

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020

Present:

Pat	Brennan Barrett	Principal	✓
Sharon	Bunker	Staff Governor	✓
Ellen	Buttler	Governor	✓
Bill	Chalker	Governor	✓
Shannon	Clarke	Student Governor	✓
Robert	Davey	Governor (Chair)	✓
Tracey	Griffiths	Governor	✓
Philip	Hilton	Governor	✓
Ummahani	Mohammed	Student Governor	Apologies
Mark	Robbins	Governor	✓
Geraldine	Schofield	Governor	✓
Helen	Scott	Governor	✓
David	Smith	Governor	✓

The quorum for the meeting was six Members.

In attendance:

Steve Rankine	Deputy Principal - Finance and Corporate Affairs
Patrick Leavey	Deputy Principal
Phil O'Hara	Vice Principal – Curriculum and Student Progress
Jan Hutt	Vice Principal – HR and Student Services
Gary Brough	Vice Principal (Resources)
Julie Brasier	Clerk to the Corporation

The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams and started at 5.00pm.

1		Welcome and Apologies	Action
	1.1	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting to be conducted via Teams. It was agreed that in the event that the Clerk was unable to be part of the meeting for technical reasons, the meeting would be recorded.</p> <p>It was also agreed that microphones would be muted unless a person wished to speak.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Shannon Clarke to her first meeting. Apologies were received from Ummahani Mohammed</p>	
2		Declarations of Interest	
	2.1	The Chair reminded Members to declare their interests as and when necessary on the agenda.	

3		Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 13 October 2020 and any matters arising	
	3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to the correction of minute 8.5 and would be signed by the Chair.	
4		Determination of Any Other Business	
	4.1	There were no additional items.	
5		Covid Update	
	5.1	The Vice Principal, HR and Student Services gave a verbal update. Cases of the virus in the College were low. There had been no transmissions in College. The College provided a secure environment for those at risk due to age. Some staff and students were self isolating. The College was prepared for a potential increase in numbers after the Christmas holiday.	
	5.2	Expectations regarding compliance with all Covid requirements including reporting were being reiterated. The College was very cautious in its approach and vigilant regarding the risk of transmission. RESOLVED C[47/20] The Corporation resolved to note the Covid Update Report.	
6		Principal's College Overview Report	
	6.1	The Principal presented her report. 1.5 – Develop English and Maths Competences - this was now shown as red due to learning lost since March 2020. This area was always challenging because of the high numbers of students taking English and Maths qualifications. The target is to improve the students' grade to so that they get their technical or vocational qualification. Working in bubbles was more complex and students needed support with this.	
	6.2	<i>In terms of 1.4 – develop technical, professional skills – is there a challenge regarding the new qualifications?</i> The DfE are looking to make qualifications harder. There is a consultation on level 2 and level 3 qualifications. Details of these and T levels will be discussed more at the Strategic event.	
	6.3	<i>3.2 – deliver a skilled workforce through developing entrepreneurship. Technical and employment skills, was green and is now amber?</i> This is due to the impact of Covid which has affected employment opportunities. There may be an issue in securing work placements but this will be an issue for all colleges. <i>Are employers offering work experience for T levels?</i> No because many employers have staff working from home. However, the DfE are continuing to insist on this element. The Deputy Principal was looking at a project to try to cover this. <i>Could employers organise work experience on the scale required without Covid?</i> It is unlikely that sufficient placements would be available. <i>With T levels all students have to complete an employer set project.</i> The College has done work on this which has been submitted to the DfE.	
	6.4	<i>Is there an overall digital plan?</i> The College has signed up to an initiative to improve and increase digital skills. Staff were working with a partner college to create a new digital strategy. This will be covered further at the Strategic event. There will a range of initiatives for this.	

