

**Minutes of the Corporation meeting
Thursday 24 March 2022
TB506
4.00pm**

Present: Allan Schofield (Chair) Ian Pryce CBE, Principal & CEO
Dennis Buckley Raj Randhawa
Sharon De Leonardis Sheila Selwood
Richard Dimpleby Alasdair Simmons
Luke Ferebee Abigail Stevens
Mark Lawson Luisa Vecchio
Olly Mills Cliff Wragg

In attendance Karen Campbell (Vice Principal)
Pat Jones, (Executive Director of Finance)
Rachel Nicol (Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation)

Action

**C/6/22 Apologies for absence &
Declarations of interest**

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Carvell, Melissa Peacock, Vinod Tailor and Amanda Wagstaff

C/7/22 Matters arising

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

**C/8/22 Dashboard and progress against
strategic aims**

The Principal and CEO presented the paper in the context of national and local trends.

It was confirmed that the College and Aston Recruitment and Training Limited have been approved for the Register of Apprenticeship and Training Providers.

Financial pressures on the College in terms of national insurance and utility increases were outlined, as well as the impact of planned projects and local relationships.

The Board was updated on developments at Bedford College Academies Trust ("BCAT") and Silverstone UTC in terms of recent key appointments.

The report was noted



C/9/22

Update on Central Bedfordshire College (CBC)

The Principal and CEO provided an update following the presentation to Central Bedfordshire College on a proposed merger. The Board of Central Bedfordshire has approved Bedford College as the selected merger partner and it was confirmed that an announcement will be made to all staff at 4pm Friday 25 March.

The preferred merger date is currently 1 February 2023 but this will be confirmed with the FE Commissioner. The legal requirements and planned extent of the consultation were outlined. In addition to identified stakeholders, meetings with MPs are planned.

The merger is planned as a Type B merger, the nature of this and plans for due diligence were explained to the Board and noted.

The current considerations around management structures and issues to be addressed were set out by the Principal & CEO, including requirements and benefits of cross college activity as well as geographic focus.

The Board discussed in general terms the nature of the “whole institution” and group as well as campus identity.

It was agreed that the management structure and roles is a decision for the Principal & CEO under the Instrument and Articles but that the Corporation will be kept informed and offered their support. The determination of senior post-holder designations is a matter for the Corporation and will be considered in due course, when the identity of all individuals currently designated senior post-holder in both institutions is understood and management structures determined.

An update was given on the recent Ofsted inspection at CBC with a recognition of strengths as well as areas of challenge.

The Corporation recorded congratulations to the team for the work to date.

The update was noted.

C/10/22

Update on the strategic plan

The Chair updated the Board. It had been agreed to delay the proposal of the targets to a future meeting in light of the discussions around potential merger.

The Executive Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment confirmed that a 16 page summary of the Strategic Plan has been prepared and will be circulated to the 100 list, the students and staff for comments. A plan is being developed to embed the new values as part of the processes for the recruitment, induction and training of staff.

The Board noted the update

C/11/22

Strategic Initiatives



A paper had been uploaded to the portal and proposals under consideration were outlined. The Board discussed the proposals, the alignment with the key functions of the College, and the potential for benefits in keeping with the College's status and educational aims.

The Board discussed how projects might help students and increase the profile of the College in the local area as well as the financial and reputational risks.

It was agreed that the Chair, Principal and Executive Director of Finance will further review the options.

C/12/22 Community Engagement

The Executive Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment presented the report and outlined the current activity on engagement, including employer forums and the consultation on the Corby Sixth Form. The measure of impact through the likelihood to recommend was outlined, the historic trends explained and the position is being monitored. The consistency of measures is being reviewed and the RepTrackPulse survey results were outlined.

The Chair of the Governance Committee provided the background to the review of community engagement and monitoring required with key documents being available on the portal, including the 100 list and calendar of events.

The Board discussed how the 100 list is updated and identification of out of date contacts by governors with links was welcomed. Governors were also invited to provide additional information and contacts for consideration. The methodology of the list in relation to the strategic plan was explained and is kept under review.

The report was noted.

