

**Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on  
Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at 5.00pm**

**Present:** Christine Bampton  
Michelle Brabner (Principal)  
Dyese Bruce  
John Fell  
Veronica Fell (Chair)  
Rob Firth  
Mark Grutters  
Vickie Hayes  
Carla Kennaugh  
Alex Kenny  
Suzanne Knowles  
Mo Kundi  
Jonny Lea  
Kathy Passant  
Carol Reid  
Vipin Trivedi

**In Attendance:** Anne-Marie Francis – Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality  
Eddie Green – Vice Principal Services  
Caroline Jenkinson – Director of Governance  
Jesamine Kelly – Assistant Principal

**Action.**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Board meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

**C.20.84 Item 1: Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Margaret Boneham, Kasraa Mohammadi, Lisa Owens and Katy Robinson.

**C.20.85 Item 2: Declarations of Interest**

A standing declaration of interest was received from Veronica Fell (Chair) as she is married to John Fell.

**C.20.86 Item 3: Minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

Minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

**C.20.87 Item 4: Matters Arising/Actions Summary**

Actions complete and no matters arising that are not included on today's agenda.

**C.20.88 Item 5: Confidential Items**

None.

## **C.20.89 Item 6: Written Resolution**

A written resolution on governance arrangements with regards to COVID-19 and changes to quoracy was approved by the Corporation on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

## **C.20.90 Item 7: Chair's Report**

*Governance note as follows:* The Chair requested that all reports to the Board or any sub committee should include a recommendation request either to “receive and accept” or “to approve”.

The Chair welcomed the Principal to her first Board meeting, noting the unusual circumstances and form of meeting. She offered her sincere thanks to the Principal for the work undertaken since joining the College and for forwarding the regular emails sent to staff during lockdown.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked the senior management team and CMT for their support and work in keeping the college going during the unprecedented times.

The Chair highlighted the following points of note:

- a diagnostic assessment from the ESFA had been discussed and is currently being progressed by the Principal and VP Services
- a supportive letter from the FE Commissioner has been circulated to all governors which emphasised the importance of governors being able to do their job remotely
- discussed with Principal the provision of IT equipment for governors

The Chair advised plans were still in place for a Strategy Day on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May. A shorter day would be planned with the intention of discussing contingency plans for recruitment, strategic objectives and thoughts the new Principal may have on improvements.

## **Item 8: Strategic Issues**

### **C.20.91 Item 8.1: Corporate Performance Interim Report**

The Principal delivered her first Corporate Performance Report. For continuity purposes due to COVID-19 the Principal had decided to follow the format of the previous Principal's report for this report only. She informed the Board her future reports would be prepared in a different way and this was something that would be discussed at the Strategy Day where strategic objectives would be considered.

The Principal noted her appreciation of the support she had received from the senior team since joining the College.

The Principal confirmed enrolments were a key focus of the report and referred to the following:

**16-19** – from a funding perspective the college knows where it is and is cautiously optimistic of meeting targets. It is slightly behind on where it would have been prior to lockdown which is mainly attributed to having to follow the usual enrolment processes, e.g. course discussions, over the telephone

**Adult Education** – due to the current situation there has been an adverse impact on courses ran at this time of year. However the college is well positioned to deal with any increased demand as a result of COVID-19.

**Apprenticeships & HE** – identified as key risk areas. The Principal and VP Services had spoken to the ESFA the previous day on this subject. Southport College is very much in line with other colleges, however it was recognised that there would be an adverse impact in these areas.

With regards to Outcomes the Principal confirmed the VP Curriculum & Quality is currently compiling a guide for governors regarding the process for the establishment of grades.

**VP C&Q**

The college has also got to prepare for potentially having to run competency tests, e.g. for gas fitting students over the summer or autumn.

