

Minutes of the Corporation Strategic Planning Day

Friday 29 January 2021, commencing at 9am

Present Helene Jones (*Interim Chair*), Andy Dobson (*Principal*), Amanda Allen, David Allen, Joanne Chilton, Lance Hanson, Jake Hiatt, Zubeda Limbada, Mark Richardson and Joanne Rouse.

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

1		Apologies Apologies were received from Louise Jones, the Chair. In her absence the Vice Chair, Helene Jones would Chair the Strategic Planning Day.
2		Declarations of Interest There were none.
3		Appointment of Chair Helene Jones provided a message from the Chair Louise Jones, who was unable to attend the Strategic Planning Day. Due to the impact of Covid on the Chair's personal circumstances, she had regrettably tendered her resignation with effect from 1 st February 2021. Members asked that a formal letter of acknowledgement and thanks be sent to Louise Jones. In accordance with the Instrument of Government, the meeting were duly tasked with the arrangements to appoint a Chair.
		The Corporation elected Helene Jones as Interim Chair of Halesowen College Corporation, commencing 1 February 2021, initially up to 31 March inclusive.
	Action 3a	The Corporation agreed that the appointment of Corporation Chair be addressed at the next full meeting of the Corporation on Wednesday 31 March 2021.
		Strategic Planning
4		Foundation The Vice Chair, Helene Jones welcomed everyone to the core business of the day emphasising the importance of Corporation ownership of strategy. Constructing a Strategy - Principal The Principal, Andy Dobson talked to members about the key elements of constructing a new strategy, from planning to engagement, to realisation through a shared understanding of the baseline, articulation of a clear purpose, mission vision and values, leading to identification of key goals. Getting to know one another. To support the Corporation, with both new members and the constraints in continued distanced meetings, members undertook an exercise to learn more about each other.
5		Review of the Self-Assessment Report Joanne Williams gave a presentation on the College's Self-Assessment Report. Members noted:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the grading headlines for each area with regard to student achievements, there had been few appeals as the College had successfully applied centre assessed grades adult learner provision required improvement, particularly retention, which had been further impacted by the pandemic Apprenticeships had been reviewed and again the impact of the pandemic was noted mental health issues continued to be a growing factor increased enrolment of A level students brought ongoing challenges, in that some would not be able to cope students remained the focus there was very good engagement with students, with online engagement increasing each week students were noted as exemplary and on the whole were seen to work hard and behave well. <p>Andy Dobson commented that the Self-Assessment Report illustrated that the College was in a strong position.</p>
		<p>The Corporation resolved to adopt the College Self-Assessment Report 2019/2020, subject to minor draft amendments.</p>
6		<p>Review of the external environment</p> <p>Andy Dobson and Jacquie Carman gave a presentation addressing competition and collaboration, curriculum reform, Covid recovery and Brexit.</p> <p>The White Paper, 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunities and Growth'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The White Paper was positive in recognition of further education, with colleges at the core of the education and standards levelling up agenda. Focus was on skills for jobs, with employers at the heart of the system, including qualification design. However, strategic partnership working was tempered by tension between what large employers and more local SME's (Small, Medium Enterprises) needed. Higher level technical qualifications were a valued alternative to university and this was a shift in approach, with impact on funding across the two sectors. Access to education was for life, but was skills and employment focused and based on the learner loans system. It was likely that Local Skills Improvement Plans would operate at the level of the region of the West Midlands Combined Authority. Funding could be simplified with greater autonomy, however, there was limited new money and little in the paper concerning 16-18, working with schools, ESOL, literacy or numeracy. Strengthening of governance and supportive resource was included. <p>Curriculum Reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College had responded to consultations on areas of curriculum reform. While supportive, there were concerns that the needs and wishes of some students would not be met in Apprenticeships, T-levels and A Levels alone. Defunding of Applied General Qualifications at Level 3 posed a threat to current provision and that some students could fall through the gaps in a revised offer. The locality had much competition, with some collaboration in place and a need to identify unique selling points and collaborative opportunities. <p>Covid Recovery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The magnitude of post pandemic recovery, in both scale and cost was hard to comprehend. The end of furlough, redundancy fears, added to already increased unemployment claims, was layered on the local considerations of no work households, children in poverty, a high

