



Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held at 5.30 pm on Thursday, 18th March 2020 by Microsoft Teams

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Norma Boyes; Amie Calvin; Elaine Clinton Peter Ellwood (From Minute No: 21/21); Beth Gaskell; Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday; Phil Jardine; Arron McCarthy; Robert Milburn; Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Brooke Robson; Tanya Weston

Apologies: Stuart Williams

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal); Mark Birschel (Quality Manager – Minute Nos 23/21); Jane Murray (Clerk)

17/21 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021 in open session be approved and signed as a correct record.

18/21 Declarations of Interest

Chris Nattress; Nigel Holliday; Phil Jardine declared an interest in Minute No 25/21 and 31/21, Lakes College Enterprises, and would withdraw from decision-making.

19/21 Agenda Management

Funding Bids were moved up the agenda and were taken after the Financial Update.

20/21 KPIs

As before, 16-18 numbers were above target, with an impact on the allocation for next year. The advised allocation also included a very optimistic assumption by the ESFA with respect to T-Level recruitment and was therefore being treated with some caution overall.

The Adult Education Budget numbers were small, not at the same volume as last year. The sector was waiting for news on tolerance levels. In the interim, consideration was being given to further means to meet strategic objectives of distance learning and extending the geographical reach of the college through and enhanced distance learning offer.

The College was also preparing a small offer to commence in April for Level 3 adult learners as part of the Government's adult initiative.

In comparison to national performance, the College was pleased with its apprenticeship starts at 298 so far this year. Apprenticeships in learning had been affected by lockdowns, with breaks in learning, particularly in some sectors such as care homes and schools. Overall though, relatively good performance in comparison to the national picture.

Moving to attendance, focus was mostly on functional skills English and maths attendance, which, by way of an update, was suggesting that recovery actions – to be discussed later in the agenda – were beginning to have an impact. In the last two weeks, attendance for FS Maths was up to 70% and for FS English to 74%.

Asked about GCSE attendance, GCSE Maths attendance was strong at 80%, but an acknowledgement that some investigation was ongoing into English attendance at 65%.

Asked about the level of performance for Functional Skills English and maths following progress review 4, it was predicted to be 56% for maths and 54% for English. Where engagement with English and maths was (persistently) unsatisfactory, disciplinary action process was being instigated.

It was noted that HE attendance was consistently strong.

The KPI data for FE learners at or above target was updated in the meeting following progress review 4. This was now above target at 84% which was welcomed by the Board.

Retention remained strong.

Work placements were having a challenging year again, but some progress was being made with 19 early years/health and social care placements scheduled and some work taking place on the Big Rig on site in lieu of work placements directly with an employer.

21/21 Curriculum Update

While there had been a short suspension to observation activity to allow staff to regroup with learners on site following lockdown, it was felt that the observation model, with streamlined processes and innovative practice, was proving very effective. Observations were restarting shortly.

The Assistant Principal also shared recovery plans, where staff were working very hard to re-engage with students and offering support mechanisms where need be to assist students to feel confident in their progress. The Board was impressed with the approach.

Higher Education performance was strong this year, with graduates gaining excellent results. It included a couple of uplifts from merit to distinction and it was pleasing to note that the Foundation Degree for Civil Engineering and Asset Management had seen learners obtain 4 x merit and 1 pass, which was a good foundation on which to build for the Civils Training Centre and Associated Curriculum.

A MSc in industrial management (covering pathways of mechanical, electrical and low carbon), is under development with the University of Cumbria and it is hoped to launch in 2022. It is also intended to move from HNC/HND provision for Business Management to a Foundation Degree with the University of Cumbria, building on the success of such a move for engineering and the associated good feedback from employers.

Peter Ellwood joined the meeting

In respect of apprenticeships, work was continuing to re-engage with employers, with some sectors, such as hospitality, particularly badly hit. The College was working with empathy for the situation that employers found themselves in and were looking at flexibilities around end point assessment.

While the awarding organisation AQA had yet to issue guidance following the cancellation of GCSE English and maths formal exams, there was confidence that the team would be called on to support in-class assessments on which to base their grades and that a moderation process would ensue.

The challenge would be to motivate learners to be fully prepared given their interpretation that exams are cancelled. Individuals who are not making expected levels of progress are being targeted, including specialist intervention during the Easter break. The hybrid delivery (where some learners are online and some in class) in support of those caring for dependents or those self-isolating is being carefully monitored.

An extensive list of activity in respect of T-Levels, and project milestones, were shared with the Board. This included marketing and promotion, engagement with employers in developing the curriculum and sharing of development in national and local networks. In response to questioning, a few applications had already been received, but that focus in the next phase would be about selling the offer.

