

Colchester Institute Corporation

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporation Board
held on 24 April 2024
at the Colchester Campus**

Present:

Kevin Prince, *in the Chair*
Alison Andreas
Simon Attwood
Michael Asare Bediako
Stephanie Bettinson
Lisa Blake

Thomas Empson
Marco Iciek
Sally Messenger
Brenda Rich
Dawn Swainson
Tim Triffitt
Caroline Williams

In Attendance:

Ali Davies	Deputy Principal
Gary Horne	Deputy Chief Executive
Alison Bennett	Head of Governance
Aaron Parkes	Observer
Chris McWhinney	Observer

*denotes attendance

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Peter Cook, Chris Donovan, Michael Asare Bediako, Richard Block.

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

No declarations of conflict of interest were made against any item on the agenda.

3. **Agreement to Starred Agenda Items**

Governors were invited to indicate any items which they wished to star for discussion or question. It was agreed that items that were not starred be noted and/or approved by the Committee without discussion.

4. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 (CIC/24/3/1) were received and **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Governors requested an update on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training. The Principal explained that the College is working with a consultant who is providing EDI training focused on the FE sector. All leaders and managers will receive the training. The training is an opportunity for staff to learn more about the EDI landscape, pause and think about their own concepts and consider the College's journey. It is recognised that the College is in the early stages of its EDI journey however going forward this will include whole college CPD, values and how to embody those values to ensure it is in everything the College does. The training also plays into the wider management development programme and will form one of the modules that is provided on an annual basis. Governors **ASKED** what the desired timeline will be for all staff to receive the training. The Principal said it is hoped that it will be before the end of the calendar year. A bid has gone into Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to take the training to the next stage.

The Chair **COMMENTED** that the notes of the strategic planning day were extremely comprehensive and thanked the previous Clerk for that.

5. **Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting**

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the Corporation Board Action Sheet from the meeting of the 29 February 2024 (CIC/24/3/3)

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

It was reported that the Corporation Chair had attended the Annual Strategic Conversation with the DfE on March 27^h 2024.

7. **Accountability Statement for 2024/25**

The Principal provided a verbal update on the Accountability Statement for 2024/25.

It was explained that the Accountability Statement forms part of the Funding Agreement is how the College outlines how it will fulfil its duties as an FE provider of Education and Skills, meeting local and national skills needs. The 2024/25 return is very similar to the previous years and will include the strategic plan and the response to Local Skills Improvement Plan. Local needs duty has been added to the accountability statement for this year. The document must be uploaded to DFE by 30 June 2024. Governors **ASKED** if there is any judgement on quality of the document by the DFE. The Principal replied that there is not and the guidance states that no feedback will be given. Governors were reminded that there is an expectation that the accountability statement is seen by the Board and local stakeholders prior to submission.

8. **2024/25 Applications and Curriculum Plan – Further Education**

The Deputy Principal provided a verbal update.

A review of application trends from previous years has been undertaken which has shown that applications are continuing in an upward trend and are the closest to pre-covid numbers and where learners are applying from, than in previous years. There is concern around the variance of 82 in Early Years. The entry rates for T Levels are higher than the traditional BTEC which will no longer be an option from next year. As a result, there will be some learners who drop down to the Level 2 and the College will need to ensure that the curriculum supports those learners who are starting with good grades to then move onto the T Level in their second year.

Salon Services and Hospitality applications are rising back up to pre-covid numbers. There has been no request for an increase in staffing in those areas.

Public Services & Sport – presently it looks like an additional group will be required however they are confident this can be covered by the current staffing.

The availability of industry placements for wood occupations need to be considered in establishing likely cohort numbers.

Projections suggest the enrolment numbers will be around 4,000 learners against a curriculum plan of 4243.

Access applications for adult learners are in decline, but this is in line with national trends. Currently delivered face to face and online, it was explained that this will be monitored and we could move to an online option only.

Apprenticeships has a target of 612 and staff are confident this can be met.

Governors **ASKED** whether the demographic figures will impact projections. It was explained that the pool of learners is still growing, and will continue to do so up until 2030. The Colchester/ Braintree campus split is around 8% of the total college learners studying at Braintree. College managers will be inviting some students in CM post codes who have applied to Colchester, to visit Braintree campus.

Governors asked whether the College set the T level entry requirements. The Deputy Principal confirmed it does. It was explained that a T Level is a two-year programme and for those who do not

complete all elements and the full two years there is no fall-back award. Therefore the College has to ensure learners have the best possible chance of achieving when admitting them to the programme. Discussions ensued around T Level work placements. The Deputy Principal explained that Early Years work placements are a traditional part of the course however it will be areas such as Wood Occupations which will be harder to find placements. The Deputy CEO said that this has been included on the Corporate Risk Register and a work placement coordinator has been appointed whose role will be to try and increase engagement with employers in this area.

Governors **ASKED** whether The College is confident that all colleges are as rigorous as CI with T level entry requirements. The Principal confirmed they are.

Discussion took place around the increased Maths and English requirements from 2024/25 when it will be expected that The College delivers 3 hours per week of English and 4 hours of maths. It was explained that most colleges in the region currently deliver 2 hours and there is little evidence to suggest that an increase from 2 to 3 hours per week would make a difference in terms of outcomes. Efforts are underway to recruit additional maths and English roles for next year, but this is already proving difficult and it is likely we will need to pilot 3 hour delivery (and look at different ways of delivering this) with a number of groups next year to inform our strategy for the following year and allow us more time to resource the area.

9. **Safeguarding Report**

The Safeguarding report had been provided to and discussed by the Curriculum and Quality Meeting held on 16 April. The Link Governor assured the Board that they should be confident that the key areas of safeguarding are being responded to very well by the College. The Board were made aware of the impact of student mental health concerns post Covid and the increase in case files from schools which have almost doubled. The College is planning a follow up exercise to the previous critical response activities.

Discussion took place around the notion and definition of what the College means by mandatory training, which has very high compliance rates above the current 97% target, however by definition the figures mean that there are members of staff who have not yet completed the training which may imply risk depending on the area in which they work. The Deputy CEO explained that the figures include members of staff who have not yet started their employment with the College, so this assumption may not be correct. Current policy states the training must be completed within 5 days of starting. Following discussion, it was felt that the figures should include only those staff eligible to complete the training for example if someone has not yet started employment with the organisation, they should not be included in the figures. Mandatory training should have a 100% completion rate for eligible staff. It was agreed that if removed from the figures, staff on long term sick need to be followed up on return to ensure compliance.

Governors **ASKED** whether the figures in the report include Governors. It was explained that Governor training is monitored separately.

10. **Reports from Committee**

10.1. **Curriculum and Quality Committee**

10.1.1. **Curriculum and Quality Update Report (CIC/24/3/4)**

The following Key Points were highlighted:

- Provided a positive report on attendance, retention and predicted achievement for 16-18 learners.
- Concern was expressed that the continuing gap between those students who have declared difficulties and/or a disability and predicted achievement and that of their peers.
- College data and new national rates for the Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) have been published and were provided within the paper for the committee. The College is in a very pleasing position and came high in the regional ranking.
- Safeguarding continues to show an increase in case numbers which outstrips the increase in population.

- Personal Development (PD) forms part of the wider curriculum and the College has invested in a post to support this area of work. The committee heard about the research that has been carried out to date and the next steps.
- Teaching and Learning survey has taken place and the committee was provided with a comprehensive report on the results. Satisfaction of FE and Adult students has increased by 1 percentage point compared to last year, reaching 91%, which exceeds the College target of 90%. Apprentice satisfaction rate is 88%, 3 percentage points lower than for FE and Adult learners, but an increase of 6 percentage points on last year's satisfaction rate
- Governors were able to triangulate the data by the different reports that were provided.

The Deputy Principal explained that since the meeting she has looked at the vulnerable learners' attainment gap and held two area monitoring meetings (Early Years and Motor Vehicle) where it was agreed that any learners not predicted to achieve, should be monitored. Student focus groups to identify why they have responded the way they have in relation to behaviour and the vulnerable students will take place.

10.1.2. **Update on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan**

The report presented to Governors identified good progress against all goals and associated actions within the Quality Improvement Plan.

Governors closely reviewed the progress being made under goal 4 following a lower score in the Teaching and Learning Survey for the development of literacy and language by students. Governors noted that further work is planned on the English and Maths Strategy.

Governors critically reviewed the increasing gap in predicted achievement rates between students who declare difficulties and or disabilities and the student population under goal 2. The College target is the performance gap must be less than 2 percentage points and the gap is currently 4 percentage points. Governors are confident that the College Executive are actively working to reduce the gap.

10.1.3. **Prevent Strategy**

Governors were informed of the changes that had been made to the Prevent Strategy. The committee approved the Prevent Strategy and recommended it to the Board subject to the 5 areas for improvement listed in the strategy being included in the Prevent action plan.

DECISION: The Board **APPROVED** the Prevent Strategy.

10.2. **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a verbal report of the meeting held on 13 March 2024. It was noted that the minutes of the meeting are yet to be circulated and would be added to the next meeting for information.

The Board's attention was drawn to the following points:

- Financial implications of curriculum reforms. Governors felt that there is likely to be a need for a joint Audit & Risk and Finance and Resources Committee in the future due to the overlap regarding this matter
- The committee approved an additional audit assignment for this year's annual audit programme. The College Executive highlighted a concern around the utilisation of classrooms and given the impending additional requirements brought by proposed increased English and Maths provision, it was felt appropriate that a review should be undertaken to ensure value for money in utilising the way the College space is used.
- Committee membership – The committee identified that the membership is finance experience heavy and this needs to be reviewed to ensure there is a balanced skills and knowledge set.
- Satisfaction that both the external auditors and internal audit service have both provided value for money over the previous year.

Governors commented that it was positive that the committee identify the need to extend the skills and knowledge set.

10.3. Finance and Resources Committee

The Deputy CEO presented Finance and Resources Committee report (CIC/I24/3/10) in the absence of the committee Chair. The Board's attention was drawn to the following points:

- Based on the current forecast, the College would end the year with a financial health rating of "requires improvement". However, if the outturn improved by £100K the College would move into a "good" rating. Although it was recognised this would be a challenge, the committee were confident, from the discussions, that the Executive would do everything possible to try and achieve this.
- The Initial pre-budget estimate presented showed a £1.3m increase in the main funding line taking FE funding to £29m. The Deputy CEO explained that since the meeting the adult skills budget had been received and should provide a £600k uplift. It is therefore predicted that the budget will be around £42.5m income and with a similar expenditure total for the 2024/25 academic year, leaving around a £100k surplus. Full proposals will be provided to the July meeting.
- The committee noted the continuing improvements in HR. The new HR Director explained the department will be continuing to build on the foundations laid over the last 12 months to ensure HR further supports the overall success of the College and the achievement of the strategic objectives.

10.3.1. Monthly Management Report

The Monthly Management Report and Accounts [Period 07], were received and noted (CIC/I24/3/11). The Deputy Chief Executive reported:

- YTD surplus is c£500k ahead of the same point last year.
- Apprenticeship funding is ahead of the budget target.
- Overall performing to plan despite ongoing challenges around the increased costs of delivery.
- Cash is showing a £3.2m reserve at the end of the year.

Governors **ASKED** about the previous discussions around upgrades to the HR system and whether the College has moved forward with this. The Deputy CEO explained that this is in the scoping process, ahead of system procurement, having been previously approved by the Board.

10.3.2. Update on Property Matters

The property strategy has identified three blocks which need to be rebuilt rather than be retro-fitted due to their age and condition, and it is hoped that there will be opportunity to bid for funding for significant demolition and rebuild projects in the future.

Condition Improvement Fund work is continuing, including to refurbish toilets, window replacements in blocks H & C and a new water main in blocks B, C and D.

Governors commented that this is a comprehensive strategy which shows how discussions in other areas can be realised.

10.3.3. College Estates and Accommodation plan 2023/24

Governors **ASKED** if there is still T Level funding available. The Deputy CEO replied that funding is only for equipment, and this is being looked at by the Curriculum leads having received an allocation earlier in the year.

Governors commented on the reference to a new combined End Point Assessment Centre (EPA) supporting electrical and plumbing apprenticeships. The Deputy CEO said that Electrical side is up and running and with a little more work to be done in relation to the gas facility. Both areas are being used

as training centres and are staffed in house with an external provider being employed to carry out assessments.

A Governor commented that there is always a risk with the building works and the retention of learners as the site becomes different to operate. The Deputy CEO agreed and said that accommodation needs to meet a forward-thinking curriculum but members must be aware of the risks that will be associated with this.

11. **Review of Effectiveness of the Meeting**

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

12. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Corporation Board is on Thursday 25 July at 4.30pm. The meeting will be preceded by a presentation at 4.00pm.

13. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None