

LEEDS COLLEGE OF BUILDING

CORPORATION MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 3.45 pm via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT:

Julia Evans (JE) Chair
Peter Norris (PN) Vice Chair
Simon Bray (SB)
Andrew Kenny (AK)
Rachel Lindley (RL)
Caroline Meehan (CM)
Derek Packer (DPa)
Mark Roper (MR)
Professor Dave Russell (PDR)
Derek Whitehead (DW)
Jackie Wignall (JW)

IN ATTENDANCE:

David Pullein (DP) (Vice Principal – Finance & Resources)
Nikki Davis (ND) (Vice Principal – Teaching, Learning & Quality)
Karen Rolinson (KR) (HR Director – Items 7, 8 & 9)
Michaela Beardsall (MB) (Clerk to the Corporation)

**ACTION
BY AND
TARGET DATE**

1. CHAIR'S AND GOVERNORS' COMMUNICATIONS

- 1.1 RL (Chair of Audit Committee) gave feedback on the last Audit Committee meeting. The focus had been the signing of the 2019/20 accounts. RL welcomed the positive interactions with internal and external auditors.
- 1.2 AK (Chair of Student Liaison Committee) gave feedback on the last SLC meeting on 19 January 2021. The meeting had been good; four students were present: two on Apprenticeships, one on Civils HND and one on a Foundation course. Feedback from those attending and other students (who could not attend) that had sent in their views had been generally positive on facilities, teaching staff and the College response to the pandemic.

One of the students on an Apprenticeship expressed frustration with the lack of practical workshop training. The HE student did not agree with another student's opinion that online learning had been an effective alternative to "in classroom" learning. He missed the ability to discuss or clarify concerns about theory, either with the tutor or in breakout groups during lectures. This also contrasts with the 78% of students who responded positively to this question in the SPOC survey to be discussed under Item 12 of the agenda today.

DW and ND acknowledged that the student's concerns (which he says are shared with his year group) have been discussed with the Faculty Director and they are looking at ways to satisfactorily address the issues raised.

Assistance in securing Apprenticeship employment is a recurring theme and the College continues to help with this wherever it can exercise influence. Other minor issues raised are actively being addressed.

- 1.3 MB presented Governors with an alternative to the 'Away Day' calendared for 9 February 2021. This is to reduce the number of hours, meeting via Teams and to focus on the key areas identified via the Governor Skills Survey. An additional (and hopefully face to face) half day Away Day will be calendared for the new academic year (late September / early October) to 'reset and review' post-COVID-19.

1. CHAIR'S AND GOVERNORS' COMMUNICATIONS (continued)

The proposed amended programme is as follows:

- Horizon Scanning – The White Paper (DW)
- Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Progress (ND)
- Risks and Going Concern (DP)
- Question & Answer – Open Forum (JE).

Each session will be 30 minutes, delivered by a member of the Executive Team, followed by Question & Answer.

Governors accepted the proposal. MB to circulate the programme and Teams link.

**MB
2 Feb. 2021**

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Wilson. Ryan Cordingley was a non-attender.

3. DETERMINATION OF ATTENDEES / OBSERVERS

The Corporation agreed attendees / observers at the meeting as per the attendance list.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Senior Postholders declared an interest in Item 9.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 were approved as a true and accurate record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

6.1 Ref Min 1.1

Completed – email sent.

6.2 Ref Min 6.5

Ongoing – JE has spoken to B Duffy and positive feedback received. DPa has arranged an appointment with M Bailey for 27 January 2021.

6.3 Ref Min 6.9

J Miah will complete Safeguarding training videos for Governors to access when they need the update.

6.4 Ref Min 9 (summary of action points 24 November 2020)

Taken under Item 12.

6.5 Ref Min 9 (summary of action points 24 November 2020)

Taken under Item 12.

6. MATTERS ARISING (continued)

6.6 Ref Min 20

Despite numerous attempts to engage him, Ryan has not attended any meetings this academic year. Attendance figures affected in both Student Liaison Committee and full Board. MB highlighted the positive contributions made by other students in the Student Liaison Committee and the potential for one / more of them to become the Student Governor(s). ND would canvass Oliver Harding-Jeans and/or Cameron Grier by the next Corporation meeting.

