

**Minutes of the Corporation held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021, 3:30pm  
Virtual meeting**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**Present** Heather Du Quesnay, Chair  
 Mark Robertson, Principal  
 Tim Arthur  
 Judith Coplowe  
 Andy Jennings  
 Martin Clapson  
 Martin Doel  
 Lynn Morgan  
 Nichola Harrison  
 Paul Gaudin  
 Neil Hunter  
 Jo Lancaster  
 Theresa van Ruth (Staff Governor)  
 Abby Houghton (Staff Governor)

**In attendance** Michelle Dowse, Derek Sharp, Laura Kerry, Kate Da Costa, Corrin Hoyes

**Clerk** Emily Baldwin

<b>1. Introduction</b>		
<b>1.1</b>	Declarations of Interest	There were apologies for absence from Yeish Mohamad, Raj Kumar, Lewis Beddow, Cordelia Williams and Mike Cole.
<b>1.2</b>	Apologies for absence	
<b>1.3</b>	Minutes of the meeting held on 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	The minutes of the meeting of 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 were agreed to be a true record.
<b>1.4</b>	Governor feedback	<p>Governors gave feedback on their link visits and visits to the College.</p> <p>It was noted that M Cole had met with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.</p> <p>N Harrison reported that she had undertaken the Young Carers training, and found it extremely useful.</p> <p>T Arthur reported that he had introduced the College to the 'Power2Inspire' project, and the College had responded well.</p> <p>J Lancaster had attended the Supported Learning Student Board and found it very impressive.</p>

		<p>It was noted that T van Ruth had shown H Du Quesnay a selection of online courses, which had also been made available to all Governors.</p> <p>P Gaudin had been involved in a student mentoring programme, and the students involved had given very positive feedback on their experience.</p> <p><i>T van Ruth joined the meeting</i></p>
<b>2. Governor training</b>		
<b>2.1</b>	Prevent and radicalisation	<p>M Dowse introduced the training presentation on PREVENT and radicalisation.</p> <p>Her presentation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characteristics of students who were likely to be more vulnerable</li> <li>• regional perspective, including risks of Islamist terrorism, right wing extremism and white supremacy</li> <li>• information on the number of referrals nationally, and at CRC</li> <li>• information on the range of support in place at the College, and the importance of an inclusive College</li> <li>• reference to the strong programme of preventative education and resources to support CRC students</li> </ul> <p>Governors thanked M Dowse for a useful presentation.</p>
<b>3. Principal's Report</b>		
<b>3.1</b>	Principal's Report	<p>M Robertson introduced the Principal's Report.</p> <p>He started his report with a video from the Staff Festival of Achievement which set out the achievements of the last 12 months, which was well received by Governors.</p> <p>J Lancaster asked about the current level of testing of students at the College. M Robertson reported that most students had completed their studies, but existing students were still being encouraged to test.</p> <p>The FE Commissioner visit would take place on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July. The Ofsted inspection may be delayed until 2023 according to new guidance.</p> <p><i>J Lancaster left the meeting.</i></p> <p>M Robertson gave an update on a number of collaborations that the College was involved with. Governors noted the higher level of enrolments in comparison to the same position as last year. He also drew attention to the updated Strategic Implementation Plan.</p> <p>Governors noted the Digital Bootcamp proposal. Governors noted the risks, quality arrangements and opportunities of the proposal. M Doel said that the performance management arrangements with the Combined Authority needed to be clarified. It was noted that the contractual arrangements with the Combined Authority were at an early stage. Governors noted the challenges around the tight delivery timetable and capacity. It was important to recruit an effective project manager. The College had already spoken to a large employer in the region who was interested in taking advantage of the programme. Governors were pleased</p>

