

Colchester Institute Corporation

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board
held on 20th April 2016
at the Sheepen Road Campus**

Present

Christopher Bridge, *in the Chair*
Alison Andreas
Lisa Clampin
Tyler-James Collinson
David Gask

David Gronland
Kevin Prince
Sue Thompson-Arnold
Richard Wainwright

In Attendance

Gary Horne
Hazel Paton
Jill Wognum

Vice Principal: Finance and Operations
Clerk to the Governors
Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality

Apologies for absence were received from Brenda Baker, David Kerridge, Bryn Morris, Peter Hempstead and Karen Tarling.

Board Briefing

The meeting was preceded with a presentation from the Dean of Higher Education, Tom Toolan, on the revised operating model for assessment in higher education (HEFCE 2016). The presentation covered three areas:

(i) Baseline regulatory requirements

New requirements include:

- Financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) requirements of the relevant funding body.
- The expectations of consumer law as expressed through the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance.
- Student protection measures as expressed through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator
- The provider's mission and strategy for its higher education provision

(ii) Review of established providers

The review of established providers every five years is being replaced with a risk based approach. An annual provider review will look at the College's own quality processes and procedures, and those of the University of Essex, use data returns such as those to HESA and HEFCE more systematically and look at the views of students and where the organisation is on the their risk register. A national HE risk register will be published. The University Centre Colchester has a risk based approach to its provision which is going to be driven down to course level. Course tutors will be asked to risk rate their provision (both operational and strategic risks). This will involve a cultural change. At the moment the focus is on recruitment, retention, withdrawals and the number of students that intermit because this has an immediate impact on income.

The College's performance against the aspects of the accountability arrangements in the Annual Provider Review was discussed. The number of good degrees (first class and upper second class) is going up. Given the cohort of students (66% of students are from disadvantaged backgrounds) the

College's performance is high compared to mainstream universities. This is due to the high level of pastoral support that is provided. Module evaluation surveys are going to be changed so they provide a more accurate picture of student views. The College needs to be more reactive at course level to student concerns

There is greater emphasis on the role of the Governing Body in Annual Provider Review. This will start in 2016-17.

(iii) **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**

All providers of HE will be available for to apply for the Teaching Excellence Framework. The College must prepare for and submit to the TEF process at the earliest opportunity. Not to do so will restrict long term growth aspirations.

Governors asked what the impact would be on lecturing staff and were advised that they would have to take a risk based approach to their provision and manage that risk.

Tom Toolan was thanked for his presentation.

1. **Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest**

None.

2. **Membership**

The Board APPROVED the appointment of Tyler-James Collinson as a Student Governor for the period 20.04.16 to 31.07.16 and welcomed him to the meeting.

3. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2016 (CIC/16/2/1) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None, other than on the agenda.

5. **Chair's Announcements/Action since last meeting**

It was reported that the application to vary the capital bid for the STEM development at Braintree had been approved, enabling the College to proceed to planning and tender for the conversion of the Sports Centre. The College has had initial discussions with the planners and is optimistic that the application will be approved.

6. **Principal's Report**

CIC/16/2/2, Principal's Report April 2016, was received and considered.

(i) **Adult Provision 2016-17**

The College is currently making plans for adult provision for next year against a backdrop of changes to funding regulations. Many 19+ learners on Level 3 or above courses will have to access FE loans as Government funding will no longer be available unless it is the student's first Level 3 course or they are eligible for a fee waiver. Decisions are being informed by modelling based on the last few years. The College is also looking at new adult classroom

courses but the planning process is being slowed by delays in publishing the list of courses that will be funded (updated monthly by SFA).

Governors asked which courses might be returned to funded provision. It was reported that some Early Years and Health and Care adult courses and AAT were full-cost this year. AAT has a large number of adults and the College lost two to three groups as students shopped around and went to other providers. It is likely that these will return to funded provision. Governors asked the size of the FE loan and were advised that it is dependent on the size of the course. As an example, AAT is about £2.4k; some construction courses will be higher than this and others, such as hair and beauty, will be lower. Funding for a BTEC extended diploma is between £3k and £4k.

Governors noted that an aim of the Area Review process is for colleges to make annual operating surpluses of between 3%-5% going forward and asked how the College plans to achieve this. This will be achieved as the College becomes more efficient, through increased class sizes (minimum of 16), rationalisation of the estate and no longer delivering provision at every location. More provision will be delivered at Sheepen Road. The College is moving towards a model where it can be much clearer about the cost of delivering a particular course or type of course. Some provision costs the College more to deliver than it contributes.

