

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation
held on Thursday 12th July 2018 at 8.00am
in the Boardroom of Matthew Boulton Campus**

| Present: | Apologies: |
|--|-------------------|
| Steve Hollis (SH) (Chair) | Dan Zastawny (DZ) |
| Veronica Docherty (VD) | |
| Andrew Cleaves (Principal) | |
| Simon Thompson (ST) (by phone) | |
| Hilary Smyth-Allen (HA) | |
| Michele Larmour (ML) | |
| Amardeep Gill (AG) | |
| Keith Horton (KH) | |
| Angela Myers (AM) | |
| Cliff Hall (CH) | |
| Mohammed Al-bukair (MA) (student governor) | |
| Jane Smith (JS) (Staff Governor) | |
| Sonia Crook-Lake (SCL) (Staff Governor) | |
| In Attendance: | |
| Louise Jones (LJ) | |
| Liam Nevin (LN) | |
| Simon Cosson (SC) | |
| Karen Reilly –ESFA (KR) | |
| Michael Nicol – ESFA (MN) | |

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Dan Zastawny

Declarations of Interest and Matters Arising

No declarations were received in addition to those contained in the register.

To note: Due to technical problems with the College's phone system ST was unable to join by conference call until item 3 (iv)

SH welcomed KR and MN to the meeting.

The Chair advised that the confidential minutes of the meetings of the 17th May 2018 and 19th June would be taken under item 8.

Item 1 – Open Minutes of the Meeting of 17 May 2018

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Item 2 – Report from the Chair of the Academic Standards and Quality Development Committee

(i) Draft Minutes 21.6.18

These were noted

(ii) Post Inspection Action Plan

VD summarised the business transacted by the Committee. In relation to the PIAP the Corporation were advised that improvements in A level performance were not progressing at the required rate and the Corporation had previously agreed a range of changes that would address this issue. The Committee had also scrutinised and challenged whether theme 3, "teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to learners" contained sufficiently comprehensive measures, and it was noted that the recommendations of the FE Commissioner included reflection on the amended SAR grades and that this was addressed under item 6 of the agenda.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the PIAP be noted**

(iii) Quality Strategy/Journey to Excellence

A three year development plan to achieve excellence had been presented to the committee and the objectives and goals were aligned to the business plan. The Committee had stressed the need for more focussed measures and the Principal had provided assurance that these would be developed for discussion at the Corporation Strategy Day in October.

HS noted that the risk register identified a movement in the RAG rating from green to red in respect of "Curriculum offer is not fit for purpose" which was a surprise and she asked for an explanation. LJ advised that an important component of the journey to excellence was to ensure that the curriculum offer remained relevant. For example, the College's digital offer had shrunk although this was an area of job growth. The rating reflected the need to critically review the relevance of the curriculum offer.

SH summarised that this was a reflection of the College's offer and not the quality of delivery, but that the language needed to bring this out more clearly.

CH asked whether there were qualifications that the College should be offering and were not and pointed to the work being done by others, for example, in relation to trialling of T levels.

LJ stated in reply that the College curriculum offer was quite traditional and she was planning to build on the work being done with Careers Colleges to review the College wide offer.

The Principal advised that the plan set out the College's aspirations over the next three years. He did not want a post Ofsted lull and was committed to driving the College on to outstanding. He was looking for the support of the Corporation and agreement that the document reflected the right level of aspiration given that the core priorities under section 3 reflected the trajectory to get the College to outstanding. This would be the core of the College's developing strategy with the focus on improving outcomes for students.

SH invited comment from the ESFA colleagues and MN stated that he had regular conversations with the College and his view was that it had "kicked on" considerably in the last six months but there were still some areas where there was a residual risk on quality and, for example, where staff were subject to performance management.

AM stated that she was particularly supportive of the emphasis on a personalised learning focus and would like to see more of this and SH stated that he would welcome CH and AM's contribution the development of this part of the strategy in advance of the governors strategy day in October.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Journey to Excellence/Quality Plan be approved**

- **That the Journey to Excellence be integrated into the development of the College Strategy.**

(iv) Safeguarding Policy Update

VD advised that minor changes were proposed in light of changes in the guidelines produced by the government. The document was clear and comprehensive and as lead safeguarding governor she was satisfied that the roles of key personnel were clear and that staff understood it. The document had been reviewed by the Committee and was commended to the Corporation.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the updated Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy be approved**

(v) College Forecast 2017-18

VD advised that the underlying basis of forecasting had moved away from the BRAG system and was now based on the data in Markbook, with supplementary sources used where Markbook data was not complete. She highlighted the forecast improvement in grades for 16-18 programmes and for adult learners as set out in the report. It was noted that the forecast for apprenticeship achievement was 72%, but that at 57%, timely completions were forecast at 2.4% below the national rate.

