

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 29 September 2021 at Blossomfield Campus starting at 5.30 pm

Present

- Stan Baldwin (Chair)
- Paul Assinder
- Scott Beasley
- Badri Gargeshnari
- Sarah Horton-Walsh
- Lucy Lee
- Sukhy Nijjar
- Harrison Thompson (External Member)
- Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal)
- Sally Tomlinson

In Attendance

- Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
- Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum)
- Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
- Adam Thomas (Director of Student Services)
- Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed all members to the first in-person meeting for the academic year 2021/22. He expressed thoughts and prayers for John Callaghan and his family and acknowledged his tremendous continuation to the College during his time as Principal. Appreciation was recorded to the Acting Principal and her term for picking up the leadership role so abruptly and for taking the college forward. The top key risks were noted.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Barbara Hughes, Tasleem Chaudary, Neil Ladwa, Tony Lucas and Geraldine Swanton.

2. Declarations of Interest in Relation to this Agenda

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2021 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature. The contents of the actions report were noted.

The minutes of the extra-ordinary meeting held on 1st September 2021 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature.

4. September 2021 Update

4.1 COVID-19 Update and Plans for 2021/22

The Acting Principal provided an update with regard to activities at the start of the 2021/22 academic year, summer works and arrangements regarding COVID-19.

The Acting Principal explained that the College had been selected, along with only 11 others, to become a World Skills Centre of Excellence and this meant that from November 2021 5 members of staff would have a weekly CPD session with a high-performance coach to develop skills to be able to support students to move from competence to excellence. This learning would then be disseminated to other staff.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality described the 'Busy on the Bus' Action Research Project, which would develop examples of best practice. She described a maths project that included preparation work, rather than homework.

The Acting Principal confirmed that the construction area at the Stratford upon Avon was completed and handover for the TV and Radio Studio was awaited. Numbers in Construction at Woodlands were very positive.

It was noted that COVID-19 restrictions had largely come to an end and college life was mainly back to normal. Testing had taken place during the first 2 weeks of term, with only 9 positive results. Discussion took place regarding arrangements for student vaccinations.

Q. In what circumstances is the College considering high quality blended learning?

A. Blended learning will be in place for students that test positive with COVID-19 and are well enough to join the session remotely.

Q. What if staff are positive for COVID-19 can they teach remotely?

A. No, generally online teaching is not being encouraged. If staff are away from the college cover would normally be arranged. During 2020-21 there had been incidents of staff teaching from home, whilst a support tutor was in the classroom, however, it is anticipated that these arrangements will be avoided, as much as possible. It was noted that the Government and Public Health England were encouraging colleges to keep classes open as much as possible.

Q. Is there any discussion in the education sector to require teaching staff to be vaccinated?

A. No requirement and currently EMT would not feel comfortable doing more than encouraging staff. Very difficult to enforce. Whilst no data had been collected regarding staff that had had vaccinations, it was believed that the majority had.

The Chair noted that the report represented excellent work by EMT and the College team.

4.2 Recruitment 2021/22

The Acting Principal confirmed that enrolment numbers were good, with predictions above target at Blossomfield and Woodlands campuses, whilst it was anticipated that numbers would be on target at the Stratford upon Avon campus.

Q. Is there any indication that people have deferred their studies due to COVID-19 last year?

A. No, there didn't seem to be a trend of deferrals – it was noted that by law students between 16 and 19 years old had to be in education or training after GCSEs so deferrals were unlikely for that student group.

Q. Had the demographic information been reviewed against the increase in numbers?

A. It was noted that from the demographic data growth was expected, however, numbers were higher than anticipated. Targets were based on demographics at 5076, however, total numbers were predicted to be 5274.

Q. Will recruitment data be adjusting expected retention rates to reflect that?

A. Final recruitment data would be presented at the Corporation in November, when numbers would be adjusted to incorporate retention numbers.

4.3 Achievement 2020/21

The Acting Principal provided an initial indication of achievement data and noted that due to Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) the data would not be published. Current predictions were cautious, but it was anticipated that outcomes would be good. It was noted that level 1 achievement had risen above national achievement, however, Access to Health courses had been impacted by the pandemic with adult learners often having family commitments and often being drafted in to help with issues raised due to COVID-19. Apprenticeships continued to present a challenge with regard to assessment

completion, but the College was continuing to work with students to address this and a detailed report would be presented at the next meeting. Maths and English results for 16-19 student were good.

5. Interim Arrangements

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and noted following the retirement of John Callaghan and appointment of Lindsey Stewart as Acting Principal there were some further arrangements that required approval as follows:

Resolved to approve

- Rebecca Gater, Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum to represent the College as a Director on the GBSIoT Board;
- John Callaghan, Jo Haine, Elaine Watton and Emma Taft be removed from the Solihull College bank mandate with immediate effect; and
- Rebecca Gater, Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum, and Kirk Bennett, Assistant Management Accountant be added to the bank mandate.

