



Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 10th December 2020 at 5pm

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Sean Lyons, Chair
Charles Heaton
Neil McDonald
Rebecca Joyce
Sardip Sandhu
Andrew Cropley, Principal & CEO
Kate Truscott
John Gray
Steve Sutton
Tony Westwater
Mary Mamik
Spencer Moore
Anna Teal
David Gillies
Keith Spiers
Nathan Clements
Andrew Spencer
Elliott Parker

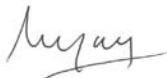
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance
Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience
Jon Fearon, Finance Director
Matt Vaughan, Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Suzanna Smith, Director: HR & Organisational Development
Gavin Peake, Director: IT, Estates & Learning Resources
Mike Firth, ESFA Observer
Jane Fishwick, Assistant Principal: HEADCPS (from 5.10pm – 5.30pm)

ACTION by whom	DATE by when

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Rebbeca Chambers.

The Director of Governance advised of a number of changes since the last meeting, including:

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

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- Mary Mamik has withdrawn her resignation and will continue as a governor and chair of the Standards Committee.
- Paul Frammingham has stood down as a governor because of work commitments but will continue as a Finance & Estates Committee co-optee.
- Mel Stirland, academic staff governor, has resigned and this vacancy will be advertised for recruitment in January 2021.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH OCTOBER 2020

The minutes were reviewed, and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2020.

There were no matters arising.

4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The director of governance introduced this item and, in relation to line 5, was able to confirm that the task and finish group met this morning. This is to provide governors with the opportunity to be involved in the continuing development of the employer engagement strategy.

The board were happy to note the content of the update provided.

5 CHAIRS UPDATE

The chair provided a verbal update on a number of areas:

- He took the opportunity to express thanks and appreciation to staff and the executive on behalf of the board for the exemplary response to COVID throughout the year. He acknowledged that the situation had been more complicated in the autumn term given that the college was subject to a financial audit and also an Ofsted light touch inspection regarding COVID arrangements. All agreed that there had been a great college response.
- Chair invited feedback on the 'meet the staff and students sessions' which had taken place in the autumn term. Governors agreed that they had been very useful and had found them to be a positive initiative. They were an opportunity for both staff and governors to put a face to names. The principal was also able to

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confirm that staff had fed back positively regarding governor contact and engagement. Rebecca Joyce, in her role as health & safety link governor, confirmed that monumental effort has been made by the team to do all that they can in terms of responding to COVID. This has been a huge effort and the college has done really well. On the basis of governor feedback, it was agreed that the meet the staff and student sessions would continue into the new calendar year.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

(Jane Fishwick joined the meeting at 5.10pm)

6 **TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING (TEL) STRATEGY**

The vice principal: curriculum & quality and the assistant principal: HEADCPS provided a presentation to the board, which provided a summary of a number of aspects. These included:

- A description of digital-enhanced learning. This is utilisation of software and other technologies to enhance the learning experience. Examples given were Moodle, OneFile, Teams, etc.
- Thousands of lessons have been delivered by TEL since March 2020.
- Demands and challenges have been onerous; however, the college and staff have responded to meet them.
- College has made a significant commitment and investment to CPD, which includes one to one coaching, training events, curriculum area training, and national events.
- The college has a hybrid approach to blended learning which sits alongside the 50/50 timetable. It does involve some live streaming, which is a radical move away from the more traditional 'chalk and talk'.
- There have been exponential improvements in the use of TEL since the first lockdown.
- There is a specialist member of staff joining the college in January who has significant blended learning experience, and it is expected that this will move the college forward even further.
- Blended learning standards are in place and the college is planning for and committed to this different type of delivery.
- ILT digital is looking to the future and will involve contributions from:
 - a) An 'improving pedagogy' staff group
 - b) A student group.
- The college has seen a huge increase in digital skills, with learners far more confident now than was the case in March 2020.
- The college is cognisant of digital poverty but has been able to provide support in terms of staff and student digital hubs.

