

Minutes of a Meeting of the CORPORATION held on

Wednesday 28th February 2024

at College Business Centre

24/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. She informed Members of personal news from the former Chair. A card from Members would be sent. She also informed Members of the resignation of Prof Adam Amara for professional reasons.

There were no declarations of interest.

25/24 APPROVAL OF THE NON CONFIDENTIAL AND CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 24 JANUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held 24 January 2024 were approved as a true record.

26/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 24 JANUARY 2024

The Director of Governance reported on Matters Arising. She drew attention to items to be actioned or in progress for the current academic year. She highlighted responses to queries raised as follows: a query had been raised regarding the reporting of payroll costs and the Director of Finance responded that the section referred to related to cashflow; and a query had been raised regarding depreciation and the Director of Finance responded that there was higher depreciation but there was also higher income to offset as a result of project spends. There was nil impact on the year's results.

The Chair requested timescales for actions. The Director of Governance would add a target date column to the Actions Log and where dates had not previously been set in Corporation meetings she would request the senior leadership team (SLT) to confirm these on the Log.

27/24 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Draft minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 29 November 2023 and the Capital Committee meeting of 13 December 2023 had been circulated to Members.

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that the meeting held 29 November had largely been concerned with all of the requirements for the approval of the Annual Financial Statements. She reported a high level of assurance from testing and internal and external audit.

The Chair of the Capital Committee reported on the meeting held 13 December 2023. There were a number of capital projects ongoing which were being well managed. There were ongoing discussions regarding the boundary ditch.

28/24 CHAIR'S BUSINESS/RATIFICATION OF CHAIR'S ACTION/GOVERNOR APPROVALS

The Chair reported on the External Governance Review. She expressed her thanks to those Members making themselves available for a workshop on this on 12 March 2023.

Referencing the resignation of Prof Adam Amara she stated that it was incumbent on all Members to consider and recommend potential Governors, in particular there was a need to recruit Governors with expertise in teaching and learning.

She reported on the approval of the appointment of Mrs Sandie Paice as Governor given by email following interview and recommendation for appointment by the Search and Governance Committee.

The Corporation APPROVED the appointment of Mrs Sandie Paice as Governor for a 4 year term from 14 February 2024 to 13 February 2028.

Mrs Sandie Paice joined the meeting.

29/24 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT REPORT: PATHWAYS

Mrs Clair Etchell-Johnson, Head of Learning, Access, Foundation Learning and High Needs, joined the meeting. Four short films made with Pathways students were shown to Governors. These included a virtual tour of the Pathways department, and of the sensory room, and interviews with the students.

The students reported what they liked about College: friendships, support, helping students to do their best, the sensory room and movement studio, the staff, the accessibility, and breaktimes; what they feel could be better: they would like to do work experience outside of the College, and for their bus to be bigger and more accessible. They also spoke about their aspirations which included working with children, at the hospital, working in a library, working with animals, working as a carer in the community, and working in the travel industry as a train driver.

The Chair noted the Outstanding Ofsted grade for the Pathways department, and praised the films as an excellent way of reviewing the provision and hearing from students. She asked if the sensory room was a planned activity or a place to go when students need to relax. Ms Etchell-Johnson responded that it was utilised both as a planned activity and for relaxation.

The Teaching Staff Governor suggested that departmental reports be received in the same meeting as the student engagement report on a given department. The Director of Governance outlined the process as giving opportunity for students to give their views first and then for the relevant department to respond in the next session. It was noted that the process will be reviewed for the next academic year following its introduction this year.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

Ms Etchell-Johnson left the meeting.

30/24 DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW – PUBLIC SERVICES

The Assistant Principal (HE, Academic and Vocational) presented the departmental review of Public Services in the absence of the Head of Learning who had submitted the report. The Head of Learning sent her apologies as she was attending an External Quality Review (EQR). The Assistant Principal reported that the current departmental self-assessment grade is grade one and this has been maintained from the previous year. The area is also on track to maintain this in 2023/24. She reported on the

departmental response to the areas for improvement raised in the student engagement report: the Public Services students are now in the same classroom for 75% of their time at College; a structured 1:1 tutorial programme has been implemented for all learners; and the teaching team has reflected on the student's request for further team-based activities and are reviewing the curriculum delivery to facilitate more group projects to integrate team-based learning.

