

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held remotely on Monday 14 December 2020

Present: -

- Mervyn Jones (Chair)
- Abigail Appleton (Principal)
- Ellie Arbuthnott
- Jennette Arnold OBE MA
- Stevie Callender
- Daniel Fox
- Dr Mia Gordon
- Joe Hedges
- Clive Hodgeman
- Hannah Jones
- Jordan Knight
- Tim Newsholme
- John Nicol
- Scott Rolfe
- Katie Seekings

In attendance: -

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

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

1. Process of the Meeting

- I. Apologies for absence were received from Professor Robin Baker OBE, Peta Darnley, Mike Rookes and Kay Sandford-Beal.
- II. The Chair remarked on the Principal's and SLT's sheer volume of work to lead and manage the College regardless of the extra workload created by the pandemic whilst ensuring that the College manages operations following Government guidelines.
- III. There were no new declarations of interests.

2. Minutes of the Last Meetings

- I. The Board agreed the Chair should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 as a true record.
- II. There were no matters arising.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

3. Principal's Report

- I. The Principal drew Governors' attention to the recruitment process and applications received at this early stage in the year which was very different to previous years due to COVID-19.

Cityheart are liaising with the College regarding the revised opening date for Station Approach accommodation. Information will be available for prospective students on the website. An independent report had been provided regarding the fire in the building which related to its construction and not the design.

The College had submitted a bid in collaboration with several partners for the Stronger Towns Fund, a £25M capital grant opportunity for Hereford.

The Principal presented a summary of project-2020 which had been implemented to reduce costs in central services without detracting from the student experience. Phase 1 assumed £120K salary savings (157K including on-costs). Following the consultation process in July 2020 adjustments were made based on comments and proposals from staff. Savings of £98K (£126K including on-costs) were made creating a negative variance of £22K. Phase 2 had been postponed due to managing COVID-19 which had assumed £41K savings. Subsequently there have been some in-year savings resulting in a positive variance of £11K.

Warwickshire College have announced plans to withdraw its provision at Malvern Hills College from September 2021 and sell the premises. The local MP has approached the Principal to discuss options to maintain some arts provision in Malvern with options being explored in partnership with Malvern Hills District Council.

- II. There was discussion about wellbeing and mental health which remain crucial areas for the College to offer support to students and staff particularly following an increase in issues since the COVID-19 pandemic. Students with challenging home lives are being supported. The Wellbeing Officer will send a pack to all students with contact details of organisations offering help during the Christmas period. There was a question about the protocol to contact student's parents or next of kin. Measures are in place to contact parents of students who are under 18 years; however, all students are notified at induction that parents or next of kin will be contacted in there is a serious issue or crisis; this applied to FE and HE. Safeguarding overrides confidentiality and GDPR, even if the student is over 18-years old.

A Governor raised the additional workload for SLT who are required to be on call six days after the close of term to report any COVID-19 cases. Appreciation was recorded to staff who may be required to continue working to address this.

- III. Achievement of objectives and KPIs 2019/20-2020/21 was presented with achievement affected by COVID-19. It was agreed that some objectives are inappropriate following the pandemic. The Chair and Principal would identify amendments to objectives in the spring. **ACTION: CHAIR/PRINCIPAL**
- IV. Management accounts to 31 October 2020 had been issued. Short courses will not be offered in the spring term creating a reduction of £18K income. There is an overall a positive variance of £40K for the month.
- V. Governors discussed correspondence from Gavin Williamson MP to adopt the antisemitism statement with caveats from the Home Affairs Select Committee. A summary from GuildHE was provided which highlighted some opposition to the statement. Feedback and comments were invited with some strong views expressed, particularly that the statement was limited to antisemitism, that free speech should not be curtailed, that the caveats were supported, and that tone, underlying threat and subject matter of the request

from the Minister of Education on this matter was not wholly appropriate. There was an abstention on the basis that that singling out one group for non-discrimination devalues the integrity of the College's already robust Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and of all other groups covered by this policy but not included within the MP's request.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the reports
- To accept the objectives for 2020/21 in principle which would be amended subject to comments from Governors and impact of COVID-19
- To adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism with caveats, which had been recommended by the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2016
- The antisemitism statement should not supersede the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

4. Higher Education Portfolio Development Report

The Head of HE presented the report which outlined progress from the autumn 2019 course review. A RAG rated summary of the following aspects of BA (hons) courses was provided: course recruitment, short term recruitment potential, NSS results, complaints, distinct identify and course contribution.

Recruitment and quality improvement are interrelated and key drivers for course development in addition to sector and regulatory changes. The College offers Level 1 to Level 7 provision with internal progression opportunities. The College's vision includes delivering transformative education for students to enrich lives and prepare them for employability. Course revalidation and development plans were outlined which dovetailed to this to modernise programmes with some course collaboration, meet demand, outcomes and employability.

Best practice will be shared between staff as part of the course validation progress. Teams currently use the Knowledge Exchange Hub (KEH) which provides pedagogy and excellent staff development opportunities whilst encouraging staff to take creative risks.

Students have opportunities to work with employers on live briefs. This will be articulated clearly with strategic approaches to target employers and examples publicised.

A Governor asked if the College would collaborate with NMiTE for some course delivery noting that it was too early to progress at this stage. The College will investigate opportunities to work with NMiTE in the future once NMiTE has become more established.

