

## Minutes of the Corporation Strategic Review Special Meeting

Held Tuesday 21 May 2024

*Present* Joanne Chilton (Chair), Aisha Benachour, Stuart Fisher, Mark Hammond, Andy Hanson, Ian Hughes, Alison Jarrett, Tiffany Harvey-Pallent, Raj Joshi, Gail Rothnie, Joanne Rouse, Lee Smart, Mark Sterling, Anna Sutton, Kate Taylor

*In attendance* Andrew Woodford (*Vice Principal and Chief Finance Officer*)  
Craig Tucker (*Assistant Principal Quality and Standards*)  
Jon Priest (*Chief Information Officer*)  
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
	Apologies were received on behalf of Jacquie Carman, Joanne Williams, Chloe Naughton, Sarah Dawson, Shabir Chagan and Helene Jones.
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
	Kate Taylor declared her interest under strategic matters discussed regarding her role with the West Midlands Combined Authority.
<b>3</b>	<b>Accountability Agreement</b>
	<p>A video presentation by Jacquie Carman placed the new draft Accountability Agreement for 2024-2025 into context. The duty to review skills was statutory and the document outlined how the College was working to meet local skills needs. The Annual Plan and the Transformational Projects proposed supported a step change in practice geared to achieve impact.</p> <p>Jacquie Carman provided an overview of data, covering employment across the locality and particularly in the Black Country in comparison with national statistics. While below national rates there was a positive local trajectory. However, this was within the context of fewer people employed in management and professional roles and higher youth unemployment, particularly across Sandwell, which had currently one of the highest rates nationally. The lack of digital skills was particularly noted.</p> <p>The College had aligned its priorities against the four pillars of the West Midlands Combined Authority and the priorities of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, with curriculum offer mapped against key areas. The College had consulted stakeholders and key organisations.</p> <p>The draft document aimed to set out vision and strategic objectives, with focus on place and community, which was pivotal in helping people gain skills and employment, which contributed to fulfilling and happy lives.</p> <p>Governors probed the content of the draft document in depth. Following discussion about the language and info graphics used, it was recognised that the format met the requirements of the Department for Education, however, it was felt that this was subsequently often difficult to read as it assumed much prior knowledge. It was recognised that it was not suitable for all audiences but could be used perhaps to tailor</p>

	<p>information for stakeholders. Detailed points of feedback were noted to be provided to the senior team. These addressed clarity of data and language, the volume of text, positive use of graphs and tables and increased evidence to showcase what the College is doing.</p>
	<p>The Corporation agreed that the final version of the Accountability Agreement should be provided for written resolution prior to signing and submission.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Annual Plan 2024-2025</b></p> <p>The Chair reported that the Annual Plan was being provided for early consideration to then approve at the July meeting of the Corporation. This would prepare the Corporation to move in real time into the new academic year.</p> <p>A video presentation by Jacquie Carman explained that the new annual plan focused on five strategic objectives with a clear vision for success.</p> <p>Governors provided detailed feedback on the form and content of the draft plan. Detailed points would be shared with management. In summary key points included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assurance that the plan is not overly ambitious for achievement in one year.</li> <li>2. Clarification and communication on early stage discussions regarding partnership working, to address gaps in local area provision around access to skills and training.</li> <li>3. Increased clarity and standard of measures provided across the plan and if these would be supported by a separate metrics document.</li> <li>4. Provision of the budget plan alongside the annual plan to be assured of resources.</li> <li>5. Consideration of simplifying the format to reduce narrative and duplication.</li> </ol> <p>The draft Annual Plan 2024-2025 was received for consideration, with approval of the final plan scheduled for 3 July 2024 Corporation meeting.</p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Transformational Projects Consultation</b></p> <p>Members received the Principal's presentation on the proposed Transformation Projects for 2024-2025.</p> <p>The overarching drive of supporting happiness encompassed a complex challenge including building skills, confidence and resilience, inspiring ambition and eliminating achievement gaps.</p> <p>Governors asked how the three projects had been prioritised.</p> <p>It was noted that the priorities had been reached by the leadership team, underpinned by consulting staff students and employers. The 6 in 6 careers programme, together with the power pack of skills, further curriculum development in the changing landscape of educational reform, and recognising the impact of deprivation on learners, were worthy of prioritisation, with the potential to make transformational change.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that the College was also now part of a Trauma Informed Project</p> <p>It was noted that the projects were woven through the Annual Plan 2024-2025.</p> <p>The Chair further highlighted that recent information indicated that a potential change in the ruling political party would not reverse any defunded courses.</p> <p>A governor particularly commended that the Transformational Projects were appropriately written very positively and further reported that attendance at a recent open evening had triangulated information about the impact of educational reform. Staff had been realistic but very positive in talking to prospective students and parents.</p>

	<i>Ian Hughes left the meeting.</i>
	The Corporation approved the Transformational Projects for 2024-2025.
<b>6</b>	<b>Estates: Shenstone House Tender</b>
	<p>Andrew Woodford confirmed that due to the delayed refurbishment of Shenstone House (with grant funding from the Department of Education) subsequent construction costs had increased. The contract had been through a tender process and a value engineering process.</p> <p>The shortlisted tenders were outlined.</p> <p>Governors asked about potential further funding from the Department for Education in relation to the contract value and risks to the College if not achieved. Members asked questions about alternative sources of funding, looking at the overarching strategy for estates and for increasing revenue streams. Andrew Woodford explained the very challenging position for capital borrowing across the Further Education sector, however, he would also welcome suggestions for alternative routes of funding. Moving forward the College would need to generate funding and to increase its EBITDA.</p>
	The Corporation approved the revised costs for the Shenstone House refurbishment project.
<b>7</b>	<b>Staff Governor Appointment</b>
	The outcome of the staff governor election was noted by members.
	The Corporation resolved to appoint Oliver Preece as the staff governor, subject to set eligibility criteria, commencing 1 August 2024 for two years.
<b>8</b>	<b>Any other business</b>
	<p>Members noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From 1 August 2024 a new Safeguarding lead governor would be needed.</li> <li>• The report from the External Board Review was positive and would be presented at the 3 July 2024 meeting.</li> <li>• That the Chair would be attending the Trauma Informed Project Group alongside Joanne Williams and Sarah Bullus.</li> </ul>
<b>9</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b>
	The next meeting of the Corporation is as scheduled for Wednesday 3 July 2024.

**The meeting closed at 8pm**