

Minutes of an electronic meeting held at 1800 on 9 November 2020

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Present** | Jo Birch | Christine Chisholm | Sue Grant  (Chair) |
|  | Jesmin Haq | Jean Fawcett | Phillip Fulton |
|  | Zoe Hancock  (Principal) | Kerry Hood | Steph Lawrence |
|  | Neil Myerson | Rob Payne | Peter Thompson |
| **In Attendance** | Nicola Caiger  (Dir I&P) | Ana Guimaraes  (Dir Curr) | Paul McCormack  (FD) |
|  | John McMahon  (MD TT)(to 16/20 only) | Harpreet Nagra  (DP) | Amanda Washbrook  (Dir App/HE) (to 17/20 only) |
|  | Sian Williams  (Dir Curr) |  |  |
| **Apologies** | John O’Sullivan |  |  |

A Corporation raising awareness and training session had been held immediately before the meeting, this had considered the “Prevent” initiative, which aimed to deter individuals becoming involved in terrorist activity. The electronic presentation, delivered by David Layton-Scott from the HE/FE Police Partnership (Eastern Region) **comprised** slides supported by a comprehensive and interactive presentation including actual examples of terrorist activity. Of particular note was the increase in the “right wing” element.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular the two newly elected Student Members, Jo Birch and Steph Lawrence. She then explained that some items would be taken out of agenda order to allow the presenters to leave the meeting.

**PART ONE**

**15/20 ELIGIBILITY, QUORUM AND OPENING REMARKS**

1. The apologies were accepted. 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. Ofsted. An Ofsted interim visit, designed to support Colleges in welcoming learners back from lockdown had been completed during the previous week. The visit focused on how the provision met students’ and stakeholders’ requirements and noted approaches to learning development and safeguarding. There was no associated judgement or gradings but a short report would be issued. Safeguarding, including focus on the on-line safety of students had also been evaluated and had been extremely well received. The thorough assessment process had been valuable to both participants: to Ofsted to reinforce the body of knowledge gathered from the wide range of Colleges and to Oaklands by providing practical experience of interaction with Ofsted. The inspectors had been impressed with the support for students’ wellbeing, which had been identified as consistent cross-college. When questioned, students were complimentary about the support and efforts of teachers and the levels and scope of pastoral provision. The inspectors were impressed with the early and initial “six-point” and other assessments, which were seen as an excellent measure of students’ starting points; student review boards were also sound and positive support for ongoing skills analysis. They were impressed with the commitment of teaching staff and in particular, present and future plans for remote and face to face teaching. The curriculum was seen as well-planned and sequenced, and this was also true of the apprenticeships and high needs teams. This had been a successful visit and thanks were recorded to all involved.

**The information was received and welcomed.**

**16/20 TOGETHER TRAINING (out of agenda order)**

The Managing Director (MD) of Together Training (TT) explained progress against the Business Plan and further general information.

1. Business Plan. The intent at the start of the year that delivery would be equally split between on-line and personal delivery had been overtaken and all on-line delivery had been implemented. A blend of both was possible in future and reversion to face-to-face learning was being hoped for in 2021. Full compliance with all Covid requirements had been achieved and thanks were recorded to both colleges for their support. Exciting new partnerships were explained, including Systems and Complexity in Organisation (SCiO), which could support employers with needs for complex merger or digital skills and upskilling of senior leaders, Greater London Local Authorities and joint considerations with Hertfordshire County Council (Herts CC) for a similar project. Work with existing clients included support for ASOS, which was seeking to be entered as an employer on the Register of Training Providers (RoATP) and if successful would become a sub-contractor for TT. Work associated with the HS2 project in Hertfordshire was noted as expected to continue for several years. Enrolments were strong and ahead of target with 100+ applications for apprentice training. The qualification picture was equally positive, 41/45 qualifiers achieved during lockdown and 50% overall achieved high grades; the remaining 4 continued towards qualification. Financial performance was sound despite current challenges, with a £45k surplus. The TT unique curriculum offer had been widened, informed by employer feedback and public sector framework opportunities.
2. Quality. Enrolment this year of 210 had taken the total number on roll to 330. There had been 171 due to complete in the current year and after 20 who had withdrawn for personal reasons 151 remained and nine remained on furlough. The RAG Rated Performance Dashboard (Appendix 1) related to the 45 apprentices who had left in 2019 mentioned earlier and the gradings were noted.. Appendix 2 detailed the current TT offer and was also noted.

TT was a sound organisation, which had responded well throughout the lockdown and since; Members were reminded that Rob Payne had replaced Ginny Kerridge on the Board.

**The information was received and welcomed.**

**John McMahon left the meeting**

**17/20 APPRENTICESHIPS (out of agenda order)**

A comprehensive report on apprenticeships was explained and discussed. Outcomes were considered, these were better than expected through Covid influences, but the target KPI (70%) had not been met; in particular, achievement at c67% (in line with the previous year and subject to legacy issues) had been disappointing, as had retention at 70%, which had reduced from c79% earlier in the year. Coming years’ forecasts were discussed: best case achievement for 2020/21 stood at 79.4% and was likely to out-turn at worst case 70%; retention continued to be challenging and the negative effect of the failure of Monarch Aircraft Engineering would continue into 2022/23; the length of some apprenticeships would also adversely affect retention. Areas with poor outcome levels prompted by withdrawals had been tabulated and were noted. Covid related uncertainties had affected enrolments although early enrolments had been higher than expected, however employer reluctance to commit for the necessary length of time had prompted some withdrawals and redundancies. It had also been noted that the level of “Business Administration” apprentices had fallen, possibly for similar reasons. Those affected received full support, notably one learner who was successfully steered to another employer after redundancy, which was welcomed by Members. Employer engagement was explained; feedback for the current completers was being obtained and details of many employer related activities were noted. Financial details had been tabulated and, as had been expected Covid related influences had prompted a (£60k) reduction to income and influencing key effects were discussed and noted. During discussions, and in response to a query, it was confirmed that employers received direct support with understanding of the complex Governmental guidance on financial and other issues. Other issues raised noted that, despite lockdown, some employers, including challenged trades such as hairdressing, continued to employ new apprentices. The use of additional emergency funding was explained and it was suggested that some apprentices could access the Level 3 adult grant during any enforced break in professional training. There was no doubt that Apprenticeship provision had received a “bumpy ride” from the onset of Covid and thanks were recorded for all the efforts and professionalism of those involved.

**The information was noted and received.**

**18/20 STANDING ITEMS**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and recorded thanks to the SMT and all staff for their continued professionalism and commitment. The meeting process was explained.

1. The minutes from the Corporation meeting (Part 1 & 2) held on 12 October 2020 were confirmed for electronic signature. **(Action 1)**
2. Matters arising. There were no matters arising.
3. Actions. Actions from the last meeting were discussed and confirmed as listed.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| See referenced minute for full detail | | **Status** |
| **Action 1** | Intro. Updated draft Data Pack to AC Chair for comment. | **Complete** |
| **Action 2** | 02/20a. Last minutes (06.07.20) confirmed for signature. |
| **Action 3** | 02/20d. AC recommendation noted for Item 7. |
| **Action 4** | 04/20a. Complaints re Business Department to be resolved. |
| **Action 5** | 05/20c(i). RR approved. |
| **Action 6** | 05/20c(ii). RM Policy approved. |
| **Action 7** | 06/20. Visits to the Homestead to be reserved in advance. |
| **Action 8** | 08/20. List of HAS staff to be circulated to members. |
| **Action 9** | 09/20. Safeguarding Policy approved. |
| **Action 10** | 10/20a. S&G Committee to consider Regulatory Documents. |
| **Action 11** | 10/20a. Regulatory Documents provisionally approved. |
| **Action 12** | 10/20b. Corporation SAR approved. (S&G discretion). |
| **Action 13** | 10/20c. JF&RP reappointed to Corporation. |

re Action 10. The Corporation Regulatory Documents had been provisionally approved for later consideration by the Search and Governance (S&G) Committee, which had also been authorised to amend content.

**The information was noted and received.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 27/20)**

**19/20 QUALITY**

The report reviewed progress with the College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and other issues. The Ofsted visit (15/20b) had precluded the Quality Advisory Group (QAG) 4 November meeting and the Executive Summary and some unvalidated data had not thus been considered but had been included in the draft report. The draft was for comment, would be amended in the light of these considerations and the final version brought to the next meeting for approval **(Action 2)**

