

Boston College
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 10 MARCH 2022

1. PRESENT

Peter Cropley (Chair), Holly Barker, Ruth Catlett, David Earnshaw, David Fannin, Claire Foster, Kelly Harris, Heather Lee, David Parnell, Chris Pett, Helen Rumbold, Axel Sedgwick, Gerry Tawton, Paul Tomlinson, Sandra Williamson, Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Teresa Young (Minute Taker), Jen Durrant (Executive Director: People), Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services), Adrian Humphreys (Executive Director: Business, Innovation & Partnerships), Vicki Locke (Deputy Principal), and Sharon Posey (Interim Head of Learner Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Atkins, Daran Bland and Ann Savage

Meeting attendance: 84%

2. PRESENTATION - SKILLS FOR LIFE, JOBS, CAREERS AND BUSINESSES

Tim White, Joanne Wright and Claire Ashley joined the meeting and gave a presentation on developing the college's Adult Education offer.

The team explained the external drivers around funding, Skills Bill, Ofsted and Covid along with the internal drivers on quality, budget, local needs, barriers and the needs of adults and developing new skills. Claire Ashley outlined case studies at curriculum level and Jo explained about employers and the trust they have with the college.

David Fannin asked about the employer forum and the 3rd sector and asked if he could be part of the college forum around apprenticeships. Tim White will contact David for further discussions on this. ●

David Earnshaw asked if the college has access to wider skills such as the use of national lecturers. Claire noted that shared industry contacts (Talent Pools) were used for bespoke courses, and, since Covid, delivery can also be via Teams which is an asset. Tim noted that the college tends to use local staff as there are high costs incurred for travelling from further afield. Adrian Humphries explained that often retired industry personnel could be used on a short-term basis.

The presenting team left the meeting at the conclusion of the discussions.

3. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed and noted progress made on items listed in the Corporation's Action Log.

4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

a) Corporation – 15 December 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

b) Search and Governance Committee – 31 January 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022 were reviewed.

c) Finance and Resources Committee – 31 January 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022 were reviewed.

d) Standards Committee – 9 February 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2022 were reviewed.

5. REPORTS

a) Principal's

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

Peter Cropley asked about staff rewards and if there were any ideas planned. Claire Foster explained that she had met the College Manager's group to explain the college's financial concerns. Some colleges are offering small pay awards but currently the college is unable to do so. The National Living Wage has now been attributed to relevant staff. Jen Durrant is currently looking at other means of reward such as extra holidays, but these also come at a cost. The college is however continuing to support staff development for progression purposes.

Peter expressed the importance of learners conducting work experience whilst attending college.

David Earnshaw asked if there were any structure proposals after Vicki Locke's departure. Claire explained that there will be opportunities to look at the quality and skills sets of the team, but a full restructure is not proposed. Claire confirmed that the advert has now gone out for a Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

Chris Pett asked about the economics of the sector and if there are any concerns regarding delivery in education. Claire noted the need to achieve our predicted income targets in order to avoid reducing staff. Managers have been asked, as a priority, to look at cost savings across the college. Chris asked if the college could grow its market and income. Claire outlined the two elements of working with employers and the communities to enhance the growth. The Small Group Tuition fund will also be effectively utilised as this should not be returned.

b) Mayflower Update

The request for approval to complete and submit a business case for the project to the Towns Deal Board and subsequently to Department for Levelling-up was discussed and agreed.

Peter Cropley asked about the joint project with University of Lincoln (Centre for Food and Fresh Produce Logistics) and how this would work. Claire Foster explained that Lincoln are doing the research methods on this and that there would be space to 'badge' the centre within the Mayflower building.

David Fannin expressed his delight that this proposal has been approved and noted that this was better than the original offer. He emphasized the importance of inclusive

growth to become economically strong. It places the college in a much better place being separate to GMLC and gets the appropriate result for the college. Claire thanked Debbie Holland and Rebecca Clark for their exceptional support in writing the bid. Nick Worth said it is a credit to Claire and the team for getting the proposal through. It had been hard work and very difficult at times but got there in the end. David Parnell asked if the Corporation could see the 'Master Plan'. Claire said that Debbie is currently looking at an Estates Strategy and will share it once complete.

