

NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE
CORPORATION MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2019

Present:

Carole Thorogood (Chair))	
Anja Beriro)	
Mary Carswell)	
Philip Crompton)	
Andrew Dickinson)	
Michael Green)	External governors
Jonathan Hawley)	
Neghat Khan)	
Gill Lane)	
Andrew Unitt)	
Michael Wisher)	
John van de Laarschot		Chief Executive Officer
Becki Pate		Staff governor

In attendance:

Ian James	Clerk to the Corporation
Philip Briscoe	Principal (Curriculum & Education)
Jo Clifford	Principal (Finance)
James Whybrow	VP Partnerships, Apprenticeships & Enterprise
Tom Dick	Executive Director Curriculum Delivery & Development
Emma Woods	Executive Director Academic, Adult & Quality
Simon Kirby	Director of Marketing and Communications
Zoe Butler	Director of Customer Experience

PART 1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

290 Apologies were received from Richard Donovan, Helen Hopkinson, Liam Perkins, Melanie Pope and Jane Peacock (ESFA).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

291 There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES

292 **Resolved** that the minutes (Part 1) of the meeting held on 29 April 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE

293 The Chair reported on the meeting of the Committee held immediately before this Board meeting and the recommendations made.

294 **Resolved**

- 1 that Michael Wisher be reappointed for a two-year term of office until 31 July 2021
- 2 that the number external members be reduced back to 12 following the retirement of Gill Lane on 31 July 2019

- 3 that Neghat Khan be reappointed for a one-year term of office until 31 July 2020, subject to her re-nomination by the City Council
- 4 that Richard Donovan be reappointed for a second term of office until 31 July 2023
- 5 that, with effect from 1 August 2019, the membership of the Governance & Search Committee be amended to read “the Chair of the Board of Governors, the Chief Executive Officer and four external governors”

POLICIES

Environmental & Sustainability Policy

295 The Board received this Policy which included minor updates and was subject to reapproval. The governors asked for the reference to students to be amended to reflect their involvement in the Strategy rather than referring to specific activities being undertaken.

296 In addition, the Board asked for a three to five-year plan to be prepared including targets for progress in this policy area.

297 **Resolved** that, subject to the amendment requested by the Board, the Environmental & Sustainability Policy be approved

Security Policy

298 The Board received this policy which included minor updates and was subject to reapproval. The governors asked for the separate policy on Lone Workers to be referenced in this Policy.

299 **Resolved** that, subject to the amendment requested by the Board, the Security Policy be approved

Nottingham College Charity Policy

300 The Board received this new Policy which was designed to ensure that charities selected for support through staff and student activity shared the College’s values and ethical standards. A suggestion was made that a future version of the Policy could include some basic parameters for the types of charities that might attract support.

301 **Resolved** that the Charity Policy be approved

FINANCE

Management Accounts

302 The Principal (Finance) submitted the usual detailed report on the management accounts, for the period to 31 May 2019 (period 10). The accounts showed that the College’s income was below budget across most income streams although this was partly offset by savings on staffing and on non-pay. The overall operating position was behind budget at this stage although the management accounts contained an update of the recovery plan intended to address the College’s current under-performance.

303 Bearing in mind the shortfall in income, the point was made that the College should seek to improve the process for target-setting for student numbers and retention so as to aim for greater accuracy of forecasting. In addition, more clarity was required in the accounts as to whether variations were caused by trends, one-off issues or timing so that a better understanding of trends could be achieved.

304 On the subject of income, the Principal (Curriculum & Education) commented that the College needed to improve its progression rate from level 2 to 3 and this would be a key priority the future.

305 In answer to a question, the CEO assured the Board that efforts were being made to ensure that staff understood the importance of achieving targets so as to secure the College's income. In addition, staff were encouraged to propose methods of increasing income although it was also suggested that more could be done to facilitate the flow of ideas and information. The governors felt that this would be a key area for development in the next academic year.

