

Minutes of an electronic Corporation meeting held at 1800 on 01 February 2021.

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| **Present** | Jo Birch | Christine Chisholm | Sue Grant  (Chair) |
|  | Jesmin Haq | Jean Fawcett | Phillip Fulton |
|  | Zoe Hancock  (Principal) | Kerry Hood | Stephanie Lawrence  (late arrival) |
|  | Neil Myerson | John O’Sullivan | Rob Payne |
|  | Peter Thompson |  |  |
| **In Attendance** | Nicola Caiger  (Dir I&P) | Ronnie Davison  (Dir HR& Staff Dev) (till 47/20 only) | Jan Edrich  (Principal (Des)) |
|  | Ana Guimaraes  (Dir Curr) | Paul McCormack  (FD) | Harpreet Nagra  (DP) |
|  | Amanda Washbrook  (Dir App/HE)(till 46/20 only) | Sian Williams  (Dir Curr) |  |

**PART ONE**

**45/20 ELIGIBILITY, QUORUM AND OPENING REMARKS**

1. No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and there had been no interests declared.
2. Chairs Opening Remarks. The Chair welcomed all, in particular Jan Edrich the Principal (designate) and Zoe Hancock to her final Corporation meeting. This was the first meeting since the introduction of the current Covid measures; the response of all staff and students had been outstanding and on behalf of the Corporation the Chair recorded sincere appreciation. Members spontaneously and unanimously signified support. **(Action 1)**
3. Some items would be taken out of Agenda order for convenience. **(Action 2)**

**The information was noted and received.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 56/20)**

**46/20 APPRENTICESHIPS**

Information on apprenticeship performance and forecasts had been detailed into an informative report including a narrative supplemented by graphical and tabular data.

1. Current KPI. Retention was 79.44%, Achievement 24.5% (a rolling completion number which was in line with expectations) and withdrawals 20.56%. The outcome looked good and performance, which had been on the National Average (NA) at 67% for the last two years could well be exceeded. There were now only 7 months available to complete learning in this year and more apprentices may lose employment as employment protection measures drew to a close.
2. The electronically based employer feedback process, which had replaced the former paper system had not yet returned the hopes for an increased response and employers were being urged to complete the return. The low number of responses all positive had not met expectations and a question on whether the process was still too complex in this challenging time for employers. The formal feedback system was supplemented through informal information gained during frequent contacts with employers and the overwhelming feeling was sound.
3. Finance. Financial performance had been tabulated and showed a negative variance of £217k. Concern over the risk on reduced enrolment levels had prompted the current and ongoing deep evaluation of the offer portfolio.

**The information was received and noted.**

**The Dir App/HE left the meeting.**

**Stephanie Lawrence joined the meeting.**

**47/20 PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT**

Strong and ongoing support was provided for the 28 staff who had tested positive since September together with those symptomatic or self-isolating. Mental health awareness remained key as it had since the start of the pandemic with mental health champions on constant availability. The Employee Assistance programme (Lifeworks) now included a Covid toolkit, updated daily with communication and information available through videos and posts. Staff from the commercial, academies residential and nursery departments, which were not funded publicly, had agreed to accept furlough conditions and the 80% payments had subsidised their full salaries. All staff had been urged to continue to take breaks and holidays to strengthen health and well-being. Liaison with trades unions throughout the pandemic had been excellent with positive feedback and support throughout. Staff turnover was currently 5% and sickness was 2.2 days per employee against the annual targets of 11% and 5.6 days respectively (sickness excluding Covid related). The Talent Management programme, which retained and developed potential was proving popular.

**The information was received.**

**The Dir HR& Staff Dev left the meeting.**

**48/20 STANDING ITEMS**

1. The minutes from the Corporation meeting (Part 1 & 2) held on 14 December 2020 were confirmed for electronic signature. **(Action 3)**
2. Matters arising. There were no matters arising.
3. Actions. Actions from the last meeting were discussed and confirmed as listed.

