

## Boston College

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2021

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#### 1. PRESENT

Peter Cropley (Chair), Andy Atkins, Holly Barker (from item 2), Ruth Catlett, David Earnshaw, Claire Foster, Kelly Harris, Heather Lee, David Parnell, Chris Pett, Ann Savage, Axel Sedgwick (from item 2), Gerry Tawton, Paul Tomlinson and Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Jen Durrant (Executive Director: People), Julie Hebdige (Quality Improvement Manager – item 4 only), Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services), Adrian Humphreys (Executive Director: Business, Innovation & Partnerships), Vicki Locke (Deputy Principal – to item 6c only), Dawn Telford (Assistant Principal: Learner Experience) and Gareth Jones (RSM Auditor – item 6d only)

Apologies for absence were received from Daran Bland, David Fannin, Helen Rumbold and Sandra Williamson.

Meeting attendance: 79%

#### 2. MEMBERSHIP

Members were advised that elections for student governors had taken place and were given details of the proposed appointments. It was agreed that Holly Barker should be appointed for a one year term and Axel Sedgwick for a two year term.

Holly Barker and Axel Sedgwick joined the meeting.

#### 3. ACTION LOG

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

#### 4. PRESENTATION – OUR EXPERIENCE TERM 1

Kelly Harris and Julie Hebdige gave a presentation entitled “Our experience term 1 – knowledge/skills/behaviour development”.

Julie shared information on learner views which had been obtained through survey responses and interviews with learners. The feedback was endorsed by the student governors. Staff have been proficient at managing knowledge gaps caused by the impact of the pandemic on education provision but this remains an area of concern.

#### 5. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

##### a) Corporation – 20 October 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2021 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

##### b) Standards Committee - 17 November 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were reviewed.

Peter Cropley asked about attendance at English and maths. Vicki Locke advised members that attendance had increased this year and was being monitored. A lot of work has been done to improve the learning environment in this area.

c) Audit Committee – 18 November 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 were reviewed.

d) Search and Governance Committee – 22 November 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2021 were reviewed.

e) Finance and Resources Committee – 22 November 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2021 were reviewed.

## 6. REPORTS

a) College Self-Assessment Report 2020-21

Members received a report from the Deputy Principal on the college's self-assessment for 2020-21.

Vicki Locke advised that the report showed an overall grade 2 for the college. A breakdown of grades together with information on key strengths and areas for improvement were provided. The areas for improvement form the basis of the Quality Improvement Plan which is monitored throughout the year by the Standards committee.

David Earnshaw asked how the grades compared with the last inspection. Vicki advised that the last full inspection was in 2014 and at that point the college was rated Good across all elements. The 2017 short inspection was also very positive. The inspection framework has now changed and data is no longer the driving force.

In response to queries raised by Ann Savage and Gerry Tawton, information was provided on support for learners with personal development plans for employability and the effect of staffing changes and the pandemic on an area with a lower grade. It was noted in respect of steps to employment that enrichment and personal development had been adversely affected by the pandemic. A more individualised approach is being taken to this in the current year.

Holly Barker asked about Covid implications and risks and whether there would be different strategies for online learning if there was another lockdown. Vicki explained that providers were better prepared now than earlier in the pandemic. The college is ready to move to online delivery if necessary and would continue to offer on-site support to vulnerable learners and those without suitable IT access. Dawn Telford advised that the college had supported up to 100 learners on site each day during previous lockdowns.

Peter Cropley queried why sub-contractor performance appeared to be better than the college's direct provision. Vicki explained that this was specialist adult provision and that shorter delivery made retention easier. Looking at English and maths performance, Vicki advised that English has declined a little and is the focus of attention.

Peter asked about learner views on staff guidance and feedback. Vicki advised that this score was generally lower than others and it is being reviewed. The survey being carried out during lockdown may have resulted in learners feeling less supported than they would have been with face-to-face delivery.

Axel Sedgwick asked if there was a strategy to use the Learner Cross-College Teams channel more. Vicki explained that this is a new development. Kelly Harris commented that a new Head of Digital Learning had been appointed and would be promoting this. Teaching and Learning coaches are working with staff and learners. Dawn Telford advised that use of Moodle had ended so the college was looking to enhance communication with learners in different ways.

Following a query from Peter about feedback from parents about support, services and guidance available to learners, Vicki provided information on the arrangements for communicating about these services. Some learners will not have needed to access them.

Members confirmed acceptance of the Self-Assessment Report.

b) OfS Reportable events

Vicki Locke advised that there was nothing to report.

c) Principal's

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

Claire Foster advised members that the Covid contingency plan had been updated and the college is fully prepared for any further restrictions which may be required. She also advised that the annual conversation meeting with the ESFA had been positive.

