

# PUBLIC MINUTES



## Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation of Yeovil College Held on Thursday 05 December 2019 at 16:30 In A310/11, Third Floor Kingston Building, Yeovil College

**Members:** Sam Best\*; Mark Bolton [Principal]\*; Mike Brinson\*; Paul Clowes\*; Ken Comber\*; Jacquie Dean [Vice Chair]\*; Lee Harwood\*; Jo Howarth; Jessica Hughes [Student FE]\*; Sam Leigh; Rebecca Marshall\*; Netta Meadows; David Mills\*; Paul Morey [Staff]\*; Jagtar Ner\*; Gayle Pogson [Staff]\*; Scott Roy\*; Peter Thomas [Chair]\*

**In attendance:**

**All Items:** Steve Chattell [Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality]\*; Emma Cox [Vice Principal Finance & Resources]\*

**Item 4 onwards:** Isabella Stanley [Student HE]\*

**Clerk:** Kaz Corbett\*

*\*indicates presence at meeting*

### 1. MEETING PRELIMINARIES

**Apologies** for absence were received from Sam Leigh, Netta Meadows and Jo Howarth. The meeting remained quorate throughout. There were no **Declarations of Interest** made on this occasion.

### 2. AMENDMENT TO INSTRUMENT AND ARTICLES

With the recommendation of the Clerk, the Board **approved** a minor change to its Instrument and Articles, to allow Student Ambassadors to serve as Governors.

*7.3 A person who is a member of staff of the institution may not be, or continue as, a member, except as a staff member or in the capacity of Principal.*

*7.4 Paragraph (3) does not apply to a student who is employed by the Corporation in connection with the student's role as an officer of a students' union **or as a student ambassador***

### 3. APPOINTMENT OF NEW CORPORATION MEMBERS

The Board **approved** the appointments of:

- **Issy Stanley** as a new HE Student Governor until July 2021
- **Tim Sweeney** as a new Co-opted Member of the Finance and Remuneration Committee for a four year term of office

### 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Board **APPROVED** the following minutes as true and accurate records of the meeting held on:

- 10 October 2019 Public
- 10 October 2019 Confidential

The Minutes were signed by the Chair. The Public Minutes would be uploaded to the College website.

### 5. MATTERS ARISING

The Action and Query sheet was reviewed, updated and noted. The VP C&Q was asked to give an update on a query raised at the Board's last meeting regarding inclusion of all

protected characteristics on enrolment forms. The VP C&Q informed the Board that a small working group was looking at how best to capture this information. All other queries were either complete, included elsewhere on today's agenda or being appropriately tracked and carried forward.

## 6. CHAIR'S REPORT

Members **noted** the Chair's report which today included updates on:

### **CMT Away Day**

The Chair shared his positive experience attending the recent CMT away day. He informed the board that attendees had enjoyed an interesting presentation from the AoC on the new inspection framework, alongside high quality benchmarking data. The 'Three I's': Intent, Implementation and Impact are integral to the new framework, and Board papers and presentations will include reference to this going forward. He added that from a Governance perspective it was highlighted that oversight of Subcontracting and Apprenticeship provision was important.

### **Compliance against the AoC Code of Good Governance**

Governors **noted** the outcomes of a self-assessment of the Board's performance against "the Code" which had recently been conducted by its Search and Governance Committee. The Board supported the conclusion that the Corporation is found to be performing strongly against the values and principal responsibilities as set out in the Code.

### **Governor activities**

The Chair and other members participated in Learner walks over the last week. The timetable for the next observation window at the end of January will be distributed early in the new year to allow greater Governor participation.

### **Finance and Remuneration Committee Chair**

The Board **approved** the progression of Lee Harwood from Vice Chair to Chair of the Finance and Remuneration Committee to succeed Mike Brinson, who was sadly retiring from the Board.

## 7. OfS LETTER

The Board **noted** a letter sent from the OfS to notify the Chair that the College had missed a deadline for payment of registration or other fees. The Chair was asked to discuss with the Board the reason for this error, and how it will prevent a repeat occurrence.

The Principal informed the Board that the OfS is a new regulatory body, and as such brings its own requirements and a complex regulatory framework. The error in question related to late payment of membership fees. The Board asked why this payment was missed.

The Principal explained that the fees were budgeted for, however no invoice was issued, and the deadline for payment was detailed in an unrelated OfS communication. It was noted that 250 other providers had failed to meet the same obligation. On this occasion there is no penalty, however any further breach of the conditions could incur a fine of up to £500k or 6% of turnover.

The Principal has requested a list of requirements from the OfS, but this has been declined. Instead, the College has analysed all historic communication received from the OfS to ensure no other deadlines have been overlooked. An action plan has been created, with appropriate tracking to ensure no further errors. All OfS emails are now flagged and forwarded to several recipients to allow full oversight.

