

MOULTON COLLEGE

CORPORATION

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 10th December 2020 via Teams

- Present:** Mr D McVean (in the Chair), Mrs C Harris, Mr A Clarkson, Miss S Frederiksen, Mr B Hansford, Mrs P Hawkesford, Mr I James, Dr P Jones, Miss L Knapp, Mr M Knibbs, Mr C Matts, Mr T Neville OBE, Mr M Pate, Mrs P Prow, Mr A Thomson and Mr M Wakeford
- In attendance:** Mr D Aldridge, Miss A S Bruce, Mrs G M Hulley, Mr C Jenkins, Mr S Parkes (ESFA Observer), Mr J O'Shea and Mrs C Smith

SECTION A – ROUTINE AND GOVERNANCE ITEMS:

- 20/89 Apologies for absence (Agenda item 1)**
Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Ijewsky and Miss E Cohen Neighbour.
- 20/90 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 2)**
Mr T Neville OBE declared an interest in agenda items 10 and 14.
- 20/91 Minutes of the last meeting (Agenda item 3, Paper A)**
The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th November 2020 were approved as a true and accurate record.
- 20/92 Actions outstanding (Agenda item 4, Paper B)**
The one outstanding action was not due for consideration until April 2021.
- 20/93 Matters arising**
The Chair sought the views of the Corporation in relation to the development of a 'road map' outlining a series of metrics for the next 3-5 years for governors to monitor progress towards achieving the Strategic Plan 2020-30. The Principal confirmed this would be achievable (**Action 168 – Principal**).
- 20/94 Health and Safety (Agenda item 5)**
The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) confirmed that terms of reference would be shared with the College Health and Safety Committee next week. Where Covid-19 was concerned, numbers were extremely low. The College Intervention Management Team (CIMT) had started to plan ahead for January and February 2021 when more cases were expected. The Governor Champion confirmed that he considered the College continued to be compliant with Health and Safety and that it was currently being effectively managed. He explained it would be important to get the governance infrastructure right in relation to the College Committee to continue improvements with cultural change within. This included more involvement of the student body. He felt that the way in which staff had responded to Covid-19 was an excellent demonstration of cultural change. In response to a question about future delivery of Apprenticeships, the Executive Director Commercial confirmed that a number of actions had already been taken in preparation. Other actions would be required when Apprentices were on site but the team was very clear about what those actions would be.

Resolved: To receive the Health and Safety Report.

20/95

Governance Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 and Governance Improvement Plan 2020-21 (Agenda item 6, Paper C):

The Chair of the TLA Committee explained that this report had been subject to scrutiny and challenge at the last two meetings in October and December 2020. The Committee had agreed that based on evidence supplied in the report, this was sufficient to support an overall judgement of Good. The Corporation agreed that the proposed 'road map' linked to the Strategic Plan was a positive move towards identifying any further skills gaps. In response to a question about membership, the Chair of Corporation confirmed that the new skills audit which had recently been circulated would now offer a more forensic approach as it now required governors to justify their ratings against skills directly linked to the Strategic Plan. Chairs of Committees had also been asked to consider and identify what level and which core skills were required. The Corporation was also committed to having a membership that reflected its local community. As there were currently no vacancies, co-opted membership could be an option and opportunities would be explored with the EDI Committee for achieving this

Resolved: To approve the Governance Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 and Governance Improvement Plan 2020-21 including the overall judgement.

