



Minutes of Corporation Meeting No. 127
22nd March 2021

[Virtual Meeting held via Microsoft Teams]

Chair: K Finnigan

Members Present: A Beatty, M Atherton, P Barker, S Codling, N Gerrard, C Goldsworthy, H Hallsworth, M Hyslop, J Johnson, J Leslie (127.6 onwards), I MacNaughton (Principal), D Morran, J Owens, H. Skeggs, I Vipond, M Waring

In

Attendance: J Harker, S Williams, J Cadman, A Johnson, G Rayner, A Frost, P Loveard, S Okpattah, T Harrison (item 127.9 only)

Clerk: T Johnson

The Chair opened the meeting by thanking all the staff at the College, for their work and reminded those present that meeting agendas reflect the ongoing and extensive triumvirate dialogue, aimed at ensuring statutory and urgent governance matters are prioritised, whilst also ensuring senior managers are not over-burdened, during this exceptionally challenging time. Careful consideration is given to ensuring governors always have the information they require to make required judgements and hold managers to account and, in this context, following receipt of the supporting papers, all governors are provided with an opportunity to raise questions of management, in advance. The responses, to these questions are circulated to all governors prior to the relevant meeting, providing further opportunity to advance knowledge, thereby subsequently facilitating insightful strategic questions and challenges.

127.1 Apologies for Absence

All members were present. The Chair informed the meeting that ex- student governors; P. Loveard and S. Okpattah were attending the meeting to present the annual report of the Student Council. T. Harrison, Director of Premises, Estates and Facilities, had been invited to attend the meeting for the duration of item 127.9 ILT and Estates/Property Strategies.

127.2 Any Other Business & Chair's Action

No other business was requested. The Chair confirmed that he had not been required to take Chair's action since the last meeting.

127.3 Declarations of Interest

None

127.4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

127.4.1 The minutes of Corporation meeting No.126 held on 25th January 2021 were agreed, as a true record.

127.4.2 The minutes of the focused briefing meeting No.125 held 5th January 2021 were agreed, as a true record

127.4.3 Matters Arising

Due to the impact of the Coronavirus on workload, it was agreed to defer the following matters;

- Equality and Diversity Policy & Report
- Additional studies and extra curricula activities requested report re cost v take up v outcomes
- Consideration of impact of the website (in the context of web design, re engagement with stakeholders, ease of navigation and accessibility)

All other matters arising were identified on the agenda.

127.5 Student Reports

127.5.1 P Loveard and S Okpattah, presented their report, as student Council Chair and Vice Chair. The report covered the main issues raised by student representatives and the Council activities undertaken over the past 12 months. Unfortunately, most of the 2020/2021 Council priorities remained unachieved, due to the significant impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Governors thanked students for their report and for their valued contribution as student governors during the preceding year. Students thanked governors for making them 'feel welcome in corporation meetings and to not only speak but to be heard, which had been really helpful in trying to make the best changes for student life.'

127.5.2 The appointment M Hyslop and M Waring, as student governors for a 9 month 9 day term of office was approved.¹

127.5.3 In response to student questions, the Principal explained that the final details regarding the awarding of 2021 grades was not yet known. The government's next review of the road map out of lockdown during the week commencing March 29th, would likely contain more detail regarding future FE operational frameworks, including expectations around face to face teaching.

J leslie Joined the meeting

127.6 Coronavirus (COVID 19)

127.6.1 Governors had been provided with visual and written reports, on the College lateral flow testing programme. The Senior Manager (HR and Administration), as the lead of the testing programme, provided governors with an update on onsite testing, use of consent forms, supply of home testing kits to staff and PPE. Over 4,000 tests have been administered onsite to date. It was noted that as the government has not made testing compulsory and as some students choose to undertake testing at home or at local testing centres, it is not possible to provide an accurate figure re the percentage of the student body tested. This would equally apply to staff members.

The Principal commended the Senior Manager and the testing support team, for their work in setting up and running the testing programme.

127.6.2 Operational Decisions

The forthcoming government review is scheduled to take place during the first week of the Easter break, which makes the potential for speedy responses and adjustments to any changes in educational measures and arrangements very difficult (outside of term

¹ Term of office - 22/03/21 to 31/12/21

time schools and colleges are not fully operational and the majority of staff will not be working).

