Barnet and Southgate College Corporation
Board of Governors Meeting
7 April 2020

MINUTES

Time	18.30	
Venue	By videoconferencing	
Governors present (Quorum: 6)	Ann Zinkin Alessandra Almeida-Jones Nana Brew Fiona Bulmer Sheila Dawson Graham Duncan Imelda Galvin Darren Mepham Christalla Tsattala	Chair
In attendance	Neil Coker Mark Sellis Hiten Sivla Melissa Drayson	Principal and Assistant CE (P/DCE) Exec Director Corp Services (EDCS) Director of Finance Clerk to the Corporation
Apologies	Mervin Archer Tracey McIntosh	

Items deemed confidential on the grounds of commercial or personal sensitivity have been redacted from the published minutes.

Item		**Action lead**

1. Preliminary Items

1.1 Chair's welcome
The Chair thanked governors for joining the meeting, and the staff team for setting it up and reminded participants of the meeting protocols that had been circulated. Attendees gave consent for the meeting to be recorded to assist with the minutes.

1.2 Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Mervin Archer and Tracey McIntosh. Best wishes were conveyed to both for a speedy recovery.

1.3 Confirmation of eligibility, quorum and declarations of interests
It was confirmed that all present were eligible to take part in the meeting, there were no new declarations of interests, and the meeting was quorate.

1.4 Notification of urgent items of other business
There were no items of other business.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

i. Meetings held on 27th February and 5th March

It was confirmed that the term of any renegotiated loan would be 13, not 3 years. With this correction, the confidential minutes of the Special Board meeting on 27th February were APPROVED as a correct record.

The minutes of the scheduled Board meeting on 5th March were APPROVED as a correct record with no amendments.

Confidential sections of both minutes were confirmed.

ii. Matters arising and outstanding actions

An update was requested on the LGPS triennial actuarial valuation. The deficit reduction payment would come down by £200k pa but the monthly contribution would rise to 21.7%. These two elements would balance out resulting in a minimal impact on cash.

The Board considered the status of matters arising from previous meetings and supported the postponement of some actions due to college closure because of Covid-19. Governors stressed the importance of maintaining the budget savings tracker. Management explained that there had been no change between the 14 February report and college closure. The financial situation had now changed dramatically with a number of new income risks, but the report would be revisited once the situation was clearer.

The Principal confirmed he would continue to monitor the QIP, although evidence would be difficult to collate and would integrate the HR and OD actions as part of this work

3. CEO Report

Supporting paper by the CEO

The CEO, Principal and EDCS presented electronically on both the College's tactical response to Covid-19, the emerging risks and opportunities, and the impact on planning. Items 4.ii and 6.ii were covered by this presentation.

<u>Teaching and learning for current students</u>

All teaching had now been moved online, utilising a range of platforms but primarily Microsoft Teams. The amount of online activity was being monitored on a day by day basis. 75% of courses had been registered, and student attendance was 68%. This was considered very positive under the circumstances and a testament to the hard work of staff. Many examples of innovative and creative approaches to online learning were being shared via social media.   Early issues whereby students had inviting friends not connected to the college to join online classes had now been addressed.

There had been some impact on apprenticeships where employers had closed or had reduced activity. 467 apprentices were still on programme, 36 had been withdrawn and 46 were on a break in learning. New starts had, however, been put on hold

Assistance was being provided for students who had difficulty accessing online learning, through the loan of IT equipment.

Guidance for assessing students at the end of the year was still emerging, but it was believed that GCSEs and A Levels would be based on teacher assessments. Guidance was still awaited on how practical assessments within vocational subjects would be undertaken.

There was a requirement to continue to provide on-site learning for vulnerable students and children of keyworkers. All on-site learners were being accommodated either in the LLDD centre or the learning resource centre at Southgate.   Of 500 students in classified as vulnerable, 20-35 were on site before the Easter holidays, but contact was being maintained with all students in this category and their social workers in line with the College’s responsibilities.

The college would not be open over Easter and, after Easter, the LRC would remain closed with students being supported remotely.

In response to governor questions, it was confirmed that all students who were known to the safeguarding team due to welfare concerns had an individual action plan and an allocated member of the team. Contact with each student was on a negotiated basis.   Documentation and information had been shared with staff about identification and referral of new safeguarding concerns.   Student counselling services and welfare services were continuing.

Governors asked what support was being provided to students receiving bursaries. It was confirmed that those eligible for free school meals were now receiving the cash equivalent.

<u>Staff and settings</u>

Most of the teaching and business support staff were now working from home. Staff sickness absence rates were currently 14.5% which was about 3 times the normal level. About a fifth of staff had been affected either by illness or quarantine. However, absence due to self-isolation was now lower as self-isolating staff were able to work from home, with the exception of those working with vulnerable students at Southgate.

The challenges and stress factors for teaching staff of conducting online learning were recognised and a range of support mechanisms were in place, including management briefings team meetings and informal peer support networks. Teaching staff were being trusted to set up and run online learning without management policing or monitoring them.

