

Open Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Corporation

22 June 2020 at 17:00

Present

Carole Stott (CS)	Chair
Dan Ball (DB)	Student Governor
Paul Blenkinsopp (PB)	Staff Governor
Erica Draisey (ED)	
Andy Furse (AF)	
Mike Oram (MO)	
Laurel Penrose	Principal & CEO
Ian Tavener (IT)	
Gary Waylen (GW)	
Jenny Williams (JW)	
Neil Wilson (NW)	
Julian Young (JY)	

In attendance

Jayne Davis (JD)	Deputy Principal, Curriculum & Quality
Paul Fletton (PF)	Interim Finance Director
Barbara Owen (BO)	Director of HR and OD
Anne Roberts (AR)	Head of Governance

Attendance: 100%

ITEM	ACTION
1. Apologies for Absence	
Welcome was given by the Chair. There were no apologies for absence.	
2. Declarations of Interest	
Dan Ball in relation to the Student Governor appointment. Mike Oram in relation to the Institute of Technology.	
3. Confidentiality of items	
The confidential Board minutes, Risk Registers, Management Accounts (until approved) and the Corporation Governance Group and Finance & Estates Group notes were agreed as confidential.	

4. Minutes	
4.1 Open Minutes – 30th March 2020	
The open minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2020 were approved as an accurate record and the minutes would be signed by the Chair following the meeting.	
4.2 Confidential Minutes – 30th March 2020	
The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2020 were approved as an accurate record and the minutes would be signed by the Chair following the meeting.	
4.3 Actions and Matters Arising	
The Board considered the action register. All actions had been completed, were on this agenda or future agendas.	
4.4 Written Resolution 7 May 2020	
The outcome of the written resolution asking for approval of the Management Accounts (Feb & March) 2020 and the revised Integrated Financial Model was formally reported. Ten members had confirmed their approval and two members had not responded. The resolution was therefore carried. PF had submitted the return to the ESFA.	
5. STRATEGY	
5.1 Principal's update	
<p>LP thanked the management team at the College and staff for enabling the continuing strong student participation and for moving so quickly to keep things on track. She provided the following updates:</p> <p>Operational</p> <p>(i) Assessments</p> <p>This has been a recent focus for the College with tight timescales expected from the awarding bodies. The technical assessments were less well-defined but the College had completed all that was required within the required timescales.</p> <p>(ii) Apprentices and Learners</p> <p>Just under 50% of apprentices had been furloughed and 7 had been made redundant. Delivery had proved more challenging for adult and community learning where digital access was difficult and numbers had declined.</p> <p>Members asked about the impact on income streams. LP highlighted the difficulty in retaining levy-funded apprentices as the contract was with the employer. However, every effort was being made to ensure they could continue studying or were offered alternative study. The main impact would be the loss of new apprentices and this would have a significant impact over the next three years.</p>	

The Chair reminded members about the AoC 'Rebuild: skills led recovery plan' in relation to the impact on the sector and need for funding. It was likely that there would be a growth in demand for which funding would be needed. She asked members to support this initiative through their own contacts and networks.

(iii) Staff

Over 90 staff had been furloughed in May. This had reduced slightly in June and was regularly reviewed.

(iv) Estates

The catering and hospitality project had been delayed for 3 weeks due to lockdown but was now on track with work aimed to be finished in the next few weeks. It would be called 'James Street Eat'. Photographs were shown to members. A question was asked about the installation of touch free fixtures, given the covid-19 situation. LP confirmed that these were being reviewed.

(v) Institute of Technology (IoT)

LP reported that the contract had now been signed and sealed. The College was therefore now part of the West of England IoT. Access to capital funds was now available for IT hardware and the refurbishment of part of the Macaulay Building. Members thanked LP and her team for the work in achieving this which should be of great benefit to the college.

(vi) SEND Centre

The bid submitted to B&NES for residential accommodation at the Somer Valley Campus was not being taken forward by the Authority. However, the College would continue to work with B&NES on this.

(vii) Creative & Digital new build

The College had obtained RIBA Stage 2 but could not achieve RIBA Stage 3 without an additional £300k for surveys. Re-profiling of funds had been requested but as this had not been agreed, the bid could not progress. This was disappointing news but LP was making every effort to ensure that this remained high on B&NES agenda. Members asked how this related to the proposed I-Start programme. LP confirmed that this programme related to levels 4 and above.