	6.5	Areas directly impacted by Covid were identified. RESOLVED C[48/20] The Corporation resolved to note the Principal's College Overview report	
7		Self Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) including apprenticeship and headline HE outcomes 2019/20	
	7.1	The Deputy Principal presented the SAR and the QIP which had been considered in detail by the Quality of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee at its meeting on 7 December 2020.	
	7.2	The SAR had been mapped against the Education Inspection Framework and against the Ofsted handbook. Grade profiles had improved compared to 2018/19. There was greater consistency across all areas of provision. Outcomes had improved again and this continued the 6 year trend. The College was in a good position to articulate the reasons for this.	
	7.3	Personal Development had gone from a Grade 2 to a Grade 1. Apprenticeships had moved to a Grade 2. Timely achievement for apprenticeships was now 5% above the national average. Leadership and Management was now judged to be Grade 1. This means that Overall Effectiveness stood at a Grade 1. It was possible for Overall effectiveness to be a Grade 1 even with one area as a Grade 2 as long as the College was continuing to improve.	
	7.4	<i>The achievement rate is excellent, is there evidence to support the student statements mentioned in the report?</i> There is survey evidence, and in an inspection, Inspectors will talk to students. <i>Have we done what Ofsted would do in terms of surveys?</i> Yes, the last Ofsted survey was very positive and was the feedback given by students. <i>Is there any downside to a Grade 1?</i> At the last Ofsted the College was judged to be good with outstanding features. Since then the College has improved incrementally and consistently. The College has measured itself against other Grade 1 Colleges. The SAR has been reviewed by an External Consultant who is an Ofsted Inspector. Staff feel there is sufficient evidence to be judged a grade 1 college. Overall the pass rate is high; very few students do not get their qualification. Staff had been challenged in 2019/20 regarding the small proportion of students not achieving their qualification. This has now been reduced further.	
	7.5	The Deputy Principal also presented the QIP for 2020/21. It contained 6 objectives. Some actions had been carried forward from 2019/20. The following points were highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subjects that had improved in 2019/20 continued to be a focus to ensure that the improvements were sustained in 2020/21. This was supported by the BRAG process. There were changes to the delivery of Maths and English because of Covid. There will be continued close monitoring of attendance and progress. Century Tech software was being used. There are gaps in learning and teachers are having to teach things for the first time as opposed to covering subjects by way of revision. There are increased number of students sitting GCSEs. November resits did take place. BRAG data for the second assessment was being compiled Improvement in apprenticeship provision to be sustained. Some apprentices had been furloughed and a very small number had been made redundant Robust tracking and monitoring across all programmes to close any gaps 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Learning and Assessment continues as an objective to ensure continued improvement Increased focus on attendance and punctuality, combined with wrap around support where needed, particularly for students struggling with the impact of Covid. Attendance was increasing. <p>Having considered the verbal report from the Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment committee at Minute 8 below, the Committee agreed as follows:</p> <p>RESOLVED C[49/20] The Corporation resolved to approve the SAR for 2019/20 including the Overall Effectiveness grade and the QIP for 2020/21.</p>	
8		Quality. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee	
	8.1	The Chair of the Committee gave a verbal update on the meeting held on 7 December 2020. There was good detailed discussion at the meeting on all points. A student survey had been done to ascertain how well students were coping with a blended learning model. The results were positive. It was important to keep the views of students in mind. Students felt safe and were appreciative of the efforts made by staff to support them. More work was needed to support HE students with study skills.	
	8.2	End point assessment outcomes had been reviewed.	
	8.3	The SAR was discussed in depth. A lot of work had gone into to producing the document. The Committee had confidence in the grades given and the evidence to support those grades. There was a 6 year trend of continuous improvement in outcomes. Performance gaps between different groups were closing. The Committee concluded that Grade 1 for Overall Effectiveness was appropriate even though Apprenticeships are a grade 2 given the positive trajectory of outcomes.	
	8.4	Staff from core provision had been seconded to support the delivery of Maths and English in the apprenticeship programme. More stringent entry criteria were being applied to apprenticeships. Apprenticeship visits were happening virtually.	
	8.5	As mentioned above the SAR had been reviewed by an External Consultant. There was a high degree of Integrity in the College's process for centre assessed grades. Managing and maintaining the quality of the apprenticeship programme was more important than growth. The Committee recommended that the Corporation approved the SAR and the judgements in it.	
	8.6	The Committee had also reviewed the QIP. There were 6 objectives, as explained above. It was noted that some students preferred remote learning. Covid had impacted on the number of apprenticeships but the position was better than anticipated. The College's IT systems to deliver remote learning were performing well and support was in place for students needing it. Colleges may have to run testing centres. The Committee recommended that the QIP was approved by the Corporation	
	8.7	Catch up programmes would start in the Spring term rather than the Summer term because of Covid. The academic calendar has been extended by 3 weeks.	
	8.8	At HE level, the College was now working with Pearsons. This was a more independent approach. Enrolments had increased. 2 new programmes had started this year and more were planned for 2021/22. These would be linked to the Digital academy. RESOLVED C[50/20] The Corporation resolved to note the report of the Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee	

