

BOSTON COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 28 MAY 2020

1. PRESENT

Peter Croyley (Chair), Andy Atkins, Daran Bland, Ruth Catlett, David Earnshaw, Kate Folling, Claire Foster, Heather Lee, Chris Pett, Michelle Sacks (from Item 5c onwards) Ann Savage, Gerry Tawton, Ben Webb (from Item 2 onwards), Nick Worth and Helen Wright.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Richard Chambers (Head of Engineering and Technology), Paul Collins (Director of Business Services), Jen Durrant (Head of HR and Organisational Development), 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: 88%

Apologies for absence were received from Helen Mather.

The Chair welcomed Claire Foster and Daran Bland to their first meeting as members of the Corporation.

2. MEMBERSHIP

The Clerk to the Corporation advised that Ben Webb's term as a staff governor had expired. Advice has been taken about the circumstances where a normal election could not take place and it was suggested that the term of office could be extended until appropriate election arrangements could be made. The Corporation agreed that Ben Webb's term of office should be renewed until 31 December 2020.

Ben Webb joined the meeting

3. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress against items identified in the action log.

It was noted that the college had still not heard from Boston Borough Council about sponsorship of equipment for the EMAT building. In response to a query about business continuity, Claire Foster advised that the Senior Leadership Team was reviewing the Continuity Policy in the light of Covid 19.

4. MINUTES

a) Corporation – 26 February 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2020 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

Peter Croyley asked about the position with the Towns Deal and it was noted that this was being followed up by Claire Foster. At the present time it appears that this is still being pursued by the Government.

b) Corporation – 9 April 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2020 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

c) Finance & Resources Committee – 30 April 2020

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

d) Standards Committee – 18 May 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2020 were reviewed.

5. REPORTS

a) Principal's

Members received a report from the Principal on a number of issues.

With regards to Covid 19, Claire Foster advised members that the situation was constantly changing. Good support had been provided by the Association of Colleges and it was noted that staff morale was very important. David Earnshaw asked how the College would re-open once it was allowed to do so. Claire explained the plans for a limited number of learners to return.

Heather Lee asked about staff morale with most of the staff working from home. Claire advised that this had been a priority and that a number of staff were now coming back onto the College site. Vicki Locke confirmed from a curriculum prospective that staff were quick to pick up the challenge that this situation had created. Jen Durrant told members that managers were working with staff to see if there were any barriers to their return and that feedback received was generally positive. Claire advised that she felt that the College was at least as well prepared as others.

Peter Cropley asked whether the situation would have any impact on Higher Education and relationships with HE Institutions. Claire suggested that parents may choose more localised provision and application numbers currently support this. Universities are still valuing widening participation.

Chris Pett asked about International applications. Paul Collins advised current application numbers but confirmed that if the 2 week isolation requirement was removed it would be helpful and could increase the numbers. In response to a query from Helen Wright about where the applications were coming from, Paul confirmed that there was a good spread across the International market that the College normally works with. The Anglophiles provision is not going to happen in Summer 2020 but the company is keen to return to this in 2021.

b) Finance

Members received a report from the Director of Finance and Funding on management accounts, financial planning and risk management.

Debbie Holland highlighted the re-forecasts which were provided within the accounts and it was noted that the forecast deficit of £150,000 which was reported on the March accounts had actually reduced in the April 2020 accounts. Information was provided on the 5-year financial re-forecast and members noted that further detail would be available on the 2020/21 budget for the CPD event in June.

In response to a query from Chris Pett, it was confirmed that the College was making up full pay for staff who had been furloughed as is the norm for the sector. It was also confirmed that the additional staffing costs for distancing arrangements on re-opening had not yet been fully modelled. Claire Foster advised that the delivery model would differ across different areas of the College and the staffing model will be produced as soon as possible.

A discussion took place about a new financial return which is required by the ESFA to be returned by the Finance Director at the end of July. Members noted that although this does not require sign off from the Corporation, information would be brought to the July Corporation meeting about the return.

A question was asked by Peter Cropley about the receipt of furlough money and it was confirmed that this had come through. He also asked about holiday for staff who had been furloughed. Jen Durrant advised some staff furloughed had been on a reduced working year and that others were continuing to take pre-booked holiday.

Debbie Holland highlighted changes to the risk register and in particular the changes which had resulted from the pandemic.

Debbie Holland provided members with information on the changes which had been made to the bank loan with NatWest bank in 2019 and a new agreement which needs to be signed. Gerry Tawton reminded members that the changes had been agreed in principle when they had occurred. The Board considered the bank's requirement for specific acceptance of the revised arrangements.

After due consideration of all the circumstances and on being satisfied that it is for the benefit of the College and in the interests of the College for the purpose of carrying on its business to enter into a supplemental agreement (the "Supplemental Agreement") in the form now produced in respect of the loan of £1,849,601 made available to the College by National Westminster Bank Plc (the "Bank") in terms of the Agreement dated 22 November 2010 as subsequently amended.