20/96

Principal's strategic update (Agenda item 7, Paper D):

The Principal outlined a number of key points for the Corporation's attention:

- An extremely busy term with very positive feedback following virtual visits from Ofsted and the FE Commissioner. No new recommendations were expected in the report once received.
- In order to track and monitor the College's progress towards achieving its strategic ambitions, the College's Quality Improvement Plan was now aligned to the Corporate objectives. A number of plans (Commercial and Business Development; People; Financial Recovery; Estates) would be monitored through the sub-committees. This would ensure a joined-up approach and the whole College was working towards the same goals.
- Notable key performance indicators included those related to 16-18 student attendance which was very high considering the impact of Covid-19; new student applications showing a significant in-year increase to date; and, extremely low levels of staff turnover and absence.
- A staff CPD day was planned for the following week when everyone would give consideration to their department's contribution to the Strategic Plan. Responses would be collated using a standard template with contributions feeding into a SLT action plan.
- A very positive meeting had been held with the Lord Lieutenant and the College continued to plan for the centenary.
- A virtual meeting had been held the previous day with the Minister for Skills and Education and the Minister of State for Transport. This included a virtual visit to various curriculum areas and discussions with the Chair, Senior Leadership team, staff and students.

The Corporation thanked the Principal and her team for such a successful term. A question was raised about retention in one area and members were informed of the actions being taken through monthly performance monitoring boards. Everyone acknowledged that it was important to remain focused on agreed priorities and not to become complacent. The Board agreed with the Chair of Corporation's proposal that there should be a standing item on the agenda for student governors to offer feedback.

Shannon Frederiksen, FE student governor confirmed that she thoroughly enjoyed being at the College and the facilities were so good, they encouraged her to attend every day.

Resolved: To receive the Principal's Strategic Report.

20/97

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (Agenda item 8):

a. Minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2020 (Paper E.1):

The Chair of TLA confirmed that there had been 1 meeting of the Committee since the last Corporation. Some reports considered at that meeting were included today as they were being presented for final approval. Attention was drawn to the implication of the 20% increase in student numbers. This was likely to lead to an increase in Safeguarding concerns. As the College was likely to grow further in the future, there would also be a need look at resources supporting this. The Committee also examined actions arising from an audit of the single central register completed by the Safeguarding Governor Champion. A follow up visit was arranged for March 2021. A review of the risk register confirmed that of the 4 risks managed by the Committee, 2 were improving and 2 remained the same. The Committee understood the reasons for the latter and were able to confirm there were no concerns that the Corporation needed to be alerted to.

The Governor Champion was thanked for his continued support of Safeguarding and that such work confirmed to the Corporation that the College followed good practice.

b. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2019-20 (Paper E.2):

The Chair of the TLA Committee confirmed that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report had been subject to detailed scrutiny and challenge at the last meeting. This was a comprehensive report offering a detailed overview of the College's position for 2019-20. The Corporation received an assurance that the College was meeting its legal duties. The report included an action plan which would be monitored by the EDI Committee. The Committee recommended the EDI Annual Report for approval.

The Corporation welcomed the report which everyone agreed was of a particularly high standard and congratulations were extended to the authors. Some members queried whether any additional detail about information for the region was available for purposes of contextualisation. It was also agreed that diversity was important throughout the College and Corporation. The Chair confirmed this was something that the Search and Governance Committee was actively pursuing to address in addition to the earlier suggestion of co-optees.

Resolved: To receive the report from the Chair of the TLA Committee and subject to proof-reading and an additional page of contextualised information about the communities the College served, to approve the EDI Annual Report 2019-20.

20/98

HE Quality Enhancement Plan (Agenda item 10, Paper F):

The Dean of HE highlighted the importance of having mechanisms in place to capture feedback from students. Plans were in place from January 2021 to improve overall participation; and, quality mechanisms to create a feedback loop to students to explain how issues and concerns had been addressed. In terms of value added for student groups from February 2021, industry panels had been organised and guest lecturer visits. A HE Steering Group as part

the Academic Board was now set up with student representatives from all courses at all levels providing feedback. Priority was being given to continuation by assigning a personal tutor to each student with weekly progress tutorials; monthly PMBs to highlight issues with overall grades; and, the Dean of HE would attend University of Northampton progression boards. An academic framework had been created to support the further development of academic staff. A more detailed plan would be prepared and discussed with the Director of Quality in January 2021.