9		Audit Committee Annual Report	
	9.1	The Deputy Principal (Finance and Resources) presented the Audit Committee Annual Report which had been reviewed by the Audit Committee at its last meeting. The report this year included detail on compliance with the Office for Students requirements and the impact of Covid. The report set out the conclusions reached by the Committee. A copy of the report goes to the ESFA.	
	9.2	<i>Is there a format for reporting on Cyber Security?</i> There is not a specific format. Internal Audit carries out Internal health checks. The College was working with JISC on cyber security and as a result had increased the strength of the firewall. Cyber security is reported to the Audit Committee.	
	9.3	<i>Does Cyber Security need to be part of compliance reporting?</i> The Audit Committee had reviewed the Internal Audit plan – cyber security could be part of that. The College was working towards the Kite Mark for Cyber essentials. RESOLVED C[51/20] the Corporation resolved to approve the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2019/20	
10		Letters of Representation, Audit Findings and Financial Statements for Approval for the year to 31 July 2020	
	10.1	The Deputy Principal (Finance and Resources) presented the letters of representation, the Audit Findings Report and the Financial Statements for 2019/20. The level of surplus was impacted by Covid and increased staff costs due to the increase in contributions to the Teachers' Pension scheme, pay rises and the growth in 16 – 18 numbers.	
	10.2	Both the EBITDA measure and cash balance were strong. The current ratio, being a solvency indicator, was very high due to the low level of loans. Staff costs should reduce as a percentage of expenditure in 2020/21 as income for additional student numbers should then increase. Overall the ESFA scoring meant the College met the criteria for outstanding in terms of financial management.	
	10.3	The LGPS pension deficit was discussed by the Corporation and ways of reducing it were noted. Contributions were driven by an actuarial valuation which happened every 3 years. The balance sheet showed the cash and net asset position which gives comfort against the LGPS deficit.	
	10.4	No concerns were raised in the Audit Findings report. RESOLVED C[52/20] The Corporation resolved (a) To approve the Letters of Representation, Audit Findings and Financial Statements for the Year to 31 July 2020; (b) To delegate authority to the Chair of the Corporation to sign these documents as necessary	
11		Student Recruitment and Enrolment 2020/21	
	11.1	The Deputy Principal, Finance and Corporate Affairs, presented his report. R04 had now passed. Recruitment overall had increased compared to last year. The increase in numbers for 16 -18 year olds should secure additional funding in 2021/22. All recruitment this year had been done on line. There was an increase in adult loans and adult funding was in line with last year. Covid had impacted on apprenticeships. HE numbers had also increased.	
	11.2	<i>Recruitment is lower on foundation courses – could we attract more students?</i> This varies from year to year and could mean that more students had stayed on at school. More level 1 courses were being provided.	