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- Staff continue to work with HR in terms of ongoing training requirements.
- Student feedback is being taken on new technologies, and they are part of the group who will make suggestions, undertake testing, and help to develop the offer.
- There is shared responsibility to enhance life chances.

One governor asked what more the board can do to help. The board were advised that the college has been incredibly supportive and has responded to all requests. Examples given were VR, AR, and 3D printers. The board were assured that, even without governor involvement, the college has acted very quickly and supportively to initiatives and developments proposed. It was agreed that the vice principal: curriculum & quality would link with John Gray, who will be able to share examples of what others are doing in this and other sectors.

VP Q&S

Dec 2020

The board were given assurance that the college is working with other FE providers and other colleges both within the LEP area and nationally. The board took the opportunity to acknowledge all of the contribution made by the director of IT, estates and learning resources and his team.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

(Jane Fishwick left the meeting at 5.30pm)

7 BALANCED SCORECARD

The CEO introduced this item and provided an outline on how the system now operates. He explained the developments that have taken place since the last meeting. He expressed the view that the focus now needs to be on the student experience and the outcomes.

It was explained that each of the areas have been RAG-rated, with all aspects RAG-rated as red having a supporting explanatory report. These were considered on an individual basis.

- 1) AEB – it was explained that the position is very much linked to subcontractor performance. The report provides an explanation of the current position, together with plans and expectations for the remainder of the year. This offers an opportunity to increase direct delivery and planning is taking place for this ready for 2021. The principal acknowledged that this was an internal challenge but that staff are really looking to move quickly to progress this.

The board questioned how the RAG rating parameters are set, in terms of how they are agreed and the criteria applied. The principal explained that there was a significant spreadsheet that sits underneath the screens

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presented at the meeting. The intention is to ask the vice chair, Sardip Sandhu, to undertake a review in the new year to check that the approach taken is objective, logical, etc. He confirmed that internal auditors have also been asked to complete an early review in 2021. Both of these aspects will provide an opportunity to test thinking. It was agreed that a wider invitation would be made to other governors to be involved in the review/testing process.

Principal

Jan. 2021

- 2) Development of curriculum strategy – the principal indicated that progress on this has been impacted by staff capacity and other priorities, i.e. delivering to students to cover staff absence.

The board asked what the direction of travel is in relation to the amber RAG-rated items. The principal indicated that both were heading towards green with some good progress made, particularly in relation to technology-enhanced learning and employer engagement. In relation to the latter, he expressed the view that this was now moving forward at pace with some incredibly useful business improvement meetings taking place.

The board asked for clarification on the metrics utilised in the balanced scorecard. The principal indicated that this varies, with some aspects being year-to-date data and some being a rolling 12-month average. A challenge from the board was, if at all possible, to include an additional column which summarises the trend, i.e. is the college narrowing the gap or is it growing?

Director IT
& MIS

Feb. 2021

The principal acknowledged that it is important for governors to have confidence regarding information provided and the underpinning data to support the reports; therefore, it was agreed that all governors would be welcome to be involved in the review planned.

- 3) Number of deep dives completed – the principal explained that these were deliberately targeted at areas of concern, therefore the college has not hit the 44% target of 'good'. The position is not quite as good as the college would have hoped for, but the deep dive process is believed to be really effective. The principal indicated that it will be a challenge to now make up the percentage gap against the target that exists.
- 4) Staff mandatory training – the principal expressed an expectation that this will improve quickly.
- 5) Apprenticeship provision – the college is really starting to see improvements. There is good retention this year and very clear evidence of student improvements where staff teams are stable.
- 6) English and maths – the board acknowledged that the challenges

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in this area are well known. The principal described the targets set as being stretching but confirmed confidence that the position will improve.

