Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 15th October 2020
Meeting held via Zoom

Governors Present: Max Hailey (Chair), David Bainton (Vice Chair), Karen Mitchell (Principal), Amir Khaki, Andra Mirica, Bethan Waters, Eddie Weiss, Ian Harper, Jackie Campbell, Julie Gillespie, Nick Bevan

In Attendance: John McGrath (VP, Corporate Services (VPCS)), Clare Rooney (VP, Learning & Quality (VPL&Q)), Anna Smith (Clerk to Corporation)

	AGENDA ITEM	Evidence of Support & Challenge (S / C)
1.	**INTRODUCTION** The Chair opened the meeting welcoming all to his first Corporation meeting as Chair. Thanks were granted to the senior team and all staff for their efforts and dedication in ensuring such a Covid-safe environment for students returning to the campuses. Apologies were Noted from Anne-Marie McNeill. The meeting was quorate and there were no new declarations of interests.	**S**
2.	<u>**CLERK'S PAPER**</u> The Clerk briefed Members on her paper resulting in the following: 2.1 The Corporation **Approved** the Terms of Reference for the Search and Development Committee and Remuneration Committee for 2020-21. 2.2 The Corporation **Approved** the Role Descriptions for the Link Governor positions for Health and Safety; Safeguarding and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as recommended by the Search and Development Committee. 2.3 Governor Development: It was proposed that during the Covid-19 pandemic and whilst meeting restrictions were in place, there would be dedicated time for Governor development prior to each Corporation meeting. One Governor stressed the difficulties he may have with this during such busy times for him working within the NHS and it was agreed an alternative could be considered for his development. The Corporation agreed the principle and the Clerk would liaise with Members on timings **(Action: Clerk)** 2.4 The Corporation had received copies of the governance records as reviewed by the Search and Development Committee (Register of Interests; final attendance record 2019-20; Governors training and development record; Board diversity report). Query was raised over the high percentage of staff with no ethnic code recoded (due to historic record taking) and whether an exercise could be conducted now to capture more data on this. The Principal informed Members that all staff had been invited to record their ethnic origin when iTrent was introduced and that she would revert to Human Resources to consider revisiting this **(Action: Principal)**. The governance records were **Noted**.	**S** **S** **C**
3.	**STUDENT UNION REPORT** The Student Governor briefed on the latest report of the Student Union informing the Corporation of the 2020-21 membership appointments to the President/Vice President positions across the campuses. Virtual student council meetings have been scheduled at each campus for students to share their views and student suggestion boxes are located at each Reception area. The LGBTQ+ groups will start	

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	meeting again from November. The College will be providing various virtual sporting activities for students from November in partnership with Leap. Query was raised over where the activities would take place and the Student Governor confirmed it is likely they will be via zoom. Members thanked the Student Governor for her report. *The Student Governor left the meeting.*	
4.	**CONSENT AGENDA** 4.1 The Corporation **Approved** the minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 9th July 2020. 4.2 The Corporation **Noted** the draft minutes of the Search and Development Committee Meeting held on 23rd September 2020. 4.3 Approval of two confidential resolutions *(available separately)* had been granted with overwhelming majority by email during the summer months and the Corporation formally **Ratified** their approval of these. 4.4 Independent Governors had received the confidential draft minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 1st October 2020.	
5.	**REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)** The Principal briefed Members on the new set of KPIs for 2020-21 and reminded Governors that these are available for them to review and ensure any areas of concern are addressed in the Senior Post Holder reports and scrutinised appropriately. Concern was raised over the attendance KPI and the VPL&Q confirmed she would address this in her agenda item. Query was raised over the 'Agency Costs' KPI contrasting with reported agency costs. It was confirmed this should indeed be green as agency costs are well under control and the rag rating would be amended accordingly.	**C** **S & C**
6.	**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT** The Principal informed Members that the Link Governor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was working with the Executive Director for HR on the EDI report and this would be available for Governors at the December Corporation meeting. COVID Safer Learning and Working The first six weeks of testing of the College's safer systems of learning and working have gone well with students operating on a full timetable with a blend of face to face and virtual learning. Governors were informed of the College's first case of a student testing positive for Covid-19 today. Governors were reassured of the protocols followed with immediate action by the College in liaison with Public Health. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carried out a 'spot check' of the College's COVID safer learning and working practices at Wycombe Campus on 23/9/20 and reported it was a "very positive" visit and they were "very happy with the good work that is in place", taking away examples of good practice for other colleges and schools. The College continues to keep safe learning and working under scrutiny on a daily basis. Query was raised over whether the College could make good publicity of the positive feedback from the HSE and it was confirmed that this could be considered moving forward.	 **S**

