

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 12 MARCH 2021 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:

Lillian Croston	Chair
Paul Levet	Vice Chair
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Mark Allanson	Member
Geoff Disley	Academic Staff Governor
Paul Fleming	Member
Ram Gupta	Member
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Chris Johnson	Member
Michael Lee	Business Support Staff Governor
Paul Morris	Member
Glenys Pashley-Crawford	Member
Roger Spensley	Member
Brooklyn Spiers	FE Student Governor

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jennifer Eastham	Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services
Nicola Clayton	Director: Business Development and External Engagement
Jean Tracy	Clerk to the Corporation

The meeting started at 14:04pm and was quorate.

The Chair welcomed Ram Gupta to the meeting, noting that his appointment to the Board would be covered later in the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Kathryn Lord, Arif Patel and Steve Waggott.

2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair advised those in attendance that should members of the Corporation Board become aware of any potential conflicts of interest, they should be disclosed at the earliest opportunity during the meeting.

It was noted that some potential conflicts of interest would occur during the meeting and that the relevant Governor would be asked to leave the meeting whilst the related agenda items were being discussed. In these cases, the members had not received a copy of the paper nor any relevant minutes.

3. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETINGS HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2020 AND 24 FEBRUARY 2021

The Board was reminded that the minutes of the Extraordinary Board meeting held on 29 January 2021 had been accepted as a true and correct record at the meeting held on 24 February 2021. The minutes of the Corporation Board meetings held on 11 December 2020 and 24 February 2021 were **ACCEPTED** as a true and accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no other matters arising, the Board having noted the status of actions from the previous meeting.

5. BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS / RE-APPOINTMENTS

Board members were reminded of the recent election process for the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporation Board. One nomination for each position had been received – Lillian Croston for Chair of the Corporation Board and Paul Levet for Vice Chair of the Corporation Board. Both members' term of office would expire on 31 March 2021 and thus their continued membership of the Board was considered, the Board noting the recommendation from the Governance Panel on their re-appointment.

The Board also noted the outcome of the recent elections for the Business Support Staff and Academic Staff Governors and that as no nominations had been received by the deadline for the Academic Staff Governor vacancy, the election process would be repeated.

Having considered the above and noting the recommendations from the Governance Panel on appointment/re-appointment to the Board, the Board **APPROVED** the appointments of the following, the terms of office being until 31 March 2024. Board members did not take any part in the discussion/vote regarding their own re-appointment.

- (i) Lillian Croston as:
 - a. Member of the Board
 - b. Chair of the Corporation Board
 - c. Chair of Governance Panel and Student Voice Committee
 - d. Member of Learning and Quality Committee and Remuneration Committee

- (ii) Paul Levet as:
 - a. Member of the Board
 - b. Vice Chair of the Corporation Board
 - c. Chair of Policy and Resources Committee and Remuneration Committee
 - d. Member of Governance Panel

- (iii) Michael Lee as:
 - a. Member of the Board – Business Support Staff Governor
 - b. Member of Policy and Resources Committee

- (iv) Ram Gupta as:
 - a. Member of the Board
 - b. Member of Learning and Quality Committee

The Board also noted the recommendation of Governance Panel and **APPROVED** the appointment of:

- (v) Glenys Pashley Crawford as:
 - a. Member of Student Voice Committee.

The Board was reminded of the resignation of Shru Morris and that the Governance Panel was looking to fill the full and co-opted vacancies on Audit Committee. Paul Fleming had been approached and had kindly agreed to take on membership of the Committee as a temporary measure. The Board **APPROVED** the appointment of Paul Fleming as a temporary member of Audit Committee.

The Chair thanked the Board for the continued support but noted that she would not wish to be re-appointed for a further term of office and requested that Board members consider whether they would wish to take on the role of Chair and/or Vice Chair in the future.

6. (i) **PROBATIONARY REVIEWS**

The Board noted the recommendation of Governance Panel and **APPROVED** the continued membership of the Board and relevant Committees of Paul Morris, Glenys Pashley-Crawford and Arif Patel. It was noted that in all cases, the term of office was to 31 March 2023.

(ii) **RE-APPOINTMENT OF LILLIAN CROSTON AND PAUL LEVET**

Minuted under Item 5 above.

(iii) **RAM GUPTA**

Minuted under Item 5 above.