A Governor stressed the importance of marketing and expressed concern that it was difficult to find information on the College's website. It is anticipated that the Resources Committee will receive the Marketing Strategy at its summer meeting. The Strategy, which is currently being finalised, has three sections: HE, FE and Adults, and Employer Focused, including apprentices and full cost. There will be a plan associated with each section and overarching information including a SWOT analysis. The Resources Committee was asked to consider how it might monitor the impact of the strategy when it is received in July.

(ii) **Annual High Level Performance Targets**

Progress as at 31 March 2016 on the annual high level performance targets was discussed. It was disappointing to note that for many of the targets the likelihood of reaching the forecast target had been downgraded to amber. The targets had been set to move the College to Good, and were ambitious. A review of 50+ Ofsted reports published since the beginning of the year found that the targets are at the top end of the Good range. The College continues to improve and in the majority of areas is forecast to outperform last year, which was itself a big improvement on 2013-14. Forecast outcomes will continue to be updated on a monthly basis.

7. Ofsted – Updated Quality Improvement Plan

CIC/16/2/3, Colchester Institute Quality Improvement Plan April 2014 - December 2016 (with update April 2016 - including Post Inspection Action Plan), was received and noted. New actions around the themes of improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; improving action planning and target setting; and performance management were discussed.

Much of the College's teaching is good and the focus is now on making sure more teaching is outstanding. In response to feedback around the use of ALS (Additional Learning Support) practitioners the College is planning to do some work with ALS and teaching staff to ensure that ALS are used more effectively in teaching sessions.

The College needs to continue to develop its digital learning strategy. Ofsted identified that the College has excellent online resources for students, mainly through Moodle, but not all students

engage with them and are aware of the benefits of using them. To raise student awareness the resources will be expanded and built into sessions.

Inspectors identified a lot of targets in ProMonitor but in some areas they were not aspirational and there was not enough evidence of students' engagement with those targets. New actions focus on improving the target setting for learners and early interventions to improve attendance, including the sharing of good practice in the strategies for improving attendance. Close monitoring and interventions in the first few weeks of term has the biggest impact and the College hopes to introduce progress and destination tutors in September to work with students in tutorials. Governors asked how other colleges have improved student attendance and were advised that they put in place resources and mechanisms to follow up why students are not attending and try to address those issues. Some colleges put in a team of people to telephone absent students as soon as the register is marked. Identifying things to improve attendance will help all the other actions.

Governors noted that a large number of actions had an implementation date of July and September 2016 and asked if this was achievable. It was reported that a lot of activities are planned between now and July to ensure that staff are trained and things are in place and embedded for the start of the new academic year.

The focus of management development activities will be on ensuring middle managers have the skills they need to improve teaching and learning in their area and move the College to outstanding. More information on this will be provided to the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

Governors discussed how to keep staff motivated to move from good to outstanding against a backdrop of constant change and would like to see actions on staff welfare include in the plan. It was reported that a lot of work is being done in the area of staff welfare and this will be included in the action plan.

8. Reports from Committees

8.1. Audit and Compliance Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2016 (CIC/16/2/4) were received and presented by the Committee Chair Lisa Clampin.

8.1.1. Committee Membership

Governors were reminded that the Remuneration and Search Committee had been looking for someone to join the Audit and Compliance Committee as a co-opted member. Someone who works for the local authority has expressed an interest in joining the Committee and the Corporation Chair, Committee Chair and Principal were due to meet the individual the following day. It was agreed that if the individual was suitable that she should be invited to join the Committee with immediate effect.

8.1.2. Financial Statement Auditors

The Board accepted the recommendation of the Committee and AGREED to reappoint Scrutton Bland as Financial Statements Auditors for the 2015-16 financial year.

8.1.3. Corporate Risk Register

CIC/16/2/5, Corporate Risk Register as at 3 February 2016, was received and noted. The Committee had discussed in detail the form and content of the register and how best to present the information. One recommendation arising from the discussion was that planned actions should be time-framed so that progress could be measured.

8.1.4. Equality and Diversity Report

CIC/16/2/6, Equality and Diversity Report, was received and noted. The report had been revised from earlier reports to include more benchmark data. The Committee had discussed the action plan and how progress for some of the objectives could be measured. The Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement had agreed to look at the measures and consider how they can be quantified so that progress can be measured going forward.

8.2. Curriculum and Quality Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2016 (CIC/16/2/7) were received and presented by the Committee Chair David Gask.

8.2.1. Scorecard

The Committee had received an update on the current performance of students based on the live data in Scorecard. Since Scorecard was introduced at the start of the academic year Heads of Department have been much better informed on the performance of individual students and the quality of discussions at Boards of Studies has improved as a result.

