



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation  
held on Tuesday 28 April 2020 held remotely**

**Present: -**

Mr Igor Andronov (Chair)  
 Cllr Sebastian Bowen  
 Mrs Sally Cassels  
 Mr James Caird  
 Miss Abby Durant  
 Mr Tony Ford  
 Mrs Laura Johnston  
 Mrs Debbie Lambert  
 Mr Adam Matthews  
 Mr Jeremy Nicholls  
 Ms Rebecca Payne  
 Mr Ian Peake (Principal)

**In attendance: -**

Mrs Jo Ricketts (Deputy Principal)  
 Mr Edward Gwillim (Director of Finance)  
 Mrs Debra Baldwin (Director of Personnel)  
 Mrs Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Corporation)

The meeting was quorate as twelve Governors were present for the meeting which was held by conference call due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- |  | <b>Action</b> |
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| <p>1. I. There were no apologies for absence.<br/>           II. The Chair thanked everyone for joining the meeting remotely.<br/>           III. Cllr Bowen declared an interest regarding his appointment as a Co-opted Member of Audit Committee.</p> <p>2. I. <b>Minutes of the Last Meeting</b><br/>           The Board agreed that the Chair should sign the minutes of the Board meetings held on 10 December 2019 and 25 February 2020 as true records.</p> <p>II. <b>Matters arising</b><br/>           There were no matters arising.</p> <p>III. <b>Notes from Strategy Meeting: 11 February 2020</b><br/>           These were noted.<br/> <u>The Board agreed: -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To approve the minutes</li> </ul> <p><i>Discussion</i></p> <p>3. <b>Principal's Report</b></p> <p>I. The Principal's written report was noted.<br/>           Officers provided briefings outlining the College's response</p> |               |

to COVID-19. The Principal explained that there had been challenges following advice from Government, (which was received over a period of time), closure, (which had been initially anticipated to relate to students but later transpired as closure to students and staff), and guidance for vulnerable students which had changed to the requirement for vulnerable students who were considered unsafe at home to attend College. A minority of staff took actions which were not instigated by CMT; some causing additional challenges. The closure was instigated extremely quickly bringing dramatic changes to the operation of the College. Teaching and learning is the key issue to be addressed in the summer term along with completion of assessments. The majority of staff and students have responded positively with effective communication channels established. The COBRA team and CMT meet regularly, along with Assistant Principals and managers who meet their teams. COBRA are planning arrangements to reopen the College following Government guidance. The Principal is in regular discussion with the Principal Designate to prepare for the next academic year. Applications are being processed which are currently at a similar level to 2019/20. Budget planning for 2020/21 will commence anticipating a decrease in income which must be balanced by reducing expenditure. Primary challenges will be delivering teaching, learning and assessment whilst implementing social distancing, and enrolments (16-18 and 19+) with a possibility that some adult learners may defer studies due to COVID-19. Some apprentices have been furloughed by their employers with a likelihood that fewer apprenticeships will be available. There is a risk that HE applicants may defer programmes until September 2021. The Principal summarised that the College is continuing to operate positively; despite ongoing significant challenges.

There was a question if the College has capacity to accommodate new students in the next academic year in tandem with some students finishing their courses. The College has proved to be extremely flexible in response to COVID-19. It will use different working methods next year which will need to include final assessments for this year's students.

A question followed as to what would happen if students fail to achieve results and progress to complete studies in the next academic year which would impact on results and funding. The College will need to facilitate this; however, it was not anticipated that there would be any specific or additional funding support from Government.

Funding has been secured for this academic year noting it is important that the College remains sustainable.

The Deputy Principal explained that item 8 would be addressed within her report. The primary focus has been to deliver remote teaching, learning and assessment to ensure students can make progress and achieve qualifications.

Staff are delivering the theory part of qualifications and supporting students to achieve competences by online/distance learning. Moodle, the engage app, Microsoft Teams and Zoom are being used effectively. c10% of students are not engaging in learning; the majority of these are studying GCSE English, maths and ESOL. Teachers are engaging with students individually to encourage learning.

Ofqual have identified three categories for qualifications and procedures to calculate grades. GCSE and A Levels will be calculated based on students' work up to 20 March 2020. There was a question if AS Levels would follow the same process as A Levels which was confirmed; however, students studying AS Levels are expected to continue their studies to take A Levels in September 2021. Awarding organisations have been requested to adapt models for qualifications with occupational competences requiring a skill to do jobs. Results could be delayed if a face to face assessment is required to award a qualification. Any occupational competence and theory components required for progression to HE as a performance measure will be in place for 2019/20 with an option to adapt or delay assessments.

The Director of Finance explained that COVID-19 had a major impact on the I&E account showing a reduction in income reported in the management accounts to 31 March 2020. The 16-18 and adult education budget (AEB) will continue to be funded this year; the AEB based on the mid-year return. Apprenticeship income is expected to be reduced as it is likely that some apprentices will be furloughed by their employers. Fee income, nursery and refectory income are anticipated to reduce by c£895K as a result of COVID-19. There was discussion about furloughing staff noting guidance on eligibility requires staff to be funded from commercial or grant funded income; only nursery staff are eligible. Savings of c£400K will be required in the current financial year to reduce the financial impact of COVID-19 and the impact on the EBITDA.

