

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD ON 12 MARCH 2025

1. PRESENT

David Earnshaw (Chair), Gavin Booth, Jacob Cawthorne, David Fannin, Claire Foster, Mike Gildersleeves, Heather Lee, Jessica Mellon, David Parnell, Shruti Trivedi, 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 Matt Smith (Deputy Principal). Gemma Robinson (Director of Commercial Partnerships) attended for item 2 only and Sharon Posey (Head of Safeguarding and Wellbeing) for item 4a only.

Apologies for absence were received from Daran Bland, Nick Hodgkiss, Jurate Matulioniene, Katy Priestley and Sandra Williamson.

Meeting attendance: 71%

2. PRESENTATION: EXTERNAL PROJECT PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PLANS

Gemma Robinson, Director of Commercial Partnerships, gave a presentation on project funding and performance.

Mike Gildersleeves commented on the success of Boston Brilliance and Gemma confirmed that the project evaluation report will provide feedback on the social value of the event for Boston. Governors expressed their appreciation of this event.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

a) Corporation - 11 December 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

b) Finance and Resources Committee – 10 February 2025

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2025 were reviewed.

David Parnell told members that the committee had highlighted reduced levels of cash later in the year and discussed how to address this. The committee had also looked at an issue of a debt dating back to 2020 and asked for feedback on its resolution.

c) Standards Committee – 12 February 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2025 were reviewed.

David Fannin advised that the committee had been pleased with the information presented and the evolution of the data recorded. The committee had found presentations of curriculum plans particularly useful in giving the committee an understanding of thought processes and allowing plans to be questioned and challenged. Tom Hughes noted that this was a key change getting governors directly involved.

d) Property Group 21 February 2025

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2025 were reviewed.

It was noted that the presentation of this informal group's minutes was unusual, but its consideration of the Haven Wharf proposal was particularly relevant to the Corporation's discussions of this matter. Mike Gildersleeves noted that the committee had looked at the risks involved but recognised that the proposed development was in a sector aligned to the national industrial strategy. Claire Foster outlined the rationale of what was being proposed.

4. REPORTS

a) Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Members received a report from the Head of Safeguarding and Wellbeing.

Sharon Posey advised members that the college had recently completed a lockdown drill on the Rochford campus. Gavin Booth asked for feedback about the lockdown and Sharon advised that although there had been only local feedback so far, the exercise had went gone well. Jacob Cawthorne told members that a survey on the lockdown had been sent to course representatives. One comment which had been made was about the lack of window blinds in SIXTH. It was noted that not all courses had taken part in the lockdown drill. Sharon confirmed that the college was working across the sites to identify vulnerabilities.

Looking at the data contained within the report, Sharon identified a need to work with Gavin Booth to agree what information governors require. ●

c) Principal's

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

Claire Foster noted that a draft Accountability Statement had been provided and that the final version will be brought to the May meeting. ●

David Earnshaw asked if the new rules around English and maths for apprenticeships was a positive. Claire confirmed that it was for some areas but the college had to be mindful of the need to support literacy and numeracy particularly if employers valued these essential skills. Shruti Trivedi agreed and noted that there was some nervousness about this change and some disciplines are concerned about its impact.

Gavin Booth asked about the cost of National Insurance rises if these were unfunded, and Debbie Holland confirmed that this would be £96k for the balance of 2024-25.

David Earnshaw asked about the lengths of apprenticeship programmes and Claire advised that the length needs to reflect acquisition of the required skills. In response to a question from Gavin, Shruti suggested that colleges were being put under pressure to deliver in less time. Claire noted that there had been a lot of support from employers for the change in minimum course lengths and Matt Smith said that shorter programmes were being looked at for those coming in with pre-existing skills.

d) Finance

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer which included information on the financial position at 31 January 2025 and the latest reforecast.

Debbie Holland advised members that the reforecast included provision for a 3% pay award. The college is expecting to hear about funding for the increase in National Insurance later in the year. £200k has been identified for this in the forecast. Announcement of the pay award has been well received.

David Earnshaw commented on the cashflow challenges identified.

e) Property - Haven Wharf

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer on the potential acquisition of the Haven Wharf site.

Debbie Holland told members that LocatEd advised the completion of due diligence on the site and that their report was still awaited.

Heather Lee asked where acquisition of this site fitted in with the college's estates strategy. Claire Foster told members that space on the Rochford site was exhausted and this site would offer an opportunity to grow specialist areas and support Boston's aspirations. David Parnell noted that the Property Group have looked at this in the context of the college's purpose against other options which had been considered and concluded that there was merit in this proposal. Nick Worth commented that development of this site would be good for the college and for the town.

Mike Gildersleeves summarised the benefits of the proposed acquisition and noted that there was still time to review this once due diligence was complete. Shruti Trivedi asked why indemnity insurance would be required for the site and Debbie explained that this was due to possessory title on part of the site and some restrictive covenants.

David Earnshaw explained that the funding available could deliver the site and progression to a fully developed scheme. David Parnell suggested that a professional negotiator should be employed to deal with any acquisition. Claire noted that progress will have to be made quickly because of the funding requirements.

Members, with the exception of Jacob Cawthorne and Jessica Mellon who did not participate in the vote, unanimously agreed to proceed with acquisition of this site within the parameters set out in the paper received. It was also agreed that the Finance and Resources committee should have delegated authority to agree any amendments to this approval. ●

f) Learner Views

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal, Quality, Performance and Standards.

Gavin Booth asked if there was any commonality in the areas of lower satisfaction and Tom Hughes advised that it differed in the different college areas. Nick Worth asked if there was anything in the capital budget to enhance IT resources and Debbie Holland told members that different solutions for IT resourcing such as learners bringing in their own devices were being considered.

g) OfS Reportable Events

Matt Smith confirmed that there was nothing to report.

5. **ACTION LOG**

Members reviewed progress made against items in the action log.

It was noted that HR reporting at the year-end would include more analysis due to enhancements through iTrent. The half year report to be presented to the Finance and Resources committee in March will include additional analysis.

A visit to the Haven Wharf site is to take place before the next meeting of the corporation. ●

Claire Foster told members that a video 'fly through' of the college buildings is being created and will provide an historic record of its 60th year.

6. NEXT MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meetings of the Corporation will take place on 14 May and 2 July 2025.