

CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 4:00 PM, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

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

Attendees:

Martin Colbourne (NES MD), Jerry White (Deputy Principal), Julia Buckland (Vice Principal, FE Curriculum and Quality), Clare Johnson (Clerk to the Corporation), Sue Millions (Administrator)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Nikki Gray and Emily Staley.

2. Declaration 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.

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

3. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 15 September 2020 (Paper 02)

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 were amended and agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

4. Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 15 September 2020 (Paper 03)

The unconfirmed confidential minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

5. CEO's Report (Paper 04)

The CEO Report from the Principal informed the Board how the College is continuing to operate through the Coronavirus pandemic. The following information was discussed and highlighted:

Students – over 9,000 students are currently enrolled across all sites. This figure is close to the ESFA target figure and the College is still seeing new enrolments and in-year retention rates are about where they were predicted to be at this stage. The NHS COVID-19 App is now having an impact; with one student having been contacted, now self-isolating at home.

Guidance has been issued to staff and students on the use of the NHS App and QR codes are being used for visitors at all reception areas.

Jerry White explained the processes in place on how the college will approach the liaison with and recruitment of current Year 11 students in schools, and how support materials will be used. Pre-recorded presentations for assemblies in the schools, online parents' events and virtual Open Days are being arranged to ensure opportunities are available to all current Year 11 students. It was agreed that this is challenging, with significant concern about engagement with more vulnerable groups, and there will need to be on-going support provided in the coming months.

Ofsted Visits – the Principal informed Governors that Ofsted will recommence their interim visits from 28 September and a visit to CCN is expected this term. The College has been notified that these interim visits will not include: results stated as graded judgements; any change to previously received inspection grades; the use of the Education Inspection Framework; looking at performance data, SAR or QIPs; include any lesson observation or deep dives; or require any additional documentation for the visit.

It is expected that visits will be for two days, with two HMIs. There will be about nine meetings across the two days with senior and middle leaders, employers, stakeholders, safeguarding leads, teachers and students. The meetings will be a mix of face-to-face and online, depending on the COVID Control Measures at the time of the visit. It was noted that Governors will not be required during the two days but the Principal agreed to confirm this when the confirmation email is received regarding the date of the visit.

Inspectors will explore three themes, these being:

- What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that meets the reasonable needs of students and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?
- What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of students?
- How are leaders ensuring that students are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

The Principal informed Governors that she has emailed all staff to explain the processes and to explain that interim visits are not inspections, they are professional discussions to assess what actions and steps have taken within the scope of the three themes and how the college is meeting expectations within guidance from the Department for Education and other government departments.

FE Development – the Prime Minister, has today, announced a major expansion in FE funding for adults and the launch of a Lifetime Skills Guarantee. This included an announcement that adults over the age of 23, without a full Level 3 qualification, will be able to study a technical course for free from April 2021. The details are still to be published including a list of available Level 3 courses. This announcement reflected increased government recognition of FE following the recommendations in the Auger Review of Post 18 Education published in early 2019 and leading up to the expected FE White Paper expected around the Comprehensive Spending Review next month.

Staff Survey and Site Safety – the staff survey showed that adherence to social distancing is a key area of concern with a second area being the need for enhanced cleaning.

The Principal informed Governors that having considered all the information available to the college, it has been decided to strengthen the control measure related to cleaning in the overall risk assessment.

Some departments are already asking students and staff to clean down their work area at the start and end of a session and it has been agreed that all staff and students will be required to do this. If this happens, the cleaning company can focus their cleaning resources on emptying bins, cleaning other frequently touched surfaces and communal areas. Additional cleaning hours are being provided across all sites to meet the demand of cleaning between different groups using the same room / workshop. There is no additional funding for this or any other additional expenses to cover the COVID situation which will be reflected in the emerging picture to be reviewed at the October Board Meeting. It was noted that the AOC is pushing central lobbying to acquire additional funding if possible.

