

Minutes of the electronic Corporation meeting held at 1700hrs on 9 June 2021.

Present	Guy Ainsley	Phil Berry	Irina Kendix	Richard Lewis
	Matt Luheshi	Chris Nicholls	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)		

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

PART ONE

78/20 ELIGIBILITY, QUORUM,

No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and there had been no interests declared.

79/20 STANDING ITEMS

- a. The Minutes (Part 1&2) of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 were confirmed for electronic signature; the Clerk to Action. **(Action 1)**
- b. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.
- c. 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	68/20a. Last Minutes (10.03.21 & 22.04.21) confirmed.	complete
Action 2	70/20c. Part 2 IoT bid to be presented	
Action 3	70/20h. Congratulations to awarded students.	
Action 4	71/20. Information to be prioritised in future reports.	
Action 5	72/20a. IK re-appointed to Corporation.	

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

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (Register 87/20 below)

80/20 PRINCIPALS REPORT

- a. Performance. The Report included detail of the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Dashboard, the colour coded performance monitoring criteria were fully considered and related issues were discussed. From the start of the next academic year, presentation of data, currently split between Barnfield and West Herts, would be detailed by individual campuses. There was a shortfall in industrial placements, despite focus and perseverance, the adjusted target of 140 had been missed and 128 had been achieved. This was purely Covid related and the Department for Education (DfE) had indicated that for providers who had maintained best efforts to meet the target there would be no clawback.

- b. Two applications had been submitted to the Strategic Development Fund in collaboration with other colleges, one from across Hertfordshire and the other the MI South economic area additionally, cross Hertfordshire employers had applied under the Skills Improvement Plan to become a "Trailblazer" area. The Barnfield College (BC) Phase 1 project was progressing according to plan for completion in Spring next year and, following procurement of the Design Team, Phases 2&3 were progressing. The Health and Safety (HAS) Executive had commissioned a routine electronic "no-notice" spot check to test Covid-19 measures. Luton Borough Council representatives had visited College to discuss and update on current and future skills provision; the meeting had gone well and was positive regarding the College contribution to the Town. The decisions on College Transformation Fund (Stage 1) applications had been expected by 21 May, but the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had advised that notification would be delayed; there was no indication of an amended date. It appears that the number of applications had been over 200 and that was the cause of the delay, this would probably, in turn, delay the stage 2 process which had required submissions by 30 Jul 21 for outcomes w/c 27 Sept 21. The unexpectedly high level of applications could prejudice the chance of success and, in that event, options were considered. The project was costly and, should loans be available which was questionable, the associated burden of debt would be unacceptable, particularly in the longer term. There had been many recorded instances of such a policy backfiring on colleges as economic and other influences changed. The other alternative, refurbishment of Enterprise Way (EW), was agreed as not viable; alternative funding sources would have to be sought out. **(Action 2)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (Register 87/20 below)

81/20 QUALITY

Quality of education was regularly monitored with concerns promptly addressed, clearly the last year had been significantly affected by Covid however, despite the associated challenges there had been positive student outcomes, which were detailed in the accompanying report and which would also inform the annual College Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Monitoring was completed through a series of complementary activities supplemented by performance against quality improvement plans and assessed against Key Performance Indicators (KPI); the comprehensive paper considered these processes.

- a. Attendance. Attendance had been particularly affected by Covid and the target had been missed through higher absence of a relatively small number of students, a more accurate and meaningful way of reporting was currently under consideration. Actual performance had been 86% at Barnfield College (BC) and 88% at WHC against the stretch target of 90%. The matter was discussed generally, particularly intentions for blended learning and whether it was possible to gauge individual commitment, for example "private study", which could result in more positive outcomes than reluctant live attendance. Regulations required formal monitoring of attendance as timetabled and there was an evidenced definite link between regular attendance at timetabled lessons and progress leading to achievement.
- b. Teaching Learning and Assessment. The expectation was that 85% of lessons met expectations and those both "live" and remotely delivered were monitored; 127 live and 247 remote lessons had been monitored, those meeting expectations had been 84% at BC and 83% at WHC; full detail had been tabulated in the document. Two key areas had been identified as "requiring improvement"; 296 teachers had already received associated training and development.
- c. Student Progress. Close monitoring of progress and attainment had shown that Covid related issues, a combination of "lost learning" and lockdowns, had led to a high proportion of students (3377 across the Group) being "at risk" of dropping out or failing to achieve. Provision of an additional 12000 teaching hours had moved the significant majority (2420) back on track, however 664 students continued to receive additional support and 193 remained at risk of failing to achieve. Full detail was tabulated in the Report and it was noted that the number of failing students was broadly in line with pre-Covid performance

whilst many colleges were reporting significant number who would have to repeat the whole year; this was a positive reflection on the Group recovery processes. Failing students continued to be supported in determining their future intentions.

- d. **Student Satisfaction.** Student surveys were completed several times each year, with an expectation of at least 80% confirming satisfaction. There had been 2296 responses to the latest survey held in March: BC 579 and WHC 1717, overall satisfaction at both Colleges had exceeded the minimum 80%. Further detail was analysed in the report, including a RAG rated tabular presentation of each question compared with the previous year which was noted; remedial action to address areas of concern had already been implemented. The participation rate had been a positive c40%, which corroborated the outcomes. Additional student feedback was from internal quality audits, which included focus groups with students and considered their experience and their perception of quality of education. The groups also followed up areas below expected levels of performance when specific concerns emerged.
- e. **Qualification Achievement.** The achievement targets (non-Covid) for retention and achievement were 90% and 95% respectively. Outturn performance was normally compared with official national averages (NA) however only pre-Covid full NA information was available but headline detail had been published as a comparator and was fully detailed in the report. The achievement data would inform self-assessment and apply the Covid effect as appropriate, the full Self-Assessment Report (SAR) would be presented to the Corporation at the October meeting. Full detail of the predicted achievement rates for the range of Group provision, and for specific groups, was tabulated in the report and comprehensively explained and discussed. Covid had affected some areas more than others: for example, adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Food Academy at WHC had both been disproportionately affected, since ESOL students, clearly with very low-level skills in English speaking and writing had had experienced additional challenges and the hospitality sector had experienced widely publicised issues.
- f. The SAR process was a particularly useful for staff and Members were encouraged to participate in the process, involvement was important and welcomed and the schedule would be available in the near future. **(Action 3)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (Register 87/20 below)

