE. Ensuring health and safety and delivering a positive student experience were paramount. The change of policy in the last FE capital conditions grant round to allow spend on student residential accommodation had been welcomed.
199. The Principal updated the committee on the development of the new property strategy for 2025-2030, summarising the further work which would be undertaken before presenting an updated version of the strategy to the Board, including a prioritisation exercise to be undertaken by the SLT.
200. Members discussed a number of points, including the need for flexibility to respond to future funding opportunities, the potential for development of the Andover campus as part of the wider Andover town redevelopment and the future of The Lights theatre, and the approach taken to assessing the condition of the estate in the strategy ahead of the DfE's condition survey report being issued.
201. The committee was satisfied to note the progress and to endorse the further work outlined ahead of presentation of the property strategy to the Board.
202. The Principal and Director of Estates introduced the updated Staff Accommodation Policy, noting that this was supported by new staff occupancy agreements and a revised staff handbook. Members discussed a number of points and noted that the CFO would further review the policy before it was presented to the Board to ensure compliance with tax rules.
203. **Resolved** – that the Board be recommended to approve the updated Staff Accommodation Policy with the additional revisions to be finalised by the CFO.
204. The COO introduced the updated Student Accommodation Policy, explaining the changes to advise parents of 16-18 year olds of their obligation to monitor use of meal cards and report any concerns, and confirming the college's right to refuse to allocate accommodation.
205. Responding to a member's question, the COO undertook to confirm that parents had access to their student's meal card account.
206. **Resolved** – that the Board be recommended to approve the updated Student Accommodation Policy.

### Sustainability

207. The committee had received and reviewed the report of the Principal on progress with the Sustainability Strategy and action plan, including the annual Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) and utilities data monitoring.
208. The committee noted that the college had made progress towards its overarching ambition to be net zero for scope 1 and 2 by 2030, however, it would be challenging to make further significant progress due to growth in student and staff numbers, unless opportunities could be identified to support investment in green energy solutions for heating in order to reduce LPG and fuel oil usage. The college continued to work with its suppliers in relation to scope 3 at the point of tender.

### **SPARSHOLT COLLEGE SERVICES**

209. The committee had received and noted the latest Sparsholt College Services Limited (SCS) management accounts (to 30 April 2025) for information.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

210. The Chair noted that it was A Neal's last committee meeting prior to the end of his term of office as a governor and thanked for his valuable contributions to work of the committee.
211. Confidential matters were recorded separately.
212. The meeting ended at 12:45.

***Approved: Resources Committee Meeting 12 March 2026***