ND
1 Mar. 2021

6.7 Ref Min 9

To be arranged. ND to meet with MR.

ND
1 Mar. 2021

7. 2019-20 STAFFING REPORT AND STAFF SURVEY

Staffing Report

KR presented the Staffing Report. The data presented is up to the end of July 2020. It shows a slight reduction in the number of staff and more staff working flexibly.

Due to the impact of COVID, staff turnover has decreased significantly and there has been an improvement in attracting applicants and recruitment.

The gender balance remains stable and is male dominated. Ethnicity – there has been a slight decrease in BAME staff. Declared disabilities – the College needs to know how to protect staff. More staff are willing to come forward as a direct result of the pandemic. Age – over 50's = 45% (the College has recruited staff from the younger age group, including a number of Apprentices).

AK noted the encouraging report which demonstrates a comprehensive endorsement of provision.

DPa questioned KR on the calibre of people who are applying for the roles. With the market as it is, are people applying who have greater skills / experience than required? As soon as the market is clear will we retain staff? KR explained that the College only appointed people who were up to the job. There have been instances in the past of the College recruiting staff on fractional hours and developing them. She also noted the longevity in service of a number of staff and some staff who have returned to work at LCB, having worked in other establishments. This reflects positively on the College.

RL queried if there were any risks associated with filling positions / vacancies? She also queried if there was a move to improve the gender balance via an action plan and also noted the lower proportion of females on the management spine. KR explained that the College's staff profile was reflective of the construction industry. Age profile is a risk, hence the recruitment of new staff. The Support staff profile is 50/50 in terms of gender. White males form the majority of lecturers, especially in vocational and craft areas. There are a number of female lecturers in the HE provision. The College encourages female members of Support staff to train and while there is no formal recommendation via an action plan, it is being addressed organically. KR also noted that there are a number of female Curriculum Managers.

7. **2019-20 STAFFING REPORT AND STAFF SURVEY** (continued)

MS reflected on the gender balance and attracting staff under 50 with the necessary skills to teach. The FE sector has a lower earning potential than working in the trade. KR explained that a number of lecturers under 50 have been recruited. Working for the College is a package – a guaranteed income, holidays and pensions, not working alone and rewarding. The College will continue to promote the rewarding nature of a career in FE.

PN noted the favourable turnover in staffing and requested that KR explained any risk areas. KR stated that Electrical is the main area. Joinery and HE have been risk areas in the past but the situation has improved. Recruitment of Estates Assistants has proven difficult historically, however, two people have been recruited recently.

PDR acknowledged that as roles become more senior, the statistics reflect positively. He requested further information regarding the gender of all applicants, not just successful applicants and whether unconscious bias may play a part. KR explained that the College's policy was to undertake anonymised shortlisting and that recruitment was proportionate to the applications received. PDR also requested further information regarding the Gender Pay Gap reporting. KR would present the Gender Pay Gap report to the next Corporation meeting.

KR
23 March 2021

JW stated that she has undertaken work in relation to Gender Pay Gap reporting. The gender imbalance reflects students' profile. While some HE students are female, it is the social norm for construction to attract fewer females.

Staff Survey

KR presented a report on the Staff Survey, which was undertaken in June 2020 during the first lockdown. The College has the 9th highest response rate in the data set. The results show an increase in satisfaction rates. It is particularly pleasing that there is a significant improvement in relation to Communication, Staff not afraid to raise concerns and College is well led / managed.

This is a good reflection on DW's first 18 months as Principal.

Only three minor decreases were noted in the results. Overall comparison – above average in majority of questions benchmarked against the other colleges in the data set.

AK stated that the report is very encouraging. He highlighted Q15 in relation to adequate space. Students have also expressed discontent with the working environment, specifically at North Street.

DW stated that confirmation that the College has an extension to utilise the capital allocation until the end of September 2021 has been received from the ESFA. There will be a direct, positive impact on the workplace, including upgrades to Wifi, toilets and eating facilities. A flexible working policy is also being developed. The long-term strategy is to move out of North Street, but to improve provision for staff and students in the short to medium term.

