

Colchester Institute Corporation

**Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Corporation Board
held on 23 February 2022**

Present:

Kevin Prince, <i>in the Chair</i>	Liz Goodall
Alison Andreas	P Giddings
Lisa Blake	Irene Kettle
Peter Cook	Terry Smyth
Mark Davies	Richard Wainwright

In Attendance:

Maeve Borges	Vice Principal: Student Services and Support
Gary Horne	Deputy Chief Executive
Hazel Paton	Clerk to the Governors
Jason Peters	Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance
Jill Wognum	Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality

Board Briefing – Principal’s Presentation to Ofsted

The Principal shared with Governors the latest version of a PowerPoint that had been prepared at the start of the academic year and updated as required in readiness for an Ofsted Inspection. It was reported that the presentation was currently being shared by Heads of Areas with their teams and that early feedback indicated that staff recognised and would be able to talk to Inspectors about the claims that were being made. This was important as the Inspection Team would be looking for evidence to validate what they are told at the start of the Inspection.

The presentation provided an overview of why Colchester Institute is here and what had happened since the last Inspection. Key points included:

- Use of Strategic College Improvement Funding to work with Northampton College
- Comprehensive progress checking system with teaching and learning at the forefront
- Achieved outstanding Study Programme outcomes within six months of the 2018 Full Ofsted Inspection
- Outcome of the December 2019 monitoring visit which recognised the impact of the College’s Teaching, Learning and Assessment Improvement Plan and resulted in two judgements of reasonable progress and two judgements of significant progress.
- Delivery during Covid until the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year. Student engagement was very high during this period and student feedback was positive.
- ‘Learn Back Better’ campaign to support the return to campus.
- Teaching and Learning observations based around the Tom Sherrington approach, including the booklet Walkthrus.
- The positive things that employers, managers, and teachers usually tell us and what is usually seen in the classroom
- Headline results from the recent student survey.

Governors asked to receive an updated version of the presentation ahead of the Inspection. To help with their understanding of the relationship with employers, Governors asked if the sections that talk about employers could include names of employers. **ACTION: Principal**

Governors questioned whether the wording in the final few slides was sufficiently positive given the huge progress that had been made since the last Inspections and the Principal agreed to consider this further.

PART I

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Jasmin Patel and Brenda Rich.

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

None.

3. **Agreement to Starred Agenda Items**

Governors were invited to indicate any items which they wished to star for discussion or question. No additional items were starred. Items that had not been starred were noted and/or approved without discussion.

4. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 (CIC/22/1/1) were received and approved as an accurate record.

5. **Matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. **Chair's Action**

The Board received and noted CIC/21/7/2, Application of the Seal of the Corporation. It was reported that the signing of the Wayleave Agreement with British Telecommunications plc would lead to the removal of one of the temporary phone masts at the Braintree campus.

7. **Curriculum and Quality Update Report**

CIC/22/1/3, Curriculum and Quality Update Report – Spring 2022, was received and considered. It was reported that the report had been developed in response to feedback at the last Board meeting and was designed to give Governors better oversight of key curriculum and quality items and aspects of the student experience.

Governors noted that interventions had been actioned in those subject areas where predicted achievement rates were significantly below target, and asked for examples of what had been put in place. It was reported that the interventions varied depending on the cause and ranged from measures to ensure that learners' behaviours and expectations improve, to a very detailed action plan and targeted one-to-one support for hard-to-reach adult learners referred to the Learning Shop. It was reported that the Learning Shops were not expecting a high achievement rate which will impact on the overall achievement rate for this year.

Governors questioned the Executive on the headline responses to the student survey on Teaching and Learning and the extent to which the data is analysed at class/teacher level. It was reported that the survey results had been circulated to Area Heads earlier that week. Areas Head can drill down to course level and work with Course Leaders to take forward any issues. In addition, the Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality and Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement would be looking at specific points of feedback with the Area Heads, and members of the Quality Team would be walking around and asking students questions aligned to the survey to pick up themes.

Governors questioned the Executive on how they were responding to the concern that student have no, or very low, experience of undertaking public exams. It was reported that students sitting public examinations in January had shown lots of nervousness. The College was preparing students by undertaking mock assessments in formal examination spaces under normal examination rules. This was being supported by the examinations team. In addition, group tutorials in April would focus on exam preparation, including video shots of examination rooms and reading out the invigilation notices, and the Welfare Team would hold workshops around examination stress and anxiety. It was reported

that a large number of people were now asking for small rooms as a result of anxiety, and about 45% of candidates in the GCSE exams had some form of additional access requirements (computer room, reader, scribe, additional time etc). If students choose not to use the concessions that they are entitled to, they will be reviewed and potentially removed so that support can be re-directed. Another area of concern was that many learners have never revised for an exam. It was reported that in January some Level 3 students did not engage with revision sessions put on by teachers, or carry out effective independent revision.

Governors welcomed the new report as a good foundation for reporting to the Board. In terms of future reports, Governors asked for the Executive Summary and/or the introduction to highlight the key points that the Board should be focussing on, and significant changes in data between one report and the next.

8. Reports from Committee

8.1. Curriculum and Quality Committee

8.1.1. Report from Chair of Committee

The Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee presented his written report (CIC/21/7/), drawing Governors' attention to the key points and actions agreed at the meeting held on 2 February 2022:

- The College was still dealing with the learning and behavioural effects of 'educational long Covid'.
- New students do not have experience of examinations although more qualifications include examinations.
- The November GCSE maths results were very low. This was because the College provided every student with the opportunity to resit the exam if they wished and experience a formative assessment that had been denied to them over the previous two years. Other colleges did not do that. The students had only been in College three to four weeks and the teaching could not have impacted on the results.
- The Committee challenged the Senior Leadership Team on the processes for predicting achievement and discussed the nine-point scale for scoring knowledge, skills and behaviour.
- It is in the College's interests to have a view on diversifying and decolonizing the curriculum, which has become a prominent issue in schools and HE but less so in FE. The Committee Chair had recently participated in a UCC staff development session where there had been some very good discussions on this topic.
- Finding sufficient industrial placements will be critical when the College starts to deliver T Levels and may be a limiting factor in many vocational courses.
- The Senior Leadership Team use a RAG rated matrix to highlight by subject and type of provision strengths and areas for improvement which they will consider including in future Curriculum and Quality Update Reports.
- Members commented that RAG categories used to indicate progress against the Quality Improvement plan were quite broad and might hide if risks were increasing or decreasing. The Committee had asked for movements within the categories to be highlighted in future reports.

Referring to a Safeguarding presentation to Governors early in the academic year which had included statistics on the number of learners who had expressed suicidal thoughts and the pressures on the Safeguarding Team, a Member asked for an update on the current situation. It was reported that these students would be supported throughout their time at the College as they do not come off suicide prevention plans. The College has a Fitness to Study Policy, a supportive mechanism with a number of stages for people who are struggling to learn because of their health (usually mental health). In some instances, a student may be supported for a

number of months but still need to take time out to engage with external agencies. With regard to the Safeguarding Team, it was reported that an additional member has been recruited on a fixed term contract for this academic year, and the staff member responsible for supporting looked-after children was working an additional day each week. The impact of this work was being seen in retention figures.

A Member asked about IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance), destinations, and work placements for curriculum delivery, topics not covered in the C&Q papers. The Executive addressed each point:

- **Destinations** - it was reported that a lot of work goes into gathering intended and actual destinations for FE learners, and destinations is covered in the annual Self-Assessment Report. The Executive Vice Principal suggested headline information could be included in the C&Q Update report at an appropriate point in the year, or a standalone paper could be considered. **Action:** Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality.
- **Work placements** - it was reported that all Study Programme students have an entitlement to 30 hours preparation for work and next steps (GAP). Some Level 3 students have more substantial placements, and once the College is more involved in T Levels the requirement for work placements will be even greater. An annual report on work placements was suggested. **Action:** Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality
- **IAG** – It was reported that IAG is an ongoing process with a number of different strands. Industry placements are looked after by the IAG Team. The Careers Team put out information and provide one-to-one careers interviews. A lot of the careers work and less formal GAP is carried out within curriculum areas. External quality assurance is through Matrix accreditation. The College was currently undergoing a Matrix assessment for its apprenticeship IAG.