A/S levels were forecast to improve but would still be 5% below the national rate and A level achievement rates were forecast to reduce to 87%.

LJ was asked to summarise her confidence in the forecast and she advised that various sources of data supported this; there was a more robust assessment of student progress throughout the year based on assignment marks, and attendance, retention and student satisfaction had all increased. In addition, teaching and learning had significantly improved through the support provided by the PLCs.

JS added that in previous years observations had been undertaken within the Directorates but there was now a more independent and consistent approach and that the focus of teaching and learning coaches on the impact of teaching on student progress had more rigorously identified the students who were not making sufficient progress. The measurement of progress was, in her experience, more accurate than in previous years.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

(vi) Higher Level Skills Update

VD advised that four of the seven objectives had been met and that the remaining three were set to be achieved. However, applications for the next academic year were 25% down on the current year and this was particularly significant because it was a growth area for the College. Based on the conversion rate expected from applications, 400 walk ins would be necessary to meet the target and that did not appear a realistic prospect.

LJ agreed that the recruitment target was a risk and that a change in the leadership in this area had now been made.

HS stated that the link between this information and the financial implications presented to the Finance Committee had not been strong and it was necessary to understand how these implications had been reflected in the Financial Plan

LJ advised that the financial targets sat with each Head of Faculty and there was an expectation that resources were taken out of areas that did not meet income targets.

KR noted that the ESFA were seeing poorer HE recruitment across the FE sector.

ML noted that there were 14 new programmes proposed on page 3 of the report and questioned the rationale for these and whether performance was a factor. LJ advised that many of these were introduced as updated courses in discussion with the partner universities, or in some cases it was a requirement of the awarding organisation. However, the changes were not performance related.

KH stated that recruitment to HLS courses was a risk because most universities were aggressively targeting potential students to try and combat the demographic downturn.

HS questioned whether this advice warranted a review of the financial target and SH asked for clarification on the flexibility of the College's cost base if its income target was not achieved.

LJ stated that there was reasonable flexibility and that she had already asked her Heads of Faculty to produce contingency plans. There was, in this calculation, a trade-off between the balance of salaried staff and Associate Lecturers (ALs) and whilst the number of ALs would be lower than in past years it would be necessary to retain some in order to ensure the ability to quickly adjust the cost base after September if recruitment was below target.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

General

VD summed up the remaining business considered by the Committee. Thereafter, KH expressed concern that the Business Review at item 5 of the agenda appeared to be at odds with the discussion at the Academic Standards Committee in that the forecast for students to achieve target grades was 63% for 2017/18. LJ stated that this was not inconsistent with the debate at the Committee and explained the distinction between achievement of target grades and achievement of qualifications, noting that students could achieve the qualification without hitting their target grade.

Item 3 – Report from the Chair of the Finance Committee

(i) Draft Minutes 3.7.18

HS advised the Corporation that there had been two meetings of the Committee on the 3rd July and the draft minutes of both were noted.

(ii) Management Accounts

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

(iii) Financial Plan

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

(iv) Business Plan

ST joined the meeting by telephone at this point.

A completed "mock- up" of the business plan was tabled at the meeting

HS questioned whether the business plan was consistent with the Journey to Excellence considered by the Corporation earlier in the meeting and LJ advised that the two documents had been developed in tandem and that the targets were consistent.

KH asked who would see the plan and the Principal advised that it would be circulated widely within the College.

AG stated that the document read well and should be made available as widely as possible.

KR stated that under strategic goal 4 it would be appropriate for the College to consider reducing debt to the government. SH agreed and stated that it fitted with the objective of financial sustainability and also recognised the support that the College had been given.

