

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 1st July 2021 via Zoom

Governors Present: Max Hailey (Chair), Karen Mitchell (Principal), Ian Harper, Anne-Marie McNeill, Jackie Campbell, Eddie Weiss, Julie Gillespie, Nick Bevan, Bethan Waters, Andra Mirica, Josh Holdsworth, Amir Khaki, Caroline Perkins, Ian Greggor, Kish Sidhu, Chris Oakley

In Attendance: John McGrath (VP, Corporate Services (VPCS)), Clare Rooney (VP, Learning & Quality (VPL&Q)), Anna Smith (Clerk to Corporation)

Apologies: David Bainton

AGENDA ITEM	Evidence of Support & Challenge (S / C)
<p>1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. The Principal noted that the College was experiencing technical issues and so all staff present had to move quickly to personal devices with limited access to papers.</p> <p>The meeting was quorate and there were no new declarations of interests.</p>	
<p>2. CLERK'S PAPER – CORPORATION MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>a) <u>Corporation and Committees Memberships</u></p> <p>The Corporation Approved the memberships for 2021/22 as recommended by the Search and Development Committee.</p> <p>The Clerk informed the Board that Cathie Prest (CP) had confirmed her interest in joining the Quality and Curriculum Committee as a Co-opted Member. The Principal briefed Members on CP's strong background and wealth of skills and experience in FE. Subject to the Search and Development Committee recommending the appointment, Members would receive a Written Resolution to seek the Board's approval by email and then ratify the decision at the next Corporation meeting.</p> <p>The Clerk sought, and the Corporation agreed their Delegated Approval for the Search and Development Committee to approve a role description for Co-opted Members.</p> <p>b) <u>Committees Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>The Clerk briefed the Corporation on the annual review of the Committees Terms of Reference (ToR) and the new ToR being introduced as part of the new structure for 2021/22. These had been subject to review and recommendation by their relevant Committee. The following points were noted during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Audit Committee ToR had been updated in accordance with the revised Audit Code of Practice • The EDI aspect of the Quality and Curriculum Committee ToR may be reviewed in-year to avoid any overlap between the Committee and the role of the EDI Lead Governor. • The amendment to cl.12 in the Audit Committee ToR will be mirrored in the Finance Committee ToR to ensure the relationship between both committees is clearly defined. • The Estates Committee ToR should include a reference to the Committee's responsibilities around health and safety. <p>Subject to the amendments noted above the Corporation Approved all Committees ToRs for 2021/22.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p>

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<p>c) <u>Scheme of Delegation</u> The Corporation Approved the new Scheme of Delegation which had been prepared in order to meet the needs of the new Committee structure.</p>	S
<p>3. CONSENT AGENDA</p> <p>3.1 The Corporation Approved the minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 29/04/2021. 3.2 The Corporation Noted the approved minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 24/03/2021. 3.3 The Independent Members of the Corporation had Received the confidential minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 12/05/2021. 3.4 The Corporation Noted the draft minutes of the Search and Development Committee meeting held on 10/06/2021. 3.2 The Corporation Noted the rolling actions log.</p>	S
<p>4. STUDENT UNION REPORT</p> <p>The Chair thanked Josh Holdsworth for his support noting that this would be his last meeting and wished him luck at University next year. The Chair also thanked Andra Mirica for her support and wished her luck in her continued studies. Andra informed Members that she has applied for a further course to progress with the College and will be applying for the student union presidency positions so may return as a Student Governor next year depending on the outcome of elections.</p> <p>Members had read the report and the Student Governors highlighted that meetings with Student Union presidents across all campus should be more structured going forward.</p> <p>The Corporation Noted the report and the Chair thanked the Student Governors.</p>	
<p>5. REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)</p> <p>The Chair reminded Governors of the dashboard available to support their scrutiny of the management reports.</p> <p>Before moving on the Chair, on behalf of the Board, noted his formal thanks to the senior team for their dedicated efforts during what had been a challenging year adapting to government changes in teaching and learning and ensuring the safety of all students, staff and visitors.</p>	S
<p>6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</p> <p>The Principal briefed Members on her report highlighting in particular:</p> <p><u>COVID RESTORE Plan Update</u> There has been very little change since the last meeting but the College continues to respond to government requirements. As information is received over the Summer the team will continue to make adjustments as required to ensure safe learning and working for September. It is hoped that there will be as near normal learning experience as possible given the disruption over the last two years.</p> <p><u>FE Commissioner Diagnostic Assessment Follow Up Visit Report</u> The Principal took Members through the report and briefed on the positive feedback received from the FEC team in their follow up visit.</p>	