The student governor provided feedback and confirmed the belief that the college does know what students need to do to achieve and improve, and his experience is that the college is very supportive. He confirmed that involvement in the learning companies is very useful and gives real life experiences. This allows students to develop as they progress through their course and gives wider commercial experience. It was agreed that the vice principal: curriculum & quality would circulate a short note on the learning companies to ensure that all governors are up to date on initiatives and progress made to date.

VP Q&S

Jan. 2021

The board were then given an update on the skills network, and it was explained that there are 20 qualifications that the college has status to deliver. The college is looking at direct delivery rather than franchise, and there are another 30 which are non-accredited.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

8 **ANNUAL KPI REPORTING**

The CEO introduced this item and confirmed that there were three KPIs to report on at this meeting. These are:

- Progress to level 4+
- Overall performance against target grades
- Employer survey.

- 1) Percentage of final year level 3 students progressing to level 4, 5 or 6

The principal reminded the board that the target set was 41% and that the college achieved 47%, which is a real positive. All agreed that this was a really good performance in COVID circumstances. The target is +10% for next year, and this is a really important objective for Mansfield and Ashfield.

Governors questioned where the other 53% went. The principal explained that, of these, 65% were positive destinations but the other 35% are 'unknowns'. He confirmed that resource has been committed to follow up on the unknowns to better understand the position. The college knows that 6% are individuals who are either taking a gap year, are carers, or are ill, and these are the NEETs. The principal confirmed that the vast majority have progressed, with some moving into purposeful employment. COVID has impacted on some sectors, specifically hair and beauty, retail, and some apprenticeships. 67% of A-Level students went to university but there are 30 'unknowns' and the

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college is currently chasing this data. The principal confirmed that, whilst it is an improving position, the college needs to do more to gather data. A challenge from the board was to narrow down the unknowns in terms of intentions and actuals.

The principal explained that the intended destinations were 92% positive, which should be compared with an actual known position now of 67% positive. He provided assurance that resource has been committed to unpick the unknowns and secure more data. It was confirmed that the board will have sight of a more detailed destinations report following planned discussion at the Standards Committee meeting in January 2021.

VP Q&S

Feb 2021

2) Overall performance against target grades

Governors' attention was drawn to the report from the Standards Committee, where this was discussed in detail. The principal indicated that, whilst COVID was beneficial in terms of overall grades, this was not the case in relation to high grades. He acknowledged that there was more to do, and he expects the position to increase significantly next year. The hope is that, throughout the year, students will get closer to target as they are pushed and stretched.

3) Employer survey

The board were advised that there has been a low response rate and it is believed that this may have been impacted by historic issues regarding apprenticeship delivery. The main area of focus for the college is to increase the response rate and, to support this, the team are looking at a range of strategies for next year. The board noted that there had been 69 responses and they questioned how many this was out of. It was confirmed that 500 employers had been invited to participate in the survey.

AGREED: to note the content of the reports provided.

9 COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS

1) Standards Committee

The committee chair drew governors' attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2020 and the summary note provided. Key matters that she brought to the board's attention were:

- A really good meeting.
- Good data available.
- Really self-reflective SAR completed. It recognises where the college is and the areas that need to improve. There are still some areas requiring focus, including maths and English and

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apprenticeship provision, albeit that the latter is on the road to improvement.

- In terms of safeguarding, the committee was absolutely assured regarding the processes in place, and this is a real strength at the college.
- CPD is considered as a key strength, with lots of green shoots evident.
- The SAR was felt to be really honest and self-critical. The college clearly knows the areas to address, and the committee challenged in terms of pace. The board were advised that external support provided to the college has been positive in terms of the quality of the SAR.
- The SED is reflective of last year's position in terms of the college's HE offer, it being acknowledged that this has now significantly changed following the partnership with NTU.

The board asked whether the Standards Committee needs anything from the wider board to help and support. The chair expressed the view that the committee's focus now needs to be on the key areas and providing the right level of challenge.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the chair's summary report
 - b) Note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting
 - c) Approve the SAR 2019/20 as circulated
 - d) Approve the SED 2019/20 as presented
 - e) Note the content of the safeguarding/prevent update (provided at agenda item 9)
 - f) Note the content of the QIAP (provided at agenda item 9).
- 2) Audit Committee

The committee chair drew the board's attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020 and the summary report.