Cyber Security – the Principal informed Governors that today the phone system had been subject to a attempted scam with some staff receiving one or more calls at work, or at home, attempting to get IT information or to install software on their equipment. The callers were claiming to be calling about BT accounts or calling from BT Openreach and when challenged had hung up. The Principal when informed immediately issued an email to all staff advising them to hang up if they receive any of these calls. It was noted that there have also been several incidents attacking the IT system in previous weeks, but all were effectively detected by the IT team, who are also working with JISC to check our systems.

Curriculum and Standards Committee Meeting – the Principal informed Governors that Jerry White will prepare a paper to close down last year's targets, the HE paper will include NSS results and actions and a NTTC paper, if possible. Helen Richardson Hulme will provide an IAG Update as well as covering residential provision. The TLA Report will update on priorities for the first few weeks and the rest of this term and a verbal update will be provided on Easton. The Principal will present a paper on the priority actions for this term, including governor involvement, which will then go to Business and finally to the full Board for approval.

The Chair thanked the Principal for her full and comprehensive report.

6. EOC Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire

(Paper 05)

The regularity self-assessment questionnaire associated with the 'stub accounts' for EOC, previously circulated, has been compiled by rolling forward the previous EOC questionnaire from the 2018/19 audit year and updating with any known changes that impacted the stub account period 1 August 2019 – 31 December 2019. Martin Colbourne informed the Board that as CCN was nominated as the lead successor organisation, it is their responsibility to prepare, consider and approve the answers in the questionnaire. Reassurances have been received from the following to enable CCN to complete the questionnaire:

- The experience and continuity of the CCN Board of Governors and the Senior Leadership team of EOC during the period to 31 December 2019.
- The policies and procedures in existence at EOC which operated in full up to the date of dissolution.
- The role of the ESFA attending the Board of EOC as it continued to operate under 'supervised status' during this period.
- The increased scrutiny provided throughout the merger process via external due diligence and independent bank reviews.
- No material irregular transactions or matters were brought to our attention during the merger process.
- The continuity of external audit provided by KPMG.

Martin Colbourne confirmed that the content should be reassuring to Governors and the process will be closed down as quickly and succinctly as possible.

The Chair asked Philip Richardson, as a past Governor of EOC, if he had any additional comments on the questionnaire and he confirmed that no concerns were raised by the Board during the last few months prior to the merger and all finance staff had acted professionally throughout that time.

The Chair agreed that the questionnaire is a key piece of audit evidence and following discussion, it was agreed and approved by all Governors present.

7. Further Education Capital Allocation

(Paper 06)

The Further Education Capital Allocation Summary paper was previously distributed by Martin Colbourne and the following highlighted for information and discussion:

The Further Education Capital Allocation (FECA) was announced by the Prime Minister on 30 June 2020 and the funding available to the College is to support the improvement and upgrading of the FE estate.

The Principal has previously agreed and signed the proposal and the following was discussed:

- £1,754,642 has been received for CCN and was paid in one lump sum in September 2020.
- It is for spend on substandard or deteriorating buildings – grades B, C, D (from the College FE Data Collection report) or ‘through a more detailed survey conducted by the College.
- Monitoring returns will be completed: the first one by 16 October 2020 explaining how the college intend to use the funding and the second by 31 March 2021 confirming the spend.
- The guidance states that ‘Colleges should contribute up to 25% in match funding if that’s possible’. It was noted that advice will be sought from the ESFA about this including on how this would be enforced. The CCN contribution of 25% would be £439k. It was noted that the college would normally expect to spend around £750k p.a. on maintenance and upgrades of the estate.
- All colleges are expected to have an up-to-date Estates Strategy approved by the Board in the last 3 years. The Principal informed the Board that the most current version will be discussed at a future CCN Business Committee Meeting and approved at the Board Meeting taking place in December 2020.
- It was noted that funding cannot be used on improving estate not for FE use, for buying land or for rent / service charges.