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| See referenced minute for full detail | | **Resp** | **Date** |
| **Action 1** | 33/20b. Items out of Agenda order. | **Chair** | **wie** |
| **Action 2** | 34/20a. Corporation assurance for OfS confirmed. |
| **Action 3** | 35/20a. Last minutes (09.11.20) confirmed for signature. | **Clerk** |
| **Action 4** | 35/20d. Chairs Actions all endorsed and approved. |
| **Action 5** | 35/20d. Interim Principal to be appointed. | **Chair** | **asap** |
| **Action 6** | 36/20a. SAR & QIP approved. | **DP** | **wie** |
| **Action 7** | 36/20b. Data Pack to include comparative information. |
| **Action 8** | 36/20d. QAG to consider EAM progress. | **Chair** | **asap** |
| **Action 9** | 36/20d. GCSE EAM liaise with FS EAM. | **DP** | **wie** |
| **Action 10** | 37/20c. Corporation training on Application/Enrolments tba. | **asap** |
| **Action 11** | 38/20e. AFS approved for signature and submission. | **Chair** | **wie** |
| **Action 12** | 38/20f. LoR approved for signature. |
| **Action 13** | 38/20h. Finance Record signature delegated to AO. | **FD** |
| **Action 14** | 40/20. Thanks recorded for Covid responses. | **Chair** |

1. Urgent Business. There was no urgent business requested.

**The information was noted and received.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 56/20)**

**49/20 PRINCIPALS REPORT**

The Principal’s Report updated on points not included on the agenda or considered elsewhere, the report had been circulated well in advance of the meeting and was received, but of note were:

1. Key Performance Indicators (KPI). The KPI (Annex 1) were noted; retention performance was above target however at this point in the previous year it had been 99% (end of 42 day period) and further information would be brought to the next meeting. **(Action 4)**; information contained in other agenda items was signposted.
2. Coronavirus Update. The requirement to develop capacity for lateral flow testing from the start of term had been met. The system had been fully implemented and had tested over 130 staff to support return to work on 11 January, lateral flow testing had not been introduced for the testing of close contacts of positive cases for 7 consecutive daily tests in the current College environment; that decision had been endorsed by Public Health England (PHE) and local health agencies.
3. Appointments. The new Head of IT, Garod Barker, would take up post on 1 March. Celeste Jones had been appointed to lead UCSA in April. The new Director of Marketing and Admissions will be David Alder wef 15 February.
4. Further Education (FE) White Paper. The White Paper had been published. The key points were listed in the Report and would be on the agenda for the next Corporation Strategy Day tbh in June. During general considerations, the Student Member spontaneously expressed frustration felt by students at the lack of clarity in national explanations on the grading process for this year end. Reassurance was given that the issue was being actively pursued and information would be circulated as soon as possible.
5. FE Capital Transformation Fund had also been launched. The first of the 2-stage process was required by 15 March, the match funded minimum bid was £500kand would specify upgrades to the estate to meet the White Paper aspirations. This would also be considered at Item 14.

**The information was received and noted.**

**50/20** **QUALITY**

The Report would update Members on Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA), remote on-line provision, English and Maths (EAM) and the Data Pack.

1. TLA. Classroom 15 minute observations for the 23 “below expectations” teachers from the previous year had been suspended until re-opening; prior to the suspension 16 had been completed:
2. 10 (63%) were assessed “low risk”;
3. 2 (12%) were “medium risk”; and
4. 4 (25%) required re-observation and 2 will receive capability hearings.

All were working with Quality Improvement Facilitators (QIF) to improve further.

1. Curriculum audits were progressing and had prioritised those areas that had been underperforming in the previous year. The robust process included identification of likely themes for Ofsted style “deep dives” completed by the quality team. Poorly performing parts in each Area had been specifically identified to focus rectification and avoid lower assessment of the whole. In response to a question whether the planning for each area was digitally coherent, the process was further explained. The next review, of “Business” would be remotely and fully completed and that would be followed by a review of the IT provision. These audits were controlled by strict protocols that were clearly defined and were working well. The Student Review Board No 3 had recently been completed online. Essentially, the process was coherent across each area.

