

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held at 6pm on 28th March 2023 via Zoom

Governors Present: Max Hailey (Chair), Jenny Craig (Principal & CEO), Amir Khaki, Eddie Weiss, Nick Bevan, Bethan Waters, Ian Greggor, Chris Oakley, Kish Sidhu, Martina Porter, Tim Marshall

In Attendance: John McGrath (VP, Corporate Services (VPCS)), Hannah James (AP Learning Innovation (APLI)), Rachael Murray (Executive Director, Planning & Growth (EDPG)), Isobel Ellison (Executive Director, Human Resources (EDHR)), Anna Smith (Director of Governance (DG)), Nicola Ellis (Faculty Director) *(for items 1-3 only)*

Apologies: David Bainton (Vice Chair), Ian Harper, Martin Tugwell, Adam Poland, Alex Reynolds

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1.23	<p>CHAIR'S WELCOME</p> <p>Apologies were noted and the Chair welcomed all to the meeting. The meeting was quorate and there were no new declarations of interests.</p>
2.23	<p>NEW GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS</p> <p>A panel of members of the Search and Development Committee had interviewed two candidates who had expressed an interest in joining the Board as governors, both of whom had strong backgrounds in the film and TV industry, a key growth sector for meeting skills needs in Buckinghamshire. The Committee Chair provided assurance of the formal interview process and interview panel members agreed both would bring significant skillsets to the Board.</p> <p>The Corporation Resolved to Approve the appointments of Martina Porter and Tim Marshall as Independent Members of the Corporation from 28th March 2023 for an initial term of four years.</p> <p><i>Martina Porter and Tim Marshall joined the meeting and were welcomed as new governors.</i></p>
3.23	<p>SAFEGUARDING PRESENTATION</p> <p>Nicky Ellis provided governors with a safeguarding presentation following discussions and recommendation by the Safeguarding Link Governor. A copy of the presentation is available separately and included assurances of safeguarding processes and staffing teams across the campuses as well as the latest student safeguarding and mental health data for the college.</p> <p>The following points were raised by governors and discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case numbers have increased year on year and it is likely numbers will continue to increase nationally as mental health concerns have increased significantly post-Covid. The college is focused on its mental health strategy for both students and staff to respond to concerns as efficiently as possible. Homelessness and the cost of living crisis also add to mental health issues and the increase in exam anxiety for those unfamiliar with exam circumstances due to the pandemic is also a concern. Support and coping strategies are in place for students to ensure anxieties are minimised. • Governors were reassured that while the surge in numbers does require increased support from the safeguarding team, the college has strong staffing in the area and the structure is being reviewed to ensure sufficient resource is consistently available going forward. • There is a demographic correlation of cases by campus and safeguarding needs within the new build at High Wycombe will be considered as a high priority within the planning process.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building resilience in students before the need for safeguarding intervention is being factored into the tutorial and full time study programme and the college is looking to introduce a more holistic, pastoral professional coach to support students at the early stages. • In terms of the timeframe involved in the safeguarding cycle, this varies across individual circumstances. Cases are rag rated and some will be on the register for longer than others across the different rag ratings in a very personalised process in order to ensure needs are met at all stages. <p>Prior to leaving, the Faculty Director invited all governors to attend a dinner in Hardings restaurant being hosted by the catering students in June. Details will be circulated in due course (Action: DG).</p> <p><i>6.25pm: Nicky Ellis left and Kish Sidhu joined the meeting.</i></p>
4.23	<p>DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE REPORT</p> <p>The Corporation Resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratify the written resolution to approve the appointment of Martin Tugwell as Chair of Corporation with effect from 1/7/23. • Ratify the written resolution to approve the appointment of Cathie Prest as an Independent Governor with effect from 1/9/23. • Ratify the written resolution to approve the Independent Governor Appointment Policy and Procedure. • Ratify the written resolution to approve the revised Chair of Corporation Role Description. • Ratify the approval of the revised Quality Improvement Strategy. • Note the Governor Links and Engagement Record including governors reports of Link Meetings to date. The DG reminded governors that students would be invited to join curriculum area link meetings going forward to ensure direct student voice at governance level.
5.23	<p>MINUTES AND BOARD ASSURANCE REPORTS</p> <p>The Corporation Resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the non-confidential minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 12/12/22. • Note the notes of the Strategic Events held on 12/12/22 and 9/3/23. • Note the updated rolling actions log. • Note the report and draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 8/2/23. • Note the report and draft minutes of the Special Search and Development Committee meeting held on 14/2/23. • Note the report and draft minutes of the Quality and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 21/2/23. • Note the report and draft minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 23/2/23.
6.23	<p>STUDENT VOICE REPORT</p> <p>Members were informed of actions both taking place and planned to ensure increased participation in student voice activities across the college. The student governor election process has been revised with a more supportive approach to ensuring student governors are in post for September 2023. For the remainder of this year student voice at governance level is being achieved through student involvement in the link governor scheme and ‘meet the governors’ lunches (the first of which had been very well received by both governors and students present).</p> <p>Across college, there has been increased focus this term on gaining student feedback on enrichment trips and the enrolment process resulting in faculties reviewing trips to enhance subject area engagement. Student feedback on the enrolment process is being taken into account as part of the review of the college’s approach for 2023-24.</p>

