



Minutes of the electronic Corporation meeting held at 1700hrs on 14 October 2020

|                      |   |                           |   |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Present</b>       | Guy Ainsley                                 | Phil Berry                | Irina Kendix                                |
|                      | Richard Lewis                               | Matt Luheshi              | Mathew Messenger                            |
|                      | Chris Nicholls                              | Jason Smith               | Ben Stapleton                               |
|                      | Paul Thompson                               | Phil Thompson<br>(Chair)  | Gill Worgan<br>(Principal)                  |
| <b>In Attendance</b> | Ralph Devereux<br>(Clerk)                   | Gary Dixon<br>(DPQ)       | Cath Gunn<br>(Principal, Barnfield)         |
|                      | Sarah Knowles<br>(DP (P&D))                 | Eamonn McCarroll<br>(DoF) | Tammy Nuthall<br>(DP, Barnfield) (attendee) |
|                      | Louise Barden<br>(Principal's PA)(Observer) |                           |   |

**The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.**

**PART ONE**

**01/20 ELIGIBILITY, QUORUM, DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

- a. No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and there had been no interests declared.
- b. Electronic meetings were confirmed as compliant with Standing Orders (SO); members had submitted questions in advance and these would be addressed at the relevant stage of the agenda. The meeting format was explained and agreed. **(Action 1)**

**02/20 STANDING ITEMS**

- a. the Minutes (Part 1&2) of the meeting held on 8 July 2020 and the special meeting held on 26 August 2020 were confirmed for electronic signature; the Clerk to Action. **(Action 2)**
- b. Matters Arising.
- c. Outstanding Actions. All actions from the last meetings were considered and it was agreed that all had been implemented or were in progress.

| See referenced minute for full detail. |  | Resp  | Date        |
|--|--|-------|-------------|
| <b>Action 1</b>                        | 96/19b. Meeting format agreed.                           | Chair | <b>wie</b>  |
| <b>Action 2</b>                        | 97/19a. Last minutes (10.06.20) confirmed for signature. | Clerk |             |
| <b>Action 3</b>                        | 97/19d. Internal & Audit Plans approved.                 | DoF   |             |
| <b>Action 4</b>                        | 100/19. Members urged to meet and exchange with staff.   | Chair | <b>asap</b> |
| <b>Action 5</b>                        | 102/19a. Meeting Schedule 2020.21 approved.              | DDPD  |             |
| <b>Action 6</b>                        | 102/19b. Complaints detail to be reported.               | Chair |             |
| <b>Action 7</b>                        | 102/19b. Business Plan 2020.21 approved.                 | Chair | <b>wie</b>  |
| <b>Action 8</b>                        | 102/19. Regulatory Documents conditionally approved.     | Clerk |             |
| <b>Action 9</b>                        | 103/19. JS appointed for 2 years.                        |       |             |

- d. Matters arising. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- e. Committee Minutes. The Minutes of the Audit Committee (AC) meeting held on 30 September 2020 were presented by the Committee Chair. There had been three Internal

Audit Service (IAS) Fieldwork Reports: Sub-contracting (significant assurance), Learner Record (apprenticeships reasonable/classroom significant assurances) and a Management (advisory no assurance provided). The Committee Terms of Reference had been evaluated alongside the Audit Code of Practice (ACOP), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) requirements and recommended for approval, that was accepted and they were approved. **(Action 3)**

- f. Urgent Business. There was no urgent business requested.

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

### **03/20 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Principal explained that Chris Pearson had decided to take the recently announced voluntary redundancy and he had now left the College. The Principal's report, which covered detail outside the scope of the agenda had been circulated in advance and was received; several points were considered further:

- a. An Ofsted interim visit, designed to support Colleges in welcoming learners back from lockdown had been completed on 6&7 October. The visit focused on how the provision met students' and stakeholders' requirements and noted approaches to learning development and safeguarding. There was no associated judgement or gradings but a short report would be issued. The team recognised the efficiency and speed with which the required remote on-line delivery systems had been introduced and become effective. Safeguarding, including focus on the on-line safety of students had also been evaluated. During the exit meeting the team, based at the Watford campus throughout, commented favourably on student behaviour, cohesion and the clear common vision.
- b. Capital. The Barnfield College (BC) project was proceeding well, with the S106 finalisation allowing planning permission, which had now been issued. The South East Midland Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) funding agreement was expected in the next few weeks. The sale of land to Taylor Wimpey was expected to close in the next few days and the fee was likely to be in the delegated authority tolerance level (10%).
- c. Government Skills Announcement. The detail of the Prime Minister's announcement at Exeter College on 29 September 2020 were detailed in the document and were noted, a link to the full text was also included.
- d. Further Education Commissioner (FEC) The FEC termly letter was attached and noted.