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<p><u>Adult Learning Strategy</u> The Principal briefed Members on the strategy which had been developed to reinvigorate adult learning to increase income. Members praised the strategy's alignment with the 2021 Bucks Local Skills report.</p> <p><u>Student Recruitment 2021/22</u> 16-18 applications continue to grow and are ahead of the same time last year across all campuses. Internal progression also continues to grow with a strong increase against the same time last year. T Levels are showing healthy applications to date.</p> <p><u>Health and Safety Report</u> Query was raised over the 'outstanding' column related to H&S training and it was explained that this is a rolling programme for staff and can show those who are only a day overdue. Members noted the update report.</p> <p>The following were raised by Governors:</p> <p>Q. With regards to the staff costs/income ratio, how do we know that the College needs to grow its income base? A. Adult learning income needs to incrementally increase with more delivery brought back into College. Broadly the ratio is related to the breakeven position and structurally the estates strategy supports the ambition. Aspirations and strategies in place to grow and better represent adult learning in the local areas were explained by both the Principal and VPCS.</p> <p>Q. Is there enough capacity to achieve the strategy sustainably? A. Resources would have to be invested in to achieve the strategy successfully and this is why it is incremental over three years.</p> <p>Q. How can we increase our adult numbers? A. As per the strategy, branding and marketing will be reviewed to better reach adults. Business development will also be reviewed in terms of dedicated resources.</p> <p>Q. Given that the recruitment for 16-18 this year is critical to reaching the breakeven budget, are we close to achieving this based on current numbers? A. The Principal explained for the benefit of new governors the difference in applications numbers and enrolments and that the College does not know its actual numbers until September. The lagged funding process was also explained.</p> <p>The Corporation Approved the Adult Learning Strategy.</p> <p>The Principal's Report was Noted and the Chair thanked her for her update.</p>	<p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>S</p>
<p>7. LEARNING AND QUALITY REPORT</p> <p>The VPL&Q briefed members on her report which included updates on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicted achievement for 2020-21 and the impact of COVID noting that overall retention is good and above the provider group average. • In year progress against KPIs on attendance, TLA, English and maths and apprenticeships showing good improvements compared to last year. Apprenticeship outcomes are expected to meet national average despite the significant impact of COVID. • Safeguarding and welfare noting a significant increase in the number of incidents and amount of support being provided by the safeguarding team. <p>Discussion took place as follows:</p> <p>Q. Overall it is good to see all provision (except high needs) has increased since last year. Timely apprenticeships is increasing but does appear to still be a challenge for the College.</p>	<p>C</p>

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<p>A. It is still challenging but arguably the challenges and impact of COVID on apprentices completing on time can provide an explanation for this.</p> <p>Q. What is the impact of a break in learning on the timeliness?</p> <p>A. It creates a new end date but as they wouldn't have achieved their original end date it counts as a negative and the data will move into next year.</p> <p>Q. Do you still get 90 days' grace after the end date?</p> <p>A. Yes and the College still tries to ensure they complete in this time and has 90 days to claim the full qualification.</p> <p>Q. Is there any lobbying in the sector to increase the grace period to allow for COVID?</p> <p>A. Not at the moment but it is likely that there will be a full provider review. We are still trying to ensure all our apprentices have a good experience despite the challenges of COVID.</p> <p>Q. What is the provider group average? Is this the national average?</p> <p>A. Yes, it is national average and we use this as our own benchmark when grading the area.</p> <p>Q. We are dealing with large headcounts, are there any areas/levels/programmes of concern in terms of predictions which might be masked by averages which we need to be aware of?</p> <p>A. The priority is going to be the study programme because the English and maths data is in there. We need to be mindful that if students don't achieve their English and maths they will not achieve their study programme.</p> <p>Q. How confident are we in our predictions?</p> <p>A. In most cases at this point in the year we are fairly accurate. Governors should be assured by the plans in place over the summer to support students' progression to the next level.</p> <p>Q. On attendance, what reasons do students give for low attendance?</p> <p>A. There are many reasons and we have tried different strategies around timetabling but generally lower level learners in particular just find English and maths difficult and struggle to engage.</p> <p>The Student Governors were asked for their views on the reasons for low attendance in English and maths. They shared feedback from the recent student focus groups noting that there is work to do around teacher engagement and improving the classroom experience with more interaction. Kahoot quizzes are very positive and welcomed by students.</p> <p>The VPL&Q noted that there has been a lot of focus on the implementation of the plan. The attendance strategy is robust and we need to ensure everyone is applying it consistently.</p> <p>Q. Digital skills are showing the lowest attendance. Does this lead to a particular qualification at the end or is it to support the qualification being completed?</p> <p>A. It is a combination of both and for September the digital skills team will be involved as part of induction. Students will be engaged at the start of their course as they are able to choose which programmes they take to develop their digital skills.</p> <p>Q. Many students will need digital skills to complete their vocational course effectively and so would you ideally like to embed this into their vocational course?</p> <p>A. English maths and digital skills are embedded into vocational skills courses anyway and this is an expectation for all students.</p> <p>Positive feedback had been received from the Student Summer Survey and highlights from this were shared in the report.</p> <p>The Corporation Noted the report and Approved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy 2021-22 • English and Maths Strategy 2021-22 • Safeguarding, Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2021-22 <p>The Chair thanked the VPL&Q for her report.</p>	<p>S&C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S</p>
<p>8. FINANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT</p>	

