

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD ON 3 JULY 2024

1. **PRESENT**

David Earnshaw (Chair), Daran Bland, David Fannin, Claire Foster, Nick Hodgkiss (from item 2), Kimberley Jones, Heather Lee, Jurate Matulioniene, David Parnell, Katy Priestley, Gerry Tawton, Sandra Williamson, Nick Worth and Fiona Wrisberg.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Jen Durrant (Executive Director: People), Debbie Holland (Chief Operating Officer), Tom Hughes (Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance and Standards) and Abid Hussain (Assistant Principal: Student Experience). Claire Ashley (Director of Learning: Academic Core and Business Studies) attended for the presentation under item 3a only.

Apologies for absence were received from Gavin Booth.

Meeting attendance: 88%

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

Members were advised that Nick Hodgkiss had been nominated as a staff governor and it was agreed to appoint him for a period ending October 2027.

Nick Hodgkiss joined the meeting.

Members were advised that Lucy Walker had resigned from her student governor position.

3. **PRESENTATIONS:**

a) **Every Connection Counts**

Claire Ashley gave a presentation on the learner journey from recruitment to achievement through a number of case studies. Examples showing how learners had progressed were shared and discussed.

b) **Long term impact of curriculum restructure**

Claire Foster gave a presentation showing the impact of the curriculum restructure.

David Earnshaw asked whether there were measurable outcomes and Claire advised that these could be seen in the staff survey, achievement forecasts and financial performance. Daran Bland asked if there were still adjustments to be made and it was confirmed that there might be some small adjustments but generally the situation was satisfactory. Daran reported that the Standards committee was seeing data coming through which pulls the threads together and which Claire suggested reflected the managers knowing the learners and doing what was right for them. Fiona Wrisberg commented that the Senior Learning Leads have owned the curriculum planning process this year.

David Fannin asked if there was a connection with the balanced scorecard. Claire advised that Tom Hughes has done a lot of work on this and that the focus is on strategic priorities. Sandra Williamson thanked Claire for sharing the results of the changes and commended the ambition shown. David Parnell commented that the closeness between teachers and learners comes through and everyone understands their role. Claire said that she was proud of the work the managers have done.

4. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

a) Corporation - 8 May 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2024 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

b) Search and Governance Committee - 10 June 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton, who had chaired the meeting, commented that there was a limited pool of potential governors coming through. David Earnshaw asked members to think about contacts who could be referred through and to promote the benefits of being a governor themselves.

c) Finance and Resources Committee - 10 June 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton commented that the number of non-committee governors attending the budget briefing had been disappointing. The committee had had a long discussion about Haven Wharf. The committee had particularly noted the ongoing 'Good' financial health.

d) Audit Committee - 13 June 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024 were reviewed.

Sandra Williamson reported on the presentation on AI given to the committee. The mock funding audit had identified continuing weaknesses in apprenticeships. The committee had approved the audit plan and strategy.

Heather Lee commented on the need for assurance on the consistency of data and managing this before audit visits. Fiona Wrisberg advised that checks on apprentices' off-the-job training were being reintroduced.

e) Standards Committee – 19 June 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2024 were reviewed.

Daran Bland advised that discussions had taken place about teacher induction, hot spots for attendance and the development of work experience. There is a need to boost levels of feedback from learners. In respect of audit feedback, the committee needs a guide to where the college is and what is needed and will have a briefing on identification of issues. It was suggested that the Chair of the Audit committee might attend this since issues identified need assurance through audit and oversight through the Standards committee. Heather Lee commented on the importance of reflecting these points in meeting minutes.

5. REPORTS

a) Balanced Scorecard

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation on the proposed introduction of a balanced scorecard. The proposed format and timings for review of the score card were considered.

David Earnshaw commented on the scorecard's alignment with the strategic plan and Claire Foster pointed out that the goals were directly taken from the plan. Claire commented that the strategic plan is due for review and the trial of the scorecard in next academic year would allow for it to be refined and reviewed. Daran Bland suggested that this was a positive approach to demystifying progress on delivery of the strategic plan. The risk register relationships are to be embedded into the scorecard and the proposed reporting cycle would feed into Corporation meetings. Sandra Williamson suggested that this could inform the choice of presentations for meetings.

It was agreed that the balance scorecard should be trialled in 2024/25. ●

b) Principal's

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

Gerry Tawton asked if the timescales for moving the Haven Wharf project forward were realistic. David Parnell stressed the need to be aware of potential issues and risks. David Earnshaw commented that the college has obtained documents on previous investigations and work on the site. Claire Foster said that there was potential support in drawing on the University of Derby's expertise. Nick Worth highlighted potential funding risks from the imminent general election.

c) Finance

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer which included the proposed 2024-25 budget and longer-term financial plan and the financial dashboard to 30 April 2024.

Debbie Holland identified the issues and areas of risk in the proposed budget and shared the assumptions underlying it. She explained that the budget only includes planned activity and there is potential to do more in areas where the plans do not match the allocation in apprenticeships, adult provision and higher education. Heather Lee asked why apprenticeship income was not growing. Claire Foster explained that there is a new apprenticeship manager with a proper development plan looking at areas for potential development. It identifies where the college can develop higher value apprenticeships and Claire was pleased to see a business-like approach to this. Tom Hughes commented that staffing has been an issue with higher level apprenticeships. Claire confirmed that the model was being reviewed and Nick Hodgkiss commented on the skills needed to provide higher level apprenticeships.

Debbie advised that there was nothing in the proposed budget for pay increases other than the National Living Wage which was the same approach as had been taken for last year's budget. Heather Lee asked whether this was typical for the sector and Debbie advised that the approach was variable. Sandra Williamson suggested that pay costs needed to match the college's ambition. David Earnshaw confirmed that the Finance and Resources committee will keep a close eye on this. Jurate Matulioniene asked if funding was available for pre-entry level students and provision for lower-level learning was explained. Daran Bland asked if there are levers to adjust the budget if expectations do not materialise and the approach to ●

this was explained. Sandra Williamson suggested that the Finance and Resources committee look at the sensitivity analysis. ●

The budget for 2024/25 was approved.

With regards to the financial dashboard information, Gerry Tawton asked if the year-end forecast was robust. Debbie advised that there were still some concerns about delivery of the AEB budget.

d) Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Student Experience.

David Earnshaw asked about the challenges being faced. Abid Hussain advised that there is still a focus on mental health. A lot of time has been spent on behaviour management and a success coach role has been introduced for September. In response to a query from Daran Bland, Abid gave an update on the rollout of the MyConcern software. There are still some staff not enrolled but this will be followed up in August since it is the main risk to the implementation.

David Earnshaw asked how the challenges at Boston College compared with other colleges. Abid advised that he does not see major issues at the college and that learners are generally well behaved. Heather Lee commented on the need for triage training for staff to save time on visits to Accident and Emergency.

e) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Student Experience which included the student profile and information on activities undertaken.

Abid Hussain explained that EDI is embedded within the curriculum and that he had been particularly proud of ESOL learners taking ownership of the International Day. Heather Lee asked about the male/female profile of learners aged 14 to 15 and it was confirmed that this was a group of learners sent in by a school. Claire Foster commented that Abid has created opportunities for groups not previously represented and is now leading on SEND for the college. David Earnshaw confirmed that the SEND work is exciting and the college is working with AOC sharing good practice.

f) Governance

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation.

Members approved the schedule of proposed meeting dates for 2024-25. It was agreed that Nick Hodgkiss should replace Fiona Wrisberg on the Finance and Resources committee and that Fiona should remain on the Standards committee. Other committee appointments are to be discussed with members at their review meetings. ●

The follow-up of the external governance review and the contents of RSM's Emerging Issues publication were noted. Members were advised that they should take the opportunity to read the Financial Handbook since it was a key document. It was noted that the Finance and Resources committee had already looked at this. ●

Gerry Tawton asked if the Procurement Act was an issue. Debbie Holland advised that a briefing will be given to the Audit committee on this and will also be available to other members. ●

g) Learner Views

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal, Quality, Performance and Standards which analysed the feedback from the end of year survey for full time learners.

Tom Hughes outlined the issues raised and explained that he had met with Senior Learning Leads to look at these. Survey outcomes were a key discussion point at review meetings. In response to a query from Fiona Wrisberg about response rates, Tom explained that local feedback has been obtained from areas with low response rates. An issue appears to be that students are not checking their emails especially at the end of the year. David Parnell commented on the notable disparity in some areas which needs to be followed up. Fiona suggested that this could possibly be part of the new success coach role. Kimberly Jones asked whether the survey could be carried out on Teams as that is the way learners normally communicate. Kimberly commented that she feels that the college is welcoming and proactive when issues arise. Sandra Williamson suggested that it would be useful to see the experience of different EDI groups and particularly to see feedback on supporting people on mental health.

h) Subcontracting Policy 2024-25

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer presenting an update to the college's Subcontracting Policy. Members reviewed and approved the adoption of the updated policy.

i) OfS Reportable Events

Tom Hughes confirmed that there was nothing to report.

j) Annual Accountability Statement

Members received a report from the Principal presenting the proposed Annual Accountability Statement.

Members reviewed the draft statement and confirmed their approval of it for publication.

6. **ACTION LOG**

Members reviewed progress made against items in the action log.

7. **MEMBERS**

It was noted that it was the last Corporation meeting for Kimberley Jones and Gerry Tawton whose membership would end over the summer. Both members were thanked for their work with Kimberly's positive contributions as a student governor and Gerry's service as Chair of the Finance and Resources committee throughout most of his time as a governor being particularly commended.

8. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

Having been duly nominated, members agreed to appoint David Earnshaw as Chair of the Corporation for 2024-25.

9. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

Having been duly nominated, members agreed to appoint Heather Lee as Vice Chair of the Corporation for 2024-25.