Peter Cropley asked about nationally reported issues with the recruitment and retention of staff relating to pay. Claire advised that pay was one factor and that the college had taken a limited number of specific decisions on remuneration. Innovative ways of attracting new staff are being reviewed. Ann Savage asked how hard it was to convert from industry to teaching. Claire explained that the associate lecturer role allowed staff to see if the teaching environment suits them. Some new staff are surprised at the administration and assessment load. The college's activities are supported by a strong teacher training arm.

Gerry Tawton asked what the CRM system was being used for. Claire advised that it captured data across the diversity of the college's work with stakeholders. Adrian Humphreys explained that it pulls everything together to ensure that the college has a single line of contact and a complete picture. It records how the college is working with employers.

Holly Barker asked for information about T levels and their impact on students. Claire gave an explanation and advised that the college will embrace T levels in suitable areas.

d) Finance

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services on financial performance, including the 2020-21 annual accounts, and risk management.

Debbie Holland advised in presenting the annual accounts that there was an ACOP requirement for the auditor, Gareth Jones, to be present. The detail of the accounts was reviewed and it was noted that an adjustment had been made following approval of the AEB business case.

Debbie drew members' attention to an investigation which had been carried out into a funding related data issue. The college had investigated a reported discrepancy and taken appropriate action with the data in question not included in the funding claim. The issue related to inappropriate actions of individuals and there had been no overclaim shown in the accounts. The ESFA and awarding body are aware of this as are the auditors. Gareth Jones confirmed that there had been no loss to the college or ESFA and that the sum involved was not considered 'material'.

Gareth told members that the audit had gone well and concluded with an unqualified and unmodified audit opinion. He was satisfied that the Corporation could sign off the accounts presented. Peter Cropley asked for confirmation that requirements for signing off the accounts had been complied with and Andy Atkins confirmed that the Audit committee was content that they had.

In considering the audit plan submitted, Gerry Tawton pointed out that the financial figures in the plan had not changed since earlier in the year. It was agreed that the audit plan should be approved subject to these being updated. The risk management annual report and update were also reviewed and accepted.

Members agreed to approve the 2020-21 annual accounts for signature along with the management representations. The Audit committee report which included, in addition to the audit plan, the Internal Audit Annual Report and external audit findings was accepted along with reviews of the auditors' performance

Members reviewed the management accounts presented and Debbie Holland confirmed that she was happy to take feedback on the new format for these.

e) Governance

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

Members reviewed and approved the Search And Governance committee's annual report and the governance self assessment for 2020-21.

The Search and Governance committee's view that the requirement for external directors for Eastern Enterprises Ltd was not necessary was endorsed and it was agreed that this requirement should be removed from the adopted Code of Good Governance.

Performance targets proposed by the Audit committee for 2021-22 were considered and accepted.

g) Safeguarding and Prevent Update

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

Members were advised thought there had been a spike in safeguarding referrals which had been affected by worries about issues such as the Christmas break and potential

lockdowns. It was noted that the terror threat had been raised to 'Severe' and a number of actions were being taken in response to this change.

g) SEND

Members received a report from the SEND managers which was presented by the Assistant Principal: Learner Experience.

Dawn Telford advised that the report showed strong performance although there were some data gaps and challenges working with the local authority.

Gerry Tawton asked about decisions to decline potential learners. Dawn explained the transition process and that the college is only able to decline if it cannot meet a learner's needs. The LEA reviews these cases.

Ann Savage asked whether the college got sufficient funding for these learners and the impact on other learners. Dawn explained the funding arrangements. With regard to the impact on others, working with different groups of learners helps young people's understanding of and respect for others.

Chris Pett asked how many of these learners progressed to some form of employment. Dawn confirmed that the numbers were quite low and that for many of the learners employment was not part of their plan or pathway. Some will never be able to live independently and many follow different pathways to learners on mainstream provision. Covid has had an effect on the ability to do placements which develop work-ready skills.

Holly Barker asked how closely the college worked with parents of high needs learners. Dawn explained that the college does work with parents but that once they were 18 learners were classed as adults and the college could only deal with parents if consent was given. Without consent, work with parents would stop unless there was a safeguarding concern.

**7. DAWN TELFORD**

Members noted that Dawn would be leaving the college in February. They thanked Dawn for her work and agreed no-one could have carried out the role with more dedication and conscientiousness.

**8. NEXT MEETINGS**

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

10 March 2022 (CPD and Corporation)

18 May 2022

6 July 2022