A Member asked whether the students feel that the actions reported to Governors have addressed the points they raised. The Principal reported that we have confirmation that the approach being taken is providing a beneficial improvement to the area. It was agreed that student response should be added to future reports.

The Chair invited one of the Student Governors who is a student in the department to comment. She reported that the course is going very well and referred to recent volunteering planting hazel trees and how this had been a beneficial team-bonding experience. In response to a query from the Chair, she confirmed that the designated classrooms are an improvement on previous arrangements.

A Member referred to an article reporting on the students' work with Wight Nature Fund and commented that this should be celebrated. The Chair commented that it was good to celebrate such achievements especially during Colleges Week.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

31/24 TERMLY SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The Assistant Principal (SEND and Foundation Skills) presented the termly safeguarding report. She provided an update on staff training. She also reported on feedback provided by the Student Governors and through a student focus group.

Student Governors had suggested alternative feedback mechanisms, for example, where students may wish to remain anonymous if concerned about a peer. She was reviewing how contact could be made, and noted that students had expressed a preference for a message system. There was also a suggestion for posters to be displayed on the back of toilet doors.

Further training had been held on the recent Staff Development Day and the safeguarding team were attending team meetings to pick up any issues locally. The systems inventory was up and running, and MyConcern had been rolled out as part of the Staff Development Day. eTrackr would remain in place with a complete switchover to MyConcern scheduled for September 2024. This would enable time to iron out any glitches and consider the filter categories.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead Governor reported that she continues to meet with the Assistant Principal on a termly basis. She commented that it would be helpful to have comparative information on the numbers of vulnerable young people in order to see trends. She added that there appeared to be an increased number of reports but a similar number of students and stated that she suspected this was due to the introduction of MyConcern. The Assistant Principal acknowledged that this was the case and confirmed that there was not a deterioration. She stated that she would need to consider how to capture this effectively in the annual report as the College moves across to MyConcern. There was a triage system which was more effective for reporting and monitoring.

The Teaching Staff Governor asked if MyConcern was being used for apprentices. The Assistant Principal responded that Smart Assessor was currently being used for apprentices but that they would be included on MyConcern. The Teaching Staff Governor welcomed this and commented that raising safeguarding concerns was one of the difficulties in apprenticeships.

A Member asked whether Governors needed to sign in and out using the new visitor system and it was confirmed that they do not need to use this as long as they have a Governor ID lanyard.

A Member of the Audit Committee reported assurance given as part of the internal audit of safeguarding.

The Chair supporting the request made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead Governor requested that future reports include tabular information providing data on student numbers over a number of years in order to easily identify trends.

A Member asked for a definition of Early Help. The Assistant Principal responded that this meant that the student was at intervention stage with social services but was not on plan.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

32/24 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS REPORT

The Vice Principal presented the quality improvement progress report. He reported that there were five targets derived from the self-assessment report (SAR) process for the academic year 2022/23 as well as incorporating the main themes for improvement from the Ofsted inspection in September 2023. The targets were outlined as follows: 1) Leaders and managers to ensure that students build confidence, self-esteem and develop positive attitudes and behaviours towards English and maths that improves attendance, student satisfaction, and progress and achievement; 2) Leaders and managers to ensure effective development of a skilled workforce, with staff with a high level of subject knowledge, and teaching and learning skills; 3) Leaders and managers to ensure a proportionate representation of stakeholders are effectively involved in the design and implementation of all curriculum areas, in the planning for the 2024/25 academic year, to prepare students for further education, employment and work; 4) Leaders and managers to ensure that all adult learners and apprentices benefit from a personal development programme of learning that helps them develop their wider skills and interests; and 5) Leaders and managers to ensure that all apprentices currently past planned end date (PPED) are supported to achieve and for those who are due to finish this academic year, achieve in a timely manner.

He outlined interventions to improve English and maths and in particular improving attendance for which bespoke measures had been put in place. Looking ahead to next year's curriculum the intention was to focus on bespoke programmes that contextualise learning as much as possible.

The Vice Principal reported on work around continuing professional development (CPD). New managers are supported with detailed development plans.

Employer engagement events had been launched during National Apprenticeship Week. Thirty employers had attended the event and there had been positive feedback. The intention was for employer engagement with curriculum design considering what employers are facing now but also

what they will need in 5-10 years' time. There was a forthcoming event on Health and Social Care and companies would be showcasing new software in this area.

