

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held via Zoom at 17:00 on 24th March 2020

Present: Kevin Finan (Chair), Andy Champion, David Chalmers, Harrison Edwards, Sean Mackney, Lena Marvão, Holly Milton-Jeffries, Maxine Padgham, Steve Richardson, Mark Rogers, Iain Springate, Lindy Stacey, Lee Thommen, Jenny Wallace and Chris Williams

In Attendance: Bill Blythe, Jane Hanson and Sheena Murphy-Collett
Craig Litster (for item 7 only)

Governance Advisor: Jane Barton

1. Membership and Apologies for Absence

All Governors were present.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Principal and CEO declared a previous working relationship with one of the prospective External Governors (Deborah Watson). No other declarations of interests were declared.

3. Confidential Items

The CVs relating to Deborah Watson and Rob Nicholls; and Item 10 Pay Award paper were deemed confidential.

4. Business brought forward by the Chair

There were no other items brought forward for discussion by the Chair.

5. Matters for Report and Approval:

19FGB46/47

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Full Governing Body held on Wednesday 29th January and Monday 24th February 2020 were approved.

6. Principal and CEO Report

The report from the Principal and CEO focussed on the current Pandemic and how the College was responding in the short, medium and longer term. He outlined how the College had instigated the Business Continuity Plan by transferring executive responsibility for handling the crisis to a Pandemic Advisory Group (PAG). Governors were advised that the PAG meet daily to consider and react to the

latest Government directives, to assess risks and to consider what actions need to be taken. All communications out to Staff, Learners, Governors and Stakeholders are led by this group.

An overview of the key strategic areas followed.

Teaching and Learning:

In summary:

- A significant amount of learning has been transferred on-line; this was done in the days leading up to the directive to close.
- Learners had been surveyed to ascertain if they had access to IT equipment and Broadband and actions taken to address both the lack of IT equipment and to ensure access to Broadband was accessible.
- The College is working hard to ensure that learners have access to good quality learning resources and materials.
- Exams have been suspended.
- For end-point assessments there are significant unknowns.
- Staff have been actively encouraged to share good practice.
- The wellbeing of staff and learners is a College priority.

Moving forward the College plans to look at the framework for project based learning; the College will also consider how to best support on-line Professional Development.

In the medium term the College will ensure they know what learners need to progress; appreciating that the College will need to adapt to meet the needs of new learners.

Safeguarding:

The College is striving to make sure that Learners have appropriate support, personalised to meet their individual needs.

- Key Workers are in place to support vulnerable learners.

Governors were advised that the take-up of learners, coming in to College, whose parents are key workers has been minimal.

Finance:

In summary:

- The College faces significant financial exposure.
- 16-18 Funding is guaranteed.
- The ESFA are continuing to pay the Adult funding (AEB) on profile; although there is no clarity on what, if any, reconciliation will be applied at year end.
- The biggest risk to the budget is from the Apprenticeship activity; no indications of any financial support from the ESFA at the moment. Worst case scenario; should every Apprentice be made redundant, the financial exposure for the College would be circa £1.2m. However, it is unlikely that this would happen to all our Apprentices.
- The College is contacting all Employers and their Apprentices outlining plans to continue with on-line learning. If Employers furlough their Apprentices this would be deemed a break in learning.
- There are some risks to our Project Activity.

- In Higher Education (HE) if a learner fails to return to learning after the Easter break the College would lose 50% of the expected Student Loan funding. There is a possibility that some Learners won't return after Easter in the current situation. The College is doing everything they can to keep in contact with the learners and supporting their on-line learning activity.
- Prior to the ramp up of Government directives relating to the Pandemic the College had purchased extra PPE including deep cleaning equipment.
- The College is currently forecasting the impact on the finances by the current situation.
- The College is considering what level of cost cutting may be needed in-year.
- The College is considering how it manages any necessary restructuring; it anticipates a hit to the budget in 2020/2021 of between ½ and 1 million sterling.
- The College has put in place a payment holiday of the rent to Marie Curie and the Nursery.
- The College has £3 m in the bank.

