

Minutes of the Corporation Special Meeting

held on Saturday 9 January 2016

at Aston University Conference Centre

Present Leslie Williams (*Chair*), Ian Jewkes (*Vice Chair*), Keith Bate (*Principal*), Karen Cocker, Geoffrey Elliott, Andrew Hanson, Mark Johnson, Helene Jones, Allison Matthews, Alison Perks, Rianna Soley

In attendance Jacque Carman (*Director of Finance and Corporate Services*)
Joanne Williams (*Director of Learning and Teaching*)
Louise Craddock (*Faculty Director, A Levels*)
Julie Edwards (*Faculty Director, Business and Professional Services*)
Sarah Dobson (*Faculty Director, Creative Arts*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Jane Chan, Peter Mitchell and Elizabeth Skipper.

2 Declarations of Interest

Members interests were as reported under their current declarations forms.

3 Strategic Plan 2015–2020 (Review of Plan and Prioritisation of Options.)

Leslie Williams outlined the work plan for the day moving on from the overview provided in the meeting held on 8 January 2016.

Progress of Annual Plan

Governors and staff divided into two groups to review the Core and Enabling Strategies of the 2015-2016 Annual Plan. Points arising from the groups were reported back and discussed. For completeness the notes of the working groups are provided as an Annexe to these minutes.

4 Implementing the Strategic Plan and Priorities for the Corporation 2016–2017

Strategic Priorities for the Year Ahead

Keith Bate provided a detailed overview of the areas impacting upon the development of priorities for the College for 2016-2017.

Keith Bate explained the make-up, reach and powers of the West Midlands Combined Authority. The critical mass of the authority would help broker international trade. Priorities included focus on productivity, land, mental health and transport. Early understanding of the operation of the new authority was based on public sector lead officer roles.

The Skills devolution programme would be outcomes driven and funding would not be based on a qualification tariff. The 2018/19 timescale was contingent on readiness conditions.

The Area Review would now be chaired by the Combined Authority not the FE Commissioner. The focus had developed from that of sector financial viability to that of meeting local need, offering the right balance of provision and raising productivity. Corporations retained decision making powers and would be required to consult on proposed changes to their institution.

Other developments in the sector which could have impact included academy conversion of Sixth Form Colleges, development of new Institutes of Technology and Free Schools. Additionally the employer levy for Apprenticeships and changes to qualification routes were significant.

The Black Country Partnership for Learning, Ratio Review was provided. The College was researching the potential for shared services to achieve economies of scale. The College was also exploring Multi Academy Trust sponsorship as a means of extending collaboration and supportive working partnership arrangements.

Mark Johnson asked about physical provision across the area and the impact of an Area Review removing some sites. Members questioned if it was appropriate to consider a changed strategy. Leslie Williams noted that the College had discounted a more aggressive strategy previously as distracting the College from its core purpose. Alison Perks also felt that the College's collaborative approach had historically been successful. Karen Cocker asked about development proposals and it was noted that the Chair and Principal would report to the Corporation following their meeting with Black Country College Chairs and Principals on 26 January 2016 regarding delivery of Adult Skills in relation to both LEP and WMCA priorities across the region. (The Black Country LEP had identified five Transformational and five Enabling Sectors).

The Corporation confirmed the following mandate for the Chair and Principal in preparation for the Area Review:

- Maintain independence of College
- Pursue financial sustainability, including looking at shared services
 - In discussion with King Edward's VI College and Stoke on Trent VI Form College and Newcastle-under-Lyme College
 - Collaboration on teaching, sharing resources and staff
 - Corporate services, development and planning opportunities
- Recognising changing environment, pursue strategic partnerships and collaborative working to achieve these objectives
- Pursue opportunities for a local multi-academy trust with like-minded organisations
 - Discuss with King Edward's VI College
- Support and participate in a single model for apprenticeships across the Black Country

Action 4a Following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement the College was considering its approach. 16-19 base rate funding was cash protected, however, assistance would be valued from employer based governors regarding the New Adult Education Budget and Apprenticeship Levy and Funding. Ian Jewkes and Helene Jones agreed to join an employer group.

