

## Minutes of the Corporation Meeting

held on 1 June 2020

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

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

*Meeting held by use of Microsoft Teams for all attendees.*

### 1 Apologies

There were none.

### 2 Declarations of Interest

The Clerk noted that staff and students present would be required or asked to withdraw under Standing Orders, in relation to the confidential agenda item 8, Transition to New Principal.

### 3 Minutes

#### 3.1 Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 25 March 2020

The minutes of the meeting held 25 March 2020 were approved as a correct record.

#### 3.2 Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that under item 6.1a, Review of Standing Orders and Instrument of Government, from the meeting of 25 March 2020, action was in progress, to be reported to the Corporation in July.

### 4 College Arrangements - Covid-19

#### 4a Operating Plan

Joanne Williams provided members with a comprehensive picture of the College's operating and response plans to address core activities in the short and medium terms as safely as possible. It was noted that the plans were being continuously updated in response to the developing government guidelines.

Joanne Williams outlined how staff were addressing the provision of predicted grades to awarding bodies and identified that this was particularly challenging for the high volume of Functional Skills and GCSE students. In addition, some areas would have students required to return to College to complete assessments and, in one area, an exam.

Online teaching and student support arrangements including for those who are at risk, vulnerable or without access to their own technology, were detailed. Examples where the College is making a difference were shared.

Members were informed of arrangements to keep current progressing students active and engaged and for remaining in proactive communication with applicants for 2020/2021. This included use of effective communication mechanisms, virtual information provision, course designated live chat slots and links for online enrolment. In addition, further staff training and support would be required for greater diversity and good quality in evolving online teaching and learning.

Joanne Williams highlighted the particular areas of concern for adult education in light of potential increases in unemployment and learners deferring higher education. The College was working towards an appropriate offer to support learner progression and employment readiness, such as pre-apprenticeship and pre-university programmes.

#### **4b Response Plan**

Joanne Williams referred members to underpinning practical detail required for the College estate readiness, for operations to be safe and meet requirements. The College was working towards achieving Covid Aware accreditation to assure stakeholders.

In addition to risk assessment and policy updates, practical actions included preparing a draft timetable to meet the best blended learning offer and ensuring communication was addressed in a timely manner.

Members noted the focus on year twelve learners and asked about support for year eleven learners. Joanne Williams explained that the College plans to implement an extended induction/recovery curriculum to support learners back into learning.

With regard to digital learning, members were apprised of key issues and that the College was considering how to deliver the curriculum differently, and for students not to be disadvantaged. The Digital Learning Policy would be finalised and address how strands of funding could help learners who face digital poverty.

Members asked how staff were in general coping, if there were new teachers starting at the College and how they were being supported. Joanne Williams reported that staff responses were broad, with some staff concerned about returning to work and others keen to return to campus. Staff would be managed individually, according to their personal circumstances. A return to work survey was intended and the College had a range of supportive resources for staff and student wellbeing, the latest being the Big White Wall. Joanne Williams also explained that staff development and mentoring were in place and information was provided at an early stage for new teachers. David Williams also noted that the College Leadership Team had been holding regular question and answer sessions via Teams for staff.

Staff and student governors shared their experiences with effective communication being key, both from tutors directing content and staff teams addressing functions. Joanne Williams shared the positive feedback from a student survey conducted before half term, which illustrated the difference staff had made in supporting students. The College planned to hold virtual student and staff awards and had so far received 600 online nominations for staff.

David Williams noted that much positivity had been displayed throughout the crisis, with good examples of how staff and students had worked, innovating and growing in confidence.

Members commended the work being done to support mental health and the impressive work being undertaken by the safeguarding team to support vulnerable students.

## **5 Risk Assessment – Covid-19**

### **5a Risk Assessment Update**

Jacquie Carman referred to the use of Government guidelines and other helpful checklists to support preparations for staff and students returning to the College site. Health and Safety continued to be taken very seriously, with exceptional work being undertaken by the Health and Safety Manager. Actions required were constantly updated.

Jacquie Carman outlined key challenges to ensure that the estate was best prepared, that control measures would be in place, with clear guidance on social distancing, use of facilities, limiting movement and what to do if Covid symptoms are presented. This addressed detail from redesigning the refectory, toilets, cleaning and using own devices, to fitness to travel and use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

Members were also informed that the College insurers had been contacted and updated to ensure that governors liability cover was appropriately addressed.

Under business continuity the College was working alongside the Association of Colleges in taking account of costs of Covid-19 and the appropriate use of public funding.

The risk management of behaviour was considered. Learners would need clarity on, and to comply with, safety protocols.

