

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 28 January 2021 at 5.30pm on Microsoft Teams

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Norma Boyes; Amie Calvin; Elaine Clinton
Peter Ellwood; Beth Gaskell; Nigel Holliday; Phil Jardine; Aaron McCarthy
Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Brooke Robson; Tanya Weston; Stuart
Williams

Apologies: Alison Hampson; Robert Milburn

Also present:

Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal);
Neil Anderson (HR Manager, Min No 12/21); Jane Murray (Clerk)

01/21 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session on Thursday, 10th December 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

02/21 Declarations of Interest

No further declarations received (it being noted on the agenda when the Principal and Clerk would withdraw in respect to remuneration and performance).

03/21 Agenda Management

No changes were made to the agenda.

04/21 Key Performance Indicators

The Deputy Principal noted the relatively strong performance in recruitment for 16-18 year olds, but equally noted that Adult Education Learners were below target, although at a better point than the previous year. Work was continuing to boost numbers, including a marketing promotion for distance learning.

Apprenticeship starts are relatively strong, but apprentices ‘in learning’ numbers were impacted by the first lockdown. However, this has been offset by increased funding rates through the move to apprenticeship standards. HE recruitment is above target.

There has been a lot of behind the scenes work on attendance, with strong performance against national performance in the first term of 83%. As level 1 online attendance is lower than average, some learners were being brought back on site. However, this has now been paused owing to lockdown.

It was asked whether low attendance on English and maths functional skills would have a direct impact on performance. It was agreed by the Assistant Principal that this may have an impact, which was behind the move to bring students back on site. It was asked what more could be done to pre-empt poor pass rates for functional skills this year and reassurance was given that strenuous efforts were underway to secure the evidence that was required to pass the qualifications. He added, though, that he felt the uncertainty about examination requirements was not helpful to either staff or students.

It was asked why there was a decline in Education and Training Learners progress between weeks 1 and 2 and it was felt that by Progress Week 2, there was a richer information base which gave a clearer picture. Reassurance was offered that the situation would improve.

In response to questioning, it was noted that retention was strong and that it remained strong at this point in the year, in spite of lockdown.

05/21 Curriculum Update

It was noted that remote learning continued through lockdown, building on experience. Laptops have been supplied and there was real ambition to continue to delivery as much of planned learning as possible.

Noting the continued vigilance in respect of Safeguarding, with external agencies also attending safeguarding meetings, it was asked whether the available counselling support was being accessed. It was felt that the counselling service had been increased in line with demand and although this was done online, 1-2-1 was still available.

Some concern was expressed about learner voice for higher education, with some answers in the autumn term survey below target. It was noted that participation continued to be low, but that a concerted effort was being made to generate more participation, including HE forums being chaired by the Principal.

Asked about feedback on online learning, some feedback had been received from adult students about their difficulties in accessing the learning, which had led to more flexibility to accommodate their other responsibilities. It was verified that tutors were able to check whether a learner had accessed the learning (if at a later date) and this was confirmed.

It was noted that the Office for Students was requesting that the Board review whether the College had met what they had promised to deliver at the start of the year for Higher Education Students and what action was proposed if there were discrepancies. This would come to the March board meeting, but in the

interim, a high level audit of the College's continued compliance with the conditions of registration was tabled for information.

06/21 Equality and Diversity

Reflecting on performance in 2019-20, it was noted that the impact of poor performance in functional skills in English and maths, which had had an impact on pass rates, including Level 1, had seen a widening of gaps in a number of areas, but particularly around disadvantage; learning disabilities and gender. This was met with some disappointment, however, it was verified that the action plans put in place should have a positive impact. It was also asked whether, had the functional skills rates been stripped out, what the performance was for the remainder of the study programmes and assurance given that this was strong.

Some minor amendments to the equality and diversity strategy were received and noted.

07/21 Confidential Session and Minutes

Resolved –

- 1) To move into confidential session
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session of 10 December 2021 be received and noted.

08/21 Strategic Update - confidential

The Principal shared some local and national developments and progress with partnership working.

09/21 NCfN Financial Statements- confidential

The Board received and noted the NCfN financial statements.

10/21 Finance Update - confidential

The Board received and noted a financial update

11/21 Open Session

12/21 Human Resources Report

The Board welcomed Neil Anderson to the meeting, who presented an update to the Board on staffing issues.

Through the scrutiny process of vacancies, staffing had been reduced in-year. The new professional development tool was getting some good feedback, as did the virtual award ceremony this year and in response to questioning, confirmed that there was a good spread of staff involved in the pilot.

The reduction in sickness absence was noted and welcomed, with analysis suggesting that more flexible working patterns coupled with current work practices and good hygiene, limiting the spread of bugs, had contributed to the fall. In response to questioning, it was felt that the ability of staff to maintain some kind of flexibility in working patterns would certainly be a consideration in the future.

The efforts of the staff in setting an operational lateral testing centre had been impressive and this was echoed by the Principal, who added thanks to all staff involved, including HR, Admin and facilities staff.

13/21 Facilities Update

It was noted that Storys had now started work on the Civils Site.

Strong performance continued on Health and Safety with no Riddor reportable incidents and all Covid measures in place.

It was felt that the cleaning contract was working well and was sufficiently flexible to meet business needs during the pandemic. It was noted that the catering contract was due to expire at the end of the academic year.

ActivZone staff have again been furloughed, however, it is noted that there has continued to be a significant demand for the service on re-opening from lockdowns.

It was noted that the annual review of insurance policy has taken place (in year 3 of the 5 year contract). In addition to an uplift of 1.2 % in the line with CPI of the building and contents, there was the intention to increase cyber insurance from standard cover to £1m.

It was asked about site security with limited numbers and felt that the site was secure with passes needed to enter through the security doors and less opportunity to tailgate.

It was asked to what extent cleaning staff had been furloughed and advised that sufficient staff were on site to ensure cleanliness and regular cleaning of touchpoints. The supervisor was on site.

Assurance was sought that home workers were covered by insurance and advised that this had been checked and that the College was fully covered and that the health and safety officer had carried out home working assessments and kept these under review. A number of staff had taken their office chair and their monitors home with them.

Staff, student and staff governors withdrew

14/21 **Recommendations from the Remuneration Committee**

In the broader context of reward for staff, the Remuneration Committee put forward a recommendation for staff to receive a discretionary day, noting their commitment and long hours as a result of the pandemic and that a letter be sent out from the Chair.

Resolved –

- 1) That a staff discretionary day be awarded for Wednesday, 2nd June 2021.

The Board discussed remuneration of the Senior Postholders and their performance reviews.

The Clerk withdrew

The remuneration of the Clerk and her performance review was discussed.

The meeting closed at 1940h