

COLCHESTER INSTITUTE CORPORATION

Minutes of the
CORPORATION BOARD
Held on
Thursday, 25th July 2024 at 4.30pm
at the Colchester Campus

Present:

Kevin Prince - Chair	Marco Iciek - Governor
Alison Andreas – Principal and Chief Executive	Sally Messenger – Governor
Simon Attwood - Governor	Caroline Williams – Governor
Michael Asare Bediako - Governor	Richard Block - Governor
Lisa Blake – Governor	Dawn Swainson – Staff Governor
Peter Cook - Governor	

In attendance:

Ali Davies – Deputy Principal
Gary Horne – Deputy Chief Executive
Alison Bennett – Head of Governance

PRE-BOARD BRIEFING

The meeting was preceded with a Board Briefing on Learning and Development incorporating Leadership Development, which was led by the Principal and Deputy Chief Executive (CE). Approximately £300,000 has been invested in staff CPD over the past 12 months, around £100k, of which was financial support for those who join the college as unqualified teaching staff to enable them to undertake their PGCE or equivalent, and become qualified teachers. Governors **ASKED** the number of Learning Support Practitioners (LSPs) who go on to complete their PGCEs. The College Executive replied that it is not as high as they would like it to be and is an area that could be developed further. The Deputy CEO took the meeting through the college CPD opportunities for staff including the management development programme.

In relation to the Learning from the Middle programme Governors **ASKED** whether it is known why those who did not apply, chose not to. The College Executive replied that there was a mix of reasons including being near the end of their career and already studying, amongst others, and assured Governors that there were no trends to be concerned about.

The Deputy CEO went on to introduce the Inspiring Leaders programme, a follow on from Leading from the Middle for first line supervisors and managers. The programme is open to staff who are not in a middle management position already and will be delivered in partnership with FE Associates. It will be a cohort of 20 running between September – December 2024. Governors were asked to consider whether they would be willing to support the programme by being a mentor.

ACTION: Governors interested in providing mentorship through the Inspiring Leaders programme to contact the Principal.

Governors **ASKED** if every member of staff in the organisation receives an appraisal. Deputy CEO confirmed this to be the case.

Part I

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Stephanie Bettinson, Thomas Empson and Tim Triffitt.

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

No board or staff member declared any conflict of interest against any item of business to be discussed.

3. **Agreement to Starred Agenda Items**

Members agreed to only starred items being discussed; all other items would be deemed noted and/or approved by the Board as appropriate.

4. **Minutes of meeting held on 24 April 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. **Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None.

6. **Chair's Action / Announcements**

None.

7. **Targets 2024-25**

(CIC24403) The Academic Targets 2024-25 were approved by the Curriculum and Quality Committee at their meeting of 27 June 2024 with a query around target 5. The College Executive confirmed this target has since been elevated to be more aspirational.

Section 3 Human Resources target 02 – Governors **ASKED** whether the target of 65% is accurate. The CE explained that the apprenticeship levy paid is c£80,000 of which the college is using around £50,000 and sharing the balance. Following discussion, it was agreed that the wording of this target would be changed to 'being utilised in house' to reflect usage of the levy more accurately.

Section 3 Human Resources target 02 – Governors commented on the staff turnover figure of 19% being high and **ASKED** whether this is a downward or upward trend. The CE said that 19% was higher than in recent years and the figure of 17% is a milestone target towards a more ambitious target in line with Association of Colleges (AoC) targets, however they are confident that the College will achieve the 17% target. There has been an improvement in staffing in recent months with most business support areas now being fully staffed. There continues to be recruitment challenges within some areas for teaching staff. Governors **ASKED** whether exit interviews are undertaken and whether issues and trends are addressed. Governors were assured that exit interviews do take place and there have been no identifiable trends. The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee assured the board that committee receive regular updates on this area and requested that the Board allow the Committee to scrutinise this further. The Board **AGREED** to this. Governors said that it would be beneficial to have a subset target for teaching staff. The Principal said she would look at the age profile of leavers to ascertain how many of them were due to retirements. Governors **ASKED** if there are formal mechanisms for succession planning and whether the appraisal process forms part of this process. The CE confirmed that the appraisal process does form part of the college succession planning mechanisms.

Governors **ASKED** that the HR targets also include the actual figure for each year to allow Governors to follow through the improvement.

The meeting noted that the Maths & English target is lower than previous year actual target. It was explained that this information is sourced from the system, as well as information known around attendance and retention and as such 91.6% is the best possible outcome.

DECISION: The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Academic Targets 2024-25

8. **Strategic Plan**

8.1 (CIC24404) Strategic Plan 2024-28 Vision, Mission, Values and Goals

The Principal provided a brief overview of the document. It was explained that during the recent marketplace event Staff were consulted on potential strap lines. The two that received the most votes were 'Transforming Lives' and 'Take control of your future'. The principal proposed that the strap line be 'Transforming Lives' which Governors agreed. It was noted that this could be used flexibly by adding relevant suffixes.