(iv) **GLENYS PASHLEY-CRAWFORD – STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE**

Minuted under Item 5 above.

(iv) **PAUL FLEMING – AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Minuted under Item 5 above.

7. (i) **APPOINTMENT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AUDITORS / EXTERNAL AUDITORS FOR 2020/21 YEAR END**

The Board considered the paper and on the recommendation of Audit Committee, **AGREED** that the appointment of BDO as financial statements auditors be extended for a further year and **APPROVED** the proposed fee increase which would be restricted to Consumer Price Index (CPI) only.

8. (i) **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – 31 JANUARY 2021**

The Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services presented the Management Accounts up to the period ending 31 January 2021, these having been considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2021.

The Board **APPROVED** the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 January 2021 as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee.

(ii) **HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE – INCLUDING THE UPDATED HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE POLICY 2021**

The Board considered the Report which provided information on the key health and safety activities during 2020/21, legislative changes (where relevant) and key health and safety risks.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Health, Safety and Welfare Policy 2021, noting that this would now be signed by the Chair of the Corporation Board and the Principal and Chief Executive.

A member of the Board asked if the Policy included reference to mental health and wellbeing. The Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services replied that College related policies were referenced in the Health and Safety Policy and that reference to the mental health and wellbeing would be included in the Policy going forward. The Board was also referred to the Health and Safety Awareness update for Governors which had been circulated to all members by the Clerk to the Corporation and which had been uploaded to the Governors' Portal.

9. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked Board members for their attendance at the recent additional Board meetings.

The Chair had been into College, subject to Covid-19 restrictions, and was aware that all staff – management, teaching and support – had been working extra hard to cope with the changes which Covid had brought. She had undertaken a number of digital learning walks to gain first hand experience of the good practice in online delivery. All the sessions had been excellent and students were very positive about their experience. Further learning walks were planned to enable visits to a cross-section of delivery levels.

The Chair informed the Board on the Lateral Flow Testing which was now taking place, it being noted that over 1700 tests had been completed since the return to face-to-face teaching. The Chair extended her thanks to all those involved.

The Chair also provided a brief update on the strategic leadership programmes to which she and the Principal and Chief Executive were enrolled.

10. REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Principal and Chief Executive thanked the Chair for her comments, noting that all staff had worked to support each other and, more importantly, the students. Governor involvement in learning walks was welcomed, it being important that Governors were aware of the quality of education.

The Principal and Chief Executive then presented his Report which included the challenges over the last 12 months around the lack of IT and work space poverty; it being noted that the College had provided over 720 IT devices to staff and students. In addition, all managers had routinely contacted staff to check on their welfare and to provide support where appropriate.

The Report also provided information on the changes to learning sequencing, the structured approach to ensure full engagement and appropriate progress and the quality assurance processes in place to validate engagement and progress. The Report also provided information on retention, attendance, the process on which student outcomes would be based, value added and apprenticeship provision.

Further information was provided in relation to Higher Education and covered retention, the focus on student outcomes with timely intervention to provide additional support and the current position with regard to participation in the National Student Survey (NSS). The Board noted the proposed appointment of an Assistant Principal: Higher Education in the latter part of the academic year. The Board was reminded that a review of the Higher Education portfolio was also ongoing and would, as previously agreed, be shared with Learning and Quality Committee before being brought to the Corporation Board.

The Report also provided the Board with an overview of the financial position, full details being contained in the other reports presented to the Board, and the meetings held by the Principal and Chief Executive with staff and students.

Board members were reminded that the College had received a virtual follow up visit from the FE Commissioner's office. The outcome of the visit resulted in three of the recommendations from the previous visit being completed with one recommendation ongoing. A paper covering the ongoing recommendation would be presented to the July Board.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

The Report also provided an update on the FE White Paper: Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, this having been the discussion item for the Governors' Seminar Follow Up meeting which been held that morning.

A member of the Board asked what promotional activities had been undertaken to showcase the College's response to the Covid-19 lockdown and whether the College entered awards to recognise the developments and the work of the staff. The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that such activities had taken place and that the College did enter national competitions, whilst acknowledging that more could be done.

