



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING**

**HELD REMOTELY ON WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020**

**Present:** Lucy Barrow, Sue Higginson (Principal), Lorraine Jones, Tim Kelly (Chair), Richard Mawdsley, Joe McArdle, Phil McKeown, Paul Smith, Jayne Winders.

**In attendance:** Michael Norton, Deputy Principal  
Christine Carter, Vice Principal – Curriculum  
Philip Jones, Vice Principal - Quality  
Andrew King, Head of Finance  
Nikki Leising, Financial Controller  
Lesley Venables, Clerk to Governors  
Louise Scott-Kelly, Administrator to Governors

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

217. Apologies for absence were received from Anna Barnish, Gary Doyle, Michael Taylor and Vix Wrigley.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

218. The following interests were declared:

- Lucy Barrow – on secondment to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.
- Tim Kelly – any matters relating to the Merseyside Pension Fund.
- Richard Mawdsley – any matters relating to Peel Holdings.
- Joe McArdle – University of Chester and as a parent of a student who attends the College.
- Paul Smith – employed by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and that his spouse was employed at the College.

**PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE**

219. The Principal provided an update on recent developments in the College's operation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

220. A Curriculum Strategy for the close down of 2019/2020 had been prepared, together with a clear framework for the operation of 'blended' learning for each curriculum area for 2020/2021. The Vice Principals were working with curriculum teams on the implementation of the Strategy.

221. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and curriculum managers were working on the closedown of 2019/2020 and had rigorously reviewed projected outcomes for all students. Three cohorts had been identified: students who would achieve by calculation, using

previously assessed work; students who would achieve through adaptation of the final approach to assessment, as defined by the awarding Body and; students who required a final practical assessment to achieve. All students would be required to revisit the skills they had acquired during the first 6 weeks of 2020/2021 due to the gap in routine learning and skills development during lockdown. Predicted achievements had been prepared with most achieving their qualifications and staff had been busy ensuring that evidence of learning and assessment was available and had been submitted to the Awarding Body.

222. Students who required a practical 'licence to practise' assessment to complete their qualifications, such as electricians, had been identified. As all College campuses were currently closed, safe social distancing processes were being developed for these students to enable them to attend assessments by appointment, with a minimal number of staff in attendance and the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available, where appropriate. Although plans to assess this cohort were already underway, the College was awaiting further guidance from Ofqual on its assessment requirements, which would be built into the processes.

223. The remote engagement of students continued and the Vice Principal – Quality presented data on the level of participation in online activities in each curriculum area. The data tracked all methods of student engagement, including those who were using alternative methods, for example, paper based activities due to a lack of IT or internet access, and a small number of students who had not engaged had been followed up by the support team. Staff were able to provide a context for each student and continued to follow up with those who had had little or no engagement to ensure they were receiving the appropriate support and remained on the College's radar.

224. The Principal informed that the College continued to supply equipment to learners, where there was a need and where this was possible. This issue had been raised with Government, to enable the bursary to be utilised, as appropriate, particularly as students would now be required to engage remotely in the long term.

225. A governor enquired about the level of engagement in Traineeships. The Principal explained that, usually the student would be undertaking learning with their employer, however, due to the current circumstances, this could not continue because apart from apprentices, students were not allowed to continue in employer placements during lockdown.

226. In response to a question on Higher Education (HE) courses the Principal advised that these were monitored in the same way as Further Education (FE), with each programme scrutinised to establish the level and amount of work that could be done remotely, particularly with BTEC courses. The College continued to work closely with its HE partners to support students.

227. Governors were informed that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some apprenticeships and the associated funding had been frozen. The College continued to support the knowledge-based work that apprentices could complete remotely, but recognised that this was not sustainable in the long-term and that progress would be dependent on further Government announcements.

228. The Principal and the Deputy Principal were leading the College's business continuity and Covid-19 reopening strategy that focused on the health and safety of all staff and students. All relevant teams were developing online enrolment process, with the Deputy Principal leading on timetabling and the logistics of social distancing at all campuses.

229. Governors were informed that the Estates Team was preparing buildings for a social distancing regime. A variety of approaches were being used, such as revising classroom layouts and group sizes; designated staircases and corridors to implement a one-way system (taking into consideration emergency exits and fire procedures); Perspex screens for Reception staff; Services such as the hairdressing salon and the restaurant could not currently open to the general public. A deep-cleaning schedule had been prepared for all College sites. These processes were part of the detailed Method Statements, linked to the College's Risk Assessment.

230. The College had previously donated a significant amount of PPE to the local hospital. However, upon re-opening, a substantial investment in PPE would be required for Additional Learning Support staff and other support workers on an ongoing basis.

231. The Principal provided an update on Safeguarding activity during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Safeguarding team continued to support and check on students on a regular basis. Governors noted that the College had received 5 Operation Encompass domestic abuse referrals in one day, which was above average and, unfortunately, reflected the national picture on domestic abuse incidents during the national 'lockdown'.

232. The Principal commended both staff and students for the way in which they had embraced the transition to remote learning and working

## **SHARING RECENT SUCCESSES**

233. The Board received the routine report on the College's recent successes and commented on the positive and innovative ways in which both teaching and business support staff had adapted to engage with students. Governors thanked all staff for their efforts and hard work throughout the transition.

