

NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE
CORPORATION MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019

Present:	Carole Thorogood (Chair))	
	Anja Beriro)	
	Mary Carswell)	
	Andrew Dickinson)	External governors
	Neghat Khan (mins 165-187))	
	Gill Lane)	
	Andrew Unitt)	
	Michael Wisher)	
	John van de Laarschot)	Chief Executive Officer
	Becki Pate)	Staff governor
	Helen Hopkinson)	Student governor

In attendance:	Ian James	Clerk to the Corporation
	Jo Clifford	VP Finance
	James Whybrow	VP Partnerships, Apprenticeships & Enterprise
	Tom Dick	Executive Director Curriculum Delivery & Development
	Emma Woods	Executive Director Academic, Adult & Quality
	Ffyona Baker	Director of OD and HR
	Zoe Butler	Director of Customer Experience
	Simon Kirby	Director of Marketing and Communications
	Matthew Varley	Director of Estates/Capital Projects
	Drew Keavey	IT Director (minutes 169-171)

The meeting was preceded by a presentation on the latest developments in the teaching of English & maths from Emma Woods together with Caroline Sheard (Head of Faculty for Lifestyle), Sharon List (Faculty Area Manager – English) and Vicki Stockdale (Manager of Programme of Study). The presentation provided a detailed account of several key actions being taken forward in this area:

- Embedding English and Maths Staff into Curriculum Teams to improve communication and ensure timely interventions around student progress and achievement
- Pilot Scheme of Work (SoW) Project designed to better meet students' needs and encourage greater engagement
- Basic Maths Premium Pilot - a successful bid for additional DfE funding providing three specialist tutors working with students to identify intervention strategies to support students to achieve

The Chair thanked the group for their presentation and for their work in this challenging area of the College's activities.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

165 Apologies were received from Richard Donovan, Eseose Okotako, Liam Perkins and Jane Peacock (ESFA).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

166 There were no declarations of interest.

INSOLVENCY REGIME

167 The Board received a presentation from lawyers Eversheds Sutherland explaining the details and ramifications of the Insolvency Regime for further education colleges shortly to be introduced by the Government.

MINUTES

168 **Resolved** that the minutes (Part 1) of the meeting held on 10 December 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

Update on IT issues

169 Following two serious issues affecting the College's IT services, the Board received further information about these incidents from the IT Director and the management response. The governors were well aware of the difficulties of creating an IT system for the College bearing in mind the quite different systems operated by the pre-merger colleges. By way of an update, the IT Director advised that a good deal of research had been necessary to understand the configurations of the previous systems which were not well documented. A plan to move forward was in place and some improvements had been achieved before Christmas. However, an eight hour power outage at the start of term had caused significant problems on which external advice was being taken. The roadmap ahead was designed to create effective links between sites, improved wi-fi access and greater resilience.

170 The Chair asked about the timescales involved and was advised that the Plan should be complete by the end of the year. Asked whether it was possible to bring this forward, the IT Director responded that the College was in the hands of the contractor appointed to work on inter-site links (Virgin) and the timescale they were working to which was the end of May. Asked what level of confidence there was that the Plan would be delivered on time, the IT Director commented that he was now much more confident that the main issues were known and were being addressed.

171 The governors emphasised the need for effective communication to staff and students about the roadmap for IT and asked for a digestible version to be sent out for this purpose. The Chair asked for the governors to be copied in on this.

Construction Skills Hub (ref minutes 150-152)

172 At the previous meeting, the Board had received information about this project and supported the College's involvement while retaining some concerns over the College's exposure should the project not proceed.

173 A further report was now received updating the governors on the significant progress made with the project including the granting of planning permission. If approved, the project would commence on 6 March.

174 The governors queried a number of aspects of the revised costs of the project which were provided with the report showing fixed and variable items of expenditure. They questioned the removal of a post of Health & Safety Manager and were reassured that this responsibility would be discharged by the Project Manager and that, in addition, a number of safety improvements had been made. A reduction in the marketing budget was also queried and the governors were advised that marketing would now be carried out in conjunction with the College's marketing activities. The variable costs of the project would depend on the numbers of participants.

POLICIES

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy

175 **Resolved** that the EDI policy be approved

Fees Policy

176 The Board received the Fees Policy for 2019/20 for approval. Governors drew attention to a number of changes from the previous Policy which required explanation and asked for a report at the next meeting clarifying the thinking behind the changes.