Governors welcomed the report and acknowledged the actions that had been taken to date. An offer was extended for HE students from the College to take advantage of the facilities at the University of Northampton. The Dean of HE confirmed recent membership with the National Union of Students which he was certain would have a positive impact on student experience in due course. The Governor Champion for HE highlighted the importance of sharing good practice internally. The Office for Students (OfS) had released a consultation on regulating quality and standards in HE and the Dean of HE confirmed a collaborative response with Landex was planned. The Chair of Corporation confirmed the report provided a degree of confidence that the key issues were being addressed. Priority should also be given to more degree apprenticeships and to involve the student governor (HE) with student voice activities.

Resolved: To receive the HE Quality Enhancement Plan.

Mr C Jenkins left the meeting.

20/99

College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2019-20 and Quality Improvement Plan 2020-21 (Agenda item 9, Paper F)

The Chair of TLA Committee confirmed that the SAR had been subject to scrutiny and challenge at a validation meeting attended by himself and Mr B Hansford and then at the last meeting of the Committee. He explained that the version of the QIP presented to the Corporation had been updated since the last meeting. He welcomed this updated version which now included further detail on work-experience; careers; and, gifted and talented. The Committee had no hesitation in recommending the report for approval.

A question was raised about ensuring good work-experience was available to all students for whom it was relevant. The VPC&Q confirmed that this was a key priority for the team. Placement Officers were in each of the schools. Part of the curriculum planning process was to engage with more employer forums. More and more were being set up to accommodate this. The Chair of Corporation highlighted work-experience placement metrics were on the governor dashboard for governors to monitor. Any issues with access should be sent to the Clerk.

Resolved: To approve the College Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 and receive the Quality Improvement Plan 2020-21.

20/100

Minutes of the last meeting (Agenda item 11):

a. Monday, 9th November 2020 (Paper H)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th November 2020 had been circulated previously. Any issues from that meeting had been taken forward to the meeting held earlier in the week.

b. Monday, 7th December 2020 (Paper H.1)

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee updated Corporation members on the key discussion points from the meeting held on the 7th December 2019. The meeting had focused on scrutinising the College group accounts for 2019-20. The Director of Finance had highlighted a number of points including a reduction in funding income for the period and the impact of Covid-19. As a result there was an increase in the Comprehensive Deficit for the year. A number of presentational and disclosure changes were also highlighted, for example, details of the expenditure in respect of OfS Access and Participation Plan were included. Most of the group activities and assets were now held within the College entity. Two subsidiaries were due to be struck off Companies House with the 3rd to follow. The College group accounts included all the required disclosures in relation to the subsidiaries at year-end. The accounts continued to be prepared on a Going Concern basis and a number of disclosures were included in the accounts and audit report to reflect the position which remained similar to the previous year. The Finance and Resources Committee recommended the Financial Statements to the Corporation subject to the completion of all outstanding actions by the Financial Statements auditor and final proof-reading by the Finance team. The Committee also agreed that authority should be delegated to the Principal and Chair of Corporation to sign the accounts in January 2021 once all outstanding actions had been completed.

Resolved: To note the report from the meeting held on the 7th December 2020; and, to approve the College Group Accounts and to delegate authority to the Principal and Chair of Corporation to sign the accounts in January 2021 once all outstanding actions had been completed.

20/101

Audit Committee minutes (Agenda item 12, Paper I):

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on the 7th December 2020 had been circulated previously. Three reports featured as separate agenda items for discussion later in this meeting. The Committee approved an updated set of Terms of Reference and Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Policy. It also received a report on the findings from the annual self-assessment. Reports were received from the new internal auditors who had completed one audit to date. The outgoing internal auditors had reported on progress with previously agreed recommendations which had been fully implemented. For those that were not, an action plan had been produced and the CFO had confirmed that the deadline of April 2021 for completion was achievable. Three internal audits had been completed. The Head of Internal Audit had confirmed an overall opinion of 'reasonable assurance' as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's governance, risk management and systems of internal control for the year ending July 2020. This was the highest level of assurance the College could receive.