The report was discussed, the FEC letter had considered class sizes and it was confirmed that, the local course file and plan had been reviewed at the start of the year; if below target and financially prompted, classes would be merged or discontinued. Generally, an average class size of 17 was typical at West Herts College although Barnfield is lower. Sourcing GAP and Industrial Placements was increasingly challenging, both with understandably hesitant engagement from employers and obtaining reassurance of remote student Covid-safety. By agreement with the awarding body, mandatory work placements in Care and Early Years and Care had been temporarily suspended. There were currently 59 work placements (36 in the workplace and 23 online). However, the quality of 'in work' placements was less robust than usual, but 'online' placements were stronger. Some online workplace activities and industry masterclasses were being arranged as a substitute for work experience. Consideration moved to the "Kickstart" scheme, aimed at young people receiving universal credit by funding businesses to employ them for 6 months. This was treated as a "not in education or training" (NEET) resource, accordingly, links with DWP and JCP had been re-established to track and support these measures. Should the current Covid environment lead to further restrictions or "lockdown", experience gained from the first phase and since refined, gave confidence that full delivery could be maintained.

**The information was received and noted.**

#### **04/20 POSITION PAPER AND PLAN**

At this point in a normal academic year the Annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) would have been completed and informed the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as explained in the accompanying paper, that had been precluded by external influences for the current year. The aim was now for the SAR to be completed for consideration at the December Corporation meeting, until then, regular updates against targets would be provided. An interim Strategic Position Paper and Work Plan had been prepared to guide focus on quality improvement and advancement with full awareness of the Covid environment and that was considered. The paper, had been thoroughly staffed, and was designed to lead to provision of outstanding service to stakeholders and the local communities; it was fully Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) compliant. The content and intentions were then considered and discussed. Funding of £888k for 'catch up' tuition and support for students to repair "lost learning" was welcomed and a detailed plan had been determined to utilise the funds and provide additional tuition to address specific knowledge and skills gaps. Initial and Diagnostic Assessments had been progressing since the start of term to identify precise gaps and regular further assessments would be made to assess progress. It was not yet clear which courses would be eligible for additional help from the National Skills Fund (NSF), but there were proposals that eligible courses should reflect local labour market needs and skills priorities. Current Covid management arrangements were explained. All reported cases were managed by CLG (Sarah Knowles; Emma Doree) and reported to Public Health England (PHE) and the Department for Education (DfE) as required; since the start of the year, 17 students and 3 employees had tested positive, with c300 students required to isolate at varying times. Parents were updated on how the College was managing cases. All reporting requirements were being met.

**The information was received and noted.**

#### **05/20 HEALTH AND SAFETY (HAS) POLICY AND ANNUAL REPORT**

- a. HAS Annual Report. The WHC Group (the group) remained committed to provision and maintenance of a safe environment for all and that was achieved through robust established and documented processes. As had been explained earlier in the year there had been extensive guidance about home-working; risk assessments had been completed with employees who thought they required adaptations to their home and where necessary, these had been provided. The overall "work related" incidence rate was 1% for the Group but it was not clear how this compared with similar organisations, since benchmark data was not readily available; this would be researched. **(Action 4)** More complex Covid environment related sicknesses and occupational health matters were, if necessary referred to an external independent advisor, who would provide specialist and appropriate guidance. The comprehensive report was welcomed, particularly the clear presentation of full data and comparisons with previous years' performances, together with the clear and sensible follow up actions where needed.
- b. HAS Policy. Appropriate guidance for the present situation had been taken and had informed the amended (amendments shown in red type) HASAW Policy with Covid related changes, which complemented the previous year's, which had been updated for personalities and dates. The Policy was welcomed and unanimously approved for a further 12 months. **(Action 5)**

**The information was received and noted.**  
**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

#### **06/20 SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

Safeguarding Policy. The Safeguarding Policy relied on statutory guidance from the DfE (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018, Education Act 2002) together with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) and the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB); the Policy applied across the Group including the specific early years' regulations for the nursery at New Bedford Road, Luton. All changes within the documents were clearly explained and in red type. The content was considered and discussed, there was a relatively high number of students reporting mental health issues and the Tuition Fund was partly being used to provide specialist training to help them cope with the impact of lost learning, the pandemic in general and help with ongoing challenges. New guidance on mental

health had been incorporated into the Policy and would partly inform Members' training and updates on Prevent and Safeguarding, which would be included in the November meeting. Staff were fully aware of the importance of safeguarding, which was subject to continuous review and scrutiny. The Safeguarding (and Nursery) Safeguarding Policy was approved for immediate implementation. **(Action 6)**

**The information was received and noted.**  
**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

#### **07/20 SUBCONTRACTOR FEES AND CHARGING POLICY**

The required annual Sub-Contractor Fees and Charges Policy had been revised to satisfy ESFA guidance, changes had been marked up; most amendments were relatively minor and the Policy was approved. **(Action 7)** Subcontractors were rigorously monitored for compliance and standards, due diligence (DD) included consideration of modern slavery (see 08/20); this had been evidenced by the IAS report into this area (02/20e refers); contingency arrangements were in place for any no-notice termination of sub-contracted provision.