1. Professional Discussions. Discussion had now been completed and each teacher had a personalised TLA development plan, which provided the basis for personal development and would be modified after review outcomes. Temporarily curriculum reviews informed assessment of TLA quality pending post-Covid full resumption.
2. Remote Learning. Remote teaching and learning had been fully supported by a wide range of initiatives informed by, amongst other sources, the Ofsted explanation of what was working well. Bespoke Continuous Professional Development (CPD) packages and a “Quality Bulletin” had been developed.
3. English and Maths (EAM). The EAM resit results published on January 14, showed that from the overall 95 English entries the pass rate had been 100%, 44% of which had been high grade (grade 4 and above). For Maths, from the overall 119 entries the pass rate had been 100%, 34% of which had been high grade. These were welcome numbers and represented the highest on record; Members took comfort from the performance. Improvements to digital support for EAM and proactive measures to improve engagement, including use of “Canvas” software were explained and noted. Work with external partners to inform on improving remote delivery expertise were explained and noted and the joint venture with Harlow College based around “Edutech” (education technology) a combination of IT and educational practices was working well. This partnership would consider an issue from the recent student survey re online provision, which had been well supported with over 620 responses. That issue indicated that pre-recorded EAM lessons were unpopular and that more 1:1 input would help, consequently a more blended approach had been introduced. Attendance at EAM sessions continued to be challenging and would be a priority after the lockdown eased and students were able to attend College; this would be particularly welcome for those who found remote working a challenge. In response to a query, it was confirmed that online options would remain as an element of the blended learning approach; it was suggested, that should be reconsidered in the light of these discussions and further detail would be brought to the next meeting for further discussion. **(Action 5)**
4. The Data Pack. The Quality Advisory Group (QAG) together with the working group had reviewed and revised content and presentation of the Data Pack, which after some final revision would replace the current version. The current data pack was at Annex 1.

During general discussions it was explained that student destination detail would be brought to the March meeting. **(Action 6)** The issue of some lighter “fun” on line activity was raised as important to wellbeing and the clearly and widely articulated wish for more personal contact. There were several such opportunities, for example “21 days of happiness” , keep fit sessions and activities arranged by the Sports Academies. The Students Union had recently formed an online social group and it was suggested and accepted that more imaginative use of social media including some recently released applications would help with sorely missed interaction. The Student Member undertook to contact outside the meeting **(Action 7)** Attendance was slipping and even closer focus on re-engagement had been established.

**The information was noted and received.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 56/20)**

**51/20 STUDENT INCLUSION AND PROGRESSION**

The comprehensive report, taken as read, would consider issues directly related to students. Items of particular note were:

1. Gatsby Benchmarks. The 8 Gatsby benchmarks represented a framework for career guidance, which had been developed to support the best possible careers education information, advice and guidance. The Careers and Personal Development Co-ordinator (CPDC) was working closely with the Careers and Enterprise Agency to address these as required by the end of 2021.22. The St Albans campus now had a Careers Advisor although that for WGC remained vacant. In response to a query on progress with advancing the framework it was agreed to bring detail to the next meeting.**(Action 8)**
2. Industrial Placements/work experience. The target for 25% of 16-18 year students on a FT Level 2 or 3 course to undertake an industrial placement was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve during lockdown and alternatives were being investigated. Work experience was less demanding since it could be completed virtually; 755 students had completed and more would follow.
3. Safeguarding and Wellbeing. Student Services recent restructure had been completed and there were now 3 Student Advice and Safeguarding Officers at each main campus and available for short notice deployment to Borehamwood; their integration, responsibilities and activities were explained and discussed. There had been a marked increase in the recording of concerns with 530 students (listed at Annex 1); a significant proportion for mental health, wellbeing, self-harm and even suicide attempts. Work continued with external agencies to promote appropriate support and had produced a comprehensive information leaflet. Formally there had been 217 referrals (listed at Annex 2) to various agencies since September. Particular responsibilities towards the 130 “Looked After Children” (LAC) were discussed, retention of this group was currently at 96%; those who had withdrawn had done so under close guidance. Full detail of additional safeguarding support including this group during lockdown was detailed at Annex 3 and was explained, discussed and noted. Emphasis was placed on continuing support including, in liaison with external partners, support in the home including for parents and carers.

During general considerations assurance was provided that full support and guidance was available with individual UCAS applications and the deadline had been extended until the end of the month; all was on track. Distribution of online devices continued, the difficulties associated with demand in homes with several student and possibly also with home working adults, were fully accepted; to date 502 Chromebooks and 20 Dongles had been distributed and that work continued.

**The information was noted and received.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 56/20)**

**52/20 POLICIES**

There were two Policies to consider, both had been updated for routine changes and there was nothing of note to bring to Members’ attention:

1. Whistleblowing. (Public Interest Disclosure (PID)) The Whistleblowing Policy was approved. **(Action 9)**
2. Disciplinary Policy for Senior Post Holders (SPH) Reference to the Data Protection Act 1998 would be replaced with “General Data Protection Regulation” (GDPR); with that amendment included the SPH Disciplinary Policy was approved. Members were reminded that there was currently only one SPH – the Principal **(Action 10)**

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified. (Register 56/20)**

**53/20 FINANCE AND RISK**

The management accounts accurate to 31 December 2020 (Annex 1) were then considered and discussed.