(viii) Government Capital Funding

Prior to covid-19, the Government had confirmed £1.6bn capital for the FE sector. An announcement was awaited.

(ix) T-Level Qualifications

The Board received an update in relation to the T-Levels capital bid for £1.8m government funding. This funding would support capital work in relation to the delivery of T-levels from September 2021 in the curriculum areas of Digital, Education & Early Years and Health. The proposed capital work, as outlined in the bid, was summarised for each of the curriculum areas.

The Board noted the current proposal that the College's contribution of matching 50% of the funding would be in kind but a waiver would be requested. In light of the fact that the deadline for the bid was 26 June 2020, the Board agreed:

- (i) to ask the Finance & Estates Group and the Chair of the Corporation to review the proposal in more detail, and
- (ii) to delegate approval of the bid to the Finance & Estates Group and to the Chair of the Corporation, on its behalf.

(x) Applications 2020/21

Applications were looking positive with an increase of 8% above this time last year and a 21% increase in acceptances. The College had held a successful virtual open day and a second one would take place on 30 June 2020.

Strategic Developments

(i) Members considered a briefing paper on work being undertaken in preparation of the predicted post-Covid 19 impact on employment within the Local Authority and WECA region. LP provided context in terms of growth in the health, social care and digital sectors and the opportunity for the College to support local skills and provide routes to employment. Members commented that this was an excellent briefing paper and one that showed how the college could play both a civic and leadership role, post covid-impact.

LP reported that she was on the B&NES Recovery (Rebuild) Board and Skills Advisory Board and the College had good links with key players in the local area so was well placed to lead in the delivery of skills for both adults and young people. LP also reported on the links with St John's Foundation to help disadvantaged learners.

Members commented on the shrinking of some sector areas, such as hospitality and tourism which had been buoyant for the College in the past. The College needed to be agile in its course offerings and one of its strengths was that it offered a broad and diverse curriculum and could build on its health, science and digital areas. Care was needed that entry and level one students did not get left behind.

JD reported that the Border Agency had just announced that Tier 4 sponsorship could be used for blended and distance learning (for international students).

(ii) LP briefed members on discussions with Bath Spa University to provide a joined-up approach to address the need for re-skilling and up-skilling courses, as well as the College increasing its Adult Community Provision for introductory level programmes. The Chair also reported on her discussions with the Vice Chancellor. The intention was to explore a more formalised partnership working

<p>arrangement which would be of benefit to both organisations and the wider community. Members asked whether any formal partnership agreements were in place. LP confirmed that nothing had yet been formalised. If the Board agreed, the next step would be for the Chairs of both organisations to have a discussion to explore the shared values, vision and potential benefits, whilst remaining autonomous institutions. HE and FE were going through a transition period and this would be a good opportunity to consider how both institutions could support the local economy and needs of disadvantaged young people, particularly at a time when the demographics were rising. Members were content with this provided that the mission and identity of the college was upheld.</p> <p>The Board agreed that discussions should continue with Bath Spa University to explore a more formalised partnership arrangement and requested that a paper come back to the Board with any options and recommendations. ACTION: Chair/LP</p> <p>(iii) LP reported on the impact generally on funding for the College. A task force had been set up to model scenarios, look, at a strategic level, at how to provide new pathways, reduce costs and lessen the impact of a reduction in funding. The outcome of this would form an action plan for discussion alongside the budget for 2020/21 at the next Board meeting. ACTION: LP</p>	<p>CS/LP</p> <p>LP</p>
<p>5.2 Recovery and Planning</p>	
<p>5.2.1 Summer re-opening of the College</p> <p>LP reported that the College was closely following Government and H&S Executive guidance and, as communicated earlier to Board members, proposed that the College partially re-opened to more students from 1 July 2020. Significant progress had been achieved and detailed risk assessments completed with input from staff and the unions (see 5.2.3).</p>	
<p>5.2.2 Planning for September</p> <p>The summer opening would be closely monitored and outcomes used to inform actions for September. Management were looking at start/end dates, class space, transport, online enrolments and blended learning. A paper would be brought to the July Board.</p> <p>ACTION: LP/JD</p>	<p>LP/JD</p>
<p>5.2.3 Covid-19 Risk Assessment</p> <p>JD provided an update on the key risks and mitigating actions associated with the return to college of selected students and staff prior to September 2020. The assessment used a hierarchy of risk controls and government guidance on health & safety measures in educational settings. The document had been put together in consultation with staff and the unions.</p> <p>Systems had been tested, buildings had been checked and prepared and everything was as up to date as it could be. The</p>	

