North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Thursday 12th December 2024 at 6pm - The Conference Centre - Nuneaton Campus

Present: In person: Prof. Ray Linforth (Chair), Mrs Marion Plant (Principal), Mr Chris Benham, Miss Maisy Deakin, Mr Steve Dover, Mrs Jeannette Essex, Mrs Mannie Ketley, Mr James Stanley and Mr Andrew Turner.

Via Microsoft Teams: Mr Anil Majithia, Mr Steve Maxey, Mrs Natalie Prosser, Mr Clive Read and Mrs Rebecca Suart.

In attendance: Mr Colin Butler (Executive Director People and Culture), Mr Ben Crook (Senior Vice Principal Curriculum, Quality and Skills), Mr Simon Lomax (Associate Executive Director 14-16 and Schools), Mr David Poole (Chief Operating Officer and Deputy CEO) and Mrs Rachel Marshall (Clerk).

Mr Stuart McKay (MacIntyre Hudson) via Microsoft Teams.

Members had undertaken a tour of the new estates facilities at the Nuneaton Campus before the meeting.

1. Routine and Standing Items

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Sally Barnett, Helen Holley, Michelle Kavanagh, Jeevan Marwaha and Luke Robinson.

Ray Linforth welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was quorate.

1.2 Declaration of Interests including Gifts and Hospitality

There were no new declarations of interest or any declarations of gifts and hospitality.

1.3 Minutes of a Meeting held on Thursday 4th July 20204 and the Notes of the Creative Meeting held on 11th November 2024

The minutes of the last meeting held on Thursday 4th July 2024 and the notes of the Creative Meeting held on 11th November 2024, were unanimously approved. (Proposer: Steve Dover; seconder: Andrew Turner).

1.3.1 Schedule of Actions

Members received the schedule of actions.

1.3.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1.4 Chair's Action

Ray Linforth reported that he had undertaken the following Chair's actions:

i. approval for the Principal to attend EuroSkills 2024 in Lyon, France from 6th-10th September 2024; and

ii. approval for an additional two days leave to be awarded to staff, one of which was a College closure day meaning staff did not need to take leave on that day.

2. Matters For Decision

It was agreed that agenda items 2.2 and 2.3 would be taken next.

2.2 **Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24**

Anil Majithia introduced the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2023/24 and recognised the hard work undertaken by College staff in responding to the requirements of the Education Skills Funding Agency audit, the Ofsted inspection and the external auditors in a timely manner. He also thanked his Audit Committee colleagues for their work and support, and also David Poole and Rachel Marshall for their tremendous efforts. He then provided the following overview of the Annual Audit Committee Report:

i. As Members were aware, the Audit Committee was required to produce an annual report for the Corporation. That report presented a number of key matters which included the work undertaken by Macintyre Hudson, the College's external auditors, for the regularity and financial statements audit and provided the Audit Committee's conclusions for the Corporation.

ii. For the academic year 2023/24, the Audit Committee's conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's systems of internal control and their arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes, and securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness were that:

iii. The Audit Committee was able to reassure the Corporation that the College had an adequate and effective assurance framework and arrangements for governance, risk management and control, and had fulfilled its statutory responsibilities for the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets. It could also reassure the Corporation that progress continued to be made on the strengthening of systems and the implementation of new systems where necessary.

Following discussion, Members received the Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24.

2.3 **Annual External Audit Presentation**

Ray Linforth introduced Stuart McKay from Macintyre Hudson, the College's external audit service, who was joining meeting to present the external audit findings report and answer any questions Members might have.

David Poole introduced the paper and provided the following overview:

i. The College's draft financial statements had been presented to the Audit Committee for review and scrutiny. The Audit Committee was now recommending the approval of those financial statements, together with the letters of representation and the confirmation of the College's 'going concern' assessment.

ii. The statutory accounts were unqualified and the audit opinion was unmodified, with no material changes having been made to the financial statements. As the audit had over-run slightly due to the Ofsted inspection an additional charge had been incurred.

Stuart McKay then provided an overview of the key matters set out in the Audit Findings Report, including the reduction in the EBS legacy student debt and the work undertaken on the balance sheet. There was nothing to report on regularity, unlike a number of other Colleges which had received qualifications on their regularity opinion. A number of follow-up actions had been proposed to continue the College's pathway of improvement, and progress had also been made on the findings from the previous year's audit.

