

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION ON 15 MARCH 2023

1. **PRESENT**

Peter Cropley (Chair), Daran Bland, Gavin Booth (from item 2), David Earnshaw, Daniel Elkington, Claire Foster, Kelly Harris, Kimberley Jones, Heather Lee, Jurate Matulioniene (from item 2), David Parnell, Katy Priestley, Gerry Tawton, Paul Tomlinson 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), Sharon Posey (Interim Head of Learner Services) and Simon Perryman (External Governance Reviewer). Neil Percy (Director of Learning: Creative & Cultural Industries), Wendy Poole (Director of Learning: Adults & Apprenticeships) and Adam Wardell (Director of Learning: Health & Care Industries) attended for item 3 only.

Apologies for absence were received from Orla Brown, David Fannin, Helen Rumbold, Oskar Sobota and Sandra Williamson.

Meeting attendance: 75%

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

It was reported that Orla Brown had been nominated as a staff governor. Members agreed that Orla should be appointed as a staff governor for a four-year term.

Recommendations were received from the Search and Governance committee for the appointment of two new governors. Having reviewed the applications and recommendations, members agreed to appoint Gavin Booth and Jurate Matulioniene for four-year terms.

Gavin Booth and Jurate Matulioniene joined the meeting.

3. **PRESENTATION: MAKING AN IMPACT THROUGH OUR 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE CURRICULUM'**

Members received a presentation from Kelly Harris, Neil Percy, Wendy Poole and Adam Wardell.

Members noted that the Making a Difference Curriculum was designed to support broader skills and build resilience. Apprenticeships have been included in it from 2022-23. Daran Bland asked how this offer fitted within timetables for apprentices. Wendy Poole advised that it is meshed within the curriculum rather than a separate session as the apprentices' time in college is limited. In other areas it is timetabled around lessons. Kimberley Jones gave an example in her area of learning Makaton which is useful for work and everyday life.

4. **ACTION LOG**

Members reviewed progress made against items in the action log.

Peter Cropley asked about the international debt and members were advised that the hearing had been postponed until September so that another witness could be included. In response to a query raised by Gerry Tawton about a possible name change for the Audit committee, Debbie Holland advised that the auditors had recommended that a decision on this should be deferred.

5. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

a) Corporation – 14 December 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2022 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

Peter Cropley asked about funding opportunities to support capital projects. Debbie Holland advised that the DfE loan scheme could be considered when details are released.

b) Finance and Resources Committee – 30 January 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2023 were reviewed.

c) Standards Committee – 8 February 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were reviewed.

d) Search and Governance Committee – 1 March 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton asked what the issue was with the VITAL system. Kelly Harris explained that whilst it is a good system it will become unsupported so the college is looking at alternative systems.

6. REPORTS

a) Principal's

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

Members noted that the challenges identified in the report had been reflected in the AoC briefing at the CPD event. Claire Foster advised that Boston had been successful in getting levelling up status. News is awaited on a possible devolution deal.

David Earnshaw asked which of the identified challenges were immediate and which longer term. Claire advised that managing the AEB funding was an in-year concern with qualifications reform being longer term. Issues with proposed qualification changes were a particular concern because of local qualification levels. Daran Bland commented that gaps may be emerging for some learners and asked whether representations about these were likely to be successful. Claire assured members that key messages from colleges are being fed back and gave an example of the information in AoC briefings. Raising the issue with MPs is helpful.

Gerry Tawton asked if there was any information available on colleges' loan applications being refused. Claire said that there was no general information but there were colleges in the region with issues about the need for revolving credit to support cashflow. Timeliness of decisions on requests is also an issue.

Gerry asked about potential impact on funding of T level changes. The college has modelled the impact and Claire noted the effects on learners unable to progress. Heather Lee asked about plans to deal with the impact on NEETs (Young people not in employment, education or training). In response to a query from Heather about requirements for English and maths GCSEs to allow progression to T levels, Claire advised that learners are able to progress with a pass in one of these but carrying an outstanding GCSE forward alongside a large T level programme would be challenging. A discussion took place about the challenges involved in the introduction and delivery of T levels and it was noted that time needed to embed new approaches did not seem to have been appreciated.

b) Finance

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services which included January management accounts.

Members were advised that the latest forecast information predicted an outturn close to the original budget. Nick Worth asked about mitigation of the AEB shortfall. New courses are being considered to use more of the AEB funding and there should be an increased claim for Additional Learning Support. In response to a query from Peter Cropley, it was confirmed that there was confidence that shortfalls could be mitigated.

Gavin Booth asked if cash balances were forecast to recover. It was confirmed that they were but were affected by defrayal of capital expenses which was why a rolling facility had been sought. In response to a query from David Earnshaw, Debbie Holland explained the key variances from the original budget.

c) Safeguarding and Prevent Update

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

The report included information on Martyn's Law which is progressing through parliament. Peter Cropley asked if this required the college to take action to comply. Sharon Posey advised that a working group was addressing this. Work is also progressing on the Online Safety policy where feedback from learners is being obtained through focus groups. Claire Foster commented that the involvement of learners is critical to getting a policy which is fit for purpose. Sharon advised on questions relating to toxic masculinity and meeting safely online which were raised by Katy Priestley and Daniel Elkington. Peter Cropley asked if the Online Safety policy has been developed with JISC and it was reported that an initial draft had been shared for comment.

Daran Bland asked if there was concern about outstanding staff training. Members were advised by Jen Durrant that this is fully audited and is being monitored and resolved through CLT. Claire Foster confirmed that this was a priority. Jen told members that new IPR software had been purchased which will track and monitor training and notify staff and governors of training required.

Sharon reported that the college would be acquiring new software for recording safeguarding referrals digitally which will reduce administration and allow the safeguarding team to share information with other agencies more efficiently as well as making reporting easier. Gavin Booth asked about the transfer to the new system. Sharon advised that there will be a transition period but ways of expediting the move were being reviewed.

David Earnshaw asked if the Safeguarding team was fully resourced and it was confirmed that it was. The majority of referrals go to Sharon directly from schools and to Denise Swift as the most experienced member of the team. New team members are under supervision. Daran Bland suggested that it would be helpful to know what percentage of each cohort were the subjects of a referral. Sharon agreed to look with Kelly Harris at the presentation of the information to help identify more vulnerable learners. Heather Lee suggested that it would also be useful to see movement over time.

d) OfS Compliance/Reportable Events

Claire Foster confirmed that there was nothing to report.

e) Governance

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

Vacant committee and Lead Governor positions were noted. It was agreed that David Parnell should become the Lead Governor for Careers and Daran Bland Lead Governor for SEND. A vacancy for a staff governor on the Standards committee is to be offered to Orla Brown.

Members received a letter from the National Education Union: Boston College requesting union representation on the Corporation. A discussion took place on this request. Having taken into consideration the Search and Governance committee's view on the request and the representative and consultative arrangements which already exist, members agreed to decline the request.

7. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Members were reminded that new appointments would be made at the May meeting. The Clerk will ask for expressions of interest in these positions in advance of the meeting.

8. NEXT MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meetings of the Corporation would take place on 10 May 2023 and 5 July 2023.