The College has a maximum recruitment level to the Artist Blacksmithing course which is restricted by capacity at the forge facility. The Finance Director commented that despite course costs, the Artist Blacksmithing makes a course contribution to overheads.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the update from the HE Course review to date which would be a standing agenda item

5. Assurance Reports

- I. The Risk Register had been discussed by the Audit Committee noting that the main changes related to student experiences as a result of the pandemic which SLT are continuing to manage.

- II. The Head of FE presented the Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/20 which evidenced practices embedded for safeguarding and students' welfare in accordance with KCSIE 2020. The Chair of AQ&S (FE) Committee as Designated Safeguarding Governor, commented that this was a positive report which provided Governors reassurance of effective processes, policies and procedures. There had been a significant increase in student issues recorded on MyConcern since the pandemic. Safeguarding support is publicized to all students. Performing Arts and Music courses have embedded wellbeing into the curriculum. yoga and mindfulness are offered to improve students' wellbeing and alleviate pressure on the wellbeing team.
- III. The Remuneration Committee's Annual Report 2019/20 was presented as a requirement to the AoC's Colleges' Senior Staff Remuneration Code which the Board adopted. The Remuneration Code requires the Remuneration Committee to prepare an annual report for the Board which is also made available to the public.
- IV. The Audit Committee Annual Report 2019/20 outlined the role and work of the Audit Committee confirming that all audits were completed in 2019/20 albeit some were delayed slightly due to the pandemic. The opinion, based on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Corporation's assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes, for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency of the institution and safeguarding its assets stating that the Governors can put reliance upon internal control systems established.

The Board agreed to approve the following reports: -

- Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/20
- Remuneration Committee's Annual Report 2019/20 which would be published
- Audit Committee's Annual Report 2019/20 which would be submitted to ESFA with the Financial Statements
- RSM Internal Audit Service's Annual Report 2019/20
- Value for Money Annual Report 2019/20
- Health and Safety Annual Report 2019/20
- Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20
- Personnel Annual Report 2019/20 with satisfaction recorded that the report provided valuable information feeding into the College strategy

6. Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020

- I. The ACOP regularity self assessment questionnaire had been discussed by the Audit Committee with a recommendation that the Chair and Principal sign the questionnaire which was a requirement in order for Mazars to recommend the financial statements for approval.
- II. The F&GP Committee had discussed financial aspects of the report and the Audit Committee had discussed the report making a recommendation to the Board to approve the Members' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020. The Finance Director highlighted that Mazars have tested if the College is a going concern for the next 12 months and will remain a solvent entity which was confirmed. The pension reserve had a negative impact on the balance sheet and statement of comprehensive income.

The Board agreed: -

- To authorise the Chair and Principal to sign the regulatory self assessment questionnaire
- To endorse the Members' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020 and authorise the Chair and Principal to sign the Letter of Representation for the financial statements and regulatory

7. College FE Self Assessment Report (SAR) 2019/20

The Head of FE informed Governors that the SAR comprised of input from all curriculum areas with external moderation in addition to scrutiny by the AQ&S (FE) Committee. The SAR will be uploaded to Ofsted in January 2021.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve College FE Self Assessment Report (SAR) 2019/20
- To thank the Head of FE and Teaching and the Learning and Quality Improvement Lead for preparing the SAR which was an excellent document

8. Policies and Strategies

The Principal explained that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Policy replaced the previous single equality scheme and policy. The Academic Board and AQ&S Committee had thoroughly reviewed these which will support work in the College. The College seeks to ensure fair treatment and opportunity for all and aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination on the basis of an individual or group of individual's protected characteristics. The policy promote equality amongst students, staff and visitors.

The HSBC Bank mandate to change bank signatories was a housekeeping issue which required Board approval.

The Board agreed:

- To approve the Equality and Diversity Inclusion Policy at the recommendation of the AQ&S Committee
- To approve the HSBC Bank Mandate

9. Re-appointment of Financial Statements and Internal Auditors for the year 2021/22

The Board agreed: -

- To appoint Mazars and RSM as financial statements and internal auditors respectively for the years 2020/21 and 2021/22 at the recommendation of the Audit Committee who work professionally to provide audit services. A joint tendering process with HLNSC will be deferred in view of COVID-19

10. Minutes (draft) and summary of recommendations from Committees

The following minutes from Committees were noted: -

- I. Audit Committee: 30 November 2020
- II. Search and Governance Committee: 23 November 2020
- III. Finance and General Purposes Committee: 23 November 2020
- IV. Academic Quality and Standards Committee: 24 November 2020. The AQ&S (HE) Chair commended the specialist input from the co-opted member on the Committee suggesting an HE professional should be sought for the AQ&S (HE) Committee which would be addressed by the Search and Governance Committee. **ACTION: PRINCIPAL/CLERK**

11. Any Other Business

- I. The Principal thanked Governors for their support both at formal meetings and for providing support and advice informally.
- II. The Chair wished everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be on Monday 25 January 2021 commencing at 12.30 pm. It was anticipated that this would be held using Microsoft Teams and timings may be adjusted.

ACTION: PRINCIPAL/CHAIR/CLERK

Signed as a true record of proceedings

Chair: Date: