

Colchester Institute Corporation

**Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Corporation Board
held on 21st October 2020**

Present:

Kevin Prince, *in the Chair*
Alison Andreas
Lisa Clampin
Mark Davies
Pam Donnelly
Patrick Giddings

Liz Goodall
Irene Kettle
Jasmin Patel
Brenda Rich
Terry Smyth
Richard Wainwright

In Attendance:

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| Gary Horne | Executive Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Development |
| Hazel Paton | Clerk to the Governors |
| Jason Peters | Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance |
| Jill Wognum | Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality |

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Cook and Keith Moule.

2. Declaration of any conflicts of interest

None.

3. Membership

3.1. It was reported that Lizzy Ellam, Staff Member nominated and elected by the College's teaching staff, had resigned from the Board 08/09/2020.

3.2. The Board APPROVED the appointment of Brenda Rich as a Staff Member, nominated and elected by the College's teaching staff, for a four-year term of office 21/10/2020 to 20/10/2024. Brenda was welcomed to her first meeting of the Board.

3.3. The Clerk updated the Board on the Student Governor election process. Two HE and six FE students were standing for election, with voting taking place between 21 October and 4 November. Governors were pleased to note the good level of interest from the student body, and asked what had changed, given that the level of engagement in the role of student governor had been variable in recent years. The Principal felt that the new approach of seeking nominations specifically for the role of Student Governor, rather than automatically appointing a member of the Students' Union Executive to the role, has been positive. Other members of the College Executive observed that the campus has a different feel to it this year. Students appear to have a genuine appreciation for the services that the College provides, and standards of behaviour are even better than in previous years. Compliance with the health and safety measures that have been in place as a result of the pandemic is good, and students want to make the most of their time on campus.

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2020 (CIC/20/4/1) were received and confirmed as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

None, other than on the agenda.

6. **Items Recommended by the Finance and Resources Committee**

- 6.1. CIC/20/4/2, Sickness Absence Policy, was received and considered. Governors noted the circumstances in which contractual sick pay may be withheld. This includes where the employee's incapacity has been caused by participation in dangerous sports or activities. Given that most sports can potentially be dangerous, Governors questioned whether the policy should be more specific in terms of what the College deems to be dangerous sports/activities. Governors acknowledged the difficulties in defining a dangerous sport, and noted that some activities may be undertaken as a one-off for the benefit of a charity. It was suggested that the College may wish to rely on this clause if a member of staff was warned not to undertake an activity but went ahead with it. After discussion it was agreed to leave this clause in the policy, and to ask the Director of Human Resources to consider this point further.

The Board APPROVED the Sickness Absence Policy.

- 6.2. The Board received, considered and APPROVED:

- CIC/20/4/3, Subcontracting Strategy and Supply Chain Management Policy 2020/2021
- CIC/20/4/4, HE Fee Proposals 2021-22

7. **Determination of Membership Numbers**

The Board considered a recommendation from the Remuneration and Search Committee to amend the number of members of the Corporation. The proposal to increase the maximum number of Independent members will enable additional Governors with particular skills to be appointed as opportunities arise to address identified skills shortages, and help with succession planning.

The Membership by category was APPROVED as:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Independent Members | At least 11 and not more than 14 |
| Student Members | 2 |
| Staff Members | 2 |
| Principal | 1 |

8. **Strategic Plan 2022-2024**

CIC/20/4/5, CI Strategic Plan 2021-2024 – initial draft outline, was received and presented by the Principal. The document had been produced following discussion at meetings of the College Executive, Senior Leadership Team, and (briefly) the Remuneration and Search Committee. Governors provided their feedback on the draft outline plan.

Proposed Mission Statement

Comments included:

- Very inclusive and very focussed
- What are the aspirations of the degree awarding body in terms of the College's HE provision and how is this reflected in the statement?
- Does it need to be written in layman's terms?
- Colchester Institute is unique within the community it serves and this should be added to the Mission statement. Unlike its competitors (the Sixth Form College and schools sixth forms) which offer academic routes, Colchester Institute is a proven specialist in providing high quality vocational and technical skills qualifications, and this is seen as its unique selling point.
- Most organisations believe they are special or different. The Mission Statement needs to articulate what unique means to us.

