

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 28th March 2019 at 5.30 pm in the Boardroom of the College.

Present Michael Priestley (Chair); Norma Boyes; Amie Clavin (from Minute No 16/19) Alison Hampson; Elaine Clinton; Tanya Weston; Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday; Phil Jardine; Robert Milburn (from Minute No 16/19); Chris Nattress (Principal); Mark Stanger (from Minute No 20/19) ; Stuart Williams

Apologies: Claire Madden; Loren Redmond; Denise Rollo; Dr Robin Talbot
John Thinnesen

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal); Mark Birschel (Quality Manager)

15/19 Appointments

It was noted that nominations had been sought for a non-teaching staff governor and that one had been received. The Board noted Amie's background and approved the appointment.

It was also noted that both Robert Milburn and Denise Rollo were keen to continue to stand as Board members, which was welcomed and agreed.

Resolved –

- 1) that Amie Calvin be appointed staff governor from 28th March 2019-27 March 2020;
- 2) that Denise Rollo be re-appointed to the Board from 9th May 2019-31 December 2021
- 3) that Robert Milburn be re-appointed to the Board from 9th May 2019-31 December 2021.

Amie Calvin joined the meeting
Robert Milburn joined the meeting

16/19 Minutes

Resolved – to approve the minutes of the meeting held in open session on 7th February 2019

17/19 Declarations of Interest

None received

18/19 **Confidential Session**

Resolved – to move into confidential session

19/19 **Strategic Update**

The Principal briefed the Board on sector and partner developments in confidential session which included business confidential items. Of general policy announcements discussed:

- It was noted that there had been no treasury announcements in respect of FE Funding. In the interim, DfE were advertising for consultants to administer the insolvency regime. In addition, recently published guidance by DfE had been on the detection of fraud.
- Non-levy apprenticeship funding is running out, while the cost is reducing to 5% for non-levy employers, creating a bigger demand for fewer resources. Governors noted the uncertainty being caused.
- ESFA had revised their rules on GCSE English and maths. Students with a grade D or 3 will still have to re-sit. Those with a lower grade can take a level 2 functional skills qualification instead, and that will be deemed to be sufficient to meet study programme conditions.

The Principal sought approval for a strategic options review.

Resolved – that the format for the strategic review be approved.

Mark Stanger joined the meeting

20/19 **Finance Update – confidential**

The Deputy Principal gave an update of financial performance.

The draft minutes of the Finance and Corporate Working Group were received and noted.

21/19 **Risk and Opportunity Registers – confidential**

The Deputy Principal presented risks and opportunities to the Board.

22/19 **External Audit – confidential**

The Chair of Audit drew attention to the draft minutes of the special Audit Committee held on 14th March.

Resolved – that Armstrong Watson be appointed External Auditors for a 3-year period from 1 August 2019- 31 July 2022, at a cost of £53,397, renewable for 1 year + 1 year by negotiation.

23/19 **Open Session**

Resolved – to re-open the session.

24/19 **Complaints, Compliments and Surveys Update**

There had been more complaints at the time of the year than the previous year, with a thematic theme around communications emerging in respect of the complex area of apprenticeship fees. There had been no complaints in respect of higher education.

Compliments were noted as being on the increase.

In respect of the study programme survey, broadly speaking this had been positive with most scores in the top decile, however, some aspects would be considered in more detail including through a maths, English and digital focus group. There had been a good response rate.

Equally, there were good high scores for Higher Education, however, concern was expressed about the low survey rate. It was asked whether there was anything different that could be done, that perhaps being done for Further Education Surveys and agreement to look different means of engaging students.

The response rate was improving for apprenticeships – the survey had been carried out at the time of their reviews (independently) remains positive.

There had been a good response rate to the parents' evening survey with some very positive comments. It was asked whether this was collated as an Ofsted impact measure and agreed that this would be helpful.

The response rate was too low for distance learning programmes, but the format was being reviewed.

