

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held at 5.30pm on Thursday, 1st October 2020 by Microsoft Teams

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Norma Boyes; Amie Calvin; Elaine Clinton; Peter Ellwood; Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday; Phil Jardine; Robert Milburn; Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Dr Robin Talbot; Tanya Weston; Stuart Williams

Leave of Absence: Beth Gaskell

Also present: Karen Wilson, Deputy Principal; Daniel Braithwaite, Assistant Principal, Jane Murray (Clerk)

78/20 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held in open session on 2 July 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

79/20 Declarations of Interest

None received

80/20 New Term Update

The Assistant Principal noted the introduction of TLA Coaches, with the aim of taking teaching and learning beyond good by developing a culture of collaboration and mutual trust. This is in addition to the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, which has been active in moving learning from traditional models to alternative approaches and which is shaping the curriculum for T-Levels.

It was felt that the Virtual Learning Environment was actively supporting learners and staff in the online delivery of learning and was a successful collaboration of teaching and IT staff. While challenging, the timetabling aimed to create a blend of learning, with practical work on site. The balance between onsite and online, depended on the course. It was acknowledged that college felt a very different place with many fewer students on a daily basis and the balance would continue to be reviewed in light of experience and capacity.

Robert Milburn joined the meeting

It was asked how recruitment was faring and noting the 6-week rule, and the potential drop-out rates, it was felt that recruitment was strong, up 40-50 on study programmes (which didn't include 19+ students with an EHCP).

Plumbing and engineering were very full leading to some challenges with workshop timetabling. Questioned about the likelihood of drop outs, it was felt that there were about 31 learners at risk, with whom staff were engaging.

Overall, it was felt that recruitment was pleasing, with adult recruitment steady and apprenticeships relatively strong (although the Covid-19 pandemic may impact on the timeliness of achievements).

It was asked to what the strong performance on recruitment could be attributed and while acknowledging that the current situation could have had an impact, it was also felt that improvements to marketing and IAG had an impact. It was also noted, however, that some learners may have stayed at 6th form having had stronger GCSEs this year. It was felt that a proper analysis would be difficult until after the 6-week rule.

It was noted that the College had now also opened up to a small number of evening learners.

The Deputy Principal drew attention to the support being given to learners with their IT equipment. This was a combination of direct support to some students with equipment through learner support funds and a lease scheme being offered to families this year, of which approximately 30 had taken advantage. It was asked whether those at school could continue with their school equipment, but felt that the nature of the work required a laptop and most schools were on tablets.

It was asked whether there were risks to cyber security in the support with IT equipment and felt that the same control measures as currently would be in place and also that oversight from a safeguarding perspective would be maintained.

Moving to the Covid-19 measures in place, it was felt that inductions had been successful and on-site behaviours were good with masks being worn in communal areas and social distancing rules being observed. In a recent development, one member of staff had tested positive for Covid-19 and the college had moved swiftly to ensure that those who had had contact with that member of staff were moved into self-isolation and learning from home. The action which was taken was disseminated appropriately to staff, students and their families. Having had prior sight of the measures which were taken, it was felt that the College had moved swiftly and effectively.

It was asked whether special measures were being taken for staff and students who were in the 'shielding' category and noted that Occupational Therapy advice was sought (and that there was no longer a requirement for those staff to shield).

The impact on the catering provision of the numbers in College and the newly opened service station across the road was likely to lead to a change in offer and contract, which the Board noted.

The Board noted the update and the initiatives and measures being put in place and felt that it was an encouraging start to the term.

81/20 Key Performance Indicators

The Deputy Principal apologised for an earlier error in the KPIs. The apprenticeship starts were relatively strong, but not as strong as has been reported in the July KPIs.

There had been good 19+ recruitment on short distance-learning courses during the pandemic, which had helped the college meet its contract.

Early indications were that value added was strong. Retention was very strong for 19-20 and the SAR sessions would identify the impact that this would have on final outcomes.

The Board received and noted the KPI outturn for 2019-20.

