

CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23 MARCH AT 4:00 PM, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

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

Attendees:

Jerry White (Deputy Principal), Julia Bates (Vice Principal, FE Curriculum and Quality), Martin Colbourne (NES MD), Helen Richardson-Hulme (Assistant Principal, Student Services), Jodie Mitchell (Head of Professional Services) – agenda items 1-6.2, Clare Johnson (Clerk to the Corporation), Sue Millions (Administrator)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Bree Sherwood.

2. Declarations of Interest

In the interest of transparency and in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Corporation, all Governors of the Corporation Board are asked to make a written declaration of relevant pecuniary interests on appointment. Governors were requested to make known any relevant pecuniary interests relating to any items on the agenda and it was noted that all declarations will be recorded.

Jerry White informed governors that he has been appointed to the Towns Deal Board for Norwich City Council as part of his college duties.

There were no other new declarations of interest given at the meeting.

3. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 23 February 2021 (Paper 02)

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2021 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

4. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes (Paper 03)

Board 4 (19/20) Action 7: *Clare Johnson to liaise with the Principal on the appointment of additional Governors to the Audit and Risk Committee. Committee membership was discussed at Business on 13.10.2020 and the Principal will provide an update following discussion with a current governor. The Principal was unable to contact governor at present but will follow-up in early January 2021. Governance review will take place as part of Strategy development. Action completed.*

Board 7 - Action 2: *Teams Meeting to be arranged with the Principal and Jerry White and any interested Governors to discuss the role of the Link Governor and the focus and structure of the Governor link role. Removed as duplicate C&S action. Action completed.*

Board 10 - Action 1: *Staff Well-Being Survey results to be discussed at the next full Board Meeting. Please see agenda item 6.6. Action completed.*

Board 10 - Action 2: *Comments from Governors on the proposed Strategic Framework to be forwarded, via email, to the Principal by Friday 19 February 2021. Action completed.*

Board 10 - Action 3: *The Strategic Framework for 2021 to be agreed and signed off at the full Board Meeting taking place on 23 March 2021. Please see agenda item 6.4. Action completed.*

Board 10 - Action 4: *Helen Richardson-Hulme to check the training compliance figures and the presentation of this data in future reports. Please see agenda item 7.2. Action completed.*

Board 10 - Action 5: *The Principal to revise the Priorities and Targets for 2021 and prepare a timeline for when and where progress on the priorities and targets will be discussed throughout 2021. Discussed and approved by the Board on 9 February 2021. Action completed.*

Board 10 - Action 6: *The Clerk to inform Jodie Mitchell that the Board have approved, and the Chair signed the extension of 12 months, with the option of a further 12 months, to First Care Ltd for the absence management tender. Document was signed by the Chair and shared with Jodie Mitchell. Action completed.*

5. Chairman's Remarks

There was no Chairman's Update discussed at today's meeting.

6. SECTION A – papers in Section A are for discussion and action

6.1 TEN Group Strategy Update

6.1.1 Approval of the Amendments to CCN's Instrument and Articles

Please see the confidential minutes.

6.1.2 Approval of the Transfer of NES Shares from TEN to CCN

Please see the confidential minutes.

6.1.3 Approval of the Shared Services Agreement between CCN and NES

Please see the confidential minutes.

6.2 Catering Contract Extension

(Paper 04)

Please see the confidential minutes.

6.3 Chairs' Summaries of Committee Meetings

6.3.1 Curriculum and Standards

(Paper 05)

Jill Lanning, the Chair of the Curriculum and Standards Committee, informed Governors that a meeting of the Curriculum and Standards Committee was held on 9 March 2021 and all key matters discussed at the meeting are highlighted and brought to the Board's attention in the papers previously distributed. In addition, it was noted that:

- 2020/21 performance - whilst many normal data sources have been significantly impacted on by the COVID pandemic, retention rates were reviewed and a discussion on the continued high levels of retention at Easton was held to explore the reasons for this trend. It is believed that this is due to higher expectations being clearer to students.
- Apprenticeships – it was noted that considerable work is underway to support Apprentices to catch up key assessments in order to enhance progress and complete

their apprenticeships which has been impacted by lockdown. It was noted that the small loss in the number of apprenticeships is not due to teaching and learning but to industry being impacted by lockdown resulting in redundancies. It was also noted that there are likely to be pressures on arranging EPA assessments with the volume of assessments needed nationally and the ability of EPAOs to provide enough assessors.

