

MOULTON COLLEGE

Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on Thursday, 30th March 2023 at 9.30 am via Teams

Present: Mr D McVean (in the Chair), Mr A Clarkson, Mrs C Harris,
Mrs P Hawkesford, Miss L Knapp, Mr M Knibbs, Mr C Matts,
Dr M Saeudy, Mrs K Squires and Mr A Thomson

In attendance: Mr D Aldridge, Miss A S Bruce and Mrs G M Hulley

SECTION A – ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS:

23/22 Apologies for absence (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Mrs S Ijewsky, Miss I Knowles, Miss M McArdle, Miss M Smith, Mrs P Prow and Mr M Wakeford. Ms F Williams and Mr M Smith also sent apologies.

23/23 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

23/24 Minutes of last meeting (Agenda item 3, Paper A)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 26th January had been circulated previously and were approved as a true and accurate record.

23/25 Actions from last meeting (Agenda item 4, Paper B)

The two actions remained open.

23/26 Governance (Agenda item 5)

- a. Election of Chair and Vice Chair of Corporation: The Clerk to the Corporation confirmed that following an election, the Corporation had been unanimous in its approval that David McVean continued as Chair of Corporation for the period 1st February 2023 to 31st January 2025 and Charles Matts continued as Vice Chair for the period 1st February 2023 to 31st January 2025. Approved.
- b. Independent governor recruitment: Following interviews, the Search and Governance Committee agreed the following recommendations:
 - i. Shan Wareing, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Northampton: An outstanding individual with vast experience across a number of areas that would greatly enhance governance at Moulton. The interview panel agreed Shan should be recommended as a full Board member; and, member of the TLA Committee.
 - ii. Elaine Limond, Interim Executive Dean, University College Birmingham: Another outstanding candidate who had a comprehensive understanding of governance and FE with particular strengths in HE and the Higher Apprenticeship offer. The interview panel agreed Elaine should be recommended as a full Board member; and, member of the TLA Committee.
 - iii. Andy McCaig, Co-founder and Director and CTO, Iter Digital Limited and Assilium Limited: Had a good understanding of key challenges for the College and also an IT background particularly in relation to taking an IT strategy forward. The interview panel agreed Andy should be recommended as a full Board member; and, member of the Audit Committee.
 - iv. Craig Ablett, Managing Director, Consulo Health and Safety Limited: Some experience as Trustee of a school. A very good understanding of health and safety. A former student of the College. The interview panel agreed that Craig should be recommended to be a co-opted member of the Audit Committee.

- v. Rosie Brown, Head of Safeguarding and Compliance, Northamptonshire Football Association: Good understanding of governance; role of boards/committees; and, MC culture. Extremely knowledgeable of safeguarding and risk assessments. The interview panel agreed that Rosie should be recommended to be a co-opted member of the TLA Committee.
- c. Search and Governance Committee: At a meeting held before the Corporation, members considered two reports:
 - i. Governance Professional - Succession Planning: The Committee agreed to a new model of governance support that would be provided by two individuals from September 2023: The Chair confirmed that the proposal reflected the increasing demands on the Governance Professional in view of: the College continuing to grow; reclassification and risks and constraints to that growth; and, the need to split the role to reflect the difference complexities of compliance and strategy. The support role would provide the additional support that was currently required and also offer someone an excellent opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and expertise at a higher level.
 - ii. Governor Appraisals: The Committee approved a new accountability framework which would be developed to allow each level of governance to set out the impact that it would have. A number of principles were agreed including: the Chair of Corporation would be appraised by all other independent members; each chair would agree with his/her members, a set of qualitative and quantitative measures of success which were complementary to the College's Strategic Plan 2020-30. Such strategic measures would be reviewed at the end of each year; governors would be subject to one layer of appraisal and these should be timed to align to the College's timeline. The next Governor Development Day would provide an opportunity for each Committee to work with members to start a conversation about objectives.
- d. College seal: The Clerk confirmed that the College seal had been used on the leases in relation to Chelveston Road, Units 1, 2 and 3.
- e. Lease agreement – Northampton Town Training Centre: The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that following the closure of the Animal Therapy Centre, the College had worked with Northampton Town Football Club to develop and agree a lease for the building as a training centre for the club. Governors were invited to consider the terms and approve the lease and delegate authority to the Chair of Corporation and Principal to sign the legal documents as required. Governors welcomed this opportunity and sought clarification around safeguarding, pricing, EDI and marketing. The Corporation was informed that: robust safeguarding procedures were in place and were working effectively; the lease figure excluded the cost of using the pitches; marketing to date had been very effective demonstrated in interest from other sports organisations wishing to work in partnership with the College; and, the COO outlined a number of examples whereby NTTC demonstrated its commitment to EDI. Approved.

Resolved: To approve the three appointments as full Board members and two co-optees; and, to receive the report on Governance.

23/27 Health and Safety (Agenda item 6)

The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that further H&S Committees had been held internally. A detailed report would be presented to the next F&R Committee. There was currently a major focus on wellbeing. Governors received assurances around compliance which was all in hand. An internal audit of H&S had recently been completed. Moderate assurance had been received with a small number of recommendations.

The Executive Director HE confirmed the new wellbeing sub-committee was very pro-active with good representation. Staff governor Karen Squires was heavily involved in a number of initiatives that had been agreed with the SLT to take this priority forward. A dedicated area would be created on the staff hub area. All initiatives would be brought together into this one place; a new initiative delivered by Able Futures to provide mental health professional support was outlined. This was due to be launched after Easter. The Corporation agreed that wellbeing should continue to be reported on via F&R Committee who would report to each Corporation meeting on progress. The Chair requested that where appropriate, the report on wellbeing should explain the impact. The EDHR agreed to develop a set of metrics for the F&R Committee to monitor (Action 204 – EDHR).