Feedback received from Governors:

Governors **QUERIED** whether T Levels should be included in the sub strategies. The College Executive (CE) agreed to consider this.

Governors **COMMENTED** that the 5 goals of the strategy are very clear but felt that the document did not explain the relationship between those and the 10 sub strategies.

Governors **ASKED** if there was any planning around the ordering of the goals in the document. The Principal replied that there is not a hierarchy for the goals, but that the graphics being worked on showed the goals clustered, but with student and staff experience, being supported by the right curriculum, strong finances and outstanding partnerships

Governors felt comfortable that there is a way of measuring that the College is working towards achieving of the goals.

Governors expressed disappointed not to see the term 'careers' more explicitly within the document to reflect the passion the college has for that area.

Governors reflected on the use of the word learners and whether the document should occasionally use the term apprentice. It was stated that the term learners had been deliberately chosen to embrace both students and apprentices.

Discussion took place around the positive language used in goals 1 & 4 and whether goal 2 required more positive use of language.

Governors **QUESTIONED** whether Staff being fairly rewarded is an aspiration that can be achieved in the current climate. Following discussion, it was agreed that the term 'fair' is subjective and that rewards does not refer to just financial rewards.

DECISION: Governors **APPROVED** the strategic plan 2024-28 Vision, Mission and Goals, and in producing the final version, the Principal would consider all comments made.

8.2 (CIC240405) Strategic Plan – One year action plan review of goal progress had been circulated to Governors for information. The Board of Governors registered thanks to all staff for their contribution in achieving the strategic plan and asked that this be communicated to staff.

9. Safeguarding Report

(CIC240406) Circulated for information following in depth discussion at the Curriculum & Quality Committee on 27 June 2024.

Governors **ASKED** whether benchmarking could be undertaken in relation to the number of safeguarding concerns. The CE replied that there would be limited utility in comparing colleges due safeguarding concerns being affected by localised issues.

10. Reports from Committees

10.1. Curriculum and Quality Committee

Report from Chair of Committee was provided for the Board's information.

Report provides context of where Governors made enquiries into specific areas.

Analysis of performance for students within vulnerable groups is a new area and starting to see some data come through.

Governors were made aware that the achievement rate for adult learners is below the national average (due to the mix and type of provision offered) but that every effort needs to be made to raise this.

Retention and achievement for vulnerable groups varies, with some groups being below the average of the respective student population.

Governors **QUESTIONED** why there is no data relating young adult carers and were advised that this had not been routinely collected and analysed

Governors **NOTED** an increased predicted achievement rate of 65% for apprentices compared to the final outturn of 59.4% for 2022/23 and the target of 67%.

Governors were interested in why there was no mention of work experience under goal 3.

Governors were informed that the self-assessment process has changed, and training has been carried out with Area Heads and other team leaders. Governors were also informed that a timetable for completion of the departmental and college self-assessment reports had been agreed.

Governors were informed that a run, hide, tell drill will take place in the first half term of the new academic year once the new intake of students have had their induction as that will include information on it. The Safeguarding Governor confirmed that these arrangements were appropriate.

Governors **APPROVED** the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy (FE) subject to an addition.

Link scheme Governors to be appointment to the vacant areas with the final scheme to be launched at first meeting of 2024-25 academic year.

The Chair said that it was a very productive meeting which was well prepared for by the CE allowing the Committee to dig deep into the agenda items.

(CIC24/4/8) Curriculum and Quality Update Report was received for information.

10.2. **Audit and Risk Committee**

(CIC24/4/9) Report from Chair of Committee was circulated in advance and taken as read.

The Committee Chair highlighted the committee's discussion around the limited assurance audit on Room Utilisation and assured the Board that challenge was given as to what was being done on this.

Actions arising from the committee:

1. Governors to support the review of Governor training arrangements and the skills matrix update by responding promptly to associated requests for information from the Head of Governance.
2. Approved the updated policies and procedures for recommendation to the Board
 - Risk Management Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Business Continuity Policy and Disaster Recovery Procedures.
3. Board Briefing session by Internal Auditors to be arranged to provide an update on emerging themes and the current risk environment for colleges including Governor responsibilities within that context.
ACTION: Head of Governance to liaise with Internal Auditors to arrange a board briefing session on emerging themes and the current risk environment for colleges including Governor responsibilities within that context.
4. Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Policy was reviewed by the Committee. Discussion took place around the full Corporate Risk Register, focusing on areas of change and taking some time to consider how the risks as presented. No amendments were considered necessary.

- Internal Audit Plan 2024-25

(CIC24/4/10) The Committee received the internal audit plan 2024-25 and, after some discussion about risks against the content of the Corporate Risk Register, were satisfied that the risks and planned reviews were appropriate. The committee therefore recommended the Internal Audit Plan 2024-25 for approval.

DECISION: The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Internal Audit Plan 2024-25

- Assurance Dashboard 2023-24

(CIC24/4/11) The Assurance Dashboard 2023-24 was received for information.