Peter explained that the proposed plan of moving Reception to BCUC would benefit the college as it would be nearer to the car park. Claire also noted that this would restrict traffic driving through the site and thereby improve safety.

Holly Barker asked what will happen to the old classrooms when the Mayflower is built. Claire explained that some areas will move to be more efficient which will free up larger spaces for other areas to use.

Debbie Holland asked the Corporation to approve the capital match of £520K against the funding achieved for Mayflower. Debbie noted that £200K had been incurred in professional design fees and that early release funding of 5% was available to fund this and the agreement was awaiting signature from the Council. It will be taken out of the total Town Deal project funding for Mayflower of £10 million. Gerry Tawton asked if these costs were spent from the College 'cash reserves' and Debbie confirmed it was until the funds were received. David Earnshaw asked if a subcommittee was required to discuss the £200k already spent and asked for clarity that this money would be returned into the cash reserves. Debbie confirmed this would be the case. Claire Foster confirmed that authority from the Corporation is currently only sought for submitting the business case. A further approval to proceed will go to Corporation. Gerry asked if the business case does not get approved whether the £200k spent would be reclaimed. Claire confirmed that yes, this would be the case. Peter Cropley asked for approval on this basis and this was agreed.

c) Finance

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services on financial performance.

Debbie Holland proposed that the Corporation's 21/22 performance target for cash reserves to be amended to match the revised £1.5 million minimum cash reserves target set by the Finance and Resources committee. This was approved.

Debbie presented the period 5 management accounts, the finance key performance indicators that were approved at Finance and Resources Committee and a verbal update on the current financial position following the quarter 2 reforecast. Peter Cropley asked about the Education specific EBITDA KPI and why it was as high as 5%, Debbie confirmed this was agreed at Finance and Resources committee and was the target to get to Outstanding financial health. However, it was agreed that this would be reduced to 4% considering the current financial position and will be revisited in July as part of the budget setting process.

Gerry Tawton asked if there would be a full reforecast at Finance and Resources Committee. Debbie confirmed that there would and noted that the current AEB clawback of £380,000 had been mitigated in the quarter 2 reforecast, however, the AEB clawback projected was now £520,000 and the increase is not mitigated against. Discussions took place about some detailed elements of the management accounts.

d) Safeguarding and Prevent Update

Members received a report from Sharon Posey, Interim Head of Learner Services.

Sharon discussed the report in detail, noting that the department are dealing with more complex mental health issues from learners. Holly Barker asked why there are so many referrals in the Foundation area. Sharon explained that the learners in this area are the most vulnerable learners in the college and more likely to raise issues.

Gerry Tawton asked if she was receiving any more resources. Sharon noted that she is now the designated Safeguarding officer for the college and a plan is in place for new staff members to join the team. A new triage system is also now in place. Vicki Locke asked Sharon to share with Corporation how she is releasing her caseload. Sharon explained that she has kept a few cases that she has been working on, but the majority have now been shared out to the team. Chris Pett asked if there had been any issues around the Ukraine situation. Sharon noted that there are none at risk at present, but individuals had been contacted regarding support. There are concerns over EU learners being conscripted and the college is providing letters. LSOs are working closely with these learners and Sharon is in contact with local community officers. A general discussion took place around this, and David Fannin suggested that if concerns are coming through, these could be logged as a FAQ report that can be distributed to learners. Holly asked for a 'cosy space' for vulnerable learners. Peter explained that this had been discussed at Student Council and provisions are being sought.

e) OfS Reportable events

Vicki Locke advised that the Horncastle bid has been reported to OfS for information.

f) Committee membership - verbal

Committee membership was considered and it was agreed that Sandra Williamson should be appointed to the Audit committee and Paul Tomlinson and Axel Sedgwick to the Standards committee.

It was noted that Holly Barker is to attend the Finance and Resources committee meetings although she cannot become a member as there are currently no vacancies on the committee.

6. NEXT MEETINGS

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

18 May 2022

6 July 2022