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Further query was raised over who the risk assessments related to (staff; students or premises) and the Principal provided reassurance that many risk assessments are in place covering the whole College overall as well as by activity, by department and by staff and student group.	C
Ofsted Interim Visit Feedback Ofsted visited Aylesbury Campus on 6th and 7th October for an interim visit with no grading, judgments or recommendations. The Principal briefed Governors on details of the inspectors visit and whilst their written report has not yet been received, verbal feedback was very positive with consistent and positive messages from all stakeholders they approached. Remote learning had been successful in terms of both learning and behaviour and the return to campuses had been equally positive with an increased engagement in homework and more structured learning. Safeguarding support had been well adapted to support students working remotely. Ofsted must inspect merged colleges within three years of a merger and so this visit had taken place to meet that requirement but does not replace the full inspection anticipated in year.	
Student Recruitment The Principal noted thanks to the MIS team for their work during lockdown in developing a new online enrolment system in a very short space of time in response to COVID. The main allocation for 16-18 year olds funding for 2020-21 based on current data and information has been met, although it should be noted that there are changes in the first six weeks and this will be firmed up for the ILR return at the end of October. Further report will be brought to the December meeting. Changing trends across the College were noted. Enrolments continue to decline at Amersham Campus, particularly in Performing Arts, Media Make Up and Media. Aylesbury Campus enrolments have increased across all curriculum areas. Wycombe Campus has seen an increase in enrolments to Health and Social Care and Public Services but a decline in Sport.	
Q. What are the key drivers to the increases in the curriculum areas mentioned? A. There could be a number of reasons but analysis is conducted at the end of October so this will be brought to the December Corporation meeting.	S & C
Complaints Summary 2019-20 The Principal briefed Members on the rewritten process and policy for dealing with comments and complaints to ensure more accurate data, capturing formal and informal complaints. Governors reviewed data and the following queries were raised:	
Q. Can this data be compared with other colleges across the sector? A. There is no formal benchmarking for complaints but this would be useful.	S
Q. How far does the College look at complaints received and change the way things are done? A. This is considered and provided in responses to the complainant and fed into quality improvement.	C
Q. Does this get fed back to the students? A. It is not always students who complaints are received from but they can be from parents, the community etc. but in all cases formal feedback is provided to ensure the complainant is satisfied with the outcome.	C
Q. How does a complaint need to be received to be logged in the data report? A. Any complaint whether verbal face to face/by telephone, written, via the website etc. is recorded. The majority of complaints are dealt with informally but are still logged.	S & C
Health and Safety Annual Report 2019-20 Query was raised over an issue mentioned in the report and it was confirmed this was a single isolated incident which occurred and was resolved safely during lockdown.	C

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	The Corporation **Noted** the Report.	
	The Corporation **Approved** the Health and Safety Policy 2020-21 and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2020-21.	S
	The Chair thanked the Principal for her report.	
7.	**FINANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT**	
	<u>2019-20 Financial Position</u> The VPCS briefed on the 2019-20 year end accounts which were positive overall, achieving an improved deficit than previously estimated. The year-end cash position was in line with the July forecast. Members were reminded of the ESFA funding reconciliation process and the rule changes made this year. The VPCS informed Governors that he is confident the College will be above threshold when submitting the final return. Governors agreed the positive outcome of the year end finances.	S
	<u>2020-21 Finances</u> The VPCS briefed on the key income changes and assumptions being worked through as detailed in the report. The College is forecasting a full year outturn deficit in line with the budget and the same for the year end cash balance. The VPCS stressed the importance of not underestimating the criticality of the estimates which need to be forecast for apprenticeships and tuition fees in the October accounts. This will be shared at the December Corporation meeting and an interim update may be circulated to Members prior to that meeting to keep the Board fully informed.	
	<u>Subcontracting 2020-21</u> For the benefit of new Members the VPCS briefed on the background of the College's subcontracting provision (including that of the two separate colleges pre-merger). A focus for the College has been to bring subcontracting closer to Buckinghamshire and limit the amount going outside of the county. Members were briefed on the current relationships with the College's subcontractors and the proposed funding payment values for each as outlined in the report. Q. With reference to one particular subcontractor are you saying that people prefer to come to us for such provision rather than go to other colleges closer to home? A. This subcontractor is very strong in its speciality and they have a very good reputation. They also have good relationships with employers and provide good employment links as well as individual skills. The VPCS contextualised the figures detailed in the report against the budgeted amount. In terms of quality, it was noted and agreed that the control of teaching quality would need to be monitored for the one subcontractor whose numbers are increasing significantly and where there is an opportunity for a more strategic partnership. The VPCS proposed that the director of the company be invited to meet with Governors at the December Corporation meeting **(Action: VPCS)**.	S & C
	Q. Is there some potential for closer partnership working/shared facilities? A. The provider does not get referrals which the college could provide for; they are looking to expand geographically and they tend to attract students who are often hard to reach NEETS and potential NEETS who would struggle in a college setting.	S
	Q. Have we been able to undertake sufficient monitoring of our subcontractors in uncertain and restricted circumstances? A. The VPL&Q confirmed that there is a full cycle of quality monitoring and this has continued to be followed remotely for all subcontractors.	C
	The Corporation **Approved** the recommended tuition subcontracts for 2020-21and the proposed payments to the College's high needs partners.	S