A suggestion was made that the College should seek the views of the University of East Anglia (UEA), which will be considered by the Principal. It was reported that when the UEA had agreed to become

the College's validating partner it had been particularly attracted by Colchester Institute's uniquely vocational offer. The Dean of Higher Education is developing an updated strategy for University Centre Colchester and this will be reflected in the Higher Education section of the new Strategic Plan.

Governors felt that it would be useful for the Board to have a presentation from the UEA on their vision for Colchester Institute at a future meeting.

Context:

A Governor asked whether the statement on climate crisis referred to how the College is responding to the climate crisis in terms of the curriculum, and if so whether it would be through cross curricular content, or through more specific programmes. There are three areas to this:

- (i) the way the College operates its business;
- (ii) cross curricular information;
- (iii) specific curriculum and full cost provision which the College is well equipped to deliver. The difficulty is attracting viable group sizes. The Energy Skills Centre at Harwich, which was set up to support the off-shore wind industry, now supports a range of engineering sectors, but will always have a key link to the energy sector and both off-shore and on-shore wind.

Strategic Priorities

Comments included:

- Which aspects are in the College's control and which require the support of the students, the local community or other agency, and how is success going to be measured? The Principal suggested including an additional section on potential barriers and how the College will achieve the priorities.
- Although not a large part of the College's provision, the work of UCC needs to come through more strongly in the section of Higher Education.
- How is the College going to meet the needs of those people who may not immediately go into jobs and who are going to be self-employed?
- Teaching and Learning needs to be at the heart of the strategy.

Key features of our strategy

There was a wide-ranging discussion about the idea of offering a recruitment service to employers. The College already provides such a service unofficially in a wide range of areas (referring students to employers and employers to students; bringing in employers to meet with students and possibly holding interviews on campus) and would like to formalise those links that get people into positive destinations. There was a general view that the College does not need to be a recruitment company, but it should have excellent relationships with employers and should be providing the best networking opportunities. A Member commented that the Annual Public Meeting was a good forum for building relationships with local employers. Annual Public Meetings are no longer held because they were largely attended by staff and Governors, but few employers. The College holds a range of employer events throughout the year focussed on different sectors. Breakfast events organised by CIBS (CI Business Solutions) attract between 40 and 80 employers.

Next Steps

The Board wanted to take the lead in the setting the strategic priorities and agreed to hold a special, single agenda item, meeting for Governors and the College Executive to take this forward.

9. Chair's Announcement/Action since last meeting

- 9.1. The Chair and Principal signed (09/10/2020) an agreement between (1) Braintree District Council, (2) Colchester Institute Corporation and (3) M Scott Properties Limited. The agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 relates to land at Braintree College of Further Education Church Lane Braintree, Essex CM7 5SE. Documentation is being drawn up with a view to completing the land sale on 30th November 2020.

9.2. The Chair attended two recent AoC (Association of Colleges) events:

- (i) **The FE Climate Action Roadmap: Practical help for implementation for Governors (07/10/20)**
The Roadmap provides clear actions and guidance on how colleges can respond to the climate emergency and advance sustainability.

The Government is making significant sums of funding available to colleges and schools to upgrade their campuses. The College Executive are currently considering a range of projects which could be funded by this money. The chosen projects will be part of a wider College Estates and Accommodation Strategy, to be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.

The Executive Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Development reported that he had met with building consultants earlier that day to discuss a bid through Salix for the Government's decarbonisation scheme funding. It is hoped that the College will be able to put together a bid to replace the aging boilers in the Blocks B/D at the Colchester campus and potentially to replace the fenestration.

- (ii) **Governor's online Conference (13/14 October 2020)**
The presentations from the event will be circulated to Board members as soon as they are available.

10. **Principal's Report October 2020**

The Principal presented her written report (CIC/20/4/6).