CURRICULUM STRATEGY

306 The two Executive Directors provided a slide presentation setting out a high level view of the College's curriculum strategy which was designed to achieve the following outcomes -

- 'Good' Ofsted rating and continued confidence in the quality of Higher Education
- improved outcomes for student achievement and progression
- high levels of student and employer satisfaction
- growth in student numbers for 16-19, adults and apprenticeships and a reduction in subcontracted provision

307 A governor asked about the relationship between the curriculum strategy and the financial forecast and was assured that firm links were in place although the financial forecast took a prudent view of likely student numbers. Asked whether the financial viability of individual courses was tested, the Executive Directors explained that courses were expected to make a 50% contribution to central costs although inevitably there were variations in performance around that general target.

308 The Executive Directors were asked how the College sought to ensure effective impact in the community and they advised that a key focus was on personalising information and services for individuals as part of the overall effort of public services to improve the position of Nottingham relative to other UK cities. An important part of this was the work with schools.

309 Governors drew particular attention to the importance of links with employers and felt that the strategy could focus more attention on this aspect to emphasise the benefit that College students gain from these links. Subject to these comments the Board was content to endorse the strategy and to establish a Task & Finish Group to take the strategy forward with management.

310 **Resolved** that the Curriculum Strategy be approved and that Mary Carswell, Philip Crompton and Neghat Khan be appointed to the Task & Finish Group to oversee the implementation of the Strategy

ATTRACT & ENROL UPDATE

311 The Director of Customer Experience provided a slide presentation on the current position with applications for 2019/20 which, at this stage, appeared favourable compared to the same point in 2018/19. She also detailed the many techniques and approaches in place to seek to ensure that as many students as possible actually joined their courses in September. Much had been learned from the recruitment experience in 2018/19 and this had informed the process being used this year.

312 The process by which students were attracted to the College, how they applied, and how they were signed onto courses was a particular area of interest to governors who emphasised their belief that the simpler the process was, and the sooner students were told that they had a confirmed place at the College, the more likely they would be to enrol and attend.

Consequently, they urged management to consider all possible means of simplifying the process to avoid students becoming stuck in the process which could cause them to become disengaged.

RETAIN/ACHIEVE/EMPLOY

313 The Board received a report updating the current position on performance in curriculum and quality. Attendance was performing ahead of the same time last year which was positive although below the College target for classroom based provision. Retention was positive for adults but was a particular focus for 16-18 as it was now within 1% of target for the year.

314 Governors asked about the measurement of student retention and were advised that this was from the beginning of their courses with some 12% dropping out during the initial six-week census period. However, it was known that students that 'walked in' at enrolment were more likely to drop out (18% compared to 8% for earlier enrolments) and consequently early engagement with the College was extremely important. There had been some attrition during the year although this had been less than last year.

315 Given that there would always be some loss of students, a governor asked how much resource it was worth devoting to improving retention and was advised that 12% was an unsustainable level and needed to be reduced. A governor queried whether the reasons for students leaving their courses was captured, it was confirmed that this was the case and it should be noted that some reasons for students leaving were positive such as obtaining a job.

316 The results of the term 2 student survey were contained in the report and attention was drawn to the decline in student opinion. The governors were assured that the issues identified were being addressed.

317 The Board was asked to establish a short term task & finish group to work with management on the Access and Participation Plan required by the Office for Students and to agree the fees to be charged.

318 **Resolved** that Gill Lane and Melanie Pope (with the Chair as substitute) be appointed to serve on the Task & Finish Group with delegated authority to approve the Access and Participation Plan and HE fees

CEO's REPORT INCLUDING SCORECARD & KPI'S

319 The Board received the CEO's routine report enabling the governors to monitor performance against KPI's and to take note of a number of 'good news' stories from the activities of students and staff.

INFORMATION ITEMS

320 The Board noted the contents of two information items:

- Information compliance (Data Protection) Update
- Office for Students: Financial Viability and Sustainability information for governors

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

321 Monday, 22 July 2019

Chair

Date