

# CORPORATION BOARD



Minutes of a meeting held on 2 July 2019 at Common Leys Campus at 5pm

## Present

Di Batchelor, Principal  
Fay Croft  
Vicky Field  
Roger File  
Nick Handy  
Ali Kennedy (from 5.30pm)  
Gavin Maitland-Smith, Chair

Adam Mumford  
Tony Petruso  
John Revis  
Nicolas Pagès  
Sean Wellington

## In attendance

Jacqui Canton, Deputy Principal  
Mark Lay, Finance Director  
Maureen Boyle, Vice Principal,  
Student Engagement  
Jenny Craig, Vice Principal,  
Curriculum & Quality  
Ruth Reavley, Clerk  
Pam Willsher, Head of Land-Based  
Industries and Construction Trades

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are italicized.

### 1. Opening comments, apologies for absence and new declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed Nicolas Pagès to his first meeting. There were no new declarations of interest. Apologies had been received from Howard Dodd, Mark Johnstone, Stephen Vickers and Lucy Coppock.

Governors had approved revised policies by email: Student Financial Support 2019-20, Health & Safety, Conflict of Interest & Loyalty, Risk Management, Financial Regulations, Disclosure & Barring Service, Equality & Diversity, LGPS Pensions and Employer Discretions, Staff Disciplinary, Expenses, Supply Chair Fees & Charging 2019/20, Whistleblowing/Public Interest Disclosure.

Governors had approved an amendment to Standing Order 44, and extensive amendments to Appendix 12, the Committee Standing Orders, reflecting the changed Committee structure, by email.

Governors noted that, following the Strategy Day, regular meetings between the Chair, Principal, Vice Chair, Chair of Finance & General Purposes, Clerk had begun, with more scheduled for 2019/20.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Publish revised Policies to O365 and website as appropriate	Clerk	immediate
Issue revised Standing Orders	Clerk	immediate

### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2019

All minutes were approved and signed.

### 3. Matters arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

The Clerk updated members on progress of actions not covered elsewhere on the agenda. All progress was noted. No member raised further matters arising. With respect to Deep Dives, it will not always be the case that the SMT lead is the Deputy Principal.

The Agenda was varied to take the Faculty presentation at this point.

### 8. Faculty Presentation: Landbased Industries and Construction Trades

The Head of Faculty, Pam Willsher, spoke of the achievements and challenges of students in the Faculty, and the high calibre and commitment of staff. Recent capital investment on

the Common Leys Campus had significantly improved the quality of provision in animal-based curriculum areas. HE students on equine courses had recently participated in an International research conference. Staff drive to improve English and maths attendance particularly in Construction Trades areas had been effective in-year – the impact on achievement was awaited.

#### **4. Update on progress against the Strategic Plan**

The Principal presented her report.

Governors approved the amended wording of strategic objective 4 for 2019/20, to “Working within our means”.

##### Delivering the highest quality

The new Ofsted Inspection Framework was discussed. Governors noted “Outstanding” was unlikely to be given as a grade in future. The observation of teaching and learning in FE was subject to further consideration by the Ofsted Chief Inspector. If inspected in the near future, the Principal believed the College would be judged “Good” once again, albeit within a different framework from that for which “Good” was previously gained. Governors were pleased to note the achievements of both students and staff recorded in the report.

##### Developing the curriculum

Governors noted that many students are on applied general qualifications at Level 3. The trend to T-Levels has the potential to remove them from the approved list for funding. The College has accepted an invitation from Pearson (educational publishers) to lobby at Parliament for recognition and continued funding for applied general qualifications. The Augar Review has stimulated renewed contact from the MP for Wantage; the College has long-standing positive relations with the MPs for Oxford West and Abingdon, and for Witney.

Governors noted that a full College response to the new Ofsted requirement to define “curriculum intent” is work in progress. Much is already in place, as the College does not simply prioritise qualifications but also behaviour, resilience, and key employability skills, and is in regular contact with employers to ensure intent matches their needs.

##### Fulfilling external requirements

Governors noted the impact of Government interest in Alternative Provision and in children excluded/off-rolled from school. They supported the college’s aspiration to become a preferred provider for Oxfordshire County Council.

##### Working within our means

Governors, noting plans to diversify and sell services, urged the College to not neglect core services whilst supporting the direction of travel.