Governors asked about flexibility arrangements for staff with childcare or caring responsibilities at home. Staff were being trusted to organise their workload to suit their circumstances. Publications had been shared from other organisations giving advice to staff on how to deal with various challenges of working from home.

All sites had been closed except for Southgate and part of Colindale used by the social services early help hub. There was a reduced security presence at the closed campuses and sites to deter anti-social behaviour and break-ins. The estates team was also performing daily fire alarm and other health and safety checks.

Appropriate PPE was being provided for staff working on-site with LLDD students, and the cleaning regime had been increased.

The M Block refurbishment was very near to completion, but had now been suspended due to supplier issues and staffing levels. Two of the floors had been completed and could be used for teaching once the college re-opened. The construction company had guaranteed that they would prioritise completion of the remaining works. It was confirmed that the Force Majeure clause within the contract over-rode any claims by either party. It was believed that additional costs relating to the delay would be minimal.

AGREED: that the thanks of the Board of Governors should be passed on to all staff for their efforts in responding to the challenging circumstances and the move to online teaching DM

Marketing and recruitment for 2020-21

This would normally be one of the busiest periods for marketing activity. An alternative, virtual based campaign and application process was being developed, including online interviews. The potential for a virtual open day was being explored. Close contact was being maintained with employers and delivery partners for commercial courses.

Planning for the new year would need to encompass various scenarios, including resumption of business as usual, partial reopening and continued closure.

In response to governor questions it was confirmed that recruitment to summer terms adult courses was low. The few applications that had been received were being dealt with remotely. These mainly related to ESOL and Electrical.

Governors also asked whether offers would be made to students using GCSE assessments based on predicted grades according to Ofqual methodology. This was confirmed. Internal progression based on practical skills was being reviewed on a case by case basis.

Information was sought on how applications compared to previous years point last year. Applications before closure had been slightly higher. The challenge would now be to keep these applicants warm. It was not known how the school sector would be responding in terms of their 16-18 provision. It was agreed that there was a good opportunity to run a campaign targeted at parents.

The opportunities were discussed for the college to develop training for employees of companies that have gone out of business or laid off staff. It was believed that hospitality and catering would be a 'boom' area. Management would be looking more closely at potential opportunities, included those directed by government or local policy, in the forthcoming weeks in order to be on the front foot and develop a targeted marketing approach.

Governors asked what the college was providing in terms of careers advice for students in the light of current uncertainties.

AGREED: Careers advice to be checked and reported back. **NC**

Current year financial position

ESFA and GLA would be honouring payments on profile for the remainder of the year for 16-18 and Adult Education Budget funding.

There remained limited risk of clawback of ESFA funded AEB funding, based on student numbers at the mid-year point being under target. The college would have delivered 100% by the end of the year had it remained open.

A further risk related to High Needs funding from the local authorities. This was a London-wide concern. It was helpful that the college had a strong relationship with both Boroughs Councils.

A large part of levy funded apprenticeship provision had been received or billed. The worst case, but unlikely, scenario was that no more income was received, leaving a shortfall of nearly £500k. Work was underway with all employers to establish their intentions in respect of their apprentices.

HE withdrawal from courses was considered low risk. Teaching was being delivered online successfully.

Income from new commercial FE loan-funded adult courses presented a risk. Governors asked if the college had received any requests for refunds from self-funded adult learners. Most related to electrical courses. The approach would be to deliver theory until June through e-learning. There would then be a pause until the college was open at which time the practical skills and assessment would be completed. There had been a high level of engagement in e-learning and no indication that students would seek refunds.

Cashflow would be lower than previously forecast but was not critical at any point. The worst-case scenario for income loss was estimated as approximately £1m.

Savings to partially offset income losses would be found from agency staff reductions, furloughing of relevant staff on full pay, and reduction of costs in some areas whilst safeguarding the supply chain. The point was made that managers should be trained to have sensitive conversations with staff about the implications of being furloughed and allay any concerns. It was confirmed that the numbers would be low at around 20 staff in specific areas.

It was confirmed that there were reductions in security costs. The existing cleaning contract had now been extended to 31 July to avoid complications relating to TUPE of furloughed staff to the new contractors.   Most potential savings in sports related to enrichment provision.

Governors asked if the college had approached the bank for a loan repayment holiday. It was confirmed that this had not yet been broached, but might result, in any case, in a future increase in interest rates costs.

Financial position for 2020-21

Planned savings associated with curriculum efficiency, management review and longer-term changes relating to the Borehamwood contract were all proceeding.