The Board noted the above and asked to receive reports which provide a comprehensive overview of how the College is doing and impact.

A Member asked about recent IAG legislation, in particular the Baker clause, and whether the College now had greater access to schools. It was reported that the College works to the Gatsby benchmarks, eight criteria that colleges need to meet including opportunities for access to one-to-one careers support. There had been concerns in the past that MATs (Multi-Academy Trusts) with sixth forms did not allow the College access but there has been a genuine improvement over the last two years. At the beginning of the year a report is produced showing the number of enrolments per school, which the Marketing Team links to the ever stronger school liaison work.

8.1.2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 2 February 2022 (CIC/22/1/5) were received and noted.

8.1.3. **Progress against Quality Improvement Plan**

CIC/22/1/6, Updated on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan, was received and considered.

Noting that it was proving exceptionally difficult to source industrial placements in line with CDF (capacity and delivery fund) requirements and it was unlikely the College would meet the CDF requirement in full a member asked whether there would be financial clawback. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that there was still a way to go in terms of meeting the full year requirement and it was hoped that there would be a relaxation of the requirements in view of the current external environment. Guidance suggests that to avoid clawback we need to evidence the costs incurred, and we are indeed incurring high costs in both securing and attempting to secure as many placements as possible.

8.1.4. **Update on Strategic Plan One Year Action Plan**

CIC/22/1/7, Update on Strategic Plan Goals including revised one-year success indicators for the 2022 calendar year, was received and noted.

8.1.5. **Policy Review**

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

- CIC/22/1/8, Safeguarding Policy
- CIC/22/1/9, Safeguarding Protocol for Staff

8.1.6. **Governor Link Scheme**

CIC/21/7/10, Governor Link Scheme 2022, was received and noted. It was agreed that Governors would contact their link Manager to arrange in-person or virtual visits.

8.1.7. **Annual Report to the Board**

CIC/21/1/11, Curriculum and Quality Committee Annual Report to the Board 2020-21, was received and noted.

8.2. **Finance and Resources Committee**

8.2.1. **Report from Chair of Committee**

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee presented his written report (CIC/22/1/12) drawing Governors' attention to the key points discussed at the meeting held on 9 February 2022:

- Progress on HR Systems development was being hampered by IT legacy issues.
- Historically the College has a high level of flexible workforce. A peer review was being carried out to see how this correlates with other local colleges.
- Sickness absence levels are increasing
- Hard to fill vacancies remain and a new action plan is being developed
- Income and expenditure are both below budget profile for the year, but the YTD operating surplus is ahead of YTD target.
- Cash Reserve levels were ahead of budget and forecast in the month.
- The Committee had questioned whether GCSE grade inflation, which had negatively impacted 16-19 recruitment in 2021/22 would also impact learner numbers next year. The Executive did not believe that would be case and based on early indications up to an additional 300-400 16-19 learners were expected to enrol next year.
- The Salix Decarbonisation works were progressing, albeit there had been delays partly due to Covid and delays to materials.
- The T Level capital bid to support delivery of the Early Years Route in D Block was approved by the Committee.

8.2.2. **Minutes**

The minutes of meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 9 February 2022 (CIC/22/1/13) were received and noted.

8.2.3. **Management Report and Accounts**

CIC/22/1/14, Management Report and Accounts December 2021 [Period 5], was received and noted.

8.2.4. **Property Matters**

The Deputy Chief Executive updated the Board on property matters. It was reported that

- The business case for the T Level capital bid and how it links to the longer-term T level aspirations, needed to be submitted by 11 March 2022.
- Work was continuing on the Salix decarbonisation scheme. The funders had agreed that work could continue beyond the original deadline of 31 March.
- Some exits to the main block had been closed during the recent storms because it was felt the scaffolding could pose an additional risk but there had been no issues. Three trees had fallen, the car parking barriers had been damaged, and some tiles had been damaged at the Minorities as a result of the storms. All since repaired.

