

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation Awayday held on Friday 26 January 2018

at Somer Valley Campus, Wellow Board Room

Carole Stott	Apologies
Andy Furse	Vice-Chair
Laurel Penrose	Principal
Victor da Cunha	Apologies
Erica Draisey	
Tesh Baber	Apologies
Paul Blenkinsopp	
Jane Shaw	
Gary Waylen	
Neil Wilson	Apologies
Julian Young	

In attendance

Heather Cross	Clerk to the Corporation
Jayne Davis	Deputy Principal
Rachel Hepworth	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Shirley Collier (National Leader of Governance)	Present for items 1 - 4

- 1. Apologies for absence and welcome** **ACTION**
Apologies for absence were received from Carole Stott, who was unwell and sent her good wishes for a productive day. Andy Furse, vice-chair, took the chair of the meeting. Other apologies were received from Victor da Cunha, from Tesh Baber and Neil Wilson.

He welcomed Shirley Collier to the meeting for the session on Board evaluation.
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
None
- 3. Confidentiality of Items**
None
- 4. Board Evaluation**

Shirley Collier thanked Board members for completing a questionnaire in advance of the day. She fed back that the Board as a whole shared a view on its priorities and strengths but there was not always a fully united view in the returns. The Board was particularly good at making connections between features of its activity. There was a strong correlation between what the Board considered mattered and what it was good at. The adapted policy governance model operated effectively and the mechanics and dynamics of the meetings worked well. Strong chairing, trust and frequent challenge should be continued as at present.

Group work then took place to consider what strengths could be improved further, focussing on identifying two or three things which would make a significant difference. It was decided to discuss fostering teaching and learning, financial sustainability, student voice and responsiveness to work force trends.

Feedback from the group work identified the following top priorities, although the groups had discussed others as well.

Fostering teaching and learning

- More Board time to challenge and for this aspect to have a more prominent place on the agenda
- A sharper focus on strengths and weaknesses/quality
- Board debate on reports from the Quality Working Group
- Quality dashboard to include targets and dotted lines between achievements and targets

Responsiveness to workforce trends

- Having previously approved strategies, the Board should return to review their effectiveness (eg Open for Business)
- Develop relationships with current students to enable qualitative feedback and tracking into workplace
- Raise the visibility of the work the college is doing in this area to governors
- Have we got the right people on the Board (eg digital, hospital)

Financial sustainability

- Critical eye on the new finance dashboard – are the KPIs the right ones?
- If the needs of employers are met, then income will flow.

Student Voice

- More structured approach to student challenge of the Board – different formats and models?
- Appoint a governor with special responsibility to liaise with student bodies

It was decided that each group's notes would be provided to the Clerk who would put all of the identified aspects together to help facilitate

their final discussion and agreement of consequential actions at the next Board meeting.

5. Estates Strategy

The Principal spoke about the context in which the estates strategy for the college should develop, giving a particular focus on the city centre as this was the site which needed most development and also had the most potential. The City centre campus was in the middle of an enterprise zone and this should affect its orientation as in future to be facing the south and the Quays development could be preferable. This site needed investment, with accommodation looking tired, new types of accommodation needed to support new styles of teaching and learning and the expectations of college users. The IT infrastructure needed to be much improved and public spaces were remote from the entrance. The restaurant which should be a flagship was hidden.

Four areas of the curriculum needed to be considered:-

- Multifunctional classrooms equipped with all requirements including integrated IT, so that use could be flexible. Independent learning spaces were needed along with space for simulation and virtual learning to support theory and give lots of practical opportunities.
- Apprenticeships needed flexible, online and blended learning with state of the art training rooms and offering live links to employers and virtual access 24/7.
- 19+ and community learning – a welcoming, clear entrance and environment. Social learning spaces very important, and with support facilities all accessible together and easily identifiable.
- HE and International – better quality spaces needed to be provided, including seminar and tutorial space, lecture theatre, a university standard digital library and a logical campus configuration, plus accommodation.

Social meeting spaces for all were needed and the possibility of hiring out spaces could be explored. Strategic commercial priorities needed to be considered too in order to diversify income streams. An active street frontage, an orientation to maximise footfall and industry standard service facilities should all be ambitions. Spaces created needed to be of good quality. Catering accommodation was the first phase but needed to fit into longer term plans to meet the identified needs.

Governors asked about funding. The Property adviser working with the college had been asked to explore possible investment partners and in addition there was a possibility with a university partner and a bid to the LEP. It was noted that the key requirement was to have a strategy in order to pull in the money.

The meeting thanked the Principal for setting out the key priorities.

Michael Magri of GSS Architecture joined the meeting. He reminded governors that of the development option ideas put forward previously

that option 4 had been that preferred and this had been developed further. He gave a recap from the previous occasion he attended a Board meeting of the different options suggested. The option proposals had been circulated previously.

Governors questioned again the differences between options 1 and 4 as both put forward the notion of a street concept in the site on the east side and also the need for a new entrance. All the options had been scored to see what they achieved and whether the key elements, principally catering teaching accommodation, could be delivered by September 2019. The circulated scoring matrix was discussed which showed different variants on option 4 and costing information for comparison purposes. Each variant was discussed.

Michael Magri was thanked for his presentation.

