

MOULTON COLLEGE

CORPORATION

Minutes of the meeting held on the 30th January 2020

Present: Mr D McVean, Mrs C Harris, Mr A Clarkson, Ms S O'Connor, Mr A Eastland, Mr B Hansford, Mrs P Hawkesford, Mrs S Ijewsky, Mr I James, Miss L Knapp, Mr C Matts, M T Neville, Mr M Pate, Mr A Thomson, Mr M Wakeford and Miss L Watson

In attendance: Mr D Aldridge, Miss A S Bruce, Mr G Davies, Mrs G M Hulley, Mr S Parkes (ESFA), Mr R Plantier and Mr J O'Shea

SECTION A – ROUTINE AND GOVERNANCE ITEMS:

20/01 Apologies for absence (Agenda item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

20/02 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 2)

Mr C Matts declared an interest in agenda item 11(c). Mr T Neville declared an interest in agenda items 7, 8 and 11.

20/03 Minutes of last meeting (Agenda item 3, Paper A)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 19th December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair of Corporation.

**20/04 Actions outstanding from last meeting (Agenda item 4, Paper B)
26th September 2019, Management accounts (Saudi bond)**

A formal complaint had been raised with the bank. A response was still awaited about the fee that the College would need to pay. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that there was no risk to the College. (Open)

SECTION B – PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:

20/05 Strategic report and Key performance indicators (Agenda item 5, Paper C)

The Principal identified some key points from the report:

- Quality improvement and financial stability continued to be the two main priority areas for the College.
- Priorities to date had also included financial modelling, curriculum planning and the procurement of a 6-year estates strategy. This information would enable the future shape of the College.
- Steady growth was required in order to become financially resilient over the next 3 years.
- Evidence from monthly performance monitoring boards (PMBs) confirmed improvements in retention, teaching, learning and assessment, and quality.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee outlined the decisions taken at the meeting held earlier in the week. It was agreed that in terms of 'Financial KPIs', these should be for a 3-year period (to 2023) in order for the Committee to monitor and track progress. Recruitment was a priority strategic KPI and statistics should also be included in the data. Where 'People KPIs' were concerned, the quarterly HR report would include provide further

clarification in the narrative to explain the context for the staff turnover figure (F&R – Director HR).

In terms of questions, a general theme centred on seeking assurances around how improvements would be maintained throughout the rest of the academic year. The Vice Principal confirmed the robust processes in place to ensure data used in the PMBs was current; retention was significantly above national benchmarks for colleges; attendance was significantly better than last year; and, weekly curriculum and quality meetings were being held. A number of actions that were being taken in relation to HE were also outlined. Further scrutiny of various FE and HE reports was planned for the next meeting of the TLA Committee in March 2020.

Resolved: The strategic report and KPIs were received.

SECTION C – QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE:

20/06

Learner voice: First impressions survey (Agenda item 6, Paper D.1)

Student voice continued to be a key indicator of the impact of changes that were being made within the curriculum. The Vice Principal highlighted two key quantitative responses for the College. Over 80% of students surveyed 'would recommend the College to others' which was above the national norm. Over 90% confirmed that they 'feel safe in the College.' The report also included an analysis of responses by each School thus providing a more forensic level of detail. A number of student forums had been established to get a greater insight into student voice throughout the 'learner journey'. A schedule of meetings was included in the report. Where areas of improvement had been identified, such forums would be used to further investigate issues and inform any strategy to address them. The Vice Principal concluded by explaining that although the initial feedback was quite pleasing, further work would be completed to ensure all responses were above FE benchmarks in every category.

Members commented on the importance of drilling down into the root cause of any issues in order to make improvements. This was essential if the pace of improvement was to be maintained. The link governor for safeguarding reported on a meeting he had attended the previous week. He explained that he was reassured by the further improvements to communication that had taken place. In addition, a number of activities were now taking place which encompassed the wider aspect of safeguarding as well as student focus groups which had been developed around this priority.

The Corporation welcomed the report acknowledging the impact that student voice can have. The Chair confirmed that the survey had identified a series of positive points and areas that the College Executive would need to consider and address (**Action 162** – VPC&Q).

Resolved: To receive the report on Learner voice: First impressions survey.

20/07

HE Access and Participation Plan (Agenda item 7, Paper D.2)

The action plan demonstrated progress being made against the College's HE Access and Participant Plan for 2018-19. It was subject to monitoring by the College Executive and Corporation. Following approval by the latter, it would be uploaded to the Office for Students (OfS) website by the 28th February 2020.

The Chair emphasised the importance of full compliance with the OfS requirements. The Vice Principal outlined systems and procedures that were now in place. The Corporation agreed that from a governance perspective, a link governor should be identified (Mr Neville volunteered). A representative from the OfS would be invited to take part in regular case conferences with the Chair and Principal as this would be beneficial in terms of effective communication. HE and FE would continue to be reported in detail at the TLA Committee.

Resolved: The Access and Participation Action Plan 2018-19 was approved.

SECTION D – AUDIT:

20/08 **Audit self-assessment questionnaire (Agenda item 8, Paper E.2)**
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 19th November 2019. 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.

Resolved: The self-assessment questionnaire was approved for signature by the Accounting Officer and the Chair of Governors.