An advance calendar was being put in place for skills awards.

A comprehensive plan has been put in place to address and support learners past their planned end date.

A Member asked how many companies had been represented at the recent employer engagement event. The Assistant Principal (HE, Academic and Vocational) responded that 18-20 companies had been represented at the event.

A Member asked if there was any evidence that the interventions to improve English and maths were effective. The Vice Principal responded that attendance had increased and that this was a good indicator for improvement. The Member enquired whether students are surveyed and the Vice Principal responded that this was the case and the survey had just closed and would be reported at a future meeting. The Member commented that he had read an article arguing that a focus on trying to get students to improve in English and maths qualifications was wrong-headed and forcing students to fail. The Vice Principal responded that the concern was that this may result in more children not in education, employment or training (NEET). However it was important to continue to develop English and maths skills though the requirements were restrictive and colleges may prefer to develop a different approach to improving skills in this area.

The Chair welcomed the report and requested more tabular data to be able to identify trends. She also requested less jargon.

Referring to appraisals in the report, the Chair asked if there was any evidence of improvement and links with organisational goals. The Vice Principal responded that work was underway with human resources (HR) on this. He reported that with the appraisal window spread across the year this was difficult to manage and monitor. There would be training for appraisers and quality checks would be carried out on appraisals.

Referring to the participation of stakeholders in 35% of curriculum areas, the Chair enquired what the target was in this respect, and the Vice Principal responded that the target was 100%. The Chair noted the ambassadorial role that Governors could play and offered Governor support in this respect. She did not consider that Governors were being utilised as well as they could be in this area adding that there needed to be clear messaging for Governors. The Assistant Principal (HE, Academic and Vocational) acknowledged that there could be more information provided to Governors in terms of which curriculum areas are struggling with the remit to engage with employers in curriculum design and that Governors support in progressing this could be improved.

The Chair requested a clear dashboard regarding apprenticeship end dates and the number of PPED apprentices.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

With the agreement of the Chair the agenda was taken out of order.

33/24 GENDER PAY REPORT

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the Gender Pay Report. This was a prescribed report and a legal duty which had been considered by the Audit Committee in its meeting earlier today and was recommended for approval by Corporation.

There was some discussion on the report and it was acknowledged that the prescribed style may not answer the question of whether men and women are paid equally as well as one would like, it was also considered to be 'old-fashioned'. The Chair responded that whilst the report was prescribed this did not prevent the College and Corporation from addressing areas through Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) reporting and progress. She noted that the Committee had queried how many enquiries had been raised as a result of publication of the report on the College's website as required and the answer given had been that there had been nil enquiries.

The Corporation APPROVED the Gender Pay Report.

The agenda returned to order.

34/24 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The College Campus and Health & Safety Manager, and the Director of Finance joined the meeting. The College Campus and Health & Safety Manager presented the revised Health and Safety Policy which was reviewed annually and there were a number of changes reported in the chronology. She noted that there was a separate policy covering apprentices. She outlined work in emergency preparedness and access controls. There was a new lockdown alarm system which had been tested and improvements were being worked on in relation to the volume of the alarm. There had been work on disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks for regular visitors. There had also been significant work undertaken regarding site safety.

A Member asked if the College does any reporting regarding accidents, incidents and illnesses. The College Campus and Health & Safety Manager confirmed that there is an accident form for accidents occurring on site and that there are new processes in place to report on these to SLT on a monthly basis as well as the annual report to Governors. The Member suggested a QR code or similar on display in common areas. The College Campus and Health & Safety Manager welcomed the suggestion and would look into this.

The Teaching Staff Governor noted that COVID-19 had been removed and stated that the flowchart had been helpful to staff. The College Campus and Health & Safety Manager responded that the Policy had been amended to address pandemic generally but that the flowchart was still in place. In response to a further question from the Member, it was confirmed that the flowchart procedure should still be followed in the event of COVID-19 or any other respiratory illness.

The Member referred to risk assessments for workplace stress and the Principal responded that this came under HR and not Health and Safety.

The Chair noted that the Policy reminds Governors of their responsibilities at section 3.1.

There was some discussion regarding policy review process and the importance of effective implementation with the Principal concluding that this was why she had implemented monthly reports to SLT in this area. A data dashboard had been implemented to identify any themes arising.