		<p>with the level of information in the new template, but asked that future proposals be presented to Governors at an earlier stage in the bidding process. They asked for more information on the programme costs, and for a formal review point to be agreed after a certain level of costs had been reached (eg £100k). M Robertson and M Dowse agreed there were risks attached to the project and it would be closely monitored. The College needed to be selective about which national and regional initiatives it participated in to ensure it did not use up management time unduly.</p> <p>Governors reviewed the Risk Register. They suggested the Register needed to be clearer on how risk ratings had changed and to be more dynamic. Governors asked specifically about the risk of cyber fraud. J Coplowe, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, confirmed that the internal auditors had looked at the area and appropriate actions were being taken forward. The area would always be high risk due to the potential risk of human error. D Sharp outlined some of the initiatives the College was undertaking to combat phishing attacks. It was suggested that the area may need a separate operational risk register.</p> <p>M Doel asked how the College was addressing sexual harassment between learners which was a new area in the Ofsted handbook. M Dowse reported that it was being fully embedded in the College safeguarding and quality processes. More information would be taken to the next L&amp;Q Committee.</p> <p>Governors <b>received</b> the Principal's Report.</p>
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**4. Matters referred from Committees**

<p><b>4.1</b></p>	<p>Matters referred from the Audit and Risk Committee</p>	<p>J Coplowe updated Governors on the main items of discussion from the Audit &amp; Risk Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee had asked for the Risk Register to have a full review before the next academic year, including making the Register more user-friendly and removing historical actions</li> <li>• There had been two internal audits including employer engagement (significant assurance) and appraisals audit (adequate assurance). It was noted that the audit on appraisals had recommended actions to improve the quality of appraisals, but that the appraisal cycle was now on track.</li> <li>• The Committee had discussed a new counter-fraud strategy. The strategy included a statement that the College has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, and the requirement for an annual report to the Audit and Risk Committee. It was confirmed that there have been no reportable instances of fraud in the 2020/21 academic year. The strategy would complement the Anti-Bribery Strategy and be appended to the Financial Regulations.</li> <li>• The external auditors had attended the meeting and introduced their financial planning memorandum. It was noted that changes to the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice which meant that the ESFA would no longer give assurance on their funding, could require the auditor to undertake a significant sampling of student records. Auditors were in discussion with the ESFA to seek clarification on this which could lead to a change in the audit costs and schedule. An additional Audit &amp; Risk Committee had been set up in the autumn term to address the issue.</li> </ul>
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4.2	Matters for decision referred from the Learning & Quality Committee	<p>L. Morgan updated Governors on the main items of discussion from the L&amp;Q Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee had received a comprehensive and useful presentation from J Lloyd on High Need Learners, including information on rate of growth, College strengths, delivery structure and risks.</li> <li>• The Termly Performance Update had been updated and showed good progress on assessment processes, progression activities, student attendance and English and maths. The Committee had welcomed the new format of the report which included provision type reporting and department level health checks, as well as progress against actions from the PIAP and IQRs.</li> <li>• The Committee had been reassured by two satisfaction surveys from students and employers.</li> <li>• The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy had been updated.</li> <li>• Michelle Dowse, Designated Safeguarding Lead had given an update on young carers. M Dowse confirmed that the College had achieved accreditation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Corporation approved:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of Reference</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning Strategy</li> </ul>
4.3	Matters for decision referred from the Finance & Resources Committee	<p>T. Arthur updated Governors on the main items of discussion from the F&amp;R Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee had reviewed Period 9 management accounts. These showed an adverse variance of £(80)k against forecast, mainly due to a drop in apprenticeship income. The forecast for the year showed an overall loss for the year of £(555)k before restructuring costs. Financial health had been assessed as 'needs improvement'.</li> <li>• The Committee had reviewed the budget for 2021/22 which showed a surplus of £376k for 2021/22. The Committee had scrutinised the individual income lines and discussed the particular risks around apprenticeship and international income. It was critical that the College delivered a surplus in 2021/22. The Committee had asked for a table of budget risks which were attached for information. The sale of the iBlock building would have a positive effect on cash reserves and working capital. D Sharp confirmed that the budget would form the basis of the CFFR (College Financial Forecasting Return) that needed to be submitted by the College to the ESFA and would be confirmed with the Chair of F&amp;R Committee, T Arthur.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee had reviewed subcontracting performance for 2020/21. The College was forecasting delivery of over 90% of its AEB funding which was above the threshold. The Sub-contracting and partnership strategy, and Supply Chain Policy had been reviewed.</li> <li>• The Estates Strategy had been updated. The Committee had asked for the estates items to be re-ordered in priority order and for indicative costings to be attached where possible. This had been partially carried out but a further version would be taken to F&amp;R Committee. The Committee had given its support to the College submitting a bid to the Post-16 Capacity Fund for upgrade to construction facilities across both campuses.</li> <li>• The Committee had reviewed the HR update and were particularly assured about the positive performance on appraisals.</li> <li>• Governors had discussed the introduction of an Agile Working Policy for the College, which allowed staff to work more flexibly. Care was needed to monitor the policy carefully to ensure it supported the College's culture and values.</li> </ul> <p>T. Arthur added that the Chair of Commercial Strategy Committee, M. Doel, and M. Dowse had both been invited to the meeting to contribute to the discussion on the budget for 2021/22 and to confirm that the commercial/international targets were achievable.</p> <p><b>Corporation approved:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget for 2021/22, and 3-year forecast (to form basis of CFFR)</li> <li>• Subcontracting and Partnership Strategy</li> <li>• Estates Strategy</li> <li>• Agile Working Policy</li> <li>• Health and Safety Policy</li> <li>• Terms of Reference</li> </ul>
4.4	Report from the Commercial Strategy Chair	<p>Due to Governor availability, the Commercial Strategy Committee scheduled for June was postponed. Instead, the Chair of the Commercial Strategy Committee held a separate meeting with the Deputy Principal Michelle Dowse and the Principal to scrutinise the commercial income streams set in the budget for 2021/22. M Doel reported that it had been a useful meeting.</p> <p><i>A Jennings joined the meeting</i> <i>J Lancaster rejoined the meeting</i></p>
<b>5 Strategic items</b>		
5.1	Strategic conversation	<p>M. Robertson introduced the slides on the College's Vision and Strategic Objectives. It set out the College's key objectives and priorities over the next three years and would be used as the basis of the next Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Governors discussed the College's mission and vision. They debated whether it was appropriate to continue to reference Cambridgeshire in the College's mission statement or whether it should be broader. M. Doel said it was important to understand the proportion of delivery outside of Cambridgeshire if the statement was to change. Overall, Governors felt that it was important to establish a sense of place in the mission statement, but that it might be appropriate to reference Cambridgeshire and environs, at least in the strategy itself.</p>