As an overview, he confirmed that there is more to do in terms of risk and there are plans in place to consider this in more detail in February 2021. He drew the board's attention to the Audit Committee's annual report for 2019/20, which provides a summary of key matters as part of the end of year process.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) Note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting
- c) Receive and note the Audit Committee's annual report for 2019/20
- d) Note the content of the updated risk register 2020/21 (provided at agenda item 9).

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3) Joint Audit and F&E Committee meeting held on 26th November 2020

The meeting chair drew governors' attention to the detailed minutes and also the summary position. The board were advised that the finance director has made great progress in terms of getting auditors to agree the bksb pension liability position. This is a real positive in terms of Gift Aid and the tax position. It was explained that, whilst the college remains in intervention until the exceptional financial support required from the ESFA has been repaid, the college has come out of supervised status.

The board acknowledged that there had been really detailed discussion regarding the yearend members report and financial statements, and they were happy to accept the joint meeting recommendation to approve.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) Note the content of the full minutes of the meeting
- c) Note the content of the 2019/20 Financial Statements Audit Management Letter
- d) Approve the 2019/20 Members Report and Financial Statements as presented
- e) Approve and ask the chair/principal to sign the Letter of Representation
- f) Note the content and approve the Regularity Audit Self-Assessment Questionnaire as presented.

4) Finance & Estates Committee

The new committee chair drew governors' attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020. He explained the decision taken by Paul Frammingham to step down as a full governor but remain with the committee as a co-optee. He took the opportunity to thank him for all of his hard work to date and expressed the view that it was really positive to still have his expertise as a co-optee. Key matters that he brought to the board's attention included:

- The committee was reassured regarding health and safety actions. The committee was comfortable with all steps taken. It was acknowledged that some 'standard' activities are behind plan because of COVID but are now being addressed.
- Measures in place have helped to contain the number of COVID cases.
- In terms of financials, the college continues with a prudent view and the committee is comforted that the college is still in a reasonable position.
- The college has a positive cash position and is able to pay down

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£4 million of debt.

- There have been good discussions with the bank, and they are open to exploring a number of options.
- Minor changes proposed and agreed in relation to subcontracting arrangements.
- Minor amendments proposed in relation to financial regulations and fraud policy.

In considering the management accounts, whilst the board acknowledged the prudent position, they questioned whether there were any income lines which are a concern. The finance director indicated that:

- Subcontractor performance is significantly down against plan.
- £750k EBITDA comes from subcontracted activity and there could be as much as £600k at risk.
- The college's forecasts are based upon failure to deliver on this, but options are being explored in terms of an online offer, direct delivery, and employer pilot projects. The finance director indicated that the college is currently taking a worst-case scenario view but that it was acknowledged that the college needs to work hard not to lose the AEB funding.

A challenge from the board was in terms of where the college logs the risks in relation to income and how these are built into the forecasts. The finance director confirmed that the risk register does include income risks and sitting alongside these there are potential upsides; however, these are not yet proven. He confirmed that the overall impact on EBITDA in October 2020 was minimal as savings offset the income gap.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) Note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting
- c) Note the content of the October 2020 management accounts (at agenda item 9)
- d) Approve the amendments proposed to the Financial Regulations and Anti-Fraud Bribery and Corruption Policy
- e) Approve the revised allocation for subcontractors.

The committee chair advised that there was also a request later in the meeting, under confidential discussions at 17b, to provide delegated authority to senior management to make a determination on pay proposals which were considered by the committee. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the appropriate point later on the agenda.

