

## **Item: 11**

**Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 7 June 2023.**

**Orkney College – Proposed Operating Principles.**

**Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider adopting a set of operating principles for Orkney College.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That Orkney College is in the unique position of being the only college in Scotland fully owned by a local authority.

#### **2.2.**

That Orkney College, as part of the Council, has two distinct relationships with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), namely:

- It is one of the 12 Academic Partners of the UHI, collegially delivering Higher Education and Research.
- It is assigned, by statute, to UHI, which is the Regional Strategic Body, receiving funding from the Scottish Funding Council which is then allocated to Orkney College for both Further and Higher Education provision.

#### **2.3.**

That the Orkney College Business Review Member/Officer Working Group recommended that a set of operating principles be adopted to clarify the relationships, referred to above, and their implications for the day-to-day working of the College.

#### **2.4.**

That, should the draft Orkney College Operating Principles, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved, the College Management Team will use the Operating Principles to guide their work with staff in the Council, with UHI and external partners.

**It is recommended:**

## **2.5.**

That the Orkney College Operating Principles, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

## **3. Background**

### **3.1.**

Orkney College is in the unique position of being the only college in Scotland fully owned by a local authority.

### **3.2.**

Orkney College, as part of the Council, has two distinct relationships with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI):

- It is one of the 12 Academic Partners of the UHI, collegially delivering Higher Education and Research.
- It is assigned, by statute, to UHI, which is the Regional Strategic Body, receiving funding from the Scottish Funding Council which is then allocated to Orkney College for both Further and Higher Education provision.

### **3.3.**

The Orkney College Business Review Short-Life Working Group identified the lack of a shared understanding among Council officers and elected members regarding the status of Orkney College as a barrier to the future development of the College. There is a common misconception that the College operates in a manner similar to a private business, rather than as a service of the Council, which can lead to unhelpful, negative language and perceptions of the College.

### **3.4.**

The Deputy Principal Academic and Research, UHI, was co-opted onto the Orkney College Business Review Short-Life Working Group. The University Secretary of UHI participated in the session which agreed the Operating Principles submitted for consideration. Both representatives from UHI provided invaluable guidance and assistance in developing the proposals submitted for consideration.

## **4. Orkney College Operating Principles**

### **4.1.**

The draft Orkney College Operating Principles, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, aim to provide clarity on the Council's ownership of the College, and the relationships between the College and UHI, in a succinct form for all those who work for and with the College, both within the Council and in external partnerships.

## **4.2.**

It is expected that widely shared understanding of the College's status as part of the Council will support positive regard for the College's ability to play its part in delivering the Council's strategic policies. This, in turn, will give confidence to the Senior Leadership Team of the College to include in the College's strategic plan initiatives which will need investment in the developmental phase but are forecast to ultimately bring income to the Council and benefit to the people of Orkney.

## **4.3.**

The draft Orkney College Operating Principles provide clarity for all those who work for or with the College as to:

- The Council's ownership of the College.
- Governance of the College by the Council.
- The College's relationship with UHI.
- Strategic planning.
- Financial monitoring.

## **5. Links to Council Plan**

### **5.1.**

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Strengthening our communities.

### **5.2.**

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority C3 Development of learning provision and pathways.

## **6. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan**

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Recovery.

## **7. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **8. Legal Aspects**

There are no legal aspects arising directly from this report.

## **9. Contact Officers**

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## **10. Appendix**

Appendix 1: Draft Orkney College Operating Principles.

# **Appendix 1 - Orkney College Operating Principles**

## **1. Orkney College as an Entity**

Orkney College is an entity whose assets and liabilities are owned by Orkney Islands Council (“the Council”) and the Council is the employer of all Orkney College staff.

The college is not a separate legal entity from the Council, and cannot therefore hold property or enter into contracts in its own name.

The governing body of Orkney College, being the Council, is assigned in statute (Assigned Colleges (University of the Highlands And Islands) Order 2014) to UHI as the Regional Strategic Body (RSB). As RSB, UHI distributes funds to Orkney College for Further Education and Higher Education and holds it accountable for the use of those funds.

## **2. Orkney College Governance**

The Governing Body of Orkney College is the Council, with a structure befitting the requirements for Local Government Committees and enabling effective direction of the College.

## **3. Orkney College as a Partner in UHI**

Orkney College, as part of the Council, is an Academic Partner within UHI and, together with the Council, takes a positive approach to making the Partnership Agreement with UHI work to its best extent for all parties concerned.

Collaboration with other universities beyond UHI is encouraged where this provides additionality.

## **4. Orkney College Strategic Planning process**

### **a. Governance**

The College Governing Body, the Council, in partnership with UHI determines the overall direction for the College, taking account of the needs of the communities the College serves.

### **b. Management**

Based on the overall direction determined by the College Governing Body in partnership with UHI, the College Management Team devises the strategic plan based on viability, desirability and practicality, and implements it.

In addition to development initiatives, the Orkney College Strategic Plan includes annual agreements about which areas of the curriculum to increase/decrease and a Planned Capital Improvement and Maintenance Programme for estates and equipment, agreed with the Council and taking into account RSB requirements.

## **5. Orkney College Financial Monitoring**

For governance and operational purposes, the Orkney College Management Team focuses on the financial year August to July, based on the main funder, UHI’s financial year. Monthly reports will be shared with the College Governing Body, alongside those produced on the Council April to March financial year, to allow informed scrutiny of performance against budget both by the Council and the RSB.