

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 29th April 2021 via Zoom

Governors Present: Max Hailey (Chair), David Bainton (Vice 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

Governors Present from Item 2: 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: None

AGENDA ITEM	Evidence of Support & Challenge (S / C)
<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting reminding Members of the main focuses of the evening (Board restructure; financial approvals; confidential agenda item). The meeting was quorate and there were no new declarations of interests.</p>	
<p>1. CLERK'S PAPER – CORPORATION MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>a) <u>Jackie Campbell Term of Office Renewal</u> The Corporation Ratified its decision to renew Jackie Campbell's term of office for a second term from 16th March 2021 to 15th March 2025 as had been previously approved via email.</p> <p>b) <u>New Member Recommendations</u> The Clerk briefed the Corporation on the four new governor appointments which had been recommended by the Search and Development Committee. The Chair of the Committee reinforced the decision noting how positive the interviews had been and how pleased they were to be recommending such strong candidates to strengthen the skills and experience of the Board. The Principal added that Caroline Perkins is also responsible at the LEP for the implementation of the FE White Paper and her appointment puts the Board in a fortunate position to be able to work so closely together. Jackie Campbell added that Caroline also works closely with Bucks Business First (BBF) which will further strengthen our local industry links and representation from local business. Governors agreed all the candidates' CVs looked very strong and the Corporation Approved the appointment of all four new Members.</p> <p>c) <u>Amendment to Standing Orders</u> The Corporation would still like to recruit a Governor with FE Quality experience. Due to the huge success of the recruitment search providing such strong candidates to join the Board it is now necessary to amend the maximum membership number stated in the Standing Orders in order to recruit a further new Member. As detailed in the paper, the Corporation Approved the amendment to the Standing Orders to increase the maximum number of Independent Members to 13, thereby increasing the maximum total membership to 18. (Action: Clerk to amend the Standing Orders and recirculate to Governors).</p> <p>In the period prior to the new Members joining the meeting Governors held a discussion with the senior team around students' full return to face to face learning next week; the College's rapid responses to government guidelines around the pandemic requirements and the measures in</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">S</p> <p style="text-align: right;">S</p>

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<p>place to ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors to the campuses. Discussion included feedback from Amir Khaki who shared practices taking place within the NHS Trust and the vaccination plans going forward.</p> <p>The Chair then welcomed Caroline Perkins, Ian Greggor, Kish Sidhu and Chris Oakley to join the meeting and briefly introduced each Member/Attendee.</p>	S
<p>2. CHAIR'S REPORT – FEC RECOMMENDATIONS AND BOARD REVIEW REPORT</p> <p>Mainly for the benefit of new Members, the Chair briefed Governors on the background of the FE Commissioner's Diagnostic Assessment visit which had taken place in November and the recommendations which had been endorsed by the Corporation. Governors were taken closely through the action plan for implementing the recommendations noting the strong and rapid progress which had been made since November.</p> <p>The new Governors joining the Board will further strengthen scrutiny around the College's finances and the estates strategy. The Principal stressed the current strengths within the Board and excellent governor engagement and that the new recruitment recommendations were to further strengthen this with increased experience and skills to support the College moving forward with strategic objectives.</p> <p>The DfE funded ETF Board Review conducted by Rob Lawson, NLG, had been well received. Recommendations from the report aligned with the FEC recommendations and were endorsed by the Corporation. The main point for discussion was the recommendation for the Board to move to a committee structure to increase scrutiny of finance and quality by devoting more time to these than full board meetings allow.</p> <p>The Chair and Clerk briefed Members on the positive work ongoing with their NLGs which had been thoroughly welcomed by both as a means of further support and sharing best practices.</p> <p>The College has partnered with Fareham College (graded Outstanding) to share best practices and support peer review of quality practices and self-assessment.</p> <p>The recommendation to work towards an improved operating position for 2021-22 was discussed under item 8 of the agenda.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed comments around the transition to a committee structure and detailed discussion took place which included the following points:</p> <p>Query was raised by the Vice Chair around absorbing the current Estates Project Sub Group into a new Finance and Estates Committee. Thorough discussion took place and Governors shared concerns that combining the two into one committee would not allow for sufficient time to be devoted to each particularly given the scale of discussions required around the current estates strategy and the financial position.</p> <p>The Quality and Curriculum Committee should be devoted to focussing on the quality of education, the standard of teaching and learning, the student voice, curriculum design and the student experience.</p> <p>Potential concern was raised that a committee structure can lead to silo working. Reassurance was provided that the Corporation would receive reports from each Committee to ensure the Board is fully informed and the Corporation would be given the opportunity to request scrutiny of specific areas for future committee meetings. In terms of board assurance this framework will</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p>

