

Time: 5.15pm

Venue: Runshaw College (Virtual Meeting held via MS Teams)

Present: Warren Middleton (Chairman), Yvonne Bradshaw, Jo Venn, Andy Pratt, Simon Partington (Principal), Joshi Jariwala, , Alison Watson-Bird, Stephen Gregson, Ella Lawrenson, Jacqui Chatwood, Martina Jay, Jessica Gill, Robert Cobourne, Pam Pye

In Attendance Clare Russell (Deputy Principal), Wendy Higgin (Interim Deputy Principal), Janet Ivill (Director of Finance), Fatema Hussein (Head of Governance), Pauline Odulinski (Observer)

Meeting began 5.15pm

Meeting closed 8.00pm

Attendance 100%

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

The new staff Governor Robert Cobourne was welcomed and introduced to the meeting.

Pauline Odulinski was welcomed to the meeting in her role as Observer.

2. Declarations of Interest

Governors were invited to declare any direct, indirect, pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interest relating to any item on the agenda for the meeting

There were no declarations made

3. Minutes of The Meeting Held on 18th May 2020 & 4th June 2020

3.1 Approval of the Minutes

Agreed that: the minutes are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication (Part 1).

3.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The action progress log was reviewed and it was noted that most of the actions had been completed.

4. Corporation Committee Meeting Minutes

The Board received reports from the Committee meetings and the following points were noted:

4.1 Finance Committee Minutes 24 June 2018

- The management accounts had been reviewed and it had confirmed that a year-end surplus of £180,000 was forecast with Good financial health status being maintained
- Written confirmation had been received from Barclays regarding the variation to the bank covenant
- Management had been requested to consider an alternative scenario for the 2020/21 budget
- The Fees and Treasury Management policies had been reviewed and approved
- It had been noted that further savings had been generated from procurement activities undertaken this year

Treasury Management Policy - Risk Spread

The Director of Finance reported that the risk spread / credit exposure had been reviewed as requested by the Committee. There was £1million on deposit in a single account with the remainder having been spread across several easy access accounts so that cash could be moved quickly if required. The policy would be reviewed again in September.

4.2 Remuneration and Organisational Development Committee Minutes 17 June 2020

- A separate Remuneration Committee had been established and would meet in the Autumn term
- College had been successfully managing the transition to remote working, and continuing to provide support for staff mental health and wellbeing
- There was regular communication with staff in order to prepare them for their eventual return to work.
- Clarification had been received from management regarding professional indemnity insurance for staff who undertook paid external work on behalf of the College
- The home working policy had been reviewed and approved
- The Succession Planning data had been considered and it had been noted that 77% of management posts had an identified successor compared to the overall target of 80%

Governor Questions

Q. What was the outcome of the discussions with the college insurers in relation to the professional indemnity cover?

A. The insurers had confirmed that as long as this work was conducted on behalf of the College, and generated a revenue stream, then the College's professional indemnity insurance would be applicable. As the College encouraged senior staff to undertake Ofsted duties in their normal working time and received revenue from Ofsted (even though this was then paid directly to the individual via PAYE), they were covered. This applied equally to Examiners/Moderators. The College encouraged staff to undertake these duties during normal working time which generated a revenue stream, as the College received Teacher Release Fees

4.3 Standards and Curriculum Committee Minutes 19 June 2020

- The Committee had received a report on the outcome of the external review of Apprenticeship provision
- An update on online learning had been provided which included feedback from staff and students
- The Curriculum delivery plans for September had been discussed including how students would be supported with re-establishing study habits and the provision of support to vulnerable students and those in receipt of free college meals.
- The Annual Reports had been reviewed and it had been noted that the Student Services area of the College had continued to support students and responded to COVID 19 by providing a number of on line services for students

