

BOSTON COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 21 OCTOBER 2020

1. PRESENT

Andy Atkins, Daran Bland, Ruth Catlett, Peter Cropley, Mellyssa Doades (from membership item onwards), David Earnshaw, Charlie Ellerington (from membership item onwards), Kate Folling, Claire Foster, Kelly Harris (from membership item onwards), Heather Lee, Chris Pett, Helen Rumbold, Ann Savage, Gerry Tawton and Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Richard Chambers (Head of Engineering and Technology), Jen Durrant (Interim Executive Director: People), Craig Gosling (Assistant Principal: Performance & Quality), Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services), Vicki Locke (Deputy Principal), Dawn Telford (Assistant Principal: Learner Experience) and Tim White (Assistant Principal: Curriculum).

Meeting attendance: 100%

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Having been duly nominated, Peter Cropley was appointed as Chair of the Corporation for 2020-21.

Peter Cropley in the Chair

Having been duly nominated, Nick Worth was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Corporation for 2020-21.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Members were advised that Mollie Plummer, Michelle Sacks and Ben Webb had all left the Corporation.

Janet Hemmant advised that elections had taken place for student and staff nominees for vacant positions. Details of the nominees were shared and members agreed that Kelly Harris should be appointed as a staff member of the Corporation for a period of 3 years ending on 29 October 2023 and that 2 student members should be appointed, Charlie Ellerington for one academic year and Mellyssa Doades for two academic years.

Mellyssa Doades, Charlie Ellerington and Kelly Harris joined the meeting.

4. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress against items identified in the action log.

It was noted that a decision on LEP bid in respect of the Horncastle development had been deferred to November. Members agreed that items to be reviewed on the Business Continuity policy should be deferred until after Christmas.

5. MINUTES

a) Corporation – 1 July 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2020 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

Having noted Michelle Sacks resignation as a member a discussion took place about the other links which the College had with Boston Borough Council and these were noted to be strong.

b) Search & Governance Committee – 30 July 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2020 were reviewed.

c) Finance & Resources Committee – 18 June 2020 and 28 September 2020

The Minutes of the meetings held on 18 June 2020 and 28 September 2020 were reviewed.

d) Standards Committee – 30 September 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020 were reviewed.

e) Audit Committee – 25 June 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2020 were reviewed.

6. REPORTS

a) Principal's

Members received a report from the Principal on a number of sector and College-specific issues.

In response to a query about Higher Education numbers Claire Foster confirmed that the College has met its target. Peter Cropley also asked about the numbers of International learners and Claire advised members that there were 29 International learners largely from European countries. Claire outlined the issues which the College was addressing relating to Covid-19 in respect of these learners.

David Earnshaw asked about the proportion of learning which was being done face-to-face. Claire confirmed that this depended upon the groups. Foundation learners are fully back on site and other groups are receiving a mixture of face-to-face and online teaching. It was noted that the ESFA has to be advised if a College is proposing to significantly change the mix of teaching offered to learners. Chris Pett enquired whether government advice was now getting easier to deal with. Claire advised that there was still lots of advice coming through but not so many global messages because of the way in which Covid-19 is being addressed by region. A query was raised about how staff teams were coping with the challenges and Claire advised that many colleagues were getting tired and looking forward to the half term break.

b) Towns Deal Project - Mayflower

Members received a report from the Principal giving an overview of the college's project submission as part of the Towns Deal and wider town investment plan.

Claire Foster explained the background to the project which includes revisiting the Geoff Moulder site for urban regeneration. The plans include a swimming pool which would be operated by Boston Borough Council.

Gerry Tawton asked about the legal and the consultancy costs of the project and Claire confirmed that these had been covered by the acceleration funds which had been made available. Ann Savage asked whether there was an environmental impact statement as part of this project. Claire advised that it has to be carbon neutral and there is a proposal to re-use the bio mass boiler. There is a biophilic approach to design.

Peter Copley asked about interest in the business units which are proposed to be included within the development and Claire confirmed that there had already been some interest expressed.

David Earnshaw asked how much of a commitment the Corporation would be making if it agreed to approve progression of the scheme. Claire advised members that this development is core to the town investment plan and approval would mean that the project could be worked up further with governors being advised throughout. The development of the scheme is likely to take a further 12 months. Nick Worth advised that there is 12 months of due diligence on Towns Deals bids and overall funds available for these bids had been reduced.

