

**Open Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held via Microsoft Teams
27 January 2020 at 17:00**

Present

Carole Stott (CS) Chair
 Dan Ball (DB) Student Governor
 Paul Blenkinsopp (PB) Staff Governor
 Victoria Downing-Burn (VDB)
 Erica Draisey (ED)
 Lisa Ford (LF)
 Andy Furse (AF)
 Mike Oram (MO)
 Laurel Penrose (LP) Principal & CEO
 Ian Tavener (IT)
 Gary Waylen (GW)
 Neil Wilson (NW)
 Julian Young (JY)

In attendance

Jayne Davis (JD) Deputy Principal & Deputy CEO
 Paul Fletton (PF) Interim Finance Director
 Kate Hobbs (KH) Assistant Principal (Education & Training)
 Anne Roberts (AR) Head of Governance (Secretariat)

Attendance: 93%

ITEM
1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence
The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2021 and welcomed Kate Hobbs, Assistant Principal. Apologies for absence were given from Jenny Williams.
AF, on behalf of the Board, congratulated Carole on the award of an OBE in the New Year Honours List in recognition of her services to education.
2. Declarations of Interest
The Chair in relation to her membership of the Ofsted Board and the now disbanded Ofsted Recovery Committee (in relation to 5.1 and 6.1.1).
3. Confidentiality of Items
The Board agreed that papers relating to 6.2.2, 6.3.4, 7, 8.2 and item 10 were confidential and these are marked as (C).
4. Minutes
4.1 Minutes – 16 December 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 were considered and approved as an accurate record. These would be signed by the Chair by electronic signature following the meeting.

4.2 Actions and Matters Arising

There were no matters arising. The Board considered the action register. It was agreed to review the Equality and Diversity Report in February and to add draft Digital Strategy for review in February (following CQWG) and an update on underperforming areas (in March). All other actions had been completed, were on this agenda or scheduled for a future agenda.

4.3 Outcome of Written Resolutions

The Chair thanked all governors for their prompt response to the two written resolutions, as set out in the paper. The timing of these had been necessary to achieve the required approvals from the bank and the external auditors in advance of the approval of the financial statements. It was reported that both resolutions had been approved by all governors.

5. STRATEGY

5.1 Principal's update

LP reported on the following:

- *Asymptomatic testing.* The Government had issued advice on asymptomatic testing just before Christmas and plans had taken place for its organisation. Advice had since changed due to lockdown. The College had undertaken a pilot and was now testing students and staff who came into college. As of 25th January, 42 tests had been completed. The testing was an additional burden on staff and more volunteers would be needed once the College re-opened fully. Government funding for this was not yet clear.

The Board thanked LP, JD and their staff for organising this in challenging circumstances and timescales.

- *Lockdown.* The College had re-opened on 4 January 2021 when a further lockdown was imposed. The College remained open for vulnerable students and the uptake was higher than during the first lockdown. Support mechanisms for staff and students had been arranged. The Prime Minister had just announced that colleges would not be re-opening immediately after half-term and this would likely shift to 8 March.
- *Exams.* The Government had announced that A Level and GCSE exams would not be taking place this summer. As there was no announcement about BTECs, these exams had taken place on 4th and 5th January. With the announcement of lockdown, the remainder had been cancelled on health & safety grounds. The March BTEC exams have also been cancelled. The equity of the assessment process was being scrutinised nationally and Ofqual guidance was expected mid-February.
- *Skills for Jobs White paper.* This had been issued last week and had a large focus on FE and skills as part of the government levelling up

agenda. The paper would be an agenda item at the February strategy day.

Members asked about teacher assessments and the need for the College to have early sight of what was required in order to plan and provide clarity to students and staff. This was a key decision for those students for whom a license to practice was needed.

5.2 People Strategy

JD presented the draft People Strategy which had been circulated to members for comment. This had been put together with input from SMT, the HR team and discussion with VDB, the HR link Governor. Members were asked for their input in to whether it was a clear strategy for staff to engage with.

