

NEW COLLEGE, SWINDON

Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on Thursday 29th November 2018

Present: Charlotte Mannion (Chair), Dennis Bridges, Sarah Church, Simon Cove, John Dernie, Joe Goodman, Carole Kitching, Sam McCurdy, Peter O'Brien, Mark Owen, Alexey Smirnov, Ben Tedds, Jim Webster

With: Chris Baish, Vice Principal Business Development and Employer Engagement
Maureen Debbage, Vice Principal Human Resources
Richard Harris, Vice-Principal Finance and Resources
Paul James, Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality
Zoe Becket-Furnell, Health and Safety Manager (item 2063 only)
Paul Jones, Head of Partnerships
Tracy Scaife, Clerk to the Corporation

2063 Governor Training – Health and Wellbeing – presentation by Maureen Debbage, Vice-Principal Human Resources and Zoe Beckett-Furnell, Health and Safety Manager received and noted.

The meeting noted the impact of the Equality Act 2010 on the application and interview stage for potential new employees. Candidates and their current or previous employers can no longer be asked about any sickness absence they might have had before they are offered a position of employment, only after an offer has been made.

Teaching Unions are warning of an 'epidemic of stress'. It was noted that a recent article in The Guardian advised that 3,750 teachers were signed off on long-term sick during 2017 due to pressure of work, anxiety and mental illness. In the last four years 1.3 million days have been taken off by teachers for health reasons. Sickness absence at New College has reduced (3.8 days per employee per annum) but a growing number of absence is attributable to stress. The college offers in-house support to staff – flexible working, on-site support and does its best to keep staff 'in work' and ensuring that staff feel supported during any absence and that managers recognise the early signs of stress.

2064 Student referred matters – the Chair welcomed Joe Goodman and Ben Tedds, newly elected Student Governors to their first meeting of the Corporation.

The meeting noted that as part of the Student Voice/Positive Student Commitment policies student representatives have been asked to form taskforce groups to undertake a mission to bring about positive impacts for all at the college. Four taskforce groups have been set up as follows – environmental group; mental health and buddying group; charity and fundraising group and enrichment group. Each group was tasked with pitching for a small initial fund of between £75 and £100 to a panel of 'dragons'. A second larger fund of £1000 will be available in term 2 and again will be awarded through a dragons den type exercise at the Student Conference. An update on the taskforce groups will be presented to each meeting of the Corporation.

The results of this academic year's settling in survey have now been analysed. The key findings relate to the following issues – access to Proportal; the need for more focus on employability (i.e. cover letter and CV writing); awareness and promotion of enrichment; improved signage at enrolment and more interactive tours at induction.

The Student Fund has been used to fund the taskforce group grants and also to run a new and revamped Fresher's Festival. Both of these projects have generated good levels of student engagement.

Fundraising activities for Children In Need raised a total amount of £391.51.

2065 Partnerships update – report by Head of Partnerships received and noted.

Apprenticeships outturn is disappointing but measures have been put in place to address this and an improvement should be seen towards the end of the current academic year. The college has one main HE partner and they have already hit their allocation. It was further noted that Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding is to be devolved to seven combined authorities from the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year. From this date the ESFA will no longer be accountable for administering AEB.

2066 Apologies for absence – received from Les Durrant and Peter Foskett.

2067 Goodbyes – the meeting paid tribute to Sam McCurdy who has been a staff governors for eight years. The Chair thanked him for his contribution and support to the Corporation. Paul James, Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality and Richard Harris, Vice Principal Finance and Resources are also attending their last meeting of the Corporation and were thanked for their hard work and support.

2068 Disclosures of Interest – received as follows:

Sarah Church declared an interest in relation to item on the agenda. Carole Kitching, Sam McCurdy and Mark Owen declared an interest in relation to item 23 – pay award.

2069 Minutes of the last meeting held on 16th October 2018 – agreed as a correct record.

2070 Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting held on 16th October 2018 – raised as follows:

(a) 2043 Governor Training – Keeping Children Safe In Education Guidance and safeguarding update – it was noted that there are still some IT issues but these are being resolved. A new IT system is being developed for staff for safeguarding training and governors will be included. All new staff are undertaking safeguarding training when appointed.