The Principal and Chief Executive, in answer to a question from a member of the Board, provided an update on the work which the College was currently undertaking to launch a programme which would increase the opportunities for our students to gain exposure to a number of employers to prepare for the world of work. The College was also in contact with local employers to find out what skills, beyond the qualification, they would want from their future employees – and which the College could provide. The College was also in contact with a number of alumni and would be looking to increase the opportunities for them to work with current students, this work having been impacted by the lockdown.

11. COVID-19 UPDATE: QUALITY, FINANCE AND BUSINESS OPERATIONS

The Report provided an update on the impact of Covid-19 on College business, as previously requested by the Board. The Report had also been considered by Learning and Quality Committee and Policy and Resources Committee at meetings held in February 2021 and March 2021 respectively.

The Board noted that a number of items had already been covered – including the Lateral Flow Testing (LFT). The Principal and Chief Executive expressed his thanks to Nicola Cunningham who, with the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services, had led of the LFT process.

The Board noted the information provided in the Report on the organisational impact, the financial position and the impact on recruitment of Covid-19.

12. STAFF GOVERNORS' REPORT

The Business Support Staff Governor presented the Report which covered the return to on-campus delivery and the need to re-integrate students to a different College life which included social distancing and other Covid-19 related requirements.

A number of changes to curriculum delivery had been made and it was suggested that an in-depth review be undertaken; this would help to identify what worked well and would also be of value in possible changes to delivery models to suit the needs of employers going forward. Such a review was welcomed and a member of the Board commented that this would be of benefit were the local area be subject to future interventions linked to Covid-19.

The Vice Chair of the Corporation Board asked for information on staff morale. The Academic Staff Governor replied that staff had received good peer support from colleagues. Some staff

had found working at home difficult, most were happy to be back in College and with the steps taken in College to ensure a safe working environment. In answer to a question from a member of the Board, it was confirmed that signage in the College in relation to social distancing, wearing of face masks, etc. was good.

13. STUDENT GOVERNORS' REPORT

The Report had been written by the HE Student Governor and included a comment on the inability to open windows in some classrooms which could make the wearing of masks uncomfortable. The Board was informed that such classrooms were linked to the College ventilation system and that all necessary requirements were satisfied. It was also confirmed that there were no restrictions on students using facilities in another area of the College to that where they would normally be taught.

Due to internet connection problems, the FE Student Governor was unable to add further comment.

14. GOVERNOR CHAMPIONS' UPDATE

(i) HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Health and Safety Governor Champion commented that the College Health and Safety Committee had been extremely busy as a result of Covid-19 and credit was given to the relevant College staff on the progress that had been made and for those attending far more meetings that would normally be the case.

(ii) SAFEGUARDING/SEND

The Safeguarding and SEND Governor Champion informed the Board that she attended regular briefings with the Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement in addition to the College Safeguarding Committee meetings. Additional measures had been put in place as a result of the pandemic but the Assistant Principal was aware that other issues should also be dealt with as necessary. The Governor Champion confirmed that she was very assured in the way in which safeguarding and SEND were approached and that students were appropriately supported.

(iii) EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Board was reminded that the Equality and Diversity Governor Champion had only just been appointed and there was therefore nothing to report at this time.

(iv) CAREERS

The Careers Governor Champion mentioned the work being done in College and the regular contact with College staff. The Board received regular reports on careers, the careers strategy and on progress against the Gatsby benchmarks.

(v) TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

The Chair noted that the items on Student Voice Committee provided an update.

15. STRATEGIC PLAN 2019/2022 – ANNUAL OPERATING STATEMENT

The Report provided the Board with an update regarding the progress towards the Strategic Plan targets for 2020/21. Of the 25 targets for 2020/21, 3 were on target, 10 were on target in part, 2 were under target and 10 were not yet reportable. The Board again noted that the impact of Covid-19 in 2019/20 had resulted in a number of projects not progressing as quickly as

planned and thus a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been severely affected. An explanation of each had been covered elsewhere on the agenda.

In answer to a question from the Chair, it was noted that the first possible launch date for T Levels at the College was now September 2023, this being because of the College's current Ofsted grade.

The College was also asked whether the training with the Alps Connect team had taken place. *Post meeting update: The external training was delayed and so the Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic) delivered online training on Alps Connect to all Curriculum Leads and Heads of School. An advanced training session delivered by Alps would be arranged towards the end of the academic year.*

A member of the Board requested information on the acronyms used in the Report. It was **AGREED** that a glossary would be included in future reports.

