

Colchester Institute Corporation

**Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Corporation Board
held on 16th December 2020**

Present:

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

Liz Goodall
Irene Kettle
Keith Moule
Brenda Rich
Terry Smyth
Richard Wainwright

In Attendance:

Maeve Borges
Gary Horne
Tim O'Connor
Hazel Paton
Jason Peters
Jill Wognum

Vice Principal: Student Services and Support
Executive Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Development
Scrutton Bland, External Auditor (item 6 only)
Clerk to the Governors
Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance
Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Tyler Burgess, Peter Cook, Zainab Domingue and Jasmin Patel

2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest**

None.

3. **Membership**

The Board confirmed the appointment of Tyler Burgess (nominated and elected by the further education students) and Zainab Domingue (nominated and elected by the higher education students) for a term of office 5 November 2020 to 31 July 2020.

4. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2020 (CIC/20/6/1) were received and confirmed as an accurate record.

5. **Matters arising from the minutes**

None, other than on the agenda.

6. **Report and Financial Statements 31 July 2020**

The Board received and considered:

- CIC/20/6/2, Report and Financial Statements 31 July 2020
- CIC/20/6/3, Letter of representation for the year ended 31 July 2020
- CIC/20/6/4, External Auditors Report to Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee reported that:

- The External Auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion.
- The number of adjustments identified during the audit process was higher than in previous years. Some of the adjustment were related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Others were due to the nature

of the audit, which had been carried out remotely and was more demanding in terms of the level of scrutiny and the amount of evidence that the College was required to provide.

- The Internal Audit programme was halted when the College campuses were closed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result insufficient work had been undertaken to enable the Internal Auditor to provide an opinion for 2019/20 on the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's system on risk management, controls and governance processes. The Audit and Risk Committee were aware of this during the year, and in response to concerns raised by a Member, it was agreed to look at other audit and assurance activity that had taken place. The Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report to the Board and Principal and Chief Executive summarises the range of other assurance activities that took place between the summer 2019 and summer 2020 and which informed the Committee's opinion to the Board.

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee drew Governors' attention to the pension scheme deficit, which had put the balance sheet into a deficit position. The Committee had discussed the potential impact that this may have on the College's credit rating, and had been reassured that this liability was disregarded by the bank for covenant monitoring purposes and by the funding body when monitoring financial health. Governors were advised that the pension scheme disclosure in the accounts, which had been prepared in accordance with the FRS 102 accounting standard, was different to the triennial review which is used to determine the College's employer contribution rate.

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee reported that the College ended the year in a much better financial position than that forecast in the April 2020 Management Report and Accounts and thanked the College Executive for achieving this result after a difficult year.

On the recommendation of the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resources Committees the Board APPROVED:

- the Report and Financial Statements 31 July 2020
- the letter of representation for the year ended 31 July 2020. The Corporation Chair and Principal and Chief Executive were authorised to sign the letter of representation.

7. Papers from Audit and Risk Committee

The Board received, considered, and on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee APPROVED:

- Internal Audit Annual Report 2019-20 (CIC/20/6/5)
- Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2019-20 (CIC/20/6/6)
- Internal Audit Plan 2020-21 (CIC/20/6/7) – Following a detailed review, the Audit and Risk Committee had taken the view that some of the proposed audit areas were a lesser priority for review and did not represent value for money. The Plan presented to the Board incorporated the changes requested by the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Corporate Risks Register – Strategic risks (CIC/20/6/8)
- Value for Money Policy (CIC/20/6/9)
- Anti-bribery, Gifts and Hospitality Policy (CIC/20/6/10)
- Data Protection Policy (CIC/20/6/11)

8. Papers from Curriculum and Quality Committee

The Board received, considered and, on the recommendation of the Curriculum and Quality Committee, APPROVED:

- College Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 and Quality Improvement Plan (CIC/20/6/12). It was reported that subsequent to the meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee, and after much consideration of the Governor's questions, the section on Apprenticeships had been

redrafted. The Committee Chair had reviewed and approved the amendments to the text, which related to a couple of areas for improvement that were perhaps not sufficiently developed in the earlier draft. The judgement that Apprenticeships are Good was unchanged.

- FE Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure (CIC/20/6/13)

Pam Donnelly left the meeting

9. **Strategic Plan 2021 to 2024**

The notes of the Strategic Planning Meeting held on 16th November 2020 (CIC/20/6/14) were received and noted.

The Board received and considered CIC/20/6/15, Proposed Strategic Plan – 2021-2024. In line with feedback from the Strategic Planning Meeting, the proposed Plan was more succinct than the previous draft, which was welcomed by the Board. The general view of the Board was that the plan was better structured and read very well.

The goals were discussed. One member commented on the number of goals (ten) and questioned whether these could perhaps be further reduced. Governors noted the similarity between two of the goals and considered whether these could be combined. The Principal noted the comment but would not want to lose the focus of the need to do more in respect of embedding equality, diversity and inclusion within the curriculum.

After discussion the Board agreed that the current strapline, *Better Careers Begin Here*, was still relevant and appropriate and did not require updating. Governors asked how the strapline was used, and were advised that it is widely used in marketing literature and on posters around the College. A Governor questioned the extent to which local stakeholders were aware of the College's profile and objectives, and suggested that the Principal talked to One Colchester (the local strategic partnership of Colchester Borough) about the ambitions for Colchester Institute. This was welcomed by the Principal.

The Board APPROVED the Strategic Plan 2020 to 2024.

10. **Content and Structure of Board meetings**

The Chair of the Remuneration and Search Committee reported that the Committee had been looking at the content and structure of Board meetings and considering whether any changes could be introduced which would allow more time at meetings for discussion of key strategic items. Governors were invited to provide feedback on the suggestions put forward by the Committee:

- reordering the agenda to move discussion items earlier in the meeting
- Committee Chairs preparing a brief written summary of key points to bring to the attention of the Board, to be circulated with the Board agenda.
- Encouraging Governors to raise questions in advance of the meeting, which could be responded to by email or at the meeting.

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee reported that members of that Committee had been encouraged to submit questions in advance when meetings first moved from face-to-face to online. In his view, this had worked well and had made the meeting more focussed. There was a general view that submitting questions and comments in advance could be helpful and enable staff to prepare and provide a fuller response at the meeting. There was less support for providing a written response in advance, which is not common practice, and would create additional work for the College Executive. Concern was also expressed that this might limit the quality and spontaneity of the discussion at meeting. It was agreed that there was merit in reorganising the sequencing of the agenda.

This will be considered further at the next meeting of the Remuneration and Search Committee.

11. **Chair's Announcement/Action since last meeting**

11.1. The Board received and noted CIC/20/6/17, feedback on Board self-assessment 2019-20. The Corporation Chair reported that the responses were generally very positive. The Chair had been surprised that one person had commented that decisions are taken by a small group of people, and will reflect on this. Other comments included:

- Board members not able to be visible in the College at the moment
- Governors not taking the opportunity to network and act as ambassadors for the College in their daily lives.
- Governors not always being aware of information that has been presented to a Committee, such as student destination data.

It was noted that potential actions include a programme of regular pre-Board briefings to raise Governor awareness of key areas.

11.2. It was reported that the Principal and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee had signed as a deed the final sale documentation to complete the Scott Properties transaction:

- Transfer Deed for the Care Home
- Transfer Deed for the residential area
- Deed of Variation
- Licence for Accessway Works

It was reported that the Braintree campus land sale was completed on 2nd December 2020.

12. **Principal's Report November 2020**

CIC/20/6/18, Principal's Report – November 2020, was received and noted.

13. **Reports from Committee**

13.1. **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 2nd December 2020 (CIC/20/6/19) were received and presented by the Committee Chair.

The Board received and noted:

- CIC/20/6/20, Regularity Audit Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2019-20
- CIC/20/6/21, Health and Safety Committee Annual Report 2019-20

13.2. **Curriculum and Quality Committee**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 11th November 2020 (CIC/20/6/22) and 30th November 2020 (CIC/20/6/23) were received and presented by the Committee Chair. The Committee Chair thanked staffed for their work and commitment during what had been a difficult year.

