

BOSTON COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 11 DECEMBER 2019

1. PRESENT

Peter Cropley (Chair), Andy Atkins, Ruth Catlett, David Earnshaw, Kate Folling, Jo Maher, Helen Mather, Michelle Sacks, Ann Savage, Gerry Tawton, Nick Worth and Helen Wright.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Richard Chambers Paul Collins, Jen Durrant, Craig Gosling (Head of Quality), Debbie Holland (Director of Finance), Vicki Locke, Dawn Telford and Tim White.

Meeting attendance: 75%

Apologies for absence were received from Heather Lee, Chris Pett, Molly Plummer and Ben Webb.

The Chair welcomed Ruth Catlett and Kate Folling to their first meeting of the Corporation.

2. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress made against items identified on the action log.

Jo Maher advised members that the pensions consultation outcomes were not yet available. Gerry Tawton advised that he had queried the contribution rates going up despite a surplus on the fund but had ascertained that this was to cover future cost liabilities and a matter of prudence. The funding level would need to be at 120% before a reduction could be allowed.

Members were advised that a promotion event was being planned in March for the EMAT Centre and it was hoped to get a Minister to attend the opening. It is also hoped that the LEP Chief Executive will be able to attend and the LEP has been consulted about arrangements.

With regard to the Horncastle agreement, heads of terms and the agreement need to be reviewed and the College's legal team is being advised that this is expected. Some concern was expressed about potential coastal area investment from competitor organisation.

Members were advised that the property committee had now been established and the membership was Peter Cropley, David Earnshaw, Heather Lee, Jo Maher, Michelle Sacks and Ben Webb.

With regard to queries raised about HR monitoring it was confirmed that absences by month was being looked at. Long term sickness levels had reduced since the Summer and were being managed and short term absence is also reduced. Jo Maher advised members that processes had been tightened up to ensure that the system was being used properly.

3. EDUCATION INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

Members received a presentation from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the new Education Inspection Framework.

Vicki advised that the EIF is the framework in which the College will now be inspected and that the quality of education is a determining grade for the inspection. She advised members of the preparations that the College was making for its next inspection which should take place in around 3 years time. Staff briefings and training is being undertaken and the College is focussing on the impact on learners which is a key part of the inspection. Members noted that inspectors would want to know from learners what it is like to be a learner at the College.

The Chair confirmed that he felt that the College's preparations were well thought out and Helen Wright commented on the excellent result from the residential inspection which had achieved an Outstanding outcome. Michelle Sacks asked if inspectors would be looking at the intervention taken where performance was lower than expected and it was confirmed that this was the case.

4. **MEMBERSHIP**

The Clerk to the Corporation advised that David Rudnyanszky had resigned as student governor and that an election to replace him would take place after the Christmas break.

The Corporation was advised that the Search and Governance Committee was recommending that consideration be given to appointing Nick Worth for a further term.

Nick Worth withdrew from the meeting

Members were advised that the Search and Governance Committee felt that Nick Worth made a substantial contribution to the work of the Corporation and was recommending re-appointment for a further 4-year term. Members agreed to approve this reappointment.

Nick Worth re-joined the meeting

5. **MINUTES**

a) Corporation – 30 October 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2019 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

Gerry Tawton asked about the implementation of the new Board software which had been approved. It was confirmed that this would be introduced from the end of January 2020.

The Chair confirmed that he had written to members who had left the Corporation thanking them for their services.

b) Finance and Resources Committee – 25 November 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2019 were reviewed.

6. **REPORTS**

a) Principal's

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

Jo Maher advised members that meetings had been taking place with staff about developing the new strategy. A focus with staff had been looking at what mattered most to employees of the College. Jo advised that she had reviewed the old strategy and strategies of other institutions with staff. The information gleaned from this process will be passed on to the new Principal and it had provided a good opportunity to talk to staff. ●

Jo took members through other key points of her report and it was noted that the Towns Fund, which she was acting as Chair for, was a fantastic opportunity for Boston. The Towns Fund board consists of a strong group of members and Michelle Sacks advised that Lincolnshire had fallen into one of the poorest areas which had focussed attention on it.

