

Minutes of the electronic Corporation meeting held at 1700hrs on 10 March 2021.

Present	Guy Ainsley	Phil Berry	Irina Kendix	Richard Lewis
	Matt Luheshi	Chris Nicholls	David York	Ben Stapleton
	Jason Smith	Paul Thompson	Phil Thompson (Chair)	Alberto Ucci
	Gill Worgan (Principal)			
In Attendance	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Gary Dixon (DPQ)	Cath Gunn (Principal, Barnfield)	Sarah Knowles (DP (P&D))
	Tammy Nuthall (DP, Barnfield)	Eamonn McCarroll (DoF)	Louise Barden (Principal's PA)	

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

PART ONE

50/20 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)**

51/20 STANDING ITEMS

- a. The Minutes (Part 1&2) of the meeting held on 4 February 2021 were confirmed for electronic signature; the Clerk to Action. **(Action 2)**
- b. The unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit Committee (AC) meeting held on 23 February 2021 were slightly amended and were received, the following recommendations were considered:
 - (i) re 24/07. Financial Regulations (FR). The updated FR had been recommended for adoption;
 - (ii) re 24/20d(i). Policies. The updated Whistleblowing Policy had been recommended for adoption; and
 - (iii) re 26/20. Buzzacott had been recommended to continue as external auditors for 2020.21.

All were approved wie. **(Action 3)**
- c. The unconfirmed Minutes of the Search Committee (SC) meeting held on 03 March 2021 were received: Chris Nicholls, Paul Thompson and Ben Stapleton had been recommended for re-appointment at the end of their current terms and that was approved wie. **(Action 4)**
- d. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.
- e. Outstanding Actions. All actions from the last meetings were considered and discussed; it was agreed that all had been implemented or were in progress.

See referenced minute for full detail.		Status
Action 1	37/20b. Meeting format agreed	Complete
Action 2	38/20a. Last minutes (09.12.20) confirmed for signature.	

- f. Matters arising. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- g. Urgent Business. There was no urgent business requested.

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (Register 59/20 below)

52/20 PRINCIPALS REPORT

The Report included detail of the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Dashboard, the colour coded performance monitoring criteria were fully explained and it was noted that there were currently no Red areas. The Covid induced sector wide challenges with the Adult Educational Budget (AEB) continued and hopefully the reduced lockdown parameters would ease the situation. Focus had been kept on this area and although enrolments had been postponed due to the latest lockdown re-start and recruitment would be actively pursued and should improve budget spend to c 90% of the original allocation by year end. Industrial placements had been particularly affected during the lockdown and the employer-liaison team was maintaining contact with current employers and also attempting links with new employers. In the absence of Placements and Work Experience, a broad range of alternative employer-led activities such as, Industry Masterclasses and podcasts had been made available. Work continued with employers to resume placements as soon as Covid-19 restrictions eased, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) monitored this area and could intervene. The College had reopened (01.03.21) and main vocational teaching was through face to face delivery, while English and Maths (EAM) would be delivered on line through the Century system, supported by specialist teachers. Additional funding (£500k) had been made available to bolster the Tuition Fund to help with the "lost learning" recovery programme. The amount had been based on numbers of groups for FE and HE provision (300) with every group allocated 2.5 hours of additional teaching per week over 15 weeks. Curriculum Directors, Heads and Teachers would determine how best to employ the resource and assessment would indicate those behind with progress, such as those denied workshop access. The funding would come from the College's forecast surplus in 2020-21. The qualification achievement/progression rates would be the ultimate measure to demonstrate the effectiveness of the additional teaching. Governors would recall that one of the key reasons for preparation of the Savings Plan that underpinned the budget was the ability to reinvest in teaching and learning in-year; if needed, College leaders were monitoring plans against KPIs -to check impact on an ongoing basis. Planning was underway to ensure that the recently announced qualification assessment arrangements would be consistently and equitably delivered. Lateral flow testing was working well with 550 staff (60%) currently having consented and 1591 (25%) students had returned consent forms. Employees and Students book tests via an electronic system which controls demand, some individuals could obtain a test that day if availability permitted. Catering and photography students, sponsored by Veolia had collaborated to produce an impressive cookbook, (annexed) and a welcome visit by the Lord Lieutenant had been extremely well received; The Lord Lieutenant had visited to discuss first-hand the effects of lockdown on students and concerns regarding access to careers advice and Higher Education (HE) had been raised, Members were assured that both colleges had dedicated, fully qualified Careers Education practitioners and their work had accelerated since Monday's return, particularly Barnfield College (BC) where engagement with careers education had notably fallen during lockdown. Termly staff voice exchanges had been held at both Colleges; the minutes were available to everyone via ShareSpace. The staff Satisfaction Survey would be completed during March and the outcome brought to the July meeting as noted, it was unusual for the College to be concerned in an ET, there had been only one in the previous 20 years. The Further Education Commissioner (FEC) was informed of financial probity by reference to 6 published benchmarks, the updated versions were included in the FEC letter (annexed) and explained by the DoF, these were required financial indicators and some parameters had been reduced, which indicated the pressures, particularly financial, on the sector. The College was amongst a small number of GFEs that met/exceeded previous and current benchmarks.

