

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD ON 8 MAY 2024

1. **PRESENT**

David Earnshaw (Chair), Daran Bland, Gavin Booth, Daniel Elkington, David Fannin, Claire Foster, Kimberley Jones, Jurate Matulioniene, David Parnell, 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), Abid Hussain (Assistant Principal: Student Experience) and Heather Marks (Deputy Principal). Sharon Posey (Head of Safeguarding & Wellbeing), Axel Sedgwick (Student Enrichment Coordinator) and Adam Wardell (Director of Learning: Health & Care Industries) attended for the presentations under item 3 only.

Apologies for absence were received from Heather Lee and Lucy Walker.

Meeting attendance: 81%

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

Members were advised that James Brindle had resigned from the Corporation.

3. **PRESENTATIONS:**

a) **Strategies implemented to improve attendance, retention and the learner voice**

Adam Wardell and Axel Sedgwick gave a presentation on the impact of the Challenge 90 initiative to improve attendance, retention and the learner voice and highlighted the next steps to be taken.

In looking at learner satisfaction, Gerry Tawton asked about the underlying response rates for the surveys which had been carried out. It was reported that the first survey had had a consistent response rate to the previous year and a similar situation was expected for the next survey.

b) **MyConcern**

Sharon Posey gave a demonstration of the MyConcern software showing how concerns are raised and logged on the system.

David Earnshaw asked when reporting on the system would be ready and Sharon advised that training was currently taking place but the manual system would continue for this academic year due to the in-year implementation of MyConcern. Clarification was also given about the use of the system for dealing with mental health concerns. Daran Bland asked whether the software allowed ongoing recording of interactions with other agencies. Sharon told members that the system can be updated as cases progress and then closed when complete.

Jurate Matulioniene asked whether the system was also being used for staff safeguarding but was advised that it was not due to potential confidentiality issues. Fiona Wrisberg asked how long information would be retained on the system and

Sharon advised that this would be covered in the retention policy but information should only relate to active learners. Daran suggested that a check should be made to ensure that the safeguarding logs conform to the retention policy and Debbie Holland offered to follow that up with the Data Protection Officer.

4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

a) Corporation - 6 March 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

b) Audit Committee - 21 March 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2024 were reviewed.

Sandra Williamson reported that the committee had discussed curriculum efficiency and had asked the finance and resources committee to review this. She also noted that the risk management policy is to be reviewed in September 2024.

Gerry Tawton asked about the impact of the Financial Handbook and members were advised that this would be considered at the next meeting.

c) Finance and Resources Committee - 25 March 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2024 were reviewed.

Gerry Tawton highlighted the challenge being experienced by the College in replacing the finance manager. Members were reminded that the June meeting of the committee would be looking at budget preparations and this would be open for all members to attend. David Earnshaw asked about cash reserves and the Financial Handbook and Gerry reported that the current reserves were healthy but the handbook did not specifically refer to cash reserves.

d) Standards Committee – 24 April 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were reviewed.

Daran Bland advised that the committee is keeping a focused view on SEND developments. Proposals which had been discussed will enhance the learner experience and the committee will also keep an overview of CPD requirements to support curriculum changes. KPIs and lesson observations are looking positive.

Gerry Tawton asked how integration of English and maths into the curriculum would work. Claire Foster advised that there was a history of English and maths being separate and moving delivery into curriculum areas will help learners to appreciate the relevance of these subjects to their main qualification aims. David Parnell gave an example of plumbing apprentices who only realised the relevance of maths when using it in their trade. In response to a query from Gavin Booth about CPD requirements to support this change, Heather Marks said that the college was focussing on making sure that English and maths can be competently delivered in curriculum areas.

David Earnshaw asked whether targets for SEND learners were ambitious enough. Daran explained the challenge of translating EHCP targets into meaningful progress targets. Claire advised that the team had seen software on a visit to Northumberland College which helps log progress for these learners.

5. REPORTS

a) Principal's

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

A discussion took place about the potential impact of defunding some Level 3 qualifications and it was noted that the financial impact will fall in future years because of lagged funding arrangements. Changes were noted to be primarily in areas where there was a crossover with T levels and Claire Foster advised that it was still hoped that there would be some reconsideration on this. David Earnshaw asked about the status of preparations for T levels and Heather Marks provided information about management of the implementation plan. Areas of concern were noted to be work placements and engineering. Tom Hughes commented that the same pool of employers had to be used for placements and apprenticeships.

Nick Worth asked if further information could be provided about the potential purchase of the Haven Wharf site and Claire advised that an update will be provided at the July Corporation meeting.

b) Finance

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer which included management accounts to 31 March 2024 and ESFA confirmation of the college's financial health grade.