Resolved: To note the report from the meeting held on the 7th December 2020.

20/102

Audit Self-Assessment Questionnaire and Audit Committee Annual Report (Agenda item 13, Paper J):

The College completed the questionnaire as part of the regulatory audits. Completion of the questionnaire confirmed compliance with the financial memorandum between the College and the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency). The self-assessment questionnaire had also been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on the 7th December 2020. The Chair of Audit Committee confirmed this was an essential part of the

process as each statement was supported by evidence. No areas of concern were identified.

The Chair of the Audit Committee also introduced the Audit Committee Annual Report which provided a summary of the work completed during 2019-20. The report had been amended to reflect feedback which had been received at the Audit Committee held on the 7th December 2020. The Chair highlighted a number of sections within the report. This included the financial statements auditor's opinion reported on earlier in these minutes. The report summarised the seven internal audits that had been completed during the year together with the overall assurance opinion and any agreed recommendations. The overall opinion of the Audit Committee was adequate.

Resolved: The self-assessment questionnaire was approved for signature by the Chair of the Audit Committee.

20/103

Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter and Letter of Representation (Agenda item 14)

The Financial Statements auditor had advised that subject to resolving some outstanding matters identified in the Management Letter that they intended to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the College financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2020. It was likely that the opinion would include a material uncertainty. This was not due to any concerns about going concern but because of the timing of the Revolving Credit Facility which was due for renewal in June 2021. The Letter of Representation included details of all the confirmations that had been noted from the audit. The Chair of Audit confirmed it was in line with expectations.

Resolved: To receive the Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter and Letter of representation and to delegate authority to the Chair and Principal to sign the letter of representation in January 2021.

20/104

Commercial Update (Agenda item 15, Paper L):

The report outlined a 5-point plan to focus on a joined-up approach to developing the commercial offer in the College. Three guiding principles were highlighted: the need to link everything to students and associated benefits that this would bring; empowering staff within a supportive quality assurance framework; and, micro-managing budgets in order to monitor income and expenditure.

Points raised by the Corporation included the need to have a set of metrics for Years 1, 2 and 3 so that these can be monitored by governors. The cohort of alumni should be used more effectively for Apprenticeships and work-experience. Employer engagement was also important and how contemporary information about student performance was crucial to help manage students effectively. The terminology used for business advisory groups needed to be consistent.

Resolved: To receive the Commercial Update report.

20/105

Staff Survey – Autumn Term 2020 (Agenda item 16, Paper M)

A staff survey was conducted in the autumn term with a response rate of 58.3% which was an increase on the previous year. Survey results were positive. This had been circulated in order to provide a quick 'temperature gauge' from the workforce. A number of themes had emerged from the report

which would be addressed by the new People Plan and associated Action Plan.

The Executive Director HR responded to a number of questions raised by the Corporation and confirmed that the survey questions were a repeat of last year and the timing allowed an early indication of how people had started the year. This was particularly pertinent in view of Covid-19. There would be a follow-up survey at the end of the academic year with more detailed questions. The associated action plan was now a priority. The Executive Director HR welcomed an offer from the Corporation's HR specialist to provide feedback on this next report.

Resolved: To receive the Staff Survey Report.

20/106

Any other Business (Agenda item 17)

- a. **Carbon neutral:** A question was raised about progress with the College becoming carbon neutral and the Chair confirmed a detailed action plan was currently being produced.
- b. **Chair's comments:** The Chair of Corporation offered thanks on behalf of the Corporation to the Executive and all members of staff. He also thanked each governor for their continued support throughout the year and that he considered it a privilege to be the Chair of Corporation at Moulton.

20/107

Date of next meeting (Agenda item 18)

Thursday, 28th January 2021 at 9.30 am via Teams.