The meeting discussed in more detail the sub options to option 4. Questions were asked about financing and it was clear that with the college's current financial position a limited contribution to the scheme could only be provided internally and partnerships or grants had to be the route to secure what was necessary.

After some considerable debate and discussion it was **agreed unanimously** that

- Option 4E should be developed and fully costed as the preferred scheme to provide new catering teaching and restaurant facilities for the college to be ready for use by September 2019, whilst
- staying open to funding opportunities to enable an extended remodelling and new build scheme in the future (option 4D – the Corn Street development).
- In addition the college should continue to secure the funding approval for the Digital Centre in the location of St James Parade to proceed as soon as funding allows and to pursue the M and E plant costings as part of this scheme.

It was noted that there were the possibilities for options along with scope for joint venture opportunities associated with the adjoining Corn Street development.

6. Strategic review in the context of national policy

The Principal gave a presentation about a number of key sector current developments. She spoke about the recent appointment of Damian Hinds as the new Education Secretary, who had as yet a limited knowledge base. The College sector had reduced substantially this year, following a significant number of mergers. There were now 189 whereas a few years ago there were over 300.

The recent Ofsted Chief Inspector's Annual report had been the first for Amanda Spielman. The atmosphere for FE was more receptive than previously. However the messages from the report were that no regime

was too large to fail. English and Maths would remain a focus. A comment was made in the report that there was insufficient focus on employability at level 2, whereas at this college there was exceptional focus on this at level 2. Ofsted had said they would review apprenticeship inspection arrangements in the light of the levy. A new Common Inspection Framework was to be published in the next year.

The Principal spoke about the key features of the Industrial Strategy and how it should impact on FE. A governor spoke about how he had recently joined a group to promote STEM across government. Digital would revolutionise engineering.

The new Careers Strategy was discussed.

The college response to these new policy initiatives was to build a new 3 year curriculum plan, to move apprenticeships into curriculum areas, to submit a bid for extended work placements and an expression of interest in an Institute of Technology. It was likely that Weston would be successful with their bid for this and the college was discussing with them the possibility for collaboration.

Bidding for work was acknowledged as being much more prominent and prior pedigree not always a criterion for being invited to take part. Governors agreed that the college management should be encouraged to find the resources for a bid writer.

Governors welcomed the value of this presentation and requested that they receive more regular updates on policy and regional and national context.

7. Minutes of the meeting held 18 December 2017 and any matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting which had been circulated previously were accepted as a true record.

There were no specific matters arising.

8. Audit recommendations Action plan update

The Audit Action tracker report was included in the papers for the meeting on Minutepad but with much information included it was difficult to read. A hard copy of the document was laid on the table but this was no easier. It was agreed that the originating Excel spreadsheet be circulated on this occasion.

Detailed scrutiny of the actions would be undertaken by the Audit Committee. The Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Services commented that staff had been asked to complete the tracker by this week. Internal Audit were due in the following week to check what had been completed. There had been 103 outstanding actions of which 30 were now complete. Only a small percentage were high.

The Chair of the Audit Committee thanked the college for the effort to conclude the work on these outstanding actions and for setting up a system to follow them up for the future.

9. December Management Accounts

The Management accounts for December 2017 had been circulated previously including income and expenditure account, cashflow and bank balance position. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services commented that there were some technical issues currently in providing a balance sheet because of the current construction of the financial ledgers but there were no material issues and no issues concerning the records of debtors or suppliers.

It was noted that the cashflow position was lower than the last report but it indicated a prudent position for the rest of the year. The bank balance position showed a deficit. The forecast was for a year-end deficit of £1.1 – £1.2m. The SMT had undertaken recently a comprehensive review and reduced the deficit to £547K. This had been subject to a reasonableness check.

There followed a discussion about whether subcontractors should be used to generate income, noting that the SMT's analysis of an achievable deficit included their use. It was decided that subcontractor use secured future income and also future commissioning.

It was agreed that it would be useful for future reporting to understand the risk and range around the reported figures and the estimate of what out-turn was achievable. In further discussion it was agreed that a further £116K saving could mean that a pay rise would be affordable and this objective should be pursued.

10. Finance Dashboard

The draft finance dashboard had been circulated. Governors welcomed the information showing the points given by the ESFA in considering financial health. It was noted that the college's total meant it was 10 points into 'satisfactory' and thus above 'inadequate'. The college's net liabilities were relatively high. Creditor days were at 31 and debtors were relatively high but this included the Student Debt Company.

Capital spend needed to be examined and a proper planned basis for this constructed.

In discussion it was determined that the pie chart showing the investment portfolio could be consolidated. The presentation of the debt structure showed a clear picture. It was suggested that the colour coding for the legend associated with the bank loan should be examined to see if it could be more clearly presented.

It was agreed that the financial health target should be the mid point of satisfactory and the RAG rating presentation should be based around this objective.

11. Ofsted Feedback

The Deputy Principal reported verbally on the comments made in the recent Ofsted inspection.

Governors recorded their thanks to all college staff for their work which was reflected in the inspection result and especially recognised the

work of Jayne Davis and Laurel Penrose in achieving a 'good' assessment in all categories. Jayne and Laurel were presented with bouquets to mark the governors' appreciation of all their efforts.

12. Date of next meeting

This was noted, as previously agreed, to take place on Monday 26 March at the Somer Valley Campus.