

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD ON 5 JULY 2023

1. PRESENT

David Earnshaw (Chair), Daran Bland, Gavin Booth, Claire Foster, Kimberley Jones, Heather Lee, Jurate Matulioniene (from item 2b), David Parnell, Katy Priestley, Helen Rumbold, Gerry Tawton and Paul Tomlinson.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Jen Durrant (Executive Director: People), Debbie Holland (Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services), Heather Marks (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality) and Sharon Posey (Interim Head of Learner Services – to item 6c). Jonathan Creed (ICCA Education Training & Skills) and Adam Wardell (Director of Learning: Health & Care Industries) attended for the presentations under item 2 only.

Apologies for absence were received from James Brindle, Daniel Elkington, David Fannin, Sandra Williamson and Nick Worth.

Meeting attendance: 63%

Heather Lee reminded members of the importance of improving attendance levels and meeting the target which had been agreed.

2. PRESENTATIONS

a) Fraud and Corruption

Jonathan Creed joined the meeting and gave a presentation focussing on the duties of the Corporation and Audit Committee in relation to fraud and corruption.

Jonathan explained that recently fraud around examinations had been the most frequently identified. Another type of fraud which is more common relates to assets but financial fraud tends to be unusual. The Corporation is responsible for control systems and establishing a culture of probity. The Audit Code of Practice details the approach to these issues and the roles of the Audit committee and auditors are key. Jonathan advised that Boston College had always felt like an organisation built on integrity and the college's control framework is fundamentally sound. The ESFA is clear that this is the Corporation's responsibility and it should receive periodic reports from the Audit committee on the issue even if this is only to report that nothing untoward is happening. ●

Gerry Tawton asked about the requirement for internal audit. Jonathan advised that, whilst it is not a mandatory requirement, the majority of the sector has retained it. There is no definition of what auditors should do but the requirement for a directed audit may come back with the move into the public sector. Heather Lee commented that it was pleasing to hear about the college's culture and behaviours and asked if anything further was needed. Jonathan commented that Boston College had never felt as if it would accept anything other than doing the right thing.

Daran Bland asked if the Corporation had enough awareness of the work of the Audit committee. David Earnshaw suggested that the Corporation would now be better able to interrogate the work of the committee which Jonathan advised was important.

b) The Boston College Graduate

Jurate Matulioniene joined the meeting at this point

Adam Wardell gave a presentation on learner experience and the opportunities the college provides for learners including some case studies.

Kimberly Jones commented on her volunteering experience and how that had helped with her confidence and realisation that working with learning disabilities could be what she wants to follow up as a career. Members noted that work experience and volunteering are having significant impact on learners and Daran Bland commented on the progress of some of the learners he knew from his own school. David Parnell asked if all learners got work experience and Adam confirmed that they did and gave an explanation of how it is included at different levels. Gavin Booth asked if the aim was to offer broader volunteering opportunities as well as work experience and it was confirmed that this was the case. Sharon Posey commented that employers and businesses were asking about opportunities to be included in the volunteer fair.

3. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress made against items in the action log.

Members were advised in response to a query from Gerry Tawton that union representatives remain unavailable to be notified of the outcome of the representation request. Claire Foster told members that an Ofsted update would be provided at the beginning of September and that more in-depth training for selected governors was planned for late August.

5. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

a) Corporation - 10 May 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2023 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

b) Search and Governance Committee - 12 June 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2023 were reviewed.

c) Finance and Resources Committee - 12 June 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2023 were reviewed.

d) Audit Committee - 15 June 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton asked about a reference in the minutes to remuneration and it was confirmed that this related to ONS implications.

e) Standards Committee – 20 June 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June were reviewed.

Daran Bland commented on a presentation the committee had received on the benefits of AI. The committee had found this thought provoking and will be keeping it under review. Daran suggested that a presentation to the Corporation would be useful and Claire Foster agreed that information on AI and how the college is using it should be provided.

6. REPORTS

a) Principal's

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

Claire Foster advised that work had been carried out with the broader college network on an LSIF bid. It was noted that Lindum had been appointed for the Mayflower project and work was being carried out on value engineering. The college is working with Boston Borough Council on the plaza development.