AGREED: that ELT should bring the outcome of its considerations on achieving curriculum efficiencies to the Board for further discussion at the May meeting, or before if required. ELT

Other issues and uncertainties

- Impact on Ofsted timetable and the college's ability to demonstrate improvement

- Eligibility for other sources of financial support
- Impact of universities making mass unconditional offers on HE recruitment, although the Office for Students was taking steps to prevent this.
- School sixth form decisions
- The possibility that Independent Training Providers will go bust without government support, creating opportunities for the college to pick up that business
- Impact on other FE providers and the future landscape.
- What will the new 'normal' look like and opportunities for the college to pick up business
- Sustainability of remote learning and maintaining student engagement
- Capitalising and building on new skills being developed during shut-down

Scenario Planning

ELT was in the process of determining its operational and the financial impact of different scenarios, including continued closure, partial re-opening, staff and supplier shortages, poor recruitment and non-completion of qualifications.

Community response

Measure being taken by the college to support the wider community, including SMEs, the NHS and the Met Police were reported.

4. Principal report on Quality and Student Experience
Supporting paper presented by the Principal

Item 4.2 was covered under item 3

4.1 Safeguarding Issues reported to Audit Committee

Several recommendations had arisen from an independent review of safeguarding in LLDD. It was confirmed that Policies were up to date and compliant. Staff changes were being implemented to bring responsibility for safeguarding within LLDD into the centralised safeguarding team. This included the creation of a new post with specific responsibilities. The Heads of Faculty overseeing LLDD had been tasked with producing a detailed action plan to cover all other recommendations, with a timeline of the end of term for the satisfactory completion of actions. Progress reports would be made to the newly set up Safeguarding and Welfare Committee.

The Safeguarding Governor confirmed that she was now aware of the issues and recommended that reports are made to each Board meeting until assurance could be given that all issues had been addressed.

AGREED: Reports to each Board meeting on progress with addressing recommendations relating to safeguarding in LLDD NC

4.3 Governor engagement with students and curriculum

Governors welcomed the range of suggestions to ensure stronger engagement with students, staff and the curriculum. It was considered important that staff should also benefit from such engagement. It was requested that more informal, less structured 'meet the student' sessions should also be reinstated with an open agenda.

It was **AGREED:** that governor involvement in the self-assessment report validation process should also be reinstated.

5. KPI Report – February 2020

Supporting paper presented by the Chief Executive

The Board accepted that there had been significant change since the position presented for February, and that monitoring of many current KPIs would not be possible until business as usual was resumed.

6. Finance and Resources

6.1 Assurance report from Finance and Scrutiny Group, including period 7 Management Accounts (February 2020)

Minutes of the FSG presented by the Chair of FSG

Many of the issues relating to the implications of Covid-19 on finance had already been discussed. The February accounts had been scrutinised fully but had been superseded by events.

The timescale for the production of the 2020-21 budget had been agreed. The FSG would meet prior to the May Board meeting to consider the outline budget. The Board would then consider the draft budget in June for final approval in July. The FSG had also asked for presentation of different scenarios to get a sense of the range of risk.

6.2 Update on Finance implications of Covid-19

Covered under item 3

7. Committee and Task and Finish Group reports

7.1 Audit Committee report

Supporting papers presented by the Chair of the Audit Committee

There were no recommendations from the committee.

It was noted that, anecdotally, some colleges appeared to be loosening controls and authorisation levels during the current situation. The Board agreed that controls needed to be tighter than ever.

7.2 Capital Projects Steering Group
Minutes of the meeting presented by Sheila Dawson

The Board noted the factors that had contributed to the overspend on the M Block budget, leading to an increase in the budget. The CPSG had expressed concern and raised many questions but recognised that the reasons were unavoidable. The project managers had been unhappy that the project had gone over budget as they had brought in other projects under budget. Governors registered concern that it had approved a contingency of in Oct, but this had been taken up by works to the roof structure.

The Board was reminded that the overspend would not impact on the financial position as it was within the overall capital budget.

The Board was advised that the negotiation of the final account had yet to be undertaken. It was hoped that this might result in reductions to the total project cost in total but there was a risk that it could go other way.

RESOLVED: that the overall project outturn costs for the M Block refurbishment be APPROVED.

8. Governance and Policy

8.1 Chair recruitment arrangements
Oral update by the Clerk. Governors with an interest withdrew from this item.

Interviews would be going ahead on 9 April. Graham Duncan and Fiona Bulmer had agreed to join the panel to cover for Mervin if necessary and ensure there was a balance of new and longer standing governors. A Special Board meeting would be convened to approve the panel's recommendation.

There was a discussion about the implications and risks of making an appointment in the absence of the opportunity to meet face to face. It was agreed that this should be discussed with the recruitment agency.

8.2 Covid–19 implications for governance

The Board supported the business as usual approach discussed at the Audit Committee, with a pragmatic approach to postponing business that it was not possible to cover. Contingency arrangements were discussed, should the Chair and Vice Chair be unavailable at the same time. It was agreed that any eligible external governor would be asked to take the Chair.

9. **Urgent items of other business**
There was none

10. **Dates of forthcoming meetings**

14 May (Board Development Day)
18 June at 18.30
16 July at 18.30

The meeting closed at 21.00

Signed: ……………………………………………………………………………..(Chair)

14 May 2020