SCORECARD & KPI'S REPORT

177 The CEO introduced this routine report enabling the Board to monitor performance. He drew the governors' attention to areas rag rated 'red' which were attendance for English & maths, sickness absence levels and completion of mandatory training by staff. A further 'red' area relating to the number of applicants who commenced an on-line application who eventually submitted a completed application would be referred to in the marketing presentation later in the meeting.

178 The governors queried the apparently small proportion of sessional staff who had completed all five mandatory training modules (17%) and were advised that this group were either 'active' or 'inactive'. The latter group would be sent training materials whereas a deadline of February half term had been set for the remainder.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

179 The VP Finance submitted a detailed report on the management accounts for the period to 30 November 2018. The accounts showed that the College's income was below budget by £1491k although this was partly offset by savings on staffing £275k and non-pay £731k. The overall operating position was an adverse variance to budget of £485K and, at EBITDA level, £416k.

180 A full year forecast had been prepared and this showed that there was a shortfall of around £1.5m after accounting for income reductions, known cost reductions and anticipated efficiencies. The SLT had developed a recovery plan as set out in the report which was explained to the Board in detail. A fuller version of the plan would be forthcoming at the next meeting.

181 The report also contained a graph highlighting the areas of income that were below budget and the governors enquired about the shortfall of around £1.2m on direct apprenticeship provision. They were advised that the current recruitment was 98 below target and that some contracts had been lost especially in the area of construction. However, following questioning on this, the governors were reassured that the College's construction provision was generally sound although there were staff recruitment issues at the higher technical levels.

182 Income from direct apprenticeships had also been affected by the fact that the average income per apprentice was around £2.8k compared to the £3k assumed; this being due to the type of apprenticeships started. The College's own apprenticeship levy work has been late starting but this was now well under way.

183 A variance on the catering budget was queried and the VP clarified that this was due to an error in the original budget which had overstated the budget by £170k. This area was currently under review. The governors reiterated their request for the management accounts to include monitoring information relating to compliance with the Bank covenants and this would be included in future. The VP assured the Board that there were no issues at present giving rise to concern over Bank covenants.

184 A governor commented favourably on the quality of the management accounts and the recovery plan but queried whether there were any areas where the management was making short term decisions with long term implications. The CEO responded that this was not the case at present and that the management was handling this issue very carefully to minimise any damage and to protect the long term as the College sought to build its way out of the current position.

GOVERNORS' SELF ASSESSMENT

185 The Clerk presented a report setting out the results of the governors' self-assessment exercise together with the actions discussed by the governors at the November away day. The action plan would be extended to include completion dates for actions prior to resubmission at a later meeting.

ANNUAL REPORTS

186 The Board received for information the following Annual Reports:

- EDI
- Health & safety
- Safeguarding

187 With regard to the Health & Safety report, the Chair asked for the Board to be advised of any material issues emerging from the outstanding employer or public liability claims referred to in the report.

MARKETING UPDATE

188 The governors received a slide presentation setting out the latest very detailed data analysis on the student journey from application to enrolment and, most importantly, the points at which applicants were lost along the way. Overall, 56% of initial applicants did not enrol on courses at the College. The focus was now on streamlining the application process so that it covered just the essentials to ensure that the process itself was as easy as possible.

189 The analysis highlighted the faculties with the highest attrition rates and identified level 3 as the most vulnerable qualification level. It also provided details of the 'walk-in' students joining College courses drawing attention to their poorer retention rate. The College's strategy for 2019/20 recruitment was being planned to take account of the findings of the study.

190 In answer to questions from governors it was confirmed that it was possible to apply using a mobile phone. The Board were also assured that strenuous efforts were being made to obtain access to schools. Details of 'keep warm' activities were also provided.

191 Suggestions forthcoming from the Board to assist in this challenge were:

- use of mystery shoppers in respect of the 'walk-in' experience
- review of 'touch points' when the College engaged with applicants making them as simple and user friendly as possible
- possible introduction of a 'clearing' system such as used by UCAS
- consider making 'insurance' offers to students against the possibility of not obtaining grades required for A level

192 The presentation also covered the work being undertaken on curriculum planning to respond to the developing needs of learners and employers in Nottingham. A suggestion was made that the College could examine whether there was a demand for an 'access to FE'

programme similar to the current 'access to HE'. A governor commented that it would be useful to understand the scale of the different markets the College was working in, the demographic trends and also what other colleges are doing in curriculum development. In answer to a question, the SLT were confident that the approach being taken would identify new curriculum areas into which the College could expand.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governor Recruitment

193 The Chair reported that the Governance & Search Committee had interviewed a number of candidates for possible appointment to the Board and that recommendations would be forthcoming at the next meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

194 Monday, 4 March 2018