	11.3	<p><i>Where recruitment is growing in some subjects, are there any concerns about the impact of growth on the quality of provision?</i></p> <p>Plans are in place to ensure that quality is sustained. There had been good staff recruitment to support this.</p> <p><i>How is recruitment for construction?</i></p> <p>It matches previous levels. Targets had been exceeded last year and recruitment was ahead of the business plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED C[53/20] The Corporation resolved to note the Student Recruitment and Enrolment Report.</p>	
12		Management Accounts and Commentary for the period up to 31 October 2020	
	12.1	<p>The Deputy Principal (Finance and Resources) presented his report. Income was in line with the budget. There may be an adjustment for apprenticeship funding. Pay costs were below budget and this was expected to be the case at year end, additional Covid funding had not yet been used. Staff costs had been carefully managed and an end of year surplus was predicted.</p>	
	12.2	<p><i>What drives the forecast cash balance?</i></p> <p>The funding profile is front loaded with higher receipts in August and September than in March so cash builds up at the start of the financial year. Funding from the ESFA had been received for building condition works, but the use of this funding was restricted. Capital funding was also due for the Digital academy and there would be Tuition fund to assist with disrupted learning. Not all activities will involve additional costs.</p> <p>RESOLVED C[54/20] The Corporation resolved to note the Management Accounts up to 31 October 2020.</p>	
13		HR Report	
	13.1	<p>The Vice Principal, HR and Student Services presented the HR Report. The College continued to focus on effective performance management. The College had very successfully defended a tribunal case – the tribunal had found no shortcomings on the College's approach.</p>	
	13.2	<p>Employee turnover was less than last year and below the regional average,. Sickness absence was also lower. Extensive work had been done to ensure staff well being and business continuity during the pandemic. Vulnerable staff had been protected and staff had been surveyed to identify concerns.</p>	
	13.3	<p>The College had adhered to all guidance for shielding. It had provided a Covid secure workplace to enable staff to return to work and they were supported in this. Individual risk assessments were done where necessary. Staff induction had included the operational changes needed in September to show that there was a safe system of working.</p>	
	13.4	<p>If more students return to face to face teaching in 2021 careful planning will take place to ensure safety.</p>	
	13.5	<p>A small number of staff would need to apply for settled status because of Brexit. The HR team had alerted them to the need to do this.</p> <p>RESOLVED C[55/20] The Corporation resolved to note the HR Report</p>	
14		Audit Committee Report	
	14.1	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 had been circulated with the agenda. Philip Hilton gave a verbal update as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit had led a useful training session for the Committee • Solvency and Going Concern had been reviewed • The Internal Audit programme had been reviewed 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial statements for 2019/20 were reviewed • The risk register was reviewed – there would be a focus on key risks and the movement of risks • Good progress had been made on Audit recommendations <p>RESOLVED C[56/20] The Corporation resolved to note the report of the Audit Committee</p>	
15		Governance Committee Report	
	15.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 had been circulated with the agenda. The Committee had reviewed the priorities for Governors for 2020/21 and recommended these for approval by the Corporation. The Committee had reviewed the practice for confidential minutes and recommended that the current approach should continue i.e. as the Corporation approves the minutes, it approved those to be deemed confidential. Governor Appraisals would be picked up in January.	
	15.2	<p>The Committee had also reviewed the draft changes to the Instrument and Articles. The Committee recommended that Bill Chalker join the Governance Committee and would step down from the Quality, Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee. Rob Davey would join the Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee for the March 2021 meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED C[57/20] The Corporation resolved to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to note the report of the Governance Committee 2. To approve the Governor Priorities for 2020/21 3. To approve the changes to Committee membership 	
16		Emergency Governance Procedures	
	16.1	The Corporation had approved temporary governance arrangements in March 2020 in response to the pandemic. The Governance Committee had reviewed these and recommended that these remain in place until the end of the academic year.	
	16.2	<p>The temporary governance arrangements in summary are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contingency arrangements for Principal's absence • Election of Second Vice Chair • Emergency governance strategy Resolutions A and B - The key elements of these resolutions were the temporary reduction in the quorum for Corporation meetings from 40% to 30% and that there was a checklist for emergency decision making, which included an additional step of a committee of 3 Governors rather than go straight to the Chair. <p>So far, the emergency governance strategy had not been needed.</p> <p>RESOLVED C[58/20] The Corporation resolved that the Emergency Governance Procedures continue until 31 July 2021 and that the term of the second vice chair, Geraldine Schofield, be extended until 31 July 2021.</p>	
17		Strategy Day Arrangements	
	17.1	The facilitator would take Governors through the key changes for the FE sector. The Government's white paper was due to be issued before the Strategy Day. National changes and reforms and new strategies for the College would be discussed.	
18		Ellen Buttler	
		Ellen Buttler would be standing down as a Governor at the end of the year. She had served 2 terms as a Governor and the Chair, on behalf of the	

		Corporation expressed his grateful thanks for her work as a governor. EB wished the College all the best for the future.	
19		Date and Time of Next meeting	
	19.1	The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 9 March 2021 at 5.00pm The meeting finished at 7.17pm.	

Julie Brasier
Clerk to the Corporation
Northampton College

Signed by the Chair:	
Date:	