2071 Risk Update – report by Deputy Principal Finance and Resources received and noted.

As explained earlier, Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding is being devolved to seven combined authorities from the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year. From this date the ESFA will no longer be accountable for administering AEB. The Corporation will be kept updated on the discussions the college is having with the relevant combined authorities.

The ESFA Management Letter was finally received late this morning. The college will be subject to a downwards adjustment of circa £11k. Overall a very good result. The report contains 23 recommendations, 5 of which are medium priority and 18 are low priority. They mainly relate to data management and many of them are duplicates (i.e. the same recommendation for multiple areas).

Changes to the senior team are also a risk to the college.

2072 Risk Appetite Statement – received and noted.

The Risk Appetite Statement had been considered by the Audit committee earlier that day and they were recommending it for approval by the Corporation. No changes have been made to the Statement since its approval last year.

RESOLUTION – that the Risk Appetite Statement be approved.

2073 Principal's Report - report by Principal and Chief Executive received and noted.

The meeting noted that period 3 accounts are looking much more positive than period 2 and the forecast is that the budgeted target will be achieved and possibly surpassed. College leaver requests for September and October are down on last year and the National Student Survey results show that HE student satisfaction is 3% above the national average.

The next bid for the Institute of Technology (IoT) was submitted for the 21st November deadline. It was noted that the draft Heads of Terms were circulated to members of the Finance and General Purposes committee for comment prior to submission. These are not legally binding until the bid is successful and the Commercial Agreement between the three anchor institutions is in place.

The Principal outlined her idea of launching a new Community Ambassador scheme in January, a new scheme to open up ways in which people can engage with the college. College Ambassadors can come from all walks of life and can include community leaders, philanthropists, parents, entrepreneurs, governors who want to remain engaged with the college but without some of the responsibilities, people who cannot make the time commitment to be a governor but what to be actively involved with the college. Another area that the Principal wishes to explore is the engagement with college alumni.

2074 Strategy/vision – the Principal and Chair advised thanked those governors who had attended the strategy session the previous week.

The session was very successful and proved to be very useful. The Principal circulated a document which showed the SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and the audacious goals. A further strategy session away day will be arranged for the new year.

RESOLUTION: that a further strategy session away day be held on Wednesday 9th January 2019 from 1600 until 2000.

ACTION: *TS to arrange strategy session away day for 09.01.2019*

2075 Self Assessment Report (SAR), Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), Achievement Rate (AR) – report by Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality received and noted.

An overall achievement rate of 88.8% was achieved in 2017/18 for 16-18, 50% for apprenticeships. Data will be confirmed in January 2019. Withdrawals to date are on track, further data will be available the following week. Actions that the college are taking are moving the college in the right direction.

2076 Audit Completion Report (Management Letter) – report by Mazars received and noted.

2077 Internal Audit Annual Report – report by Gateway received and noted.

2078 Chair of Audit/Audit Committee Annual Report – report by Chair of Audit Committee received and noted.

2079 Terms of Reference – received and noted.

RESOLUTION: that the Terms of Reference for the Audit, Curriculum and Quality, Finance and General Purposes, Personnel, Remuneration and Search committees be approved.

2080 Safeguarding update – received and noted.

2081 Minutes of committees – noted as follows:

(a) Audit committee: 16th October 2018

(b) Curriculum and Quality committee: 23rd October 2018

(c) Personnel committee: 23rd October 2018

(d) Finance and General Purposes committee: 30th October 2018

2082 Appointment of Chair 2018/19 – the Vice-Chair took the Chair for this item and asked for nominations for the position of Chair. A nomination in respect of Charlotte Mannion was received and duly seconded. No further nominations were received.

RESOLUTION: that Charlotte Mannion be appointed a Chair of the Corporation for a term of office of one year until December 2019.

2083 Appointment of Vice-Chair 2018/19 – the Chair asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. A nomination in respect of Jim Webster was received and duly seconded. No further nominations were received.

RESOLUTION: that Jim Webster be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Corporation for a term of office of one year until December 2019.

2084 Any other business – none.

2085 Date of next meeting – Tuesday 19th March 2019 at 1700 for 1715

2086 Annual Accounts and Report year ended 31st July 2018 – confidential minutes refer.

2087 Confidential minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 16th October 2018 – confidential minutes refer.

2088 Pay Award – confidential minutes refer.

2089 UCU strike action – confidential minutes refer.