In response to a governor question the Principal confirmed she was cautiously optimistic with the enrolment figures for 2020/21 and numbers were already looking to be roughly on track. It was also anticipated that the recent Ofsted report would have a positive impact on numbers. Should enrolments show a significant increase the Principal was confident that there was capacity within 16-19 to increase class sizes, rather than increase the number of classes. Increasing class sizes would help the college manage the additional costs of a higher number of students, particularly due to the lagged funding process.

A governor questioned where the college sat within the national rates for highest possible outcomes as shown in paragraph 2.5 of the report. The Principal confirmed there was presently no new data for the college, it was at a stage of gathering grades together. Students could not be told their grades before the usual results day and it was at this point that comparisons with other colleges could be made. There would be no league tables ranking colleges this year.

***The Board resolved to receive and accept the report.***

#### **C.20.92 Item 8.2: COVID-19**

The Principal presented the report and noted the key points:

- no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the College
- 20 staff self isolating due to being within a vulnerable category or living with someone showing symptoms – all still working
- 1 member of staff had symptoms but was still working
- 1 member of staff on sickness leave due to suspected COVID-19
- number of staff/students impacted by bereavement

Learners were still participating in remote activities with varied levels of engagement. The challenge was to keep students interested in learning, particularly those who were no longer required to sit exams.

A focus is on planning for the future with regards to local needs, enrolments, engaging with applicants using video tours around the campus etc.

The financial implications were under close scrutiny with no immediate cash flow issues however there was more possibility of a negative impact in the future.

The Principal acknowledged the way staff had embraced working in a remote way and the positive response from students.

A governor questioned how the college were dealing with the potential increase in violence and domestic abuse at home due to the stress of lockdown. The Principal confirmed the college were maintaining close contact with staff and students. Managers were in regular contact with their staff and teaching support staff with their students. Vulnerable learners all had caseworkers who were in frequent contact. The safeguarding team had made some referrals to external agencies.

The Vice Chair acknowledged it was currently difficult for the college to contact students progressing from L2 to L3, L3 to L4 etc. but queried how the college would ensure students were capable of making the step up to the next level. The Principal emphasised the work undertaken aimed to focus students on the value of learning during this time. The plugging of any gaps in knowledge would be addressed during the new academic year. This issue had already been raised with the ESFA as the college were aware that additional teaching would be required throughout the year to plug these gaps. The same would apply to students joining from schools.

The concerns over any additional costs from this would be considered by the ESFA in conjunction with the AoC.

***The Board resolved to receive and accept the report.***

#### **C.20.93 Item 8.3: Financial Regulations**

The Chair confirmed the report had been considered and discussed at the Resources Committee meeting earlier that afternoon.

The VP Services presented the Financial Regulations and confirmed the updates included a tidy up of wording and annexes in addition to a change previously agreed in October 2019.

***The Board resolved to approve the revised set of Financial Regulations.***

#### **C.20.94 Item 8.4: HE Marketing Strategy 2020/21**

The Assistant Principal presented the report which was an update on last year's document. Points of note:

- HE marketing group meet weekly, college are currently behind where we would want to be, similar to other providers
- marketing manager has widened the campaign area for HE including bus advertising
- considering new ways of attracting existing college students, e.g. recruitment of student ambassadors
- student satisfaction has increased this year.

In response to a governor question the Assistant Principal stated that due to COVID-19 people may consider re-training e.g. in the health sector. In response the college had to ensure a viable offer was available to them. Use of social media, analytics and talking to current students helped form the offer. The Head of HE has also written to all L3 students regarding the HE offer. The college were also looking to encourage more adult male recruitment and progression to post-graduate courses.

In response to a question by the Chair the Assistant Principal confirmed she would be meeting with the Head of Marketing to discuss the production of the website analytics reports.

**Asst Prin**

The Assistant Principal noted the measure of success of recruitment activity would be the conversion of applications to enrolment, which would be shown in reports to Cumbria and UCLan.

The Vice Chair stated that on a macro level COVID-19 was going to change the market for HE and this may require a review of the HE Strategy to ascertain whether our current curriculum offer could meet the needs which had arisen as a result of COVID-19. She noted current L3 students were likely to be in turmoil at this point and this would be an opportunity to target students who hadn't already applied to HE. The Assistant Principal acknowledged this and confirmed all students who had not applied to HE were being tracked, as were students who had applied for apprenticeships which were now not likely to be available to them.