Ann Savage asked whether there was any space for the Prince's Trust to be involved to provide incubation units for young people's businesses within the scheme. Claire advised that this fitted with the focus of the project and that she would check whether there was any funding available from the Prince's Trust for it.

Claire advised members that final decisions were not imminent from this. The objective of the bid is to focus aspirations for the town and the College needs to be central to this. In response to a query from Chris Pett it was confirmed that the business case would be modelled as it progresses and members agreed that work on the scheme should continue.

Later in the meeting Claire shared images of the latest plans for the development. The Chair asked for reactions to the plans. The two student members confirmed that these plans represented a complete upgrade on what the College currently has and that it would be a very positive addition. The new staff governor confirmed that she felt this was a positive and exciting development. Other members expressed views that the planned development made a statement about the College looking to the future in being aspirational and inspirational. It was generally felt to be an exciting project which would be positive for business and has the potential to be transformative. A query was raised about car parking and Claire explained that the College is looking at reducing the carbon footprint of the building and the way in which the transport infrastructure impacts on this. It was felt that the new building would be accessible and allow members of the public to interact with the College. It would provide access to key areas of the College and ties to local business.

c) Strategic Plan and Leadership Structure

Members received a report from the Principal on the new leadership structure for the College and a draft for discussion and approval on the proposed Mission, Vision, Strategic Drivers, Objectives, Values and Targets which underpin the Leadership Plan.

Gerry Tawton asked about the cost of the new structure and whether it fitted within the budget. Claire Foster advised that the overall establishment of the College had some vacancies and changes which had allowed the new structure to be fitted within the budget envelope. There is a recognition in new job titles of what people are doing and the new structure has not occurred significant recruitment costs. Debbie Holland confirmed that there was a nil net cost to the budget.

Members had a discussion about the proposed Vision, Mission, Strategic Drivers and Targets. Helen Rumbold commented that the new values are brilliant and exciting and Gerry Tawton commented that the production of these proposals was to be commended particularly in the timescales in which they had been produced. Members felt that the 5 pillars of Performance, Partnership, People, Productivity and Personality which were proposed were very useful and provided a good check list for governors. The proposals put forward were approved.

d) Finance

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services on financial and Risk Management issues.

Debbie Holland advised that 2019-20 accounts had been closed with a surplus showing and that the accounts were currently being audited. It was noted that the pensions adjustments had been very significant. Members were advised that Management accounts had been produced for September 2020 and were available on the Board software. The focus was now on working on the re-forecast. There is a new financial return to be submitted to the ESFA in November. This return does not require sign off by the Corporation but information will be provided to be Finance and Resources committee prior to its sign off and return.

A discussion took place about key risks identified and in particular how the College could mitigate pension risks. It was noted that the College was still waiting for the outcome of the consultation on pensions arrangements which was taking place nationally. David Earnshaw commented on the impact of pensions on the College's accounts with little opportunity to influence this impact. Ann Savage enquired whether, if the area fell within a higher tier of Covid-19 response, the College would receive any additional funding. Debbie advised that she was not aware of any funding being available in these circumstances.

e) Governance

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation on a number of governance issues.

It was noted that Chris Pett had offered to move from the Standards committee to the Audit committee. This move was agreed and it was noted that new members would be visiting committees to form a view of which committees they wished to join so that decisions could be made in the New Year.

The performance of the Corporation and committees against 2019-20 targets was reviewed and consideration was given to targets for 2020-21. It was agreed that the following targets should be set for 2020-21:

Corporation

- 80% attendance
- All governors to make at least 1 curriculum or business support visit during the year
- Oversight of the quality of Teaching and Learning assessment, learner progress, progression and destinations
- Oversight of the Horncastle and Mayflower developments
- Monitoring of OfS compliance
- Monitoring of the impact and management of Covid-19
- Maintenance of £1m cash reserve.

Finance and Resources Committee

- 80% attendance
- Progressing the following objectives:
 1. development and implementation of the Estates Strategy
 2. renegotiation of the bank loan
 3. returning financial health to Good
 4. ensuring the FE Commissioner recommendations on financial reporting are fully complied with.
- Repeat the in-depth review of the College's budget which acts as a CPD session for Corporation members
- Monitor the College's cashflow position.