David Poole provided an overview of the going concern paper, emphasising that the College was compliant with its covenants measurable as of 31st July 2024, had met all its loan repayment deadlines as they fell due and that its cash flow projections confirmed that this would continue to be the case. He then gave an overview of the letters of representation which Marion Plant and Ray Linforth would be asked to sign off.

Ray Linforth asked Members to approve the financial statements and the letters of representation and confirm the 'going concern' assessment.

Following discussion, Members approved the financial statements and the letters of representation and confirmed the 'going concern' assessment. (Proposer: Steve Dover; seconder: Steve Maxey).

Ray Linforth thanked Stuart McKay for joining the meeting, presenting the Audit Finding Report and responding to Members' questions.

Stuart McKay left the meeting at 6.32pm.

Ray Linforth and Marion Plant confirmed that their electronic signatures could be applied to the relevant documents by the Clerk.

Members highlighted their thanks to David Poole and the finance team for such a good result.

2.1 **Whole College Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 and Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25 incl. the Corporation Self-Assessment Report 2023/24**

Ray Linforth highlighted that the Whole College Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 and Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25 needed to be approved by the Corporation. Members had seen both papers and there had been very few changes made since the Ofsted inspection had taken place earlier in the term.

Ben Crook confirmed that the Whole College Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 had been drafted prior to the Ofsted inspection and then moderated to reflect feedback received from Ofsted following the inspection. The final Self-Assessment Report would be provided to Ofsted and would be used in communications with partners.

On behalf of all Members, Ray Linforth thanked Ben Crook, his team and the wider College team for all the hard work and preparations that had been taking place over the last year to deliver the excellent result following the inspection.

Following discussion Members approved:

i. the Whole College Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 including the Governance Self-Assessment Report (Proposer: Andrew Turner; seconder: Jeannette Essex); and

ii. the Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25 (Proposer: Andrew Turner; seconder: Steve Dover).

3. Strategic Oversight

3.1 **Principal's Briefing Update**

Marion Plant presented a number of slides highlighting national, regional and College updates and provided the following summary, outlining the following key matters for Members' information:

i. A reform of current qualifications had been announced in Parliament.

ii. It had been hoped that with a Labour Government now in power, the FE sector would be better valued; however in light of the increases in national insurance rates and the rise in the real living wage, the £300m additional funding promised to FE would not go far.

Members asked what the impact on the College, of the increase in the real living wage would be.

Colin Butler confirmed that there would be no impact from the national living wage and outlined the significant impact on the College that the changes to the Real Living Wage would have.

iii. The Office for Students had temporarily closed its register for new registrations. It was however possible that the College would have to re-apply for registration following dissolution.

Jeannette Essex arrived at 6.35pm

iv. The number of young people who were NEET (not in education, employment or training) was increasing. As a consequence the College was gearing up to provide support in this area of provision.

v. The College's significant medal successes at the WorldSkills UK national/finals were outlined.

vi. The College was working closely with Warwickshire County Council on its devolved skilled funding.

vii. The ESFA had indicated that there would be new money available for English and maths upskilling.

viii. The draft Ofsted report had been provided to the College and was pretty much what had been expected. It would be published in the New Year.

ix. A full ESFA funding audit had taken place. The outcome of the audit was a clawback of £316, although this had been corrected before the year-end accounts were finalised.

x. The new motor vehicle workshops were now in use by the students and were providing world class facilities at the Nuneaton Campus. Further developments were still to come.

David Poole explained that the Town Centre development had been delayed for a year and gave an overview of the current position.

Members raised the following points:

i. Following the introduction of T-levels the former Government had indicated it would phase them out.

Ben Crook confirmed that the replacement qualification had been scrapped. The current Government had recognised that T-levels were a good set of qualifications and with the amount of resource going into them, the Government couldn't go back on them.

Following discussion, Members received the presentation.