- Awarding qualifications in 2021 – the college is awaiting the final rules from awarding bodies, but the accumulation of robust evidence is being considered and reviewed.
- Higher Education - the good level of participation in the National Student Survey was noted alongside the progress in validating / revalidating degree programmes. HE application figures are slightly up at headline levels, but some programmes do have small numbers, most particularly at Easton. It was noted that there is a need to rebuild the reputation of the HE provision at Easton and this will take some time to achieve.

The Principal informed governors that Audit and Risk Committee had asked how the college assures itself on students, apprentices and employer satisfaction levels and it was agreed that the Curriculum and Standards Committee would be asked to consider this matter at their next meeting. Andrea Blanchflower drew attention to the wording about this item in the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee which could be interpreted that the national surveys are inaccurate which is not the case. It was agreed that these minutes would be changed to address this.

- Easton FE improvement work – the Curriculum and Standards Committee held an in-depth discussion of the work of the FE Easton Improvement Board, supported by the committee Chair who is the Governor Scrutiny link and the Vice Principal. All areas were reviewed except for English and Maths. The quality of teaching continues to need improvement and will be a focus, going forward.
- The Principal reported on the last round of TLA review meetings which had considered the quality of TLA in the last two half terms. It had been pleasing that only a very few grades had dropped across the college and there had been reports of some innovative and engaging practice. The summary meeting held that day had had a lengthy discussion about what TLA could look like in the future and the importance of keeping the good aspects that had been developed in the last year. This included allowing teachers to continue to be innovative and supporting those who are currently less courageous.

The full content of the Curriculum and Standards Committee update was noted.

6.3.2 Business

(Paper 06)

Andrew Barnes, the Chair of the Business Committee informed Governors that a meeting of the College Business Committee was held on 16 March 2021 and the key matters to be brought to the attention of the Board were finance and the cost of living pay award (see agenda item 6.3.2.1).

Discussions took place regarding the new FE Commissioner financial benchmarks – a paper was presented to the Committee showing the College's self-assessment against the FE Commissioners proposed new financial targets for the sector. All benchmarks were rated green except one, staff cost to income ratio, which was rated amber. It was noted that the benchmark, nationally recognised as a stretch target, is 65% and the College is currently 67.7% in the emerging picture. It was noted that the college's current target is 67% and would be a good place to be.

The debt tracker update paper was presented to the Business Committee on the status of the recoverability of 2020/21 debts for students, employers, SLC, nursery and sundry.

No serious concerns were raised and monitoring the payments from the SLC, general financial pressure on employers and some specific sundry debts were discussed. Andrea Blanchflower asked as to why the UEA debt figure was high and Jerry White informed the Board that it was just a timing issue and the majority of the debt has now been paid. Martin Colbourne agreed to liaise with Andrea Blanchflower to understand the timing issue.

The full content of the Business Committee update was noted.

6.3.2.1 Finance Reports

(Papers 07-09)

Please see the confidential minutes.

6.3.2.2 Fees Policy for 2021/22

(Paper 10)

Jerry White informed governors that the paper previously distributed builds on the previous Fees Policy considerations presented to the Business Committee following the merger with Easton College. This paper maintains the agreed principles for each type of fee and provides proposals for the forthcoming years.

The purpose of the paper was to set out the key fee rates of the 2021/22 FE course fees and eligibility statement to provide for effective advice and guidance to be provided to students for the upcoming academic year. In addition, the paper proposes the 2022/23 HE fees in order that they might be published in a timely fashion and can inform prospective students and the funding body submissions required by HE funding bodies.

Fees Policy paper covering both 2021/22 (FE, Apprenticeships and commercial full cost) and the 2022/23 (HE and Access) fees were presented to the Board and it was explained that there are no changes to FE funding body rules for consideration this year. It was confirmed that it has been a long standing practice of the college that inflationary increases should be applied to categories of fees where the market allows this to happen, and a 0.8% increase on fees for HE was proposed for agreement by the Board using the latest Consumer Price Index inflation rate figures.

In relation to HE fees, these had been adjusted last year to rationalise the fees across the Norwich and Easton provision. It was proposed that the 2022/23 fees remain at the 2021/22 level. In addition, it was proposed that the HNC/D fees should be brought in line with degrees and agreed 18 months in advance rather than the 6 months currently.

Jerry White provided an update on the main changes to the fees and, following discussion, the Fees Policy paper for 2021/22 was given full Board approval.