Under curriculum changes the new GCSEs with 9-1 grading were noted as more demanding. A Level provision was continuing to change and Vocational qualifications were becoming more exam based which would impact on students who achieved better through coursework.

The demographic fall in 16-18 year olds and the increasingly competitive environment would continue to impact on the College student recruitment numbers. Therefore effective recruitment and retention remained paramount. The College would need to take account of the increased diversity in the catchment area.

The College had increased community engagement through the facilitation of a number of developments including a Civic Society and a branch of the Women's Institute. There was scope for further development based on civic pride to support heritage, leisure, tourism and student volunteering. Additional scope for twinning to widen dimensions in place through schemes such as ERASMUS was also noted. This also provided more scope for employer engagement.

With regard to efficiencies and budgetary strength it would be appropriate to commit to achievement of a 5% Annual Operating Surplus. Members discussed further scope of a shared working approach including exchanges and collaborative teaching.

The College's Organisation Development Strategy was provided.

Strategic Priorities for the College

Members discussed key questions regarding the validity of the College Strategic Plan, the approach to collaborative working and consideration of developing or contracting provision. Leslie Williams noted that there could be change arising from the Black Country Area Review.

The Corporation's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 remained relevant. Core Strategy C1 was particularly pertinent regarding delivery of an extensive and high quality range of learning and progression opportunities that could continue to be enhanced through partnership working. Members agreed no change should be made to the Strategic Plan currently.

Annual Plan 2016/17 Options and Priorities

Joanne Williams and Jacquie Carman reviewed areas of focus for 2016/2017 under the core and enabling strategies. These are listed at Appendix B.

Karen Cocker asked about quality assurance and what needed to be addressed. Joanne Williams explained that there was an aim to review teams to ensure staff such as teacher development managers were in place.

Karen Cocker further asked about staff training and Keith Bate explained that Unionlearn was a way of enhancing Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies. Under the enabling strategies staff would be encouraged to engage with this programme.

Leslie Williams asked about Digital Development and Joanne Williams answered that use of the Moodle Platform, the Bring Your Own Device approach, staff development and investment were all areas of focus.

Leslie Williams further asked about HE Development and was assured that this remained part of curriculum development and was also referenced in Trailblazers and Higher Apprenticeships.

Action 4b It was agreed that the senior management team would address the strategic review outcomes in light of the Area Based Review and return a report to the Corporation.

Action 4c Keith Bate raised that the possibility of a forthcoming inspection should also be addressed in the current year's plans. It was agreed that a group of governors would make preparations.

Action 4d Further reflection on development, contraction and working differently was required. Joanne Williams would prepare a report for Corporation on analysis of areas regarding opportunities, problems and viability.

5 Corporation Self-Assessment Outcomes for Development

Leslie Williams and Ian Jewkes reported back on outcomes from the governor self-assessment interviews undertaken in the autumn term.

Strengths included the meeting environment where discussion and challenge was professional and conducive. Areas for reflection included the frequency of meetings, avoiding complacency on financial performance, addressing the Appeals process and succession management for the Chair and Principal. .

Development opportunities arising from the process had begun to be addressed. The Clerk provided the current Development Plan to which items would be added. These included use of external review of the Corporation and management working process, further information development and increased briefings and updates.

Action 5a The Clerk would update the Corporation Development Plan to be provided for the Search and Governance Committee and Corporation.

College Development Plan

Joanne Williams provided the key development actions for 2016. These were received by members to be linked to Strategic Priorities in the College Development Plan for 2016/2017.

6 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Corporation is the Annual General Meeting scheduled for Saturday 23 January 2016 at 10am.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.

