

BOSTON COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 12 MAY 2021

1. PRESENT

Peter Croyley (Chair), Andy Atkins, Daran Bland, Ruth Catlett, David Earnshaw, David Fannin, Kate Folling, Claire Foster, Kelly Harris, Chris Pett, Helen Rumbold, Ann Savage, Gerry Tawton, Paul Tomlinson and Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Jen Durrant (Interim Executive Director: People), Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services), Adrian Humphreys (Executive Director: Business, Innovation & Partnerships), Vicki Locke (Deputy Principal), Dawn Telford (Assistant Principal: Learner Experience) and Tim White (Assistant Principal: Curriculum).

In attendance for Item 3 only were Neil Percy (Curriculum Leader: Creative Arts), Linda Radford (Curriculum Leader: English, Maths & ESOL) and Jo Wright (Curriculum Leader: H&S Care, Schools & EY)

Apologies for absence were received from Charlie Ellerington and Heather Lee.

Meeting attendance: 83%

2. MEMBERSHIP

The Chair welcomed David Fannin to his first meeting of the Corporation.

Members noted that staff governor Kelly Harris had been appointed to a new role within the College – Assistant Principal: Performance & Quality.

3. PRESENTATION – STUDY PROGRAMMES

Neil Percy, Jo Wright and Linda Radford gave a presentation on Study Programmes and Learners' Experience.

Nick Worth asked whether there was any help on business and financial skills for students who wanted to go on to become self employed in, for example, the Creative Arts. Neil explained the approach to this and how it fitted in with the different courses. David Earnshaw asked how the Creative Arts team fitted within the College structure. Neil explained its position, staffing and student numbers. The Chair thanked the team for the presentation.

4. ACTION LOG

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

Peter Croyley asked about the break clause in the Horncastle lease. Debbie Holland confirmed that this had been satisfactorily resolved with East Lindsey District Council. She also advised on progress being made on the Business Continuity policy and, in response to a query from Peter about the Italian debt, advised that notice to reply had expired so the College can now sue for recovery. It was agreed that confirmation should be sought that the other party has funds which make this action worthwhile. ●

With regard to a query about funding from the Princes Trust, Claire Foster confirmed that a range of complementary funding was being sought for the Mayflower project which was seen as a flagship for Boston. Peter Croyley enquired about wellbeing initiatives and Jen Durrant confirmed that she had had a meeting with Helen Rumbold and a number of strands were being targeted.

Janet Hemmant advised members that where there were presentations or further information added to the VBR, these were placed within the folders for the meetings when the presentations took place or the information was requested.

5. MINUTES

a) Corporation – 10 March 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2021 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

b) Finance & Resources Committee – 26 April 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2021 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton enquired whether the loan repayment profile had been extended. Debbie Holland advised that a different approach was being taken which produced the same result and that there were no early payment fees for this loan. Debbie will share the final consultant's report once it is received. ●

In response to a query from Peter Cropley, Debbie confirmed that the lease on the Skegness property had now been surrendered and the College's involvement with this property was at an end.

c) Finance & Resources Committee – 28 April 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2021 were reviewed.

The Corporation approved the recommendation from the Finance & Resources Committee for renewal of the loan with NatWest.

d) Standards Committee – 28 April 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2021 were reviewed.

Peter Cropley asked for further information on issues raised relating to KPIs. Daran Bland advised that the committee had received good assurance on English and maths attendance and Higher Education recruitment being targeted by the College. The Standards Committee is maintaining oversight of the issues. Vicki Locke advised members that targeted timetabling for English and maths is key for next year and a number of other initiatives such as co-delivery were being reviewed.

David Earnshaw noted the committee had had a presentation on the digital hub and asked if the Corporation could have a presentation on the digital hub and DTLA. Claire Foster agreed to arrange this. Vicki Locke identified that the digital hub fell within Kelly Harris's remit and that there were early plans for development and broad consultation. Kelly Harris confirmed that this was focussing on upskilling staff and meeting learner needs. ●

e) Audit Committee – 25 March 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton sought confirmation that the references to FRS102 estimates related to non-cash movements. Andy Atkins confirmed that the recommendation was that about helping to identify which changes were cash movements and which were valuation changes.