Overall the College is confident, at this stage, that it can ride this situation out.

Business Development:

In summary:

- The College recognises that patterns of delivery may change

Wellbeing/People Development:

The College has the wellbeing of its Staff and Learners at the forefront of everything they do.

- The College acted quickly to identify the most vulnerable
- The Unions have been regularly briefed.
- Staff are communicated with on a daily basis.
- The PPE requirements of staff have been reviewed.
- Advice on working from home has been disseminated.
- The College is looking to keep everyone employed.

Partnerships:

In summary:

- The College is talking to the others in the sector.
- The College is working closely with the Devon Colleges' Group (DCG) and the AoC.
- The College is working closely with Stakeholders.
- The College is working closely with the Police, the NHS and Devon County Council about what the College can do in the community.

7. Quality, Curriculum and Learners

19FGB49

The Vice Principal Quality, Curriculum and Learners provided the Board with an update on Quality matters including:

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Governors were reminded that each term Quality Review meetings are held with curriculum teams to monitor quality improvement actions and progress against targets; noting that this is the second time in this academic year that the QIP has been presented to the Board. Governors recognised that the outcome of the Quality Review meetings informs and updates the QIP.

Whilst taking Governor through the details of the QIP the Vice Principal Quality, Curriculum and Learners highlighted the actions, the good progress made and the work in progress; whilst recognising that the QIP will need to be reviewed in light of the current situation. The Vice Principal praised the Heads of Faculty for engaging in this very rigorous and stretching process.

Governors reflected that the current situation may mean that the target dates for achieving the actions contained within the QIP may need to be revised.

DfE Performance Tables

Governors were advised that the College Performance Tables, published in March, shows us in line with national averages on progress and in a good light when compared to other colleges within the South West. The Vice Principal, Quality, Curriculum and Learners reminded Governors of the impact of qualifications moving from the Qualification Curriculum Framework (QCF) to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and the impact on outcomes. The Principal and CEO highlighted that Petroc has the 4th highest proportion of learners getting AAB or higher in at least 2 subjects.

Early Leavers Report

The Vice Principal Quality, Curriculum and Learners took Governors through this report; analysis of the report provides the college with an understanding of why learners may decide not to continue with their studies. Governors noted the main reasons learners leave which were Employment, Medical issues and to become a NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Governors were advised that the College is currently considering generally what benchmarking group might be best to measure against.

Governors noted the review of progress of the College QIP and the Early Leavers report.

HE Complaints:

19FGB50

Craig Litster, Assistant Principal Academic and Scientific Studies, presented a comprehensive report on HE Complaints; provided details of the type and number of complaints and outlined the importance of monitoring HE Complaints and the impact that any escalation of a complaint might have on the College, both financially and reputationally. Governors noted the relatively low number of complaints recognising that the majority were dealt with locally and acknowledged that the College monitored complaints closely taking appropriate action when necessary.

Governors noted the HE Complaints report.

8. Finance and Resources:

Month 6 Management accounts:

19FGB51

The Management Accounts for Month 6 (end of January 2020) 2019/2020 were presented to the Board.

The Board were asked to note that since these accounts had been produced the Cash Balance had changed (£2.9 million) this is because the College awaits an ERDF payment for Cotie.

The Month 6 accounts were received and noted.

Course Fees Policy 2020/2021

The Course Fees Policy for 2020/2021 was considered, Governors recognised that the Course Fees Policy sets the framework for the College to determine individual course fees and charges. It was noted that the Policy was largely unchanged save to clarify the role of the Office for Students in the setting of HE fees.

Governors approved the Course Fees Policy 2020/2021

Annual Accounts of the Student Union:

The Board noted the Annual Accounts of the Student Union.

Updated Bank Mandate: 19FGB52

The Board approved the changes to the Bank Mandate.

Emerging Funding Position: 19FGB53

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources presented Governors with an update on the emerging funding position; however this unfortunately had been overtaken by events; the Vice Principal was able to report some positive news; the 16-18 allocation was £125k higher than anticipated due mainly to an increase in the disadvantage uplift and the College was confirmed to be in scope for some capacity development funds.