The Support Staff Governor requested a link to supporting policies within the Policy. The Principal responded that online links were being addressed.

The Corporation APPROVED the Health and Safety Policy.

The College Campus and Health & Safety Manager left the meeting.

35/24 MONTHLY FINANCE REPORT: MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Director of Finance presented the Monthly Finance Report. The Finance report can be summarised as follows:

1. The management accounts report the ACTUAL position for the 6 months to date (to January).
2. As we always do, we are reporting the position against the budget agreed in July 2023. We are currently showing an operating surplus before structuring costs of £460k (versus a budget surplus of £138k), which is a £322k FAVOURABLE variance.
3. This has been driven by the following key items:
 - a. INCOME:
 - b. The ESFA allocation is higher: £247k being for the pay award (offset by increased pay), and £192k higher ESFA allocation than budgeted
 - c. Tuition fee income is showing some favourable variances (international 35k, full cost income £46k) – which are offset by lower advance learner loans (giving rise to an adverse variance of £54k)
 - d. Interest income is £48k higher than budgeted – in part due to the increased interest rate, but also due to volumes of cash held for projects which has not yet been spent, and a higher opening cash balance due to last years' surplus
4. PAY – Pay costs for the year are showing an £89k favourable variance for the year, due to :
 - a. non-recruited vacancies
 - b. agency costs for some non-recruited vacancies, thus giving rise to higher non pay (£44k for the year to date)
 - c. The favourable variance has been partially offset by increased pay (funded by the ESFA pay grant)
5. NON PAY – Non pay costs are £272k higher than planned for the year to date – mainly due to increased exam costs, and franchise costs being higher than budget. Both of these have been accounted for in the latest estimate.
6. BALANCE SHEET – key items include:
 - a. DEBTORS - total debtor days stand at 81 days, compared to 86 days in January 2023. In terms of debt value, this years' total debt stands at £310k, versus £476k in January 2023.
7. CASH – the total cash balance is £6.8m, of which £5.1m is college own funds (excluding unspent project monies). In January 2023, college own funds totalled £4.6m – but the ESFA phasing of cash receipts has changed, so it's not a like for like
8. COVENANTS – as noted before, the covenants are only measured by Lloyds on the 31st July. If it were based on January actuals, all covenants would be met, with some healthy head-rooms.
9. FINANCIAL HEALTH – the current financial health of the college would be outstanding.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

36/24 LATEST ESTIMATE

The Director of Finance presented the Latest Estimate. This can be summarised as follows:

The first run of the year forecasts a LOSS of £103k.

- a. Whilst this would not breach the covenants this year, the following two years would need to record a surplus.
- b. However, to ensure a financial health of good (180 points), either savings or additional income of £190k would be required.
- c. Forecasting a potential loss is common at this time of the year, and as noted in the paper, there are a number of areas for improved profitability, including:
 - i. Increased full cost income
 - ii. Further non-recruitment of vacancies
 - iii. Savings in non-pay

A Member asked the Director of Finance to expand a little more on exam costs and franchise costs and the phasing of these. The Director of Finance responded that there had been more end point assessments and therefore exam costs had been higher. The Chief Operating Officer added that there had also been a larger number of students with grade 3 at GCSE and therefore there was a larger resit programme this year. The Chair enquired whether this would be the case every year and therefore need to be budgeted for. The Chief Operating Officer responded that the November resit programme would continue and that the budget would be frontloaded to take account of this. With regards to franchise costs, contracts had approved increases to franchise provision, there would be some adjustment and this would be worked on for the next Latest Estimate, she reported. It was reported that the number of students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) could not be confirmed at the time of budget approval and that efforts were being made to improve in this respect.

A Member asked what the implications were of a financial health assessment of Requires Improvement. The Director of Finance responded that financial health is measured by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and that previously an assessment of Requires Improvement would lead to some form of intervention. The Member asked if this point was reached would the Covenants still be met. The Director of Finance confirmed that they would be. The Member enquired regarding contingency. The Director of Finance responded that there was contingency remaining in non-pay costs of £75k. The Member commented that this was not sufficient and asked the Director of Finance how confident she felt. She responded that she was quite confident and believed that there was still a number of actions that could be taken at this point. Another Member commented that it was only 1% of total budget that the College needed to 'move the dial on'. Another Member commented that this was a good focussing measure.