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<p>provide good opportunity for the full Board to be engaged in, and reassured by, the work of the committees.</p> <p>Ultimately Governors agreed that the Finance and Estates committees should be two separate entities and the Corporation Approved the transition to a committee structure. Alongside the current committees there would also be the introduction of a new Finance Committee and a new Quality and Curriculum Committee. Memberships will be reviewed with full regard to the skills audit including new governors' skills to ensure each committee is fit for purpose.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>S</p>
<p>3. CONSENT AGENDA</p> <p>3.1 The Corporation Approved the minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 11/02/2021. 3.2 The Corporation Noted the rolling actions log and the VPLQ thanked the Governors engaged in and supporting the Careers Week.</p>	
<p>4. STUDENT UNION REPORT</p> <p>The Student Governors briefed the Board on their report and plans for the future. The Student Presidents and Vice Presidents will be meeting at council level to discuss common themes and are hoping to introduce a new digital newsletter for students to increase awareness around activities available. The VPLQ added that herself and the Head of Student Services are working on an enrichment programme for 2021-22.</p> <p>Amir Khaki queried the analysis of the online enrolment data and how actions are being taken forward. Andra Mirica provided reassurance that actions are in place to improve the enrolment process but stressed that this year had been exceptional as the online system had been developed and introduced in rapid response to the Covid pandemic. Feedback from students and staff has been positive.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Student Governors for their report.</p>	<p>C</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. The Principal also included these in her report which followed.</p>	
<p>6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</p> <p>The Principal noted that the KPIs had been updated to the end of March with summary comments showing detail around the current position. Further detail is provided in Senior Post-Holder reports</p> <p><u>Covid RESTORE Plan Summer Term</u> The College is looking forward to welcoming students back to 100% face to face learning from 3/5/21 and all students and staff are adhering to safety measures in place. The Principal keeps a close eye on the Bucks Covid dashboard and will continue to respond to government requirements.</p> <p><u>FE Commissioner Diagnostic Assessment Progress</u> The Principal's report included details of progress against the FEC recommendations as discussed earlier in the meeting. Peridot Partners had been unsuccessful in the recruitment of a governor</p>	

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<p>with FE quality experience but the Principal has made contact with Stewart Jackson HMI in terms of his associates.</p> <p><u>Student recruitment 2021-22</u> Applications continue to be ahead of the same time last year, which is positive and the College is of course keen to ensure maximum conversion from applications to enrolments. Applications for the new T Levels starting in September have also increased across each subject.</p> <p>The following were raised by Governors:</p> <p>Q. What is the current position regarding exams this year? A. The VPLQ confirmed that this varies across awarding bodies. Different approaches are in place to support all students' grades.</p> <p>Q. Do we know why we are getting so many more applications? A. There could be various reasons. Some perhaps are unable to get apprenticeships so are applying for full time programmes as well. Virtual open events could be potentially better set up than schools and the application process is much easier now. Amir Khaki added that the national advertising campaign around T Levels could have helped promote applications to these and the Principal agreed this is a new attractive delivery for Buckinghamshire. 16-18 year olds demographics is slightly higher than usual at this point too.</p> <p>Bethan Waters posed the notion for governors to engage in a regular Q&A session for students to pose questions to governors and this was welcomed by all to increase student interaction with governors. The Chair noted that he had been more engaged with the student governors recently and welcomed this idea to be taken forward. The Principal added that blogs from governors would also be welcomed to share with staff and students.</p> <p>The Principal's Report was Noted and the Chair thanked her for her update.</p>	<p></p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S</p>
<p>7. LEARNING AND QUALITY REPORT</p> <p>The VPL&Q briefed members on her report and discussion took place around the following:</p> <p>With students returning to 100% face to face learning it is expected that attendance will improve and targeted intervention will have a positive impact.</p> <p>Q. Sadly there will be redundancies for some apprentices. What happens to our retention if this is the case? A. We will try to find an alternative employer to continue the framework but if this is not possible it will affect our retention rates.</p> <p>Q. Of the 22 we have lost, do you know how many of these have been lost due to redundancy? A. It will depend on the length of the programme and the VPLQ explained retention is dependent on the end date of the overall apprenticeship.</p> <p><u>On English and Maths Attendance:</u> Ian Harper noted that Governors must be conscious of the continued reporting on poor attendance and must continue to find ways to support the College with this. Jackie Campbell noted that she was surprised to read that attendance was poor as students should all understand the strategies teachers have in place. It was queried whether the cancelling of GCSE exams may have given a message to students that English and Maths is not as important any more. The VPLQ noted that the importance of the</p>	<p>C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>C</p> <p>S&C</p>