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The Corporation **Approved** the Subcontracting Principles, Funding and Payment Policy 2020-2021 and the Risk Management Policy and Procedure 2020-2022. The Chair of the Audit Committee added that the Risk Management Policy is within the ambit of the Audit Committee and the VPCS confirmed that this would also go to the Audit Committee for ratification **(Action: VPCS)**. *One item of discussion is recorded in the confidential minutes.*	**S**

8.	**LEARNING AND QUALITY REPORT** The VPL&Q briefed the Corporation on the latest in-year progress and quality improvement focus for 2020-21 as detailed in her report. Although the College will not be held to account for its achievement rates by the Department for Education, it is still important to have these in place for the College's own quality improvement and self-assessment processes. The main focus for improvement is on student attendance and Governors were taken through the actions for quality improvement in this area. Governors agreed this is a critical area for the College and during discussion raised the following:	
	Q. It is usually the more challenged learners who have difficulty attending and blended learning is likely to increase this struggle as they might have difficulty accessing technology etc. How are we supporting those students? A. Approximately 61 students have been identified who do not meet bursary requirements but who do need extra support and plans are in place for additional support, investment and providing extra technology etc.	**S & C**
	Q. When will you know whether the learning in the blended environment is achieving at the same rate as it would have done face to face? A. It is very early stages at the moment but the first Quality Impact week at the end of the first six weeks of term will show a sense of the teachers' perspective and the students' skills and knowledge development and any gaps. There will be more of this throughout the term/year to ensure confidence in the blended learning model with the mix between virtual and face to face kept under review.	**S & C**
	Q. With the online learning from home, how far is this synchronous to lesson times compared to logging on any time to complete work and how can you capture this? A. The attendance strategy was changed to the attendance and engagement strategy for this purpose. Working with the Learning Technology team we will be able to capture engagement outside of timetabled lessons as well as our usual register processes for Zoom class timetabled attendance. *Amir Khaki left the meeting at this point.* The VPL&Q invited the staff Governor (Faculty Director for Creative, Media, Business and Computing) to brief Governors on the Creative and Media digital skills pilot programme she is leading on bringing in bespoke digital design work in a life brief. The first feedback is due after half term but has so far been received very positively. When reviewing the student voice last year students asked for more information on finance and so a finance unit programme is planned. On English and maths, in line with the COVID safety model delivery has been grouped with individual courses linked to specific bubbles in a blended model. *Ian Harper left the meeting at this point.* Apprentices started back in College w/c 28th September similarly in a blended model and all except 4 furloughed apprentices have successfully returned to the workplace.	**S & C**

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The VPL&Q briefed Members on the key changes in the strategies and policies put forward for approval.	
On the English and Maths Strategy, Governors agreed the strategy was very positive and clear and raised the following: Q. You mention that written submissions are marked within ten days. Roughly how many submissions would students submit? A. This varies widely across the curriculum and will depend on the qualification. Inevitably students will be receiving timely feedback on a weekly basis that enables their improvement.	**S**
Q. Is there a way we can return to streaming by ability on English and maths as the team was quite keen on this but have been unable to due to lockdown? A. This is the only challenge in terms of safety measures which would need to be put in place. This year staff have undertaken development and training to differentiate effectively to support the varying levels of vocation and stream as much as possible.	**S & C**
The Corporation **Approved** the following: • English and Maths Strategy • Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy • Higher Education Strategy • Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy	**S**
9.	**GOVERNOR LINK AND ENGAGEMENT RECORD** Members had received the updated Governor Links for 2020-21 and were encouraged to continue their meetings with link managers.	
10.	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS** None	
11.	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** 5.30pm on 10th December 2020. Preceding development session TBC.	

Approved as an accurate record of discussions: 10th December 2020