



Minutes of the electronic Corporation meeting held at 1700hrs on 8 July 2020

Present	Phil Berry	Irina Kendix	Richard Lewis
	Matt Luheshi	Matthew Messenger	Chris Nicholls
	Ben Stapleton	Paul Thompson	Phil Thompson (Chair)
	Gill Worgan (Principal)		
In Attendance	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Gary Dixon (DPQ)	Cath Gunn (Principal, Barnfield)
	Sarah Knowles (DP (P&D))	Eamonn McCarroll (DoF)	Tammy Nuthall (DP, Barnfield) (attendee)
	Chris Pearson (Dir (SCA))	Louise Barden (Principal's PA)(Observer)	
Apologies	Guy Ainsley		

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

PART ONE

96/19 ELIGIBILITY, QUORUM, DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- a. The apology was accepted. No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and there had been no interests declared.
- b. Electronic meetings were confirmed as compliant with Standing Orders (SO); members had submitted questions in advance and these would be addressed at the relevant stage of the agenda. The meeting format was explained and agreed. **(Action 1)**

97/19 STANDING ITEMS

- a. the Minutes (Part 1&2) of the meeting held on 10 June 2020 were confirmed for electronic signature; the Clerk to Action. **(Action 2)**
- b. Matters Arising.
- c. Outstanding Actions. All actions from the last meetings had been implemented or were in progress.

See referenced minute for full detail.		Resp	Date
Action 1	83/19b. Meeting format agreed.	Chair	Wie
Action 2	33/19c. GA indirect interest declared.	Clerk	
Action 3	84/19a. Last minutes confirmed for signature.		
Action 4	87/19. SAR presented to October meeting.		14.10.20
Action 5	90/19a. Corporation meeting tbn at HH new building.		asap
Action 6	90/19b. PT re-appointed as Member and Chair.		08.07.20

Matters arising. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

- d. Committee Minutes. The Minutes of the Audit Committee (AC) meeting held on 30 June 2020 were presented by the Committee Chair. There had been three positive Internal Audit

Service (IAS) Fieldwork Reports: Procurement (strong assurance), Learner Record (significant assurance) and Governance (strong assurance) and two recommendations for approval:

- (i) IAS Annual Plan 2020.21; and
- (ii) External Audit Plan and associated fee.

Both were approved. **(Action 3)**

e. Urgent Business. There was no urgent business requested.

a. The information was received and noted.

b. Actions had been identified. (Register 106/19 below)

98/19 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal's report covered detail outside the scope of the agenda, it had been circulated in advance and was received; several points were considered further:

The report didn't include the Dashboard

a. Capital Projects. Some updates to the report were explained:

- (i) Bute Street. The Council had completed purchase of the carpark. The "put and call" option agreement with LBC required the College to retain responsibility for stamp duty (£228k);
- (ii) Kings Langley. Notice had been served to Bellway Homes to complete the sale of the Kings Langley Campus on 20 July;
- (iii) Hemel Hempstead (HH) Phase 2. Possession of the HH building had been effected on 15 June;
- (iv) New Bedford Road (NBR) NBR was progressing well and an OJEU compliant pre-tender document had been published. Further recent meetings had been held with SEMLEP and the bid was being submitted to Ministers for approval. The Corporation would be updated on progress and no agreements would be accepted without approval.

b. Covid "Catch-up". Funding of £1bn to finance a Covid "Catch up" had been announced. The aim to help young people who had failed to make progress at school during the lockdown; this fund is restricted to primary and secondary schools although the Association of Colleges (AoC) was lobbying Ministers on behalf of Colleges. Local WHC catch up sessions were planned and necessary resources were available within Additional Learning Support (ALS); Student Support (SS); and Learning Facilitators services. Costs were included in the 2020/21 budget - more resources this year to present a more dynamic and targeted service for student needs.

c. College Collaboration Fund (CCF). A £9m fund to promote sharing of good practice and to support improvement had been established, the aim was similar to the recent Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) which had funded assistance to local colleagues 2 years ago. A CCF bid had been submitted in partnership with Oaklands College; North Herts College; USP College in Essex and West Suffolk College (WSC). WHC already worked closely with other Herts Colleges, which made them logical partners. WSC and USP were particularly strong in digital and online delivery: WSC in terms of content and USP in terms of technology. Particularly useful in relation to WHC plans for future parallel class and remote delivery.

d. Higher Education (HE) Student Numbers. Possibility of financial losses through fewer university applications in the coming year had prompted worries that use of attractive placement offers would unfairly attract students and consequently "student number controls" had been introduced. This was positive for WHC since incentivisation to attend University would not be unfairly introduced.

e. FE Commissioner. A letter from the FE Commissioner (16.06.20) was attached and noted.