In response to governor questioning the following points were discussed:

In order to make the anticipated series of decisions re the College's operational arrangements, for the period from Monday 26th April, and communicate these to students, staff, parents & transport providers, the outcomes and detail arising from the forthcoming government review of the next stage of the Roadmap out of Lockdown, needs to be known. For any significant adjustments and changes to student provision to be made a communication, planning and preparation period of approximately two weeks is necessary. Therefore, in the context of the timing of the government announcements, governors agreed that if required, a Corporation meeting would be called or where applicable a decision on operational arrangements made by electronic resolution. [see also agenda and minutes of meeting No.128]

127.6.3 Summer 2021 - Awarding of Grades

The government proposed arrangements, for the awarding of grades in Summer 2021, in England, give rise to potential issues, which has resulted in creating general anxiety amongst students, parents and staff.

A government position, that there will not be an algorithm used, contradicts the requirement for schools and colleges to propose grades that are broadly in line with results achieved by the school or college in 2017 – 2019, which will require an algorithm to be used. The government have also indicated that grades can be adjusted where students have been affected by COVID-19. A strong case could be made for all (or a high proportion of) students having been affected. It is hoped that further guidance will be forthcoming.

A proportion of schools and colleges experienced significant parental pressures in 2020 around the awarding of Centre Assessed Grade (CAGs), and with many reporting legal challenges - a number of cases are still ongoing. The President of the Association of School and College Leaders, recently highlighted concerns that parents may try to influence and challenge the 2021 Teacher/Centre Assessed Grades and student and parental pressure is a growing concern for providers, who are being encourage to report any undue pressures to JCQ/Ofqual as 'malpractice'. The College is anticipating that the vast majority of its parents will not seek to influence grade awards.

The Principal informed governors, that the government have indicated that appeals against a summer 2021 grade can only be made on the grounds of an 'administrative error' or where it is believed that the intended grading process has not been followed. However, investigating any such concerns raised this will still involve a significant amount of work for staff involved in any resultant, validation processes.

127.6.4 Results Days

The 2021 GCSE and A level results days have been 'brought forward' by the government and are now scheduled as August 10 for A level and August 12 for GCSE. These revised dates have ramifications for the College not least due to the narrowing of holiday dates for Senior and specialist staff, (the majority of teaching staff being on leave) and further pressures on staff re potential challenges and appeals regarding results, commencing 10th August and also issues relating to the GCSE results of prospective students.

127.7 Principal's Strategic Matters

Governors considered the report, prepared by the Principal, including detail regarding the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on teaching & learning, staff and student wellbeing and the impact on the wider College community.

In response to governor questions the following points were expanded upon:

127.7.1 ESFA 'in year' Growth [see also 127.7.4]

The ESFA used a different retrospective methodology/algorithm than they had in previous years to calculate the 'in year growth' funding for the 2020/21 year. Only the growth between 100 and 200 additional students has been funded with a 'netting-off' of any under-enrolment of students in the 2019/20 year. The College therefore received an additional £196k relating to the additional 144 students who enrolled for the 2020/21 year.

As the funded student enrolment allocation for 2021/22 year has been increased by approximately the level of 2020/21 growth in numbers, the 2020/21 additional student numbers are 'fully funded' for 2021/22. The 'unknown' and risk factor for the 2021/22 year concerns whether the ESFA will continue to use the same 'in year growth' methodology as they have deployed for the 2020/21 year.

It is anticipated, that details of the 2021/22 methodology will again, not be released until spring 2022 i.e. post enrolment of students, which negatively impacts strategic and operational planning and management of the College for the 2021/22 year.

127.7.2 Re-current Funding Allocation

Notification of the 2021/22 funding allocation has been received and is broadly in line with expectations. The National Funding Rate² of £4,188 per student is unchanged and therefore, there will be a further reduction in the level of real terms resourcing per student for the 2021/22 year.

127.7.3 Staff Pay Awards

Although the government has instigated a public sector pay freeze for the 2021/22 year, the College will still experience increases in staff costs due to; the full year impact of the 2020/21 pay awards, incremental drift and costs relating to increases in staffing numbers resulting from the increases in student enrolments for both the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years.

127.7.4 Student Enrolments

In comparison to the 2020/21 figures, it is anticipated that enrolments for the Year 2 student cohort in 2021/22 will be 100 students higher. The increased numbers reflect the increased numbers of Year 1 students enrolled in 2020/21 and a slightly higher than average level of 'in year retention' for 2020/21 and the expectation that the Year 1 to Year 2 progression rates replicate the very high level, realised in the Summer 2020 period.