		<p>percentage of workers in low pay, low skill employment and the challenges in locally recruiting higher level skilled workers. People aged 18-34 years seemed hardest hit by the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College was placed to respond by being agile in offering skills training, to get people back into the workplace; supporting the building of confidence, knowledge and skills. The College was providing in focused areas of Health and Social Care, Business and Digital and some Construction Management. <p>Brexit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the impact of Brexit had been overshadowed by the pandemic, the position was changeable. The College had not incurred problems with its supply chains, however, prices were increasing, as were charges for delivery. The shortage of digital equipment for purchase was also noted. A key issue was that of bureaucratic challenges in the treatment of staff from Europe, and while this was a low number it could increase. Student trips overseas would also be impacted. <p>Members asked a range of questions based on the morning's presentations and the video interviews supplied before the meeting. In relation to consultation on the White Paper, Andy Dobson responded that the document was very new and still under early consideration across the sector. In relation to the impact of Brexit on employment, Jacquie Carman answered that the College employed a small number of staff from European countries and it was imperative that the correct licenses were in place.</p>
7		<p>Review – Responses to staff videos and senior manager presentations</p> <p>All members were invited to feedback their initial thoughts on the information provided. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff videos were inspirational and informative and demonstrated that staff are committed, passionate about student development and progression, with clear ambitions and clarity on areas of focus for improvement. Staff have been flexible in responding to the pandemic. Responsiveness in speed with which Colleges and teachers/lecturers have met the online teaching need, was a credit to the sector. Staff recruitment and pay to meet industry standards was recognised as an issue Departments are doing brilliantly with SAR positives outweighing the areas for improvement. Governors' networks could be of value to staff seeking vocational contacts. New governors had gained better understanding on where the College is placed, the challenges and opportunities; HE developments are clearer, as is the extent of reach to stakeholders. While inclusivity shone through, there were concerns for students potentially falling through qualification gaps, as qualifications change. Mental health was noted as remaining a very important current issue, with staff and students struggling. Access to A level programme and further supporting students to address the lack of skills and knowledge at Key Stages 4 and 5 was noted, with potential new discussion between schools, FE and HE in how the baton is passed. Branding and visibility remained an issue and communication remained key. Communication and Marketing were connected, but governors felt that it should be easier for them to follow key news about what the