The Audit Committee are also monitoring compliance with the OfS' Conditions of Registration.

The Chair added that all other communication with the OfS has been positive. The recently submitted Action and Participation Plan has been warmly received and commended as a model for other providers. The Chair would write to both the HE Manager and Derek Esp to thank and congratulate them on their impressive efforts.

**8. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Corporation **noted** the Principal's Report. On this occasion there was particular emphasis upon:

- Civic Day
- Marketing
- Student Recruitment
- High Needs Provisions and Income
- CMT Away Days
- Flex Budget

The Board asked for an update on the IoT project. The Principal informed the Board that the Consortium were currently working to a date of January, however there is no certainty of this. The Vice Chair highlighted that the March 2021 deadline for spending would not be moving. The VP F&R stated that all costs for IoT are now included in the Budget, but it has not yet been possible to start the main spending. This may impact the cash flow for the year as some improvements are required urgently, and may be needed before monies are received. Further detail on this will be discussed at the Board's Strategy Day in January. One member asked if the late sign off would affect the number of learners that can be counted towards the project; the Principal assured the Board this was not the case.

The Board then noted the updated Operating Statement for 2019/20 alongside a verbal update from the Principal. He explained that the document had been interrogated at the CMT Away Day, and improvements have been made to ensure it is a coherent document. At this point all items are RAG rated green.

**9. COLLEGE'S SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2018-19**

The Principal informed the Board that at this meeting it would normally approve the SAR. Due to the introduction of the new EIF the previous structure was no longer fit for purpose, so an entirely new document has been created.

Staff at the recent CMT Away Day had been tasked with writing the basis for the new position statements, and debating the judgements. The whole document now focuses on the 'Three I's', and reflects the new EIF throughout. The writing of the SAR has been a huge undertaking, and the document is not quite ready for Board approval. It will instead be circulated by the beginning of January, ahead of the Board's next meeting.

The Board heard that there had been a change in the atmosphere amongst staff when considering the judgments for each area, which ultimately led to an overall Self-Assessment of 'Outstanding'. One Member added that the judgment had been taken very seriously, with considerable challenge and debate. The Chair asked the Board to consider their thoughts on Self-Assessing as 'Outstanding' when they receive the finished document.

**10. STRATEGIC ITEM**

Discussions under this item are recorded separately in a confidential set of minutes.

**11. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The Board **noted** a Teaching and Learning update from the Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Assurance Committee. Particular points noted included:

- The first observation window has been completed, and feedback from curriculum staff was very positive
- Lesson observations focus on continuous performance, with the feedback used for best practice development and improvements
- The Committee will continue to monitor the observation process

**Student's National Survey Results**

The Board noted the FE Choices Student Satisfaction Survey Results alongside a verbal commentary from the Vice Principal C&Q. He highlighted that the key measure of "How likely is it that you would recommend the college/training provider to friends or family?" had scored lower this year, but is out of kilter with all the other measurements, which have

Principal

scored higher. It is thought that this may be due to some learners taking the question very literally, in spite of support from teaching staff. The VP C&Q advised that the College no longer purchases Benchmarking data as this is costly, but FE week do produce a league table which includes a score from the FE Choices Survey. The Chair highlighted that this feedback did not include Subcontracting or Apprenticeships. The Board noted a strong improvement in satisfaction for A level learners.

The Board moved on to discuss the HE National Student Survey, and noted a considerable overall improvement made over the last few years. As there is no breakdown it is not possible to scrutinise the responses by area which limits Management response.

Satisfaction with Learning Resources has improved since last year, but is still lower than the national average. One governor commented that Adult Learners, who often wish to study during evenings or weekends, are unable to access the LRC as it is closed during these times. The HE Student Governor added that poor IT functionality is frustrating for students, and the HE Study Lounge is not a quiet study space. The Principal responded that IT is an issue that is repeatedly raised, and would be addressed over the next year.

*Isabella Stanley and Jessica Hughes left the meeting at 6.30pm.*

## 12. FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Board **noted** the October 2019 Management Accounts and related financial commentary, in addition to noting a verbal update from the Vice Principal Finance and Resources. Further details on this item are recorded separately in a confidential set of minutes.