Applications and 'offers made and held' for 2021 Year 1 entry are currently approximately 150 'up' on the same point last year. Therefore, the College, currently expect a further increase in the 2021 Year 1 cohort of approximately 100 students.

Overall the College is currently projecting a growth in enrolments of up to 200 students for the 2021/22 year. A total level of enrolments of approximately 3,300 students.

² Which forms the base of a complex algorithm used in 16-18 funding allocation

If the ESFA decide to use the same 'in year' growth funding' methodology for the 2021/22 as used for 2020/21, the College could receive an additional funding allocation for 2021/2022 of up to approximately £400k. However, governors were counselled that, the College will take a cautious approach and will plan on the assumption that minimal or zero 'in year growth' funding for 2021/22 year will be received. [see also minute 127.7.1]

127.7.5 Strategic Planning

As predicted within the 2020/25 Strategic Plan, student enrolments are expected to rise to 3,400 in the 2022/23 year - the upper limit of 3,500 students is likely be achieved a year earlier than predicted.³

127.7.6 Advance Foundation Programme and 16-18 Tuition Fund

Governors were reminded that the number of students enrolling onto the Advanced Foundation Programme, is not known until the GCSE grades are awarded, although it is anticipated that numbers may be small again this year due to TAGs/CAGs resulting in grade inflation, locally.

A government 16-18 tuition fund allocation is expected for the 2021/22 cohort (students who do not achieve GCSE grade 4 or above in Maths and/or English). Last year the [tuition fund](#) allocation of £49k was utilised to ensure small class sizes for GCSE and Level 2 students.

127.7.7 Student Mental Health

The Wellbeing and Mental Health Resilience Service (WARMS) project team are now 'housed' on the College site.⁴ The bulk of the team's work will commence from the start of 2021/22 – supporting specialist staff and providing extra resources, particularly with lower level 'early intervention' work. Although, the Welfare Hub is coping with the high demand, there is currently a substantial waiting list for College counselling. In this context, the extra provision will be very welcome.

It was agreed, that the Health & Welfare co-ordinator will be invited to the relevant section of the summer corporation meeting.

Action: College/Clerk

127.7.8 Staff Wellbeing

Governors recognise, that current pressures on staff are very substantial. The additional tasks and responsibilities which have arisen from COVID-19 related government expectations, including delegating the awarding of summer 2021 qualification and grade awards to schools and colleges on top of teaching and learning responsibilities and maintaining required abnormal arrangements are not underestimated. Governors concurred that staff have been outstanding in responding to the COVID-19 challenge and asked that the minutes reflect their gratitude to staff. for their continued professionalism dedication and hard work will continue to be required until the College is able to return to some semblance of a 'new normal'.

127.7.9 Staff Recruitment Academic Year 2021/2022

7 full time and 1 temporary, part time teacher have, to date, been recruited. In the context of the need to replace staff leaving or reducing hours and to accommodate the increase in additional student numbers enrolled in 2020/2021 year and in part to respond to the anticipated growth in student numbers in 2021/22 at present it is

³ Due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic the review of the Strategic Plan has been deferred to the 2021 autumn term.

⁴ Local manager, one clinical lead and two trainee mental health practitioners).

envisaged that a total of 12 teaching staff members will be appointed for the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

A total of 28 applications were received for the post of Assistant Principal. 5 applicants have been shortlisted with remote initial interviews arranged 17th March, with face to face interviews scheduled for 24th March. The formal interviews will be attended by the Chair of the Corporation.

127.7.10 Subjects Offered

A level ancient history will be re-introduced to the curriculum offering, from the start of the 2021/22 year.

127.8 Strategic Plan and Priorities

In response to governor questions the Assistant Principal (Performance and Quality Assurance) provided an overview of the progress made towards the 2020/2021 strategic priorities to date. Governors did not underestimate, the reality of the difficulties in completing tasks required to move forward some of the priorities in the COVID-19 context and the 'shifting sands' of government guidance.

127.8.1 Student data from the autumn and spring term examinations shows that students have performed well. The College is very pleased with these students' achievement and attainment.

127.8.2 Due to the ongoing impact of government Coronavirus (COVID-19) frameworks on teaching & learning, lesson observations and the work of the Central Observation Group continues to be based on an adapted model. As far as possible, this been a near normal process, which will allow 3-year trend analysis. Lessons delivered via Teams are not monitored for teacher performance purposes.

127.8.3 Staff surveys will be sent out in the near future, with the aim of obtaining further feedback on staff views re blended learning and what digital technology staff intend to continue, to integrate within teaching & learning. Managers were keen to stress, that there have been massive improvements in the use of digital technology across the College since the beginning of the pandemic.

