

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Tuesday 5th April 2022 at 6pm - Room 1:1 - Mira Technology Institute

Present: Mr Chris Brewer, Mr Duncan Cooper, Mrs Helen Holley, Prof Ray Linforth, Mr Steve Maxey, Mrs Bryanne Mosavian, Mrs Marion Plant, Mr Clive Read, Dr Andrew Turner and Miss Charlotte Walton.

In attendance: Mr Ben Crook (Vice Principal Quality), Mr Tom Hamilton-Dick (Deputy Principal), Mrs Nicola Morrison (Director People and Commercial), Mr David Poole (Chief Operating Officer) and Mrs Rachel Marshall (Clerk).

Ray Linforth welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was quorate, and introduced Bryanne Mosavian who had just been appointed to the Corporation as the Staff Member, following an exhaustive process. Ray Linforth thanked Andrew Turner for supporting the interview process.

Members were asked to introduce themselves.

1. Routine and Standing Items

1.1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Simon Kirby, Trusha Lakhani, Anil Majithia and Tracey Simkins.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

1.3 Minutes of a Meeting held on Tuesday 14th December 2021

The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 14th December 2021 were unanimously approved. (Proposer: Clive Read; seconder: Andrew Turner).

1.3.1 Schedule of Actions

See attached Schedule.

1.3.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1.4 Chair's Action

Ray Linforth reported that he had taken no Chair's action since the last Corporation meeting on 14th December 2021.

2. Strategic Development

2.1 Principal's Briefing Update (including Covid-19 Update)

Marion Plant introduced her update presentation and highlighted the following points:

i. Regional Update:

- The College had received a letter describing the future of the local enterprise partnerships, which would cause complex problems for Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and a lack of clarity for the Leicester and Leicestershire LEP. Funding for LEPs would however continue for another year. The College needed to work out how to position itself to obtain funding once the LEPs finally finished.

ii. Local Update:

There was nothing significant to update on.

iii. National Update:

A number of developments were outlined including the Levelling Up White paper and the recently published SEND Green paper. Following a recent review, the role of the ESFA was changing with all post 16 skills policy and implementation moving to the Department for Education (DfE).

iv. The Midland Academies Trust: an update on the Trust was given.

Following discussion, Members received the update briefing.

2.2 Strategic KPI Dashboard 2021/22

Tom Hamilton Dick introduced the paper and highlighted the following matters which related to the teaching, learning and assessment KPI dashboard:

- i. Student attendance had improved since January 2022 and was now levelling up at 84-85%, which was 2% lower than pre-pandemic rates at the same time of the year.
- ii. Retention rates were relatively robust at 94% and were higher than the previous year when there had been a considerable drop-off between the February half-term and Easter. This had not been seen this year and the outturn was 'decent'.
- iii. Apprenticeship provision remained challenging, particularly in high volume areas.
- iv. Work experience numbers remained low for the pandemic legacy reasons and in line with the experience of other colleges. Staff were working on 'simulated' work experience using a number of different approaches. Everything that could be done was being done. Normally, at the current time of the year, work experience against target would be at 70%. Currently it was at 20% of target. A number of examples of the work that was taking place were provided; however it was apparent that work experience was low on employers' priority lists.

Members raised the following challenges:

- i. Why were apprenticeship numbers so low?
Ben Crook highlighted the following reasons; a significant number of apprentices were failing to finish their frameworks due to the pandemic and in some 19-23 apprenticeships, such as health and social care, the apprentices were not going forward to their end-point assessments as they were happy to achieve their NVQs which would get them a job. The situation was being closely monitored; however it was dependant on the design of the apprenticeship standard. Retention for apprenticeships was currently at 75% and if those apprentices were retained then achievement rates would be higher than the national rates. The situation was being reviewed on a monthly basis and was currently RAG rated red.
- ii. Would this situation continue or even accelerate if apprentices didn't need to go through an end-point assessment to get a job?
Ben Crook confirmed that the re-design of the standard would require apprentices to undertake their end-point assessment.
- iii. Would the current problem worsen?
Ben Crook explained that the apprenticeship achievement rates had just been released and the College remained above national rates for the previous two years, but it was clear that the state of apprenticeships and industry was having an adverse impact.
- iv. It didn't seem right that some apprenticeships required end point assessments and others didn't. Surely the Government should make a decision as to whether an end-point assessment was required.

