

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 12th November 2020 at 5.30pm by Microsoft Teams

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

Apologies: Robert Milburn

Leave of absence: Beth Gaskill

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

92/20 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held in open session of 1 October 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

93/20 Declarations of Interest

None received

94/20 Agenda Management

No change to the agenda was made.

95/20 Self- Assessments

The Principal noted that the Self-assessment report for Further Education was at the end of a lengthy process of reflection, with some Governors being involved at an earlier stage of development.

Strengths included the clarity of mission and purpose which secured a one college approach to moving to outstanding. It was felt that effective scrutiny and challenge by Governors assisted in the self-improvement process.

It was acknowledged that curriculum design and offer is employer-focused, reflecting employment needs and that in the majority of programmes, dynamic assessment practice ensure high levels of achievement bearing in mind the demands of Covid-19.

Both learners and apprentices demonstrate professional attitudes and behaviours expected in the workplace and have highly effective relationships with their teachers.

Included in the areas for improvement were low levels of engagement for functional skills English and maths, resulting in low achievement rates; the need to secure financial resilience and sustainability; and a few cases where staff take up of CPD around digital skills could be improved.

The assessment was good overall with good for most areas underpinning the overall grading, following the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework structure.

It was asked why Functional Skills had fared so badly and it was felt that the pandemic had had an impact on the required evidence, however, also noted that there could have been more evidence in place at the point of lockdown.

It was noted that GCSE performance was comparatively strong, but that there needed now to be a similar approach to improvement of Functional Skills.

Some governors felt that there were one or two of the areas where 'outstanding' seemed possible, and it was acknowledged that there had also been an internal debate on this very subject, but that the financial situation and the Functional Skills issue had an impact on a good many of the assessment areas.

Another Governor concurred that if functional skills had been an issue at the last Ofsted, it should reflect in the grading, notwithstanding some of the excellent provision elsewhere.

It was agreed that some reflection take place on the overall scorings.

The Quality Manager presented the Higher Education Self-assessment report, which included benchmark material, achievement rates and national and local surveys.

In the majority of areas, outcomes were improving on every measure. A good proportion of 2.1s and firsts had been secured and there was ambition to keep up that momentum. Evidence of lots of students progressing in their careers. Feedback is that assessment is consistently good and strong, and the College is often commended on the quality of resources and how these are used to good effect.

The way in which the College worked with employers to help design courses set the HE provision apart from a majority of universities. The synergy between HE courses and higher apprenticeships was also noted.

It was noted that it was a good report, however, it was asked about the NSS student survey which wasn't as strong as it might have been.

It was felt that there was a need to enhance the way in which feedback was secured from students...there was a plan in place which was not applied in some instances in the way it should, which could address any issues at an earlier stage. There was also a need to increase the response rates to the surveys, as again, there had been a very small proportion who had completed the survey.

While it was not now a requirement to complete a formal validation for HE, the Board was happy to endorse the report and its assessments.

Resolved –

- 1) That the Further Education Self-assessment be reviewed and resubmitted;
- 2) That the Higher Education Self-assessment report be approved;
- 3) That the Continuous Improvement Plan resulting from both reports be tabled for consideration at the next meeting.

96/20 Confidential Session and Minutes

Resolved -

- 1) To move into confidential session;
- 2) To approve the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session of 1 October 2020;
- 3) To approve the minute held in confidential session in respect of performance reviews from 1 October 2020.

97/20 Strategic Update

(To note that this item was held in confidential session, but the minute is not redacted).

The Principal updated the Board that there had been a small number of cases of Covid-19 affecting Lakes College, which had caused some disruption, but that alternative arrangements had been made and procedures and protocols followed in line with national guidance.

The visit by the Chief Inspector of Ofsted had been followed up by a letter, with a very favourable impression having been made.

Some of the detail had now been given on the Lifetime Skills guarantee, including an intention to break down the divide between FE and HE.

It was noted that a request for emergency funding to the DfE would not automatically guarantee FE Commissioner intervention, reflecting the sector distress.

It was noted that exams were set to continue, at least for the time being, but slightly later than they would normally have done.

No longer just 'good' providers to offer T-Levels, but any grade of institution from 2024.

It was noted that apprenticeship starts were down nationally last year in comparison to the previous year, predicted to be 46% down overall. In respect of Lakes College, it was felt that the College was bucking the trend.

It was noted that Ofsted were to start inspecting higher apprenticeships. This being the case, it was asked whether the College would still have to pay as much to higher education bodies, but felt unlikely that there would be any adjustments.

The strategic update was noted.

98/20 Finance Update – confidential

The Deputy Principal gave an update of the financial position of the college including the draft outturn for 2019-20.

99/20 Civils Project – Update – confidential

The Deputy Principal updated the Board in respect of the civils project.

100/20 Open Session

The meeting was re-opened

101/20 Stakeholder Update

This report, by the Quality Manager, gave the Board an overview of complaints; compliments and surveys in 2019-20.

Overall, satisfaction rates were generally high, from students; parents and employers, with further work underway to improve Higher Education satisfaction rates, which had nevertheless improved over the previous year (and noting that achievement rates were generally high).

It was noted that response rates to some surveys needed to improve and that suggested that some kind of incentive might be helpful. It was also asked to consider where response rates were high, whether any practice was transferable to other areas.

It was asked whether there were any trends emerging from complaints and was noted that the majority were either complaints against staff or course management and issues were addressed where needed.

102/20 Safeguarding and Prevent

The safeguarding and prevent annual summary was presented to the Board with some changes to the safeguarding policy arising from changes to guidance and a change in structure appointing Irene Farragher as deputy designated safeguarding officer.

An audit in 2019-20 of safeguarding and prevent had given robust assurance of activity, with no recommendations made.

Governors were reassured that there had been an increase in the frequency of contact with students on the safeguarding register following lockdown.

There were good relations with partner organisations, with police representation at some meetings by phone link.

An overview of performance by learners on the register, including children look after, was generally good and assurance was sought that everything possible had been done for those who had chosen to leave.

It was noted that the counselling service had seen a 14% increase on the previous year.

Resolved – that the Safeguarding Policy be approved.

103/20 Governance

The Clerk noted the outcome of governance self-assessment from the session preceding the Board meeting, which was outstanding with two areas of focus: greater student voice and more visibility of benchmarking.

The draft minutes of the audit committee of 21 September 2020 and the draft Search and Governance minutes of 1 October 2020 (the governance annual review meeting) were received and noted.

The meeting closed at 1920h