



**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING
HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2021**

Present:

Mervyn Ward	Chair
Andrew Bainbridge	Member
Martin Berman	Member
Andrew Ellams	Member
Peter Fitzhenry	Member
Lucy Gardner	Member
Sam Naylor	Member
Nichola Newton	Principal & Chief Executive
Peter Scott	Member
Geoff Spencer	Member

In attendance:

Michelle Seeley	Deputy Principal: Finance and Resources
Cath Brierley	Assistant Principal: Business Collaboration and Growth
Rebecca Welch	Assistant Principal: Quality & MIS
Laura Churchill	Clerk to the Corporation

The meeting opened at 10.30am

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

For noting: to receive any apologies for absence

Apologies had been received and were **NOTED** from:

Steven Broomhead	Member
Robert Cox	Member
Christine Kerr	Member
Sue Martin	Member
Kirstie Simpson	Member
Nicola Wilson	Staff Member

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

For noting: to receive any declarations of interest from Members in any items on the agenda

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest from members in any item on the agenda.

3 APPROVAL OF STRATEGIC AIMS AND KEY PRIORITIES GOING FORWARDS, INCLUDING SUSTAINABILITY ROADMAP (Presentation)

- 3.1 The Principal reported that the college's values had not changed and that in drafting the strategic priorities, a balance had been sought between making some minor amendments but also keeping things stable. It was explained to members that the college had aspirations to grow beyond £18m. Members discussed that in regards to digital innovation, there had been lots of innovation evident during the Covid-19 lockdowns and the digital learning revolution had made rapid advancements.
- 3.2 Members commented that having 4 overarching aims was a sufficient number. The Principal explained that the aims and priorities were mapped to the development plan and also the risk register.
- 3.3 The Principal informed members that the college had been asked by the local authority about expanding into providing education for learners with multiple and profound special needs and that this was currently under consideration. Members commented that the college's reputation was really growing as a result of the hard work of staff and the senior leadership team.
- 3.4 Members were informed that relationships with schools were of crucial importance as the college moved towards the delivery of T Levels, including getting year 9 students to think about the college as a year 12 option. In regards to key partnerships, members noted that the University of Chester worked closely with the college and that work was being undertaken to ensure that there were no overlaps with courses offered.
- 3.5 The Principal reported to members that a new director of teaching and learning had been appointed on the 15 October and that it was vitally important for them to ensure that learners caught up with lost learning time as a result of Covid-19, especially the college's entry and level 1 learners. Discussion was held in regards to the fact that in order to deliver outstanding teaching, consistency was key.
- 3.6 Members were informed that the college were looking to address the pay gap which had arisen as a consequence of not being able to award the 1% pay increase for a number of years historically. Discussion was held in regards to the fact that the college needed to consider different ways to grow to further improve stability.
- 3.7 The Principal explained to members that following a positive response to the staff satisfaction survey, the area that needed to be developed was communication and therefore there was a focus on ensuring that the messages being conveyed within the college were being received and understood. Additionally in regards to staff matters, members noted that the revised flexible working policy supported the college's green agenda and had been well received by staff.
- 3.8 Members were invited to give their feedback on the proposed strategic aims and priorities and it was reiterated that the college's priorities were set for a couple of years but reviewed annually.
- Q- A member asked in regards to the staff communication point how it would be tested whether internal communications had improved.

- R- Members were informed that it would be checked via staff forums, team meetings and further staff surveys.
- Q- A member asked how challenging it would be for the leadership team to articulate why the aims were chosen.

ACTION 1 – Principal to go through strategic aims and include narrative where appropriate to articulate why the aims were chosen.

- 3.9 Members discussed that the college priorities were linked to the local enterprise partnership ('LEP') priorities and that the priorities formed the basis for the executive team's performance management objectives and were then disseminated down in to the objectives for the team's direct reports.
- 3.10 The Principal reported that the college needed to remain focused on its core business within the context of a difficult external landscape and that consequently, any new ideas or initiatives were robustly debated at executive leadership team meetings, with everything risk rated.
- Q- A member asked whether addressing equality gaps should be included.
- R- Members were informed that the equality objectives were attached to the priorities and were inherent across many of the aims.
- 3.11 It was discussed that staffing was key to meeting the college's strategic aims and that greater innovation in regards to recruitment might be required in order to ensure that staffing remained strong. Members also commented that funding was a key challenge and the college may need to consider doing more in regards to its commercial offer in order to decrease dependency on government funding. The Principal explained to members that the college was very much focused on delivering a career led curriculum plan which allowed for progression for learners and a mix of funding pathways.
- 3.12 The Principal reported to members that the college had gained a reputation for excellence in safeguarding and digital pedagogy, and relevant staff had been approached to deliver at national conferences. It was discussed that self-promotion of the college was important, although needed to be balanced against ensuring the consistency of quality post pandemic.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the strategic aims and priorities 2021/22, subject to some narrative being added about the rationale for the choice of aims and priorities.

