

SOLIHULL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON 22ND APRIL 2020 ONLINE BY TEAMS, (ADDITIONAL MEETING), starting at 15.45pm

- PRESENT: Barbara Hughes (Chair)
Paul Assinder
Stan Baldwin
John Callaghan (Principal)
Badri Gargeshnari,
Mark Hayes (Staff Governor)
Paul Large
Lucy Lee
Tony Lucas
Sukhdeep Nijjar
Geraldine Swanton
Sally Tomlinson
Raees Iqbal (Student Governor)
Stuart Lyons (Student Governor)
- IN ATTENDANCE: Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal and Stratford Chief Operating Officer)
Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum)
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk)
- Linda McLaughlin, Head of School, Care and Education
Mary Younan, Head of School, Professional and Management Studies
Phil Trilloe, Head of School, Sports and Public Services

The Chair welcomed all and thanked Governors for attending via Teams. She explained the agreed protocols for the meeting and confirmed attendees. It was noted that this was an additional meeting, due to COVID-19 and lockdown issues and an opportunity for managers and Governors to discuss the impact to the College. Apologies were expressed regarding some late papers, but it was noted that this related to the current crisis.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

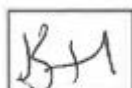
There were no new declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th March 2020 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature.

Progress in relation to the actions from the minutes were noted:

- Property – the Vice Principal Finance provided an update regarding property related items:



- Stratford Upon Avon College Re-furbishment – it was noted that phase 1 was progressing in Block A and it was anticipated that this would be completed within timeframes, although there were some issues regarding supply of fixtures and fittings. B Block costings were being obtained and it was anticipated this work would take place over the summer 2020, as planned.
- Car Park sale – solicitors had been appointed and discussions were on-going regarding the exclusivity period, particularly in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the ability to undertake due diligence.
- TGH – non-urgent planning applications were not currently being processed by Solihull MBC, so it was anticipated that the outcome would not be known until the next financial year.
- HE Dashboard – a briefing would be provided for governors early in the Autumn term.
- QIP – the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum confirmed that the latest QIP was on the Governors' Dashboard, but there seemed to be an issuing opening it. This would be resolved.
- NART Update – was on the current agenda.
- BoardEffects – the Clerk noted that negotiations were underway.

3.1 Matters Arising: Tuition Fee Policies Update

The Vice Principal Finance presented the updated policies and noted that a paragraph had been added regarding force majeure and some minor amendments regarding refunds.

RESOLVED that the Tuition Fee Policies be approved.

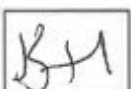
4. COVID-19 – Coronavirus Pandemic Update – Current and Long-term Impact on the College

The presentation regarding progress in relation to management of the current COVID-19 lockdown crisis was discussed.

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services confirmed that students on Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and vulnerable students were being supported with regular contact by staff. He explained that students were concerned about the COVID-19 and related issues, but staff were reassuring them and ensuring on-going support. There had been no safeguarding issues or crisis management events. It was noted the payments were being made for free school meal eligible students and there had been no funding withdrawn regarding bursaries.

The Principal provided an update regarding apprenticeships and noted that some employers had suspended learning in advance of our closure following a WMCA/ESFA video that had been circulated. This had had reduced the number of current apprentices. Assessors were continuing to support all apprentices, including furloughed apprentices, so this was an own goal as apprentices were catching up and doing well. The Team were continuing to work with employers for new business. Careers advice was being made available for any apprentices that wished to change career. Guidance was being published regularly and the College was responding most appropriately to continue to support apprentices and employers and to mitigate the impact of the current lockdown on apprenticeship provision, as much as possible.

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services confirmed that no staff had reported being ill with the virus, but there were some who had had bereavements. The Chair expressed sincere condolences to the families that had suffered losses at this current difficult time.



Q. Is there a possibility of re-deploying staff that could be furloughed in a different way, for example, to support voluntary efforts with regard to the lockdown?

A. There are a very small number of staff, at the College, that are unable to work. Generally, staff that are eligible in other colleges tend to be in categories like catering and security, but these categories of staff are not employed directly at Solihull College, so this does not apply. There is only one team, that are eligible for the furlough scheme, identified at Solihull College to date.

Q. Can the College make referrals to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) during lockdown? Is the LADO more or less accessible/responsive at the current time?

A. There have been no referrals to LADO during this time, but all local authority LADOs remain fully accessible, as are Social and Children's Services.

Q: A verbal update regarding the COVID-19 crisis, in addition to the slides, would be useful. For example. the guidance on exams has been published so what is the impact for the College?