The information was received and noted.

53/20 STUDENTS

- a. Quality of Further Education (FE). Effective on-campus vocation learning had continued during lockdown understandably rather more successfully than remote delivery. Retention remained above the National Average (NA) at both Colleges but Covid issues had prompted a greater than usual minority to be "at risk", full detail was tabulated in the Report. The increase was not due to poor quality but students had found this lockdown particularly

challenging for a broad range of personal and home-related reasons. The higher proportion of these at BC related to the significantly higher proportion of students enrolled on lower-level qualifications, who are harder to engage in remote learning and the level of hardship across the BC student population was higher than at WHC - this is again a factor that impacts on engagement within education during lockdowns. As mentioned in the previous item, significant additional support (12k teaching hours) had been established and a student advisory team led by a qualified counsellor had been established. Members were assured that both colleges had dedicated, fully qualified Careers Education practitioners and their work had been accelerated since Monday's return. Strong progress with EAM was becoming evident through the new delivery arrangements, including on-line learning involving Century, and additional lessons from specialist teachers; numbers expected to achieve GCSE grades 9-4 now exceeded NA. Introduction of Century had improved the transparency of student progress and enabled more robust and meaningful teacher predictions. Consideration was being given to a continuation of the EAM blended learning model for 16-18 students and also for blended and remote learning for some adult provision; establishing a new market of 'distance learning'. Detailed information about how qualifications would be assessed was still awaited and, on receipt of this information, the assessment strategy would be amended accordingly. Student work and evidence would be robustly moderated through usual processes including internal verification, sampling; double marking etc. As reported previously, workplace learning opportunities had suffered badly during lockdown, consequently employer engagement was a key improvement area. Industry Masterclasses, were helpful. In the run up to the merger, BC had lost touch with local communities including employers, and restoring those relationships had been a focus. Good progress had been made. Employer networks had been restored and students were now engaging in work experience and master classes for the first time in many years. The latter, delivered by employers directly to students about particular employment sectors and occupations. The new building would be an excellent catalyst to support this work post-pandemic. There had been a 10% reduction in attendance at vocational lessons and whilst that could not be accurately quantified it was, anecdotally around the local norm. Additionally, Mental Health support had been strengthened by establishment of an additional qualified team led by an appropriately qualified and experienced Counsellor.

- b. Quality of Higher Education (HE). The paper provided an overview of the 6 categories of the Conditions of Registration, listed within the paper, required by the Office for Students (OfS) which were being met; these requirements were routinely monitored by the Head of HE and the BC Deputy Principal (DP). The Covid situation had prompted the OfS to require retesting of these to ensure that students were fully informed of how they would receive learning during the lockdown and their entitlement to claim for unsatisfactory quality. The paper explained how these requirements were satisfied, in particular relating to Condition B (Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for students) and evaluated quality of the provision. There had been a high level of media reports on HE concerns relating to HE students' dissatisfaction prompting the OfS requirement for assurance. Essentially, students received face to face delivery during the Autumn term and during lockdown learners continued to receive taught lessons as per timetable and also received regular communication updates from the Marketing team and tutors. Learners were also signposted to relevant policies such as complaints, appeals and refunds. Learners on practical and practice based courses had returned on the 8th March. Delivery sequencing was adapted but students had received teaching and learning they might have reasonably expected. The delivery sequence was changed for practical courses, however all learners would be able to gain the skills, knowledge and outcomes required for progress to their next steps. All learner feedback had been positive about the quality of their experience. Funds were available to support delivery of additional lessons if required and learners had access to bespoke support from learning. This was a positive report, with good retention, attendance rates and student satisfaction; all processes complied with OfS requirements evidenced by assurance from several sources. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) visited in November 2019, commissioned by the Office for Students (OfS) and scrutinised arrangements and OfS are consulting on their approach to regulating quality and standards within HE.

The information was received.

