

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL CORPORATION
Meeting held remotely by 'Teams' on Thursday 27 August 2020
At 5.00 pm

Present	Martin Clark (Chair), Clive Barker, Carlton Brand, Poppy Broster-Becker, Amanda Burnside, Iain Hutchison, Mags Patten, Katie Walker, Jack Wills.
In Attendance	<i>Iain Hatt (Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality), Julian Wood (Deputy Principal Corporate Resources), Heather Cross (Clerk to the Corporation)</i>

	Minute	Action
2020-21 1/1	Apologies for absence and welcome to new member	
	<p>Apologies were received from Harry Adam, Jon Downing and Venetia Summers.</p> <p>Poppy Broster-Becker, Student President was warmly welcomed to her first meeting, following her recent appointment. A short CV for Poppy and a role description of the sabbatical student president role had been circulated to all governors with the agenda. Governors introduced themselves to Poppy.</p>	
2020-21 1/2	Declarations of interest	
	None	
2020-21 1/3	Chair's opening remarks	
	The Chair thanked governors for their attendance. He drew attention to the notes circulated from the Clerk and from him that day concerning the Vice-Chair positions and other governor roles and asked governors to give these some thought. With regret he informed the meeting that Jon Downing had recently informed him he would be shortly moving out of the area and would therefore not be in a position to be appointed for a second term of office after November 2020. A focused and energetic campaign to recruit another finance professional, preferably with a commercial company background, would be taking place to be added to the recruitment to fill the other existing external vacancies.	
2019-20 1/4	Principal's presentation – update on re-opening plans; examination results; enrolments	
	<p>The Principal shared a series of slides giving an update to governors on re-opening plans which also formed the basis of training for returning staff and had been used for that purpose recently – a similar version would also be used with students. The College was opening on 7 September 2020 and specific advice for the FE sector provided by Government was being followed. The document summarising the approach was noted.</p> <p>It was commented that the key preparation work was in managing the distancing risks. Each curriculum area was placed in a zone in order to create designated 'bubbles' of staff and students. Areas were following the general national guidance unless there was industry specific guidance. Unions were content with the approach the college was taking and had recorded their praise</p>	

nationally for the college's preparations. The Principal recorded her special thanks to Andy Hill, Head of Estates, for his outstanding work to get the college ready for opening in addition to support he had given on some aspects on a national basis. Governors noted the exemplary safety and protective measures being taken.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality spoke about the successful enrolment arrangements which had been made and the positive full time numbers to date. Performance data was not yet certain, following the national issues with exam grades and in particular the very recent last minute withdrawal of BTEC grades to which all colleges had had to respond extremely quickly. Overall student results were expected to improve on last year.

Governors asked a number of questions on the reports including the approach being taken to the wearing of facemasks; more details on enrolments in particular curriculum areas and the planning being undertaken for apprenticeships where it was expected that there could be significant conversions across later in the year should the job market change. The College would want to support students in these circumstances.

The Principal reported that some catch up funding had been granted to the college which should assist students to reach the required level for their next courses. Careful work would be required for students not yet ready for the automatic next level course based on their results. Further questions were asked concerning student engagement and also the work necessary to rearrange staff timetables to meet additional student needs. Overall, the college was planning to meet these needs.

In response to a question it was commented that the college would only be providing PPE for students where risk assessments identified this as a requirement. Governors commented that College management was making exceptional and impressive arrangements but noted that these would have a cost implication. It was also noted that whilst college accommodation did not lend itself to social distancing, the most significant additional costs related to additional cleaning requirements where an additional £600K was being spent and this was anticipated to double over the coming year.

It was noted that the MP for Chippenham, who was also the Universities Minister, was to attend the Chippenham campus to observe arrangements being made.

Discussion took place concerning the arrangements being made to accommodate staff. The government guidance for return to work where sensible was being followed, although many professional services staff were still encouraged to work at home. The college was being as flexible as possible in its arrangements.

There was discussion concerning governor visiting and it was confirmed that at present un-necessary face to face meetings were being avoided in order to minimise risk but in due course governors would of course be welcome again on campuses. It was noted that a discussion concerning meeting and governor visiting arrangements beyond the Autumn term 2020, which would continue on a remote basis until at least December 2020, would be scheduled for the November Board meeting. All college management meetings were continuing on an online basis currently.

The Principal commented that overall the college's responses needed to

	<p>remain flexible to an ever changing situation, there would be considerable pressure on facilities and there were substantial concerns in relation to student transport where social distancing could not take place.</p> <p>Governors continued to welcome the considerable efforts being made by College management to meet the exceptional demands placed on the organisation by the current challenging situation and thanked them for their work.</p>	
2020-21 1/5	Presentation on finance update	
	<p>A summary of the college's financial performance for the 2019-20 year was circulated through a presentation.</p> <p>It was noted that the final operating position for 2019-20 was a deficit of £1,690k. This was after allowing for the impact of COVID-19, which was estimated at £1,693k, ie almost exactly representing the amount of deficit.</p> <p>The operating deficit was a slight improvement on the June forecast (by £76k), mainly due to apprenticeships income and TCP holding up better than forecast. The main areas impacted by Covid-19 were Apprenticeships, catering and accommodation and commercial and full cost income. ESF project income was also adversely impacted by a combination of profiling and Covid-19.</p> <p>Costs, overall, were largely as budgeted for the year, resulting in a significantly worse level of EBITDA and a substantial Operating Deficit. Governors noted that as the College has no cash reserves, the deficit directly affects the ability to meet cashflow needs in 2020/21.</p> <p>It was noted that the college had been much more successful than anticipated in the budget concerning the Condition Allocation. Whilst there was a stated requirement to match fund, as this would simply result in a larger claim for assistance to the ESFA, this was not anticipated to be required in the present circumstances.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Corporate Resources reported that a further conversation concerning Covid support had taken place with the ESFA and the FEC team. An application process was expected at the end of September, which was anticipated to include an Independent Business Review exercise.</p> <p>Governors asked about progress on projects to review financial savings and other contingencies, including the possibility of re-financing through banks. All feasible alternatives were being considered, but seeking financial support from the ESFA was the main route anticipated for assistance, given the reason for the cashflow position was directly and completely attributable to Covid factors.</p> <p>The meeting received a positive report on the progress with the capital projects which were now taking shape, although impacted by Covid in respect of delay. A report was provided on the delays experienced and the negotiations currently being pursued to address any claims.</p>	
2020-21 1/6	Minutes of the meeting held 30 June 2020	
	The minutes of the meeting held 30 June 2020 had been circulated previously and were agreed.	
2020-21 1/7	Minutes of the meeting held 14 7 20	

	<p>The minutes of the meeting had been circulated previously and were agreed.</p> <p><u>Matters arising</u> The Chair reported that he had written to the Skills Minister, Gillian Keegan, MP, concerning the college's financial position and awaited a reply.</p>	
2020-21 1/8	Any other urgent business	
	<p>It was noted that should a Covid case arise on campus then Public Health England advice would be followed. Further, there was a local outbreak management plan from Wiltshire Council. Governors would be kept informed about planning and any developments. A staff briefing was to take place in the following week to which governors would be invited.</p> <p>It was noted that the Education and Skills Funding Agency had recently extended the latest deadline for submission of accounts for the 2019/20 year to 31 January 2021. The College still intended to submit accounts by 31 December 2020.</p>	
2020-21 1/9	Emerging Issues and Aspirations	
	<p><u>Contribution to outstanding governance</u> Governors welcomed having this updating meeting.</p>	
2020-21 1/10	Date of Next Meeting	
	The next scheduled meeting was on 29 September 2020.	