<p>student governor reported that the student union would need to be assessed in terms of whether this could be opened to those other than the more vulnerable students.</p> <p>Members commented that this was a well put together and comprehensive risk assessment. The biggest challenges were likely to be students not adhering to social distancing and capacity in the classrooms. Members asked whether staff and students had to acknowledge that they had read the guidance in advance and this was confirmed; the code of conduct had been revised to take account of Covid-19. Staff and students had been asked to provide relevant information that the college needed to be aware of. Individual conversations were taking place, where appropriate. On the evidence presented, the Board were assured that a partial opening of college could take place on 1 July 2020 and approved the risk assessment, in principle, accepting future changes according to Government guidelines. Thanks were given to JD for her coordination of this and to the staff involved.</p>	
<p>6. SCRUTINY</p>	
<p>6.1 Strategic Risk Register</p>	
<p>The Board considered the Strategic Risk Register which would also be reviewed by the Audit Committee on 29 June 2020. Key risks continued to be the Apprenticeships budget and the College's financial situation. One risk had moved out of red since the last update. Some risks had been impacted by the college closure from March 2020.</p> <p>Members asked about lagged funding and the risk if student numbers increased significantly next year. LP confirmed that the college could apply for a further 5% funding and that lobbying was taking place in the sector in relation to the parameters.</p>	
<p>6.2 Adult Education Budget (AEB) Curriculum Plan</p>	
<p>The Board considered the AEB WECA curriculum plan which had been brought to the Board ahead of the full curriculum plan to allow more detailed scrutiny. The Board noted that the College would dedicate a higher proportion of provision to employability and foundation skills for work for 2020/21. The College's full curriculum plan would analyse how the AEB budget linked to the rest of the college's provision providing pathways for individuals. It would also outline how the college would be assisting B&NES in the local/regional post-Covid-19 economic recovery,</p> <p>JD reported on the economic reasons for location of the provision and the need for careful risk assessment, with multiple delivery, targeting the unemployed. Members noted that whilst some wards reported high numbers of deprivation there were pockets of deprivation and high needs in many other wards, and that consideration should be given to all wards, not just those deemed to be in areas of deprivation due to the demographic. Members</p>	

<p>welcomed the partnerships being used and asked if there were others. JD confirmed that the College was working with a range of other partners, including small community partners and was always looking for new partners.</p> <p>Members also asked about rural deprivation and whether more resources were needed there. JD confirmed this was being looked at in terms of both estate maintenance on the SVC campus and also use of empty retail units in the Midsomer Norton/ Radstock area. Members asked whether there was an opportunity for black curriculum work in the adult education area. JD would speak with the college outreach manager. ACTION: JD</p>	JD
<p>6.3 Management Accounts – April and May</p>	
<p>April Management Accounts</p> <p>Members received a commentary, income and expenditure, balance sheet and monthly cash flow. The accounts had previously been circulated to Board members. They provided a staging post to show the direction of travel in relation to the year-end position. April was the first month the college was closed to the majority of students and since then the college had been working to minimise costs.</p> <p>After due consideration, the Board approved the accounts.</p> <p>May Management Accounts</p> <p>Members received a commentary, income and expenditure, balance sheet and monthly cash flow. GW confirmed that the Finance & Estates Working Group had undertaken a detailed review of the accounts with PF in advance of the Board. PF highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position showed a further reduction in the year to date deficit. The revised year end forecast showed only a marginal change from the previous revision although there were some significant variations present within certain lines, particularly partnership costs which had been understated; • Some of the significant costs such as partnerships and sub-contracting were legible for supplier relief • Significant funding partners had offered reassurance around the continuity of payments and suspending the usual performance monitoring processes that could result in clawback. The college was continuing to negotiate with students requesting refunds • A valuation of the SVC land would be done in the next few weeks and would be used by the bank to renew the loan. A decision from the bank was needed by 31 July 2020 and indications were positive • The end of year figure of c.£49k surplus was still on target provided there were no large unknown costs <p>Members asked about other funding and in particular, learner support funding payments given the growth in year. PF confirmed</p>	