David Earnshaw asked about progress with T-Levels, Jo commented that informal feedback received on the national pilots was that they had not gone well and a discussion took place about whether the opening of the EMAT Centre meant that the College could look at going into Engineering T-Levels. The next stage pilots would be in 2022-23 but the issues regarding placements still need to be resolved.

b) Finance

Members received a report from the Director of Finance and Funding which included presentation of the 2018-19 accounts, management accounts, risk management and the finance dashboard.

Members noted that the accounts had been reviewed by both the Finance and Resources Committee and Audit Committee and that appropriate assurances had been provided for signing off the accounts. Part of the supporting information which was accepted by the Corporation was the Audit Committee report which included the process for appointing auditors, the internal audit annual report, internal audit plan for 2019-20 and the external audit report. Members confirmed compliance with the requirements for signing off the accounts and approved the accounts and signing of the management representations.

In reviewing the management accounts members discussed the potential for making a staff pay award and the impact of the anticipated changes to the Living Wage. It was noted that the College had had its financial health confirmed on the basis of the July 2019 financial plan as Outstanding in 2018-19 and Good for 2019-20. A discussion about staff pay awards focussed on the level of such an award and the timing of it and a strategy for implementing this was agreed. Gerry Tawton suggested that staff needed to be aware of the increase in pension contributions and Jo Maher agreed that this should be mentioned as an addition to pay increases. Jo will advise Union representatives and then the staff of the pay awards agreed.

A number of queries were raised on the management accounts and members were advised of the meanings of some of the terms used and what some of the headings included. It was noted that a new finance model would need to be signed off at the February meeting of the Corporation and that this would replace the financial plan and finance return. Once this is available Debbie Holland asked that any queries be raised with her in advance because of the closeness of the Corporation meeting to the deadline for submission of this document.

c) Governance

The Clerk to the Corporation presented information to members on a number of governance items.

A discussion took place about committee membership and it was agreed that Ruth Catlett and Molly Plummer should be appointed to the Standards Committee and that Heather Lee should be appointed to the Search and Governance Committee.

Members noted the Audit Committee's report on achievement of its 2018-19 targets within its report to the Corporation and noted and approved its proposals for targets for 2019-20:

- make an annual report to the Corporation
- 75% attendance at meetings
- Oversight of tendering for Audit services

Members were advised of the arrangements for the appointment of the new Principal and that interviews were scheduled to take place on 23 and 24 January. The selection panel was confirmed to include Peter Cropley, Heather Lee, Chris Pett, Nick Worth, Helen

Mather and Gerry Tawton. There will be an opportunity for other governors to be involved in the process if they wish.

d) Partnership Contracts 2019-20

Members received a report from the Director of Finance and Funding containing information about the partnerships proposed for 2019-20 which were noted. Members noted that the overall level of partnership work was reducing which might bring a small reduction in headline achievement rates. David Earnshaw asked whether the targeted reduction had been achieved and it was confirmed that it had but that a minor variance had been allowed for if required to ensure achievements of targets.

e) Self Assessment Report 2018-19

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality presented a summary of the outcomes of the SAR process for 2018-19. Members noted that this had been approved by the Standards Committee and that this would be the last year when the SAR was produced against the old inspection framework. Key changes were noted and it was confirmed that Higher Education would now be appearing on the Quality Improvement Plan.

David Earnshaw asked about improvements in apprenticeships and whether there were any risk areas identified against retaining the Grade 2 which had now been achieved. Vicki confirmed that the College had plans to review added value and the delivery of apprenticeships to ensure that the grade was maintained with the only area which had lower performance last year being one which had historical data affecting it. The College is now working on moving to outstanding in this provision.