C/13/22 QSA Rag rating

The Chair of the QSA introduced the report and provided an update to the Board on each area considered during the March meeting.

Particular consideration had been given by the Committee to the development of HE provision, external partnerships and plans in respect of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Student feedback had been reported as positive and professional development activity outlined.

The approach to curriculum development and English and maths provision is under consideration and will be monitored.

The report was noted



C/14/22 Curriculum planning and approval update

The Principal and CEO provided an update on the approach being taken to the planning of study programmes to include additional hours stipulated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”).

Reflection is taking place on apprenticeships in terms of student numbers and process improvements, adult provision and learning centre activities. The College is looking at the level of funds that can be provided to adult students to help with hardship.

The Board discussed education post Covid, including the balance between face to face and on-line provision and the priorities of the Executive Director of Digital Transformation.

Further discussions took place around concerns on the acceptance of T levels by Universities and the position nationally in terms of lobbying.

The level of agency staff was raised and will be taken forward in terms of the curriculum and budget planning.

The update was noted

C/15/22 Quality of Education and student support

The Vice Principal in attendance presented the report and outlined the current position in terms of overall performance and areas of focus for 16 to 18 and adult students, including time keeping and attendance. The grades and success for apprenticeships, particularly in Construction was noted to be positive.

Staff cover and absence is monitored as a risk to the quality of education, particularly in areas where it is difficult to recruit industry specialists. Work experience continues to be a challenge in terms of both student and employer engagement.

Student demand for social spaces at campus level has increased and the impact of cashless operations is being assessed to ensure students are supported. The balance between designated functional spaces and the need for additional indoor space was discussed.

The Board sought assurance on the action being taken to address attendance, including rewards and parent involvement. Challenges for staff in supporting adult attendance was outlined. The need for a consistent approach and correlation with disciplinaries has been recognised.

The report was noted



C/16/22

Safeguarding and EDI updates

The Vice Principal in attendance presented the report highlighting the increase in reported incidents, increased mental health awareness training for staff and students (in induction) as well as the impact of lock down.

Advance to FE, a programme to support students in accessing FE, and students with learning disabilities were noted to be some of the most impacted groups.

The Board considered the gender differential on mental health issues and potential reasons for this.

At this stage there has been no increase in reported incidents attributed to the current position in Ukraine.

The Board discussed patterns in relation to the number of unique learners affected as well as the number of incidents and whether there are particular characteristics or circumstances impacting the position.

The Board raised whether, given the increase in incidents, resources are appropriate. Assurance was given that the College is managing the current levels of referrals within the resources available.

Further questions were raised on outcomes and the measure of impact of action taken. The EDI Committee has requested information in this area including the potential to ascertain reasons for withdrawals, attendance levels and achievement.

The report was noted.

A report updating the Board on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion ("EDI") was provided and the Vice Principal in attendance provided further insights into the collaborative project with Moulton College.

The current work of the EDI Committee was outlined including a review of student data on protected characteristics, staff recruitment process changes and accessibility.

The Chair of the Governance Committee updated the Board on the review of governance of EDI and the plan for unconscious bias training.

The EDI lead governor confirmed she has met with the EDI lead at Moulton and further information will be available in due course.

The Board sought and was provided with assurance on the actions being taken to address issues identified following the review of data on student disciplinaries.

The report was noted



C/17/22

Resources rag rated report

The Chair of the Resources Committee presented the report and outlined key discussions from the committee meeting in February.

In particular the Committee had made a recommendation in respect of the budget for the refurbishment of the Tower Block which had since been approved by the Board by written resolution.

The early indicative Medium Term Financial Strategy ("MTFS") had been considered and will be reviewed in May. A paper was included for consideration later in the agenda.

The report was noted

C/18/22

Estates update

The Director of Estates and Facilities provided an update and outlined the current position in respect of the Motor Vehicle centre in Kempston. Capacity had been exceeded and students relocated. Surveyors had reported on options for sale and for retention and lease and these were reported to the Board.

It was explained that future green technology curriculum development and future space requirements had been a significant consideration in the recommendation to retain and lease the building in the short term.