- Risk Management Policy (CIC24/4/12)

DECISION: Risk Management Policy **APPROVED** on recommendation of the Audit & Risk Committee.

- Health and Safety Policy

Was not approved at this meeting due to papers not being provided in advance.

ACTION: Head of Governance to circulate the Health and Safety Policy to Governors by email for approval following recommendation from the Audit & Risk Committee.

10.3. Finance and Resources Committee

- Report from Chair of Committee

(CIC24/4/14) Report from Chair of Committee was circulated in advance and taken as read.

It was highlighted that at this stage, based on the current forecast, the College would still end the year with a financial health rating of “requires improvement” (RI), although a ‘good’ rating was still potentially achievable.

- Management Report and Accounts June 2024

(CIC24/4/15) The College is forecasting an over achievement of the budgeted surplus, however it is recognised that college finances remain within the financial health rating of RI. A number of risks have been managed throughout the year. Predicting an overachievement on apprenticeship funding.

Governors **ASKED** if there is a contribution model. The Deputy CEO confirmed there is and this is contained within the budget schedule. This was subject to scrutiny at the committee meeting.

Governors commented that the mood of the budget is more upbeat than in previous years despite ongoing challenges.

- College Governing Body Finance Dashboard April 2024

(CIC24/4/16) The College Governing Body Finance Dashboard April 2024 was circulated in advance and taken as read. It was explained that the college dashboard for Governors provides an overview of how the college is performing nationally across various key areas.

- Corporate Budget 2024-25

(CIC24/4/17) The Deputy CEO highlighted key points. The budget predicts an overall operating income of £43.1m for the 2024-25 year. There will be an increase of £2m on the main ESFA funding line a result of increased 16-19 allocation and a potential £500,000 improvement to adult funding. HE tuition fees are expected to fall to £1.4m for the year. Apprenticeship income increased by 19% last year with intentions to grow this by a further 9% in 2024-25.

The pay budget has increased by £3.4m, 13.6%, from £24.4m to £27.8m. The budget allows for the approval of a 2% pay award effective from 1 August 2024, funding for an expected 3% increase in the minimum wage effective from 1 April 2025 and the payment of increments to staff who are not at the top of their scale. The potential 2% pay award will only be considered following the student recruitment review after September 2024 and the success of the savings plan across the College.

The Committee spent some time considering the proposed budget including the assumptions underpinning it. Areas explored included:

- The assumptions underpinning fee income budgets particularly in areas where the proposed budget includes growth in income.
- Growth in overall staffing levels and the associated budget requirements
- Assumptions underpinning a cost of living pay award.
- The ongoing impact of Higher Education courses that are being phased out.

It was explained that the budget would again mean the Colleges financial position would be rated as “Requires Improvement”. The Corporation Board were assured by the Chair of the Finance and Resources committee that the Committee had debated the acceptability of this and noted the rating was right at the upper edge of the rating score and so agreed the Corporation Board should consider the acceptability of setting a budget with this rating.

The Finance and Resources Committee concluded the budget was robust and should be recommended to the Board.

Governors **COMMENTED** that from information provided by the Finance and Resources Committee was an that this is an honest budget that provides room for improvement.

DECISION: The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Corporate Budget 2024-25

- College Financial Forecasting Return
To be taken as Part II item.
- Property Matters

The official opening date of new Net Zero centre has been set for 10 September.

Capital transformation fund projects are now underway in earnest whilst students are not on site.

Governors were keen to stress that disruption to teaching and learning should be minimised next year to avoid any adverse impacts.

- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure for Staff
CIC24/4/19 had been circulated in advance of the meeting for review.

DECISION: The Disciplinary Policy and Procedure was **APPROVED**.

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

- Report from Chair of Committee
(CIC24/4/20) Report from Chair of Committee was circulated in advance and taken as read.

Actions:

- Governors are asked to help to continue to recruit good quality governors.
- The need to review committee structures due to governor movement, including a review of committee chairs.

11. **Appointment of Chair Elect with effect from 01/01/2025**

Governors had been asked to consider nominations for the role of Corporation Chair with effect from 1/1/24. One nomination had been received, Lisa Blake, ahead of the meeting and no additional nominations were received at point in the agenda. LB was asked to leave the meeting. It was unanimously **AGREED** that Lisa Blake would be appointed as Chair Elect with immediate effect ahead of taking up the post on 1/1/25.

DECISION: Lisa Blake **APPOINTED** Corporation Chair with effect from 1/1/25.

12. **Review of Effectiveness of Meeting**

Members expressed that it was an effective meeting with a wide range of topics covered.

13. **Date of Next Meeting**

The Head of Governance informed the meeting that the schedule of business for 2024-25 is under review and will be circulated in due course.

14. Any Other Urgent Business

Governors were invited to save the dates for the UCC graduation ceremony on 26 September and the Net Zero Centre opening 10 September 2024 and asked to let the Principal know if they wished to receive a formal invitation.