

PUBLIC MINUTES



Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation of Yeovil College
Held on Thursday 09 July 2020 at 1630
Using Zoom

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

In attendance:

All items: Steve Chattell [Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality]; Emma Cox [Vice Principal Finance & Resources]*; Joanna Frith-Williams [Vice Principal Quality of Education]*

Clerk: Kaz Corbett*

**indicates presence at meeting*

1. **MEETING PRELIMINARIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Jacquie Dean, Gayle Pogson, Jo Howarth and Paul Morey. The meeting remained quorate throughout. There were no **Declarations of Interest** made on this occasion.

All attendees (excluding the Clerk), Staff and Student Governors were asked to withdraw.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM VP QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The Board **noted** the approval by email of Joanna Frith-Williams' appointment as Interim VP Quality of Education. In a change to today's agenda, **Item 19** was considered at this point. Independent members had supported the recruitment panel's recommendation not to conduct further interviews for the permanent VP role, following a shortlisting exercise. Independent members **approved** the appointment of Joanna Frith-Williams as permanent VP Quality of Education from September.

3. **MINUTES**

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

- Thursday 18 June Public
- Thursday 18 June Confidential

The Chair's digital signature was applied to the records, which would be uploaded to the College website.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Action and Query sheet was reviewed, updated and noted. The VP F&R was asked for an update on conversations with Tenet, following comments made at the last Board meeting. The VP F&R stressed that Tenet themselves were not at any fault, and the issue lies more in the specifications being set out in the College's procurement documents. The College has had little recent experience with higher value procurement, and requires guidance to refine the process. A change in provider could be beneficial, and Tenet will need to be given appropriate notice before a tender can be launched. Tenet would not be able to run this tender, and it would therefore need to be fully managed in house. The Chair agreed that this is new territory for the College, and finding the right procurement support is essential.

All other queries were either complete, included elsewhere on today's agenda or being appropriately tracked and carried forward.

5. **SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE**

The Chair announced that Sam Leigh had sadly taken the decision to step down from her position on the Board, due to personal and work pressures. Members were asked to contact the Clerk if they were interested in the HE Lead Governor role.

Following today's earlier Committee meeting, Members were asked to approve the following membership extensions and appointments:

- Paul Clowes' appointment as Vice Chair of the Audit Committee
- David Mills' appointment as an additional Vice Chair of the Corporation

The Committee had deliberated the composition of the Board and its Committees in detail. The Committee Chair asked all Board members to consider any recommendations they could offer for members, especially with Finance or Education expertise. The option to join as a co-opted member to a Committee may be more appealing for those not looking for a larger commitment. Any recommendations should be sent to the Clerk.

Following on from the success of the recent virtual meetings, Members were asked if a remote option would be helpful once meetings return to 'normal'. The Board felt this would be a useful addition, but that in-person meetings remain important.

The Board **approved** the revised Code of Conduct, on the recommendation of the Committee. All members would receive a new copy for their records.

6. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Board **noted** the current plans for the College reopening in September. The Principal apologised for the lateness in sharing the paper, which had been delayed due to further announcements made by the Government. Key points noted included:

- An 84-point plan has been created and will form the backbone of the revised risk management plan
- All staff and students will be on site for some time during September, in a staggered format
- 'Bubbles' will be used to keep everyone safe and limit the number of people required to isolate if anyone develops Covid-19 symptoms. This will require staff and students to remain together for their whole College day, including breaks
- Timetables will be designed to accommodate onsite and offsite learning, with easy switching if necessary
- Plans have been continuously evolving following Government updates
- Management will be taking holiday over the coming weeks, plan will be reviewed on 18th August
- There is no clear guidance at this point on the use of face coverings, other than recommendations from the Government for use indoors in congested areas. The College will recommend the use of face coverings, and has purchased 1000 washable masks. Learners will be required to wear face coverings on public transport due to current guidelines.
- College will continue to look to other organisations for best practice, both in and out of the sector
- EHOs have given independent assurance that College procedures are suitable
- Board feel reassured that robust risk assessments are in place, based on current Government guidance

The Board **noted** the draft Strategic Aims 2020-2021, which had been updated by the Principal following feedback received at the recent Strategy Day. Staff will be given the opportunity to contribute to the document before Board approval is sought in October.