Jacquie Carman further explained that there would be clear guidance and communication with staff on returning to work or remote working, in consultation with managers. All staff would be trained on returning to work.

Investment in learner and staff wellbeing had been reported on and this included looking after vulnerable learners, to ensure appropriate access to equipment and supportive skills to cope.

Members asked a range of questions to better understand the operations proposed and these were addressed:

- with reference to staff self-isolating, under the test and trace scheme, the College would continue to pay staff, and would be updating policies on sickness and absence
- there was a good relationship with trade unions with a meeting forthcoming
- with reference to the Nursery, a separate detailed risk assessment had been undertaken and provided for the local authority. Following consultation, a number of families wished to use the provision, which was currently being prepared for opening

- management of student behaviour outside of lessons would be addressed by required adherence to protocols. Students would be in College for more limited time and with increased sheltered outside space
- the supply chain for PPE had now been addressed and if any safety problems arose the College would not open.

Regarding restrictions, necessary for safe operations during the Covid-19 pandemic, members had considered both detailed operating and response plans and an updated risk assessment for the College going forward, and were satisfied that necessary considerations were being addressed to support appropriate phased access to the College by students and staff. Members further noted that plans would be necessarily updated as further national guidance emerged.

The Chair led a Corporation record of formal thanks to staff for the supreme effort being undertaken.

## **5b Financial Risk Assessment**

Jacquie Carman stressed how severely many Colleges were being impacted by the current pandemic. Halesowen College was operating from a position of financial strength, but would need to reshape provision and be responsive in light of an anticipated surge in unemployment and a need for much upskilling. The College was also incurring cost to address physical changes to the learning environment and provision.

Current year budgets would be considered in detail by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The current year outturn would be broadly similar to forecast, however, while there was certainty for 16-18 funding, areas such as ERASMUS, Apprenticeships and tuition fees had been affected. Some savings on pay had been realised due to vacancies and sessional staff not engaged for the summer term. On non-pay, coach service savings were realised but increased security costs had been incurred.

The potential substantial impact for pension schemes deficit was unknown.

Members asked about loss of staff in key posts and were informed that these were non-teaching related and were not as result of Covid-19.

Looking to 2020/2021 the College was supported by key sources of income through the lagged funding model, the increase in the student funding base rate and new strands of Government funding, however, expenditure would increase, such as use of PPE and mental health support. Jacquie Carman confirmed that the College may be able to maintain outstanding financial health in 2020/2021.

For 2021/2022, Jacquie Carman reported that a national financial working group was looking forward, as the current funding system was no longer fit for purpose.

It was further noted that the student number patterns would change and the College would need to move forward.

Members were informed that for practical consideration of budget returns, the IMFC had been suspended until July 2021. Therefore, budget reports would be provided, through which income loss and expenditure incurred in response to the pandemic could be demonstrated.

Members noted that in overall terms the short to medium term financial position was stable, with issues to address post 2020/2021.

Members thanked Jacquie Carman and the Finance Team.

## **6 Disaster Management Policy and Procedures Update (confidential)**

Jacquie Carman explained that a new global category had been introduced into the policy and procedures with level 4 emergencies requiring adherence to government and emergency service directives.

Members asked about disaster management testing and the ability to record real time decision making. Jacquie Carman responded that desktop exercises were conducted and that a range of threats remained, which should be considered going forward. Advice from local authorities was in hand, but on hold until July 2020.

**The Corporation resolved to approve the revised Disaster Management Policy and Procedures Update which remains not for public access.**

## **7 Transition Arrangements – Principal’s Report**

David Williams outlined the range of areas to be addressed over the coming months and emphasised that the Corporation should be reassured by the strength of the College Leadership Team in management across all directives.

Members noted the need for an Interim Deputy Principal, in addition to an Interim Principal, to be in place to support the team and to enable key policy structures to function.

Members also noted the range of organisations listed, both statutory and non-statutory, to be informed. The Principal undertook to address this.

In considering future plans, members discussed increased engagement with staff and were updated on the Principal recruitment process. Capacity for student and staff engagement in this process remained important.

The report was received.

## **9 Any other business**

David Williams commended the senior managers of the College in their control and work and thanked all staff who have worked extremely hard.

## **10 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for 8 July 2020.

*Under Standing Order 8, Proceedings at Meetings, it was resolved that the staff governor David Allen and student governor Lewis Callary be asked to withdraw from agenda item 8, addressing senior post holder interim appointments. David Allen and Lewis Callary left the meeting.*

*David Williams, Joanne Williams and Jacquie Carman withdrew from the meeting.*

## **8 Transition to New Principal (confidential)**

### **Senior Post Holder Interim Appointments**

A confidential minute was taken of this item.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm