

## CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

### CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 01 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 16:00 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

#### **Present:**

Andrew Barnes (Chairman), Corrienne Peasgood (Principal), Jill Lanning, Noel Bartram, Andrea Blanchflower, Bree Sherwood, Jonathan Barnard, Denise Troughton, Emily Staley, Philip Richardson

#### **Attendees:**

Jerry White (Deputy Principal), Julia Buckland (Vice Principal, FE Curriculum and Quality), Martin Colbourne (NES MD), Jacky Sturman (Administrator)

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#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Clare Johnson and Sue Millions.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None received.

#### **3. Unconfirmed Minutes from the previous meeting held on 18 August 2020**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

#### **4. Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes from the previous meeting held on 18 August 2020**

The confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

#### **5. CEO Report**

In addition to the CEO report from the Principal informing the Board how the College is operating during the Coronavirus outbreak and informing them of risks and mitigating actions being taken, the following information was discussed and highlighted:

It was noted that the College's stance on the wearing of face coverings had moved to 'face coverings should be worn outside of learning spaces (i.e. in all communal areas).'

Heads of Areas are in the process of establishing areas of the College where a one-way or keep left system should be followed.

Signage reinforcing key messages is in place across all sites.

Individual RA for staff who fall into the categories are underway.

An enhanced cleaning schedule has been set up, with two additional daytime cleaning staff recruited for Norwich, one for Norfolk House and one for Paston. (Easton have sufficient cleaning staff capacity to cover additional daytime cleaning requirements.)

Curriculum teams are finalising student bubbles; the complexity being bringing students together to study English and maths. Students will also be allocated catering slots within their bubble.

#### **DfE/ESFA**

CP advised of the receipt of additional DfE 'further education autumn term reopening guidance' at 1230 on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August with the following points highlighted:

- The guidance strongly reiterates the expectation of education providers to be welcoming all students back to a full educational programme and it does not

encourage remote learning.

- A large piece of work is required to draft 'tiered' lockdown plans by the end of September. Plans will detail opening requirements in line with Tiers 1 to 4 below: (Nursery and College requirements being very different.)
  - Tier 1 – open with face coverings
  - Tier 2 - limit number of students on each site
  - Tier 3 – vulnerable young adults and key workers and nationally identified year groups (such as those taking exams this year which could be 75% of college students)
  - Tier 4 – vulnerable students
- There is an expectation for the College to involve students in the development of a student charter or agreement which sets out responsibilities for staying safe and protecting others. CP advised that this information has been provided in the Student Pocket Guide, student email communications and college-wide posters. Students will review this guidance and how the control measures are working for them once they have settled into the Autumn term.
- There is a new section on ventilation, which the College is already adhering to in line with HSE requirements.
- CP will be issuing two separate all staff emails; one specifically detailing government self-isolation guidance and one on how to wear and remove face coverings. DT requested that staff email communications are kept clear and concise.
- All Covid-19 college guidance will be located on Sharepoint for staff to easily access.
- Further reading and digestion of the Funding section is required.

### **Land-based provision review**

CP and MC gave a verbal update on the land-based provision review they took part in, led by Meredydd David, Deputy FEC and Annette Nott of the ESFA. It was noted that the land-based sector had been hit hard by the pandemic and discussion included how resource investment and staffing might be supported. It is expected that this review will lead into the FE white paper scheduled for October. CP and MC were thanked by Meredydd and Annette for their valued contribution.

### **Ofqual**

CP explained that it was unfortunate that students' regrades for the same qualification were released sporadically. The regrading has led to some students requiring more support to help them make progression and other getting into their first choice of University.

CP advised that JBu and JW have been dealing with parents of students who wish to appeal their results but are not able to do so as there is no basis to challenge a Centre Assessed Grade (CAG). JW noted that this has been a hard message to deliver and teaching staff have been left having to build relationships with returning students in some instances. JW added that a significant number of A Level students have expressed a desire to retake their exams in November (even though they may have progressed to their first choice university) due to them not feeling that they 'own' the result they have been assessed at.

JBu reiterated JW's comments but was buoyed by the reliable information staff used to make their assessments.

Due to the number of complaints received in relation to grading JBu noted that she has not been able to respond to all complaints in as timely a manner as she would have liked.

NB asked what proportion of students/parents have complained. JW responded that this was difficult to calculate, as not all queries constituted a complaint; possibly 25% at most.

JBu stressed there are 4 students who have not progressed to their first choice of university.

JL suggested a paper on lessons learned from the experience to be brought to C&S Committee. JBu responded that the experience had highlighted that where teams have worked together, better decisions were made. Where disjointed leadership has been noted, staff struggled to make informed decisions on their own due to not drawing strength as a team. JBu added that poor government communication had added to the frustration of parents and students for which the College had taken the brunt.

JBu and JW left the meeting at 1659 to enable them to join the enrolment meeting.

### **Students**

CP advised that enrolment was at 5,014 (against the College's ESFA target of 5,723), with enrolment continuing over the next few days picking up red enrolls (students on holiday or unwell), late applicants and those students who might be on school sixth form waiting lists. CP noted that it is likely that the ESFA target will be reached by the start of term.

CP mentioned that Animal Care Level 2 numbers were slightly down; however this is likely because of regraded results and students being enrolled at Level 3. Student progress will be monitored and adjustment to course level made in-year if deemed necessary.

Unlike previous years, some vocational courses have been identified as 'full', such as Construction where numbers cannot be increased due to Covid-19 operating restrictions. Other options are being explored for students who have been disappointed by this.

NB asked how academic staff are deploying flexibility within their enrolment decisions. CP responded that judgements always err toward the benefit of the student; whilst the College may not be able to offer students the flexibility of their first choice, everyone will be offered a suitable place.

NB asked how the College will go about assessing whether students have been impacted by not being able to attend College and are behind with their studies. CP advised that this will be monitored by teaching staff as students return and settle back in. Once timetabling has been finalised there may be available staff resource to offer some catch-up sessions.

NB enquired as to what the implication may be of having to hold the exams series later in 2021. CP responded that implications would depend on how much later they are actually held. If delayed by a few weeks there would not be much impact; however a longer delay might impact on teacher pay and conditions. Either way the College will respond accordingly.

CP explained under Tier 3 the College would be required to continue to teach 'nationally identified students'; these are likely to be those who are leading up to task exams.

ABI noted that holding A Level exams later in the year will generate problems for HE 2021/22 recruitment. The UEA have moved to a more inclusive 24 hour online 'exam window' which has worked well. ABI suggested it would be very beneficial if this mode of exam taking was cascaded down to A Level; although this might mean a tight marking turnaround.

JL noted that whilst this was a good idea in principle, awarding bodies may take some convincing. ABI added that this model has worked well for the UEA and other universities, especially when applying special arrangements. It also negates the need for invigilation. JL asked whether authenticity has been raised as an issue. ABI advised that students are given a personalised login and academic integrity is applied.

CP went on to note that HE enrolment commences next week and that accepted first choice offers stand at 236 against a target of 197. CP will present an update on HE enrolment at the Board meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

### **Staff**

CP advised that a Covid Response email address has been set-up to handle staff Covid-19 related queries. To date there have been three main areas of enquiry relating to the holding of an additional role outside of college (on the same day as attending a college site), testing and when to self-isolate. To date, all staff who have undergone a Covid-19 test have tested negative.

CP added that staff Occupational Health clinics have been reinstated twice a week with capacity for additional infilling.

### **Site safety**

CP advised that the Covid-19 Risk Register action has not yet been completed and will be brought forward to the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

### **Finance**

#### Capital allowance

MC advised that work is underway on how to allocate the capital allowance of £1.75 million, the detail of which will be brought forward to the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

#### Management Accounts

MC advised that the CEO of the ESFA has announced a one-off extension (to 31st January 2021) for the submission of the annual management accounts.

#### Merger related

MC noted that the KPMG audit deadline had been pushed back by a couple of weeks. This was necessary due to the finite detail of information being requested by the auditors and due to not having the continuity of staff to locate the information. This matter will be brought to a conclusion if the information cannot be located within the two-week extension.

CP noted that the Suffolk New College (SNC) post-merger meeting had again been cancelled and rearranged for next week. MC added that a fully comprehensive email has been sent to SNC detailing what needs to be resolved with regard to legal recharge; no response has yet been received.

### **FE Commissioner Termly Letter August 2020**

CP noted that the College is prepared to provide the ESFA with in-year learner numbers.

## **6. Chairman's Update**

AB thanked all at the College for their relentless hard work and effort in guiding parents and students through these unprecedented times. AB noted that enrolment numbers were looking encouraging.

JL suggested sending all staff another thank you from the governing body; incorporating an encouraging message for the year ahead. DT noted this would be very much appreciated and again requested that staff communication is kept short and to the point.

## **7. Confidentiality**

No matters of confidentiality were raised.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

The next CCN Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 4pm.

All business having been concluded the meeting was closed at 5:45pm.

Signed ..... Date .....  
(Chairman)