Claire told members that the Institute of Technology licence is up for renewal and new licences will be for a 10 year period. An update on this will be brought to the Corporation. David Earnshaw asked how learner numbers and revenue had worked out. Claire advised that nothing had been heard about any implications for clawback at this time and therefore not anticipated as an immediate/concern.

The work being carried out with the Deputy FE Commissioner on curriculum efficiency and financial sustainability was noted. Heather Marks advised that the report will be available in the autumn term.

b) Finance

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

CFFR documents and proposals for the 2023/24 budget were reviewed. It was noted that the college should be able to maintain Good financial health for 2022/23. In response to a query from Gerry Tawton, information was provided about the identification of AEB clawback and the Mayflower development within the documents. A question was raised about continuing freedom to retain cash reserves and Debbie Holland confirmed that there was no advice on this yet but an enquiry has been received about what is done with cash. Daran Bland asked about the financial year end and members were advised that it is currently 1 August but may move to 1 April.

David Earnshaw commented that savings over the last few years meant that, effectively, a break-even budget was being proposed. It was confirmed that there was currently no provision in the 2023/24 budget for a pay award other than provision for the National Living Wage. Any other pay increases would be dependent on affordability and a discussion took place about the balance between pay awards and returns. David Parnell suggested that other sectors continue to see challenges on pay and Paul Tomlinson commented on cost increases throughout supply chains. Gavin Booth noted a focus on public sector pay and the affordability of increases which limited the education sector's ability to compete for staff. The importance of offering a good working environment was noted. Heather Lee commented on the challenge to maintain up-to-date skills and the impact of remote working. Katy Priestley noted the potential for performance-related pay links to pay awards. Claire Foster commented that performance-related pay can lead to specific and not

necessarily welcome cultures and behaviours. Helen Rumbold advised that local government was struggling to recruit to higher level posts and key specialisms. Claire suggested that making the college a place people *wanted* to work was critical.

Points raised by the Audit committee about factors contributing to the Going Concern judgement were noted.

Members agreed to approve the 2023/24 proposed budget and the CFFR statements and commentary for submission to the ESFA.

c) Safeguarding and Prevent

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

Sharon Posey reported that there was no further action being taken on a LADO referral. Daran Bland asked if there were any recommendations arising from this and Heather Marks confirmed that there were not.

A discussion took place about the level of incidents being reported. Sharon advised that the impact of introducing the MyConcern software on data was being reviewed but the software will allow year on year comparisons to be reported.

Members approved safeguarding actions proposed.

d) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Executive Director: People presented a report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The report included key EDI data and provided information on activities which had taken place. The focus of EDI activity for 2023/24 was noted and endorsed.

e) Governance

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation.

Members reviewed the External Review of Governance report and agreed that the Search and Governance committee should oversee follow up actions. The introduction of a further Strategy Day for governors was noted and Claire Foster advised that its impact was likely to be seen in the following academic year.

Members agreed the dates for Corporation and committee meetings in 2023/24.

Consideration was given to the appointment process for staff governors and it was agreed that one member should be nominated and elected by academic staff and the other by non-academic staff with the Executive Director: People confirming the definitions of the two groups for the election process. ●

f) Learner Views

Heather Marks presented a report from the Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance and Standards on the outcomes of the Apprentice Learner Survey.

It was noted that the survey response rate was low and this issue is being addressed. Communication is essential to let learners know that the issues they raise have been followed up.

Members considered the detailed information presented and noted the impact of timing on some of the responses. The approach being taken to improve response rates and address issues raised was endorsed.

g) Subcontracting Policy 2023/24

Members received a report from the Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Services and approved the subcontracting policy for 2023/24.

h) OfS Reportable Events

Heather Marks confirmed that there was nothing to report.

7. COLLEGE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Members received a report from the Principal on changes to the colleges leadership structure.

Claire Foster explained the rationale for the changes and, in response to a query from Gerry Tawton, confirmed that the changes did not create a budget issue. Interim arrangements have been made pending permanent appointments to Assistant Principal positions.

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation will take place on 18 October 2023.