AM noted (by reference to the Business Review) that 61% staff satisfaction seemed low given the College's objective of being a great place to work. The Principal advised that the Business Plan set a target of 6% increase in employee engagement but he acknowledged that the level of engagement at senior levels within the College was not carrying through the organisation and this required a renewed focus from the Leadership Team.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That subject to the amendment to strategic goal 4 as identified in the preamble, the Business Plan be approved.**

(v) Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy

HS advised that only minor amendments were proposed to the Policy.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy be approved.**

(vi) Property Disposals

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

(vii) Partnerships 2018/19 Recommendations

HS pointed out that the objective behind the recommendations was to reduce further the College's use of sub-contracting with a corresponding focus on direct delivery.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the maximum contract values and the proposed sub-contractors for 2018/19, as set out in the report, be approved.**

Item 4 – Report from the Chair of the Audit Committee

(i) Draft minutes 3.7.18

These were noted

(ii) Risk Register

ST summarised that the Committee had received a helpful summary of the overall movement in key risks, and that it was notable that the risk had increased in relation to income targets and cash, but had reduced in relation to the quality of teaching and achievement rates.

The security internal audit report was noted and it was felt that whilst the recommendations were not particularly significant there had been greater discussion around penetration testing and business continuity and that further consideration was being given to this.

KH noted that staff costs were increasing to close to 70% for the year and questioned whether the Committee were satisfied that these were being appropriately controlled. ST stated that this touched on a matter discussed by the Committee which was a desire for greater co-operative working between the Finance and Audit Committees.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the risk register be noted**

(iii) Health and Safety Update

This was noted

(iv) Internal Audit Plan 18-19

There being no discussion on this item

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Internal Audit Plan for 2018-19 be approved**

(v) External Audit Planning Memorandum

There being no discussion on this item

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the External Audit Planning Memorandum be approved**

General

ST noted that due to a change in the committee terms of reference it was no longer possible for JS to remain on the Committee and he took this opportunity to thank JS for her work over the last two years.

Item 5 – Business Review/Performance Report

SH introduced this item and invited any questions or comments to identify whether the Executive were taking all the necessary steps in relation to the College's performance.

ML stated that a key issue for the College was the pace to engender culture change and in particular whether there was sufficient capacity to ensure swift progress.

The Principal stated that there had been a strong focus on culture change generally and particularly over the last three months and the key challenge now was to unlock engagement and empowerment, which he would be happy to describe at the next meeting of the

Corporation.

ML stated that she would like to see the issue explored at the strategy day so that the Corporation could assure itself of the pace being built into the process, noting that whilst culture change itself was a process that required time to embed, it was possible for performance and development measures to move at a faster pace.

VD stated that she had made a similar observation at the Finance Committee; taking costs out of the College would have an impact on the speed of delivery in a situation where it took time to embed change. This had been seen in the huge effort to address teaching and learning improvements.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Business Review be noted**

Item 6 – FE Commissioner Recommendations

LN briefly summarised the steps being taken to address the recommendations from the last stocktake report.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 7 – Governance

(i) Corporation and Committee Calendar 18-19 and Workplan

SH requested that the Corporation meeting scheduled for September be re-scheduled for the following week.

KH questioned whether the first meeting of the Academic Standards Committee scheduled for November was too late, and LN agreed to re-consider that.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That subject to the points set out in the preamble the calendar for 2018-19 and the workplan be approved**

(ii) Minutes of the Governance and Search Committee 21 June 2018

Upon the recommendation of the Governance and Search Committee it was

RESOLVED

- **That Peter Croom be appointed as a co-opted member of the Finance Committee with a four year term.**

(iii) Corporation Membership

SH introduced the report and drew attention to the three recommendations. He advised that

there had been considerable changes to the Corporation membership and in September he wished to discuss, and take advice from the ESFA on the composition of the Board. Prior to taking the recommendations it was noted that this was the last meeting of SCL and MA, as staff and student governors. On behalf of the Corporation SH thanked both for their hard work and contribution to the Corporation.

It was further noted that VD and JS had agreed to remain as members of the Corporation and both were thanked for this commitment.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- That the term of office of Veronica Docherty be extended up to and including the Corporation meeting immediately following the next Ofsted inspection
- That Jane Smith and Sam Coles be appointed as the staff governors for 2018-19
- That the Corporation review Committee membership at its September meeting.

Item 8 – Governor Confidential Discussion and Any Other Business

The staff and student governors left the meeting at this point. MN and KR remained at the invitation of the Chair. The rest of this item is contained in a confidential minute

Date of Next Meeting: TBC



Signed.....

Chairman

Date..... 13th October 2018