Progress (as at 21st October 2020) against selected high-level performance targets approved by the Corporation Board was noted. At this early point, with one exception the College was on target to achieve or exceed the targets for this year. The one area of uncertainty was in respect of the Adult Education Budget, where adult enrolments could be impacted by the ongoing pandemic. Due to Covid restrictions and spacing, the Learning Shops have had to reduce the number of students in a session.

Statistical data from the staff survey, based on the questions that Ofsted ask staff when carrying out a full inspection, were noted. The Board was concerned at the lower level of positive responses to the statement "Leaders and managers are considerate of my workload and wellbeing" and asked if there was more the Governors should be doing to acknowledge the stresses that staff are under. The unique situation, with people feeling under pressure in terms of the requirements to deliver elements of the curriculum online and the balance between remote and on campus working, is challenging and may be why people are feeling more pressured than normal. The College does need to acknowledge this, and a sub-group has been formed with the Trades Unions to look at workload and what actions can be put in place to help in this regard. Governors acknowledged that staff feeling under pressure at this time is not unique to Colchester Institute, and asked whether the wellbeing of staff had been given a higher priority than previously as part of the Executive's response to the pandemic. The Principal acknowledged that most of the actions taken were around signposting staff to the support available inside and outside the College. Fortnightly wellbeing bulletins, put together by the Unions, have been distributed but these are fairly limited in nature. This is an area that the College needs to put more thought to.

Governors asked how individual teachers manage the process when a student group is split for their lesson, with some in campus and the others being taught remotely. This is not a model being used for FE and apprenticeship provision. Students are either taught as a group on line, or in the classroom. There are no mixed model sessions. This might occur in HE sessions however.

Another area that the College Executive acknowledge needs to be addressed is the amount of professional development that takes place. For a number of years, the Staff Development budget has

been reduced year on year. The Support Staff Governor reported that an audit of staff CPD needs identified that people have adapted well to online teaching. The College has appointed an EdTech Advisor who staff can go to for advice.

Governors noted that some student groups were not engaging and asked the reason for this. It was reported that this could be because of issues regarding access to remote learning (the College has Chromebooks which it can make available to students) or more likely to be around motivation. The ability of the staff member to deliver online sessions may be a factor. Where groups are not engaging well with online learning for any reason they are being brought back onto the campus for more of their programme.

11. 2019-20 and 2020-21

11.1. Update on quality performance against targets 2019-20

It was reported that the results for 2019-20 for FE were at least as good as the prior year, and were in line with the progress that had been made at the time the campuses were closed in March. Retention was better at 95%, and the achievement rate was 90%. Because of the proportion of centre-assessed grades external organisations are placing far less store on the results for 2019-20 and league tables will not be published this year.

Apprenticeship achievement rates (currently 67%) are in line with the prior year and with last year's national average and it is hoped to end around this level. At the time of the lockdown the College was on track to deliver a significant improvement in the achievement rate, but due to the impact of the pandemic about 130 learners who were due to finish and potentially achieve have been put into the following year. This is mainly because the End Point Assessments have been significantly delayed by the awarding bodies. There were about 50 withdrawals due directly to the Covid situation. Many students were made redundant and the College was not able to assist them with getting into alternative work. These withdrawals will not directly impact on this year's results if the learners were not due to complete this year.

The number of HE students achieving a good degree (First or upper second) was 79%, slightly up on the prior year. Most learners successfully progressed to the following year of their programme. This was partly due to the universities being more lenient as a result of the pandemic and allowing students to take some credits into the next year.

11.2. Final targets 2020-21

CIC/20/4/7, College Targets 2020/21 – FE, Apprenticeships, Higher Education, Finance and Human Resources, was received and noted.

12. Reports from Committee

12.1. Finance and Resources Committee

The Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 30th September 2020 (CIC/20/4/8) were received and presented by the Committee Chair.

12.1.1. Monthly Management Report

CIC/20/4/9, Monthly Management Report and Accounts July 2020 [Period 12], was received and noted. The Executive Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Development reported that the audit clearance meeting had been held and there were no matters of significance to bring to the Board's attention at this stage.