The IT infrastructure and team are effectively supporting remote teaching and learning. Staff have been provided with necessary equipment to work remotely.

There is uncertainty about the financial impact of COVID-19 on 2020/21. The cash flow will cushion impact; however, budgeting will be addressed as a priority for next year.

The Director of Personnel updated Governors on personnel, pay and safeguarding. Staff with underlying health conditions or family members with these, or experiencing symptoms had been concerned about COVID-19 during the period before lockdown, with some choosing to self isolate. Regular information was provided, and continues to be provided to staff, with questions answered. Staff liaised with their line managers about arrangements to

work remotely with appropriate equipment. Staff development has been provided online with additional training and regular wellbeing guidance made available. Support is being provided to a minority of staff who find home working difficult. The Staff Governor commented that the IT support is excellent suggesting a user audit on systems being used to identify training needs. The Director of Personnel would discuss this separately.

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Staff recruitment is continuing remotely using assessment centres and online interviews. CMT are planning for the College to reopen with phased returns to work and addressing sundry factors, such as social distancing measures and deep cleaning.

A Governor asked if there were any differences between operations at NSC and HLC or if these were sufficiently integrated. It was confirmed that staff have embraced changes and adapted. Landbased campuses remain open and the nursery at Oswestry is operating a rota with minimal staff. 29 nursery staff have been furloughed, mainly from HLC. Government guidance recommends that staff who are able to complete their jobs continue to be paid. Hourly paid staff are being reviewed with an intention to pay staff hours that have been allocated. The staff budget is being planned for 2020/21.

Safeguarding arrangements have ensured students continue to receive appropriate support with incidents logged on MyConcern. There have been a comparable number of incidents albeit different issues. Vulnerable students (LAC, EHCPs, children in need and protection plans) are being supported with regular contact from social workers and remote support from the College. There has been an increase in domestic abuse incidents nationally during lockdown. Students who are directly affected by domestic abuse are being supported. The College has implemented the appendix to safeguarding policy (item 7) to clarify safeguarding arrangements during the lockdown period.

A Governor asked if the College is liaising with students identified as vulnerable with little or no formal support to identify if these students are engaging in learning. Governors were reassured that students are being monitored with additional support provided.

- II. The KPIs had previously been discussed by the Q&S Committee.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the Principal's report, COVID-19 briefings and KPIs
- To record appreciation to CMT and all staff, particularly the IT team, who had supported staff to ensure the College remains operational
- To focus on planning and the College's sustainability for

*Decision*

**4. Finance**

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the Tuition Fee and Remission Policy 2020/21 as recommended by the F&E Committee

**5. Quality**

The Board agreed: -

- To accept the Quality Improvement Plan discussed by the Q&S Committee

**6. Governance**

The Board agreed: -

- To appoint Cllr Bowen for a 1-year term in office as a Co-opted Member of the Audit Committee.
- To complete the Governors' self assessment questionnaire benchmarked with West Midlands Colleges

**7. Personnel**

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the COVID-19 appendix to HLNSC Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The following reports were presented for information with specific points recorded.

**8. Awarding Qualifications 2020**

The Deputy Principal had addressed this in item 3.

**9. Risk Management and Risk Register**

The Audit Committee had discussed risks showing that the COVID-19 pandemic was the highest risk which impacted on numerous areas.

**10. Management Accounts to 31 March 2020**

A Governor asked the reason that the College's bid to the LEP to develop Pound Farm had been unsuccessful. The bid was subject to a competitive process.

**11. Learner Voice Feedback**

Noted.

**12. Minutes from Committees - noted**

- I. Finance and Employment Committee: 18 March 2020
- II. Audit Committee: 30 March 2020
- III. Search and Governance Committee: 1 April 2020
- IV. Quality and Standards Committee: 1 April 2020

**13. Reports from Committees**

- I. Health and Safety Report
- II. Staff Report
- III. Safeguarding and Child Protection Report
- IV. Equality and Diversity Report

**14. College Events 2020**

It was unlikely that student awards events would be held, however, alternative online celebrations would be arranged as an alternative.

**15. Any other business and comments**

- I. The Chair thanked everyone for their time and joining the meeting remotely which had been successful. Governors were invited to send comments to the Clerk so that options to use for future remote meetings could be explored; this could include MS Teams.
- II. Appreciation was recorded to the Principal, CMT and staff for working tirelessly to ensure teaching and learning continues to be delivered to students.

**16. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 7 July 2020 with Governors' Workshop commencing at 2.30 pm followed by the Board Meeting at 4.00 pm. Arrangements would be determined subject to lockdown restrictions.

[Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for the confidential agenda]

**Signed as a true record of proceedings**

**Chair:** ..... **Date:** .....