		<p>College is doing. Some governors were feeling even more remote in the current environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While there was opportunity to 'seize the day' while FE is on the Government's agenda, a governor questioned the philosophy of total focus of employment over education, and that the Government's priority does not necessarily meet student aspirations (students not being just focused on jobs in the West Midlands), with desire to move into HE deeply embedded. Government focus was on STEM, which could be broader. <p>Governors asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does continuing to support mental health, post pandemic, for students and staff look like? What does help to improve/address student attendance? What does supporting people into jobs actually look like? What supports people to operate in a digitally connected world? What are teachers taking forward from digital working, so they are not just going back to what they did before? To what extent is the White Paper Treasury driven? What is the difference between Corporate and civic mission of the College? <p>Members further discussed their initial thoughts on some of the points raised and asked managers for their response. In responding it was noted that Halesowen College is of its place, a broad and historically predominantly 16-18 provider, with students attending from a diverse area, who are provided with choice in an inclusive and diverse community and where staff know their students.</p> <p>To move forward, the College would need to be even better at what it already did well, and that remained well placed to meet future demands.</p> <p>Ambition for the College was that it be valued by all its stakeholders and be so good, it could not be referred to as anything but outstanding. To underpin this the focus was on staff recruitment, resources, facilities and finance, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the culture and confidence of staff, their ownership and empowerment to 'feel free to be brilliant' Celebrating what the College does. Having competent lead managers and use of performance management where necessary Staffing commitment to be able to engage with employers Addressing concern for students arriving at College with two years of education impacted by pandemic, and being marked by this different experience with much support needed for them. Further support with digital access; while equipment had been deployed to students, more were now being purchased and there was hope to free up provision for adult learners.
8		<p>Direction of the College</p> <p>Members built on the morning's discussion, to first look at ambition and purpose. The starting point was in building capacity from what the College currently provided, coming out of Covid and aiming to be the local college of choice, questioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who the College was providing for and who should be added to this; 16-18 base with continuing development to meet wider community need? Breadth of offer, specialist provision and unique selling points?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the whole audience and offer, but the differing needs of constituent parts? What is the diversity, the culture, competency and branding of this? Curriculum offer in relation to the impact of changes supported by the White Paper and the fall in proportion of A Level students? <p>It was noted that the direction of travel needed to remain agile and student centric, while maintaining a diverse range of courses to meet need. Members discussed points around quality of provision, embedding diversity in a meaningful way, being a really good employer, the physical estate, satellite sites and how this related to curriculum offer and student cohorts and financial health to support investment.</p>
9		<p>Strategic Planning Next Steps</p> <p>It was agreed that the new plan needed to initially look at a five-year period, with an annual review, and with underpinning operational plans. Alongside this there would be a discreet review of the Curriculum Strategy.</p> <p>The College would also need to clarify its approach to collaborative work and consider how virtual working may widen the scope for collaboration as a range of partnerships, including with employers, would be crucial moving forward.</p> <p>The senior team would provide a draft plan, including purpose, with reference to quality of provision, resources and facilities, commitment to sustainability, finance, staff, and culture and values.</p> <p>Consultation on a draft plan would also be undertaken with stakeholders.</p>
	Action 9a	A draft plan would be returned to the Corporation for consideration.
10		<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Corporation is scheduled for Wednesday 31 March 2021.</p>

The meeting closed at 2.45pm.

Actions from Meetings			
Ref	Agenda item and action	Review Date	Reported by
Corporation Meeting 30 September 2020			
Action 10a	<p>Legal Advisors to the College</p> <p>It was agreed that it was timely to review the provision of professional legal services to the College.</p>	2020/2021	JWi
4.1	<p>Principal's Report – Ney Review.</p> <p>The amended Annual Plan 2020/2021 would be provided as part of the Corporation strategic planning away day, on 29 January 2021.</p> <p>26 January Update:</p> <p>Following discussion it was agreed that it was appropriate to consider updates to the Annual Plan 2020/2021 at the same time as the mid-year review of risk.</p>	March 2021	
Corporation Meeting 14 December 2020			
Action 5.2a	<p>Human Resources Annual Report</p> <p>It was necessary that any anomalies in the report were updated for the record.</p>	January 2021	JCa
Corporation Meeting 26 January 2021			

Action 5.1a	Review of Staff Pay It was agreed that modelling and clear recommendations on pay would be provided for the March 2021 meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Corporation, with focus on the College as a prudent but good employer.	March 2021	Ado/JCa
Action 5.2a	Remuneration Committee Annual Report and Recommendations, Including Remuneration Committee Statement for publication The Remuneration Committee Annual Report was deferred until March 2021.	March 2021	HJo
Action 9c) a	Review of Governance It was agreed that a further meeting on the terms would be convened.	February 2021	JCh
Corporation Meeting 29 January 2021			
Action 3a	Appointment of Chair The Corporation agreed that the appointment of Corporation Chair be addressed at the next full meeting of the Corporation on Wednesday 31 March 2021.	March 2021	JSu
Action 9a	Strategic Planning Next steps A draft plan would be returned to the Corporation for consideration.	June 2021	ADo