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<p>The VPCS briefed Members on the technical issue with the College IT system which had occurred causing sufficient concern to shut down all servers. The matter is being investigated and Governors will be informed if there are any significant causes for concern to be reported.</p> <p>The VPCS took Governors through his report which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020-21 Financial Update noting the May management accounts. • Budget Submission to the ESFA for 2021-22 and 2022-23 <p>Throughout discussion, Governors raised the following:</p> <p>Q. Optically, the increased cash flow due to later payments could make next year's balance look like a significant reduction. Is it wise to hold on to all of that money this year end?</p> <p>A. The VPCS had thought this too and agreed some may be worth depressing. The banks are understanding and we will discuss it with the ESFA when we meet next week.</p> <p>Q. I agree and support the idea of getting to breakeven but can you confirm in high level terms where you see us being able to bridge that from?</p> <p>A. It is achievable if the current 16-19 student application progress becomes reality in the autumn term and with the implementation of the adult learning strategy as reviewed earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>Q. How confident are you that we will achieve the 2022-23 budget?</p> <p>A. The VPCS reminded the Board that the Corporation is an independent body and a decision can be made at the appropriate time for the next budget. If the data does not support the 2022-23 budget within next year then this will be reviewed and it is the Corporation's decision to approve. The Principal added that Governors should take confidence from the College's position in the ongoing positive support received from the ESFA.</p> <p>Discussion took place around the target budget and support was noted by Governors that ultimately it is a reasonable position to set. Governors agreed there is sufficient rationale for reaching breakeven and they will work with the senior team in year to develop plans and contingencies in order to ensure it is achieved. Governors are comfortable based on confidence in the senior team and historical detail and accept that it is a stretching target but will be in full support for achievement. The Principal reminded Members that the College is the only provider of T Levels in Buckinghamshire and this is a unique position to be in to support growth. Assurance was sought and it was confirmed that the targets do keep the College within its bank covenants.</p> <p>Following in depth scrutiny and discussion the Corporation Approved the Budget Submission for 2021-22 and 2022-23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy procurement arrangements to 2025 <p>The VPCS briefed Members on the arrangements as detailed in the report.</p> <p>Q. Is eco energy taken into account?</p> <p>A. The College is currently on a Brown plan. There is an option to move to a Green plan but there would be a cost implication. Governors asked and it was agreed that costs should be considered to take a view on this (Action: VPCS).</p> <p>Query was raised on what other colleges do and the VPCS confirmed that amongst his network of peers other colleges have taken a similar approach. Governors agreed the proposal with the current provider is a much improved strategy and lessens the risk of volatility.</p> <p>The Corporation Approved the extension of the existing energy procurement arrangements for a further 3 years to October 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated General Data Protection Policy <p>The Corporation Approved the General Data Protection Policy 2021-24.</p>	<p>S&C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>S</p> <p>S</p> <p>C</p> <p>S</p> <p>C</p> <p>S</p> <p>S</p>

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<p>The Chair thanked the VPCS for his report.</p>	
<p>9. GOVERNOR LINKS AND ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>The Chair thanked Governors for their engagement in support of the College. The Clerk reiterated thanks, in particular to those who had offered support in relation to the T Level industry placements. Governors were encouraged to notify the Clerk if they were able to offer any more support/useful contacts.</p> <p>The EDI Lead Governor provided feedback on the work of the EDI Steering Group to date and briefing Members on the EDI staff survey which had been made available to the College. The Principal added that this would be fully reported in the annual EDI report for Corporation.</p>	<p>S S</p>
<p>10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>None</p>	
<p>11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>20th October 2021</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Student Governors again for their support and the Student Governors noted their thanks to the Corporation.</p> <p><i>The Student Governors left the meeting.</i></p>	
<p>12. CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA ITEM</p> <p><i>This confidential item is recorded in the confidential minutes.</i></p>	

Approved as an accurate record of discussions: 21st October 2021