20/09 **Audit Committee annual report (Agenda item 9, Paper E.3)**
The Chair of the Audit Committee introduced the report which provided a summary of the audit work completed during 2018-19. The report had been amended to reflect feedback which had been received at the Audit Committee held on the 19th November 2019. The Chair highlighted a number of sections within the report. This included the financial statements auditor's opinion reported on earlier in the 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.

A wider discussion was held around the need for the Corporation to be fully reassured that the College was compliant with all aspects of the OfS requirements. At the last meeting of the Audit Committee, members had questioned whether a small number of days in the current schedule could be redirected and so better utilised. The Chair requested that priority was given to gaining urgent reassurance around compliance.

Resolved: The report was approved.

20/10 **Group year-end accounts (Appendix 1) and Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter (Appendix 2) (Agenda item 10, Paper E.1)**
The report was outlined and discussed. It presented the accounts for Moulton College and the subsidiaries. The accounts had been reviewed by the Audit Committee at its last meeting in November 2019 and at the Finance and Resources Committee in December 2019. The revised deadline of 31st January 2020 for signing the accounts had been agreed with the ESFA and the bank. Members' attention was drawn to a going concern paragraph that was included in the members' report and note 1 to the accounts. Members

agreed this was a factually accurate statement of the College's current situation and that it outlined the steps the College had taken through the selling of non-strategic assets.

The management letter outlined that there were no adjustments identified and no recommendations with regard to controls that should be in place.

Resolved: The Corporation delegated authority to the Chair and Principal to sign the letter of representation and Group year-end accounts.

SECTION E – FINANCE AND RESOURCES:

20/11

Minutes of Finance and Resource Committee meetings held on:

a. 16th December 2019 (Paper G.1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16th December 2019 had been circulated previously. Any issues from that meeting had been taken forward to the meeting held earlier in the week.

a. Key discussion points for the Corporation from the F&R Committee held on the 27th January 2020

- **Health and Safety:** A comprehensive report (Paper G.2) on health and safety was considered and the Committee agreed that H&S was no longer just about compliance but also about culture and driving behaviours through culture. The Committee would recommend that H&S continued to be reported at each Committee and at Corporation with a focus on what action had been taken since the last meeting. The Clerk to liaise with Director of HR to identify a suitable online H&S training package for governors. An error on page 2 of appendix 1 should be changed to read: Farm Safety Foundation.
- **Disposal of non-strategic assets:** CMC: exchange of contracts expected on the 31st January; completion and receipt of funds on the 14th February. Little Bostock: a delay with the Charities Commission due to this being THT land and waiting for them to sign off their approval. Land next to A508, still expected to complete in February 2020.
- **FE and HE recruitment:** There was an increase in applications compared to same time last year (9%). A proactive approach was needed to ensure internal progression was maximised. Evidence showed that numbers were heading in the right direction but SLT remained prudent with forecasts.
- **Management Accounts and Cash Flow:** There was a focus on cash flow and how proceeds from disposal of assets would be used to reduce debt. This would be reviewed by the bank during discussions to extend the RCF. A meeting with the bank was planned for March 2020.
- **Bank covenants:** The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee had approved the amendment letters on the Corporation's behalf. A letter from Eversheds had provided some extra assurance.
- **AOB:** Approval of new IFMC (Integrated Finance Model for Colleges) was required by the end of February 2020. It would be based on existing information that the Corporation has already seen. The CFO had delivered a presentation earlier in the day and would circulate a commentary by the 7th February 2020. The Committee sought delegated authority to approve the IFMC at its meeting on the 24th February 2020.

Resolved:

- Health and safety would be reported on at all meetings of the Corporation and Finance and Resources Committee.
- Reports relating to the IFMC and additional commentary would be uploaded to Teams. The Finance and Resources Committee would scrutinise the IFMC at its meeting on the 24th February 2020 and make a recommendation to the Corporation. A written resolution would be used to gain final approval of the IFMC.
- The report was noted.

20/12

Management accounts (Paper F, Agenda item 12)

The management accounts had been circulated previously and had been subject to close scrutiny by the Finance and Resources Committee earlier in the week. Governors had no further questions to raise.

20/13

Staff survey findings (Agenda item 13, Paper F.1)

A staff survey was conducted in Autumn term 2019 with a response rate of 55.7%. This had been circulated in order to provide a quick 'temperature gauge' from the workforce around engagement and communications. The broadly positive results achieved were an endorsement of the approach taken by College management. Based on an analysis of the responses, three themes emerged as issues for staff: workload; line management; and, staff recognition.

The report also included an update for the Corporation on staff recruitment, pay, disciplinary, employment related concerns and a range of HR projects. The Director of HR confirmed that a number of additional regular reports that would be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee on key HR activities and challenges that the College was facing (Action 163 – Director of HR).

Resolved: The staff survey findings report was received.

SECTION F – CONFIDENTIAL:

20/14

Minutes of the last meeting (Agenda item 14, Paper G.1)

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on the 19th December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair of Corporation.

20/15

Minutes for this item can be found in a confidential annex at the end of this document.

20/16

Date of next meeting (Agenda item 15)

Thursday, 30th April 2020, Kelmarsh, Management Centre

Miss A S Bruce, Mr G Davies, Mr R Plantier, Ms K Riley, (ESFA) and Mr J O'Shea left the meeting.