1. SAR. Completion of the SAR (Annex 1) was a complex and detailed process reflecting the widest possible input and interests to ensure responsive, high quality and relevant provision; the document had been based on the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and the narrative, by individual teaching area had been supplemented by a comprehensive suite of tabulated data; all areas, excepting apprenticeships had been graded as “Good” (Grade 2) or better. The basis for this classification was challenged and it was explained that the considerable distance travelled in comparison to the position at the same point last year was clearly evidenced in the document and appendices. This progress had been ruthlessly evaluated and the overall judgement, that the results justified the higher grade, had been considered by the specialist consultant (Paula Heaney) and accepted as merited. The tabulated and RAG rated detail then informed a detailed discussion. Overall although the senior leadership were recommending that the SAR be approved with a judgement of good, corporation members requested that the quality group should review it and, in particular, raise questions on behalf of the corporation in relation to: numbers of staff meeting expectations; English and Maths (EAM) engagement and performance qualification rates; the numbers of areas and therefore students affected that had not been rated good or above and equality data. Following this discussion the SAR should be represented for approval at the next meeting. **(Action 3)** After approval, the SAR became the source document for the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which was also attached in draft at Annex 2. During discussions it was agreed the EAM detail would be enhanced. **(Action 4)** The relatively low response rate to the “self-Isolation student survey” was concerning and it was confirmed that focus on the issue continued, individual students were being contacted and those present in classes would be required to complete the survey at the start of lessons. The upgraded assessment was cautiously welcomed and further comfort would be provided for members that it continued to become embedded **(Action 5)** Stronger assurance was already being sought by management, for example observations of remotely delivered lessons, remote curriculum audits and student focus group and PDR activity. Members were encouraged to send comments directly to the Deputy Principal (DP) or the QAG before the next meeting on 11 November when the Report would be revised before presentation at the next Corporation meeting. **(Action 6)**
2. Quality Update. Wider information had been informed by 3 additional documents:
3. Unvalidated Outcome Data (2019/20) (Annex 3). The data had been compared against the previous year and National Averages (NA) for 2018/19, since there would be no NA published for 2019/20.
4. Quality Calendar (Annex 4). The calendar detailed the activity and associated timescales for the current year.
5. Corporation Data Pack. (Annex 5). The Data pack was received; however, it had not been considered by the QAG.

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified (Register 27/20)**

**20/20 FINANCE AND RISK**

1. Draft Annual Financial Statements (AFS) 2019/20. The draft AFS were discussed, the audit process had been uneventful and a sound outcome appeared likely. The document comprised a narrative, informed by comprehensive graphical and tabulated detail, including full information on all pension commitments and the positive surplus, in line with former advice, was welcomed. The last accounts scrutinised by the Corporation, on 12 October, showed a provisionally determined outturn surplus of c£196k, and after mainly pension related adjustments the final published accounts would show a loss of (£8,075k). The previously agreed minimum reserve of £4m remained. The associated Statement of Comprehensive Income (SOCI) (Annex 1) was explained and the loss of (£8,099k) was noted. The full AFS would be considered by the Audit Committee at the meeting tbh on 1 December 2020 and then presented to the Corporation on the 14th. The draft and the outturn was noted. **(Action 7)**
2. Management Accounts (Annex 2). The management accounts were presented as a comprehensive narrative supported by tabulated data. The detail accurate to 30 September 2020 was then considered and discussed. The current position was a favourable variance of c£323k against budget; total income was favourable. Payroll expenditure was positive by c£100k, non-payroll variances were clearly detailed in the narrative. The accounts were then generally discussed. The balance sheet remained positive. The accounts and the strong cash information were noted. Issues relating to the low HE enrolment numbers and their mitigation were discussed.
3. KPI. The Finance KPI were explained and noted.
4. Purchases (Annex 3). Expenditure in excess of 100k required Corporation approval, (generally delegated to the Principal if outside the approved budgets) and accordingly three were considered:
5. City and Guilds (£200k);

1. Pearson Education (£300k); and

(iii) “Universitybus” Ltd (£126.5k)

The payment to “Universitybus” represented an annual payment, all three were noted and endorsed, **(Action 8)**

1. Risk Management (RM). The Risk Register presented as a RAG rated table at Annex 5 had been reviewed by the AC on 5 October and the SMT on 20 October. Changes since the last meeting were discussed:
2. Money 3 had been demoted from “Green” to “Amber” resulting from apprenticeship enrolment shortfall; and
3. Curriculum 2 had been amended to consider impact on sole self-isolating students from a continuing class.

There were 3 red, 19 orange and 6 green risks on the Register. The red risks had been considered at the previous meeting. The Register was noted and approved. **(Action 9)**

1. Quarterly Investment Report. Surplus funds were invested to maximise return and obtain value for money (VFM) and a quarterly report was required. The reserve strategy required a £4m minimum strategic cash reserve, £2m for operating purposes and £2m for one-off requirements as determined by the Corporation. The current total reserves were £8.6m and full details of their placement was included in the paper. The Report was noted and the Investment Approach was approved. **(Action 10)**
2. Insurance. In the wake of last year’ fire at the Discovery Centre the Corporation had approved engagement of Hettle Andrews for 3 years until 30 September 2022. There had been 2 claims during the year:
3. an employee hit by a rough terrain vehicle while on associated work; and
4. an employee dislocated elbow after falling due to broken concrete.

Progression of the claim initiated in the previous year for the Discovery Centre fire continued and full details in the accompanying paper were noted. The summary of key elements of cover, the 10 different Policies that serviced and the associated premiums (£169k) were explained, noted and endorsed. The Report was noted.

