

BOSTON COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 1 JULY 2020

1. PRESENT

Peter Croyley (Chair), Andy Atkins, David Earnshaw (from item 4a), Kate Folling (from item 4a), Claire Foster, Heather Lee, Chris Pett, Ann Savage, Gerry Tawton, Ben Webb, Nick Worth and Helen Wright.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Richard Chambers (Head of Engineering and Technology), Craig Gosling (Head of Quality), Debbie Holland (Director of Finance and Funding), Vicki Locke (Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality), Dawn Telford (Head of Learner Services) and Tim White (Head of Curriculum Development).

Meeting attendance: 71%

Apologies for absence were received from Daran Bland, Ruth Catlett, Helen Mather, Mollie Plummer and Michelle Sacks.

2. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress against items identified in the action log.

It was noted that there was not yet any news about Borough Council funding for EMAT equipment. A meeting regarding the Horncastle development will be taking place next week. Testing is to be undertaken on business continuity arrangements and the COVID sub-group has had one meeting.

3. MINUTES – CORPORATION – 28 MAY 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2020 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

4. REPORTS

a) Principal's

Members received a report from the Principal on a number of sector and College matters.

The Corporation noted that capital funding of £2m for the sector had been announced and the College was looking at the implications of this. Apprenticeship starts were noted to be significantly down on last year. The College is looking for opportunities to work collaboratively on a number of issues.

Kate Folling and David Earnshaw joined the meeting at this point.

With regard to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, members were advised that colleges are pressing for more revenue to allow for Summer tutoring to take place. Confirmation has been received about an Autumn series of exams. Peter Croyley asked about this year's achievements and Claire Foster explained how the calculated grades would work. Ann Savage asked if results affected the perception of College performance and whether the College had any sense that learners would be dissatisfied with these arrangements. Claire advised that she was confident of the way it had been approached and that the College had managed it correctly. Helen Wright asked about the timing of results and it was confirmed that A-Level and GCSE results would be published at the usual time in August. Vocational results have also been delayed.

In respect of the availability of any funding, Claire confirmed, in response to a query from Nick Worth about having projects ready, that the College was prepared for any opportunities which arose. Chris Pett asked about sector feedback on the financial impact of Covid 19. Claire advised that some colleges were looking at redundancies and restructures but that she was confident Boston College was in a good position. Chris Pett commented that the finance documents made reassuring reading in the circumstances.

Peter Cropley asked about how the re-opening had gone. Members were advised that it had gone well and had supported learner assessments. Craig Gosling explained that 25 learners had given feedback on their return and had generally rated their views of the return highly.

A discussion took place about new facilities being provided for further education in Skegness. Claire advised members that she had been invited to the Skegness Towns Deal Board.

Helen Wright asked who would be picking up the roles undertaken by Paul Collins who had now left the College. Members were advised that Debbie Holland was managing Estates and Digital Services. In response to a query from Heather Lee it was confirmed that Human Resources had taken over responsibility for Health and Safety.

b) Leadership Business Plan 2019-20

Members received a report from the Principal on the Leadership Business Plan.

The Corporation looked at areas which had been affected by Covid 19 and noted that the College was concentrating on distance learning to spend its AEB funding. Peter Cropley asked about a visioning exercise which was identified and members were advised that it would be taking place the following day and would start looking at the strategic plan.

Members accepted the Leadership Business Plan and the approach to strategic planning.

c) Finance

Members received a report from the Director of Finance and Funding.

Debbie Holland advised members that the budget for 2020-21 needs to be approved and information was provided on the July 2020 Financial Return and Commentary which will be sent to the ESFA.

Debbie ran through the documents provided and identified that £120k deficit was forecast which produced a 'requires improvement' financial health. This is foreseen to be a 1-year dip. It was noted that, in the documents, the staff to income ratio is high and Claire Foster confirmed that this was already being addressed. Gerry Tawton confirmed that the Finance and Resources Committee was happy to recommend the budget and members agreed to confirm the budget for 2020-2021. The Finance Return and commentary were also reviewed and approved.

Members looked at the May 2020 accounts which included a re-forecast of the outturn position. It now forecasted a break even for 2019-20. Peter Cropley asked if any more information was available on international debts which had been queried by the Finance and Resources committee. Debbie advised that there was one significant overseas debt and one smaller one and Peter suggested that the licencing arrangements for agents with these debts should be checked. A further debt in relation to Summer schools was already being resolved.

d) Safeguarding Update 2019-20

Members received a report from the Head of Learner Services on Safeguarding.