7. 2019-20 STAFFING REPORT AND STAFF SURVEY (continued)

Clarification was also sought regarding Q24 and the opportunities for career progression / advancement and if this was raised during staff appraisals. KR confirmed that aspirations formed part of the discussion. The College is relatively small, therefore routes for progression are sometimes limited but the aim is to give the best possible training and opportunities for all staff.

MR asked if any specific trends were evident in the small amount of disagree / strongly disagree. He noted the dramatic improvement and congratulated the leadership team. KR commented that it was difficult to judge the workplace answer as staff would have been at home. Promotion routes continue to be an issue as discussed at length earlier.

RL noted the leadership score in particular and also that staff feel able to speak up. She queried the next stages with the report. KR confirmed that the full report is published on the staff intranet in order for all staff to have access. The document also provides the basis for discussions with Trade Union representatives and the Staff Forum, which have been very positive.

DW highlighted that the leadership results reflect on the wider College management – a whole College approach.

JE acknowledged the admirable work and thanked KR and the team.

The Board noted the 2019-20 Staffing Report and Staff Survey.

8. SAFEGUARDING & VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY REVIEW

KR / ND presented the Policy. There were no major changes to the Policy itself, however, due to KR leaving in the summer, areas of responsibility have been clarified and an additional layer of intervention has been put in place. There will be a lengthy handover period to ensure the new system is effective. ND will undertake the full Safeguarding Lead training course in March.

It was emphasised by the Chair that this is a vital policy and procedure within the College. It is essential that lines of responsibilities are clear. Inspections can fail on this area.

CM, as Safeguarding Governor, has met virtually with S Ryan. Initial connections have been made and she is looking forward to more work in this area.

MR felt that Governors should undertake Safeguarding training annually. ND confirmed that while Governors only have to undertake training every three years, they will have unlimited access to J Miah's pre-recorded videos via the Portal.

The Board approved the Safeguarding & Vulnerable Adults Policy.

9. SENIOR POSTHOLDER REMUNERATION POLICY

KR presented the updated Policy. The AoC and OfS guidance has been taken into account when amending the Policy and KR has consulted with existing Senior Postholders. JE and PN (Performance and Remuneration Committee) have also had sight of the Policy and recommend the changes to the Board.

9. SENIOR POSTHOLDER REMUNERATION POLICY (continued)

The Policy changes demonstrate the College's commitment to fairness, transparency and accountability in line with external expectations.

PN highlighted that the necessity for the change was derived from the external auditor's disclosures.

PDR challenged KR regarding the twice-yearly appraisals of the Senior team as this is a high level of scrutiny and intense. He questioned the justification of this level of scrutiny on a high performing team. KR explained that this was part of the established practice but could be amended with Governors' approval. JE suggested that this became an item for discussion at the next P&R Committee meeting. MB would add "Frequency of SMT appraisals" to the next Performance & Remuneration Committee meeting.

MB
1 March 2021

The Board approved the Senior Postholder Remuneration Policy.

10. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2020

DP updated Governors on the ongoing dialogues regarding South Bank 1 and Pythagoras. Walker Morris have been providing the College with legal representation. Prior to Christmas, they successfully appealed to the adjudicator for an extension. Several witness statements have been submitted in support of the College. Pythagoras have a week to respond to the College's submissions and a decision is expected by 15 February 2021. DP would update the Governing body once a decision has been received.

DP
20 Feb. 2021

December Accounts

DP presented the December accounts. In a 'normal' year the College would beat the budget. The current position is significantly ahead of expectations at this stage. However, the next six months are crucial with the current external context impacting on potential income. Retention of students, adult education recruitment and Apprenticeship achievements are areas of focus and may put further pressure on the budget.

MS challenged DP on what more could be done, whilst understanding that it is difficult to predict what will happen in the future. DP explained that all areas in the College can contain expenditure. The Adult Education Budget has been affected heavily as it is difficult to recruit in the current climate. The College awaits communication from the ESFA to ascertain if the same or similar threshold conditions of funding from last academic year will be applied.

DW explained that it was evident through the Principals' network that the AoC is collectively lobbying. Other colleges are in similar positions and also lobbying collectively.

PN sought assurance regarding meeting Bank Covenants. He queried if any dialogue was needed with banks at this stage. DP stated that there is a lot of headroom and the accounts show that it is not required at this stage. Since the completion of South Bank 2, there is a healthy cash balance.

10. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2020

KPIs – pay as a % of income is positive at this stage, however, this may change as a result of the pay award, hence it is rated Amber.

There are real concerns in relation to Apprenticeships and the Adult Education Budget as discussed earlier.

The Board noted the Management Accounts for November / December 2020.

11. UPDATE ON COVID & RELATED MATTERS

DW updated Governors on COVID and related matters.

Students were stood down following the Government's announcement. Mass testing kits were sent to the College shortly after the Christmas period.

On New Year's Eve all students were informed of the College closure, week commencing 4 January 2021, with a return on 11 January 2021 onwards, except for vulnerable students / students requiring support with IT. The Prime Minister then announced a national lockdown on 4 January 2021. Staff have maintained contact with vulnerable students on a 1:1 basis. The College will begin to open next week also for students studying vocational qualifications if it is right and safe to do so. The College needs to ensure that Apprentices get through final Framework completions and End Point Assessments.

COVID risk assessments are in place and anyone in College must continue to adhere to the measures. From 4 January 2021 all Business Support and lecturing staff have been working from home. DW thanked PDR for the help and information received via a remote visit; a lot of information regarding mass testing was gathered. A working group regarding mass testing was pulled together on our return by KR and the physical resources / test sites (at North Street and South Bank 1) were set up through Estates, IT and C Izzard. Rehearsals would take place early next week to iron out any teething problems. Staff have volunteered to be Team Leaders, Processors etc. DW thanked the staff that have volunteered. The process would link in with the NHS track and trace monitoring.

Mixed messages are coming out regarding mass testing and an eye would be kept on changes. Staff can be tested twice a week. The College has responded to consultations regarding examinations / vocational technical qualifications. Currently there are only 5 known COVID cases (2 staff and 3 students).

DW complimented staff on their patience / agility to respond to student needs and keep the College functioning. JE acknowledged that a huge amount of work had been involved and passed on her thanks on behalf of the Board.

The Board noted the update on COVID and related matters.

12. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT INCLUDING STUDENT SURVEY (SPOC)

ND presented Item 12 (PMR and Student Survey). She outlined the support in place for students. Laptops have been issued to support students. SIM cards from Vodafone to allow students to access the Internet have impacted positively. FE students were not originally included. AEB have also been included for the first time, enabling more laptops to be bought. There is an increased level of support required; 1:1 support on Wednesdays is being utilised with students coming into College.

A consultation regarding GCSE exams / assessments during the summer is now open and the link to this is on the website. ND stated that a robust response will be sent by the College, emphasising the exclusion / lack of parity and fairness, especially for Apprenticeships, but also for vocational qualifications when compared with GCSE's and A Levels. A paper would be produced for Governors once the DfE consultation is concluded.

**ND
March 2021**

ND noted that a number of Office for Students (OfS) have been published and the College is responding. Each response requires a significant amount of work. ND confirmed that the College remains compliant with the OfS conditions.

Student Survey

ND presented an overview of the SPOC results. Incidences relating to welfare and behaviour continue to increase. MiDES data (which provides AoC college members with benchmark data) demonstrates the uniqueness of the College and the significantly higher level of Apprenticeship provision compared to others in the sector (22%). Higher Apprenticeships are a growth area. ND also recognised work-based learning within the College and the high level of employer engagement activities. JE fully endorsed the points raised by ND.

PN requested clarification on the major concerns in relation to welfare and behaviour incidents which have doubled. ND explained that attendance is the biggest concern, but this is not unique to this year. Progress has been made and further detail will follow. Individuals needing support in relation to lockdown are receiving it. ND would provide further detail on attendance at the next meeting.

**ND
23 March 2021**

ND also noted that once the outcome of the consultation has been published, the College's curriculum staff will focus on students' skills development to ensure they have sufficient skills to enter the workplace.

PDR commented on the outstanding responses, especially in vocational courses. ND was really pleased to see the positive responses. The SPOC will be followed up by the Quality Manager and will focus on distance learning. Results will be reported to the last Student Liaison Committee meeting of the year.

**ND
20 April 2021**

MS requested clarification regarding progression of students who lack the skills and/or who join the College from other institutions. The College should be mindful of time and finances / extra costs required to support students.

12. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT INCLUDING STUDENT SURVEY (SPOC) (continued)

MS highlighted the impact on staff workload and asked if Governors could support the College in returning to the classroom.

ND explained that the 16-19 tuition fund may be utilised if the Government continues to support this. It is also important to note that 16-18 year old students recruited in 2021/22 have had very disrupted learning and are likely to have increased difficulties with welfare / learning behaviours / mental health issues.

AK thanked ND for the improved format of the SPOC and queried if there was an opportunity to compare data with other colleges. ND stated that this would depend on the relationship with other colleges but she would enquire. JE felt that this would be useful to add context.

ND
1 March 2021

A thorough discussion ensued regarding students requesting refunds. PDR stated that this relates more to HE students requesting refunds for accommodation and therefore should not affect the College.

The Board noted the Performance Management Report including Student Survey (SPOC).

13. REVIEW OF 2020-21 COLLEGE ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN PRIORITIES

DW presented Item 13, which was a first review of the KPI's that Governors agreed in year; the report has been RAG rated. Concerns were highlighted related to work placements and being COVID secure whilst on site. Some virtual placements have been a success but the impact of the pandemic is significant. Finding placements is an issue and has been covered in earlier reports, and similarly with attendance figures.

Another concern relates to timely achievement of Apprenticeship Frameworks / Standards.

A thorough discussion was held regarding issues with grades that have been uplifted in the summer 2020 exam season, both in the College and in other institutions, and the need for 'wrap around' skills to be taught to secure students' progress.

The Board noted the review of 2020/21 College Annual Operational Plan Priorities.

14. SUB-CONTRACTOR MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND EXTERNAL BIDS

ND presented Item 14 (Sub-contractor mid-year review). The sub-contractors also share concerns relating to the Adult Education Budget, but they are confident they will deliver. ND reassured Governors that careful monitoring of the provision online is being undertaken by a College manager.

The Board noted the Sub-contractor mid-year performance review.

15. REVISED VALUE FOR MONEY POLICY

DP presented the revised Value for Money Policy; changes were highlighted in yellow. These related mainly to terminology updates.

The Board approved the revised Value for Money Policy.

16. REVISED TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY

DP presented the revised Treasury Management Policy and outlined the key changes, which had resulted from the external auditors' regularity report. In the previous meeting Governors asked DP to suggest a limit in relation to short term borrowing. DP asked if Governors were comfortable with £200k as a limit. PN confirmed he had no concerns; a process is in place should this function be utilised and therefore happy to recommend approval.

The Board approved the revised Treasury Management Policy and the £200k limit in relation to short term borrowing.

17. MID-YEAR REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

MB presented Item 17 and gave a brief overview. The key points were:

- First interaction activity completed by some Governors but suspended due to COVID-19 closures.
- The interaction programme should continue as much as practicably possible. A section of the Away Day (9 February 2021) aims to increase Governors' confidence in challenging managers / staff in relation to Teaching, Learning & Assessment and progress, which will be useful in the next phase of the programme.
- Attendance figures to 15 December 2020 are as follows:
 - Board - 77%
 - Audit - 88%
 - Performance & Remuneration - 100%
 - Search & Governance - 100%
 - Student Liaison - 80%.
- It was noted that there has been no correspondence from Ryan Cordingley and as discussed earlier, ND will canvass students to replace him.
- As noted in previous items, DP shares monthly accounts which are RAG rated and are monitored and challenged via the Audit Committee and Board.
- PN attended the ETF Chair Leadership and Development Network event – Board Diversity on 16 December 2020; he would circulate the one-page summary from the event.

The Board noted the mid-year review of the Governance Development Plan.

18. ELECTION OF CHAIR FROM 2021-22

MB noted that as JE's term of office is coming to an end, nominations to replace her as Chair of the Corporation were requested in advance of the meeting. Peter Norris was the only member to receive nominations. PN was asked to leave the meeting and a number of Governors seconded his nomination.

PN
20 Feb. 2021

18. ELECTION OF CHAIR FROM 2021-22 (continued)

PN returned to the meeting and was delighted to receive the nominations. He will take up his position from the beginning of the new academic year.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Governors 'Away Day' would take place on Tuesday 9 February from 8.30am. The next scheduled meeting will take place on Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 3.45pm.