A: Advice has been published for GCSE, Functional Skills and A levels which will involve using teacher predictions to submit predicted grades to the awarding bodies and this is a huge task. For vocational courses Ofqual have asked other awarding organisations to identify the most appropriate method for awarding qualifications that were due to be completed this summer. This could include estimation of grades, or adaptation to assessments depending on the qualification purpose, progression routes and level. The College is working on the assumption that predicted grades will apply to the majority of courses so work is underway to complete that exercise. HE qualifications will follow the advice set by our university partners and Pearson for Higher Nationals. Where qualifications involve "license to practice" such as VET Nursing, Electrical Installation it will be necessary for students to return certain elements of assessment. All tutors are busy preparing predicted grades for their students, which will be moderated and standardised in early May 2020 – this applies to vocational qualifications in addition to GCSEs. Meanwhile, final instructions are awaited from awarding bodies, pending Ofqual's consultation ending 8th May 2020, to confirm the required mode of presenting this information.

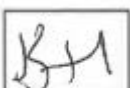
Q: Can the Government's exclusion of colleges main activities from the furlough scheme be explained in more detail? I am concerned that EFSA and DfE have a history of punishing good management and may restrict future support based on whether colleges have used the scheme. Given the guidance from the DfE on 11th April, where individuals are partially funded by grant eg, 80% public and 20% commercial, DfE are expecting colleges to access this funding.

A: The Principals' JISC-mail network had been active regarding this issue and it seemed that about 70% of colleges were likely to use the scheme in a limited way and a lot of these employed staff directly in areas like catering and security. The College's number of staff that would be eligible was very small, so it was not anticipated that the Scheme would be used at the current time, but this would be kept under review. This approach was ensuring a lot of staff goodwill, as demonstrated by letters from the Unions supporting this approach. It was noted that full cost areas, like Professional and Management, were continuing to support students and would aim to facilitate provision on-going.

Q: Can the potential impact on cashflow be quantified using scenarios and a range of assumptions to overcome the information gap – this would be useful for a future meeting?

A: It was confirmed that potential impact on cashflow would be quantified using scenarios and a range of assumptions to overcome the information gap at a future meeting. **ACTION.**

Finance Update – The Principal confirmed that a full update would be provided at the next meeting, but meanwhile gave the current position. He explained that an initial review had taken place regarding secure income streams and a cost-saving exercise was underway.



The Vice Principal Finance explained that the financial position was changing daily as government guidance was being published and the impact on areas like apprenticeships was becoming clearer. She noted the 3 main risk areas were apprenticeships, income for 14-16 year olds and high-needs funding and 'other income' that related to income from school's commercial activities, eg, the hair salon etc. Courses planned for Spring-Summer terms had also been impacted. It was noted that the overage payment due following successful planning permission for TGH was unlikely to be received by July 2020, as had been anticipated, due to a delay in local authorities granting planning permission. It was likely there would be some savings in staffing and operating costs and this was currently being identified.

The Vice Principal Finance explained that there would be a reduction in the cash balance, however, the College was in a strong position prior to the crisis and this would ensure security. However, it was noted that at the current time it was possible that financial health could fall just into 'Requires Improvement' (based on a points-score system), as EBITDA would reduce. It was hoped that following the full review of the impact on income and expenditure, the outcome would be 'Good'. She confirmed that bank covenants would be met.

Discussion took place regarding the potential impact on the College's financial health and it was noted that this would be a sector-wide issue, with some colleges already having financial concerns, being particularly adversely affected. The AOC/ESFA were fully aware of this and that the February financial return would now be redundant for all colleges. The AOC was advocating abandonment of financial health grades for 2019/20. The role of the FE Commissioner was being promoted in supporting colleges in difficulty and encouraging them to approach the Commissioner as early as possible to manage this crisis.

It was suggested that as part of the financial update in May 2020 that activity for each key income stream, where there is a reduction in funding, be identified, so that it is possible to see where there is offset expenditure. **ACTION.**

The Chair explained that there were a range of opportunities to attend online briefings and meetings through the AOC and others that gave opportunities to hear about sector-wide issues.

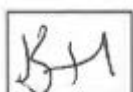
Q. Are there any financial issues relating to the Stratford Re-development Project?

A. No, at the moment, it is anticipated that work will continue over the summer for A and B Blocks and expenditure will be as planned.

Q. Learners are being supported, as discussed, but how is the College supporting staff to work at home, particularly in relation to health and safety issues?

A. The College has communicated with staff about their mental well-being through managers making regular contact, but also providing guidance and highlighting the Care First service available to all employees. Staff have welcomed the contact and guidance. In terms of physical arrangements, the College has distributed guidance to all staff regarding how their workstation at home is set up and the best approach to ensure good practice for posture, taking breaks and being mindful of stress.