82/20 APPLICATIONS & ENROLMENT

The positive growth in numbers over recent years continued and the ESFA had set an increased recruitment 16-18 target of 5988 for 2021.22, a 214 increase on the previous year. Accordingly, a wide range of virtual and on-site marketing activities had been developed; high interest had been generated at both colleges, both of whom had considerably more applications than in the previous year. New provision was popular and had contributed to the increase and interest from some employment areas, that had been significantly affected by Covid and had recovered to pre-pandemic levels; some however remained depressed. The report, which included a wide examination of local influencing factors, was then generally discussed. The new provision planning process, with associated financial and wider risks was considered. Influences included that over half of all economic activity in Hertfordshire took place within the Group catchment area and, consequently the offer was broad to reflect the high number of businesses and job opportunities. It was important that the curriculum offer was supported by a skills escalator to facilitate individual progression, such as the new L3 courses in Construction and Digital Marketing, which had proved popular. To increase accessibility to these subjects and associated jobs, feeder Level 2 courses had been introduced. However, in terms of risk-assessment for new offers the Group only committed to securing resource when applications & enrolments demonstrated their viability. Some students were concerned about availability of preferred employment due to the pandemic; students were urged generally, wherever practical and possible to remain focused on their ambition; it was expected the current difficulties with subjects such as performing arts would surely dilute and recover. The White Paper could foster more cooperation between local FE organisations under Local Skills Improvement Plans and

other initiatives; collaboration between providers was possible across adult provision, particularly with niche courses which might not be viable for any one institution and adults are generally willing to travel, however 16-18 year olds usually favoured local providers with the inevitable local competition. One of the core reasons for the merger had been to gain potential for growth across the Group. Particularly, BC aimed to improve local market share and the strategy included the greatly improving curriculum and quality of provision and the provision of new state of the art facilities. In parallel a pro-active marketing strategy included introductory meetings with applicants and parents to promote the College's strengths and achievements, establishment of schools' liaison Officers who promoted the positive changes directly with potential students, and a comprehensive Annual Report that would include all key outcomes and would be widely available externally. Local relationships had been recovered and were now supportive, co-operative and enthusiastic.

The information was received and noted.

83/20 INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IoT)

Collaborative work continued with WHC (BC was not in Hertfordshire), the University of Hertfordshire (UoH) and local colleges towards the establishment of an IoT specialising in Digital, Smart Construction and Life Sciences. There were 13 applicants in the competitive process and the inclusion of Life Sciences, particularly Cell and Gene Therapy in the bid was particularly helpful to the likely success. Hertfordshire was powerful in this area being the 3rd largest globally, and there was a strong appetite from Government to support growth in this area. Ideally all cross-county colleges would be involved in the process, however Herts Reginal and Oaklands Colleges could not form part of the formal consortium until their current Ofsted grading's were improved; current core partners were the UoH, West Herts College and North Herts College. Legal and Governance arrangements were currently under development that would, importantly, ensure equal partnerships and Members would be kept informed of progress; detailed proposals would be presented when decisions were necessary. It was probable that a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) would be formed, however direct relationship with WHC students would be maintained and there would be no sub-contractual arrangement; WHC would retain full control of the in-house curriculum offer and all property. The SPV would administer curriculum development, employer engagement and the use of capital funds. Whilst the IoT would not become an awarding body, the UoH would retain that power, however equality of all consortium partners would allow greater influence on outcomes. Members welcomed the information.

The information was received and noted.

84/20 MEMBERS

The Chair had made an unannounced visit to BC and had been amazed at the high level of construction activity caused by the combination of completion of two on-site contracts. He had also, by invitation met electronically with Baroness Wolf, a cross bench Member of the House of Lords, a specialist adviser to the House of Commons select committee on education and skills, and expert advisor for further education to the Prime Minister. The exchange had centred on how practically to implement some of the policies contained in the White Paper "Skills for Jobs" particularly the requirement to identify regional representative bodies to identify local skill requirements. The often quoted and successful German model could simply not apply in the UK since their regionally based local government patterns could not be replicated. This had led to wider considerations and Group local initiatives such as the Business Development Centre and "Skillmakers" the free-to-use resource for local businesses to access the skills, information and contacts they need to grow at WHC were explained and discussed. The Baroness had thanked the Chair for his input and information and there would be a follow up call in 3 months' time.

The information was received and noted.

85/20 URGENT BUSINESS

There had been no urgent business requested.

86/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be at 1700 on 14 July 2021. The meeting would be face-to-face and followed by a social gathering; arrangements could be made for Members who chose to attend electronically.

87/20 ACTION REGISTER

See referenced minute for full detail.		Resp	Date
Action 1	79/20a. Last Minutes (12.05.21) confirmed.	Clerk	wie
Action 2	80/20b. Refurbishment of EW discounted.	Chair	
Action 3	81/20f. Members encouraged to participate in SAR		

Ralph Devereux (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Chair)

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Final Audit Report

2021-08-02

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