1. The situation was favourable, an overall variance of c£190k against budget; income was forecast lower than budget and that was clearly explained, payroll expenditure was adverse c£239k prompted by the early staff bonus payment and would recover as the year progressed; non-payroll costs had been profiled against last year’s actuals. Income and expenditure variances had been tabulated for ease of reference and it was noted that the data did not include provision for additional effect of lockdown 3. A table at Para 4.1 compared the income and cost lines and indicated that the present outturn estimated was -(£874k) however that was expected to reduce as the year progressed. The balance sheet remained positive with a strong cash balance split between College and the St Albans capital development. The CFF indicated that ample cash would be available for both projects at year end. Identified Risks and Opportunities would be updated at future Corporation meetings. The accounts were **noted**.
2. KPI. The Finance KPI (Annex 2) were discussed; key differences were listed in the document and individually explained. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Financial Heath score remained at “Good”. Further mitigation was being considered to bring this closer to “Outstanding” in 2020/21. The KPIs were **noted.**
3. Purchases over £100k. The requirements of the Financial Regulations in relation to purchases over £100k were fully explained in the paper. There were 2 Purchase Orders (PO) over £100k detailed in Annex 3, Atlas Contractors Ltd had submitted Invoices for the cleaning contact £273,012.91 (St Albans Campus) and £141,448.95 (WGC) both of which were explained, approved for payment and **noted**.
4. Risk Management (RM). The Risk Register, at Annex 4, had been reviewed by the SMT on 19 January 2021 and the scoring methodology leading to the residual grades’ summary on the “Heat Map” was explained in the document. The “Heat Map” was then scrutinised and the 3 changes (Money 4&5 and Curriculum 1) were explained and noted. There were currently 32 Risks associated with the Strategic Themes, 2 Red (High), 23 Amber (Medium) and 7 Green (Low). The RAG ratings were discussed and the RM detail was **noted.**
5. Quarterly Investment Report. Members were reminded of the Investment Strategy and it was noted that the present position, which was clearly detailed in the accompanying paper, compared favourably with the strategic cash reserves requirements. Each investment element was clearly listed and were explained individually; the information was **noted.**
6. Budget Parameters 2021-22. Budget Parameters would be considered and discussed, the final budget for consideration would be presented to the Corporation on 12 July. The informing detail for the draft had been drawn together into a comprehensive brief supported by a “top-down statement of comprehensive income (SOCI)(Annex 5). The table illustrated the severe Covid related negative effect on apprenticeship and HE related income and the consequent deficit outturn of -(£899k). The numbers, fully informed by detail in the briefing paper and a narrative from the FD were then closely discussed. The cash position was extremely sound and even with the suggested deficit an improvement of £2m cash could be expected and the EFSA financial heath grading would continue as “Good”. There was a marked reluctance to agree, even a worst case deficit of that size and discussions circulated around alternatives. The topline could not be improved. Evaluation of opportunities and risk should continue to be thoroughly analysed and, whilst the suggested deficit was not finally rejected, approval was likely only as a final resort. For the present, a working deficit of -(£500k) should be the aim and progress towards that was to be brought to each Corporation meeting until consideration of final budget approval in July. **(Action 11)**

**The information was noted and received.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 56/20)**

**54/20 URGENT BUSINESS**

There had been no urgent business requested.

**55/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be at 1800 on 8 March 2021.

**56/20 ACTION REGISTER**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| See referenced minute for full detail | | **Resp** | **Date** |
| **Action 1** | 45/20b. Appreciation for stakeholders’ response to Covid. | **Chair** | **wie** |
| **Action 2** | 45/20c. Items taken out of Agenda order. |
| **Action 3** | 48/20. Last Minutes (14.12.21) confirmed for signature. | **Clerk** |
| **Action 4** | 49/20a. Retention data to next meeting, | **DP** | **08.03.21** |
| **Action 5** | 50/20e. Remote delivery effectiveness to the next meeting. |
| **Action 6** | 50/20f. Student destination detail to next meeting. |
| **Action 7** | 50/20f. Student member to discuss social media opportunities. | **JB/DP** | **wie** |
| **Action 8** | 51/20a. Gatsby progress detail to next meeting. | **Dir IP** | **08.03.21** |
| **Action 9** | 52/20a. PID Policy approved. | **Dir HR** | **wie** |
| **Action 10** | 52/20b. SPH Disciplinary Policy provisionally approved. |
| **Action 11** | 53/20f. Provisional deficit parameter set at –(£500k) | **FD** |