The Principal drew Governors attention to the planned curriculum efficiency review and assured Governors that all steps were being taken to help achieve a better end of year position and shore up for the future.

A Member commented that it was important to undertake work on the financial impact of the Strategic Plan.

A Member enquired the cost of end point assessments and the Principal responded that this could be up to £400 per student.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

37/24 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented her report updating Governors on an apprenticeship review; the proposed Advanced British Standard; the Further Education (FE) Commissioner's report; staff wellbeing initiatives; finance and funding; and employer engagement.

The FE Commissioner's report would be added to the reading room and a link circulated to Members. The Vice Principal is formulating an action plan. The Principal reported that the report had been helpful. She urged Members to read the full report and a summary was included in the Principal's report.

The Principal gave an overview of staff wellbeing initiatives and interventions put in place to address workload stress and anxiety.

She provided a summary of current performance against funding contracts and outlined work underway in employer engagement. Governors would be invited to events and a calendar created to enable earlier planning.

A Member noted the lower number of apprenticeship starts outlined in the report at 7.1. She commented that she was not aware of this and queried why apprenticeships were generating over budget despite fewer apprenticeship starts. The Principal responded that last year the College had budgeted low but had seen an increase in apprenticeship starts. The focus in the current academic year had been to improve the quality of apprenticeships. She highlighted to Members that slipping out of funding increased financial risk. There were also a number of factors in the reduction in apprenticeships including T levels; apprenticeships could start within year and a new intake was planned; and the employer engagement team were actively promoting courses on offer. Therefore, she concluded, there was a lot on offer and it was important to be mindful of the best options for students on a case by case basis. She expected to meet target on apprenticeships and assured Governors that recommendations made by the FE Commissioner in this respect had been implemented. The apprenticeship review would be made available to Members as soon as the data had been anonymised.

A Member noted the proposed focus on artificial intelligence (AI) at the forthcoming Governor Contact Day. He enquired whether there were free courses on AI that could be tailored to 'silver surfers'. The Principal confirmed free courses in this area but tailored to job-specific skills. She added that she would be presenting to the Chamber of Commerce on AI with a focus on small businesses and that this would build the reputation of the College. The Principal added that a calculation of staff time saved through use of AI was 5.7 hours per week. The Member commented that he would welcome any opportunities to learn in this area. The Vice Principal would be happy to lead a session for Governors on AI. The Director of Governance welcomed this and suggested a 'lunch and learn' session that Members could join online over lunch.

The Corporation CONSIDERED the report.

38/24 GOVERNOR CONTACT DAY

A draft proposal had been circulated for Governor Contact Day on 24 April. The Chair noted a typo in the report giving the erroneous date of 21 April. The proposed focus of the day was on AI development. Lunch has been booked in the restaurant for Governors and will be factored into the timetable.

A Student Governor asked whether Student Governors should attend. The Principal responded that Student Governors were welcome to attend and enquired if the date was problematic. The Student Governor responded that it coincided with her Duke of Edinburgh Award Gold Expedition and therefore her apologies were noted.

A Member commented that it was an interesting agenda but queried the level of Governor contact. The Principal responded that this would be looked at but the focus in the draft proposal was on walking through the proposed theme.

The Corporation NOTED the report.

39/24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

40/24 SELF ASSESSMENT OF MEETING

The Chair led Members in a self assessment of the meeting asking where the Corporation had added value, what impact it had, and how strategic had the meeting been. She invited SLT to comment. It was agreed that a shorter agenda had enabled focused discussion and feedback on report formats had been helpful. The suggestion for a QR code in relation to Health and Safety had added value.

A Member noted that the previous meeting had been more strategic in content. Another Member commented that the Corporation was not micromanaging and stated that management responses to queries had given her confidence. The Support Staff Governor stated that she felt she had points to raise but didn't necessarily feel that Corporation was the right forum in all cases. She raised how Student Governors could be supported in contributing further. Following some discussion it was agreed that an agenda item would be added: Student Governor report and that this would provide a dedicated space for Student Governors to raise a suggested three key points relating to the business of the meeting. This did not require a written report and was rather intended to create a dedicated space for Student Governors.

41/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 27th March 2024 at 4.00pm