

Minutes of Corporation Special Meeting

held Friday 24 January 2020

at Copthorne Hotel, Merry Hill

Present Louise Jones (*Chair*), Helene Jones (*Vice Chair*), David Williams (*Principal*), Amanda Allen, David Allen, Peter Coley, Joanne Chilton, Lance Hanson, Tiffany Harvey-Pallent, Mark Johnson

In attendance Jacquie Carman (*Director of Finance and Corporate Services*)
Joanne Williams (*Deputy Principal*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

A changed order of agenda items was agreed.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Lewis Callary.

2 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were received from David Williams, Joanne Williams, Jacquie Carman and Jennifer Sunter in relation to agenda item 4 Remuneration Committee.

Under Standing Order 8 Proceedings at meetings it was resolved that the staff governor David Allen, would withdraw in relation to remuneration of staff senior to himself.

David Williams, Joanne Williams, Jacquie Carman and Jennifer Sunter having declared an interest, withdrew from the meeting.

4 Remuneration Committee

A confidential minute was taken of

- 4.1 Confidential Minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting held 27 November 2019
- 4.2 Remuneration Committee Annual Report and Recommendation
- 4.2a Remuneration Costs
- 4.3 Remuneration Statement

3 College Self-Assessment

3a College Self-Assessment Report 2018/2019

Following in-depth discussion of College assessment, as part of the Corporation's strategic planning away day, members were satisfied that the report provided a fair reflection of performance at this time.

It was noted that fundamentally, performance was good across the spectrum of offer and provision. However, the College was not complacent. The report identified areas for improvement, which would be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan.

Members were mindful of the new Education Inspection Framework and its renewed focus; on the right curriculum offer, on student learning and meaningful progression, on student support to develop and achieve and on support for staff, through appropriate development and with regard to their wellbeing.

Members suggested the report could be further improved by the addition of more graphics.

The Corporation resolved to adopt the College Self-Assessment Report 2018/2019, subject to minor draft amendments.

3b Quality Improvement Plan 2020

A review of performance enhanced governor understanding of the College's strengths and areas for improvement. The action plan arising from the 2018/2019 Self-Assessment Report was provided for consideration and adoption.

The Corporation resolved to adopt the Quality Improvement Plan 2020 to be monitored across the cycle of business.

Both the Deputy Principal and the Vice Principal left the meeting room.

The Human Resources Director joined the meeting.

4 Principal Recruitment

The Corporation, having that day received the information that the Principal had resigned, with effect from the end of the current academic year, made time to discuss preparations for the recruitment, selection and appointment of a new Principal.

The Chair outlined early consideration of arrangements and discussed plans going forward. The Human Resources Director outlined potential engagement of external advisers and proposed timescales for the process. Members discussed the need to ensure rigour in the overall process.

Members approved the appointment of a suitable selection panel to include the Chair and Vice Chair of Corporation and three other members, in accordance with Articles of Government and in relation to dates to be confirmed.

It was agreed that early plans would be further reported to the Chair and to the Search and Governance Committee in the first instance.

The meeting commenced at 2.15pm and closed at 3.30pm.

The Corporation meeting was held as part of the Corporation Away Day on 24 January 2020.

The following notes reflect the presentations and discussion that were held across the day.

Strategy in light of the new and evolving opportunities and threats

With reference to Jacquie Carman's PowerPoint presentation.

Political

- Further education is being noticed and referenced in political manifestos and plans, and the Government has a clear agenda for FE to be employer and skills focused.
- There is promised investment to upgrade College estates.
- Further focus is placed on supporting disadvantaged students into Higher Education.
- Brexit may require a response to any extreme ideas and attitudes arising. The College has checked suppliers. A negative impact on the economy is anticipated with impact on local employers, of whom we already ask quite a lot.
- Employers are pivotal and the College may need to review curriculum to support changing needs.
- New funding settlement and budget.

Sector Regularity Issues

- Fifteen Colleges are in formal intervention.
- Current evaluation is being redefined to make financial resilience stronger.
- Many reviews; Ney Review and ESFA and FE Community monitoring review.
- Awareness of the health of competitive providers.

Social Issues

- There is very high unemployment for locality, particularly youth.
- There is a link between unemployment and crime.
- With an increase in knife crime across the UK, local colleges have signed up to a Safer Student College Charter.
- College campus safety has been reviewed and upgraded – student feedback on safety is not yet 100%.
- Statistics on poverty are shocking, with pockets of high deprivation relating to skills, health, housing violence etc.
- The College is working to develop skills, raise aspirations, nurture talent and remove barriers; to combat worklessness.