Governors noted the Emerging Funding Position.

9. Governance:

Search and Governance Committee: 19FGB54

The Board received the draft minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 11th March 2020.

The Board noted the draft minutes.

The Board were happy to approve the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee to invite Deborah Watson and Rob Nichols to join the Corporation as External Governors, for an initial 1 year term of office.

Committee Vacancies:

The Board ratified the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee to appoint Deborah Watson to the Strategic Review Committee, Rob Nicholls to the Audit Committee, Lena Marvão to the Search and Governance Committee and Chris Williams to the Remuneration Committee.

The Board ratified the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee to designate Lindy Stacey as the SID.

Board Effectiveness Questionnaire: 19FGB55

Governors considered the new Board Effectiveness Questionnaire and observed that it was a comprehensive document which would more effectively support, in a more qualitative manner, how the College measures the effectiveness of the Board.

The Board approved the new Board Effectiveness Questionnaire.

Updated Instrument and Articles: 19FGB56

A detailed review of the Instrument and Articles of Governance has been undertaken; the Governance Adviser highlighted the changes to the Board and reported that the document had been updated from good practice models in the sector.

Governors noted the changes and were happy to ratify the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee to approve the updated document.

Governance Improvement Action Plan - Progress Update 19FGB57

The Governance Advisor asked the Board to note the good progress made in meeting the objectives of the Governance Improvement Plan.

Governors noted that good progress has been made overall; recognising that the challenges of engaging Governors and College Managers in Learning Walks remained.

Audit Committee: 19FGB58

The Chair of the Committee presented the draft minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 17th March 2020; highlighting the effectiveness of the Business Continuity Plan when needed to handle the current Pandemic. The Chair of Audit briefed the Board on the current Strategic Risks underlining changes particular relating to Pandemics.

Governors ratified the recommendation of the Audit Committee, recognising that the College is demonstrating that adequate and effective assurances are in place to suitably mitigate its Strategic Risks.

Internal Audit Service Supplier:

Governors ratified the recommendation of the Audit Committee to appoint RSM be appointed as Internal Auditors to the College for a period of three years from 1st August 2020.

Student Governors Report: 19FGB59

The Board were pleased to receive the first report from the Student Governors. Both Student Governors were thanked for the excellent work they are doing; it was evident that the Student Union is a vibrant and strong collective.

10. Our People:

Human Resource Report for the autumn term 2019/2020: 19FGB60

Governors received an overview of HR developments during the autumn term 2019/2020 which included staffing figures, sickness absence figures, recruitment and selection activity and employee relations; the report also covered staff development spend and an employment law update. In

summarising the report the Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development felt that everything is where she would expect them to be.

This report was written pre-Covid-19. The Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development updated Governors on the many actions currently being undertaken to support staff and learners during this crisis.

Governors expressed an interest in undertaking some of the Distance Learning Courses available.

Action: Details of the Distance Learning Course be sent out to Governors – Governance Advisor to action.

Governors noted the report.

College Leavers Report:

19FGB61

The Director for Human Resources and Operational Development reminded Governors that at a Board meeting in December 2019, a question was raised regarding the reasons for 96 members of staff resigning from the College during 2018/2019. The report presented the key findings and recommendations following the investigations of the matter.

Governors asked what actions the College plans to undertake to retain staff; the Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that she was looking at succession planning which would cover different groups in order that the College is able to retain key staff in the future.

Governors noted the report.

Confidential - Pay Award

19FGB62

In presenting the Pay Award paper the Director for Human Resources and Operational Development asked the Board that, in light of the current Pandemic and the associated financial uncertainties, they continue to defer any decision on a Pay Award.

After consideration the Governors agreed to further defer any decision on a pay award until the situation becomes more certain.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 28th April 2020 at 5.00 pm – via Zoom.

Confidential Minutes FGB 24th February 2020

19FGB63

The confidential minutes of the Full Board Meeting held on 24th February 2020 were agreed as a true record and approved by the Board.

The meeting ended at 1945 hours.