4 APPROVAL OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021/22 ACTIONS

- 4.1 Members were informed that a sustainability roadmap had been drafted and extended further than just the college's estates. It was explained that there was a sustainability page on the college's website which took visitors through the college's key actions and associated documents.

ACTION 2 - DP:FR to add link to the Carbon Trust website on the college's sustainability webpage.

- 4.2 The DP:FR informed members that the college needed to improve communications to staff about what the college did in terms of sustainability.

- Q- A member asked whether there were financial implications for implementing sustainability measures.
- R- Members were informed that some other colleges in the sector were using grants to support sustainability measures.

ACTION 3 – DP:FR to speak to Professor Broomhead about the local authority's green initiatives and the availability of any funding.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the development plan actions 2021/22

5 APPROVAL OF COLLEGE KPIs 2021/22

5.1 The Assistant Principal: Quality and MIS explained to members that the KPIs were colour coded to demonstrate where KPI targets had remained the same as last year, had been increased or had been reduced. Members noted that the teacher assessed grades as a consequence of Covid had impacted the English and Maths target. It was explained that the target for apprenticeships had been increased so that apprenticeships were aligned with the rest of the provision on the good to great journey.

5.2 Members noted that there was a new Department for Education progress measure to replace the ALPs value added grading system and that the college was aiming for distinction minus.

5.3 In regards to apprenticeships, members were informed that there had been a dip in destinations as a consequence of Covid and the picture with industry and furlough, however, the fact that it was still 90% was a pleasing position.

Q- A member asked how current the provider rate was.

R- Members were informed that the provider rate was for 2018/19 because of the centre assessed and teacher assessed years which resulted in a lack of data for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

5.4 The Deputy Principal: Finance and Resources took members through the financial KPIs and reported that the college used benchmarks to drive targets and that the targets were monitored through the monthly management accounts. Members were informed that there had been some new KPIs added and that the college were striving towards an average class size of 16 or greater.

Q- A member asked why the target percentage for staffing costs as a proportion of income had been chosen.

R- Members were informed that it had been fed through from the CFFR.

C- A member questioned whether the CFFR was a good basis for the target setting or whether the college needed to be more challenging in its internal target.

R- The DP:FR commented that the target was stretching and that as a consequence of the national insurance increase, any further uplift in the target would be very difficult to manage.

ACTION 4 – DP:FR to consider adjusting line 24 to 67% as a stretch target, or consider adding an additional line to indicate the aspirational internal target of 67%.

Q- A member asked what the sector average was for staffing to income

R- Members were informed that there was no recent benchmarking, however, the Further Education Commissioner target was 65%. Members noted that the college's local government pension scheme was high.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the KPIs for 2021/22.

6 APPROVAL OF RISK REGISTER 2021/22

6.1 The DP:FR explained to members that there were no significant changes to the risk register from the previous academic year, however, the Board's subcommittees were now receiving at each meeting the risks pertinent to their areas.

6.2 Members noted that in regards to financial health there was an aim around income growth which was no longer highlighted red on the risk register, but was still deemed important by the college.

C- A member questioned whether Covid 19 should still be coded red.

R- Members were informed that the impact of Covid was still being seen, for example, the college's trade union provision had been badly impacted which had previously constituted a large part of the adult education budget. It was discussed that there were still ongoing implications of operating with Covid.

6.3 The DP:FR explained that safeguarding had been classified as a manageable risk because of the controls which were in place.

ACTION 5 – DP:FR to amend wording of Covid risk to make clear that the risk was the unpredictable nature of Covid.

6.4 Members discussed in regards to risk 17, failure to protect the college from a cyber attack, that the risk needed to be expanded to cover if the college did not have IT available for use.

ACTION 6 – DP:FR to amend the cyber security risk, risk 17, to include inability to access IT.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the risk register 2021/22, subject to completion of the actions outlined above.

7 APPROVAL OF THE WRITE OFF OF BAD DEBTS

7.1 The DP:FR explained to members that the team were currently writing a bad debts policy which would be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee in November.

7.2 In regards to the request for debts to be written off, members were informed that some debts were related to the impact of Covid.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the write off of £59,521.80.

Unconfirmed

The meeting closed at 11:26am.

Signed _____

Date _____