The Principal noted that it was important to fully support staff and be a good employer, particularly at this time, in terms of providing support and being reasonable about what staff can actually do from home in terms of physical and family constraints, as well as, in terms of mental and physical health. The Chair reinforced this approach and noted that the All Staff Emails circulated by the Principal were very good in reflecting this approach.



5. Curriculum Intent 2019/20 Presentations

The Chair welcomed the Heads of School and noted that the recorded presentations had been circulated to governors in advance, so this would be an opportunity to respond to questions that had been submitted. Each Head of School was thanked for their presentations and for attending the meeting. The Chair confirmed the importance for Governors of understanding the intent and breadth of curriculum offered for each school.

Q. It would be interesting to see a report for outcomes for all schools in terms of destinations, rather than just a few success stories about where students go when they complete their course – would it be possible to have a consistent report for each school?

A. A report is produced annually providing information about student progression and destinations at a College level, but it would be possible to produce this at School level to demonstrate impact in relation to intent presented by each Head of School. **ACTION.**

5.1 Curriculum Intent 2019/20 - curriculum design and management: School of Sports and Public Services

The Head of School for Sports and Public Services provided responses to pre-submitted questions.

Q. Why are there so few apprentices in this area in light of apprenticeships being a major strategy for the College?

A: The area has not traditionally been one that has a lot of apprenticeships, however, it is planned to increase the number in the future. The Police Service has started to use higher level apprenticeships, so it is hoped that these will increase at a lower level too. In Sport it tends to be necessary to win a bid or contract to attract apprenticeship provision or there can be small numbers in local companies and organisations. Currently there is a lot of competition from private providers in this area. Apprenticeship recruitment is an area for improvement and work is taking place with the Executive Director Employment & Skills and IoT and her team to increase numbers.

Q. What impact will the pandemic have on recruitment to Public Services and how will this potential opportunity be optimised through marketing?

A: As Public Services are very much in focus in the news and in response to the pandemic crisis it is hoped that this will result in increased interest in the area. There are very few colleges in the local area that offer Public Services, so competition is limited. There is also an on-going focus on ensuring good internal progression to higher level courses.

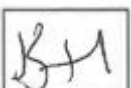
Q. Some courses have a small number of learners e.g Policing. Are those courses viable with these numbers and if not, is growth anticipated?

A: The HE Policing course had 10 learners in 2019/20. This was due to late validation, so it was actually quite positive to be able to get 10. Applications for 2020/21 are already at 30, so it is anticipated that the course will be viable going forward.

Q. What is the trend in terms of demand for Public Services courses? Do the 2019/20 figures include Stratford?

A: Trends in demand are good. For the last 3 to 4 years there have been 150 students, on average. In 2019/20 there were 260, largely at Blossomfield, but it is hoped that numbers will continue to be stable. Public Services have traditionally had 150 students over the last 3/4 years but that it spiked this year to 200 which was a significant increase. In Sport the numbers have been very stable around 260 students in the last 3/4 years.

Q. How confident are we that the Vector assessment regarding the likely opportunities in the fitness industry?



A: Vector data tends to provide quite reliable projections because it is informed by a range of good data. There are 4 large new gyms in Solihull and the current crisis is underlining the importance of both physical and mental health, so it is hoped that Sport will be a growth area.

Q: The work with the police is impressive and the intention to expand the workforce is noted. Tell us more about these programmes and about the interface with the work done in the School of Care and Education.

A: The work with the police is very positive, with 3 members of the team with a background in the core subject. Good contacts with the police and ex-students that have joined the police often visit to talk to students. Students will go into a range of jobs following completion of the programme. The programme differs a lot to the Criminology programme in the School of Care and Education, with only one element that crosses over.

Q: I was very impressed with my learning walk in this school earlier this year. It would be very interested to understand how the curriculum offering will extend further into HE in the future and whether Phil sees increased crossover with courses offered in the School of Care and Education in doing this?

A: A Foundation Degree is being validated with Oxford Brookes for all 3 areas. It is hoped to get a top up degree for Sports Science top-up degree validated too. There are level 4 and 5 programmes for Policing, but no top-up degree at the moment. The School is considering a degree in counter-terrorism, as a niche offer, as there are specialist staff in the area.

Q: How are students utilising social media to support their work experience for Sport? Eg, are they using Instagram to showcase their skills?

A: It is hard in the current climate to have all the information on what students are doing but we have had some students using a range of social media platforms to showcase training and skills.

