

**Minutes of the Corporation held on 15th December 2021, 5:30pm
Virtual meeting**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present Heather Du Quesnay, Chair
 Mark Robertson, Principal
 Tim Arthur
 Martin Doel
 Lynn Morgan
 Nichola Harrison
 Jo Lancaster
 Tim Waller
 Richard Tunnicliffe
 Martin Clapson
 Michael Killick (Staff Governor)
 Hannah Mizzen (Student Governor)

In attendance Michelle Dowse, Stephen Jones, Laura Kerry, Kate Da Costa, Corrin Hoyes, David Hoose (external auditor)

Clerk Emily Baldwin

<p>1.1 1.2</p>	<p>Declarations of Interest Apologies for absence</p>	<p>There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>There were apologies for absence from Andy Jennings, Bradley Dorrington, Neil Hunter, Mason Friars, Theresa van Ruth and Paul Gaudin.</p> <p>T Waller and M Killick were welcomed to the meeting as new governors.</p> <p>H Mizzen was welcomed to the meeting as student governor.</p>
<p>1.3</p>	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2021</p>	<p>The minutes of the meeting of 28th September 2021 were agreed to be a true record.</p>
<p>2.1</p>	<p>Principal's Report</p>	<p>M Robertson introduced his Principal's Report. A summary of 2020/21 student achievements was included in the report and noted by Governors. Student satisfaction rates remained above national benchmarks and in line with last year.</p> <p>The first data return of 2021/22 confirmed the ESFA year-end funding target was exceeded by 60 full time 16-18 year old students, and by 100 compared with the baseline allocation for this point in the year. This however was unlikely to result in in-year funding for 2021/22. High-needs</p>

	<p>enrolments were higher than budget and would result in additional funding. There were signs of good recovery in the apprenticeship market.</p> <p>Student attendance has been affected by Covid, and was running at a lower level than at the same point as last year. Staff satisfaction was maintained at 93.5% during 2021.</p> <p>Disposal of iBlock and the surrender of the lease of iMET were progressing well.</p> <p>Governors discussed the Principal's report. They underlined the importance of the College reaching a surplus position in 2021/22. They asked for clarification on the financial impact of not reaching the target for enrolments which had been factored into the budget, and asked that this be clearer in future reports. The College needed to improve its forecasting of enrolments, although it was noted that the pattern of enrolments had been affected by COVID which meant it had been more difficult to accurately forecast enrolments.</p> <p>Governors noted that FE recruitment nationally had been negatively affected by higher than average GCSE results, and that the College should be commended for the additional student enrolments that it had achieved. The College had increased its market share.</p> <p>Governors noted the financial pressures on FE Colleges, including the rise in national insurance contributions which would not be funded.</p> <p>Governors asked about staff sickness trends which were rising. L Kerry said this was partly due to COVID and partly due to minor illnesses, now that staff were back in the office. Sickness levels were similar to pre-pandemic levels. It was noted that staff were working under a lot of pressure, and there were a range of wellbeing initiatives being rolled out. There was a higher level of staff turnover than last year, but lower than pre-COVID levels. There were staff shortages in the FE sector as a whole.</p> <p>L Kerry confirmed that staff had access to an employee assistance scheme online, which included links to different wellbeing portals. The College was also rolling out mental health champions in each department. The College undertook exit interviews, but there were no specific themes emerging.</p> <p>Governors supported the new format of the KPIs. They asked about the College's performance on functional skills. It was noted that achievement rates on functional skills had fallen as students had been affected by lack of access to assessment and there was no teacher assessed grade provision allowed. It was suggested that positive destinations be looked at in more detail at a future meeting given they were slightly below target.</p> <p><i>Tim Waller joined the meeting</i></p> <p>Governors asked whether Covid had had an impact on students' learning. M Robertson said that all Colleges were seeing an increase in behavioural issues. The College was rolling out a new initiative, 50 Days of Change, in</p>
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		the new year focused on the issue. Safeguarding issues were significantly higher, at 52% compared to the same time as last year.
2.2	Strategic Plan	<p>M Robertson introduced the updated Strategic Plan. The draft strategy document had been presented to Corporation in September. Following feedback this document had been revised. A number of amendments had been made to the behaviours expected under each of the values to reflect changing priorities and areas of national focus. This document would be published on the college website.</p> <p>Governors approved the updated Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Governors also noted the updated Strategic Implementation Plan. Governors said it could be useful to be clearer in the Plan which were business as usual activities and which were critical highlights. M Robertson agreed to consider how to make this clearer in the next version.</p>
2.3	SAR	<p>Corporation members noted the updated Self- Assessment Report (SAR). The SAR had been validated by a panel comprising members of SMT, Governors and an external consultant.</p> <p>The SAR was written against the Ofsted framework. Grade 2 (Good) was proposed for Overall Effectiveness and the key judgement areas. Grade 2 was proposed for all provision types, with the exception of Apprenticeships which remained Grade 3. While there had been significant improvements to the management of apprenticeships, the full impact had not yet been felt, largely due to the impact of Covid on teaching, learning and assessment.</p> <p>C Hoyes outlined the key areas for improvement identified in the SAR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistencies in the quality of feedback on written work • Ensuring that all apprentices received a regular progress review • Further improvement needed in achievement rates for apprenticeships • Further improvement needed in GCSE maths high grades (4 and above) and in Functional Skills results • Attendance rates in Construction and Engineering were below the College target. • Attendance rates for English and maths were above the college target but now needed to rise further. • The personal development curriculum for some part time adult learners should be developed further. <p>T Arthur reported that he had attended department SARs and had been impressed by the robustness and level of challenge in the meetings.</p> <p>Corporation approved the final SAR for submission to Ofsted.</p>
2.4	Annual report and Financial Statements YE 31 July 2021	<p><i>D Hoose, external auditor, joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>S Jones introduced the Financial Statements for the year end 2021.</p>