Agenda item 1.3

Ben Crook confirmed that the College was currently reviewing which apprenticeship standards would go forward into the new year and was hopeful that the newer standards would be better designed .

Tom Hamilton Dick highlighted that the consistent view of employer forums was that apprenticeships were confusing and getting worse with every reform that was made. It had been a complex market place pre-pandemic and the Government had now introduced a swathe of changes which made it even more complicated.

- v. Was any lobbying of the Government about this issue taking place?

Marion Plant confirmed that lobbying took place through the Association of Colleges although the College could start direct lobbying.

- vi. The College was on track to implement T-levels in September 2022, ahead of expectations, and roll out would take place as agreed. National recruitment on T-levels was low and this position was unlikely to change. The College was looking to attract students from different areas; it was a new market, and the College would push aggressively. The College had put in a bid for 8 T-levels, but this number may reduce.

David Poole then provided the following overview of the corporate services dashboard:

- i. The one amber RAG rating for the financial KPIs related to the adjusted current ratio which was slightly below forecast. This was however expected to improve by year-end. The College remained compliant with its bank covenants.
- ii. The one red RAG under Enterprise and Growth related to the under recruitment of the 16-19 students in 2021/22 (funding would not be impacted until 2022/23 academic year) which Members were well aware of. The amber ratings related to MTI and AutoLive, as to date they had not achieved their forecast targets. MTI was however starting to show a profit.
- iii. HR was currently indicating two red RAG rated KPIs. One related to staff turnover, which had increased to 16% and was being closely monitored. The other related to appraisal compliance, which remained below target. Remedial actions had been put in place and an increase in compliance was now being seen.
- iv. Marion Plant highlighted that the College was in the procurement stage for a significant JLR contract which the College was involved in through a partnership led by Coventry University.

Members interrogated the paper:

- i. MTI was a fantastic facility; was now the right time to take a deep dive into the original business plan and identify the learning from it?

David Poole confirmed that a deep dive could be undertaken as part of next year's budget planning, to be shared with both the Executive and Members. Next year's medium term business plan would be much more detailed and in depth due to the stresses over energy costs and a number of other areas.

- ii. Was electrical upskilling being implemented for the whole JLR workforce?

Tom Hamilton Dick confirmed that the whilst the programme was short it was for a huge volume of staff.

Marion Plant confirmed that it was an excellent development putting the College on the 'map' and bringing in income which wasn't currently in the budget.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

2.3 Confidential - Update on Strategic Estates Developments including the Nuneaton Town Centre Development Business Case

3. Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

3.1 Students Learning & Quality Committee Assurance Report & Draft Minutes from 10th February 2022

The assurance report and minutes were noted.

4. Financial Matters and Arrangements for Internal Control

4.1 Performance Report including Period 7 Management Accounts, Recruitment Update and College Mandates Decision

David Poole introduced the paper and highlighted the following aspects:

- i. The College was on track to meet its forecast budget. All KPIs were looking positive and were RAG rated Green, including EBITDA, with the exception of the current adjusted ration, which had been highlighted earlier in the meeting. The situation had occurred over the December-March period due to the annual income pinch-point. The covenants had not been breached and cash had exceeded the minimum range permitted and there had been no need for an overdraft facility on this occasion.
- ii. There was some movement in the income streams, but losses were offset by cost savings. Overall, the College was on track to achieve its budgeted surplus
- iii. In respect of the College's energy bills, the gas contract was effective until the end of September 2022. A contingency was however in place should there be a need to break the contract with the supplier Gazprom, should it be sanctioned by the Government.

Following discussion, Members received the paper, indicating that it presented an encouraging and improving financial position.

Members then approved the updating of the bank mandates to:

- i. include the following postholders - the Chief Operating/Deputy Chief Executive Officer; the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Innovation; the Finance Director; the Finance Officer; the Management Accountant and the Accounts Assistant; and
- ii. to remove the previous signatories who had since left the College.

(Proposer: Ray Linforth; seconder: Anil Majithia - unanimous approval).

4.2 Forecast 2

David Poole introduced the paper and explained that the second reforecast for 2021/22 had been completed, based on six months of actual figures and a forecast for the remaining six months in the financial year. A detailed review of income, pay and non-pay by Assistant Principals, Directors, the Finance Director and appropriate members of the Executive Team had taken place. The paper set out the detail of the movement that was being seen.