8.2.2. Institutional Annual Review

CIC/16/2/8, Institutional Annual Review 2014-15, was received and noted.

Recruitment was discussed. The College needs to revitalise its programmes and increase the level of internal progression.

Retention was discussed. It was reported that the College always has some early drop outs, and there is very little that can be done about these. A lot of the students come from widening participation backgrounds and the College needs to be vigilant about supporting them as problems arise. It was reported that there is more of a complaints culture in HE nationally. Governors asked what sort of complaints were received and were advised that the most recent complaint was from a student that felt they should have had a higher degree grade and had been let down by the feedback they had received. The College can generally prove that it has done everything possible to support students. The College's greatest vulnerability is its small size and the range of courses. Staff teams in particular areas are often small, for example Counselling has two full time and some part time staff. It takes time to replace staff if they are off sick or leave suddenly, causing disruption to the students. The most serious complaints are often associated with staffing issues on a particular pathway with a small team.

8.2.3. Code of Practice – Freedom of Speech

CIC/16/2/9, Code of Practice – Freedom of Speech, was received, considered and APPROVED.

8.3. Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016 (CIC/16/2/10) were received and presented by the Committee Chair Richard Wainwright.

8.3.1. **Lennartz Scheme**

The College is disputing the ongoing liability of the VAT repayment which is on the balance sheet (£1.1m). There is also the potential to recover £1.2m repaid to the Revenue over the life of the Lennartz scheme. The case is likely to be heard in the First Tier Tribunal in July. There are 20 other claims linked to the College's case and there are implications for the Revenue if the College wins. The College is suggesting and has evidence to demonstrate that the legislation that the Revenue is operating is 20 years out of date and has not been updated since prior to incorporation. The Revenue is treating further education colleges in the same way as schools under local authority control.

8.3.2. **Management Report – February 2016**

CIC/16/2/11, Management Report February 2016 [Period 7], was received and considered. The College continues to clawback the poor performance at the start of the year and is forecasting a £18k year-end surplus. Cash management continues to be challenging but the short term loan, in addition to the overdraft agreed with Barclays, was not required. The loan application is still live and discussions with the bank continue in case a loan might be needed at some stage in the future. The overdraft facility finishes at the end of April but the College may need to extend it to 20 May, when HEFCE funding is received.

It was noted that there was a reduction in other income during February. The College is focussing on special project income and opportunities to run additional full cost courses or 'hobbyist' type provision to support this income line.

Governors asked if there was anything to bring to their attention arising from the budget setting process for next year. It was reported that the curriculum plan and student numbers is the most crucial aspect. The College wants to continue to grow apprenticeship numbers but growth of 15%-20% year on year is difficult to achieve. It has been four years since the College has paid a cost of living increase and it is hoped to build a cost of living increase into the budget for next year.

Governors asked when the staff were last surveyed and were advised that a staff satisfaction survey was carried out two years ago and a lot of the staff wellbeing activities are the result of the outcomes of that survey. The College entered into partnership with a health care and wellbeing provider in Braintree to survey staff six months ago on life style. The outcomes of this survey will be used to devise staff support and welfare activities. It is hoped to carry out another satisfaction survey in 2016-17.

8.3.3. **HR Plan 2015-16 – Update on Progress**

CIC/16/2/12, HR Plan 2015-16 – update on progress at 14/03/16, was received and considered. It was noted that sickness absence was slightly higher than for the same period last year but was still within sector norms. The Director of Human Resources is monitoring sickness absence closely by department.

9. **Register of Members Interests**

CIC/16/2/13, summary of changes to the register of Corporation Members' Interests during the period 20.04.15 to 12.04.16, was received and noted.

10. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Corporation Board is scheduled for 4.30pm on Tuesday, 26th July 2016. The meeting will be preceded by a presentation at 4.00pm.

11. **Any other Business**

There were no items.

PART II – CONFIDENTIAL (these minutes are not confidential but the supporting papers are confidential)

12. **Part II Minutes**

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2016 (CIC/16/2/14) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

The Part II notes of the Board planning meeting held on 7 April 2016 (CIC/16/2/15) were received and noted.

13. **Matters arising from the minutes**

13.1. **Area Reviews**

It was reported that there is slippage in the Area Review timetable. Reviews are starting on time but are taking longer to complete than expected. Of the colleges in the first and second wave, no one has reported yet. It is not clear what the status of an Area Review report is or how the review will proceed if there is not a consensus.

14. **Resources Committee**

The Part II minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016 2016 (CIC/16/2/16) were received and noted.