Work was also underway with employers in respect of the civil engineering offer for next year, prioritising the offer in line with employer need. It was noted that the appointment of site manager would assist in resources and mobilising operations.

The Deputy Principal was thanked for a strong report, particularly the detail on the recovery actions taking place.

22/21 Office for Students: Review of Compliance

The Quality Manager presented a very detailed review requested by the Office for Students, to consider whether Higher Education Students are getting what they were promised in line with expectations of consumer law.

The accompanying report demonstrated that there was a high level of clarity about what they could expect in respect of teaching and learning and that there had been no complaints in this respect. It was also the case that any subsequent changes to teaching, learning and assessment as a result of public health issues had been well communicated. Some actions arising from the audit included:

- A need to increase awareness of the Higher Education Student Protection plan for existing and new entrants in January;
- To ensure that all HE learners know how to make complaint if need be including redress to the OIA. (While this is in the complaints' policy, it is also about making sure they know where to locate the policy).

On both the above issues, it was about making sure that HE students knew where to locate these on the website. There was also a need to

- To ensure that all tutors issue and evaluate Module Evaluation Questionnaires.

In response to questioning, it was felt that the issue was one of timeliness.

In addition to the formal request for review, an audit of continuing compliance with the conditions of registration with the OfS had been carried out, which demonstrated that conditions continued to be met, but that some updates to the Higher Education Strategy and to the admissions policy would be beneficial. In addition to this, the staff handbook was being amended with further reference to academic freedom (in addition to the policy already approved).

As part of regulation in general (not specifically OfS), it was asked what the response from Governors had been in respect of the pandemic and it was felt that they had been engaged at Chair/Vice Chair level, through frequent updates, through Board meetings and special meetings, and had participated in online sessions.

(It is also noted for the record that re-opening plans and covid-specific risk registers have been approved by the Board).

Robert Milburn left the meeting

23/21 Confidential Session and Minutes

Resolved –

- 1) To move into confidential session;
- 2) To approve the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session of 28 January 2021;
- 3) To approve the minutes of the remuneration committee minutes and performance reviews (independent governors only) of 28 January 2021;
- 4) To approve (an addendum) to the minutes of the special meeting held in confidential session on 11 March 2021;
- 5) To receive and note the draft minutes of the audit committee meeting held on 8 February 2021 and the draft minutes of the Finance and Corporate Working Group held on 25 February 2021.

24/21 Strategic Update – Confidential

The Principal updated the Board on local partnership projects with 3rd parties, which is redacted.

The following minute is not redacted:

The Board congratulated all staff involved in the successful accreditation of Lakes Provision by the three engineering institutes/societies within the Engineering Council. This means that students can progress to chartered status. A member of the Board who had been questioned as a local employer noted that the accreditation panel had been so impressed, that employers had a comparatively easy questioning session.

The Principal noted that the Port of Workington had received £23m in Town Deal funding, with Lakes College closely working on the digital skills connectivity project.

On other issues in the Principal's update, the Board received assurance from the Assistant :Principal that changes to DBS certification had been noted.

Robert Milburn re-joined the meeting

25/21 Finance Update -confidential

The Deputy Principal updated the Board on the current financial position and commercial developments.

26/21 Funding Bids: Match Funding - confidential

The Board considered financial implications of funding bids

27/21 Funding Bid: Further Education Transformation Fund – confidential

The Board approved a funding application.

28/21 Funding Bids: T-Levels - confidential

The Board discussed funding opportunities.

29/21 Risk Register – confidential

The Board received and noted the risk register.

30/21 NCfN - confidential

The Board received a partnership update.

Chris Nattress, Phil Jardine and Nigel Holliday had declared an interest in Lakes College Enterprises Ltd and withdrew from discussion and decision-making on decisions.

31/21 Lakes College Enterprises – confidential

The Board considered commercial relationships.

Chris Nattress, Phil Jardine and Nigel Holliday re-joined the meeting.

32/21 Open Session

Resolved – to move into open session

33/21 Careers Strategy

The refreshed careers' strategy, which put the learners' ambitions at the heart of the strategy, was presented for approval. It was asked how the strategy accommodated those who did not have a clear picture of what they wanted to be and it was felt that the good Independent Advice and Guidance at the start of their college career and at regular intervals thereafter, would be essential in meeting learners' needs. These kinds of interventions would also be used to drive home messages, such as the need for English and maths as part of the skills mix to achieve their job aspirations.

The Board felt that the strategy looked good and requested the opportunity for evaluation in next year's board plan.

Resolved – that the careers' strategy be approved.

34/21 Governance

The Chair and a governor reported on their chat with student governors and another level 3 student in respect of their experience of online learning. They felt it had been a productive session and that they wanted to repeat the exercise with Level 2 students.

The meeting closed at 1945h.