The Board discussed the current need for cash against future curriculum needs as well as regulatory requirements. Assurance was given that there are no implications in terms of covenants or negative tax impact on either option.

Further debate took place on the appropriateness of and availability of resource in managing a lease arrangement, as well as consideration of the risks. Assurance was given that any lease would be a full internal and external repairing lease with due diligence being carried out on any potential tenants. The Board also discussed the need for detailed business scenario planning when looking at the timing and delivery of the green technology curriculum.

The Board voted on a show of hands with 7 supporting the recommendation to retain and lease, 4 against and 3 abstentions.

C/19/22

College Information Report (January)

The report was presented by the Executive Director of Finance and areas highlighted included:

- Performance against the Adult Education Budget and work being done to fulfil the contract.
- Apprenticeships and current focus on student achievement.
- Review of learning centre activity.



-Pay overspend in construction and apprenticeships and actions being taken to address this.

It was explained that the ESFA are trialling a new measure in the key performance indicators in the current year. This is being modelled and a consultation on the appropriateness of the measure will take place prior to it being included.

The Board asked whether the ESFA will consider an index linked increase in funding. A 4.8% increase has been announced for 16-18 learners but no increase anticipated in the apprenticeship rate. Further discussion took place on the ability to and appropriateness of lobbying and the potential for investment in money markets to counter some of the anticipated increases in costs.

The report was noted.

C/20/22 Medium Term Financial Strategy ("MTFS")

The Executive Director of Finance presented the report and explained the alternative models. Work to review contracts and modelling in light of the proposed merger was outlined.

Outstanding information on the tuition fund, discussions around increasing unit rates for associates and estimations and expectations around pay rises will be taken account of. Areas being explored for efficiencies are being worked on by members of the executive team.

The current utility contract expires in March 2023 with significant increases predicted. The Board discussed the appropriateness of models, contingency planning and how investments are determined. Arrangements at Central Bedfordshire will be reviewed as part of the due diligence exercise.

The Board noted the inclusion in the model of the revenue relating to the additional 40 hours in the study programme but without corresponding costs being modelled. The planning around how the additional hours are delivered is ongoing and the Resources Committee will consider this further in their May meeting.

The update was noted.

C/21/22 Capital Programme

The Executive Director of Finance presented an update on the Capital programme. Meetings with the Principal Contractor to discuss inflationary rises in construction materials had taken place.

Actions being taken include:

-Consolidation of programme of work to reduce the overheads in terms of project management



- A review of construction projects and materials and viability of selected materials and potential alternatives.
- Early progress with some work to secure materials at current prices.

The Board noted the update and the Resources Committee will continue to monitor the position.

C/22/22 Audit Committee rag rated

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the report and in particular highlighted the increased assurance on the management of the General Data Protection Regulations (“GDPR”), despite the inherent risk remaining high.

The Committee had received an updated Risk and Opportunity Management Policy to support the register with assurance given that operational documents exist between the Policy and the register itself.

The Board approved the Risk and Opportunity Management Policy on the recommendation of the Audit Committee.

The update was noted

C/23/22 Health and Safety

The Health and Safety report was presented by the Vice Principal in attendance.

It was agreed that the formatting and labelling on graphs will be reviewed for clarity.

The Corporation noted the assurance provided in the report and this was supported by the Governor attending the Health and Safety Committee meetings.

The update was noted

C/24/22 Governance Committee rag rating

The Chair of the Governance Committee presented the Governance Committee rag rating and highlighted:

-Board profile and gender imbalance. Recruitment was noted to be in a holding pattern due to merger but with one candidate being interviewed on Monday.

-The detailed review of information received by the Board and committee on EDI with Committee Chairs now monitoring the discussion on information. The Committee supported the plan to arrange unconscious bias training at the next development day.

-planned review of Governance models and structures to take into account the workload of governors, ability to attract working governors and need to be appropriate for size of College and the management structure in place.

The update was noted



Ian Pryce, Karen Campbell, Pat Jones, Abigail Stevens and Olly Mills left the meeting

C/25/22

Confidential minute removed

C/26/22

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 7 July at 4pm