*Jagtar Ner left the meeting at 6.35pm.*

## 13. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2018/19

The Corporation **noted** the Audit Completion Report (Management Letter) which covered both the Financial Statements and Regularity Assurance. Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of remaining audit work, Mazars LLP anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion without modification.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the 2018/19:

- Financial Statements
- Operating and Financial Review
- Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control
- Statement of Responsibilities
- Statement on the College's Regularity, Propriety and Compliance with Funding body terms and conditions of funding
- Letters of Representation

## 14. GOVERNOR UPDATES

### Staff Voice

The Staff Governors commented on the following:

- Staff have requested training, especially for learners with a EHCP. This is being organised
- Staff would like to receive support with embedding Maths and English
- Staff would like to engage in more industry-based CPD
- Principal will be invited to attend team meetings across College
- Star of the Month nominations are now being submitted more frequently
- Staff need to continue to challenge learners not wearing lanyards
- Tickets for the Staff Christmas Party have sold well across all departments

### Student Voice

There were no updates to note on this occasion.

### Clerk's Note

The Clerk informed the Board that she had recently spent time with a local Clerk, who is also a National Leader of Governance. She will be working with the Chair to use this knowledge to improve Agendas and process.

### **Chair of Search and Governance**

The Search and Governance Chair informed the Board that he had attended today's meeting of the SW AoC Principals and Chairs' Network on behalf of the Corporation Chair.

Discussion had included the impact of Universities making unconditional offers, and an update from the Independent Commission on the College of the Future

15.

## **LEGAL, POLICY and REGULATORY MATTERS**

### **Student Union Financial Arrangements**

The Board **APPROVED** the Student Union Financial Arrangements (including accounts).

### **Health and Safety Policy**

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Health and Safety Policy.

### **Children's Centre Policy: Child Protection and Safeguarding Children**

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Policy with recommendation from the Safeguarding Lead Governor.

### **Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy**

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Policy to reflect strategic changes, job titles, and kite marks.

### **Complaints Annual Report 2018/19**

The Board **noted** the Complaints Annual Report for 2018/19 which included the previous two years data for comparative purposes. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality highlighted that the total number of complaints has remained static at 19, with only 14 of these complaints upheld. It was noted that one Curriculum area received a disproportionate number of complaints and swift intervention was made.

### **Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity Update**

The Board **noted** a verbal update on Safeguarding and Equality & Diversity presented by the Principal and Safeguarding Lead Governor. Particular points noted included:

- The Annual LSCB Safeguarding Audit has been moved from January to March
- Safeguarding Lead Governor met with the College's lead counsellor recently. The feedback was positive, but more Counsellors would be useful
- There have been two separate incidents of racially motivated attacks involving Yeovil College learners outside of college. The College is saddened by this, and is promoting tolerance across college

### **HE Update**

The HE Lead Governor was not in attendance to offer an update. The Board **Approved** the HE Student Transfer Policy.

### **Whistleblowing, H&S and Fraud**

There were no incidents to report on this occasion.

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## **RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROLS**

The Board **noted** the following 2018/19 Annual Reports:

- **Internal Audit**

Mazars LLP had presented their Internal Audit Annual Report 2018/19 to the Committee which summarised the internal audit work during 2018-19, providing its annual opinion, benchmarking information and an assessment of the performance of Internal Audit. External benchmarking by Mazars showed Yeovil College compared favourably against their external

FE college base. A total of 8 Internal Audit visits took place during the year with the majority providing substantial assurance.

The overall assurance opinion of the Internal Audit Service for 2018-19 was:

*“On the basis of our Audit work, we consider that Yeovil College’s governance, risk management and internal control arrangements are generally adequate and effective to manage its achievement of the College Objectives. Certain weaknesses and exceptions were highlighted by our audit work, but none were considered fundamental. These and all other matters have been discussed with management, to whom we have made a number of recommendations. All of these have been, or are in the process of being addressed, as detailed in our individual reports.”*

- **Risk Management**
- **Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee Annual Report contained the following assurance statement (unchanged from last year) from the Committee to the Corporation, to the Principal (as Accounting Officer) and to the Skills Funding Agency:

***“Having regard to the reports of the Internal Audit Service and the Financial Statements/Regularity auditors and on the basis of the work of the Committee during the year, it is our conclusion that the College has an adequate and effective framework for governance, risk management and control to ensure that the Corporation has fulfilled its statutory responsibility for the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets, and to manage the achievement of its objectives”.***

The Board also **noted** key business from the draft minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 27 November 2019 which had not been covered elsewhere on today’s agenda (including risk).

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair announced that marked the end of Mike Brinson’s term with the Corporation. Mike was thanked for his time and extensive support as Chair of the Finance and Remuneration Committee over the last two years. A brief presentation took place.

**18. NEXT ORDINARY MEETING**

Thursday 23 January 2020 at the end of the Strategy Day.

***Main Meeting closed at 19:00***

Attendees (other than the Clerk), Staff Governors and Student Governors were asked to withdraw.

An additional set of limited distribution minutes in respect to agenda item 19 were recorded separately.