4.4 Audit Committee Minutes 16 June 2020 Part 1

- The follow up on the Safeguarding audit actions and additional testing by Mazars had provided the Committee with the necessary assurance that all recommendations had been addressed by management
- The Ofsted readiness and Apprenticeship compliance audits had both received substantial assurance opinions
- Assurance had been given by Mazars that Covid19 had not had an impact on the internal audit plan progress
- The impact of Covid19 was to be considered when scoping each audit
- The 2020/21 Internal Audit plan had been agreed and blended learning efficacy would be included as part of the mock inspection
- The external audit of College accounts to 31/07/20 would take into account the impact of Covid 19 on Bank covenants and Going Concern opinion

4.5 Search and Governance Committee Minutes 19 June 2020

- The membership and Terms of Reference for the Covid 19 Governance and Leadership group had been reviewed and included on the agenda for approval
- The Committee was recommending that new Board members served a maximum of 2 terms of office (8 years)
- The governance QIP had been reviewed and updated
- Corporation Standing Orders and the Governor Code of conduct were reviewed and updated and included on the agenda for approval

5 Principal's Report

The Principal's report to the Board covered the following topics; College response to Covid19, stakeholder satisfaction, political news, and curriculum matters, Finance and HR.

The following points were highlighted from the report:

- The results of the latest student survey were positive with an average satisfaction rating of 8.5 out of 10
- College had recorded its highest ever satisfaction rating for the staff survey
- Some suggestions had been made for blended learning and every Teacher was to be provided with a laptop to support this
- High risks were being pro-actively managed and some key decisions would need to be taken in the next six or seven weeks in relation to the latest Government guidance on September opening
- The decisions that were taken could have a significant impact on recruitment and finances in September

- Transport was one of the key considerations in planning for the September opening as most students used the College bus service

Governor Questions

- Q.** The Covid 19 crisis has meant that a great deal of progress on the reduced use of plastic has been curtailed. Have we got any other contributions to the environmental agenda to make, i.e. could more students/staff make use of bicycles and had any incentive been provided to do so?
- A.** The tax friendly “cycle to work” scheme had recently been extended to allow the purchase of cycles up to the value of £1000, bringing electric bikes into the price range. College provides “cycle rack” facilities for students
- Q.** The vulnerable/looked after students are the most disadvantaged and it is noted that they can attend the College if they wish. What incentives have been put in place to encourage them to do so?
- A.** When the country went into lockdown in March, the DFE guidance was that colleges must make it possible for vulnerable students (and sons/daughters of key workers) to come into College, “but if they can study at home, then they should do so”. The College safeguarding and study support teams had been in (at least) weekly contact with all vulnerable learners. For 2020-21 College was planning for students on pre-advanced courses to be on campus at a higher frequency than A Level students (if a blended learning model is in place); and a high proportion of vulnerable learners were on the pre-advanced programme
- Q.** Had any progress been made on the Catch up Fund being made available to Colleges?
- A.** At the moment, FE colleges would not be able to access this funding
- Q.** AAT has been a Key Issue and what was the likely impact of the lockdown on this course?
- A.** There has been pleasing evidence of improved teaching on AAT this year
- Q.** Did the June internal enrolment for vocational courses go as planned and were numbers as expected? Was an update available on early on-line enrolment for new students?
- A.** Yes, this had taken place and numbers were very pleasing. Early enrolment for new students had also taken place with 2573 students already “enrolled” against a target of 2660

6 Summary of current plans for 2020-21

The Deputy Principal Clare Russell provided an update on the current plans for 2020/21 and the following points were noted:

- Year 10 and 11 recruitment events were being delivered online with some new events having been developed
- Q&A video sessions had been made available to prospective new students
- Enrolment for September would be a two stage process with students enrolling in June and confirming their place in August
- College was seeking to move the August enrolment session to online as far as possible
- A range of blended learning models were being considered to meet the needs of particular curriculum areas
- Bus services were now planned to run for 5 days a week instead of 3 days as previously proposed, and plans for this were still evolving
- Students may be put into “bubbles” in some vocational areas, in order to allow for more on-campus learning while limiting contact