M. Doel suggested that consideration be given to having a time limit on the vision.

Governors agreed that the 3 pillars remained appropriate, but consideration should be given to the wording around staff. The objective for staff was broader than experience, but should also embrace performance. The College could consider using the 'employer of choice' wording. Consideration could also be given to integrating collaboration/ partnership into the mission/vision or the pillars.

Governors agreed with the priorities set out in the presentation, but suggested that the objective around inspiring and developing students was given a higher priority. They also suggested that the College distinguished between those priorities which set out new areas for development and those that were part of the College's normal business. It was also suggested that reference be made to safeguarding of students.

Improvements to the learner experience included priorities for study programmes and apprenticeships; HE and adult; and for implementing the Quality Strategy. The College was particularly focusing on personal development, as the pandemic had meant there were fewer opportunities to develop soft skills and to engage with employers. The College was continuing to develop the Skills Advisory Service and to integrate employers into the student journey.

D. Sharp gave an overview of the College's financial strategy, including a need to return to good financial health and strengthening cash holdings. Capital bids would be focused on meeting demographic change and curriculum priorities. He reported that the sale of iBlock was due to complete by the end of August 2021. There was more focus on the green agenda. T. Arthur said the most important factor was that the College achieved surplus, and the staff costs ratio should not be viewed as an end in itself.

L. Kerry set out priorities for workforce development, including supporting the health and well being of staff and improving management information to improve performance.