		<p>The Financial Statements showed a deficit including FRS102 adjustments of £3,677k. Excluding those adjustments and Covid costs there was an underlying operational deficit of £46k. The outcome for the year meant that the College retained an ESFA financial health grade of Requires Improvement as forecast in the financial plan submitted to the ESFA in July 2021. All loan covenants were satisfied.</p> <p>The Accounts and Financial Statements had been presented to both the Audit & Risk, and Finance & Resources Committees and the Statements incorporated comments from both committees.</p> <p>E Baldwin introduced the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee. Governors noted the information included in the report, including governor attendance, the internal audit schedule and the findings of the external auditor and the FE Commissioner. Governors also noted the conclusion of the Committee that, based on the information presented to it, the College had adequate and effective audit, governance, risk management and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets for the year ending July 2021.</p> <p>D Hoose, external auditor, introduced the Audit Completion report. He reported that the audit work was now complete and he recommended the signing of the financial statements with no qualifications. He had raised two low risk internal control recommendations, which had been agreed by management.</p> <p>Governors noted that additional work had been carried out on student records this year, and that no issues had arisen. It was noted that T Arthur, Deputy Chair, had also attended Audit and Risk Committee for the external audit item.</p> <p>Governors noted that the ESFA audit was still ongoing.</p> <p><i>D Hoose left the meeting.</i></p> <p>Governors discussed the grade for Governance that needed to be inserted into the Annual Report. They agreed on a rating of 2 in line with the SAR.</p> <p>Governors asked about the staff breakdown included in the report and said that for future reporting it could be useful to separate out learning support staff.</p> <p>Governors received the Audit Committee Annual Report and the External Auditors' Audit Completion Report.</p> <p>Governors approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending July 2021.</p>
2.5	Complaints/Compliments	<p>C Hoyes introduced the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report.</p> <p>There had been no whistleblowing complaints in 2020/21 or in 2021/22 to date.</p>

		<p>51 formal complaints had been received during 2020/2021 (compared to 71 in 2019/2020). Of these 29 were upheld or partially upheld: this was 57% of those received. All complaints were acknowledged promptly, and within the timescales set out in the College policy.</p> <p>73 compliments were logged by the Quality team during 2020/2021 in recognition of staff contribution, 36% of these were delivered as Star Cards, sent by managers to individual staff members within the organisation.</p> <p>Governors discussed whether a lower number of complaints meant students were appropriately informed about the complaints process. They also asked whether over half of those being upheld was in line with national benchmarks. C Hoyes said that there were no national benchmarks for this, but that the figure represented partially upholding a complaint. A number of issues were resolved locally before reaching formal complaint stage.</p> <p>It was noted that the College needed to publish HE complaints, but there had not been any in that area.</p> <p>Governors asked whether the complaints in the construction department were lessening as quality improved. C Hoyes said that this was being closely monitored. Governors also asked whether the Quality team had appropriate resources to manage the type and volume of complaints. C Hoyes confirmed that the College gave appropriate training and made use of managers across the College.</p> <p>Governors agreed that the report should continue to come direct to Corporation on an annual basis.</p>
1.3	Governor feedback	<p>Governors gave feedback on their visits to the College.</p> <p>N Harrison had attended a Student Board meeting and had a meeting with M Dowse about Student Services. She had been impressed by the flexibility that virtual appointments had given to delivering careers advice.</p> <p>L Morgan had had a tour of the Huntingdon campus and been impressed by the new facilities. She had noted that classes where some learners were on site and others participating remotely from home, brought about by Covid absences, were very challenging for staff.</p> <p>T Arthur had attended a Student Board meeting which was a very valuable tool to allow the college to interact with students, but noted that student attendance in some areas was an issue.</p> <p>H Du Quesnay had attended a Student Board meeting which she had found very interesting, and there was good attendance in the area she attended. She had attended the Student Union officers meeting and been impressed by the commitment and openness of the students. She had also attended the Apprenticeship evening and subsequently spoken with a number of engineering/construction senior managers and was</p>