<p>that the guidance was being interpreted differently by one authority who had not paid the amount requested. This had been reflected in the accounts.</p> <p>After due consideration, the Board approved the accounts and thanked PF for his work on these.</p>	
<p>6.4 Health & Safety Annual Report 18/19 and Spring 2020 update</p>	
<p>Members considered the Annual Report 18/19 and the latest quarterly update 2020. There had been a reduction in the overall numbers of health & safety incidents compared to the previous year, although there was one RIDDOR accident. Actions and preparation for remote learning/working had been undertaken. BO reported that following the H&S advisory audit, the college had moved to a more proactive system of monitoring and the Health & Safety Committee was meeting regularly.</p> <p>The Chair of Audit commented that the annual report provided a good overview of activity and assurance on actions being taken. A question was asked about emergency procedures in a covid-19 environment. JD reported that muster points remained the same as these took priority and communications to staff would take place. She confirmed that testing of buildings would continue to take place in July/August. The Board thanked BO for the reports and confirmed their assurance.</p>	
<p>7. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL</p>	
<p>7.1 Health & Safety Policy</p>	
<p>The Board considered the updated annual Health & Safety Policy statement, noting the amendments made since last year, including the references to covid-19 guidance. The Board APPROVED the Policy.</p>	
<p>7.2 Facilities Time Report</p>	
<p>The Board considered the Facilities Time report 2019/20. It was reported management had a constructive and active relationship with union officials. The Board APPROVED the Report which would be published on the college website.</p>	
<p>7.3 Sub-Contracting Policy 2020/21</p>	
<p>The Board considered the Sub-Contracting Policy and the updates since last year. LP reported that there were two sub-contractors and the college's aim was to reduce reliance on sub-contractors for adult education where the college could provide it in house. She reported that one of the sub-contractors had recently been taken over. Members asked if there was any scope for further savings. LP reported on the ESFA rules and that new guidance was about to be issued. In the meantime, the College would be exploring further partnerships.</p> <p>The Board APPROVED the Policy.</p>	

7.4 Appointment of Student Governor 2020/21	
The Board noted the result of the recent student elections which had taken place virtually and congratulated Dan Ball on being elected Student President for a second year. The Board APPROVED the recommendation from the Governance & Search Committee that Dan Ball be appointed as student member of the Corporation for 2020/21.	
8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION	
8.1 Corporation Governance Group- 6 May 2020	
This was the first meeting of the CGG. The notes had been circulated previously to Board members.	
8.2 Curriculum & Quality Working Group – 15 January & 12 June 2020	
The chair of CQWG reported on the excellent discussion with the Assistant Principals on plans and activity in each of their areas. It would be valuable for other governors to attend meetings of the Group depending on the focus. CS stated that it would be helpful to have, on a rotation basis, the APs present at Board meetings in future.	
8.3 Finance & Estates Working Group - 3 and 29 April 2020	
The notes were available for background information.	
8.4 Governance & Search Committee – 22 June 2020	
CS reported on the meeting of the Committee which had taken place earlier that day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Chair succession planning - Further discussions were needed with relevant individuals before a proposal could be put to the Board (ii) Finance Governor - the interviews for an additional Finance qualified governor would be re-activated. (iii) Governor vacancies - There was one governor vacancy and another from January 2021 when she finished her term of office as Chair. The skills audit recently completed by governors identified the need for HR strategy and FE & Skills expertise. Recruitment would commence and members were asked to let AR know of any contacts who might be interested. The Committee was keen to ensure diversity on the Board and representation from the SVC area and these would be actively promoted. Thanks were given to AR for her work on the skills audit and to all governors for completing it. (iv) An analysis of training and development needs indicated that a session on FE finance would be very beneficial to many governors. It was agreed to ask LP/PF to provide this together with a summary crib sheet. ACTION: LP/PF 	LP/PF
9. Any Other Business	

The Chair thanked governors for their time and LP and the Senior Management Team for their commitment during this particularly challenging time.	
10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
Monday 27 July 2020 at 17:00	

Signed (Chair):

Date: