

## Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held remotely on Monday 26 April 2021

**Present: -** Mervyn Jones (Chair)  
Abigail Appleton (Principal)  
Ellie Arbuthnott  
Daniel Fox  
Dr Mia Gordon  
Joe Hedges  
Clive Hodgeman  
Hannah Jones  
Jordan Knight  
Tim Newsholme  
John Nicol  
Mike Rookes  
Kay Sandford-Beal  
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)  
Nick Stew (RSM Auditors)

The meeting was quorate as fourteen 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 Jennette Arnold OBE, Professor Robin Baker OBE, Stevie Callender, Peta Darnley and Scott Rolfe.
- II. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting explaining that Nick Stew, RSM Internal Auditors, was observing the meeting as part of the HE audit.
- 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 25 January 2021 as a true record.
- II. Matters arising were outlined in the action list showing actions had been completed. These included the dates for the graduation ceremonies which had been arranged for 16 and 17 September. John Nicol reported that he had attended the music clinic which had been excellent with positive feedback provided separately to the Principal.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

### **3. Principal's Report**

- I. The Principal drew Governors' attention to the OfS Consumer Marketing Authority requirements for providers to confirm the accuracy, appropriateness and timeliness of communication and information provided to prospective and continuing students, and to ensure that the

College has a robust complaints policy. In response to correspondence from OfS a thorough assessment was undertaken with students with appreciation recorded to the Student Union President who had provided evidence to OfS showing how the College meets equality, diversity and inclusion in the Access and Participation Plan.

The Principal, SU President and a Governor had visited Station Approach confirming the accommodation will provide good facilities and high-quality accommodation for students. The SU President commented that the accommodation was inspiring. Appropriate lighting will be essential in the communal area. The corridors appeared uninspiring and will require input to improve their appearance.

Course accommodation is being assessed for September to accommodate the increase of FE students with plans outlined in the report. A Staff Governor recorded their appreciation to the Principal for securing The Hive at CRC which provided additional course accommodation. The Principal is continuing negotiations with Herefordshire Council to accommodate relocation of Foundation students to CRC which would free up accommodation for the expansion of FE students. The Government have released additional capital funding for colleges to submit bids. The Principal had a positive meeting with Jesse Norman MP to discuss skills and qualifications.

- II. The majority of staff and students comply with COVID-19 requirements; however, there are challenges to support small numbers of students and staff following their personal experiences of COVID-19. Space constraints create challenges to accommodate physical distancing. The air conditioning system recirculates air and is therefore not compliant to COVID-19 guidelines, this has created some issues with working conditions. The Principal commented that staff continue to manage the exceptional pressures created by COVID-19 whilst supporting the majority of students on campus and a minority online. The Head of HE commented that the CMA audit had shown the accuracy of planning and effective procedures which evidenced good levels of support provided for students.
- III. A confidential minute was recorded regarding applications 2021/22.
- IV. Questions were invited about the risk register. A Governor enquired if the risk level for the relationship with Herefordshire Council and progress of the Station Approach build should be reduced. It was agreed that the risk profile has reduced for Station Approach which will be available for students in September. SLT would review the scores for all risks. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Scores regarding HE tuition fee income had not changed; however, the commentary had been amended to reflect the sector-wide risk regarding HE tuition refunds. The relationship with RNC had changed who are no longer the College's landlord.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the reports

#### 4. **Finance Update and Management Accounts to February 2021**

The Finance Director explained that the management accounts showed that the College's financial health score had improved; this was calculated using performance indicators set by ESFA.

The Board were reminded of the importance to focus on the College's long-term sustainability. An analysis of the 2021/22 financial forecast submitted to ESFA in July

2020 was provided showing adjustments. HE recruitment will have a significant impact on the 2021/22 budget. Following prudent planning and restructuring in 2020 the College will not run out of cash even in the event that there is a reduction in HE recruitment in September. The Chair reminded Governors that the Board had previously set a £1M cash level as a stop position. It is not anticipated that this will trigger alternative actions which had been necessary in 2020. The F&GP Committee and Board will continue to be updated of the financial situation so that appropriate strategic actions can be taken at the right time to ensure the College remains sustainable.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the finance report and management accounts to February 2021

**5. Strategy Review and Reset [A confidential minute was recorded]**

**6. Policies and Strategies**

The policies had been discussed by the F&GP Committee and Audit Committee as indicated with recommendations for approval.

The Clerk explained that the disciplinary and grievance procedures for staff would include mediation as part of the informal process; this would be added following further exploration. Governors supported this which is recommended by ACAS and could deescalate situations. This was agreed in principle with mediation to be incorporated within designated timescales. This would be agreed as Chair's action.

**ACTION: PRINCIPAL/CLERK**

The Board agreed to approve the following: -

- Disciplinary Procedure for staff and the Grievance Procedure for staff including the addition to provide the option for mediation in stage 1 as part of the informal process which would be approved by Chair's action
- Anti-Bribery Policy

**7. Governance**

Recommendations were made by the Search and Governance Committee following discussion about the contribution and knowledge of individuals, skills represented on the Board and taking account of vacancies.

The Board agreed: -

- To re-appoint Professor Robin Baker as Independent Governors for a further 4-year term in office
- To re-appoint John Nicol as Independent Governor for a further 1-year term in office
- To appoint Mike Rookes as Co-opted Member of the Audit Committee until the end of the calendar year
- To appoint Scott Rolfe as Co-opted Member of the F&GP Committee for a 1-year term in office
- To appoint Kate Murrie as Independent Governor for a 4-year term in office effective 1 September 2021

**8. Minutes (draft) and summary of recommendations from Committees**

The following minutes from Committees were noted: -

- I. Audit Committee: 29 March 2021
- II. Search and Governance Committee: 22 March 2021. Governors were directed to the discussion about commissioning an external review of governance which the Committee had agreed to defer due to the pandemic. One to one reviews would be held with the Chair and Vice Chair in the interim period.

- III. Finance and General Purposes Committee: 22 March 2021. A consultant would be commissioned to prepare an estates strategy for the College.
- IV. Academic Quality and Standards Committee: 23 March 2021

**9. Any Other Business**

There were no items.

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

The next meeting would be on Monday 12 July 2021 commencing at 4.30 pm. It was anticipated that this would be held at College, however, there would be an option for Governors to join by Microsoft Teams. **ACTION: CLERK**

**Signed as a true record of proceedings**

**Chair: ..... Date: .....**