The year-end outturn position is likely to be in line with the Period 12 Management Report. At the time of the Resources Committee it was thought that the outturn position would be closer to the Period 11 forecast position, but some additional pension costs for the Braintree

enhanced pension scheme and an allowance for further building dilapidation costs in the year have been included in the accounts.

Governors recognised that it had been a challenging year due to the financial impact of the pandemic, and thanked the Executive Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Development, on a good year end result and for the way cash had been managed.

12.1.2. **Student Enrolments 2020**

The current enrolment data, as set out in the Principal's report, was noted.

12.1.3. **Update on Property Issues**

Braintree Campus

The relocation of the temporary masts is ongoing.

Clacton Campus

The November meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee will receive a report on the options for the potential disposal of the Clacton Campus.

The Minorities

Some dilapidation works to the southern elevation are about to be agreed. Once underway, the College will enter formal negotiations with the landlord in terms of a final settlement agreement. It is hoped that the lease will be surrendered by the end of this calendar year.

12.2. **Remuneration and Search Committee**

The Minutes of the Remuneration and Search Committee held on 30th September 2020 (CIC/20/4/10) were received and presented by the Committee Chair.

12.2.1. **Independent Review of College Financial Oversight (Ney Review)**

Governors attention was drawn to the recently published Independent Review of College Financial Oversight.

12.2.2. **Centre for Health and Social Care**

Governors noted the College's ambitions to expand its curriculum offer in the area of health and care, and observed that to make best use of the new resource there needs to be close links across the different academic levels. The Principal confirmed that the College is wishing to develop more strategic relationships with the NHS and other healthcare organisations, and the Centre for Health and Social Care must become a resource for FE, HE, apprentices and full cost provision.

12.2.3. **Board Attendance Report 2019-20**

CIC/20/4/11, Board Attendance Report 2019-20, was received and noted. Overall attendance was lightly above the sector average.

12.3. **Governance Coronavirus Committee**

The Minutes of the Governor Coronavirus Committee held on 27th August 2020 (CIC/20/4/12) and 24th September 2020 (CIC/20/4/13) were received and presented by the Committee Chair.

The August meeting had focussed on the arrangements for the new academic year. Staff had been provided with comprehensive documentation on the measures that had been place to make the campus Covid-safe, such as the wearing of face coverings within buildings. Where possible, staff continue to work from home in order to minimise the number of people coming onto campus each day. The timetable has been designed in a way that will allow it to be easily adapted if further restrictions or a local lockdown are put in place. The cost of putting in place new signage, sanitiser

stations etc, had been largely offset by savings achieved as a result of the campuses not being fully operational during the lockdown.

The September meeting had focussed on the first few weeks of the academic year. At the time of the meeting, only one person had tested positive for Coronavirus. As the term has progressed, there have been a few more positive cases amongst the College community, but the numbers remain low and manageable.

No further meetings are currently planned, but the Committee will reconvene if circumstance change. The position will continue to be monitored by the Corporation including through the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee, overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee.

13. **Future Meetings**

13.1. The next meeting of the Corporation Board is on Wednesday, 16th December 2020 at 4.30pm.

13.2. The Chair's briefing to the College Management is scheduled for 10.00am on Thursday, 17th December 2020. Board members are invited to attend this meeting.

14. **Any Other Urgent Business**

14.1. **FE White Paper**

It was reported that the Department for Education are currently advertising for 16 advisers to assist the Department on the delivery of the outcomes from the FE White Paper, due to be published this autumn. Press reports suggests that the White Paper will include major changes to the Government's powers over colleges and how provision is arranged across the sector. Further information will be circulated to the Board when the White Paper is published.

14.2. **Student Death**

Governors were saddened to learn that a student with a long history of mental illness had taken their own life the previous weekend. The College had done everything it could, including working with external agencies, to support the student.

Part II

These minutes are not confidential, but the supporting papers are confidential.

15. **Part II Minutes**

The Part II Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on 28th July 2020 (CIC/20/4/14) were received and confirmed as an accurate record.

The Part II Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 30th September 2020 (CIC/20/4/15) were received and noted.