- a. The information was received and noted.
- b. Actions had been identified. (Register 106/19 below)

99/19 COVID OPERATIONAL IMPACT

WHC and BC generally re-opened to some students on 15 June although the BC Nursery had done so on 1 June. Official guidance had been applied and firm safety measures for distancing, cleanliness and hygiene were in force. Teaching and Learning (T&L) continued to be provided for students still working remotely and strong engagement continued. A significant number of apprentices had now returned to work “off furlough” and those absent were reducing every week. Currently 130 apprentices remained on furlough; the majority within ‘low risk’ sector areas, for example: 76 in Construction & Engineering and 23 in Hairdressing. For the few in ‘high risk’ areas such as leisure/hospitality, increased support, advice and guidance had been made available. Enrolments for the coming year were surprisingly robust but how that would translate into numbers through the door could not be predicted. Plans for the large scale opening in September had been established, together with some anticipatory contingency procedures. Arrangements for delivery included a mix of class and online delivery prompted both by the self-evident success of the remote option, but largely by the “bubble” student separation requirements. Some elements which required cross-college mixing would default to the remote option, notably English and Maths (EAM) and some vocational delivery. Generally, the plans were welcomed as comprehensive, practical and well-rounded; they were endorsed. The dedicated Covid Risk Register (attached), amended as requested to show the status of mitigating action was considered; changes from the last meeting included a reduction in both security arrangements, recognising greater occupancy and Legionella since water management arrangements had been restored.

The information was received and noted.

100/19 HUMAN RESOURCE (HR) ANNUAL REPORT

The annual HR report was considered and discussed. The team comprised appropriately qualified members complemented by external specialist support as and when required. Policies were reviewed regularly to ensure relevance to strategy. Personal information was collected sensitively and stored securely and new processes to ensure fair and even-handed treatment of employees were under development. Effective succession planning contributing to the low turnover rate and recruitment processes including effective “on-boarding” were being continually developed. Levels of both short term and long term absence continued to decline year on year through the team working proactively with managers to monitor absence levels and in supporting timely return to work. There were no significant trends in reported absence type, with short term absence being attributed to Cold/Flu/Virus. Performance Management was effective and a high standard of training and development was established and was integral to the appraisal process (personal objectives set & reviewed) and monitored throughout the academic year. Gender pay, equality and diversity and wellbeing remained a high priority. Exit interviews were not well attended; this was an area that should be improved, particularly around the structure of the feedback and subsequent use. There were other routes to provide feedback, such as the Staff Voice Forum; Open Questions sessions in Webinars and Governor visits. The latter could be particularly rewarding, for example a recently departed member would complete learning walks and engage staff in informal discussions and feed back to the Corporation. All present members were urged to undertake such opportunities. **(Action 4)** Consideration was given to emerging elements for the coming year; there were plans to improve Equality and Diversity, in line with increased expectations due to recent events and new processes, such as blind recruitment. Implementation of revised 'Covid-19' home-working and well-being policies would ensure that the increased number of people working from home were doing so safely, efficiently and effectively. A more positive feature of the crisis is that the expected high unemployment may increase interest in teaching, particularly in those traditionally challenging specialisms such as construction. Additionally, the College has secured a (£54k) grant from the Education and Training Foundation that can be used to attract individuals from industry.

- a. The information was received and noted.
- b. Actions had been identified. (Register 106/19 below)

101/19 RISK REGISTER

Risk Register (RR). The RR had been updated as required by the current Risk Management (RM) Policy and the revised version had been scrutinised and discussed by the AC. The document comprised:

- a. a "High Level" WHC RR together with a separate and detailed RR (Appendix 1); and
- b. three "special/specific RR (HH/BC Redevelopments and Covid-19).