Peter Cropley asked what was the most challenging area of provision and Vicki confirmed that this was GCSE maths where a change had been made with more learners undertaking functional skills rather than the GCSE. A further element of challenge will be the achievement rates for adults due to the reducing partnership provision. ESOL is also quite challenging. The College is focussing on Levels 2 and 3 this year.

Jo Maher advised members that becoming outstanding does not mean that there are no weaknesses, the focus now needs to be putting effort into moving borderline grades into Grade 1. Helen Wright asked what this SAR would look like against the new framework, members were advised that progression rates were likely to become more important.

f) International Activity

Members received a report from the Director of Business Development on international activity within the College.

Paul Collins advised that teamwork had been outstanding for the Ofsted inspection and that the future was looking positive for this provision. The report included an outline of anticipated income for international and Hall of Residence work and details of planned international travel for the remainder of the academic year. Members noted that increased oversight was required of this area of work as the result of some recent adverse publicity in the sector about the management of international travel in particular. Members agreed that the travel plans as outlined were appropriate within the context of the College's overall international provision. Jo Maher confirmed that the regulatory environment is becoming tighter and that the concerns raised elsewhere had been particularly about return on investment. Value for money is important but the return and quality of provision are equally important.

David Earnshaw asked about the anticipated effect of a hard Brexit on international provision should this occur. Paul Collins advised that the College believes EU learners would be funded in September 2020 regardless of the outcome. The College is focussing

on building up short course and non-EU recruitments to replace any potential loss. This is confirmed to be on the risk register.

Peter Cropley asked about the income from the work with Anglophiles. Paul advised that this was within Hall of Residence data and it was agreed that in future this should be separated out in the budgets since this was the least likely aspect of EU work to be affected.

7. **SAFEGUARDING**

The Head of Learner Services advised members on Safeguarding which had seen 81 referrals since September. There was a rise in referrals from domestic abuse and a significant rise generally across the East Midlands. Updates on the levels of activity will be provided as appropriate.

Jo Maher advised that the College is encouraging pro-active response to issues for learners and that the arrangements for the Safeguarding governor were working well.

It was confirmed that there were no external Prevent referrals this year and to minimise risk additional tracking had been introduced for learners on trips including protocols for trips into urban areas. Michelle Sacks asked about the rise in domestic abuse and whether this was regional. Dawn Telford advised that some of this is about reporting, there is a general rise but most of the increase is in peer on peer abuse.

8. **OFS REPORTABLE EVENTS**

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality updated members on the Corporation's responsibility for overseeing OFS conditions compliance. She advised that reportable events had to be reported to OFS within 5 days. This was now to be a standard item at SLT and Corporation meetings. The College had already reported the planned change in accountable officer and in teach out arrangements with Bishop Grosseteste. Keeping records of discussions about this work would be evidence of compliance.

9. **LEADERSHIP BUSINESS PLAN**

Jo Maher provided members with copies of the business plan for 2019-20 for review.

10. **OFS COMPLIANCE WITH ONGOING CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION**

The Principal provided members with an analysis of the College's current compliance with conditions which will be brought back annually to the Corporation in May after review at the Standards Committee in April.

11. **MEMBER DECLARATIONS**

The Head of HR and Organisational Development advised members that new declarations were being finalised and will be circulated. Responses will be required by the end of January.

12. **PROMOTION OF THE COLLEGE**

Michelle Sacks suggested that, as a group, governors could help to promote the College and needed to be proactive in doing so. Nick Worth suggested that it would be helpful to have promotional pieces supplied which could be used by governors. Peter Cropley noted that the students had made some very positive comments and feedback about the College and asked whether these would be available to governors. Vicki Locke confirmed that they could be made available and it was agreed that Paul Collins would send information to Nick Worth for passing on.

13. DIARY DATES

It was noted that the next meetings would take place on 26 February in Spalding for the full day including the CPD event and Corporation meeting and Corporation meetings would take place in Boston on 13 May and 1 July 2020.