5.2 Curriculum Intent 2019/20 - curriculum design and management: School of Care and Education

The Head of School for Care and Education provided responses to pre-submitted questions.

The Chair requested that the presentation be amended to show the DET numbers in Teacher Training and to add three areas as sub-headings on each diagram. **ACTION.**

Q: This is a large area in the College, is it too big to manage under one Head of School?

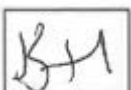
A: The area is large, but there is a good team, who support the Head of School well.

Q. How will the School respond to the pandemic and the potential increased recruitment opportunities in social care?

A: There has been an influx of applications for Access course in Health. The Head of School confirmed that she was currently working on timetables and staffing to plan for an increase in student numbers for 2020/21. Applicants were being contacted by members of the team to conduct telephone interviews. It was noted that there already 300 applications for Criminology and Psychology.

Q: The Distance Learning programmes seem most exciting. Can you describe how demand has increased, and is likely to increase, in this area of provision?

A: There are a lot of people doing these courses, with a lot of repeat business and a lot of new programmes. The provider we work with is good at producing up-to-date, relevant courses, which seem to be popular.



Q: Please give examples of the companies and organisation that the School has links with in terms of planning and delivering our courses.

A: There is a wide range of employers across health and early years, including schools, NHS trusts, SMBC, as well as, the prison service and many small employers across the area. A list can be made available if required.

Q: There is good flexing with demand demonstrated here. How does the School see the change in demand affecting their ability to deliver courses in an online world? Particularly with regard to HE and apprenticeships. Do you think there is an opportunity to deliver more online HE at a reduced fee level or is that determined by the partner provider?

A: HE will generally be steered by the College's partners. There are online delivery and assessment opportunities, that help to develop different skills. Staff have really engaged with developing different ways of working during the closure and it has provided an opportunity to reflect on current practices and potential new methods of working.

Curriculum Intent 2019/20 - curriculum design and management: School of Professional and Management Studies

The Head of School for Professional and Management Studies provided responses to pre-submitted questions.

Q: How has the pandemic affected full cost work with employers and apprenticeships? How have apprenticeship standards been received by employers compared to frameworks?

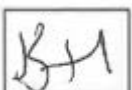
A: In many ways it has not had an effect on full cost work, many September start students are completing assignments remotely and some February start students have been moved to September. So there has been some flexibility. Discussions are underway with awarding bodies and Ofqual for allowing different types of assessment in the current situation, however, no conclusive answer had yet been received. Contingency plans were being put in place regarding progression of learners that may allow roll-over into the next academic year to finish assessments off. Materials have been made for online delivery and textbooks sent to students, where appropriate. A video has been produced by the school to demonstrate how students are being supported and this would be shared with Governors in due course. **ACTION**. It demonstrates how resilient and flexible the College is in being able to respond to a crisis.

Q: The flexibility of programme delivery, and the range of organisations worked with sound most impressive. Could you say more about the progression of students and their 'destinations'?

A: The presentation demonstrates routes for progression for all levels. 85% of learners progress internally. Some apprentices get promotion in their roles.

Q: Very good analysis of demand and response. It would be interesting to hear more detail about how one day training provided to external apprentices will be woven onto our existing schemes. How will the funding work for this?

A: Students in each class can be from a range of different funding streams; these include apprentices. Students can also roll-on and roll-off programmes, so it is very flexible. The one day training sessions are provided to employers at full cost for a group of employees or it can be marketed as a one day course. It can be used as part of a pitch for new work, tailored to individual organisational needs and for staff development to enhance skills and knowledge across organisations.



6. **National Achievement Rate Tables (NART) Data**

The Deputy Principal presented the report. Governors agreed with the clear analysis of performance both in the majority of strengths and weaker areas.

Q. Is there going to be any adjustment to entry requirements for the next academic year? Does the College expect students coming into FE or HE study to have achieved as normal in light of the circumstances?

A. There is no plan to change entry requirements for 2020/21, but flexibility may be required when considering prior qualifications due to the current circumstances.

Q: Which of the local colleges follow our progression objective for GCSEs, whereby we put the majority of 16-18 students without GCSE English and maths onto a GCSE programme and exam? This will enable helpful comparisons.

A: There are a mixture of approaches at local colleges and it is clear from much lower numbers being entered for GCSE maths and English, that some do not have the same strategy as Solihull College. Numbers at Dudley College are similar, so they are likely to share the approach. Higher volumes denote a similar approach to Solihull College.

Q: When will the orphan records at Stratford be complete and so not impact results?

A: All orphan records have now been dealt with and should no longer have an impact on results. The number was low with about 20 apprentices, but it did have quite a detrimental effect.