- For adult students, most learning was likely to be online
- The plan was to be discussed further at the Covid Governance & Leadership Group meeting later in the week

Governor Questions

Q. What were the reasons for switching the bus operation to 5 days instead of 3?

A. This was due to financial considerations as the reduction in the bus contract to 3 days week would not lead to a 40% reduction in price. However, transport was a key financial risk if the required number of students did not purchase a bus pass

Governors agreed that a low uptake of bus passes could have adverse financial implications for the College and an assessment of the projected uptake needed to be undertaken.

Q. How would the GCSE results be validated if prospective students self-entered them online?

A. Students would be requested to take photographs of their certificates and send them in. Where there was any doubt as to their authenticity, students would need to bring them into College

Q. What was the College's responsibility to current leavers who opted to take the exam option instead of accepting the Centre Assessment grade?

A. The responsibility was to invigilate and provide space for the exam to be taken in. It was anticipated that the demand for this would be quite low as Universities were being reasonable with entry requirements

7. Student Governor Presentation

The Student Governors delivered a presentation to the Board on the student experience at Runshaw. The presentation focussed on what students liked about Runshaw, areas for further development and improvements that had been implemented since last year.

Governor Questions

Q. Were there areas re improvement that need to be discussed further?

A. The Student Governors have made several good suggestions/questions, all of which are worthy of further exploration (or an explanatory response)

In response to the suggestion that had been made about the politics course, a Governor suggested that students could organise online debates to support the work undertaken in class.

Q. Would there be any benefit in Governors having feedback from students on a more frequent basis?

A. This could be beneficial and could be done at the end of every term

A Governor suggested that feedback could be provided via the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

ACTION:

Head of Governance to include as a standing item on the Standards & Curriculum agenda

Board members thanked the Student Governors for a very informative presentation.

It was noted that this was Ella Lawrenson's last meeting as Student Governor and the Board thanked her for her contribution and passed on their good wishes for the future.

8. Financial Planning - Review and Approval of 2020/21 Budget

The Director of Finance presented the budget proposals for 2020/21 and explained that:

- The budget had been presented in a slightly different format due to a change in ESFA reporting requirements
- 80% of the projected income was secured as this was the lagged funding for 16-18 learners
- Due to the current situation re Covid, it would not be possible to meet the road map targets
- A £633,000 deficit in income was forecast for the next year with H.E. income the biggest risk
- Apprenticeship income was also a key risk
- The proposed budget would ensure that Good financial health status was maintained
- There was no provision for a pay award as it would be dependent on enrolments in September
- A contingency provision of £500,000 had been included
- The Finance Committee had suggested that it would be prudent to prepare an alternative budget scenario to take account of the anticipated economic downturn and the impact this could have on the number of Apprenticeship starts
- An alternative scenario based on 25% new Apprenticeship starts had therefore been provided
- This scenario would result in an almost break even budget

Governor Questions

Q. What was the likelihood of a no pay award?

A. There were significant (Covid 19 related) risks to income and costs next year. A significant “contingency pot” had been set aside to cover some of those risks. By October, College should have a much better idea as to whether a pay award was affordable in January 2021

Q. Why is the T level Pilot such a small class size? Is this a function of T Levels, or the Pilot?

A. T-Levels are new and have therefore not yet established a well-understood “street value”. Hopefully, in a couple of years, they will become much better known and interest in them will rise rapidly

Q. Can anything be done to improve the Function Skills English Contribution?

A. In relation to Functional Skills English (for Adult learners), we are planning to deliver these courses on-line next year. By removing the need to attend in person, we are hoping that this will make the course available to a wider audience

Q. What’s the latest position with Barclays re the covenant amendment? Have we got the signed confirmation yet?

A. It was confirmed that the variation had been confirmed in writing

Q. At what point would the loan covenant and financial health become an issue next year?

A. College could drop to a £400,000 deficit before this became a concern

The Chair of the Finance Committee reported that:

- Committee members had debated the risks and assumptions that had been made in developing the budget and agreed that a £500,000 contingency was sufficient to address any unexpected variances in income and expenditure next year
- It had been agreed that the impact of Covid19 on businesses needed to be taken into account

- There could be a significant drop in the number of businesses that may still be operating next year
- An alternative proposal based on 25% new Apprenticeship starts had therefore been proposed

RESOLVED:

The Board agreed that due to the economic uncertainty, a more prudent approach was adopted and that a break even budget based on 25% new starts was approved as this would still ensure that the key financial health criteria were met

9. Review and Approval of 2020-21 Strategic Plan

The Principal Designate Clare Russell explained that:

- The key priorities in the strategic plan had been agreed before the lockdown
- The high level strategic goals which were; Excellence Everywhere, Development of External Partnerships, and Estates & Facilities were still relevant
- The proposed College theme of “Changing lives in Changing Times was still appropriate
- However, a one- year short term plan had been introduced in some Colleges in light of Covid 19

Q. Could the Governors’ plan to look at establishing a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy be incorporated into the appropriate chapter within the plan?

A. Further improving stakeholder engagement has been identified as one of the top 3 key college goals for next year, so perhaps it could be given an even higher profile within the Principal’s termly reports to governors in 2020-21

Q. Does there need to be anything regarding Safeguarding/Mental Health Support following the Covid situation and College closure?

A. Student Mental health is covered in Chapter 6.2 and staffing will be further strengthened in the safeguarding/counselling/mental health team next year

A Governor suggested that an addendum which took the impact of Covid 19 into account was added to the plan

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Strategic Plan 2020/21 but agreed that an addendum was added following further discussion at the September Board meeting

ACTION:

- Principal / Addendum the plan
- Head of Governance / Board Agenda

10. Coronavirus Governance & Leadership Group

10.1 Approval / Confirmation of Membership for the Governance & Leadership Group

10.2 Approval of Terms of Reference for the Governance & Leadership Group

The Head of Governance reported that the membership and draft Terms of Reference for the task and finish group had been reviewed by the Search & Governance Committee and recommended for approval.

Governor Questions

Q. Do the Terms of Reference need to include overseeing that College was meeting Government requirements wherever possible, and if the group agreed that this was not possible, to then document why not, and actions taken instead?

A. Agreed, that this should be included

Q. The Covid task group has no student voice on it. How can this be incorporated?

A. This could be considered when the Group met on 8th July

A Governor suggested that the overall responsibility for the College re-opening plan still rested with the Board, and as this was not a formal Board Committee, some flexibility to the Terms of Reference was considered.

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the membership of the Task and Finish group and agreed that the Terms of Reference were further reviewed at the Group's first meeting

ACTION:

Head of Governance / Task & Finish Group agenda

11. Governor Terms of Office

The Head of Governance advised that Governors at Runshaw were currently eligible to serve a maximum of three four year terms (12 years in total). However, the majority of F.E. colleges appointed for a maximum of two terms. The AOC Code of Good Governance also recommended a maximum of two terms unless there were exceptional circumstances where it could be extended.

Governor Questions

Q. Did the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee mean that Governors appointed from 1st September 2020 will not be able to serve beyond two terms even in exceptional circumstances? What is the proposed position for current Governors appointed as Board members prior to 1st September 2020?

A. Any new Governors appointed from 1 September would in the majority of cases serve two terms of office and only serve a third term in very exceptional circumstances. Current Governors appointed before 1 September 2020 would be able to serve three terms of office as this would allow time for succession plans to be developed and implemented

Q. Did the maximum terms of office for Co-opted members need to be included in the standing orders?

A. The three maximum terms of office did not apply to Co-opted Members and additional clarification would be included in the Standing orders

RESOLVED:

The Board agreed that:

- All new Governors appointed from 1 September served a maximum of two four year terms of office
- Clarification was included on the Standing Orders that Governors appointed before 1 September 2020 would still be eligible to serve three terms.