## **TERM 2 2019/2020 STRATEGIC UPDATE**

234. The Principal presented the update on performance in Term 2 against the College's Strategic Plan.

## **BALANCED SCORECARD**

235. The Deputy Principal presented the Balanced Scorecard as at March 2020. It was noted that there were 3 items graded as 'amber' relating to Apprenticeship Income, Out of Funding Apprentices (OOFs) and the Pay to Income ratio. No items had been classified as 'red'.

236. As the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic were yet to be fully realised, a prudent approach had been taken when projecting income levels for 2020-2021.

237. The Principal highlighted that, despite the majority of learning taking place remotely, the Safeguarding team continued to work to support vulnerable students. A total of 419 safeguarding cases had been identified and this was likely to increase by the end of the academic year.

## **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

238. The Deputy Principal presented the Management Accounts for March 2020, which indicated that the College's Financial Health remained as 'Good.'

239. The overall operating surplus was above plan and a governor commended the College for exceeding its Adult Education Budget (AEB) contract. However, the Board was asked to note that the lockdown period would have a negative impact on apprenticeship income levels in 2020/2021, as a number of companies had withdrawn apprentices or placed them on 'breaks in learning' for which the College could not claim any funding.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

240. Governors received an update on the College's Risk Management Register. The Deputy Principal reported that Covid-19 had first been included as a separate category within the Register in January 2020. However, as the situation had developed into a pandemic, the impact of this risk had been updated, with funding and apprenticeship income highlighted as key risk areas.

## **FEES POLICY 2020/2021**

241. The Vice Principal – Quality presented the draft Fees Policy for Further and Higher Education Courses for 2020/2021, which had been based on the 2019/2020 version.

242. Currently the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority funded Level 2 courses for adult learners who earned less than £17,550 a year. Governors were advised that this threshold could change and it was proposed that the Principal be given delegated authority to amend the fees in the Policy in such an eventuality.

243. It was also suggested that in future the draft Fees Policy should be submitted for approval at the Board's July meeting to accommodate any changes made by the LCR.

244. The Vice Principal – Quality confirmed that the level of fees for HE courses aligned with the College's Access & Participation Plan which had been approved by the Board and the Office for Students (OfS).

245. **Resolved**
- 1 That the Fees Policy 2020/2021 be approved.
  - 2 That the Principal be given delegated authority to make any minor changes to the Fees Policy during the year, if required.

- 3 That the timetable of business be updated to ensure that the Fees Policy be presented to the July Board meeting in future years.

## **TERM 2 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE**

246. The Deputy Principal presented the Term 2 Health & Safety Update and Risk Register. The report centred on the Covid-19 pandemic and detailed the actions and control measures currently being undertaken in preparation for learners returning to the College.

247. The Board acknowledged the detailed logistical management of health and safety controls required to implement efficient social distancing measures and thanked the staff in this area for their work.

## **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019-2021**

248. The Deputy Principal presented a report on the Internal Audit Plan for 2019-2021.

249. As College management was currently involved in redesigning and implementing a new curriculum model due to Covid-19, the Deputy Principal proposed that the only internal audit reviews that should take place between 2019-2021 should be those required by current regulations, such as learner records. This position would be kept under review by the Audit Committee and any proposals for changing this strategy would be reported to the Board.

250. In response to a question from a governor as to whether there would be a cost implication for postponing the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan, the Deputy Principal reported that the Internal Auditors had agreed to charge only for the work that had been undertaken to date.

251. The Board agreed that due to the unprecedented circumstances under which the College was operating, non-essential audits were not priority for the forthcoming year.

252. **Resolved** That the Board approve to suspend internal audit reviews for the 2019-2021 period, except those that must be undertaken to meet funding rules requirements.

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

### **BOARD MINUTES – 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2020**

253. **Resolved** That the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

254. Governors received a progress report on the actions identified at the previous meeting and noted that all identified actions had been completed. The action under minute 206, which referred to the external governor vacancies, had been assigned to Governance & Search Committee.

255. The Clerk presented a revised schedule of committee membership which had been updated following the last Board meeting.

256. The Board also formally received the outcome of the remote written resolution on amendments to the College's Safeguarding Policy, which had been approved unanimously.

257. **Resolved** - That the revised schedule of committee memberships be approved.

### **QSS COMMITTEE MINUTES**

258. The Board received for information the draft minutes from the Quality & Standards Scrutiny (QSS) Committee meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

259. Governors were informed that the quality indicators had been 'adapted' at the end of March 2020 and that the College's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) had effectively been finalised for 2019/2020. A new template was now being used to report on quality performance indicators at each meeting, reflecting the Covid-19 impact.

260. The Chair of the QSS Committee advised that apprenticeships continued to be a concern, but had been reassured at the meeting that the College continued to work with employers to provide as much support as possible and maintain positive relationships.

261. The Committee had also been informed of the College's position in respect of the furloughing of staff

### **HEAD OF FINANCE**

262. As it was his last Board meeting, the Chair expressed his thanks to Andrew King, Head of Finance, for his contribution to the College and wished him well in his future endeavours.

263. Nikki Leising had been recruited as the new Financial Controller and would be in attendance at future Board and meetings, where appropriate.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

Signed:  Date: 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Chair