Discussion

Governors discussed students and feeling safe, noting that problems in the community would be pass ported into the College, and that there were a range of influencing factors. It was noted that interventions were in place, in response to student questionnaire responses.

Economic Information includes

- labour market data on economically active and unemployed;
- Dudley Council Priorities of tourism, catering and leisure;
- identifying where jobs are and advising young people;
- gleaning data from students to demonstrate how the College has made a positive impact;
- adults needing skills to return to work.

Discussion

Members discussed the change to portfolio and contract working in a gig economy and employer and employee readiness for this change.

Competitive Environment

- High risk was due to the variety of local providers.
- The College needs to ensure that the Marketing Strategy remains current, including social media and hyper local campaigns and website.
- There is always a risk of negative student voice.
- The College's unique selling points/offer need to be used.
- Contract shortfall was noted.

T Level 2021 Delivery with

- impact on Digital and Early Years provision;
- specifications not yet available;
- attractive selling points for T Levels;
- development Funding available;
- a mixed response on student 50-day work placements;
- HE providers have not yet recognised T Levels.

Discussion

Members discussed cautious progression, working with schools and appropriate careers guidance to promote and recruit effectively; so that learners and parents are aware of and understand the offer. Members also discussed the use of focus groups. Members also discussed the view of HE providers to T Levels and to Higher Level Apprenticeships.

Institutes of Technology

- Unknown how much these will change the economic landscape of the area and if they provide opportunities or threats?

Metro Extension

- Opportunities for adult skills development, enterprise zones, and incentives for local businesses which the College needs to be part of.

Reputation of the College

Discussion

Members discussed that reputation was vulnerable to the impact of any negative social media. Members also discussed the quality of presentations at local school open evenings and noted the positive action in College areas, such as marketing and school liaison.

Results and Quality

Discussion:

Members touched on the number of people in the locality with low or no qualifications and the need to have the right offer at Level 1, with progression to Levels 2 and 3. Members also discussed refocusing on employability and impact. While destination data was good, richer data was now needed. The College were using researchers to establish richer longitudinal data and looking at current offer.

Funding

- Impact calculated was good with the College remaining one of the most financially robust in the area.
- The slight increase in the funding base rate, under the lagged model, would be counteracted by current year under contract performance.
- The College would benefit from focus on high value courses and some higher weighted course offer.
- Additional resources were provided for learners reaching Level 3 English and Maths.
- CDF was increased to support increase in students (30% of cohort) engaging with 50 day placements.
- Teaching Pension assurance had been given until March 2021 and would be incorporated into spending review beyond this.

Discussion

Members considered competitor impact on student enrolment. Members asked about further capitalisation on income streams and it was noted that while the main focus remained on core business, there was scope for diversification through smaller funding pots, and one off sources of grant funding could be considered. An example being agreed funding from the WMCA for a digital literacy package to upskill adults.

WMCA

- There was work in reshaping the local industrial strategy (West Midlands Renaissance).
- There would be an impact if HS2 did not go forward.

- There was notable relocation of business away from London and apparent government commitment to invest in the regions.
- The College was forging good relationships with WMCA and Dudley MBC regarding their plans regarding for Business First innovation, pipeline for talent and development of the economy, health and innovation, vacancies/skills.

Partnerships

- A holistic approach was needed.
- Colleges in the West Midlands were addressing common issues.
- There was potential to work with Dudley College in adult skills provision in the Stourbridge area.
- There was also potential in exploring work with The Prince's Trust with regard to young people where traditional study is not appropriate.

Strategic Plan and Approach

- The College Estates Plan was well underway with Block 2 completed, Block 4 commenced and Block 5 addressed over summer 2020. There were challenges and mitigating work with regard to the impact on staff and students.
- Further bids for capital development funding were planned, linked to curriculum developments and more work was proposed to bring better motivational learning environments for students and improved social spaces. There was also scope to further enhance the safe campus.
- There had been a successful launch of University Centre.
- The College would bid for further adult skills growth and consider apprenticeship growth and progression pathways.
- Staff wellbeing was also under review with regard to campus developments, training, and support in challenging student behaviour.