6.3.2.3 Estates Strategy

(Paper 11)

The Estates Strategy Accommodation presentation was previously distributed, discussed and the following information highlighted:

The Principal informed governors that the reason that the current Estates Strategy has been brought to the Board for approval is that the College has been successful in securing Further Education Capital Allowances (FECA) grant funding, which is being used to fund estates works at each of the College's campuses. The FECA funding and a new application for capital funding requires an up-to-date Estates Strategy and therefore an interim update of the Estates Property Strategy is required until July 2021 when this will be subject to a more comprehensive review following the completion of the College's Strategic Plan.

An updated draft of the College Estates Strategy was presented. It was noted that this now

incorporates all three main campuses and reflects progress made since the most recent rounds of master planning. The Estates Strategy was agreed as a useful foundation for the more detailed review of the Estates Strategy which is planned for the summer.

Martin Colbourne updated governors on the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF), which is the next capital scheme from the DfE that follows the FECA. This is an application process rather than a funding allocation as FECA was and requires a proportion of matched funding from the college. Initial proposals have been requested by 22 March and subject to approval, these schemes would need to be procured by September 2022 and delivered by September 2024. The scope of the scheme remains on improving the condition of the college estates. This will cover the roofing asbestos removal at CCN and Easton; the repairs of the boilers and heating systems; the flat roof and curtain walls in the Norwich building; the windows facing Ipswich Road and the refurbishment of the science lab on the C floor.

Following discussion, the Estates Strategy was approved by all governors present.

6.3.3 Audit and Risk Update

It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee reviewed past audit reports and reviewed the risk updates at their last meeting which took place 2 March 2021. It was proposed at the meeting that the majority of the audit reports completed during this academic year will be subject to review at the next A&R Meeting.

It was confirmed that the external audit is now out to tender and panels will be convened in the second week of April 2021.

It was confirmed that the Committee were satisfied with all internal audits and have no concerns.

6.4 Strategic Framework

(Paper 12)

The Strategic Priorities and Targets 2021 – the Principal informed governors that the priorities and targets agreed by governors in February 2021 have now been assigned to a CLT lead and the proposed meetings to receive progress against each of the areas and the full update was provided for information. It was noted that the majority of priorities and targets are underway and making good progress.

The 2021/26 Strategy will be completed by July 2021 ready for implementation from September 2021 and the updated timeline for the Strategy Review was previously circulated and was agreed by governors in February.

The Principal informed governors that the Strategic Framework which was reviewed by the Board at the Strategy Day in January, has now been shared with all management colleagues in CCN and NES, to ask whether they felt anything was overemphasised or missing. Staff were also asked to rank the statements within each pillar in order of importance and the final version was presented for governors' approval. Under the four pillars it was noted that six priorities are set out but unfortunately the last pillar had two priorities missing in the document presented. The Principal agreed to circulate the full document to all governors for information. Following discussion, the content was noted and approval by the Board.

Planning the College's response to the FE White Paper: Skills for Jobs – the document summarising the key proposals covered in the White Paper which was prepared

by the Vice Chair was previously circulated via email and it was agreed to make the document available to Governors in the Resources section of Passageways (under DfE). Jerry White informed the Board that the College is actively engaged in considering the implications of all chapters of the White Paper and he presented a short summary of areas of activities to date.

The college now awaits the implementation plans, which are expected in the summer, the Auger response expected in the autumn term and information on the spending review.

6.5 Review of Risk Register

The Principal informed governors that the Risk Register will be reviewed at the next Board Meeting, taking place on 13 April and the updated version will be distributed to all governors prior to the meeting.

The Principal noted that FE Colleges have seen an unprecedented level of cyber attacks on their IT systems in the last week leading to colleges needing to close sites and having no access to systems. All staff have been asked to be on high alert for any emails that look suspicious or links which they weren't expecting.

6.6. Staff Well-Being Questionnaire Summary (Paper 13)

The staff well-being questionnaire summary was previously circulated, and the full content noted.

It was confirmed that the questions in the staff surveys to date, have focussed on staff wellbeing and / or COVID control measures and whilst governors have seen the survey results for each survey separately, the comparison was asked for and was now presented to governors for their information.

It was agreed that it is good to see the positive trends and noted that the exercise will be repeated in the next half term.

6.7 Governance Matters

6.7.1 Governor Status and Vacancy

Governors were informed that Sophie Gray will not be returning to the Governing Body and her name has been removed from all documentation from January 2021.

Governors were asked to approve the appointment of Philip Richardson to the Curriculum and Standards Committee as of their next meeting and this was formally approved.