3.2 **Confidential - Strategic KPI Dashboard 2024/25**

4. Financial Matters and Arrangements for Internal Control

4.1 **Confidential - Performance Report incl. Period 3 Management Accounts and Procurement Timetable 2024/25**

4.2 **Confidential - Forecast 1**

4.3 **Update on Strategic Estates Developments & ICT incl. Partial Disposal**

David Poole introduced the paper and outlined the following the matters:

i. The significant investment in the College's estates and IT which had been undertaken over the last 18 months, including an overview of the works which had taken place.

ii. An update on the progress of the partial disposal which was moving forward.

iii. A delay in the Nuneaton Town Centre development.

iv. The IT upgrades which had been made on facilities and services.

Members asked what was being done with the piece of land where the nursery used to be located, now the nursery had moved into the re-developed art block.

David Poole confirmed that it would be built on by the developers in due course.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

5. Governance

5.1 **Outcomes from Written Resolutions and Sealing of Documents**

Members noted the following outcomes from one written resolution:

i. The approval of the award of the supply of Insurance Services to Arthur J. Gallagher Insurance Brokers Limited and the delegation of associated paperwork, purchase orders, invoices and contracted extensions to be approved by Marion Plant or David Poole.

Members noted the sealing of the following documents since the last report to the Corporation on 4th July 2024:

i. The signing of an amendment letter with NatWest Bank plc authenticated by Marion Plant and Ray Linforth on Thursday 4th July 2024.

ii. Recognition of a tender document for Bentley authenticated by Marion Plant on Thursday 18th July 2024.

iii. Deed of Extension and Variation between WMCA and NWSLC authenticated by Marion Plant and Anil Majithia on Monday 19th August 2024.

5.2 **Committee Assurance Reports**

Members noted the following Committee assurance reports:

i. People, Strategy & Governance Committee Assurance Report - Thursday 10th October 2024;

ii. Audit Committee Assurance Report - 26th November 2024;

iii. Students Learning and Quality Committee Assurance Report - 21st November 2024;

iv. Finance & General Purposes Committee Assurance Report - 5th December 2024.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 **Policies**

Following discussion, Members unanimously approved the following policies. (Proposer: Steve Dover; seconder: Rebecca Suart):

6.1.1 Public Interest Disclosure Policy 2024

6.1.2 Risk Management Policy 2024/25

6.1.3 Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy 2024

7. Other Matters

7.1 Members agreed to the release of papers with the exception of:

i. Agenda item 3.1 Chair's Briefing Update as it contained information which was commercially sensitive.

ii. Agenda item 3.2 Strategic KPI Dashboard 2024/25 as it contained information which was commercially sensitive.

iii. Agenda item 4.1 Performance Report: including Period 3 Management Accounts and Procurement Timetable as it contained information which was commercially sensitive.

iv. Agenda item 4.2 Forecast 1 as it contained information which was commercially sensitive.

v. Agenda item 4.3 Update on Strategic Estates Developments & ICT incl. Partial Disposal as it contained information which was commercially sensitive.

vii. Agenda item 5.1 Written Resolutions, Sealing of Documents and Chair's Action as they contained information which was commercially sensitive.

viii. Agenda item 5.2 Committee Assurance Reports - Autumn Term 2024 as they contained information which was commercially sensitive.

ix. Agenda item 6.1.2 Risk Management Policy 2024/25 as it contained information which was commercially sensitive.

x. Agenda item 8.1 Confidential Minutes of a meeting held on 4th July 2024 as they contained information which was commercially sensitive.

xi. Agenda item 9.2 People, Strategy and Governance Committee Annual Report 2023/24 including the Annual Senior Postholder Remuneration Report as they contained information which was commercially sensitive and included personal data

7.2 **Date of the Next Meeting**

Members agreed the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 10th April 2025 at 5.30pm - Wigston Campus and noted that the Corporation Strategy Day was to be held on Monday 27th January 2025 at the MTI.

Ray Linforth thanked Marion Plant and her team, and all Members for their hard work and support over the year and wished everyone a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

James Stanley and Maisy Deakin left the meeting 7.24pm

Matters on the confidential agendas were then dealt with.

8. Confidential Agenda

8.1 **Confidential Minutes of a Meeting held on Thursday 4th July 2024**

The confidential minutes of the last meeting, held on Thursday 4th July 2024, were unanimously approved. (Proposer: Steve Dover; seconder: Clive Read).

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.