Resolved: To note the Health and Safety report.

SECTION B – STAFF AND STUDENT VOICE:

23/28 Student voice (Agenda item 7)

Student governors had sent their apologies due to exams. The chair highlighted a separate piece of work that was needed to explore how to further capture student voice. It was agreed the developments with student representatives would be a very positive contribution towards achieving this. The introduction of a Students' Union would also be instrumental. An update on progress was requested for the next meeting (Action 205 – VPC&Q).

Resolved: To note the report on student voice.

23/29 Staff voice (Agenda item 8)

Staff Governor Karen Squires reported that wellbeing continued to be a priority. Feedback from colleagues was very positive about the proposed initiatives. There had been some CPD delivered for managers on difficult conversations; this would further help with staff competency and enhancing staff wellbeing. Karen Squires also now attended the College's EDI group which was now reaching out to more areas of the business.

Staff Governor Michael Knibbs welcomed the update on wellbeing and confirmed how staff would benefit in the future. He appreciated the recent updates from SLT to acknowledge feedback from staff by sharing updates from 'you said, we did.' A concern was raised about exam results and that some students required catch up sessions. The Principal confirmed a new curriculum model that would be introduced from September; this was subject to discussion at next week's F&R Committee but it should alleviate some of the problems currently experienced by curriculum co-ordinators. Plans were also being put in place to strengthen careers and the library team.

Resolved: To note the report on staff voice.

23/30 Equality, diversity and inclusion (Agenda item 9)

The Chair emphasised the importance of the need to continue embedding EDI at all levels of the organisation so that it was fully embedded. The agreed EDI strategy approved in 2022 by the Corporation was an important approach to support this vision. The EDI Link Governor would continue to meet with the relevant teams and provide the strategic lead in ensuring this strategy is fully embedded.

Resolved: To note the EDI report.

SECTION C – PRINCIPAL’S UPDATE:

23/31 Operating Plan: Progress update including KPIs (Agenda item 10, Paper C)

The report confirmed that in terms of KPIs, income and expenditure were largely on target with an improved EBITDA forecast. Staff costs were lower than anticipated due to shortages. Staff turnover had been affected by the cost of living crisis and staff absenteeism was lower than this time last year. Some staff had long-term health issues which had impacted on the figures. Quality KPIs were generally on target. Student retention was currently good but there was still a need to address pockets of poor student attendance.

In response to a question relating to opportunities to progress from Entry to Level 5, the Principal explained that better curriculum pathways had been established and this model was due for implementation in September would support this. A question was raised about PhDs and funding; the EDHR explained there was a staff development budget. Although not a full contribution, staff should approach the HR team to raise their specific questions. Each case would be considered on its individual merits.

Resolved: To receive the Operating Plan and KPIs.

23/32 Accountability Statement: draft (Agenda item 11, Paper C.1)

The Principal had produced a first draft of the Accountability Statement which included draft comments from employers. LSIP priorities were still awaited. Although good progress had been made, feedback from governors would be very much welcomed. The Chair confirmed this had been a huge undertaking to date and the majority of Committees would need to contribute to its development with the TLA Committee overseeing progress. Consideration was given to the priority in relation to sustainability and whether this should be embedded throughout each priority as something that could make a positive impact on Moulton as a land-based College. The reduction in the number of land-based colleges had been subject to a discussion with the ESFA; everyone had agreed on the importance of working out how to reverse such a decline. The Principal confirmed the document was very much like a funding agreement and a statutory requirement; it would be subject to Corporation approval in May 2023.

Resolved: To receive the draft report on the Accountability Statement.

SECTION D – COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

23/33 TLA Committee (Agenda item 12)

- a. Minutes of meeting (Paper D) held on 7th February 2023: The minutes of the last meeting were received.
- b. HE strategy (Paper D.1): The Chair of TLA Committee highlighted some of the key challenges that members had raised with the team in relation to: underpinning research; the College’s USP; and, the importance of partnerships were outlined. Feedback highlighted a typographical error in paragraph 30 and in paragraph 34, the need to change ‘ability’ with ‘potential’. Governors were reminded that this report was a strategy and that a detailed action plan would underpin it. This action plan would be subject to scrutiny and challenge by the TLA Committee. Everyone acknowledged the report was very much about forward planning; the importance of taking time to develop HE provision; appreciating the complexity of Agriculture and the need for consistency in language; and, the importance for the College to be clear of its USP.

Resolved: To approve the HE Strategy; and, to receive the TLA minutes.

23/34 Investment Advisory Appraisals Group (Agenda item 13, Paper E)

The minutes of the last meeting of the IAAG held on the 8th February 2023 were received. The Chair summarised the agreed actions for the Farm Options Plan which was to not take forward options relating to: (1) Sale of land; (2) Hydroponic/Solar farm; and, (3) Shared/Contract farming arrangement. The College would continue with option (4) Carbon trading and, in due course explore options in relation to option (5) Biodiversity Net Gain.

Resolved: To receive the IAAG minutes.

SECTION E – CLOSING ITEMS:

23/35 Any other business (Agenda item 14)

There was no other business.

23/36 Date of next meeting (Agenda item 15)

Thursday, 11th May 2023.