Action: Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services

The College was asked whether a recovery plan was in place for those instances where targets were not being met. The Board was confirmed that this was the case and a brief update on the plans was provided. The College also provided information on the work being done to promote the programmes which were available to help those in hardship to find employment/gain skills.

The Corporation Board **RECEIVED** the Report on the Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators 2020/21.

16. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2020/21

The paper listed performance against the shortened list of 24 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) monitored by the Board, it being noted that the full list had been reviewed by Policy and Resources Committee and Learning and Quality Committee.

Of the 24 KPIs, 4 were on target, 5 on target in part, 2 under target and 12 were not reportable/no longer relevant. The Board noted that the KPIs covering GCSE English and maths pass rates and commercial income were under target and that it would be unlikely that the target would be achieved.

In answer to a comment from a member of the Board, the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services informed the Board of the additional funding for 16-19 tuition which would be used for 'catch up', to provide additional teaching sessions, for example. The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Board that the College was working particularly closely with those students in the bottom quartile and agreed with the need to re-engage with all students.

17. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) REPORTS

(i) OFS INITIAL AND ONGOING CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION UPDATE

The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) joined the meeting to present the Report, noting that it had also been considered by Learning and Quality Committee at its meeting on 11 February 2021. The Report provided an update on the College's performance on its Office for Students (OfS) Improvement Plan to address student outcomes. Information on the current performance against the internal targets and OfS baseline metrics was noted, and that current performance was above the OfS baseline metrics.

A member of the Board welcomed the improvements but noted that there was still more to do, also noting that the OfS baselines were low. The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) agreed that more improvements were required and informed the Board that the College was looking

closely at those programmes which were of concern to ensure the College had the right offer and the right interventions where necessary.

The Chair of the Corporation Board referred to Table 3 (page 12 of 35) and the review of entry criteria and requested that information be provided on the detail of the entry criteria. It was **AGREED** that this information would be provided to Learning and Quality Committee at its meeting on 17 June 2021.

Action: Head of Quality and Standards (HE)

A member of the Board commented that the full details on entry criteria were not required in the Action Plan, rather that the College was making sure that students could study and that support was available as required. In receiving the Report, the Board was not giving a clean bill of health and members were aware that there was much work to be done.

The Principal and Chief Executive concurred with the views expressed and confirmed that students would be enrolled with integrity and the necessary support would be provided. He informed the Board that academic staff were taking clear ownership of their students, including the provision of extra sessions and support to ensure successful outcomes.

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee referred to the review of the HE portfolio which would be reported to Learning and Quality Committee and to the Board at the meetings in June and July 2021 respectively.

(ii) ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN – MONITORING RETURN

The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Board that the College had now received communication from OfS on the information they required. As a result, amendments to the Access and Participation Plan were needed. The Board was reminded that the deadline for return was 16 April 2021 and that once completed, reports would be made to Learning and Quality Committee and to the Board.

18. FE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN: 2020/21

The Head of Quality of Education was unable to attend the meeting and therefore the Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report.

The Report provided an update on the actions included within the FE College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020/21, it being noted that a number of issues were also covered elsewhere on the agenda. The Principal and Chief Executive highlighted the significant support from the Quality Leads and quality team to improve approaches to student engagement, particularly for English and maths staff. Teacher assessed grades would be used for 2020/21; additional coaching was in place and the College was working to improve its value added scores in order that the College be in the top quartile. It was noted that the examination results would show the impact of the actions in the QIP.

A member of the Board asked if there was any update on a potential Ofsted visit. The Principal and Chief Executive replied that formal Ofsted inspections would not take place before 1 September 2021 and that monitoring visits for Grade 3 and Grade 4 colleges had stopped. However, Ofsted was to test the current Ofsted Handbook with educational providers across the country to test the validity of the current Education Inspection Framework (EIF). A member of the Board commented that the focus of future inspections would likely be on new providers delivering apprenticeships.

19. HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE – 31 JANUARY 2021

The Report provided a summary of core HR data sets for the period 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021, and where appropriate, monitoring data against the protected characteristics as defined within the Equality Act 2010. It was noted that the Report had been considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2021.

Headline information included College headcount, gender and BAME, disability, staff turnover, absence and sickness levels and case management.

20. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2020/21 – HALF YEAR TO JANUARY 2021

The Director of Business Development and External Engagement presented the Report, it being noted that the Report had been considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2021. The Report provided a summary of the Organisational Development activity for the period 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021 and an overview of progress to date in key development areas.

Key issues were identified in the Report and the Board noted the information provided on appraisal completion rates, and that this was behind because of the restructure in HE. Support and additional training were in place and appraisals in HE would be completed by the end of February 2021. The continued focus on staff development had been to establish and embed a strong knowledge of online and blended learning, awareness of key technologies, and keeping students engaged with online learning during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Information on the staff satisfaction results was contained in the Report, the Board noting the low return of evaluations and thus the impact of the negative responses to externally provided training and the work being undertaken to improve the response rates. The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Board that an allstaff survey would be undertaken and that this would be nationally benchmarked and compared to the College survey which was undertaken two years ago. The Principal and Chief Executive requested that this be kept confidential at this stage.

21. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Chair approved minutes off the following Committee meetings were received for information:

- (i) Audit Committee – 23 February 2021
- (ii) Governance Panel – 26 November 2020 and 11 February 2021
- (iii) Learning and Quality – 26 November 2020 and 11 February 2021
- (iv) Policy and Resources – 30 November 2020 and 1 March 2021
- (v) Student Voice – 18 November 2020 and 10 February 2021

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee commented that FE performance was generally good and that retention had improved. However, the challenges re English and maths and Higher Education remained.

The Chair of the Corporation Board informed the Board that she had attended the Student Voice Committee meetings and reported that the students were very positive and had commented favourably on the support from staff. She had been impressed by the way in which the students had expressed themselves and issues raised during the meetings were followed up in the College.

22. SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE CHECK

The Corporation Board **RECEIVED** the Report which provided the Board with a summary in relation to safeguarding arrangements. The Report had been considered by Learning and

Quality Committee at its meeting on 11 February 2021 and confirmed that the College continued to prioritise safeguarding arrangements for students across all aspects of provision. Effective internal structures and processes supported statutory expectations and promoted positive external agency interventions. The Assurance Brief was also provided.

23. BLACKBURN COLLEGE HIGHER EDUCATION SELF-EVALUATION DOCUMENT 2019/20

The Report presented for information, covered the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) for the Higher Education provision at the College and evaluated performance against the 13 core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Learning and Quality Committee had considered the Report at its meeting on 11 February 2021.

24. FE COMMISSIONER'S LETTER TO CHAIRS AND PRINCIPALS – 22 FEBRUARY 2021

The Report provided an update on the revised set of financial benchmarks that colleges would be measured against going forward. The detail of the changes and the rationale for these changes was covered in the FE Commissioner's letter.

The Report had been considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2021 and the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that none of the revised benchmarks would present a challenge to the College.

25. STREAMLINED ENERGY AND CARBON REPORTING FOR COLLEGES

The Report provided information on the guidance from the Department for Education which was intended to increase the awareness of energy costs within colleges and to provide data to inform the adoption of energy efficiency measures to help reduce the impact on climate change.

26. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE 2020/21

The College had been allocated a £893k Further Education capital grant. The Report provided information on the projects completed and underway, it being noted that the College expected to fully expend the grant by the 31 March 2021 deadline.

The full rebranding and relaunch of the Sixth Form Centre had been expanded to include the remodelling of the ground floor circulation space and to create access from Blakey Moor. A tender process to deal with the 'floating roof' was due to go out to tender in March, with the project completed by the end of August.

An update on the Victoria Building was included under Part II Agenda Item 34.

27. LANCASHIRE COLLEGES HEADLINE BENCHMARKING 2019/20

The Report, which was provided for information, provided detail on the headline benchmarking figures for Lancashire colleges and for two local universities.

A member of the Board commented that it would be useful to receive similar information relating to student outcomes. It was **AGREED** that this information would be provided, noting however, that data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 would not be available because of Covid.

Action: Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services

28. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Business.

16:08 Brooklyn Spiers left the meeting.

29. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Chair thanked College managers for their reports and Governors for their attendance and positive comments.

30. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Corporation Board – Friday 2 July 2021 at 2.00pm via Microsoft Teams.

Signed:

Date: