

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 14 DECEMBER 2022

1. **PRESENT**

Peter Copley (Chair), Andy Atkins (to item 9), Ruth Catlett, David Earnshaw, Daniel Elkington (from item 2), David Fannin (to item 6a), Claire Foster, Kelly Harris, Kimberley Jones, Heather Lee, David Parnell, Chris Pett, Katy Priestley (from item 2), Helen Rumbold, Oskar Sobota (from item 2), Gerry Tawton, Sandra Williamson and Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Jen Durrant (Executive Director: People), Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services), Adrian Humphreys (Executive Director: Business, Innovation & Partnerships), Heather Marks (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality) and Sharon Posey (Interim Head of Learner Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Daran Bland and Paul Tomlinson.

Meeting attendance: 90%

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

It was reported that Oskar Sobota had been nominated as a student governor. Members agreed that Oskar should be appointed as a student governor until the end of the 2022-23 academic year, reflecting the expected length of his college course.

Recommendations were received from the Search and Governance committee for the appointment of two new governors. Having reviewed the applications and recommendations the Corporation agreed to appoint Daniel Elkington for a two-year term and Katy Priestley for a four-year term

Oskar Sobota, Daniel Elkington and Katy Priestley joined the meeting. Gerry Tawton withdrew from the meeting whilst consideration was given to potential reappointments.

Having considered recommendations from the Search and Governance committee, it was agreed that Gerry Tawton should be reappointed at the end of his existing term for a further 18 months and that Paul Tomlinson's current term should be extended by one year.

Gerry Tawton re-joined the meeting.

3. **ACTION LOG**

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

Jen Durrant advised that staff sickness levels over the pandemic had been similar to those of students. Debbie Holland reported that there were no further developments over the international debt.

4. **PRESENTATION: MAKING AN IMPACT IN TERM 1**

Members received a presentation from Kelly Harris and Sharon Posey.

Members noted the good news contained in the presentation and, in response to a query from Chris Pett, it was confirmed that this was shared more widely through social media. Peter Cropley asked if there had been any negative learner feedback and Kelly advised there had been some initial issues which had been followed up appropriately.

David Fannin asked about the identification and promotion of learner talent which would be of interest to business. Claire Foster gave examples of learners sharing skills they had acquired at the college with local enterprises.

5. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

a) Corporation – 19 October 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

Gerry Tawton asked if there had been any further developments regarding the reported vote of no confidence. Claire Foster reported that a meeting had taken place with both local and regional union representatives of the NEU to discuss workload and other concerns from both parties.

Nick Worth asked whether more could be done to promote T levels to industry. Heather Marks advised that work was proceeding on T level development and promotion through the website. Adrian Humphreys suggested that there was still work to be done to raise understanding nationally about where T levels sit in the qualifications framework. Chris Pett commented that, in his experience, employers were largely unaware of T levels. David Parnell reported that he had been to a schools event as a parent where T levels had not even been mentioned. Sharon Posey told governors that a Schools Liaison Officer would be starting in January and would be promoting T levels.

b) Corporation – 23 November 2022

The Minutes recording a decision made on 23 November 2022 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

c) Audit Committee – 10 November 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 were reviewed.

In response to a query raised by Gerry Tawton, the issue relating to Data Protection Officer coverage was explained.

d) Search and Governance Committee – 21 November 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 were reviewed.

e) Finance and Resources Committee – 21 November 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 were reviewed.

f) Standards Committee – 22 November 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 were reviewed.

6. REPORTS

a) College Self-Assessment Report 2021-22

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

Heather Marks explained that the overall grade was proposed as 'Good' and went through the key supporting grades. Members noted the key strengths and areas for improvement.

David Earnshaw suggested that the action plan could be strengthened regarding adult learners since this is an area for improvement. He also asked what was behind the issues with English and maths. Heather advised that a lot of learners have post-COVID barriers to learning. Sharon Posey commented that there was no choice for learners in taking these subjects if they had not already passed and this affected their approach to them. The college is trying to promote the industry relevance in and of these subjects. Kelly Harris advised that, when Daran Bland had talked to learners in Health and Social Care, it was clear that the learners were not as engaged and motivated with the English and maths as they were with their core curriculum. This is an ongoing national issue. Oskar Sobota commented that learners he knew preferred hands-on vocational work to English and maths. Claire Foster highlighted that nevertheless, last year there was an excellent 54% pass rate in English. Kelly Harris advised that there had been significant staff turnover in this area and new teachers are being given developmental support.

Nick Worth asked why the Response to Civic Community, Education and Employers was assessed as 'Reasonable'. Claire Foster explained that this is a new grade, and the college was being conservative in its assessment but that 'reasonable' is actually a good outcome.

David Fannin left the meeting at this point.

Peter Cropley asked why the numbers undertaking work experience were less than the college would like. Heather explained that some programmes had found it difficult to get placements post-COVID. Ruth Catlett commented that many settings had closed their doors to volunteers and students required vaccines to enter social care settings. Adrian Humphreys reported that the management of work experience had changed, and the college was now in a better position to monitor and push it forward.

Peter also asked about the relatively high number of employers perceiving a need for improvement in progress reporting for apprentices. Kelly advised that the college was working on some inconsistency in this and expects to see an improvement in next year's feedback. Sandra Williamson asked about the number of employers feeling that there was a requirement to improve adapting apprenticeships to meet their needs. Adrian reported that there was an issue that the apprenticeship standards do not always mirror what happens in SMEs which creates a mismatch between the standards and actual job requirements.

Daniel Elkington asked about the technical aspects of the apprenticeships survey and suggested that more guidance be given on its completion. Kelly advised that this is a government survey but the college also has its own survey. The government survey reflects the overall experience of the employer rather than based on individual apprenticeships.