Future challenges included

- ensuring consistency in delivery, particularly in apprenticeships
- recovering the international market after the pandemic
- the fact that the Ofsted grade prevented the College being a lead in some areas
- restrictions on staff pay
- supporting students and getting them up to speed after lost learning

There were however a number of opportunities, including a growing online offer, collaboration opportunities, demographic growth, green skills and contributing to regional skills strategies, levelling up agenda and regional recovery.

Governors discussed the estates priorities, and whether it was clear whether the College had sufficient space for the demographic increase in 16-18 year olds. D. Sharp said that where there was excess space, such as iBlock, this was the wrong kind of space, as there was a demand for warehouse and construction space. It was a challenge to deliver the capital projects to timetable due to pressures in the construction sector. M Robertson said he was concerned that

		<p>the pandemic had meant some delays to completion of apprenticeships which was having a knock-on effect on the recruitment of new apprentices.</p> <p>It was noted that there might be further testing requirements when the College opened in September.</p> <p>The College was continuing to discuss options regarding iMET with the Combined Authority.</p> <p>J Lancaster agreed to speak to M Robertson outside the meeting regarding space opportunities in Huntingdon.</p>
<b>5.2</b>	Curriculum Strategy	<p>M Robertson introduced the curriculum strategy which had been revised for 2021/22 onwards. It took into account feedback from Governors at the previous meeting.</p> <p>Corporation approved the curriculum strategy.</p>
<b>5.3</b>	Quality monitoring	<p>C Hoyes introduced her paper which outlined key quality assurance and improvement proposals for 2021-22 relating to the College's Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP).</p> <p>It was noted that the College had been expecting the next Ofsted inspection to be during 2021-22 or early in 2022-23. However, a change to the timescales between inspections for providers meant that Ofsted now had until the end of 2022-23 before they had to carry out a full inspection of the College.</p> <p>Despite this elongated timescale, the College was still front-loading the majority of quality assurance activities in order to make speedy improvements where needed to have the maximum impact on students and employers.</p> <p>Governors noted the key quality processes, including the use of an external consultant for certain IQRs. It was noted that many of the processes were existing quality processes. Governors said that it might be useful to find a new consultant to review online learning to have a different viewpoint on the expanding area.</p>
<b>5.4</b>	Online provision	<p>M Dowse introduced the item on online courses. The College was now providing a range of online courses. These were primarily at Level 2 which took about 12 weeks to complete, with a limited number at Level 3. At the time of development, predicted numbers were relatively low, but the provision had grown rapidly in response to demand and the College now had 1,112 learners enrolled on an online adult course.</p> <p>The report included an overview of the intent, risks, opportunities, quality arrangements and financial position of the online course provision. The courses were provided in partnership with the Skills Network.</p> <p>Governors discussed the risks around online provision. There was a particular concern that it could distract from core business due to its rapid rise. It was important to monitor achievement rates closely. The financial analysis also needed to be clearer.</p>

		<p>L Morgan suggested that the College surveyed the learners to understand their personal motivations for undergoing online courses in order to plan effectively for the future. It could be that furloughed staff could have an effect on the figures. M Dowse reported that while many of the initial learners were furloughed, this was not now the case. There could be an issue with furloughed staff undertaking the courses as they may not finish the course when returning to work. The College had introduced a financial penalty for students not completing.</p> <p>The Chair of F&amp;R said he would speak to D. Sharp separately to understand the contribution of the courses. Progress with the online courses would be reported to the L&amp;Q Committee.</p>
<b>6 Final matters</b>		
<b>6.1</b>	Matters agreed between meetings	<p>Governors noted the items that had been approved electronically since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of DP Finance &amp; Resources</li> </ul>
<b>6.2</b>	Any other business	<p>H. Du Quesnay thanked J. Coplowe for her five years' service to Corporation. It was noted that she had joined the Corporation as a Governor at Huntingdonshire Regional College. She had since played a particularly important role in the Audit and Risk Committee and had been Chair of the Committee for the last 12 months.</p> <p>H. Du Quesnay also thanked R. Kumar for his 8 years' service as a Governor at CRC. He had contributed to many of the Committees over his time as a Governor.</p>

There was no other business and the meeting ended at 7:10 pm.