##### Employer of Choice

In-year developments were welcomed. The continuing central concern was about funding, related to the affordability of pay awards. The imbalance between FE Colleges on the one hand and schools and Universities on the other, was progressively more unjust.

The Chair and governors welcomed the format of the progress report and the strong picture depicted.

#### **5. Principal’s Report**

A confidential minute records some elements of the Principal’s report.

Governors asked about county lines and about knife crime. One trespasser had attempted to contact students on Witney Campus, and though there had been reports of assaults locally in Witney, none had affected College students. A restructuring of roles at Witney Campus for 2019-20, including the appointment of a Head of Campus Experience, would strengthen efforts made in 2018-19 to improve standards of behaviour on Witney Campus.

A governor declared an interest, as a University Pro Vice-Chancellor, in the Board's consideration of the Augar Review of post-18 education and funding. The FE and University sectors differed in their responses. However, whilst the FE sector was presenting a unified front, the response of Universities was fragmented. Governors noted the critique of current policy and funding arrangements.

In advance of a forthcoming Board Working Group considering proposals for a re-design of the website, there was some discussion of the profile of the strapline "changing lives and communities" on the site. The re-design would afford opportunity both for corporate messages and sales.

## 6. Proposed Balanced Score Card for 2019-20

The Deputy Principal presented the paper. The structuring of data by provision type was welcomed, and the simplicity of framework broadly welcomed. Governors noted that quality measures are reported on separately. Some refinements were proposed:

- Inclusion of an indicator on HE applications
- Commentary where income is not green rated, to cover in-year adjustment of costs
- In-year Apprenticeship starts

Governors noted that the new Balanced Score Card (BSC) would be included within the Management Accounts. The latter includes key ratios such as staff costs as a percentage of income. Benchmarks for the measures included in the new BSC were not readily available, but where possible (some are from ESFA published data) they would be incorporated into the annual Value for Money report. Health & Safety matters would continue to be covered in the Principal's Report.

Governors approved the proposal, subject to refinements as noted, for use in 2019/20. The first report would be for the October Board meeting.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Incorporate proposed refinements	Deputy Principal	For use in October 2019

A confidential item was discussed.

## 9. College Curriculum and Quality Update

The Vice Principal presented her report.

- Was the requirement for industry placement in T-Levels still of concern? *Some flexibilities were being offered, for instance that Construction students could undertake Social Action projects, and students with Special Educational Needs could undertake some industry placement work in protected environments for a proportion of the required hours.*
- The appendices on FE and HE teaching quality show no data for "best practice". Why was that? *The measure has been subsumed within "Strengths", but the legend for the table has not yet been amended. "Strength" is now a measure of very high standards in teaching and learning practice.*

- How are teachers whose performance requires improvement dealt with? *There would be a professional discussion with the observer immediately following the observed lesson. The lecturer's Personal Development Plan is reviewed termly with the line manager. Follow-up observations are undertaken if necessary.*
- Has the approach for English and maths changed? *The Department for Education has slightly changed the condition of funding. The College had long championed a position that GCSE is not always the best fit for students and those joining the College with less than grade 3 upon entry were able to study functional skills to level 2 rather than take GCSE qualifications if more relevant. This had the effect of depressing one of the performance data measures. With T-Levels, there is no requirement for all students to achieve GCSE English and maths; Functional Skills qualifications at level 2 are also acceptable.*

Governors thanked the Vice Principal for an encouraging report.

### **10. Apprenticeships Update**

The Deputy Principal presented her report. Governors noted the current areas of risk in the report.

- What is the over-arching approach to persuading levy paying employers who have underspend to transfer a proportion of their allocation to non-levy paying employers? *It varies, for some the pitch is around widening participation, for others Corporate Social Responsibility. The detail will depend on what the College understands of the individual organisation.*
- Is it possible to transfer between levy-paying employers? *It is. The rules are complex.*

The Deputy Principal was thanked for a comprehensive and detailed overview of recent developments.

In a change to the order of the agenda, a related item was taken.

### **22. Apprenticeships Deep Dive**

The Deep Dive group chair reported back on the first Deep Dive, undertaken by three governors, into Apprenticeships. The objectives set for the day had been met. Following a presentation by the Deputy Principal, governors had undertaken different activities: visiting an employer; delving into the contribution model; attending an English and maths lesson; and meeting with staff. Participants had gained greatly in their knowledge and understanding. They supported the ambition of staff to increase the contribution beyond the current 20%, but urged caution about a possible loss of quality.