Discussion

Members asked about access to additional/charity funding regarding places for high needs learners. It was noted that this would be on an individual learner basis. However, signposting for learners could be looked at. It was also noted that addressing need was not solely a funding issue and that it was hard to overstate the increase in mental health support needs. Members noted that there were changes to the student body and that the College had engaged with Pivotal, which had been a proven programme for other providers, however, this was a longer term commitment to embed. Support staff and teaching staff were being trained. The student disciplinary code had also been changed.

Members considered next steps.

Performance (Self-Assessment Report, Education Inspection Framework, Curriculum, Targets)

With reference to Joanne Williams's PowerPoint presentation.

New framework judgements included:

- Separate behaviour and management review with consideration of how the College is helping young people in their personal development.
- Implementation and Impact with emphasis on curriculum focus. While the governing body understands where strengths and weaknesses are, it needs to articulate decisions on curriculum offer, on why and how courses are provided, and how this translates to meaningful progression; therefore, governor understanding of curriculum could be further enhanced. Examples of course changes in light of student need and review of recent destinations were highlighted. These included reshaping Public Services, such as towards Policing, and introducing Dog Grooming following understanding that there are jobs in this sector/role. The latter could be improved by supportive skills course offer in running a business.
- Teachers and students need to articulate knowledge and development with teachers and managers demonstrating course rationale and meeting diverse student needs.
- Governors need assurance; to see mapped evidence on sustained student destinations. Longitudinal research had been commissioned.
- Delivery of curriculum is considered on how it works for students, including the classroom environment.
- Relevant staff development and staff wellbeing were more prominent.
- Student happiness was considered.
- Inspection would also look for effective use of data in monitoring and improving performance, with both formative and summative assessment of student performance
- Effective attendance monitoring and action for improvement remained.

Discussion

Members asked about discussions previously held on timetable review, particularly a later start to the day. This had not been pursued, as student feedback had not seemed positive and timetable and estate were not currently feasible. Members also discussed A Level offer and brand identity in relation to local competition. The importance of effective transition was noted. Members discussed appropriate staff development and also steps that could be taken to increase wellbeing and happiness. Members discussed suggestions on how they could increase their meetings with staff, to communicate with staff on changes and developments. Members also asked about blended learning programmes, how this worked in practice and was being refined.

- Impact was noted with regard to curriculum areas with changes to management and curriculum.
- Members noted the use of new tracking systems regarding course monitoring on delivery and work submitted to better support effective actions/intervention.
- The College has good use of external observers.
- Vocational courses saw less progression to HE/Universities.

- There was good student behaviour in general with some pockets to address outside lessons, with two new posts for leads in behaviour and safety.

Discussion

Members further discussed the need to review Level 1 provision with focus on development on how to function as a student and in the community ie transferrable skills, work experience/ placement. Youth worker training and Duke of Edinburgh's Award were also suggested.

- Further student personal development and enrichment opportunities were being considered eg Sport England, social action, art therapy, the sustainability group, Student Union support.
- The College would need to further develop business and IT work placements.
- Inspection practice seemed to be across deep dives into the biggest, best and worst courses leading into other areas. Staff and students need to be able to articulate what they understand they are doing and why.
- Staff also need to be up to date in their subjects particularly re their industry if in vocational provision.

Discussion

Members further considered the areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Corporation Self-Assessment questionnaire was deferred.

College Culture was deferred

Strategic Options/Planning

Members considered the current strategic plan with three year aims, with regard to appropriateness in moving forward.

The aims were agreed as fundamentally still relevant, with many targets met, however, there was scope to focus on key areas which needed to be progressed.

Being able to evidence to governors

- the quality of teaching and learning
- holistic development for all students; employability for all students.

Reconsideration of

- the staff experience, including wellbeing, development and support, leadership and communication. Flexibility and trust in the working environment, with accountability and trust, to meet business needs and staff wellbeing.
- review of staff contracts and associated policies.

Recognition and celebration and morale

- being strong financially while working to maintain the market share

- a good place to work
- a good place to learn
- powerful success stories
- vibrancy of student performances

Develop/Clarify the Halesowen College Brand

- what is the A Level market?
- what are students and parents looking for/at and what is distinctive about our College?
- how do we continue to market the College?
- estates development and identity of blocks for courses and students

The Chair summarised four key points

- Holistic working
- Halesowen College is a great place to learn and work
- Coherent branding to celebrate what the College does
- Early actions identified for staff wellbeing

The Corporation Away Day closed at 4.45pm