Risk information would be regularly scrutinised by the Committee: "High Level" each term and the Full Register annually; two new risks had been added to the "High Level" summary:

- c. 5.3. Safeguarding process vulnerability during lockdown; and
- d. 8.10. Self-isolation for College staff.

A full summary of the RR had been tabulated, the information compared the detail reported at the last meeting with that in today's report; the Register had also been discussed, welcomed and confirmed by the AC. The latest versions of the Hemel Hempstead and Barnfield Campus Redevelopment RRs were at Annexes 2 & 3 respectively; the latest Covid specific version was at Annex 4 and had been considered in 99/19. The effect of a possible recurrence of Covid-19 "second wave" was discussed, the initial plan had been amended by a comprehensive action (lessons learned) log, which had been diligently recorded throughout the lockdown and management was confident in this area.

The information was noted and received.

102/19 GOVERNANCE

- a. Meeting Schedule. The final version of the meeting schedule including start times and location was considered and approved. **(Action 5)**
- b. Business Plan. The Business Plan for the coming year, which would ensure consideration of necessary key strategic, operational and legal matters. The Plan was not exhaustive and remained flexible to allow for changed circumstances. In accordance with the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges a specific Complaints Report would be added or the detail included in a relevant report. **(Action 6)** Two additional annual reports had been included:
 - (i) Equality and Diversity (E&D) tbd in June 2021; and
 - (ii) Sub-Contractor Performance tbd in Dec 2020 & July 2022.

The Plan was approved. **(Action 7)**

- c. Regulatory Documents. Governance Documents were considered annually.
 - (i) Annex C, the Scheme of Delegation would be aligned with Financial Regulations, and amended to "new contracts, over £250k (or over £100k if the contract was not subject to competitive tender or quote)" to seek Corporation approval.
 - (ii) the Code of Conduct at Annex E was based on the Eversheds template issued in 2016, there had been no significant changes and it was agreed for inclusion; and
 - (iii) Annex F Code of Good Governance for English Colleges included a model statement for non-adoption of the HE Remuneration Code, this was to explain to the Office for Students the HE Regulator that the WHC Group had adopted the alternative FE version.

With these amendments incorporated the Regulatory Documents were approved. **(Action 8)**

- a. **The information was received and noted.**

b. Actions had been identified. (Register 106/19 below)

103/19 MEMBERS

a. The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee explained that the Committee had met earlier that day and interviewed Jason Smith, contact with him had been brokered by Chris Pearson (Dir (SCA)) through his liaison activities with Barnfield College; in line with the normal process Jason had met the Corporation Chair and they had informally discussed the general role and expectations for a member of WHC Group Corporation. Jason appeared to have the necessary attributes to strengthen the knowledge base of the Corporation and to better the FE Commissioner's guidance for at least two accountants in the membership and accordingly he was invited to meet the Committee. After an excellent interview, members unanimously recommended that he should be appointed for an initial appointment of 2 years. That recommendation was approved and Jason would be invited to the next Corporation meeting. **(Action 9)**

a. **The information was received and noted.**

b. **Actions had been identified. (Register 106/19 below)**

104/19 URGENT BUSINESS

There had been no urgent business requested.

105/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be at 1700 on 14 October 2020; members noted that a special September meeting may be required.

106/19 ACTION REGISTER

		Resp	Date
	See referenced minute for full detail.		
Action 1	96/19b. Meeting format agreed.	Chair	wie
Action 2	97/19a. Last minutes (10.06.20) confirmed for signature.	Clerk	
Action 3	97/19d. Internal & Audit Plans approved.	DoF	
Action 4	100/19. Members urged to meet and exchange with staff.	Chair	
Action 5	102/19a. Meeting Schedule 2020.21 approved.		asap
Action 6	102/19b. Complaints detail to be reported.	DDPD	
Action 7	102/19b. Business Plan 2020.21 approved.	Chair	
Action 8	102/19. Regulatory Documents conditionally approved.		
Action 9	103/19. JS appointed for 2 years.	Clerk	wie

Rajiv Deveran (Clerk) for Phil Thompson (Clerk)

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Final Audit Report

2020-10-16

Created:	2020-10-16
By:	Ralph Devereux (office.mpe@btconnect.com)
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