		impressed by the improvements they were bringing in. She noted that staff recruitment and retention were key challenges.
3.1	Report from Task and Finish Group	<p>H Du Quesnay updated Governors on the main areas of discussion of the Task and Finish Group which had met on the 8th November 2021.</p> <p>Main areas of discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful IQR on online courses which showed that overall, provision was of high quality. This was a growth area for the College so it was important to monitor the quality of provision. • Ofsted framework – additions included analysis of how college had responded to Covid, and additional requirements for safeguarding related to monitoring and reporting harmful sexual behaviour. • Ofsted monitoring – progress against the PIAP (Post Inspection Action Plan) had been scrutinised
3.2	Report from F&R Committee	<p>T Arthur updated Governors on the main areas of discussion of the Finance and Resources Committee which had met on the 22nd November 2021.</p> <p>Many of the items had already been covered under other items on the agenda. T Arthur drew particular attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Human Resources Report 2020/21 – this was a very detailed report and included information on exit interviews • Disciplinary and Grievances policies – policies had been reviewed and recommended for Corporation approval • Update on the Estates Strategy – sale of iBlock and surrender of iMET were progressing well. • Health and Safety – the number of incidents had fallen, but this was likely to be because of the closure of campuses. The Committee had met Sheri Peterson, the Health and Safety Officer. <p>Corporation <u>approved</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary and grievance policies • Annual Health and Safety Report
3.4	Report from Commercial Strategy Committee	<p>M Doel updated Governors on the main areas of discussion of the Commercial Strategy Committee which had met on the 14th October 2021.</p> <p>Main areas of discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships – apprenticeship numbers were rising, but staff recruitment remained an issue in some areas to meet demand

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International business – despite some positive signs, there was considerable uncertainty in the market • Employer Engagement – employer satisfaction remained strong and an audit in the area had received substantial assurance • Marketing Strategy which had been updated and approved by the Committee • Enrolments – the Committee had looked at the enrolment profile in detail. It was recommended that a dashboard be developed that could be shared with governors electronically at critical points in the application/enrolment process. <p>Corporation approved the Committee’s Terms of Reference.</p> <p><i>M Doel left the meeting.</i></p>
3.3	L&Q Committee	<p>L Morgan updated Governors on the main areas of discussion of the Learning & Quality Committee which had met on the 30th November 2021.</p> <p>Main areas of the discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships – Dan Burns had given a very useful update on apprenticeships, including where progress had been made since the last Ofsted inspection and where improvements were ongoing. • Performance data - it was noted Ofsted would not be able to use the data as it was unpublished. • Annual safeguarding report – the number and complexity of safeguarding cases had continued to increase, with a particular trend around mental health issues. Governors were assured that more resource was being put into the team. The Committee had asked for more information on cases by campus, looked after children and the ethnicity profile of the college and community in future reports. • Termly performance report – attendance in the autumn term had been adversely affected by Covid. Hybrid lessons were challenging and staff were working hard to provide catch-up, including additional hours. • Personal development Strategy – the Committee had reviewed a new strategy which included the College’s position on careers advice. L Morgan had attended the AoC’s national course on careers advice.
3.5	Report from the Audit Committee	<p>N Harrison reported on the main items of discussion from the Audit and Risk Committee held on 6th December 2021.</p> <p>Most of the areas had already been discussed under earlier items on the agenda. N Harrison drew attention to the new format of the Risk Register. The Committee had discussed the need to ensure the Risk Register was more user-friendly and easier to navigate. Governors had supported S</p>

		<p>Jones' approach to streamline the Register and to have fewer corporate risks presented to the full Governing Body.</p> <p>Corporation approved the appointment of Mazars as external auditor for 2021/22.</p>
4.1	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"> • Appointment of Jane Payling as a co-opted member on F&R Committee • Appointment of Bradley Dorrington and Tim Waller as full Governors • Change to Standing Orders Appendix on Recruitment of Governors
4.2	Any other business	Governors approved the use of the seal for the sale of the iBlock as required.
4.3	Self-assessment of Governors' Performance	Governors agreed it had been a productive meeting.
4.4	Confidential item – Remuneration Committee minutes and annual report	<p><i>Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.</i></p> <p>A confidential item was taken which is minuted separately.</p>

There was no other business and the meeting ended at 7:45 pm.