- The three maximum terms of office did not apply to Co-opted Members

ACTION:

Head of Governance to amend Standing Orders

12. Corporation Standing Orders

A Governor suggested that reference was made to the use of Action Progress Log in the Standing Orders.

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Standing orders subject to the amendments proposed

ACTION:

Head of Governance to amend

13. Governor Code of Conduct

The Head of Governance explained that:

- The Governor Code of Conduct was last updated in 2016 and based on the Eversheds model code for Corporation members.
- As Eversheds had recently revised the model code, it would be good practice to update the College's Code of Conduct where it is appropriate to do so.
- Minor changes were proposed and these had been highlighted

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the amendments to the Code of Conduct

14. Internal Audit Plan 2020 / 2021

The Director of Finance presented the plan and reported that the student transport audit had originally been scheduled for this academic year but had been replaced by the inspection readiness audit. It was now included in next year's plan.

The Chair of the Audit Committee advised that the Committee had requested that the efficacy of blended learning was included as part of the mock inspection. The scope of the health and safety audit had been amended to include remote working

Governor Questions

Q. The scope of the health and safety audit to include remote working was agreed at the Audit Committee meeting. Is it correct to assume that this is intended to cover both staff and students?

A. This audit is planned to be a compliance piece for statutory Health & Safety obligations. Management would like to extend this to cover DSE compliance for staff homeworking, but it is not anticipated to cover student home-learning

Q. Would it be useful for the scope to include remote working be explicitly stated in the internal audit plan under the areas covered within health and safety compliance?

A. We can ensure this is explicit in the plan

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21

15. Fees Policy

It was noted that minor changes were being proposed to the policy.

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Fees Policy

16. Chair Performance Review Report June 2020

The results of the Chair's evaluation survey were reviewed and it was noted that the results and comments on the Chairman's performance were very positive, with many of the satisfaction scores having increased from "satisfied" to "very satisfied".

Governors thanked the Chairman for his work and contribution to the effective running of the Board.

16.1 Principal / Chair / Head of Governance – Working Relationship and how does this operate in practice?

The meeting was provided with an overview of the Principal/ Chair / Head of Governance working relationship and how this operated in practice. It was noted that the relationship needed to be effective to ensure good governance and that the Board functioned well.

The Chair's role in Governor recruitment and addressing issues of attendance / conduct was clarified and Governors were advised that:

- The Head of Governance would initially consult with the Chair on any issues regarding Governor attendance and conduct
- These were then addressed by the Chair on a confidential basis with the Governor in question
- The Search & Governance Committee led on the recruitment of new Governors but the Chair was involved in the interview process

15. Issues from Data Dashboard

The Board reviewed the dashboard which was used to monitor key College performance indicators, and the Principal confirmed that all of the KPI's looked positive and College was expecting all of the targets for the Key issues subjects to be met.

16. Finance Report June 2020 Update

The Director of Finance reported that the June accounts would confirm a positive outcome for this financial year. The amendment to the Barclays loan covenant would provide the College with greater flexibility.

17. Risk Register – High Risks & Key Movements

The risk register was presented and reviewed.

Governor Questions

- Q.** Was there still scope to consider an inclusion in the risk register of a risk of reduced student retention/ disengagement which could potentially lead to non or low achievement(s) and/or decreased retention?
- A.** There were currently 2 medium rated risks in the risk register; failure to retain students and drop in success rates leading to increased probability of inspection.

