

## Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held remotely on Monday 19 October 2020

**Present: -**

- Mr Mervyn Jones (Chair)
- Ms Abigail Appleton (Principal)
- Miss Ellie Arbuthnott
- Ms Jennette Arnold
- Ms Stevie Callender
- Ms Peta Darnley
- Dr Mia Gordon
- Mr Joe Hedges
- Miss Hannah Jones
- Mr Jordan Knight
- Mr Tim Newsholme
- Mr John Nicol
- Mr Mike Rookes
- Ms Kay Sandford-Beal
- Ms Katie Seekings

**In attendance: -**

- Mr Ben Gamble (Head of FE)
- Mr Justin Gregory (Head of HE)
- Ms Xaviere Hughes (Acting Head of FE)
- Mrs Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
- Mr Tim Williams (Finance Director)

The meeting was quorate as thirteen Governors were present during the meeting which was held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic

### **1. Appointment of Governors**

The Chair welcomed new Governors to the meeting and introductions followed.

The Board agreed to appoint the following to the Board: -

- Jennette Arnold as an Independent Governor for a 4-year term in office
- Ellie Arbuthnott and Jordan Knight as Student Governors, (FE) and (HE) respectively, for 1-year terms in office.

### **2. Process of the Meeting**

- I. Apologies for absence were received from Professor Robin Baker, Mr Daniel Fox, Mr Clive Hodgeman and Mr Scott Rolfe.
- II. The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new academic year which would also be the last meeting for the Head of FE as Ben Gamble had taken a post at BMET. Governors recorded their appreciation to Ben Gamble and wished him success for the future.
- III. There were no new declarations of interests.

### **3. Minutes of the Last Meetings**

- I. The Board agreed the Chair should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 as a true record subject to an amendment to item 6 that the tutorial scheme of work for Performing Arts incorporates the protected characteristics and British Values at all levels.
- II. There were no matters arising which were not covered on the agenda.

- III. The action list was noted.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

**4. Principal's Report**

- I. The Principal drew Governors' attention to recent student activity. The MA Fine Arts Degree show was outstanding and was also an achievement to curate during COVID-19. Students and staff have responded positively to the Music and Performing Arts' induction project 'Black Lives Matter'. Students have shown resilience, particularly the residential students and those who were required to self-isolate during the pandemic. Temporary student accommodation was secured, effective from September, for residential students with support from City Heart. Station Approach accommodation is now due to open in January for c50 students. Discussions are ongoing with CityHeart to lease rooms to mitigate the shortfall.

This year enrolment to FE had increased by 18% to date and HE enrolments have exceeded last year. A Governor commented about the limited support from Government to the creative industries and reduction of creative subjects being delivered in schools. There was a question how the College is mitigating this to ensure students are attracted to study creative subjects. The College publicises that creative subjects are adaptable to adjust to the world which is reflected at open days. Colleges' week has published the importance of the creative sector and transferrable skills.

The Government has announced that GCSE examinations will be held two weeks later in 2021 with some additional funding for providers to deliver GCSEs.

The Principal gave a presentation showing progress against the Principal's objectives and KPIs for 2020/21. The strategy implementation plan was presented to the Board in December 2019, a summary of progress will be provided in future. Mechanisms have been established to delegate and involve staff talent to achieve the objectives. This included establishing College working groups to focus on specific objectives from the strategy implementation plan including a Teaching and Learning Working Group and an Equality and Diversity Inclusion Group. The Principal explained that not all objectives have been achieved which had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be taken into account for 2020/21.

- II. There was an update on operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The College has had seven positive cases to date; however, two of these were offsite. The Principal has liaised with the local Outbreak Control Hub team who work closely with Public Health England. Institutions are recognised as potentially high-risk to spread the virus. In each case guidance is being followed including self-isolating and notifying those who have been in close contact. Students are being responsible and showing integrity to others. Procedures are in place to manage positive cases as efficiently as possible. The College is following Government guidelines to prioritise campus learning. Governors expressed appreciation to the Principal, SLT and the incident management team for dedicating their time to ensure guidelines are followed at each campus. SLT is identifying methods to relieve pressure on space at Folly Lane Campus. The Chair receives regular updates on positive cases so that a decision can be made as to whether Governors should be notified of the number of cases. The Board were supportive of actions taken.
- III. Changes to scores in the risk register were outlined. The impact of COVID-19 had been factored into scoring. Scores for student achievement and the

student experience have increased to reflect COVID-19. The score for the relationship with RNC had decreased to become low risk as RNC are no longer the College's landlords. Issues shown in red text have been addressed. A Governor asked if the potential change to bank interest rates moving to a negative position could be an immediate risk; it was not anticipated that this would have a major impact on the College.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the reports

**5. Resources Report**

- I. The Finance Director highlighted key points from the written report. Recruitment achieved predictions with FE recruitment above the College's ESFA allocation. There is a possibility that ESFA could provide in-year growth funding if the 16-18 recruitment has increased by 15%. The Teachers' Pension Scheme grant had been confirmed at £85K compared to £42K budget assumption. HE enrolments showed £200K additional tuition fees income. FE short course income had not been assumed for the autumn with a potential shortfall on income. There are additional costs associated with COVID-19 which are being monitored including hygiene measures to provide sanitizer, PPE and screens.