54/20 GROUP ESTATES STRATEGY

The Group estate, arranged across 4 sites in Watford, Hemel Hempstead (HH) and Luton; on-site standards, facilities and the quality of provision had been significantly improved over the last 10 years. Nevertheless some areas remained sub-standard, notably the Enterprise Way

(EW) campus in Luton; the Strategic Plan identified that estate condition was key to success and the strategy explained how future capital projects could deliver those improvements and the document was considered and discussed. The proposal to merge 2 sites into one was questioned in terms of space available; the current c25k sqm would be reduced to c12.5k sqm. There had been a significant reduction in the requirement as explained in the Masterplan, (approved in May 2019), which had rationalised the requirement at New Bedford Road (NBR). Whether to refurbish or new build was raised; the new build was favoured since:

- a. refurbishment of the larger EW would mean future considerably greater running and maintenance expenditure, which would be considerably less at a new build;
- b. refurbishment and the associated decant would negatively affect recruitment and retention;
- c. despite the new build increased cost c(£5m) the return on learner growth would be considerable, resulting in higher income; and
- d. a single site would bring staffing efficiencies.

The net present value (NPV) of the new build option would be far greater than the refurbishment and a detailed NPV would be prepared if necessary. EW would remain in use until Phase 2 was complete. In response to a question it was confirmed that significant improvements in the HH D&J building were not medium term - the building housed wet trades only a few students in comparison to EW, which housed several hundred. Planning permission, would take 9 months from initial proposal, which could be in April and that time would be used to secure a budget and funding. An application for FE Transformation Funding would be strong and the sale of EW for conversion to residential had been discussed with the Planning Dept. and supported; that would be confirmed at an early stage of the discussions. The overall prudent estimate was £25m, to be met by:

- e. £5m from the sale of EW;
- f. £12.5m from the ESFA/Transformation Fund; and
- g. £7.5m from College or other grant funding opportunities.

If it was decided to proceed then the funding position would be refined, borrowing may be necessary but was not the preferred option. If the Strategy was approved, it would be necessary to call a special meeting to consider the way forward and discuss all plans. The strategy, clearly supported delivery of the Group strategic planning and growth plans and was unanimously approved. **(Action 5)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (Register 59/20 below)

55/20 RISK REGISTER (RR)

- a. The AC had reviewed the RR on 23 February 2021 and the associated minutes had been considered earlier in this meeting. The High Level RR (Appendix 1) was discussed; the risks had been updated by individual owners (changes in red type). Risk 5.3 (Safeguarding) had been promoted to the High Level RR as a precautionary measure responding to lockdown, subsequent experience had clearly evidenced the continuing and comprehensive robustness of this area.
- b. In line with the request to scrutinise one particular risk from time to time the DP(P&D) explained the growing and sector-wide threat of cyber-attacks and the Group defences including "cyber essentials".

The information was received and noted.

56/20 MEMBERS

There had been no visits or learning walks for Covid related reasons.

57/20 URGENT BUSINESS

There had been no urgent business requested.

58/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be at 1700 on 22 April 2021(Special) and;

12 May 2021.

59/20 ACTION REGISTER

		Resp	Date
	See referenced minute for full detail.	Chair	
Action 1	50/20b. Meeting format agreed	Chair	wie
Action 2	51/20a. Last minutes (04.02.21) confirmed for signature.	Clerk	
Action 3	51/20b. AC recommendations approved.	Chair	
Action 4	51/20c. S&G recommendations approved.(CN,PT,BS)	Clerk	As reqd
Action 5	54/20. Estates Strategy approved.	Chair	wie

Ralph Devereux (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Chair)

FINALCorpMinsPt1.10.3.21RDGWPT

Final Audit Report

2021-05-17

Created:	2021-05-14
By:	Ralph Devereux (office.mpe@btconnect.com)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAA31uRQaVxgZNmhpWVhh4u6Eakgf9YgYyi

"FINALCorpMinsPt1.10.3.21RDGWPT" History

-  Document created by Ralph Devereux (office.mpe@btconnect.com)
2021-05-14 - 8:04:39 AM GMT- IP address: 86.183.49.42
-  Document emailed to Ralph Devereux (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Chair) (clerk.mpe@btconnect.com) for signature
2021-05-14 - 8:04:55 AM GMT
-  Email viewed by Ralph Devereux (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Chair) (clerk.mpe@btconnect.com)
2021-05-17 - 7:04:39 AM GMT- IP address: 86.179.97.73
-  Document e-signed by Ralph Devereux (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Chair) (clerk.mpe@btconnect.com)
Signature Date: 2021-05-17 - 7:05:14 AM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 86.179.97.73
-  Agreement completed.
2021-05-17 - 7:05:14 AM GMT