David Earnshaw asked for further information about the single audit bid which had been received for provision of external audit services. Andy Atkins advised that there was some readjustment within the sector with a number of firms pulling out of Further Education audits. Although the same auditor had been recommended for re-appointment, there is a new partner which brings a fresh approach. It was noted that RSM had worked with the College for a number of years and Andy Atkins confirmed, in response to a query from Peter Cropley, that the audit service works well with them. The committee's recommendation for appointment of RSM was approved.

6. REPORTS

a) Principal's

Members received a report from the Principal & Chief Executive on a number of sector and College issues.

Claire Foster advised that the staff survey had recently opened and she had met with the Staff Council and consulted more broadly with staff to obtain feedback.

Ann Savage asked where the College was in respect of Covid. Claire advised that new guidance had just been received on the next stage and the College was taking the loosening of restrictions steadily. Nick Worth asked about lost learning and the potential costs of addressing this. Claire explained the College's focus and Vicki Locke provided information on the small group tuition fund which was being utilised where possible but there were limited options for using this funding. Other catch-up strategies were in place, the College had focussed on practical work before the anticipated lock-down and the work on learner progress has customised approaches. The College is doing all it can but this remains a challenge. It was noted that next year's new intake will have had 2 years of disrupted education which will also pose a challenge.

Peter Cropley noted the concern about the potential for AEB clawback which is a very serious problem for the sector. It was explained how this was being dealt with and how the College is accounting for it.

David Earnshaw asked about the implications of the Queen's speech, Claire advised that there was some optimism about issues such as reducing the complexity of funding arrangements and focus on Adult skills. An expansion fund for schools and colleges has been identified.

b) Finance

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services on the Management Accounts to March 2021 and the updated risk register.

Debbie Holland advised that work was currently being carried out on the Quarter 3 re-forecast and the budget for 2021-22.

Gerry Tawton asked about the cost of employing a cyber security firm, Debbie confirmed that the College had sought to achieve best value and that this service had a cost of around £50k. Peter Cropley confirmed that there was evidence that the sector was being targeted for cyber attacks which made this support necessary. Debbie confirmed that work has started on this.

Chris Pett enquired whether, in respect of the 2021-22 budget, the College was expecting increased costs due to inflation. It was noted that there were significant inflationary cost increases for some goods and that some component parts are not available at any price. Debbie advised that inflation was built into the budget but she will review this further following governors' comments.

c) Safeguarding and Prevent Update

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

Dawn Telford advised that the number of referrals to the Safeguarding team had increased since learners were back on site and she outlined the case management arrangements. Peter Cropley asked if there was a risk to learners where police investigations were being carried out and the College's response was outlined. Dawn confirmed that there is no risk to learners on site. Members were advised that there is a new mental health support team working with the College.

In respect of the Prevent update, it was noted that self-initiating terrorism was becoming an issue. Ann Savage said that she had seen a lot of evidence of online anti-vaccination material and asked whether this was appearing in College. Dawn advised that some extremists group had piggy-backed on Covid but there was not evidence of this in College as the age group of most learners was not being offered vaccinations. There was a very small group of parents expressing these sorts of concerns. Jen Durrant provided information on the number of staff who had received vaccinations and, in response to a query from Peter Cropley, confirmed that there was only a very small number of staff not wishing to be vaccinated.

d) Gender Pay Gap

Members received a report from the Interim Executive Director: People.

Jen Durrant explained the detail of the report and identified that the results were very positive. It was noted that other local colleges had not yet uploaded their information. Peter Cropley commented that the results were good and well inside the averages quoted.

e) OfS reportable events

Vicki Locke confirmed that there was nothing to report.

7. BUSINESS, INNOVATION & PARTNERSHIPS

David Earnshaw asked whether members could receive a report on the work within Adrian Humphrey's area of responsibility. It was agreed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporation. ●

8. NEXT MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation would take place on 7 July 2021. The possibility of this meeting taking place in person rather than online was discussed and will be reviewed. ●