CIC/22/1/15, College Estates and Accommodation Strategy, was received and noted.

8.2.5. **Update on Strategic Plan**

CIC/22/1/16, Update on Strategic Plan Goals, was received and noted.

8.3. **Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee**

8.2.1. **Report from Chair of Committee**

The Chair of the Remuneration and Search Committee presented his written report (CIC/22/1/17), drawing Governors' attention to the key points discussed at the meeting held on 26 January 2022:

- It had been decided to conduct the external governance review during the 2022/23 academic year. The next steps include determining the parameters for the review and selecting a provider.
- The Committee had discussed the measures put in place to increase the focus of curriculum, planning and quality reporting at Board level.
- The Committee was actively searching for new members to fill the current vacancies on the board and succession planning for members that would be standing down at the end of 2023.
- The Committee had discussed engaging an external agency to find new Governors/Corporation Chair.

The Principal updated the Board on the search for new members. A number of suggestions and nominations were being pursued and the Principal, Corporation Chair and Clerk were due to meet with two prospective Governors in early March. Arising from the discussion, it was suggested that the Committee should be looking for someone with a background in construction to join the Board.

8.3.1. **Minutes**

CIC/22/1/18, Minutes of the meeting of the Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee held on 26 January 2022, were received and noted:

9. **Risk Management**

9.1. **Corporate Risk Register – Strategic Risks**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Corporate Risk Register, which had been thoroughly reviewed by the Risk Management Committee earlier that day, summarising the main issues and actions associated with the key strategic risks:

- Significant worsening of financial performance – the impact of factors such as the surge in inflation, the increase in national insurance costs, and the spiralling energy costs will be modelled over the pre-budget estimate period.
- Significant reduction in FE adult/full cost income – the College had struggled to recruit adults this year, in part because of the change in the employment market. The offer would need to be considered as part of the curriculum planning process over the next two to three months.

- Significant staff recruitment and retention problems – there are a range of task and finish actions, including working with Blue Octopus on managed campaigns.
- Cyber-attack – the College is monitoring information from the National Cyber Security Centre regarding potential cyber threats emerging from the current instability in Eastern Europe.

9.2. Identification of Key Risks

Governors are asked annually to contribute to the risk management process by identifying the risk areas that they believe the College will need to address over the next 12-18 months. **ACTION:** Governors were asked to email their responses to Clerk.

A Member questioned the resilience of the College's financial position in an environment where there are salary pressures, and every cost (energy, raw materials for building projects, cost of borrowing) is increasing. The Executive were asked what had been done in response to previous discussions at Board meetings in respect of discussions with the bank about the interest rate on the long-term loan; the impact of pensions' costs on College finances; and the potential to 'offer salaries not pensions' as a recruitment tool. It was reported that there had been some discussion about inflationary pressures and student income at various College Executive meetings and also at the previous Finance and Resources Committee. As has been the case for the last two years, the Deputy Chief Executive would be providing a Pre-Budget Forecast to the Finance and Resources Committee modelling various scenarios. An update on the managed recruitment campaign programme and other recruitment initiatives would be reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.

10. Review of Meeting

There was a wide-ranging discussion on the effectiveness of the meeting. Governors felt it had been a balanced meeting but that there was still too much on the agenda. Governors questioned the need to receive the minutes of Committee meetings if the reports from Committee Chairs cover the key activities, discussion points, areas of concern, action points and risks. It was agreed to consider this further at the next Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee.

11. Next Meeting

Wednesday, 27 April 2022 at 10.00am. The meeting will be preceded with a Board briefing at 9.30am.

12. Any Other Urgent Business

There were no items.

PART II

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

13. Part II Minutes

The Part II Minutes of the Board meeting held on 15 December 2021 (CIC/22/1/19) were received and approved as an accurate record.

The Part IIB Minutes of the Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee meeting held on 26 January 2022 (CIC/22/1/20) were received and noted.