6.7.2 Updated Skills Audit (Paper 14)

The Skills Audit data from March 2021 was previously distributed for information and it was noted that the latest data will be produced for review at a later date.

6.7.3 Review of Standing Orders for Committees and Board (Paper 15)

The Clerk informed governors that following the recent Governance Audit, Scrutton Bland's recommendations have been incorporated to the previously distributed standing orders for both the committee and board and are tracked for reference.

One small change was suggested and has been incorporated into the document.

6.7.4 Business Terms of Reference

(Paper 16)

The Clerk informed governors that the Business Committee's Terms of Reference have been expanded and were explained as recommended by Scrutton Bland and the Principal informed governors that when the new Code of Governance is reviewed these changes will be incorporated into the Terms of Reference.

7. SECTION B – papers in Section A are for discussion only if requested by Governors

7.1 Student Voice Report

(Paper 17)

The full Student Voice Report was previously discussed at the Curriculum and Standards Committee meeting and included a very useful update on Virtual Suggestion Form; Mental Health Awareness Week; Forum / Form feedback which had been largely positive about the online delivery during lockdown.

It was noted that students are adhering to the guidance on COVID control measures and all seem happy to be back on site. It was noted, that to date, over 8000 lateral flow tests have been conducted and it was noted that this is higher than other regional colleges. The challenge of keeping home testing going after the Easter break was discussed and it was confirmed that a campaign will be launched on social media to make sure all students complete a test before they return to college on 12 April 2021.

The full content of the report was noted, and thanks passed to Emily Staley and her team for their on-going support and well-being of students.

7.2 Well-Being and Inclusion Report

(Paper 18)

The full Well-Being and Inclusion Report was previously circulated to governors and highlights the College's safeguarding, wellbeing and equality, diversity and inclusion matters relating to staff and students throughout the year. Full discussions took place at the last Curriculum and Standards Committee Meeting which took place on 9 March 2021.

Helen Richardson-Hulme informed governors that the top 10 case types remain the same as presented at the last meeting and a continuation of the high numbers in Mental Health is seen, which is believed to be related to the pressures of lockdown. Wellbeing referrals have slowed down since Christmas, which is in line with annual trends, but despite a recent spike in referrals focussing on anxiety, overall referrals are less than we would usually expect. Helen Richardson-Hulme and her team continue to work closely with colleagues across curriculum areas to offer refresher training on identifying concerns.

The Board were informed that there have been 26 cases of bullying reported to Safeguarding since 1 September 2020 and a deep-dive review is under way through the safeguarding team. It was noted that a number of the bullying incidents were part of immature behaviour rather than systematic bullying.

Helen Richardson-Hulme informed the Board that the team continue to work with the police and external agencies on County Lines concerns with a significant increase in associated violence in the county. Concerns about possible student involvement in County Lines are identified through the college's safeguarding procedures.

At the last meeting, Helen Richardson-Hulme was asked to check the training compliance figures and the presentation of this data in future reports and it was noted that the data now includes the numbers due for training and the number of staff booked on training courses.

The Chair noted that Helen Richardson-Hulme and her team have been very supportive of students during the last months and their work and support for students is extremely important and the report gives a n excellent record of the work being undertaken during this time.

The full content of the Wellbeing and Inclusion Report was noted.

8. SECTION C – papers in Section C are for information only

8.1 Committee Minutes from Previous Meetings

8.1.1 Curriculum and Standards (Paper 19)

The unconfirmed minutes from the Curriculum and Standards Committee Meeting held in 9 March 2021 were previously distributed for information.

8.1.2 Business (Paper 20)

The unconfirmed minutes from the Business Committee Meeting held on 16 March 2021 were previously distributed and the full content noted.

8.1.3 Audit and Risk (Paper 15)

The unconfirmed minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting which took place on 2 March 2021 were previously distributed for information and the full content noted.

9. Any Other Urgent Business

The Principal thanked governors for all their support through the last year and their attendance at the additional Board meetings. The support and challenge is appreciated and noted.

All governors agreed that it would be helpful to continue the additional meetings in some form in the future.

The Chair asked for the Board’s thanks to be passed to all staff for everything they have done in response to the pandemic and for the resilience and positivity they have shown.

There was no other urgent business tabled at the meeting.

10. Confidentiality

It was agreed that agenda items 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.2.1 would remain confidential.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next CCN Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 13 April 2021 at 4:00pm, via Microsoft Teams.

All business having been concluded; the meeting closed at 6.25 pm.

Signed **Date**
(Chairman)