**The information was received and noted.**  
**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

#### **08/20 MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT). The Modern Slavery Act required certain establishments (t/o £36m) to publish an annual statement on MSHT, the aim to encourage to promote address of forced labour and human trafficking within their environment and supply chains. Post-merger the Group had entered the category required to publish the attached statement, which was discussed. The Group supply chain was not considered to be particularly vulnerable to these issues, but other providers such as work experience had been included. The statement was approved. **(Action 8)**

**The information was received and noted.**  
**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

#### **09/20 GOVERNANCE**

- a. Regulatory Documents. Governance Documents, considered annually had been approved at the last meeting.
- b. Committee membership was noted and agreed for the year.
- c. Mathew Messenger (Staff Member) had reached the end of his term of office on 9 October and an election for a replacement would be initiated. He had attended this meeting as a courtesy as the first meeting of the year. **(Action 9)**
- d. The designated Safeguarding member Matt Luheshi had agreed to continue and his appointment was confirmed. **(Action 10)**

**The information was received and noted.**  
**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

#### **10/20 ENROLMENTS**

Enrolment of 16-18 FE students, HE students and apprentices had been considered in the attached report and were discussed. Group FE enrolments were positive and the ESFA target should be met. Currently numbers were 320 (16-18) above target with fewer withdrawals than previous years, probably Covid related. If the ESFA funding formulas remained consistent with previous years a further 300 students would lead to an additional £1.5m. HE enrolments continued to be challenging, exacerbated this year through the Ofqual imposed qualification outcome which improved many students' grades. The College's strategic response to pressures on HE provision was to:

- a. increase HND/C courses that are dependent on HEI partners;
- b. increase Access to HE courses independent from HEI partners;

- c. maintain the Extended Degree offer in partnership with University of Hertfordshire (UH), for courses that have specific and higher entry requirements e.g. Science; and
- d. deliver higher-level apprenticeships via Together Training (TT).

HE was an essential element of the Group offer and would be diligently and robustly pursued. Resource to deliver new qualifications required e.g. digital specialists; health care professions was available, but some recruitment may be necessary to deliver the new logistics. Apprentice enrolment showed 24 enrolments, mainly in Trades and Hair professionals (2019 – 66); 412 apprentices were continuing, the majority of whom had returned to work from furlough, 25 had been withdrawn since lockdown. All apprentices received comprehensive careers advice and guidance, 15 had secured jobs in their studied discipline, one had moved to a different industry and 9 remained unemployed. Present employer reluctance to take on staff may dilute as the Covid situation clarified. An advanced state of the art analytical software “Vector” had been purchased and this would considerably enhance analysis of the whole perspective.

**The information was received and noted.**

**11/20 MEMBERS**

- a. Learning Walks. There had been no learning walks for Covid related reasons.
- b. Safeguarding. The nominated Safeguarding Member gave a short update on activity throughout lockdown, he had held exchange sessions with staff and staff focus on issues particularly on vulnerable students. Staff processes throughout had been impeccable. Individual risk assessments had been completed and the Nursery staff response was indicative of flexibility and goodwill: there were only two teachers and they were scrupulously maintaining social distancing in separate rooms. That was but one selected example of all Group staff commitment. Well done and thanks were recorded. **(Action 11)**

**The information was received and noted.**  
**Actions had been identified. (Register 14/20 below)**

**12/20 URGENT BUSINESS**

There had been no urgent business requested.

**13/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be at 1700 on 11 November 2020.

**14/20 ACTION REGISTER**

| See referenced minute for full detail. |   | Resp  | Date |
|--|---|-------|------|
| <b>Action 1</b>                        | 01/20b. Meeting format agreed.                        | Chair | wie  |
| <b>Action 2</b>                        | 02/20a. Last minutes (08.07.20 & 26.08.20) confirmed. | Clerk |      |
| <b>Action 3</b>                        | 02/20e. AC ToRs approved.                             |       |      |
| <b>Action 4</b>                        | 05/20a. Research home working incidence benchmarks.   | DPPD  | asap |
| <b>Action 5</b>                        | 05/20b. HAS Policy approved.                          |       |      |
| <b>Action 6</b>                        | 06/20. Safeguarding Policy approved.                  |       |      |
| <b>Action 7</b>                        | 07/20. Subcontracting Fees Policy approved.           | DoF   | wie  |
| <b>Action 8</b>                        | 08/20. Modern Slavery statement approved.             | DPPD  |      |
| <b>Action 9</b>                        | 09/20c. Staff Member election required.               | Clerk |      |
| <b>Action 10</b>                       | 09/20d. ML confirmed as Safeguarding Nominee.         | ML    |      |
| <b>Action 11</b>                       | 11/20b. Thanks recorded to staff for commitment.      | Chair |      |

*Ralph Devereux (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Chair)*

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Final Audit Report

2020-11-13

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