During discussion, members confirmed that the Strategy was clearly articulated and there was a clear synergy with the Self-Assessment Report. The Strategy clearly showed how staff groups fitted in and included staff engagement. It could possibly be amplified further by an equality, diversity and inclusion piece in the value aspect. Members asked that reference to external partners and organisations be included. They also asked for timelines to show progress made in 2020/21 before the next review. An action plan would provide assurance in relation to monitoring progress, alongside key waypoints.

It was noted that there would be a KPI for staff satisfaction, following the staff survey and that student outcomes would be presented in the Quality dashboard. Members asked how success would be measured as this was a challenging aspect and was part of the conversation between employer and staff. The Strategy should make it clear that it was a two-way partnership in terms of what the Strategy articulated it could do to develop and support staff and what the expectations were from staff in terms of their responsibility to deliver employable students and enhance their professional development and well-being.

LP stated that each year a road map was produced of the key areas to action the Strategy and this would come through the Medium-Term Business Plan. JD confirmed that a Gantt chart and HR dashboard would be produced. Both of these would enable the Board to scrutinise and monitor the action plan and these would be brought to the February Board meeting for consideration. **ACTION: LP/JD**

Members thanked SMT for the excellent Strategy which had been long awaited, was comprehensive and which clearly linked with the College's Strategic Plan. It had sufficient detail to give the Corporation oversight of HR plans for 2020-2025 and the overall ambition was clear.

6. SCRUTINY

6.1 Curriculum & Quality

6.1.1 Self-Assessment Report

ED, Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Working Group (CQWG), confirmed that the report had been considered in detail by CQWG in January and thanked those governors who had attended the Self-Assessment Review meetings.

JD presented the report which was aligned to the Strategic Plan. The format had changed slightly to align with Ofsted criteria and to make the report easier to read. The staff profile data was missing but would be added once work had been done to the HR system. Members discussed the report and commented that it was an excellent and comprehensive document.

ED stated that the report was useful for governors' awareness of how judgements were made against the benchmarks set (based on results from 2018/19) and to show the strengths and weaknesses of the College. It was important to note that the report was based on last year's activity. Destination data was being worked on by the Assistant Principal (Learner Journey) and was crucial to inform an understanding of employment of students. KH and her team were undertaking excellent work to further improved education and training. The report would be sent to Ofsted.

Members commented on the Leadership and Management section and workforce planning and welcomed the inclusion of governors' engagement and visibility which had improved. Members confirmed that the report reflected the College they knew and linked well to the People Strategy. They asked whether the previous Ofsted rating should be included to show the direction of travel. It was agreed to add this to the gradings at the front.
ACTION: JD to add this and the staff data, for circulation in February.

Members applauded the honesty and transparency of the report which gave the Corporation sufficient detail to confirm the major areas for improvement in 2020/21. They thanked JD and the APs for the realistic and positive assessment of the College despite all the challenges. They asked that the Board's thanks be passed on to all the staff involved in the reviews.

The Board APPROVED the Self-Assessment Report.

6.1.2 Quality Improvement Plan

JD outlined the College's key areas for improvement and reported that the Plan had been discussed by CQWG. Members considered that the Plan provided sufficient detail to provide them with oversight of progress and approved the plan. The detail would be reviewed by CQWG in March.

6.2 Members Report and Financial Statements 2019-20

6.2.1 Annual Audit Committee Report

JY, as Chair of Audit Committee, reported that there had been no substantial changes to the report since the Committee met in November. He thanked the Committee for their work in 2019/20 and for the clear report of a positive year. He recommended that a tender process be undertaken for the external audit work in 2021/22 as the current auditors were now in their fifth year.

ACTION: PF

The Board were assured of the activity of the Audit Committee and APPROVED the annual Audit Committee report and the appointment of the internal and external auditors for 2020/21.

6.2.2 External Audit Completion Report (C)

PF presented the external audit completion report which had been reviewed in detail by the Audit Committee in November. The outstanding items in relation to the depreciated replacement cost valuation and the sign off of

the extended bank loans (now merged into one loan) had been completed and the financial position and audit opinion remained unchanged. Members noted the report.

6.2.3 Report and Financial Statements 2019/20 and Letters of Representation

PF reported that the auditors had reviewed the members report and financial statements 2019/20 in detail and that they had confirmed their approval. Both the Audit Committee and the Finance & Estates Working Group (FEWG) had reviewed the report and accounts. Members considered the detailed commentary and the financial statements and congratulated the College, the SMT and executive for the excellent report and their achievement in what had been a very difficult year. The report showed how well the College was doing financially and how it was preparing for the future.

The Board considered the basis of the going concern position in the context of the budget re-forecast and the going concern assessment made in November. The Board reconfirmed the College as a going concern and APPROVED the financial statements, authorising the Chair and LP, as Accounting Officer, to sign these.

The Board also APPROVED the letters of representation and authorised the Chair to sign these.

6.3 Finance and Estates

6.3.1 Bank Loan

PF confirmed that the bank loan had been approved and executed and there was nothing further to report.

6.3.2 Revised Budget 2020-21

GW, Chair of FEWG, confirmed that the Group had undertaken a detailed review of the reforecast budget in the context of the new lockdown. PF confirmed that this detailed reforecast was broadly consistent with the indicative reforecast generated for the going concern review. Overall, the College was forecast to come in with a modest surplus, consistent with the budget. The College's cash position forecast was very strong. He confirmed that the R04 funding return had been submitted and used to inform this review supported by discussions with key operational managers to ensure a robust process around revenue generation.

Members asked about the apprenticeships funding and were assured that the majority of these would be put on the system to generate funding. This was a challenging area, not least due to changes for small companies needing to register on the digital apprenticeship service. Members commented that the re-forecast seemed prudent and that the current environment was still uncertain. The Board thanked PF for his work in generating the reforecast.

The Board APPROVED the reforecast budget 2020/21.

6.3.3 Management Accounts

The Board considered the management accounts up to November 2020 and the accompanying finance report which had been reviewed by FEWG.

The Board APPROVED the management accounts.

6.3.4 T-level Procurement (C)
The Board considered the recommendation from FEWG for the process of procuring the contractor for undertaking the refurbishment associated with the College's T Level implementation. The risks were discussed and, after due consideration, the Board APPROVED the recommendation.
7. Risk Register and Covid-19 risk assessment (C)
JD provided an update on the Strategic Risk Register and Covid-19 risk assessment and the changes in risk ratings. One had increased (due to a change of H&S manager rather than there being any increased risk in this area). Members asked about any risk to delays in the capital building works, particularly in relation to T levels starting September 2021 and potential knock-on effects on recruitment and revenue. PF confirmed that the risks were built into the project but that it could be added to the estates risk line given potential wider implications. Members also asked whether the rating of 'Fatal' in the risk matrix might be reworded as 'Significant'. ACTION: JD to discuss with PF JD reported that the Covid-19 assessment had just one addition to the December version in relation to testing.
8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION
8.1 Curriculum & Quality Working Group
The draft notes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 were noted.
8.2 Finance & Estates Working Group (FEWG) (C)
The draft notes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 were noted.
9. Any Other Business
AR reported on the use of the College seal for the Macaulay refurbishment and the Bank Loan.
10 CONFIDENTIAL BOARD – external members only
10.1 Confidential Minutes of the Board held on 16 December 2020 and any matters arising (C)
The Chair confirmed that she had a matter arising which was confidential to external members. She and the Head of Governance had liaised with the student and staff governor in advance and they had no comments on the minutes and agreed to withdraw at this point, along with the executive. The Board confirmed the confidential minutes as an accurate record.
10.2 Minutes of the Confidential Board (external members only) held on 16 December 2020 and any matters arising (C)
External members confirmed the minutes of the confidential Board held on 16 December 2020 as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.
12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
26 February 2021 – Strategy day (time tbc) Future Meetings – all at 17:00 29 March 2021 24 May 2021 12 July 2021

Signed: 

Date: 26 February 2021