Dawn Telford ran through the report and identified a number of changes to statutory guidance which had occurred. Some concerns had been identified about the ability to safeguard online. This had been risk assessed and weekly contact is being made with 200 learners for Safeguarding. Peter Cropley asked about whether there was an increase in mental health issues. Dawn confirmed that some rise had been identified but also that some learners had liked spending lockdown in their family environment. It is anticipated that there will be mental health referrals and that, for learners with existing mental health issues, this would be exacerbated.

Peter Cropley asked about a change in the profile of referrals and whether there was a particular reason for this. Dawn advised that there had been a swing to level 3 learners but there was no identifiable cause for this. Chris Pett asked about three staff investigations. Dawn advised that there would not normally be this number but there were no common factors or trend within them.

Members approved the report.

e) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report 2019-20

Members received a report from the External Funding Manager and EDI lead which was presented by Vicki Locke.

Members noted that refresher EDI training would be completed online to ensure that the required levels of training were achieved. Ann Savage asked about the implications of the Black Lives Matter campaign. Dawn Telford confirmed that discussions had taken place around this and it had been agreed that the political issue should not be addressed but that there should be a curriculum approach to it, for example a Black history month. Ben Webb offered to tie in what was being done with the Saturday Football provision. There was a consensus view that looking at the non-political aspects of this was correct and it was noted by Heather Lee that this issue had some developing relevance to Covid 19 responses and the College needed to be aware of this.

Nick Worth asked about the Modern Slavery project which was still high on the local agenda. Vicki confirmed that the College would be continuing with this.

Peter Cropley asked about the low numbers applying for settled status. Members were advised that there weren't enough people eligible and applying and there was low engagement with workshops having had to be cut short. The College would look at re-addressing this. ●

f) Governance

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation.

A schedule of dates for meetings in 2020-21 was approved. Members reviewed proposals for following up the Corporation CPD with developments informing curriculum understanding. It was agreed that suggested actions should be added to the governance action plan which would be monitored by the Search and Governance committee. ● Helen Wright commented that some direct input from learners used to happen at the Corporation meetings and that any access to students in useful to understanding their College experience which can only be helpful to members.

It was noted that as a result of a recommendation from the auditors a change to the constitution of the Finance and Resources Committee was suggested to include responsibility for information security governance. It was agreed that this should be added to the committee's constitution. ●

A discussion took place about Audit committee membership. Heather Lee had offered to join the committee and this appointment was approved. The committee is still seeking additional members and it was noted that the Search and Governance Committee will consider this when looking at new members and committee rotations.

It was noted that the temporary governance arrangements which had been introduced as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic had reached an end and it was agreed that they did not need to be renewed.

g) Learner Views

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on the end of year survey.

Craig Gosling advised members that this gave an insight into what it is like to be a learner at the College. The Standards Committee will review the detail of the survey.

Helen Wright asked about the arrangements for tracking progression. Craig outlined the arrangements and Vicki Locke confirmed that the College uses an external company for destination tracking but is hoping to move it to an internal system next year. Claire Foster advised members that the College was expecting more returns to education next year as a result of the pandemic.

Vicki Locke commented that the contents of this report provided information needed to enhance governance as part of inspection planning and it was agreed that this information should continue to be provided at Corporation in the future.

h) Sub-contracting policy 2019-20 to 2020-21

Members received a report from the Director of Finance and Funding.

The information provided was reviewed and it was confirmed that the ESFA would be reviewing the guidance for 2021-22. The policy as proposed was approved.

i) Business Continuity Plan

Members received a report from the Principal on the Business Continuity Plan.

Claire Foster advised that the plan has now been updated to reflect Paul Collins leaving the College. There is also further work being carried out in reviewing the bronze level assigned to cyber security.

Having reviewed the contents of the Business Continuity Plan members agreed to approve it.

j) OfS Reportable Events

The Principal advised members that there had been no reportable events.

5. HELEN WRIGHT

The Chair advised members that Helen would be leaving the Corporation after 16 years service including excellent Chairing of the Standards Committee. Members agreed that they were sorry to see her leave and thanked her for her efforts, attendance and work on behalf of the Corporation.