10

QUESTIONS THAT GOVERNORS MAY HAVE ON KEY DOCUMENTS

The director of governance explained that there were a number of documents which have been provided (as requested) so that every

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governor can have an opportunity to ask questions on these. These are:

- QIAP
- Monthly management accounts
- Safeguarding/Prevent report
- Risk register

When considering the risk register, the board asked whether, in terms of the bksb sale, there is any possibility of a joint venture rather than a sale. The finance director indicated that there was strong pressure from the bank and the ESFA to pay off debt via a sale of bksb. He gave the historic context of the aborted sale and explained that, in terms of a joint venture, there were risks as it is unlikely to be supported by funders.

In relation to the management accounts, one member of the board asked for an update on the uptake in numbers and questioned how quickly revenue is received, i.e. is it in year or is there a lag? The finance director explained that funding streams are somewhat complicated, with a lagged position for 16-18-year-olds; apprenticeship provision is on the basis of pay-as-you-earn; and, in relation to adults, the college is paid and then there are sums clawed back if the college does not deliver to full allocation.

When discussing the management accounts, governors asked whether this is the revised budget and, if not, when that will be available. The finance director indicated that a revised budget hasn't yet been released as there are two elements to be finalised. The finance director indicated that there needs to be prudence regarding income recognition and a very cautious approach taken.

A challenge from the chair was for all governors to fully read these key documents, particularly the ones that they don't normally see at committee meetings.

In relation to the additional 16-18 student numbers, the finance director explained that the value is between £1.3 and £1.5 million. Whilst this provides a current year strain, it will lead to benefits in the next academic year.

One governor present indicated that there was a very useful presentation from Julian Gravatt from the AoC on FE finance, and it was agreed that this would be located and circulated to governors as part of the training offer.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY ACT – 2020 REPORT AND PLAN

The director of HR & organisational development introduced this item

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and explained that the report provides an update on where the college currently is and also summarises the work required to take the position forward. She confirmed that there were no particular issues that she felt needed to be brought to governors' attention in terms of the workforce. She confirmed that there continues to be a commitment to engage with both staff and students.

In terms of diversity and inclusivity, she confirmed that the college was developing its approaches with an acknowledged need to develop the data systems in place so that it is easier to undertake analysis.

In terms of recruitment and selection, there are some initiatives in place to fill the 'hard to recruit to' vacancies. An example given was women in engineering.

A challenge from one member of the board was in terms of the student population and whether they are asked what their approach to diversity is and, in particular, what they think 'diverse' should look like and how important it is. An observation made by one governor was that a diverse student experience is more important than diversity statistics. It was agreed that the vice principal: communications, engagement & student experience would take this to the learner voice meeting in February for a view. A challenge from the board was not to simply focus on what people look like.

VP CE&SE

The board considered the information provided on gender across the different departments and they asked whether national statistics are available to see how the college aligns. It was confirmed that this data is available and can be utilised to provide some analysis.

In terms of legal requirements, it was explained that the college has an obligation to refresh its public equality plan and that this is from both a student and staff perspective. The intention is to reinstate the internal EDI working/steering groups and that the college will start to talk with different groups to inform the position going forward, for example in terms of religion, wellbeing, etc. It was confirmed that the equality plan will cover all protected characteristics and ensure that there continue to be robust procedures in place; examples given were in terms of equality impact assessments.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

12 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The principal drew governors' attention to his detailed and comprehensive report, and an update was provided in a number of areas:

- Prime Minister's announcement on skills – this was limited to a

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modest range of subjects.

- There is still no sign of the FE White Paper, but the sector view is that it is likely to be 'watered down' because of the one-year spending position.
- 16-18 student numbers September 2021 – recruitment has now caught up the gap reported at the last meeting.
- There is an online A-Level open evening planned for January, with a wider open evening in February 2021.

13 **AOB**

The chair took the opportunity to confirm that the winner of the 'festive background' competition was Gavin Peake.

14 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The director of governance confirmed that this is Thursday 11th February 2021 at 5pm.

15 **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

It was agreed that confidential items would be recorded on a separate basis.

Staff and students left the meeting at 7.15pm.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

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