It was noted that this is the first of three phases of capital funding promised by DfE with the second phase being allocated by the DfE and the third phase involving a bidding process. A coherent programme of work is planned as followed which was discussed and approved by Governors:

Norwich site - £1,179k for Cromer building flat roof and skylights; AA corridor windows; Blakeney and Cromer heating system. Within this allocation £500k has been included (including VAT) for Cromer roof repairs and £408k (including VAT) to replace the Blakeney and Cromer heating/building management system. These are the two largest individual schemes and will require further consideration and building specifications. The Cromer roof repairs will be prioritised, and the College would request permission to be flexible

between schemes should monies need to be reallocated; various boiler upgrades, heat exchanges, and resolving compartment breaches in plant and switch rooms.

Paston site - £172k to replace various column radiators / heat emitters and three new boilers on the Lawns site and various masonry, timber and plaster repairs.

Easton site - £404k for the poultry unit – asbestos removal and new extractor fan; Alston Hall / Garnett – new boilers, pumps, flues and HVAC controls; Jubilee – Air con units; Sports centre - new boilers, pumps, flues, HVAC controls and air con units.

It was noted that the proposals will be packaged together to enable easier procurement, e.g. boiler and heating. The works will be tendered as soon as possible to enable delivery to commence in December through to March. Governors expressed concerns about the short time for the procurement and delivery of the work programme and the ability to complete this by 31 March 2021. It was queried whether work had to be completed or just contracted by this date. Jerry White stated that the college have previous experience of managing complex work whilst students are on site, so the college is confident they can deliver.

All Governors confirmed that they are happy with the proposals set out in the paper and give approval for the tendering to go ahead.

The Principal informed Governors that she hopes that the capital allocation could be an annual event and would give the college a long term vision for the future.

8. Chairman's Update

The Chair again thanked everyone for their continuous commitment and support of both students and staff and noted that he was pleased with the current enrolment figures despite the challenges being faced.

The Chair asked if any Governors had a question for the College's management team and the following questions were discussed and answered:

Persimmon Update – Martin Colbourne informed the Board that Chris Nix is on a two week, well deserved break, but before his holiday he met with LLP to take stock of the current situation and they will be reconvening again in mid-October. Bidwells have gone back to Persimmons to discuss and challenge their revised lower pricing and to secure a revised price. Representatives of Rampton Trust have formally gone back to Carter's regarding the paperwork, but no decision has been received as to whether the Rampton Trust are in or out of the process moving forward. Bidwells will also pick up with the Local Authority what planning permission would be needed for a smaller development outside of the main project.

Asylum Seekers – it was noted that a number of applications have been received and a member of staff has been seconded to Norfolk County Council to assist college staff, particularly with pre-literacy support. Early literacy will be delivered by the ESOL staff on site. The use of the Virtual School is being revisited and ads have been placed for additional ESOL teachers and a large number of applications have been received to date.

Staff – the question was asked of the Principal as to what it is like to teach in the current climate and it was noted that staff have adapted well to the curriculum. There are many examples being seen of staff pulling together and finding different ways to deliver their teaching and learning. Staff are finding it difficult to “teach from the front”, especially as staff development for a number of years has been aimed at the opposite. A minority of students are struggling with anxiety and support is in place.

The Principal also reported that there had been positive feedback from employers regarding the apprenticeship off-the-job training. Apprenticeship starts have been lower this year as was expected with some sectors recruiting well. It was thought that numbers may increase during the year as a result of, or following on from, various government support packages.

It has been possible to continue to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the college using a variety of evidence and managers have started learning walks from the corridors given that room doors have to remain open.

The Principal informed Governors that Laura McLean is pulling together evidence of how the college has used the different funding streams and also implemented the government guidance to the benefit of students and the wider community. This will inform the conversations with inspectors during an Ofsted visit. It was agreed that this would be a good document for the Board to see and potentially for the college to share with the local media in the future.

9. Any Other Business

Digitech Building – it was confirmed that the project is progressing, and a further planning meeting is taking place next week. Jerry White noted that the results of the additional bids to the Town Fund, and regarding T Levels, should hopefully be announced in the next few weeks.

Future Meetings – the Principal will send out Teams invitations to all meetings taking place this term shortly.

10. Confidentiality

There were no items deemed confidential at today's meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next CCN Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 20 October 2020 at 4:00pm, via Microsoft Teams.

All business having been concluded; the meeting closed at 5.25 pm.

Signed Date
(Chairman)