



HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE

CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday 1 July 2021

Present:

Nazir Afzal (Chair), Helen Barton, Julia Heap (Principal / Chief Executive), Susan Ayres, Clive Reid, Steve Taylor, Greg Walsh, Jennifer Worsdale, Diana McCloskey, Jim Gallagher, Paul Dixon, Sarfaraz Akram, Martin Salins, Jacqui Mellor

In Attendance:

Jo Bentley (Executive Director of Finance, Estates & Risk Management)
Andrea Murphy (Deputy Principal)
Mathew Taylor (Executive Director Performance & Planning)
Caroline Street (Executive Director Business & Student Support)
Fatema Hussein (Clerk to the Corporation),

Meeting Commenced: 5.00pm

Meeting Ended: 7.00pm

Attendance: 80%

Quorum 8

1. Apologies for Absence

The new Board member Sarfaraz Akram was welcomed and introduced to the Board.

Apologies were received and accepted from Vanda Hagan, Cathy Berry and Rob Jones.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare any direct, indirect, personal, pecuniary or prejudicial interest on any item on the agenda.

There were no declarations.

3. Approval of the Minutes – 13th May 2021

Agreed that: the minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2021 are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The action progress log was reviewed, and it was noted that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

5. Committee Minutes

The Board received the minutes of the Committee meetings with the following points highlighted by the Committee Chairs:

Audit Committee 10th June 2021

- The internal audit plan and strategy had been considered and was being recommended to the Board
- Wylie & Bissett had presented their proposals for the financial statements audit and advised that some additional work would be required this year in relation to funding assurance
- This was as a result of changes that had been implemented by the ESFA
- Reports from both the internal and external auditors during the last 12 months had been positive

Employment & Finance Committee 10th June 2021

- The Committee had discussed the 2021/22 budget and financial plan and there were no issues to bring to the Board's attention

Search & Governance Committee 16th June 2021

- The Committee had reviewed the results of the Governor Self-assessment and a number of suggestions had been made in response to the comments from Governors
- Governor Terms of Office had been reviewed and a recommendation would be made to the Board in the Autumn term.

Standards Committee 16th June 2021

- The Committee had discussed the lack of adaptations for English & Maths functional skills, ESOL and Access courses and the negative impact that this had on learners.

Governor Questions

Q. Had any representations concerning this been made by other Colleges?

A. AOC had made representations on behalf of all Colleges as this was a national issue, but had not had any success in changing the decision

6. Principal's Report

The Principal & Chief Executive presented her report with the following points highlighted to the Board:

F.E. White Paper

Following the publication of the F.E. White Paper, the Government presented to parliament the first draft of the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill which will support the

implementation of the relevant reforms within the White Paper.

Meeting with Secretary of State for Education – Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson MP

- The Principal and Deputy Principal had “virtually” met with the Secretary of State for Education, Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson MP on 24th May
- Discussions had primarily focused on T Levels, but College had used the opportunity to broaden the discussion to include the current review on Applied General Qualifications and English and Maths
- The meeting was positive and a great opportunity to share experiences and provide challenge from both parties.
- An invitation of a “physical” visit to the College had also been sent to the Secretary of State

Hopwood Old Hall Estate

Discussed under reserved business.

7. Governor Links – Updates from Governors re Link Meetings

It was noted that some link meetings due to take place in June would be held in the Autumn term due to staff changes in those areas.

The Principal stated that Rob Jones who was the link Governor for the Technology Centre had been very supportive of this area. He had visited College last week and agreed to chair the Employer Board for Technology and Advanced Manufacturing.

The Chair stated that any Governors who wanted to form a link with a particular curriculum area contacted the Clerk to the Corporation.

8. Governor Self-Assessment Results

The Clerk advised that the Search & Governance Committee had considered the comments made by members and put forward suggestions to further strengthen the governance of the College.

The Chair stated that some Governors had expressed a desire to return to in person meetings and it was hoped that this would be possible in the new academic year.

Board members endorsed the suggestions made by the Committee.

8.1 Chair Evaluation Results

Members reviewed the results of the Chair evaluation survey. The Chair thanked everyone for their support and advised that their feedback and suggestions would be considered and implemented where appropriate.

8. Fees Policy

It was noted that the policy had been updated to reflect changes in funding guidance. No significant changes were proposed.