82/20 Annual Summary 2019-20 - Curriculum Update

The Assistant Principal noted the challenges of the summer/summer term with Awarding Organisations adopting differing approaches to arriving at results. While some requests were received for additional information, overwhelmingly assessments had been accepted, which it was felt validated the thorough, internal process which was put in place. Some delays were caused due to a need to finish practical assessments over the summer for some students and work continued to finalise those achievements, with care being taken that learners did not suffer any disadvantage to their progression in the interim.

The value added score, at 3, puts the college in the top 25% of performance nationally, with a significant move upwards to 3 from 8 for Health and Social Care.

GCSE results were strong (even in comparison to the uplift nationally) with high grades up in English by 7.8% and 10.4% in maths. There was a good evidence base in support of the results.

It was felt that that strong performance and evidence base was not mirrored by functional skills and this would form part of quality improvement work in the coming year.

While self-assessment would be considered by the Board at their next meeting, there were some emerging, positive themes around

- Robust monitoring and tracking of learners
- Assessment for learning is highly effective
- Employability skills development
- Depth, quality and impact of professional development
- Learner support, welfare and guidance
- Attitudes and behaviours in learning

Area of focus emerging included the quality of holistic development targets; assessment scheduling was focusing overly on summative approaches; and the use of developmental feedback.

Having previously noted the challenges of end point assessment and timely achievements during lockdown, nevertheless it was felt that it had been a sound performance on apprenticeships with changes to the structure and implementation of new systems providing greater visibility for all concerned.

Higher Education performance was looking particularly strong, although with some results outstanding due to delays in some Pearson-based courses.

The Deputy Principal reminded Governors of the robust audit for Safeguarding held in 2019-20 with no recommendations arising, which, it was felt was a commendation of Safeguarding policy and procedures.

It was asked whether the handover information from schools for this year's intake had improved. It was felt that the electronic systems now used provided for an automated transfer of good, upfront information, although it had to be recognised that many of these young people had been out of learning since March, which presented a number of challenges.

83/20 Confidential Session and Minutes

Resolved –

- 1) To move into confidential session;
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session of 2 July 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record;
- 3) That the notes of summer updates (circulated previously) be noted.

It was asked whether there had been any further relaxation of EBIDTA measures by the ESFA during the summer and confirmed that there had been no changes.

84/20 Finance Update – confidential

The Deputy Principal reported on financial matters.

85/20 Civils Project – confidential

The Board was updated on a partnership project.

86/20 Strategic and Policy Updates – confidential

The Principal updated the Board on both local and national developments and partnership projects, including developments at the NCfN

87/20 Open Session

The meeting was re-opened to the public.

88/20 HR Annual Summary

The Board received an update and annual overview of staffing. In spite of the decrease in staffing numbers, the Board noted the steep increase in costs, largely due to increased pension costs. Sickness absence had improved in year to 3.6% outturn.

The Board felt that staff should be congratulated on the very strong performance in the independent staff survey of colleges.

89/20 Health and Safety Annual Summary

The annual summary of health and Safety was received and noted, with a recap of the significant support for staff and students during the pandemic and of the continued vigilance against the virus.

It was pleasing to note the success performance in respect of Riddor Reportable accidents, there have been no such incidences for four years now for students and none for staff for five years.

The Board felt that it was a good report, but asked whether mental health issues could be included in future such reports.

90/20 Governance

The Clerk presented annual activity for FOI; GDPR and the annual report of the Seal (none in 2019-20) and noted that the next use of the seal was likely to be the purchase of the land for the civils projects, giving effect to the Board's decision in June.

The regularity audit questionnaire, which had been considered by the Audit Committee, was received and approved for signature.

A small amendment to the financial regulations was made to take into account an audit recommendation, which was agreed.

The internal audit plan was also approved, there being no further comments from the Chair of Audit.

The outturn of written resolution E04/20, approving the September re-opening plan, was received and noted.

Resolved –

- 1) That the Annual Report of the Seal be received and noted;
- 2) That the Regularity Audit Questionnaire be approved for signature;
- 3) That the financial regulations 2020/21 be approved;
- 4) That the internal audit plan for 2020/21 be approved.

Staff withdrew

91/20 Confidential Session & Performance Reviews

Resolved – to move into confidential session.

The Board received the performance review of the Principal.

The Clerk withdrew

The Board received the performance review of the Clerk.

The meeting closed at 1940h.