6. Quality, Curriculum and Teaching and Learning

6.1 Quality Improvement Strategy and Cycle 2021/22

The VP Curriculum and Quality presented the report and noted that a paragraph in the Strategy had been added regarding CPD, as this is an important element of quality improvement.

6.2 Curriculum Provision Map 2021-2022

The Curriculum Plan for 2021/22 was provided to all Governors to be able to see the provision across all campuses and at all levels to clearly demonstrate progression routes. It was noted that the College had been structured into 2 faculties, as provision at the Stratford upon Avon campus were now fully incorporated in the college structures. The 2 faculties were: Service Industries and STEAM

Q. Are there any gaps in progression routes?

A. No, there were no gaps, as a very rigorous curriculum development process was in place to ensure the College responded appropriately to sector needs and employer requirements.

Q. Is the Scheme of Work Quality Review a new component of the quality improvement strategy?

A. No, there had always been a review of schemes of work, although this had not been made explicit in the Quality Improvement Strategy previously.

Q. How does the Director of Quality Improvement contribute to the Strategy?

A. The Director of Quality Improvement focusses very much on the dashboard and on supporting Heads of School and their teams. He carries out intensive care processes and supports and monitors SARs. He and the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum work closely together on SAR Validations and MOTS etc. It was noted that the Director of Quality Improvement had worked hard with staff on the TAGS and in supporting staff to produce the grades.

6.3 Governor Engagement 2021/22

The Clerk presented the report and noted that Governors would be asked to identify curriculum areas that could be invited in the Spring term to undertake implementation and impact presentations in relation to their areas following the SAR validation meetings taking place in October 2021.

7. Safeguarding and PREVENT

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services introduced the report and explained that there would be a briefing for Governors at their development morning in November 2021.

The Director of Student Services presented the report and advised that the Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy had been amended to include a number of changes in KCSIE

that had come about as a result of the Children in Need review in 2020, but were delayed to 2021 due to the pandemic. He also referred to Ofsted's report regarding sexual harassment and violence issues, which had informed a revision to our policy in how we deal with disclosures of sexual violence and/or abuse. An enhanced section on online learning best practice was noted together with changes to Part 3 relating to Safer Recruitment. A discussion took place regarding the inclusion in the policy of procedures to manage low level concerns in Part 4 Managing Allegations Against Staff.

Q. Is there a reason for the increase in numbers of referrals in 2020/21 compared to the previous year?

A. It is likely that this was due to students being in college more than the previous year. It was noted that numbers at each campus were fairly consistent and there were no patterns of concern.

The Director of Student Services explained that there had been a risk-based approach to supporting vulnerable students during lockdown in 2020/21, which was similar to the previous year. There were 48 referrals, which does demonstrate that students were still contacting support services.

Following the Ofsted report relating to sexual harassment in educational organisations students were starting to make referrals – they tended to be low level (relating to misunderstanding around appropriate boundaries), historical or not onsite. The Director of Student Services referred to the College action plan in response to the Ofsted report.

Q. How does the College deal with this type of referral?

A. Tutors work with students, for instance through tutorials, to improve understanding about appropriate behaviours. Training is also available for staff to identify any issues and about how to deal with them.

Discussion took place regarding the range of issues that was included in the dangerous behaviour category. It was noted that this could also include students putting themselves into dangerous situations. It was noted that there was sometimes a fine line between safeguarding and behaviour issues.

Q. How effective are the supervisory arrangements?

A. The arrangements for staff supervision are very good with Hilary Baird providing good support and information in an open and helpful way for staff. She provides external quality assurance too, working through cases with safeguarding officers.

Q. With the number of referrals increasing is there any impact regarding resources?

A. It was difficult when students were offsite. The second lockdown worked better, as more arrangements were in place having learned through the first period. Now that students were back in college it was much easier to deal with and identify some issues. The triage process is getting more effective – the concept of early-help means that other staff may help too, like personal tutors, for example.

Discussion took place regarding the increased mental health referrals over the last 3 to 4 years and it was noted that the Mental Health team were invaluable and were continuing to develop further opportunities for students to self-help and that there was an increased use of external services like Forward Thinking Birmingham and MIND. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services explained that the staff mental health training would be made mandatory and that Mental Health Champions were continuing to support staff in supporting students.

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services noted that there were no proposed changes to the Prevent Policy and the position statement had been amended to reflect any recent actions.

Resolved to approve the Safeguarding Young people and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Prevent Policy.