Key areas of variance were highlighted:

- i. Apprenticeship and schools income was at risk.
- ii. Savings to date were being seen in sessional staff and general under-recruitment.
- iii. Non-pay costs had increased by £330k from £10,166k to £10,497k.
- iv. Energy costs had increased by £40k and were another area of risk.
- v. Cashflow was above the £1m mark.

Members were asked to note that forecast 2 was reporting a decrease in the operating surplus reported at Forecast 1 of £52k from £554k to £502k. This was not a reduction against the original budget.

Following discussion, Members received the paper

4.3 Strategic Risk Report 2021/22

David Poole introduced the paper, highlighting that the Audit Committee had interrogated the risk report at its meeting in March 2022. The report indicated that of the 18 risks presented, one was a high risk and 17 medium risks. The high risk related to Covid-19, for which there was a separate detailed risk assessment in place.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

4.4 Resource Committee Assurance Report & Draft Minutes from 9th February 2022

The assurance report and draft minutes were noted.

4.5 Audit Committee Assurance Report and Draft Minutes from 14th March 2022

The assurance report and draft minutes were noted.

4.6 Hardship Charity

It was agreed that this matter should be dealt with on the confidential agenda for external Members only.

5. Governance

5.1 Outcomes From Written Resolutions and Sealing of Documents

Members noted the following outcomes from recent written resolutions:

- i. Approval of the amended Financial Statements 2021-22 on Wednesday 12th January 2022 at midday by a majority of Members approved with no abstention and no dissensions.
- ii. Approval of the appointment of Bryanne Mosavian as staff member until 31st July 2026 on Friday 18th March 2022 at 10am by a majority of Members approved with no abstention and no dissensions.

Members then noted the sealing and authentication of the following documents:

- i. a lease relating to CLEAR and Bittesby Hours between NWSLC (tenant) and Gazeley UK Ltd (landlord) and an underlease relating to rooms at Bittesby House between NWSLC and Wincanton Holdings (tenant) authenticated by Marion Plant and Andrew Turner on 30.1.22.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Policies

No requests from Members had been received to discuss any item on the consent agenda and therefore Members unanimously approved the following policies.

6.1.1 Travel and Subsistence Policy (Proposer: Helen Holley; seconder: Chris Brewer).

6.1.2 Suicide Prevention Policy (Proposer: Chris Brewer; seconder: Helen Holley).

6.2 Matters for Note

No requests from Members had been received to discuss any item on the consent agenda and therefore Members noted the following matter:

6.2.1 Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2020/21

8. Other Matters

8.1 Release of Papers

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

- i. Agenda item 2.1 Principals' Update Report including Covid-19 Update as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- ii. Agenda item 2.2 Strategic KPI Dashboard 2020/21 Closing Position as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- iii. Agenda item 2.3 Update on Strategic Estates Developments as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- iv. Agenda item 3.1 SLQ Draft Minutes from 10th February 2022 as they were yet to be approved by the Committee.
- v. Agenda item 4.1 Performance Report including Period 7 Management Accounts, Recruitment Update and College Bank Mandates Decision as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- vi. Agenda item 4.2 Forecast 2 as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- vii. Agenda item 4.3 Strategic Risk Report 2021/22 as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- viii. Agenda item 4.4 Resource Committee Assurance Report & Draft Minutes from 9th February 2022 as they were yet to be approved by the Committee.
- ix. Agenda item 4.5 Audit Committee Draft Minutes from 9th February 2022 as they were yet to be approved by the Committee.
- x. Agenda item 4.6 Establishment of a Hardship Charity as the papers contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- xi. Agenda item 8.1 Confidential Minutes of a Meeting held on 14th December 2022 as they contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- xii. Agenda item 8.2 Resource Committee Confidential Draft Minutes from 9th February 2022 as they were yet to be approved by the Committee and contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- xiii. Agenda item 8.3 Audit Committee Confidential Draft Minutes from 14th March 2022 as they were yet to be approved by the Committee and contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- xiv. Agenda item 9.1 Outcome form the Strategy Day 2022 and Partnership Opportunity Next Steps as they contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.

7.2 Date of the Next Meeting:

Members agreed the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 6pm at the Nuneaton Campus.

Bryanne Mosavian and Charlotte Walton left the meeting at 8pm.

Matters on the confidential agendas were then dealt with.

The meeting finished at 8.50pm