Actions from meetings			
Ref	Agenda item and action	Date/item for review	Reported by
Corporation Meeting 25 November 2015			
4.2	Recommendations from the Search and Governance Committee		
a)	In response to further questions it was noted that a retired HMI would be suitable to address such external review and if agreed Search and Governance Committee be asked to progress this.	February 2016	LWi
c)	It was agreed that the Search and Governance Committee consider a list of reports to be subject to advanced scrutiny.	February 2016	JSu
6.1	College Self-Assessment Report and Development Plan		
	It was agreed that revised reporting should more clearly illustrate movement in performance, to be addressed within the Faculty Director reports provided within the annual cycle of business.	July 2016	KDB
Corporation Meeting 9 January 2016			
4	Implementing the Strategic Plan and Priorities for the Corporation 2016–2017		KDB
	Strategic Priorities for the Year Ahead		
4a	Regarding the New Adult Education Budget and Apprenticeship Levy and Funding, Ian Jewkes and Helene Jones agreed to join an employers group.	March 2016	KDB JWi
4b	It was agreed that the senior management team would address the strategic review outcomes in light of the Area Based Review and return a report to the Corporation.	Summer 2016	KDB
4c	Inspection: It was agreed that a group of governors would make preparations.	March 2016	JWi
4d	Reflection on development, contraction and working differently: Joanne Williams to prepare a report for Corporation on analysis of areas regarding opportunities, problems and viability.	March 2016	JWi
5a	Corporation Self-Assessment Outcomes for Development		
	The Clerk would update the Corporation Development Plan to be provided for the Search and Governance Committee and Corporation.	February 2016	JSu

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Working Groups Review of Annual Plan – 2015/2016

Core Strategies

C1 Deliver the most extensive range of high quality 14-25 learning and progression opportunities

Leslie Williams noted that C1 could reference in partnership with other organisations.

C1.1 Curriculum Strategy

- May not deliver all subjects
- Response to curriculum changes such as BTEC
- A Level reforms remain unclear
- Need to ensure staff are aware of changes
- Need a flexible framework 'an extensive range'
- Area Review may have a change on planned provision
- Rationalise – map across institution?
- Challenge of what and how deliver
- Technological developments - online
- Aware of student needs at the core

C1.2 Ofsted

- New CIF adopted and cascaded through training
- Count down to Ofsted expected in 2016

C1.3 Digital Learning

- More time needed to develop
- Varied student use of ipads
- Research with CE indicated personalised use of devices, expectations of learners, learner own devices, College to respond to multi-platforms, need to teach and support staff with new technology and embed more effectively in Teaching and Learning
- Level of investment – multi platforms are expensive
- Ensure the basics of printers and desktops addressed
- Lease model for IT?
- Smarter investment – respond to assessment demands
- Learn from HEI's use online material properly to support learning (eg GCSEPod), teachers need to be confident

C1.4 Higher Education Review

- Review met expectations HE was of a high standard
- Popular for students to stay local with links to HEI's and meeting demand a successful model

C2 Lead in diverse, inclusive and innovative learning, teaching and assessment

C2.1 Admission and Profile of Students

- Late induction option
- Develop for next year ILP, recognising complex student needs, continue personalised model - can learn from school model, need to recognise sensitivity

- Profile of student vital – better use of information to motivate and support progress
- Prevent, staff training on how to deal with this agenda and successfully implement
- E-Safety feedback from students

C2.2 English and Maths

- Sharper tracking and monitoring
- Attendance information
- Raised profile of GCSE English and Maths across the College
- Relevant to vocational course successfully delivered by vocational staff
- Still some areas to focus on
- Digital Developments GCSE Pod – incorporate targets like My Maths

C2.3 PREVENT

- Updated risk assessment post Paris attacks

C2.4 SEND

- An area of increasing challenge
- Increased high needs for learners, challenges of getting information needed and in managing this, regular meetings to review information and progress
- Demands of resources to support high needs
- Ofsted focus

C3 Drive strong collaborative learning partnerships in meeting the needs of the local economy, education and the community

C3.1 School Liaison and Partnerships

- Healthy liaison with schools and careers links
- Focus on schools and collegiate model

C3.2 HE Development

- HE Developments on track
- IT/Business link with LEP regarding Higher Apprenticeships?

C3.3 Community Engagement

- Building reputation
- Supporting Civic Society, walled garden, WI
- Where to develop this – Community led course? Identify demands?

Enabling Strategies

E1 A reputation and brand as the outstanding College of choice that leads local learning

Ian Jewkes noted that any change to strategy should be considered post Area Review.

E1.1 Launch Strategic Plan

- The plan was live following internal and external consultation and staff had adopted this

E1.2 50th Year Anniversary

- Planning and consultation were underway with many ideas forthcoming to celebrate and promote the College

E1.3 New Advanced Science and Technology Centre

- Following the official launch this now required maximisation of usage; there were bespoke courses on digital aspects for employers and opportunities to have more Higher Apprenticeship and pre apprenticeship programme students

E1.4 New performance Centre

- This was underway with a target date for June for completion; there had been consultation with students and staff and potential to gain feedback through January Open Day

E2 Be an exemplary employer, recognised for the most capable, committed and caring staff

E2.1 Organisational Development Strategy

- Cultural shift on CPD with positive promotion and engagement
- CPD to be relevant
- Government Challenges and responding to staff needs

E2.2 Digital Development

- Digital communication and skills and staff 'buy in'
- Systems to be better used - Development of 'book a techie' scheme to better support staff in classroom application

E2.3 Learning and technical capacity

- Staff training to use technology as a tool
- Roles and responsibility

E2.4

- Website consultation and use of social media plus traditional approach as Community newsletter was good

E3 Ensure financial strength and stability to deliver excellent facilities and resources

E3.1 Core College Systems

- Student record system had increased capacity to generate more information
- Need to develop reports
- This area was business critical and needed further improvement
- HR payroll was a concern to be addressed
- Looking to maximise efficiency gains were needed

E3.2 Moodle Developments

- Block 9 - November Open Events had showcased exciting developments
- Need to focus on teaching and learning and consulting on what staff want to use

E3.3 Financial Infrastructure and Capacity

- On target to achieve College targets

E3.4 Physical Resources and Environment

- Is the Whittingham road site right – modern, safe and attractive?
- Are the facilities what are needed?

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Annual Plan 2016/17 Options and Priorities

C1

- Extending curriculum and enhancing student volunteer opportunities
- Extending digital strategies and use of Moodle in the curriculum
- Continuing to implement the GCSE, Vocational, A Level and Trailblazers developments.
- Achieving higher levels of quality in teacher performance.

C2

- Utilising a school model of monitoring with very clear target setting to move teaching and learning forward
- Meeting the conditions of the Ambitious about Autism Charter
- Teacher staff development tailored to meet individual needs

C3

- To pursue ERASMUS and Town twinning for collaborative working
- To continue to facilitate Community through the Civic Society
- Continue to pursue a Multi Academy Trust approach
- Pursue shared working and other alliances over immediate future

E1

- Development of the Advanced Science and Technology Centre
- Volunteering and local learning development
- Launch and promotion of Block 13
- Raising the College profile through the 50th Anniversary celebrations
- Area Review – potential to promote the outcomes

E2

- New College website and meeting needs of target audience
- Equality and Diversity and a supportive environment – maintaining Leader in Diversity
- Effective management of change and training staff to support the performance management model, developing staff to highest level
- Maximisation of staff engagement, communication and staff voice
- Development of innovation skills – digital learning
- Safe and well-resourced environment. To gain the highest level of award for Health and Safety

E3

- Fully operational core systems
- Reshaping the Finance Strategy and targets
- Developing further the Risk Management model
- Maximising performance through development of professional services
- Achieve efficiencies through shared services models
- Resilient Digital network to achieve aims
- Maintaining the physical environment