The Operating Statement was **noted**. A Board member requested the addition of dates to any updates. The Principal would action this.

7. **SOMERSET CC PARTNERSHIP SLA**

The Board **noted** a briefing paper prepared by the VP F&R regarding the current status of the South Somerset 14-19 Partnership's successful application for ESF funding. Member Netta Meadows clarified that she had no interest to declare in matters relating to Somerset County Council as her employment was with SSDC. The College currently administrates the salaries for the Partnerships' employees, and in January the Corporation signed a letter to evidence this match funding for the application. Somerset County Council provided a letter to indemnify the College against any liabilities up to the value of the match funding. Following the success of the application, the Board **approved** the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and Collaboration Agreement.

8. **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Board **noted** the Chair's Report, key points included:

- Special meeting will be held on 17th September to review student numbers, and consider the professional fees spend
- The workload for College staff and SMT has been overwhelming over the last few months, which has resulted in papers being shared with little review time. It is important that members have sufficient time to scrutinise documents going forward.

9. **FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Board **noted** the May 2020 Management Accounts and related financial commentary in addition to noting a verbal update from the Vice Principal Finance and Resources. The VP F&R informed the Board that following a tender process, the roof repairs will be taking place over the Summer and should cost around £60k. The Clerk would distribute a short video update from the Head of Estates with further detail.

10. **BUDGET AND 3 YEAR FINANCIAL FORECAST**

The Board had considered this item in the context of the discussions had at the recent Strategy Day, and had agreed in principle to the approach that had been taken to prepare the 2020/21 budget (plus 3 years) as detailed in the 18 June minutes.

Ahead of today's meeting, the Board had been provided with a budget pack that provided detailed information on:

- Context and working assumptions re Covid-19 impacts
- Short-term financial priorities and objectives (2020/21)
- Assessment of solvency / forecast cash
- Borrowing requirements and Covenant compliance
- Key budget assumptions- income and expenditure
- Capital plans
- Risks and sensitivities
- Overall assessment of financial performance / critical variables

The Board **APPROVED** the College's 3 year financial plan including the 2020/21 budget for submission to the ESFA by 31 July 2020, with the understanding that additional costs of £365k for professional fees included within the budget would be assessed for approval at its September meeting.

11. **IoT UPDATE**

The VP F&R informed the Board that initial deliveries of IT equipment have been received, and will be shared with teaching staff over the next couple of weeks. The start of building works has been delayed, and is likely to complete by mid-September. There will be tenders continuing to take place over the summer, which will not require Board approval due to their value. The IoT Lead governor will continue to support these tenders.

Building works tender

The Board had received the Building Works tender evaluation ahead of today's meeting, and viewed a further email on screen. The VP F&R explained that DR Jones are the preferred provider, with a quote of £311k. Further negotiations are required to bring this down to £220k (£280k including contingency and VAT). This will be achieved by reducing the scope of works. One member questioned whether amending the initial tender specification would cause any issue with other possible bidders. The VP F&R explained that all bidders had been given the opportunity to bid for each part of the work separately. The Board acknowledged the risk. The Board **approved** the appointment of DR Jones, subject to the reduction of the quote in line with the budget.

Tensile testing equipment

The Board had received the Tensile testing equipment tender evaluation ahead of today's meeting, and viewed a further email on screen. The VP F&R explained that a change in teaching staff has meant a review of the delivery of teaching for this equipment, and only one set of accessories is now required. This results in a saving of £68k against the original budget. The Board **approved** acceptance of Zwick's quote, as the only bidder. The underspend on this equipment will be reallocated towards the building works. One member commented that it would be useful to thoroughly review the procurement process in the future. The VP F&R responded that the Projects' Committee when created will ensure appropriate oversight of spends on IoT, T Levels and any other capital projects.

12. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Board **noted** a paper prepared by the VP C&Q describing engagement throughout all FE teaching areas within the College. One member commented that it would be useful to include the numbers in each cohort to give context to the percentage data. One member asked if there was any benchmarking data for the sector, the VP C&Q answered that there was no data available.

The Chair commented on the uneven levels of engagement across all subject areas. The VP C&Q gave a detailed answer to the Board, explaining the circumstances for apparent low engagement in some subject areas. The College remains committed to ensuring all learners are able to access an appropriate device for continued learning from home, and will supply devices as necessary in September.

Most programmes are expected to perform well, however a small number of programmes are anticipated to underperform. The Board viewed the predicted achievement tables for these programmes, noting the difficulties in accuracy due to anticipated moderation from awarding bodies. The Board also noted the predicted performance of areas included in this year's underperforming course panel process.

One member asked how learners would complete practical assessments. Learners will be coming on site over the coming weeks for this purpose, at allocated time slots to ensure safety.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROLS

The Board **approved** the Insurance Arrangements for 2020/21 on the recommendation of the Audit Chair and Audit Vice Chair.

There were no other risk management items to note.

14. GOVERNOR UPDATES

The Board were reminded that this would be Jess' final meeting as FE Student Governor. Jess was thanked for her excellent input during her time on the Board, and wished well for her future studies.

There were no Staff Governors present at today's meeting.

15. LEGAL, POLICY AND REGULATORY MATTERS

Annual Review of Confidential Material 2019/20

The Corporation carried out its annual review of Confidential Material. With no amendment to the Clerk's paper, the Corporation noted and **APPROVED** which material is currently for inspection (public) and for exclusion from inspection (confidential). It was noted that there

had been no requests for public inspection of the Board's or its Committees' papers during the period of review.

Meeting dates 2020/21

The Board **Approved** its meeting dates for 2020/21.

Terms of Reference and Work Programmes 2020/21

The Board **APPROVED** the Terms of Reference and Business Cycles for the Corporation and its Committees for 2020/21 as set out in the Clerk's paper.

Policy Approvals and Delegation arrangements

The Corporation noted the updated annual policies monitoring information. It was also noted that due to the additional pressures surrounding Covid-19, and the furlough of the VP F&R's PA, some Policies and Procedures are overdue a review.

Yeovil College Nursery Admission, Fees and Funding Policy

The VP F&R advised the Board of additional changes made to this policy following dispatch. Board **approved** the policy, which had been updated to include fee changes, and reference to Covid-19.

Corporation Seal 2019/20

The Board noted the report which detailed use of the Corporation Seal during 2019/20.

Annual Safeguarding Report – Internal report to Governors

The Board **noted** the Safeguarding Annual Report for the period 01 August 2019 to 31 July 2020 alongside a verbal update from the Safeguarding Lead Governor, who commented that MyConcern reports are still lacking in quality. The new VP QE has significant experience in this area and will drive improvements in reporting.

Equality and Diversity Annual Report

The Board noted the Equality and Diversity Annual Report which detailed progress made during the past year, and contained data tables scrutinising staff and student demographics. One member commented that the number of BAME adult learners was disproportionately high, and asked for further detail. The VP C&Q explained that this was due to a large number of ESOL learners.

HE Update

The Principal informed the Board that a letter has been issued by the OfS regarding the use of unconditional offers, and restrictions on advertising HE. The College is compliant with both requirements, and has responded appropriately to the OfS.

Whistleblowing, H&S and Fraud

There were no incidents to report on this occasion.

16. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CLERK

The Board was informed that interviews for a new Clerk were planned for 13th July. The Chair and both Vice Chairs would form the interview panel.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board thanked Steve Chattell for his long service with the College, and wished him well in his new role. There were no other items to note on this occasion.

18. NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

Thursday 8 October 2020.

19. APPOINTMENT OF VP QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Discussions on this item are minuted at **Item 2**.

Meeting closed at 19.05