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	<p>The appointment of student safeguarding and wellbeing ambassadors was a welcomed initiative by governors and the Principal ensured recognition of the innovative approach to student voice and engagement by having students involved in many more aspects of college life.</p> <p>The Corporation Noted the report.</p>
7.23	<p>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</p> <p><u>Accountability Agreement</u> The Principal reminded governors of the required submission of the college's annual accountability agreement as part of the Skills for Jobs White Paper reforms. Given the submission deadline of 31/5/23 and that there is no planned Corporation meeting prior to this, governor approval was sought to endorse the college's first accountability agreement via email. The Principal is working closely with Bucks Business First and its sector employer groups to ensure the college is well placed to respond to local skills needs. For 2023-24 and beyond, the schedule of meetings will be planned to ensure a timely Corporation meeting for approving future accountability agreements.</p> <p>The presentations from the ETF's recent 'Meeting Local Needs' webinar would be circulated when received as this had included useful presentations on the subject (Action: DG).</p> <p>The Corporation Resolved to Approve the Accountability Agreement approval being sought via email.</p> <p><u>Level 3 Qualification Reforms</u> Members were informed of the DfE's current process of reforming post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below and the Principal's detailed analysis conducted on the potential impact of such reforms leaving some students without a level 3 qualification route in the future due to the enhanced entry criteria for T levels and the defunding of alternative level 3 qualifications. While the college continues to introduce T levels where appropriate and a revised level 2 offer to ensure students are fully prepared to progress to a T level where available, colleges are urging the government to reconsider defunding until it is clear that the existing level 3 qualifications are not needed.</p> <p>Query was raised following a recent conference where the matter of middle class parents viewing skills training as lower level was discussed. The Principal agreed this is a national concern, particularly for areas such as Buckinghamshire where there are selective grammar schools whose focus is more on the academic route on to A levels and university. This can be difficult for FE colleges to respond to but the Principal provided reassurance of the college's collaboration with employers to push forward technical education career paths.</p> <p>One of the newly appointed governors noted that she had been on the panel for creating the Media Broadcast and Production T Level and they had warned the DfE of employer engagement concerns at the time. She added support that colleges need to be mindful that the T levels cancel out the apprenticeships at level 3 and the Principal provided assurance that this has been taken into account in future curriculum planning.</p> <p><u>Key Performance Indicators (KIPs) and Applications Update</u> The Corporation was updated on the current position noting the progress made since the last meeting.</p> <p><u>Staffing Update</u> The Principal briefed the Board on the latest management level staffing changes as detailed in the report. Query was raised regarding recruitment challenges in the FE sector and while this is acknowledged as a significant challenge, assurance was provided that the roles are being made attractive to be highly sought after. The underpinning people strategy being prepared is aiming to address recruitment challenges with innovative thinking throughout the process.</p>