The EBITDA calculation shows an EBITDA surplus of £274k with in-year additional funding and a deficit of £61k without it (the difference being £335k). Cashflow issues are not anticipated this year. Overall the College's financial position is satisfactory.

A Governor asked if the impact of COVID-19 had increased recruitment and was likely to increase it next year. Initially it was predicted that there would be a decrease in HE enrolments resulting from only offering online contact with applicants; however, recruitment increased which could be impacted by the employment sector. HE curriculum delivery is being reviewed which could be delivered as 2-year foundation degrees in the future. A question followed about FE asking if there is a distinction in numbers enrolled for Level 2 and 3 programmes on different courses. There had been a significant increase on the Level 2 and 3 digital futures programme with more students enrolled on level 3 based on GCSE results. A pilot Level 4 Performing Arts was offered with several students considering applying for Foundation degrees next year. The College offer focuses on the high level of contact time and delivery which is a different offer and student experience compared to other institutions. Student Governors echoed that contact time is crucial, which was much lower in some institutions before the COVID-19 pandemic. The College has an attractive offer to potential students.

- II. The Principal explained that Project 2020 had commenced to reduce costs across the College to mitigate the financial risk facing the College at the direction of the Board. Staff consultation had taken place with several ideas from staff being explored. Project 2020 is in the final stages of restructuring with £80K saving this year with redundancy payments to be netted off.

The Board agreed:

- To note the reports and the clear financial report prepared by the Finance Director

## 6. HE Curriculum Development

The Head of HE reminded Governors that an HE course review had commenced before the pandemic. The report gave a summary of the current position, opportunities for growth, qualification structure and priorities. The course review is continuing which will include exploring distinction and differentiation for each course, revalidation and module delivery. FE Digital Futures pathways and progression to HE are being explored.

Governors acknowledged the significant pressure on SLT who are continuing to manage the College both operationally and strategically despite the additional workload created by the pandemic. Governors fully supported the strategy for HE to ensure that the curriculum offer is appropriate.

### The Board agreed:

- To note progress of HE course reviews and plans for curriculum development presented by the Head of HE

## 7. Safeguarding and Prevent

The Head of FE outlined changes to the revised policies which required approval.

- I. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy incorporated requirements from the DFE publication 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) published in September 2020. The main change is to support children and young people with their wellbeing and mental health which had been incorporated in the policy. These reflected practices which the College had already embedded. Part 1 of KCSIE provided a summary of changes and Part 2 Governors' responsibilities and requirement to complete regular training in safeguarding and PREVENT.
- II. The PREVENT Policy was based on the PREVENT Duty. This was previously embedded within the Safeguarding Policy. The College has had one referral this year which had followed due procedure. The Welling Lead will be the PREVENT lead who is not required to be part of the senior team in contrast to the designated safeguarding lead who must be a member of the senior team. The Head of HE and acting Head of FE are trained in safeguarding to Level 5. The acting Head of FE is the safeguarding lead.

### The Board agreed: -

- To approve the revised Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the PREVENT Policy which the Head of FE outlined
- Governors would be sent a link to complete relevant online 'Smartlog' training. **ACTION: CLERK TO THE GOVERNORS**

## 8. Governance

- I. Governors' activity 2019/20 and recommendations 2020/21  
This was presented to the Board annually to confirm and endorse key appointments and inform Governors of activity undertaken during the previous year.

The paper covered the following areas: -

- I. Composition of the governing body 2020/21 noting that there is one vacancy which is being addressed by the Search and Governance Committee. Interviews for Student Governors for FE and HE were held since preparing the report.
- II. Attendance by non-members at Board Meetings 2020/21
- III. Appointment of the Chair, Vice Chair and Chairs of Committee 2020/21
- IV. Membership to Committees 2020/21.

- IV. Attendance records 2019/20 showed 92% attendance at Board and Committee meetings which was commended.
  - V. Appointment of designated Governors to safeguarding and health and safety, namely John Nicol and Clive Hodgeman respectively
  - VI. Review of Confidential Minutes 2019/20
- II. Standing Orders and Terms of Reference 2020/21 were presented with amendments highlighted.

The Board agreed:

- To note the paper endorsing the current number, composition and membership to the Corporation, appoint Chairs for 2020/21 and release of confidential minutes as recommended
- To approve the Standing Orders and Terms of Reference 2020/21

**9. Any Other Business**

- I. The Principal thanked Governors for their support during unprecedented and challenging times to operate during the pandemic.
- II. Governors were invited to a livestream gig by the Performing Arts students.

**10. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be on Monday 14 December 2020 commencing at 4.30 pm. It was anticipated that this would be held using Microsoft Teams. It was agreed that if the pandemic should accelerate it may be necessary to arrange an additional meeting.