Members approved the Self-Assessment Report and thanked Standards committee members who had taken part in the validation process.

b) Principal's

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

Members noted that the ONS reclassification of colleges as part of the public sector has removed the possibility of approaching the private sector for lending. A discussion took place about the implications of the change, and it was noted that this was an evolving situation. Sandra Williamson flagged up the potential for areas of risk arising from this to be considered in the future.

David Earnshaw asked about learner numbers for 2022-23. Debbie Holland advised that numbers are lower than last year, particularly in Access. A discussion took place about future implications and the potential impact of a recession on learner numbers.

Chris Pett asked if the college was anticipating an issue due to the announcement of potential strikes. Members were advised that the college was aware that union membership was growing nationally and was keeping advised on the regional situation. Jen Durrant commented that regional representatives had been helpful.

c) Finance

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services on a number of financial matters including the 2021-22 annual accounts.

In reviewing the draft accounts, it was noted that the ONS reclassification had been included as a post balance sheet event. Members noted that the auditor was available to answer any queries on the accounts.

Members agreed to approve the 2021-22 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.

Debbie Holland advised that the management accounts had moved into deficit. Gerry Tawton noted that this did not include plans for making up the AEB income shortfall.

Looking at expenditure on capital projects, Debbie advised that additional budget provision was needed for the Hall of Residence conversion project. Value engineering had not released significant savings and additional works had been identified due to the age and condition of the building. Members noted that income from the energy efficiency fund and capital allocation would help offset additional costs and agreed to approve further capital expenditure of £180,000 on the conversion.

Kimberley Jones abstained from voting on this expenditure.

David Parnell asked if there was an opportunity to apply for funding to help with cash balances and Debbie advised that this was being checked. David Earnshaw asked about the impact on financial health. Debbie confirmed that it was Good at the moment but was very tight.

Members noted the availability of the financial data dashboard and approved the risk management report and register.

Peter Cropley noted the positive comments made by the auditors about the accounts production which were a credit to Debbie and her team.

d) Governance

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

Members received the annual report of the Search and Governance committee and approved the governance self-assessment for 2021-22.

Consideration was given to the proposal for a change of name for the Audit committee. It was agreed that written advice on the acceptability of the proposed change should be sought from auditors to allow the proposal to be considered further at the next meeting. ●

Members agreed that Kimberley Jones should be appointed as a member of the Standards committee and Daniel Elkington and Katy Priestley as members of the Audit committee. A proposal that Andy Atkins should be co-opted to the Audit committee when his term of office ends was supported.

Proposals for the Audit committee's performance targets for 2022-23 were approved.

e) Safeguarding and Prevent

Members received a report from the Interim Head of Learner Services giving an overview and assurance of Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements.

Members noted the increase in volume of safeguarding referrals and increase in membership of the Safeguarding Team from January 2023. In response to a query from Gerry Tawton, it was confirmed that team members combine this role with their other posts in the college which were all positions not involving teaching. The use of software to record safeguarding referrals is being explored.

In looking at figures for outstanding mandatory training, Peter Cropley asked when this could be expected to be fully complete. Jen Durrant advised that staff development time on 3 January is dedicated to catching up with mandatory training. Completion statistics will be brought to the next meeting. Governor as well as staff training is monitored. ●

Gerry Tawton asked about the large number of safeguarding referrals to Sharon Posey. Sharon advised that this is because school referrals are addressed to her. Daniel Elkington asked about referral patterns. Sharon reported that there are a lot of referrals relating to self-harm, mental health and sexual abuse/harm. In response to a query raised by Katy Priestley, it was confirmed that the designated officers for referrals are members of the Safeguarding Team.

f) SEND

Members received a report from the SEND Managers which was presented by Sharon Posey.

The information contained in the report was discussed and noted. Gerry Tawton asked about top-up funding from the local authority. Sharon explained that it can be very

expensive to support high needs learners and this additional funding relates to those learners for whom the £6,000 funded by the ESFA is insufficient to meet needs.

g) Learner Views

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Performance and Quality. A discussion took place about the views reported and actions being taken in response to the feedback received.

h) OfS Compliance/Reportable Events

Heather Marks confirmed that there was nothing to report.

7. EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members were advised that the external governance review would commence in the spring term and a questionnaire would be circulated to members as part of the process. The reviewer will attend some meetings and meet with individual governors.

8. MEMBERS

It was noted that Andy Atkins and Chris Pett would be leaving at the end of their current terms and that Ruth Catlett would be leaving in the new year. The departing members were thanked for the significant contributions which they had made to the work of the Corporation.

9. STAFF RESTRUCTURE

Claire Foster advised a curriculum restructure was taking place. Colleagues affected have been supported with union representation.

Andy Atkins left the meeting at this point.

Claire reported that the existing structure was very 'flat'. A consultation had taken place on restructure proposals and 11 posts below Director level are being replaced with 19 learning leads. Appointments have already been made to four of the five new Director of Learning posts. A number of staff have chosen to take voluntary redundancy and arrangements are being made to cover management responsibilities until all of the remaining posts are filled. The new roles will be advertised internally, directly after Christmas. The motivation for the change is to align the college with priority sectors and all the new roles have a key focus on teaching and learning. Also, views expressed in the staff survey concerned the few available opportunities for progression and promotion for academic staff. The new structure addresses these points. The restructure and process has been supported from the outset by the Deputy FE Commissioner, responding to the 'Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability' initiative.

Gerry Tawton asked about the cost of the changes, Debbie Holland confirmed that initial costs were in the budget reforecast. A paper on the restructure will be brought to the next Corporation meeting and will include cost information. ●

10. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation would take place on the afternoon of 15 March 2023 following the morning CPD event.