8. Property Update

Stratford Campus Re-development - the Vice Principal Finance confirmed that the outline capital bid for the Stratford upon Avon campus had been successful, although the DfE had indicated the need

to reduce the funding requested. The boiler works in J Block had therefore been removed from the bid and alternative funding opportunities would be explored. It was noted that the biggest risk was that approval was not received so that work could take place in summer 2022. Timescales had already been put back for completion in 2024, so it was hoped that approval would be received to allow that end date.

Resolved to approve the FECTF Bid for Stratford Campus Redevelopment Phases 4 and 5.

Heat Exchange Project – the Vice Principal Finance explained that it was proposed to sign up to a long- term agreement with SMBC's ECO's for the supply of energy. She was currently working through the details and costings and would report back in due course. The contents of the terms and conditions were noted.

Sanctuary – *this item was deemed confidential.*

Tudor Grange House (TGH) – the Vice Principal Finance provided an update regarding the new exit road from the Blossomfield campus and noted that a further overage payment by MACC Group was anticipated.

9. Sub-contracting Strategy and Policy 2021/22

The Acting Principal presented the Sub-contracting Strategy and Plan for 2021/22 and noted that the Policy had been changed slightly to ensure it was in line with new ESFA guidance. It was noted that advice had been received from RSM that there was a need to tender for the £200k contract with RMF, funded via the ESFA, and an update would be provided in due course.

Resolved to approve the Sub-contracting Policy for 2021/22 and confirm the procurement process for ESFA funded sub-contractors.

10. Human Resources - Policies

10.1 Sickness Absence Policy

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the Sickness Absence Policy and noted that it updated the reporting procedures for long term absence and ensured harmonisation between the Solihull and Stratford policies.

Q. The press indicates that there are disputes in other colleges – is this the case for Solihull College?
A. No, there were no current disputes with the unions at Solihull College and generally employee relations were good.

Resolved to approve the Sickness Absence Policy.

10.2 Annualised Hours Contract for Business Support Staff

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the Annualised Hours Contract for Business Support Staff and explained that the longer-term commitment to staff on annualised hours contracts provided increased security for staff on a permanent basis.

Resolved to approve the Annualised Hours Contract for Business Support Staff.

11. Bids and Projects Reports

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and noted that there were 3 new projects.

Resolved to approve the following projects, as set out in the report:

- B239 ESF with Warwickshire College group: Market Relevance of Education Systems in Coventry and Warwickshire

- B253 CW Skills Accelerator Programme using the Strategic Development Fund
- B265 Higher technical education provider growth fund (IoT bid).

Q. What are the key risks for the college in operating these projects?

A. The key risks relate to not achieving the students numbers or that outcomes targets are not met.

12. Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting that took place on 15th September 2021

The Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee were received.

12.1 Membership

(Harrison Thompson left the meeting during consideration of his re-appointment.)

The Clerk presented the membership report and noted that there had been 2 applications for Governor roles on the Corporation. The Chair of the Corporation and the Acting Principal would be meeting the applicants in due course. The following re-appointments were approved:

Resolved to approve the extension of terms of office for Tasleem Chaudary and Neil Ladwa for a 4 year term of office from 1st December 2020 to 30th November 2024 and for Harrison Thompson's role to be moved to be a full governor of the Corporation with effect from 1st December 2021 for a 4 year term of office from 1st December 2020 to 30th November 2024.

12.2 Register of Governor Interests

The Clerk presented the updated Register of Governor and EMT interests at 31st August 2021 and they were received.

12.3 Cycle of Business 2021/22

The Clerk presented the indicative cycle of business for 2021/22 and it was received.

12.4 Governor Self-Assessment Report

The results regarding the self-assessment process for the Corporation and individual Governors was noted.

12.5 Governor Equality Report

The results of the equality survey, to date, were noted.

12.6 Student Governor Appointment Process and Staff Governor Election Process

The Clerk noted that the appointment process for the Student Governors and the election for the Staff Governors would be taking place during October and November.

13. Draft Agenda for the Governors Development session on 6th November 2021

Items for the agenda were noted.

14. Student Voice – Activities 2021/22

The contents of the Student Voice report were noted for information.

15. COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan

The COVID-19 Outbreak Management Plan was received for information.

16. Regular Reports

16.1 PMR June 2021

The PMR for June 2021 was received for information.

16.2 Use of the College Seal and Chair's E-Signature Report

The report of the use of the College Seal and Chair's E-Signature were received for information.

17. HE Tuition Fees

The HE Tuition Fees report was received for information.

18. ESFA Letter dated 22nd September 2021

The contents of the ESFA letter dated 22nd September 2021 was received for information.

19. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 8th November 2021, starting at 5pm at the Woodlands Campus. It was noted that there would be a tour of the campus prior to the meeting.

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services explained arrangements for the graduation ceremonies that would be taking place on Wednesday 20th October 2021.

Signed  Date **08 November 2021**

The meeting ended at 7.30pm

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8.Property Update

8.3 Sanctuary -