Robert Milburn left the meeting

25/19

Key Performance Indicators

Attendance continued to be a concern, in spite of interventions. It was asked whether there was a pattern of particular offenders and acknowledged that some did fall into this bracket, but that others had quite challenging circumstances.

In elaborating on interventions, this also included the call centre chasing non-attenders every morning.

It was felt that learner progress was strong in most areas. It was asked of the two areas where it was looking less strong, whether the reasons were understood and whether there was best practice which was transferable. It was felt that there was always benefit in sharing good practice, but that some areas would be subject to different techniques than others and therefore, they were not like-for-like qualifications. It was also noted that with some recent changes to assessments, there could be a lack of confidence in predicting outcomes.

It was noted that retention was strong, but that there was also concern in respect of work experience which was being addressed.

Mark Birschel left the meeting

26/19

Quality Improvement Plans

The Assistant Principal noted that a detailed analysis of the mock examinations for English and maths had been carried out, targeted down to the content of questions. Currently, English was profiled at 30% and maths at 18.3%.

Analysis was showing that some of the issues could be attributed to a lack of literacy in understanding some of the maths questions and that hand-writing was an issue in understanding answers. It was questioned whether there was a way of sitting examinations which were not paper-based, but this was not currently an option.

It was asked whether there were any issues with attendance at English and maths classes when students were on work placements. From a planning perspective, it was felt that this was a challenge, however, not all maths and English classes took place in the one day and options were available.

The Deputy Principal also noted that there was some targeted intervention taking place on plumbing currently.

In respect of the Higher Education Improvement Plan, there had been significant development work in creating common practice and a sense

of community. Of particular note, was the ongoing work in respect of learner voice for Higher Education learners, as per previous discussions, and this was an expectation of the Office for Students.

27/19

Facilities Update

The Board received an update of developments including health and safety monitoring information. The Deputy Principal informed the Board of the failure of another boiler. This meant that 2 out of 3 boilers which had been installed at the time of the original building were now not functioning, leaving the college vulnerable to a complete breakdown.

Initial costs of a replacement system were being put at approximately £200,000 and a consultant had been engaged to look at options. It was suggested this might include consideration of a bio-mass option. Options for an interest-free loan have been identified though this would impact on financial health 'points' and therefore potentially grading. Any opportunities for grant funding is being explored. The college has cash reserves available, but this will impact on other investment requirements. Progress in finding an affordable solution is essential to limit any impact on operations in the autumn term. Should agreement be required to progress in advance of the next Board meeting, the following arrangements were agreed:

Resolved – that urgent action (if required) by the Chair and Vice Chair be approved following consultation with the whole Board.

28/19

Equality and Diversity

The Board received a comprehensive overview on progress being made in respect of equality and diversity, noting that there were currently no significant achievement gaps.

Although not formally required to do so, it was felt good practice to continue to publish a gender pay gap, which showed a deteriorating position. While it was felt that lifestyle choices could have an impact, further analysis was requested.

29/19

Safeguarding and Prevent

A safeguarding and prevent update noted that there were 51 learners on the register, 14 of whom were looked after. There was a huge demand on counselling support and work was going on to look at introducing more models, such as smaller self-help groups. There had been one referral to Channel this year in respect of Prevent.

It was asked what mental health support was available and whether staff were qualified to deal with mental health issues. It was noted that there were mental health first aiders, but that referrals were made to

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). However, this service was very overloaded and it was frequently recommended that GPs be contacted to help with access to the service.

Following the recent incident in Workington of a person walking around with knives, it was asked what the lock-down procedures were. The Assistant Principal was able to advise that there had been a rehearsal of the procedure on the last day of the autumn term with good feedback.

It was asked whether relationships with Social Services had improved and it was felt that the relations were good with positive interaction.

30/19

Freedom of Speech Policy

With the intent of managing any potential for tension between freedom of speech and Safeguarding and Prevent, the Freedom of Speech was received and approved. The importance of 'lawful' freedom of speech was noted.

Resolved – that the Freedom of Speech Policy be approved.

The meeting closed at 1945h.