127.8.4 The number of autumn term student survey responses, was too low to be able to determine any statistically significant data. Students will be asked to complete a new survey, upon return to face to face teaching during dedicated tutor time. Survey outcomes will be shared with governors.

Action: College

127.9 Cross College Operational & Statutory Reports

127.9.1 Information & Learning Technology (ILT) Strategy

Governors considered the ILT strategy for the period 2021 to 2024, including cyber security, sustainability, the current and future needs of staff and students and the plan for the replacement of hardware, infrastructure and building management systems. The intended purchase and use of near field communication cards, for library and photocopying use, tied into a cashless catering solution to allow direct payment in the college refectories was particularly welcomed by governors. The College will achieve the cyber essentials plus certification during the first year of the strategy with a renewal required annually.

The ILT Strategy 2021-2024 was unanimously agreed.

127.9.2 Property Strategy

Governors considered the Property Strategy 2021 to 2024, in the context of the 3 to 5 year strategic plan. Governors asked for a breakdown re what of the percentage of energy used by the college is sustainably sourced/green energy.

Action: College

Responding to questions regarding utilisation and further expansion the Director of Premises explained the constraints and limitations of the site. The Principal reminded governors of the government's definition of full-time provision and that to accommodate significantly more students on site, a part time offer or reducing additional studies and/or limiting independent study on site would need to be considered. However, this would not provide students with the traditional sixth form experience or breadth of additional study currently afforded.

Governors agreed the maintenance plan and requested that the property strategy be written as a forward-thinking plan, aligned to the 3 to 5 year strategic plan. The Principal explained that pre 2012 when capital funding had been available an elaborate estates and property strategy had been in place. However, capital funding support from the government has been extremely limited since 2013. The Principal indicated that the development of an updated estates strategy may be possible after the review of the 3 to 5 year strategic plan during the winter term 2021.

Action: College

The Property Strategy 2021-2024, including maintenance plan was agreed.

The Director of Premises, Estates and Facilities, was thanked for attending the meeting and presenting the strategies.

20.04 T. Harrison left the meeting

127.9.3 Health & Safety

The Assistant Principal, responsible for Health & Safety, provided an overview of the health and Safety reports provided for governor consideration. In response to questions it was noted that the low number of Health & safety instances are predominately attributable to lockdown, staff and students working off site and when on site the mitigation measures put in place for example the 2m distancing and students only being onsite for lessons.

The last fire inspection audit of premises and relevant documentation was carried out in 2015. If the fire service does not contact the College in the near future, the College will consider engaging a fire audit service.

The Health & Safety Policy was unanimously approved

20.12 At this point observers left the meeting.

127.10 Governance Matters

127.10.1 Virtual Governance Development

Governors thanked the Clerk for putting together a successful week of webinars, webcasts, online short courses and live, open discussion sessions. Governors fed back that the structure of the week, the diversity of subjects covered and the daily discussion

sessions had been interesting and had succeeded in providing governors with a programme from which they could personalise their own learning opportunities. Some governors had undertaken and achieved the certificated courses on offer. The majority of board members had also attended the live webinar on 'Anti-Racism and the Role of the Board' which had included consideration of the 10 point plan⁵

The board group discussion session on risk, had been particularly useful both from a strategic perspective and as an opportunity to spend time, with fellow governors outside of a formal, virtual meeting setting.

Due to its success, the virtual week will form a part of the board's development programme for the 2021/2022 year, alongside the usual governor visits days held in the winter and spring terms.

Action: Clerk

127.10.2 Minutes of Meetings

The Chair informed the meeting, that to ensure that all governors and stakeholders were aware of the challenges and detailed responses managers were providing to governors, the pre-meeting Q&A documents will be appendage to the minutes, including those published on the website.

Action: Clerk

The Chair closed Part A of the meeting at 20.24

At this point the Clerk left the Meeting. D.Morran was appointed Clerk for the duration of the following item

127.11 Confidential Matters

- 127.11.1 The confidential minutes of meeting No. 124 held on December 7, 2020 were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

There being no other business the Chair closed part B of the meeting at 20.25

Approved by the Corporation on 17th May 2021

Minute No. 128.4(i)

⁵ Black Leadership Group - Addressing Systematic Racism in Further Education Full letter circulated via email August 2020 : <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fevoices/52439-addressing-systemic-racism-in-further-education>