13.3. **Finance and Resources Committee**

The Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 25th November 2020 (CIC/20/6/24) were received and presented by the Committee Chair. The Committee Chair:

- Drew Governors attention to the cashflow forecast. Unlike prior years the College was not forecasting a cashflow pinch point in the spring term 2021.

- Reported that the Committee had considered the pension fund position, and feedback to questions raised at the previous meeting, including possible alternatives to the Essex Pension Fund. This is an area that the Committee will keep under review.

13.3.1. **Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Bid**

The Board asked for an update on the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Bid, which was due to be determined by 28th November 2020. It was reported that the College had applied for funding in excess of £3.5m to replace the old gas boilers and replace the windows and façade of Blocks B and D at the Colchester campus. Unfortunately the scheme had been over subscribed and, although due to remain open until the end of March 2021, had already closed. It was believed that the College had submitted its bid early enough in the second wave. The bid had been assessed by the technical team, and the College had responded to a number of questions, but has not yet been advised on the final outcome. The College was not required to provide matched funding.

It was reported that the initial bid had included an allowance for unknown costs associated with asbestos, but as part of the assessment process the bid has been reduced because asbestos contingency could not be included. The College is trying to minimise the risk of finding asbestos by putting thermal panels on front of the existing concrete but it might be necessary to go back to the Finance and Resources Committee with a request for £200k contingency.

13.3.2. **Monthly Management Report**

CIC/20/3/24, Monthly Management Report and Accounts October 2020 [Period 3], was received and noted. The Executive Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Development reported that the College had achieved three of the four main recruitment targets. It was noted that:

- The College may be able to apply for in-year growth funding because it had overachieved its 16-18 Learner Numbers targets. More information will be available in January.
- HE full time and HE part time numbers were both 30 above target.
- The College was on course to achieve its apprenticeships numbers target on a profiled basis, albeit the targets are lower than in the previous year.
- Adult FE and full cost recruitment were proving to be a challenge

13.3.3. **College Estates and Accommodation Strategy**

The Board received and considered CIC/20/6/26, College Estates and Accommodation Strategy. The Board's attention was drawn to the four funding streams that may be available to help finance the strategy. These included potentially two more rounds of FE capital funding from the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency), which have been pushed back into 2021 due to the delay in the publication of the FE White paper.

There was the potential for a Youth Zone to be sited on the Colchester campus, but it was understood from meetings held earlier that week that Colchester Institute is not considered to be an ideal location in terms of it being to the west of the town centre. Areas of greatest need in Colchester are to the south and east of the town centre.

It was reported that less than half the accommodation at the Colchester campus was classified as satisfactory prior to the receipt of a £1.2m College condition grant earlier in the year, and good progress was being made in improving the buildings. Early in the New Year the roof of C block will be replaced, repairs carried out to H and B Block, and a range of electrical and fire alarm replacement work will be carried out.

Governors asked for an update on negotiations to surrender the lease at the Minories and were advised that they were ongoing. It was reported that phase one of the refurbishment

had been completed (north and east elevation and all internal spaces) and the Trust were delighted with the work that the College has delivered. The College has instructed for the remaining work (south elevation and the Folly) to be completed in the spring.

13.3.4. Annual Report to the Board

CIC/20/6/27, Finance and Resources Committee Annual Report to the Board 2019-20, was received and noted.

13.4. Remuneration and Search Committee

The Minutes of the Remuneration and Search Committee held on 25th November 2020 (CIC/20/6/28) were received and presented by the Committee Chair.

13.4.1. Annual Report to the Board

CIC/20/6/29, Remuneration and Search Committee Annual Report to the Board 2019-20, was received and noted.

14. Register of Interests

CIC/20/6/30, Summary of Changes to the Register of Corporation Member's Interests, was received and noted.

15. Future Meetings

It was noted that:

15.1. The Chair's meeting with the College Management Groups would take place via Zoom on Thursday, 17th December 2020 at 10.00am. Governors were invited to join the meeting.

15.2. The next meeting of the Corporation board was scheduled for 4.30pm on Wednesday, 10th February 2021. The meeting will be preceded with pre-Board briefing at 4.00pm.

16. Any Other Urgent Business

There were no items.