20. Complaints Annual Report

The Principal presented the report and explained that:

- 33 complaints had been received for the year to-date, compared to 40 at the same time last year
- This represented a lower volume of complaints received compared to the previous 6 years
- There was a declining trend in the volume of complaints categorised as “Neighbour relations”, with 3 complaints received to-date compared to 7 at the same time last year
- In 2019-20, there had also been a reduction in the number of complaints received in relation to “High Expectations” following the relaunch of the College’s high expectations strategy in September 2019

Governor Questions

- Q.** Considering the highest numbers are in this area, what are the nature of the complaints under the definition of high expectations?
- A.** Most of the “high expectations” complaints had originated from students/parents who had felt that the College had been unduly harsh in the implementation of its disciplinary policy
- Q.** Were there any specific courses with a number of teaching & learning issues? What follow up has there been to ensure that teaching and learning has improved in areas where there were complaints?
- A.** A high proportion of complaints in the last 2 years have been from adult learners on AAT or CIPD courses (prior to the move to online learning). In each case the Head of Studies and Head of School have worked with the course leader to improve teaching and learning and students on these courses are now much more satisfied
- Q.** Were any of the complaints re teaching and learning linked to corona virus?
- A.** College has had very few complaints from students or parents since the move to on-line learning.

21. Safeguarding / Prevent Update

The Board reviewed the report and it was noted that students had continued to be supported remotely during the current College closure. The number of referrals has remained the same as in the previous academic year.

Governor Questions

- Q.** Had there been any referrals as a result of the move to online learning and the use of communications platforms such as Zoom?
- A.** There had been no concerns raised or an increase in mental health referrals as a result
- Q.** The highest number of new students (9) are in year one of the A level programme- are there any common emerging themes that can be addressed across the cohort?

- A.** All are health and wellbeing or mental health related. Health and Wellbeing covers a range of issues e.g. difficult relationships/circumstance at home including emotional abuse. Mental Health in the main relates to depression
- Q.** Is there any information on how referrals during the closure, particularly the newly identified students, have been followed up? Are there any current issues of concern and any arrangements for support during summer closure?
- A.** All referrals are followed up via contact with the student and ongoing support offered e.g. counselling or signposting to external agencies. Referral and discussions with Foodbanks, Housing, Parents, Police and Social Services in support of individual students – all cases/issues recorded in line with college’s normal safeguarding procedures. N.B. no Prevent referrals
- Q.** Is there any update on the provision of free College meals for eligible learners over the summer?
- A.** The current DFE position is that colleges will not be given additional funding to provide free college meals during the summer break. The AoC and SFCA are currently campaigning strongly for the government to fund FSM/FCM for all full time learners aged 5-18.

22. Governance Impact Statement

- Approval of alternative budget proposal will take account of the economic impact of Covid19 on College finances
- Student Governor Presentation /Feedback from Student Governors will lead to further improvements to the learner experience
- Suggestion to add an addendum to the Strategic Plan to take account of Covid19
- Revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Covid Task & Finish Group will provide greater flexibility in how the group operates
- Approval of the Internal Audit Plan will ensure that Governors continue to receive an independent opinion on the adequacy of controls within key areas of the College
- Increased Governor awareness re the Chair / Principal / Head of Governance working relationship and how this contributes to good governance

23. Reserved Business Minutes

23.1 Corporation Meeting Minutes Part 2B – 18th May 2020

Agreed: that the minutes are signed as a correct record

23.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

23.3 Audit Committee 16th June 2020

The minutes were received and noted.

23.4 Remuneration & Organisational Development 17th June 2020

The minutes were received and noted.

23.5 Standards & Curriculum Committee 19th June 2020

Discussed under reserved business.

23.6 Any other Reserved Business Matters

Discussed under reserved business.

24. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that this was the Principal's last Board meeting. The Board led by the Chair thanked and paid tribute to the Principal for his outstanding service to the College and the positive manner in which he had worked with the Board.

The Principal thanked all Board and Co-opted members for their time and the contribution they had made to the continued success of the College.

Board

Monday 21 September 2020 at 5.15pm

Governors SAR Meeting

Tuesday 6 October 2020 at 8.00am