Standards Committee

- Maintain attendance of 75% or higher
- Enhanced governor training on the work of the Standards committee including
 - Each meeting of the committee to include training for governors
 - Each committee member to have the opportunity of three touch points with the college during the year to improve their understanding
- Monitoring the impact of Covid-19 on Teaching, Learning and Assessment by introducing a Covid section into the Risks and Implications section of reports submitted.

Members reviewed the confidential papers which had been submitted during 2019-20 and agreed that papers which could be released from confidentiality were reports identified by the Clerk as not containing sensitive information or internal information on College performance.

Members also confirmed their satisfaction with the decision-making processes of the Corporation.

A discussion took place about the Board software which had been introduced last year and was due for renewal and it was agreed that the licence for this should be renewed.

f) Human Resources Annual Report

Members received a report from the Interim Executive Director: People providing information on the period 1 August 2019 – 31 July 2020.

Jen Durrant outlined to members the key points in the report including information about Covid-19 and the data presented. Members asked if there was any significance in the number of leavers with longer service and it was suggested that Covid-19 had prompted a couple of people to retire earlier than they might otherwise have done. In response to a query from Peter Cropley, it was confirmed that there was no particular concern over the number of leavers with 1–2 years service. Exit interviews take place and the number of leavers is monitored. In response to queries raised by Gerry Tawton it was confirmed that some posts were able to be filled by internal movement without external recruitment and sometimes external recruitment allowed more than 1 post to be filled from a bank of candidates. A discussion took place about the impact of the move to on-line learning on staff.

In response to a query from Ruth Catlett about the availability of flu injections, Jen advised that the College offer had only been taken up by 19 people last year but the college would try to support staff needing to access inoculations. It was noted that some local providers were struggling to obtain flu vaccines. In response to a query from Peter Cropley, Ruth advised that staff response to an offer of vaccination might change in the light of the pandemic and lack of availability. It was agreed that a check would be made to see if it was feasible to offer this through the College since it was noted by Heather Lee that even organisations which operate pharmacies were struggling to obtain vaccines. If it is feasible to offer on-site flu vaccination a check will be made to see if staff wish to take this up.

Nick Worth asked whether the College could do anything to mitigate long-term absences. Jen advised that there were some very difficult individual cases within the data reported. The College is currently looking at an alternative for provision of Occupational Health services. Daran Bland asked if the data provided indicated where short term absence is an issue. Jen confirmed that the College is aware that there are differences between teams and HR links meet regularly with Managers to review staff absence.

Daran Bland asked if the 65% staff cost metric was a sector target which was confirmed. Claire Foster advised that the College has to balance this target against quality but it is achievable if worked to over time. She advised that the College was in a good place to work

towards this target and would like to improve on current performance to provide for more flexibility.

g) Health and Safety Annual Report

Members received a report from the Head of Health and Safety which was presented by the Interim Executive Director: People.

Jen Durrant took members through the detail of the report and advised on actions which had been taken to reinforce the Health and Safety structure within the College. Particular note was taken of the emphasis on the wellbeing of staff and students which had been especially crucial during the move to remote working. Helen Rumbold asked if there was a plan for wellbeing champions. Jen advised that wellbeing initiatives would be relaunched with new resources and the College was proposing to recognise this. Helen volunteered to join a wellbeing group if it would be helpful to have a governor on this.

h) Safeguarding Update

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Learner Experience on Safeguarding.

Dawn Telford took members through the detail of the report and particular note was made of the arrangements relating to Covid-19 with the College checking in on vulnerable learners and high risk members of staff.

i) OfS Reportable Events

Vicki Locke advised members that there had been no reportable events in this period.

7. LEARNER FEEDBACK

Vicki Locke advised members that initial start of year feedback had been received from learners and it was noted that they had evaluated the quality of teaching as 98.5% good or excellent. Other key statistics were a 97% learner rating on being helped to be the best they can be, 97% satisfaction with safety on site and 99% satisfaction with safety online.

8. NEW PRINCIPAL

Claire Foster expressed her thanks to the College team and to governors for the support they have given her since taking up her appointment earlier in the year.

9. NEXT MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meetings of the Corporation would take place on:

- 16 December 2020
- 27 January 2021
- 10 March 2021 (CPD and Corporation)
- 12 May 2021
- 7 July 2021