**Asst Prin**

The Chair noted the year on Annex 2 should be amended to 2021/22. She also requested that monitoring of the marketing strategy include a progress column to be added to the action plan to allow progression to be measured. The Principal added including a column with an update on progress so far would identify opportunities to celebrate success and also identify any gaps.

**Asst Prin**

The Vice Chair noted there is also the opportunity in Standards meetings for governors to be updated on HE progress.

***The Board resolved to approve the HE Marketing Strategy for 2020/21.***

#### **C.20.95 Item 9: Accommodation Strategy Update**

The Chair informed the Board that the Resources Committee along with the Principal and VP Services had considered this report at the Resources Committee meeting earlier that day and had recommended its approval to the Board.

The VP Services noted the main item of the report was with regards to the Pennington Building Refurbishment Project and gave a synopsis of the current situation and the consequent inability to deliver the project over the summer due to COVID-19.

He explained 3 potential options for moving the project forward had been considered:

- i. commence in September
- ii. if agreed by the LCR, delay until next year
- iii. split the project into 2 phases - this had effectively been disregarded due to the high risk involved and potential for additional costs

The preferred option was to procure the main contractors by the traditional process and authorise management and the design team to agree a tender shortlist and proceed with a tender. This would negate the requirement for an additional Resources meeting.

In response to a governor question the VP Services explained the traditional method of procurement was used when a project was not subject to OJEU requirements. It was basically managing the tender and shortlisting process 'in-house'.

When asked about the possible employment of local contractors and use of college apprentices on the project the VP Services confirmed the grant agreement ask that the college considered these points and they were taken into account during the process.

***The Board resolved to:***

- i. receive and accept the report for information;
- iii. approve the College's traditional approach to the procurement of a main contractor for the Pennington Project;
- iii. approve management and the design team to agree a tender shortlist and proceed with a tender for a main contractor so long as the pre tender estimate of contract cost is within budget.

**C.20.96 Item 10: Audit Committee – Meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020**

The Board had received draft minutes of the meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020

**Item 11: Resources Committee**

**C.20.97 Item: 11.1: Meetings of 11<sup>th</sup> February, 3<sup>rd</sup> April and 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

The Board had received the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The Chair of Resources gave a verbal update from the meeting earlier that afternoon and noted in particular the separate section on the effects of COVID19 until the summer term which had been produced by the VP Services. This had shown a cost of up to £50k which was offset by a staff saving of £100k. He confirmed the College were approximately in line with the latest projected outcome for this year.

The Chair of Corporation advised that the consultant to run the Pennington Refurbishment Project had been approved at the Resources Committee meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

The Chair of Resources advised governors that the Committee had received two MOT reports this year, the first in February and the second today, and confirmed the Committee were happy with the management teams actions on this. If any governor not on the Committee would like to see the reports they would be forwarded upon request.

**C.20.98 Item 11.2: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures for Senior Post Holders**

This item was deferred until the July meeting. The link governor for HR confirmed he had worked with the Head of Personnel and Payroll on the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures which were now complete. There was a minor point for clarification in the grievance procedures.

**C.20.99 Item 12: Standards Committee – Meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

The Board had received draft minutes of the meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The Chair of Standards highlighted the main points of note from the meeting:

- remitted some student dissatisfaction with [REDACTED] to the Resources Committee
- HE – discussions around holding separate committee meetings for HE or to continue to have it as a separate item on the agenda
- concerns noted regarding attendance and progress, these had been superseded by Ofsted and COVID-19.

**C.20.100 Item 13: Governance Committee - Meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

The Board had received draft minutes of the meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The Chair of Governance noted the minutes had made mention of the use of Microsoft Teams which was now as a result of COVID-19 in regular use.

**C.20.101 Item 14: Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020