

**COLCHESTER INSTITUTE CORPORATION**

**Meeting of the  
CORPORATION BOARD**

**To be held on Tuesday 17 December 2024  
4.30pm, at the Colchester Campus**

**Present:**

Kevin Prince – Corporation Board Chair  
Lisa Blake – Corporation Vice Chair  
Alison Andreas – Principal and Chief Executive  
Sanjeev Arya – Governor  
Simon Attwood - Governor  
Stephanie Bettinson - Governor  
Chris Donovan - Governor  
Adam Fair – Staff Governor  
Marco Iciek - Governor  
Nicola Jay – Staff Governor  
Sally Messenger - Governor  
Tim Triffitt – Student Governor  
Caroline Williams – Governor

**In attendance:**

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

**Part I – MINUTES**

1. **Apologies for Absence**  
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Richard Block and Michael Asare Bediako.
2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest**  
None.
3. **Membership Matters**  
The Board noted that after the elections, the following Staff Governors had been appointed:  
Adam Fair– Teaching Staff Governor  
Nicola Jay – Business Support Staff Governor
4. **Minutes of meeting held on 9 October 2024**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024 (CIC/24/5/1), were approved as a true and accurate record.
5. **Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the Agenda**  
CIC/24/5/2, Corporation Board Action Sheet, was received and noted.
6. **Chair's Action/Announcements**  
None.

## 7. Self-Assessment Report 2023/24

7.1 CIC/24/5/3, Self-Assessment Report was presented to the meeting by the Curriculum & Quality Committee Chair. Governors were informed that the draft SAR 2023-24 and QIP 2024-25 had been updated using the verbal feedback from the most recent Ofsted inspection.

It was highlighted that the Ofsted report recognized the College for making a significant contribution to meeting skills needs, with the Contribution to Skills being rated as Strong. Governors expressed that the college should take pride in this achievement, as obtaining a Strong rating in this area is extremely challenging.

Governors thanked the Senior team for the work that had been put in ahead of and during the Ofsted visit.

Following recommendation from the Curriculum and Quality Committee the Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Self-Assessment Report 2023/24.

7.2 CIC24/5/3a, Quality Improvement Plan was presented to the meeting. The Deputy Principal explained that there have been minor updates to the document since it was presented to the Curriculum & Quality Committee, with additional updates planned for the future. Ofsted raised concerns with the Governors about the amount of blue on the document, and this feedback has been addressed.

Following recommendation from the Curriculum and Quality Committee the Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Draft Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24.

## 8. Report and Financial Statements 31 July 2024

CIC/24/5/4, Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2024, was received, and presented by the Deputy Chief Executive. It was reported that:

- It was pleasing to note a very positive outcome for the year with a near £1 million improvement on the outcome from the previous year with total comprehensive income for the year confirmed as £464k
- Income increased largely as a result of higher funding body grants but savings were also achieved, particularly in relation to energy costs.
- Cash reserves had increased slightly to £3.1 million at July 2024, despite another year of substantial investment in buildings and equipment for learners.
- The annual pension review resulted in a positive outcome meaning that there was no negative impact on the balance sheet.
- The College is now at the highest points score in the financial health RI category and is just 10 points away from achieving a "Good" financial health rating, which is expected to be reached by July 2025.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee said that, during discussions, the External Auditor reported that the process for the audit was smooth and well facilitated by the finance team.

The Board registered thanks to Deputy Chief Executive and Finance team for their work.

Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2024 were **APPROVED** by the Corporation Board.

8.1. CIC/24/5/5, Letter of Representation, was received, considered and **APPROVED**. The Chair and Principal and Chief Executive were authorised to sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Board.

8.2. CIC/24/5/6, External Auditor's Audit Findings Report to the Audit and Risk Committee, was received, and noted. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee reported that the Committee had been pleased to receive the report, noting that it was the cleanest audit report in terms of

both outcomes and content that had been received for some time. There had been an opportunity to question the External Auditor during the meeting, as well as privately without senior management present, and no concerns were raised for the Board's attention. The EFSA funding audit had been concluded without financial impact, which offered further reassurance to the committee on internal controls. The Board were informed that the Going Concern issues raised earlier in the year by the College Executive had fallen away since the recent Government announcement on defunding and therefore this had not affected the signing of the accounts.

CIC/24/5/7, Regularity Self-Assessment 2023/24. It was reported that this is prepared by the College Executive and Head of Governance to inform the External Audit outcome. Both the External Auditor and Audit and Risk Committee were satisfied by the content of the Regularity self-assessment. It was noted that the requirements of the self-assessment have increased since the reclassification of colleges, and as a result the self-assessment report and checklist itself had increased over the past two years.

Following recommendation from the Audit and Risk Committee the Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Regularity Self-Assessment 2023/24.

- 8.3. Report on Going Concern. The Board agreed that recent announcements had superseded this item and it was withdrawn from the agenda.

#### 9. Corporate Risk Register

CIC/24/5/8, Corporate Risk Register, was received and noted. The Principal explained that the risk register has been amended to reflect the highest risk now being lack of resources / capacity to meet all applicants' needs, due to increased student numbers in September 2024 and probably ongoing. College leaders will be implementing a number of solutions ahead of the 2025/26 academic year. The most popular areas are also those that require larger floor spaces, and to meet future course demands, resources will need to be added and/or repurposed in both the short and long term.

Defunding remains a high risk but with recent announcements, this level of risk has already been reassessed and is considerably lower. The demand for Maths and English remains high, and the College must ensure it is able to meet the funding conditions for these students next year.

External review has been downgraded following the Ofsted inspection, Staff retention and recruitment continue to pose risks.

Governors **ASKED** whether students who had completed a Level 2 in subjects such as construction might now wish to progress to a Level 3 next year. The Principal replied that the College will have these discussions with relevant Department Heads to ensure that resources are most appropriately allocated. It was good to have the choice again and, in most areas, level 3 programmes will now be reinstated.

Governors **ASKED** about T-levels and whether there has been an indication of how long they may be in place for. Indications suggest that T-levels are here to stay, with some areas where they are seen as the best qualification, and other areas where they may be the only option. Changes to industry placement rules are expected to make the process easier. In one area (Onsite Construction) T Levels will be discontinued and in others, there will remain an option to do the T Level or other Level 3 qualifications. The College already has a clear plan for 2025/26.

Discussion took place around the growing need for skills to support house building, and whether there was any suggestion of funding to help colleges provide these skills. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that the Spring/Summer spending review is expected to allocate capital funds for colleges to bid for.

Governors **ASKED** about room utilisation and whether there has been any further work in this area. The Deputy Chief Executive replied that the Internal Audit recommendations are being implemented, with 4 out of 5 completed. The increase in student numbers has naturally impacted room utilisation.

## 10. Safeguarding

- 10.1. CIC/24/5/9, Safeguarding Report, was received and presented by the Deputy Principal: It was reported that:
- Ofsted acknowledged that Safeguarding was effective
  - Top three themes are mental health, bullying and harassment and family conflict
  - 29 reports categorised as 'other' relate to issues initially reported to the safeguarding team but were not followed through as safeguarding concerns.
  - The Chair noted that recruitment checks are at 100% across the College.
  - The Safeguarding Governor commented on the consistency of safeguarding, which was also recognised by Ofsted.
- 10.2. CIC/24/5/10 Safeguarding Policy, was received, considered and **APPROVED**. It was reported that the policy is updated annually to reflect changes in Keeping Children Safe in Education, which is updated annually. The updates this year were minor, such as the removal of old terminology and there was nothing significant to bring to the attention of the Board.

## 11. Reports from Committees

### 11.1. Curriculum and Quality Committee

CIC/24/5/11 Report from Chair of Committee Curriculum and Quality Committee on the meeting held on 26 November 2024, was received, and noted. The feeling of the meeting was very positive following the Ofsted inspection.

### 11.2. Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a verbal update on the meetings held on 5 December and 13 December 2024. The Committee discussed the following:

#### **Advisory:**

- Key areas of focus included outcomes from the Internal Audit and External Audit reviews for the year.
- Two amendments were made to the 2024/25 Internal Audit plan due to changes in the College's risk profile.
- The Committee critically reviewed the annual report and statements with particular focus on the Governance Statement.
- A change in Chair will take place from the first meeting of 2025.

#### **Assurance:**

- The assurance dashboard was presented and discussed, with a very positive outcome overall. The main area of concern was a limited assurance review of room utilisation. However, the Committee was satisfied that action on this issue has already begun.
- The EFSA funding compliance review reported no significant issues in the final report. The Committee commended the College Executive for effectively managing the EFSA funding audit, External Audit, and Ofsted Inspection.
- The review of compliance with the College Financial Handbook was also discussed.

#### **Action:**

The Board received and noted:

- CIC/24/5/13, Internal Audit Annual Report 2023-24
- CIC/24/5/14, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2023-24
- CIC/24/5/15, Health and Safety Committee Annual Report 2023-24

### 11.3. Finance and Resources Committee

- CIC/24/5/16, Written report from Chair of Committee was received and noted. The Deputy Chief Executive thanked governors for providing their input to the annual report ahead of approval.
- CIC/24/5/17, Management Report and Accounts October 2024 was received and noted. It was highlighted that the College is on target for 104% delivery against adult skills allocation. Income is £135,000 ahead of target YTD. Full year forecasts show an improvement to a surplus of £310,000. This does not take into account any in year growth funding which may become available.

Governors received a report that the College would benefit from a Crown Guarantee for its Local Government Pension Scheme debts which may result in a review of contribution levels and could support an improvement to the bottom line.

- Property Issues  
Noted the increasing pressure on college accommodation, as well as issues with the motor vehicle workshop. It has now been agreed that those learners will be relocated on site. Discussion took place around potential planning issues for a new building, however it is hoped that these will be mitigated by building on an existing former brownfield site.
- College Financial Forecasting Return 2024 to 2026 ESFA review report is still awaited and will follow at the next meeting.

**ACTION**– Governors’ Dashboard to be included on February 2025 agenda.

### 12. Review of Effectiveness of Meeting

The effectiveness of the meeting was discussed.

### 13. Any Other Urgent Business

As it was the last meeting of the Corporation Chair before stepping down from the Board the Principal took the opportunity to thank him for over 16 years of service, including five years as Chair, and his significant contribution to the college.

### 14. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 27 February 2025

Wednesday 30 April 2025

Thursday 22 July 2025

All meetings to start at 4.30pm, at the Colchester Campus. Meetings will be preceded with a Board briefing at 4.00pm.

## **PART II – CONFIDENTIAL**