A discussion took place about the spend on IT which Debbie Holland advised was included in the capital expenditure shown in the accounts. Within this is a programme of replacements as well as new items such as switches. Daran Bland noted that schools are experiencing significant refresh costs due to the phasing out of Windows 10. Debbie noted that the college has made a significant investment in iPads. A slowdown in the need to replace hardware was reported and Debbie advised that the college policy has moved from three years to five years for replacement. Claire Foster commented that investment needs to have synergy with teaching and learning requirements and that one change being considered is a move away from fixed computing provision. There is a need to focus on accessibility. Jurate Matulioniene asked whether old equipment could be passed on, particularly to learners who may not have access to IT outside of college. Debbie advised that equipment is usually recycled but that there is a bank of laptops available to learners and bursary funds to help disadvantage learners.

Gerry Tawton noted that there was a reforecast at the end of April and financial health was still forecast to be good.

c) Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Members received a report from the Head of Safeguarding and Wellbeing which was presented by the Assistant Principal: Student Experience.

Members noted that police dogs would be visiting the college in the near future. Claire Foster told members that it had been decided to use this visit to demonstrate the college's position on illegal substances and parents will be advised of the visit. Abid Hussain commented that this was a response to issues raised on safety through the learner voice and would let people know that the college is a safe environment. Sandra Williamson highlighted that follow up and support will be important.

David Earnshaw asked about the oversight off the safeguarding action plan by the safeguarding committee. Abid confirmed that the plan can be shared with Corporation members if they wish to see it. Claire advised that the college was aware of issues at feeder schools and will continue to support learner needs.

d) OfS Reportable Events

Heather Marks confirmed that there was nothing to report.

e) Mayflower Approvals

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer on the use of cash reserves and a potential land transaction.

Debbie Holland explained that value engineering on the Mayflower project was now complete. David Parnell commented that the Property Group had looked at the progress made towards delivering the right outcome and noted that the property market has moved on since it was first planned. The proposed investment of college funds would leverage in significant external investment and the Property Group is supportive of this. Gerry Tawton asked about cashflow information which had been provided and it was confirmed that subsequently the cashflow profile would return to normal although cash will have to be carefully controlled. There is also a potential need for capital spend to be restricted for a while.

David Parnell suggested that it was sensible to make the proposed investment. Members noted that not all of the costs, particularly on shared space, were fully defined yet and members agreed the need to ensure that the college's contribution reflected its demise and were a reasonable contribution. Daran Bland asked where the risk lay if new costs occurred during the project. Debbie advised that the only exception would be around expenditure of the provisional sum with the risk around water noted as possibly £10,000-£15,000.

Gavin Booth asked if there was a minimum cash level required by the college and whether its policy was being changed. Gerry confirmed that there was not a change to the policy and the college would want to build cash and cash days back to its agreed level.

With the exception of Kimberley Jones who abstained from voting, members agreed unanimously to support the use of £825,751 of college cash to support this development.

Members considered a proposal to transfer a strip of land from the college's ownership to Boston Borough Council. It was agreed that this should be taken into consideration when agreeing the financial investment in the whole of the Mayflower project and the Principal was authorised to negotiate disposal of the strip of land in return for suitable identified benefits or return to the college.

6. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed progress made against items in the action log.

Tom Hughes advised members that information on apprentices' progression was captured elsewhere and it was agreed that this point should be closed off on the action log. The suggestion of looking at the possibility for using apprenticeships for LSA roles is also to be closed off as this is now resolved.

Claire Foster advised that further information on the replacement of VITAL is likely to be brought forward next academic year. The linking of self-assessment outcomes with committee monitoring is to be further considered and more information on IT expenditure will be provided to the Finance and Resources committee.

7. ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Claire Foster advised that annual accountability statements needed to be approved by governors. The deadline for submission is 30 June but a short extension is being requested so that this can come to the July Corporation meeting. The statement will be circulated for consideration if this request is not approved.

8. DOMESTIC ABUSE TRAINING

Jen Durrant advised that domestic abuse training is to be offered, probably in the week commencing 15 July, and requires a minimum of 40 participants. External nominates are welcome to participate in this training.

9. Open University

David Fannin reported that the Open University has grants available to improve the HE offer for local students. He offered to follow this up and act as an intermediary as required.

10. HEATHER MARKS

It was noted that this was Heather Marks' last meeting of the Corporation since she would be leaving the college in June. Members thanked Heather for her service and particularly for her contribution to the Ofsted inspection.

11. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation will take place on 3 July 2024