Q: Could we have a little more detail behind the key actions in 3.5 please.

A: The actions identified in 3.5 are mainly from the QIP – it would be possible to map across. Boardpack gives a QIP update as at 30th March 2020- please refer to this.

Q: Level 1 Achievement 16-18 - Are there other indicators that led us to believe this would be the outcome?

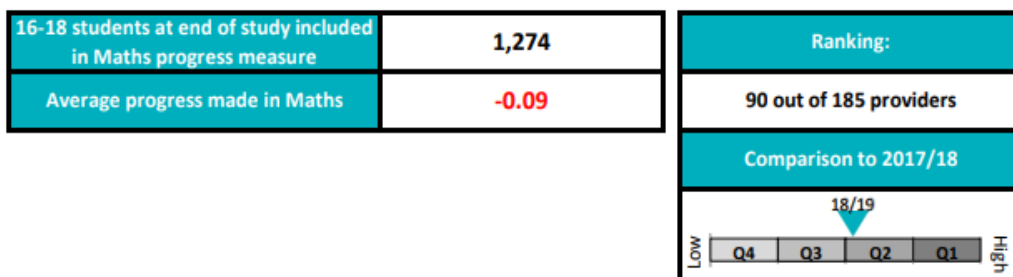
A: The College was aware there were issues with retention in the level 1 cohorts both at Stratford upon Avon and at Solihull. Both these courses are in intensive course and their progress is reported through the regular QIP update.

Q: Explanation for maths poor results is that are placed into a category in the comparison tables. Are we able to 'prove' that this adequately explains our underperformance and that there are no other issues at play

A: The figure below from MiDes (2020) shows that in terms of progress (rather than achievement), compared to national General FE colleges, we are just above the median, in the second quartile. This evidences that our progress is 'good', and supports our strategy to enter learners on to GCSE programmes.

Solihull College

Maths (Your College compared to GFE/Specialist Colleges)



Q: In light of their experience as Ofsted Inspectors, how would the Chair or Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality rate our overall achievement in the light of regional and National comparisons?

A: As the majority of colleges are judged to be 'good', the results that they produce (i.e. the national average) must therefore also be good. Our 16-18 are above NA (at least good), our progress in maths is good, and English is outstanding, apprenticeships are at national average and therefore good, adults require improvement. However, the data is one measure within a hefty 'quality of curriculum' judgement and therefore contribute to, but do not limit, the judgement grade awarded.

7. **Dashboard and PMR for February 2020**

The Chair explained that the changes regarding the financial position had been covered under item 4 relating to the COVID-19 crisis. The February 2020 PMR was therefore noted for information.

8. **Audit Committee – minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2020**

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2020 and noted that a meeting with the Chair of the Corporation had highlighted the potential for the Corporation to be more proactive relating to the business of the Committee. It was suggested that more questions and challenge would be useful and that there was a need to ensure that all Governors were fully informed and engaged with the risks and risk management processes of the College.

It was suggested that a case study be created to demonstrate the College's approach to risk. **ACTION.**

9. **Membership Report**

The Chair presented the report and noted that it was proposed to extend the role of the Staff Governor, Mark Hayes to 31st August 2020, due to the current COVID-19 crisis. A Staff Governor election would take place in the summer term, with their term of office beginning on 1st September 2020, when it was hoped that support and induction could take place more effectively. The timeline for recruitment of a new Staff Governor was noted.

RESOLVED that the term of office for **Mark Hayes**, Staff Governor, be extended to 31st August 2020.

10. **Arrangements for Summer Term 2020 for Governance**

The Chair noted arrangements for the summer term 2020.

Dates for meetings to be set up during Summer Term 2020:

Search and Governance Committee – w/c 29th June 2020

Compliance VFM and Risk – second meeting – to be confirmed.

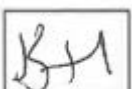
Meetings in Summer Term 2020:

Corporation on Wednesday 13th May 2020 starting at 3pm

Audit Committee on 15th June 2020 starting at 5pm

Corporation on Wednesday 8th July 2020 starting at 3pm

No annual dinner this academic year.



11. **Dates for 2020/21**

The draft list of dates for 2020/21 was noted.

12. **Remuneration Committee meeting held on 20th April 2020 and related reports**

This item was deemed confidential.

13. **Regular Update Reports - Use of the College Seal and Use of the Chair's Electronic Signature**

The contents of the Use of the College Seal Report were received for information.

The meeting ended at 5.40m



Signed: _____

Date: 13 May 2020

Chair's electronic signature applied during College Covid-19 closure with approval