It was resolved that in addition to and without amending, prejudicing or revoking any Bank Mandate/Company Excerpt Minute or any other instruction/s provided or to be provided by the College to the Bank the Principal and Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign on behalf of the College the Supplemental Agreement.

A discussion took place about a recommendation from the Property group that a small overspend on the IoT contract should be allowed. The Property group had met and agreed to accept a quote from Gelders and were recommending that a maximum £73,000 overspend should be allowed on the project to achieve the required outcomes. It was confirmed that the overspend can be accommodated in College budgets and the Corporation agreed to approve this. David Earnshaw pointed out that the Property group had also highlighted potential risk to timing of the delivery of the project and a potential overrun due to the impact of Covid 19 on supply chains.

Michelle Sacks joined the meeting at this point.

c) Property

Members received a report from the Director of Business Services on a range of property issues.

Paul Collins advised that a meeting had taken place with East Lindsey District Council about the Horncastle development. It was noted the planning permission was going well although there were some concerns about the readiness for opening in September 2021. There had been no further news on LEP funding for this. In response to queries from Peter Cropley and Michelle Sacks it was confirmed that discussions were still taking place about the detail of the arrangements with East Lindsey District Council and key points which had been discussed with the Corporation previously would be protected Michelle Sacks asked for it to be noted that if Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council moved to a closer working relationship she would have to declare an interest in this matter in the future.

Members were advised that the DTLA building is due to be completed by Christmas subject to the impact of Covid 19 on working practices and the supply of materials. The IoT project should be complete by the end of September and fortunately relates to a self-contained area of the building so carries no Health and Safety concerns for College staff and students.

d) Gender Pay Gap

Members received a verbal update from the Head of HR and Organisational Development on the Gender Pay Gap return submitted in March 2020.

Members were advised that the enforcement of reporting the Gender Pay Gap did not apply due to Coronavirus (COVID-19). However, the College had submitted the figures in advance of this announcement. The information provided on the College's position showed that the average pay gap was 3.9% compared to 3.88% last year and the median pay gap was 21.37% as compared with 18.6% last year. Jen Durrant advised that the differences were mainly due to the roles recruited to and were not a cause for concern. Overall the figures compare favourably with those across the education sector.

e) OfS Monitoring

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on compliance with Office for Students regulations and conditions for registration.

It was noted that the information provided had already been reviewed by the Standards Committee and gave members assurance on the College's compliance. Vicki Locke advised that during the Coronavirus outbreak there had been some relaxation of some of the requirements.

f) Risk Assessment and re-opening from June 2020

Members received a report from the Principal about the arrangements for re-opening the College. The report included the plan for re-opening and the associated risk assessment.

Ann Savage commented that the documentation was very good. She suggested that there should be a reference to track and trace which it was agreed could be included. She also made suggestions about specific items which could appear within the plan. Claire Foster confirmed that this was an evolving document which will be updated.

Chris Pett asked about the provision of food in the College. Paul Collins confirmed that in the first instance the canteen was not being opened. A discussion took place about the use of water fountains which will be reviewed. Chris also asked if the plan had to be published and Claire Foster confirmed that it had been shared with the Unions and staff and so therefore could be shared more broadly.

In response to a question from Michelle Sacks, a discussion took place about arrangements to ensure that social distancing occurred and to monitor the number of people who could be safely accommodated within the building. Claire Foster confirmed that the behaviour policy would reflect requirements and monitoring of behaviour would be ongoing. The College is looking at ways of monitoring the numbers of people in the buildings.

A discussion took place about the potential implications of further outbreaks of Covid 19. In respect of the College's position it was confirmed that its Health and Safety rating evidenced a high standard of management, the re-opening plan was in place and managers were being trained on doing risk assessments. Managers had also been in receipt of NEBOSH training in 2019. Staff were being advised of guidance on working practices and it was noted that the June re-opening will give a useful trial for September when larger numbers are involved. Michelle Sacks suggested that a questionnaire on

where people had been if they reported illness would be useful as this would create an audit trail and offered to provide such a questionnaire. Ann Savage also suggested that the ISO Audit programme should provide records of compliance. Paul Collins confirmed that these audits will be done.

Heather Lee suggested that issues relating to further outbreaks needed to be considered alongside stress related to the situation and that consideration needed to be given to dealing with vulnerable and shielding individuals.

Daran Bland asked whether the College was aware of individuals not wanting to return. Jen Durrant confirmed that guidance had been issued to managers which could be shared with employees. Individual concerns will be addressed to support their return. Members agreed to approve the plan with minor amendments which had been discussed.

A discussion took place about the possible creation of a sub-group of governors to work with the Senior Leadership Team to monitor the plan. Claire Foster advised that it was regarded as good practice to create such a group and it was agreed that 3 governors, Heather Lee, Ann Savage and Nick Worth should become members of this group.

The Corporation noted that staff had done a fantastic job in dealing with the Covid 19 outbreak and it was agreed that they should be thanked and congratulated on their performance in the College Bulletin.

6. **NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation would take place on 1 July 2020. Gerry Tawton reminded members that they were all invited to attend the Finance and Resources budget briefing on 4 June.