Staff involved had reported that they had found it a positive experience. The presentation would be made available on the portal.

Participants recommended that further Deep Dives are planned. One on Student Services would be scheduled once the newly appointed Head of Student Engagement had been in post for a term. Other ideas would be developed by the Chair and Principal. Governors were encouraged to suggest areas of focus.

### **11. Annual Report – Student Voice**

The Vice Principal, Student Engagement, presented the report.

- What was the response rate? *72% amongst full-time and substantial part-time students. Completion was part of their core activities.*

- Were apprentices surveyed? *Apprentices are invited to complete the college survey but responses were very low. Typically apprentices do not read messages sent to their College email addresses. An alternative method of collecting their views is used and additional work on this will be undertaken next year.*

Governors welcomed the report as a positive account of student views.

## **12. Management Accounts**

The Finance Director summarised the report – very little had changed since the March Board Management Accounts paper. The Chair noted that it was a tremendous achievement for the College to have achieved the operating surplus and cash holdings reported for 31 May, and the full year forecast position.

Confidential items were discussed.

## **15. Local Government Pension Scheme Consultation**

Governors noted the main areas of the consultation. They authorised the Finance Director to respond to the Consultation document in line with AoC recommendations.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Respond to LGPS Consultation	Finance Director	In timely manner

## **16. Reflection and discussion of strategic implications of agenda items**

The Chair reminded Governors that this new standing item was intended to ensure that governors had sufficient opportunity to consider strategic implications. Governors were satisfied that debate had been sufficient within the individual items on this occasion.

## **17. Risk Management**

The Board approved the High Level Risk Register.

## **18. Audit Matters**

The Board approved both the Internal Audit Strategy and draft programme for 2019/20, and the Financial Statements Audit Strategy for the year ended 31 July 2019.

The Chair noted his thanks to the co-opted Governor who had chaired the Audit Committee on an ad hoc basis in recent months. He had been in discussion with an external governor about the role, and hoped that the Committee would make an appointment at its next meeting.

## **19. Chair and Vice Chair terms of office**

As part of the resolution involved decisions relating to the terms of office of the current incumbents, the Chair and Vice Chair left the room.

Governors noted that the terms of office for the roles had been raised previously at Board and remained unfinished business. The case for a three-year first term for the Chair was supported. The argument for the Board having discretion to extend an 8-year Governor term of office for the Board Chair into the 9<sup>th</sup> year to complete a 3-year first term or a 2-year second term was supported.

The Clerk confirmed the role of the Nominations Committee in seeking nominees and making recommendations to the Board at the end of any term of office for Chair and Vice Chair.

- would there be merit in “rounding” the term of office to coincide with an academic year? *There was strength in continuity and planning to avoid the simultaneous exit of members of any two or more of the Chair, Vice Chair, Principal and Clerk.*
- The Board would want to avoid a Chair departing part-way through, for example the Accounts approval process. *The Board has extended the term of office of a Chair in the past to avoid that. Equally, unless a Chair is appointed from outside the Board membership, any successor will have some familiarity with the accounts.*

The Board approved the following recommendations:

- a) That the first term of office of the current Chair is extended to three years, taking the first term of office to 31 December 2021.
- b) That the second term of office for the current Vice Chair is extended to two years, taking it to 31 July 2020
- c) That the Clerk would circulate amendments to Standing Orders which reflect the changes discussed, for Board approval.

The Chair and Vice Chair returned.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Circulate draft revised Standing Orders to reflect the decisions for approval	Clerk	immediate

## 20. Confirmation of Committee Membership 2019/20

Governors confirmed the proposals.

## 21. Board business plan and meeting dates 2019/20

Members confirmed the proposals for Board and Committee business plans. Meeting dates were approved.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Issue Outlook calendar invitations for all meetings	Clerk	immediate

## 22. Committee Minutes

Public and Confidential Committee minutes were noted.

The Chair thanked staff governors, and members of the Senior Management Team, for all their work during a very full and challenging year. Staff governors, Senior Management Team members, the Principal and Clerk left the meeting.

The meeting continued for External Governors with confidential discussion.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signature .....

Date .....