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified. (Table 27/20 below)**

**21/20 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 and discussed it was still a little early in the year for meaningful analysis but stronger data would be available at the next meeting; information contained in other agenda items was signposted.

1. Government Communication. There had been 2 letters from government; the first was noted and the second, from the Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson) regarding acceptance of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of Antisemitism prompted detailed considerations. The issue had been raised with Universities during 2019 and had only recently been widened to include Further Education (FE) Colleges. Oaklands association with the University of Hertfordshire (UoH) had prompted an enquiry regarding their view; they had not accepted it previously since they did not define other religious discriminations but they were reviewing again. It was suggested that advice should be sought from the Association of Colleges (AoC) on the issue to determine if the directive had been intended for FE Colleges. That was discussed and the view accepted was simply that it was a moral matter and wholly appropriate for individual College Corporations to decide; that was unanimously agreed and as a moral issue it should be decided locally. Accordingly, Neil Myerson proposed and Jean Fawcett seconded that Oaklands College adopt the IHRA definition wie and that was carried unanimously. **(Action 11)**

1. Institute of Technology. In 2018 it had been proposed that a Hertfordshire Institute of Technology should be formed and an unsuccessful bid was submitted. A second round of funding was now available and a strategy for a further application, supported by the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), had been drawn together, Annex 4 refers; the UoH was leading the bid. As currently graded RI, Oaklands was unqualified to participate as a “core” partner but would be welcomed as such after an improvement. The AoC was lobbying for scrutiny of the policy and the delays in re-inspections of RI Colleges.
2. The revised management organisation chart would be circulated to members. **(Action 12)**

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified. (Table 27/20 below)**

**22/20 INCLUSION AND PROGRESSION**

The Report included detail of student voice, careers, 14-16 students. Association and participation with local agencies and schools were discussed and noted. Residential students had settled in well, with no incidents, other than sporting injuries to report; attendance above the College average was noted and welcomed.

**The information was received.**

**23/20 GOVERNANCE.**

The annual skills audit had been completed and the consolidated results would inform the S&G Committee at their next meeting when considering corporate expertise; lay membership and improved diversity would be particularly considered.

**The information was received.**

**24/20 EQUALITY INCLUSION & DIVERSITY**

1. Report. There was one annual report and one Policy for review. Members had taken comfort that the Ofsted monitoring visit had been impressed with the approach to Safeguarding. The comprehensive Report was discussed, in detail in particular the representation of cross-college ethnicity balances ranging from the Corporation, the Students Union and other agencies. Covid limitations had precluded completion of some EDI raising events and it may be possible to repeat them in the near future. It was agreed that an E&D section would be included in the SAR **(Action 13)** It was also important that specific issues, for example “Black Lives Matter” (BLM) and disability matters continuously influenced EDI and not be limited to specific periods. It was confirmed that lessons from the lockdown had and would continue to enrich approaches to these issues. The Report was received and noted.
2. Policy. The Policy had been updated for personalities and other minor changes and it was confirmed that there was nothing of note to bring to the attention of the Corporation; the EAD Policy was approved subject to the addition of the IHRA definition as agreed in 21/20. **(Action 14)**
3. **The information was received and noted.**
4. **Actions had been identified. (Register 27/20)**

**25/20 URGENT BUSINESS**

There had been no urgent business requested.

**26/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be at 1800 on 14 December 2020.

**27/20 ACTION REGISTER**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| See referenced minute for full detail | | **Resp** | **Date** |
| **Action 1** | 18/20a. Last minutes (12.10.20) confirmed for signature. | **Clerk** | **asap** |
| **Action 2** | 19/20. SAR to next meeting. | **DP** | **14.12.20** |
| **Action 3** | 19/20a. Grade 2 (Good) agreed. | **Chair** | **wie** |
| **Action 4** | 19/20a. EAM data to be strengthened. | **DP** |
| **Action 5** | 19/20a. Improvement profile detail to be provided regularly. |
| **Action 6** | 19/20a. Feedback to DP or QAG by 11 Nov. | **11.11.20** |
| **Action 7** | 20/20a. Draft AFS & outturn noted. | **FD** | **wie** |
| **Action 8** | 20/20d. Purchases noted and endorsed. |
| **Action 9** | 20/20e. RR approved. |
| **Action 10** | 20/20f. Investment approach approved. |
| **Action 11** | 21/20b. IHRA definition adopted. | **Chair** |
| **Action 12** | 21/20d. Organisation chart to be circulated to all. | **ZH** |
| **Action 13** | 24/20a. Repeat cancelled EDI events if possible. | **DP** | **asap** |
| **Action 14** | 24/20b. IHRA definition adopted.. | **wie** |