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	<p><u>Health and Safety Update</u> The Corporation received the latest report.</p>
8.23	<p>LEARNING AND QUALITY REPORT</p> <p><u>Quality Data and Revised Priorities</u> The APLI took governors through her report contextualising the latest quality data and briefing on the revised priorities for the remainder of 2022-23.</p> <p>Assurance was sought and granted that a full improvement action plan is in place with roles and responsibilities and this is being launched and embedded across the curriculum. The college is aiming to simplify quality assurance processes to ensure focus on immediate impact for student success.</p> <p>Attendance remains a concern for governors and all staff across college and while it was acknowledged some things cannot be changed in year, there is a strong focus on making a difference to support the current cohort of students with more significant changes planned for 2023-24 to ensure improved attendance going forward.</p> <p>National average post-pandemic data is expected imminently which will allow for a more accurate comparison with the sector. It was agreed a revolutionary approach is needed for maths and English especially as these are entry criteria for T levels.</p> <p>Query was raised as to whether staffing challenges correlated with attendance figures and while it is not possible to separate this out as a distinct reason, there is a pattern where quality is impacted in areas subjected to staffing changes and attendance is therefore impacted as a consequence.</p> <p><u>Subcontractor Strategy</u> The Corporation Resolved to Approve the Subcontractor Strategy 2022-23 as recommended by the Quality and Curriculum Committee.</p> <p><u>Safeguarding Update</u> The Corporation received the latest safeguarding update.</p>
9.23	<p>FINANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT</p> <p><u>2022-23 Financial Position</u> The Board had received the management accounts on a monthly basis and the VPCS briefed on the latest position as detailed in the report noting in particular the impact of the increase in energy costs. Adult provision income and staffing continue to be challenging since the pandemic and cost of living crisis and tackling both of these is being factored into the strategic plan development.</p> <p>There has been no expenditure of the interest income received so far this year. This will be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting and subsequent Corporation meeting as pay reviews and capital expenditure are to be considered in more depth.</p> <p><u>2023-24 Budget</u> The first draft budget was shared and general assumptions explained. Again, this will be considered in more depth at the next Finance Committee meeting. The increasing move to T levels means the DfE are phasing out some of the funding for industry placements, which amongst other things means the positive impact the college experienced with increased student numbers this year has been eroded by funding changes beyond the college's control.</p> <p>Query was raised regarding agency staffing and attracting permanent staff with more flexible working arrangements. It was confirmed the college already offers this with various contract types to try to</p>

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	<p>suitably attract new staff but it is a frustrating position and other colleges are in a similar position relying on agency staff particularly for the hard to recruit areas. The premium paid for agency staff above permanent staff was clarified but equally there can be benefits to contracting staff on a longer term basis in some areas where more of a self-employed model exists e.g. counselling and sometimes construction.</p> <p>Based on the assumed budget the cash flow would be broadly breakeven, thereby continuing to meet a principle of only spending what is earned (again excluding interest income received). Commercial income is still being targeted and the budget is relatively cautious on this for next year.</p> <p>Interest rates were queried and confirmed as at the Bank of England base rate. In context, the college's current financial health rating is Good.</p> <p>The Finance Committee requested feedback at a future committee meeting of the impact of the pay strategy (which had been implemented last year) on staff retention in order to consider targeting more closely this year (Action: VPCS).</p> <p>Moving forward an increased amount to previous years is planned to be allocated to capital expenditure to ensure continuous investment and improvement of resources. The VPCS briefed the Corporation on the proposed part-government funded capital project for the change to the Learning Centre at Aylesbury – this project comes about because of the introduction the Business T level provision from September 2023 and was scrutinised at the last Finance Committee meeting. Corporation approval of expenditure on this will be sought once tenders have been received. Members requested and the VPCS offered to circulate plans for the Aylesbury campus works to Corporation members to ensure governors were satisfied that funds are being utilised beneficially (Action: VPCS).</p> <p><u>Strategic Risk Register</u> The Corporation received the strategic risk register as agreed previously and this would be shared at each Corporation meeting going forward.</p>
10.23	<p>HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT</p> <p>The EDHR presented the Diversity, Equality, Wellbeing and Inclusion (DEWI) policy which had been revised following feedback from the last meeting. The policy now clarifies expectations, roles and responsibilities and is simplified to enhance the college's commitment to staff and students as well as strengthening its commitment to wellbeing.</p> <p>Members agreed the policy was much improved with good clarification in terms of responsibilities and stakeholders and that the three-year review period is entirely appropriate.</p> <p>The Corporation Resolved to Approve the Diversity, Equality, Wellbeing and Inclusion (DEWI) Policy 2022-25.</p>
11.23	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>None</p>
12.23	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>26th June 2023</p>

The meeting moved into confidential business and closed at 8.20pm.

Approved as an accurate record of discussion: 26th June 2023