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<p>whole programme including English and Maths is embedded into understanding at the beginning, particularly for progression. Parents are kept informed of the strategies and of their son or daughter's attendance and what is needed to ensure progression. Query was raised and it was confirmed that parents are engaged in this.</p> <p>Anne-Marie McNeill asked the Student Governors if they have any idea on why attendance at English and Maths is low. The Student Governors agreed that some fellow students are disengaged in the subjects and would like to see more exciting and engaging lessons to encourage attendance. The VPLQ noted that this is being worked on with the student voice.</p> <p>Nick Bevan requested clarification that English and Maths is only required for progression and so if students only need the vocational achievement they may not engage in English and Maths. It was confirmed this is the case and the numbers involved in those needing GCSEs coming from schools was discussed.</p> <p>Amir Khaki noted in the chat function and Andra Mirica agreed that it would be useful to bring those students not attending in to ask them what they would like to see in a lesson. The VPLQ confirmed these conversations are taking place but more work will be done around capturing opinions from student groups to improve attendance going forward. (Action: VPLQ to pick up with Student Governors on focus groups to look at improving English and Maths attendance)</p> <p><u>Admissions Policy</u> The Vice Chair requested clarification around the admissions session attendance and withdrawal process on the flowchart and the VPLQ provided this and agreed to make this clear on the flowchart (Action VPLQ).</p> <p>Subject to this amendment the Corporation Approved the Admissions Policy and Procedure 2021-23.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the VPL&Q for her report.</p>	<p>S&C</p> <p>S</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S</p> <p>C</p> <p>S</p>
<p>8. FINANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT</p> <p>The VPCS took Governors through his report which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020-21 Financial Update noting the March management accounts. • Budget Planning 2021-22 and Beyond setting out the overall direction of travel. <p>The VPCS briefed in detail on the summary and analysis as detailed in the report.</p> <p>Chris Oakley queried the cost of a pay increase as a percentage and the VPCS confirmed that 1% is approximately £130k per year.</p> <p>The Chair noted concern over setting the deficit budget and how the FEC shared concerns over governors agreeing this and welcomed the VPCS' views on this. The VPCS noted the need to be realistic when setting budgets rather than being unrealistically ambitious and then failing to achieve. He considered it extremely difficult to reach surplus level within one year based on our deficit and the still unknown remaining impact of Covid.</p> <p>Kish Sidhu queried that although it is not feasible, have you considered what the implications would be of budgeting to zero? The total additional improvement required would be around £0.7m. The VPCS noted the limited number of income lines that could be increased to meet this and given we had already put an increase of 15% into the budget, another 15% would not be a reasonable assumption. Colleagues then discussed whether the implication of making such a change to pay costs and again agreed this was not sustainable at the current time. The VPCS welcomed challenge on this and the Principal added that the balance of finance and quality is equally important, especially with an impending Ofsted inspection due.</p> <p>Kish Sidhu reiterated the Chair's concern over setting a budget below zero and it is more credible to note that you have considered the options of financial reductions and the implications on</p>	<p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p>

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<p>quality this would have. The VPCS understood that the position was not sustainable in the long term which is why it is important that the College continues to progress the estates strategy as quickly as possible.</p> <p>The Vice Chair noted that to set a breakeven budget would mean a negative effect on quality and this must be avoided given the position and the strategy moving forward. The cash position is important and the estates strategy will support increased student numbers.</p> <p>Kish Sidhu asked are the FEC benchmarks comparable? The VPCS confirmed the College does not meet the key FEC benchmark of 65% staff cost to income ratio. Merging the two campuses will support our position in terms of our staff income:cost ratio. The Principal added that the ESFA are supportive of the College's financial plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T Levels Capital Funding. <p>The College was successful in its bid for capital funding to improve facilities and equipment for the delivery of the T Level qualifications starting in September 2021 and the VPCS sought approval from Governors to spend the funding received on the improvements detailed in the report.</p> <p>Eddie Weiss queried whether we are going to spend a lot of money at the Amersham and Wycombe campuses which potentially will then be lost when we merge to the new build. The VPCS confirmed that this is not the case although there are some facilities which are required with the appropriate amount of funds being spent across the campuses to deliver the provision with high quality.</p> <p>The Corporation Approved the spending of the T Level capital funds received from the DfE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendment of Barclays Loan Agreement. <p>The VPCS briefed on the need to enter into a resolution to accept the amendment to the terms and conditions of the loan agreement as detailed in the report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendment of Lloyds Loan Agreement <p>The lending rate LIBOR is being phased out and agreement was sought to amend the agreement in respect to this being replaced by the Bank of England Base Rate.</p> <p>With regards to the loan agreements Bethan Waters noted the importance of ensuring the spread is captured and we are not compromised financially. The VPCS noted the explanatory documentation does cover this and he will send her a copy (Action: VPCS).</p> <p>Bethan Waters further queried whether the Barclays Loan Agreement is also linked to LIBOR and it was confirmed this is the Bank of England Base Rate.</p> <p>The Corporation Approved the recommendations to amend both loan agreements.</p> <p>The VPCS briefed members on the Fees Policy which was largely unchanged but does require one additional reference not currently included in it, to allow the College to refer outstanding debt to a third party collection agency should the need arise. The final fees list will be available for Governors at the next meeting (Action: VPCS).</p> <p>The Corporation Approved the terms of the Fees Policy noting that the final fees would be provided at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the VPCS for his report.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>S</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S&C</p> <p>S</p> <p>S</p>
<p>9. GOVERNOR LINKS AND ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>The Chair thanked Governors for their involvement and the Clerk reiterated thanks to those Governors involved in the Careers Week.</p>	<p>S</p>
<p>10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>None</p>	

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11.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>1st July 2021</p>	
12.	<p>CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA ITEM</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Student Governors for their attendance and support and the Student Governors left the meeting.</p> <p><i>This item is recorded in the confidential minutes.</i></p>	

Approved as an accurate record of discussions: 1st July 2021