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and approved the Fees Policy

9. Strategic Plan 2021 - 2022

The Principal presented the draft strategic plan for 2020-2025. It was noted that:

- Meetings had been held with a number of key stakeholders including Governors, staff and students prior to the development of the plan
- The proposed vision was “Bringing out the best in you”, and the plan was underpinned by the following key strategic intentions and targets:

Strategic Intentions

- Providers of Excellent Education and Skills
- Champions of inclusivity
- Drivers of economic prosperity
- Guardians of our environment

Strategic Targets

- Increase of Post 16 attainment levels across the borough
- No attainment gaps
- Governors and workforce reflect our community
- Increase in average wages in Rochdale
- Establish College carbon baseline and improve

Governor Questions

Q. Was there any possibility of seeking some further student feedback?

A. Most students had now finished but a discussion had been held with the student representatives

RESOLVED:

The Board endorsed the strategic intentions and draft plan for 2020-2025

10. Budget and Financial Plan 2021-2022

The Executive Director of Finance, Estates & Risk Management presented the budget and financial plan and explained that:

- An underlying break-even position excluding ‘Exceptional’ COVID-19 related costs & FRS102 pension costs was being proposed for 2021/22
- A contingency of £218k had been included for Covid related costs
- ‘Outstanding’ financial health would be maintained throughout the period of the plan
- Capital Investment of £11.67m (before capital receipts of £3.175m) had been included in 2020/21 & £2.25m 2022/23 as part of Estate investment strategy
- Cash days would remain well within the 30-day target throughout the life of the plan
- As the College continued to invest in several capital projects, the level of cash reserves did reduce to £7.9m by 31 July 2022 and increased to £8.8m in July 2023
- The conditions of bank loan covenants would also be met
- The budget had been set on the ‘Medium’ case scenario

- The 16-18 funding allocation for 2021/22 had been confirmed and based on 3,010 learners; a growth of 242 learners on the previous year's allocation
- GMCA devolved adult funding including Community learning had been included at 2020/21 levels for the life of the financial plan with a contingency for under delivery of £427k, as this was one of the College's largest financial risks in 2020/21

Governor Questions

Q. Would an allowance be included for Covid contingency costs in future years?

A. An allowance had been included in next year's budget and some Covid adaptations would be remaining in place moving forwards

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and approved the 2-year financial plan and associated planning assumptions for 2021/22 – 2022/23 including the Revenue and Capital Budget for 2021/22

Governors acknowledged that the College was a 'Going Concern' based on the budget and financial plans presented

11. Risk Appetite Statement

The risk appetite statement was presented and reviewed

RESOLVED:

Governors approved the statement and agreed that the risk appetite should be set at low. However, in certain circumstances such as undertaking new activity, a balanced approach could be adopted.

12. Governor Code of Conduct

The Clerk explained that the Code of Conduct was based on a model code devised by Eversheds, and all existing and new Board members would be requested to abide by it.

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and approved the Code of Conduct.

13. Teaching, Learning & Assessment Update

The Deputy Principal presented the update on Teaching, Learning & Assessment with the following points highlighted to the Committee:

- Following a rigorous interview process, all 3 Centre Director posts had been filled, with all offers having been accepted
- Most Teacher Assessed grades had been uploaded by the deadline of 18th June
- Some curriculum areas (electrical, plumbing, ESOL and functional skills) would continue to assess after this deadline due to lack of adaptations in these areas
- The Senior Leadership Team had met with Centre Directors and Programme Managers to check that the assessment process had been adhered to by each curriculum area

- The uncertainty this year would make it much more difficult to predict achievement rates than in previous years
- The following areas have not had any adaptations (or very minimal adaptations) to their assessment processes:
 - English and Maths functional skills
 - Access to HE
 - ESOL
 - Plumbing and Electrical diplomas
- It would not be possible to have any concrete achievement rate predictions until after the Board meeting
- In addition to the strategic discussions with various stakeholders, the Principal and Deputy Principal had recently met with a representative from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy and the Director of Strategy from the Institute of Apprenticeships
- The meeting was extremely productive and based around the work that Hopwood Hall was undertaking with local and regional business partners

Steve Taylor left the meeting at this point

14. Financial Update incl Capital Projects

The following update was provided by the Executive Director of Finance, Estates & Risk Management:

- The full year forecast operating surplus had improved to £1.14m (before COVID exceptional costs & FRS102).
- Latest estimates indicated that College should deliver 91% of the AEB contract value and the year-end forecast would improve further if the provision for claw back of AEB under delivery was no longer required
- Cash reserves and liquidity both remained strong
- Additional capital grants of £1.428m from the ESFA has also contributed to the improved cashflow position by 31 July 2021 to £14.8m

RESOLVED:

Board members:

- Accepted the April Management accounts and noted the Year-end operating surplus position of £1.14m (before Covid exceptional costs & FRS102)
- Approved that equipment purchases of <£1k allocation could be increased in year by up to £214k. This would allow for equipment to be purchased in this year and enable staff to plan and prepare for new courses in advance
- Approved the increase to the Capital budget by £83k which has been funded from ESFA Specialist equipment grant and note that additional T equipment planned for 2021/22 may be brought forward in 2020/21 and financed from the total specialist equipment grant of £428k.
- Formally approved the submission of 2 additional capital bids from the Post 16 Capacity Fund with College match funding of 16%

Rochdale B Block

Board members were informed that:

- A meeting had been held with the DfE yesterday to discuss the level of contribution required from the College and issue a Memorandum of Understanding in order to progress the scheme
- The College had recommended a contribution of £750k
- DfE had advised that a contribution of £1 million plus VAT was being requested with £750,000 plus VAT as the lowest acceptable level that would be considered
- The total build cost was estimated at £16 million

RESOLVED:

After careful consideration, members agreed that the lower amount of £750k plus vat (£900k) contribution could be supported by the College. It was agreed that the additional £150k contribution above the original business case submitted by the College, would be found from savings identified within the College's capital programme.

15. Risk Register – Top 14 Risks

It was noted that there were currently 14 high risks which were being managed and monitored. The risk registers had been reviewed and discussed in detail at the Risk management Group on 24 May & Audit Committee on 10 June.

16. Safeguarding Update

The following update was provided by the Executive Director Business & Student Support:

- The Principal had recently been accepted to join the Rochdale Community Safety Board
- Senior Safeguarding overview meetings had been introduced this academic year involving the Safeguarding and Welfare Manager (DSO), Head of Student Support and Equality (Senior DSO), Executive Director for Business and Students Support (SLT lead for safeguarding) and the Principal
- Safeguarding cases and issues had been discussed and actions identified and taken at the above meetings
- The attendance and engagement of vulnerable learners was also being monitored through review meetings with the Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal
- This would help to ensure that full support was being given to vulnerable learners where their attendance had caused concern
- A Safeguarding Risk Register was to be introduced for 2021/22 as an additional assurance method and reviewed as part of the monitoring and assurance processes
- There had been an increase in both EHCP and High Needs learners this academic year which had resulted in an increase in demand for learning support
- Capacity for supporting student mental health had been increased this academic year with the introduction of the Pastoral Welfare Officer who acted as the first line of support to learners with clear signposting to more intensive support (College counselling).
- Through funding received from the AoC, College had been able to increase its counselling support from five days to eight days for much of the academic year
- College had also invested in a system called CPOMs (Child Protection Online Monitoring System) as a tool for monitoring and reporting on pastoral, welfare and

safeguarding concerns.

- CPOMs would be valuable in providing full and thorough transition information for new learners joining the College from schools for the 2021/22 academic year as most schools were using this system
- The head of student support and equality (senior designated safeguarding lead) had tendered her resignation to take up another position

Governor Questions

Q. Ofsted was to look at how cases of sexual harassment were dealt with as part of the inspection process. How was College planning to address this?

A. This was currently being reviewed by various teams in College

A Governor suggested that trend data was included in future reports as this would provide Board members with a more holistic picture and enable them to assess the impact of Safeguarding processes and procedures

ACTION:

Executive Director Business & Student Support:

17. * College KPI's 2020/21 Update

The 2020/21 Key Performance Indicators were reviewed and noted.

The Board requested that their thanks were passed onto all staff at the College for their dedication and efforts in ensuring that students received the best possible experience and outcomes during what had been an extremely difficult and challenging year.

19. Reserved Business

19.1 Appraisal & Remuneration Meeting Minutes (16th June)

The minutes of the Committee meeting were received and noted.

19.2 Clerk to the Corporation – Performance Appraisal & Contract

Discussed under reserved business.

20. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 14th October 2021 at 5.00pm