Barnet and Southgate College Corporation
Board of Governors Meeting
14 May 2020

MINUTES

Time	14.00 – 16.46	
Venue	By videoconferencing	
Governors present (Quorum: 6)	Ann Zinkin	Chair
	Alessandra Almeida-Jones	
	Mervin Archer	
	Nana Brew	
	Fiona Bulmer	
	Sheila Dawson	
	Graham Duncan	Vice Chair
	Imelda Galvin	
	Adam Goldstein	Chair designate
	Darren Mepham	CEO
	Christalla Tsattala	Staff Governor
In attendance	Neil Coker	Principal and Assistant CE (P/DCE)
	Tracey MacIntosh	Exec Director Partnerships and Commercial (EDCP)
	Mark Sellis	Exec Director Corp Services (EDCS)
	Melissa Drayson	Clerk to the Corporation
Apologies	Mervin Archer	

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**	
	It was noted that this was Ann Zinkin's last meeting in the Chair. She confirmed she would remain on the Board for the time being to ensure a smooth handover to Adam Goldstein and would say her proper farewells once the college re-opened and Governors were able to meet.	
1.2	**Apologies for absence**	
	Apologies were received from Mervin Archer.	

The Clerk and Principal updated on the recruitment of new student governors. In view of the late point in the academic year, and the college shutdown, it was agreed that a fresh recruitment campaign would be launched with the new student cohort in the Autumn.

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

Detailed in item 7.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

i. Meeting held on 7 April

The budget figure stated under item 7.2 was corrected. With this edit, the Part A minutes of the Board meeting on 7 April were **APPROVED** as a correct record and confidential sections were confirmed.

The confidential Part B minutes had been circulated to external governors only and were **APPROVED**.

ii. Special meeting on 24 April

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as a correct record.

iii. **Matters arising and outstanding actions**

Completed actions and those covered on the agenda were noted. An update was provided on the following:

Careers advice to learners during shutdown: covered under Item 4.

Number of settlement agreements: It was reported that there had been 7 settlement agreements during 2018-19. Five had arisen from redundancy and 2 from protected conversations.

3. CEO Report

Supporting paper by the CEO

The report was structure in two parts: a) update on college response during shutdown and b) planning for reopening.

a) Update on college response during shutdown

The report was noted and governors raised additional questions:

An update on the use of Colindale by Barnet Council for emergency social care was requested. This had not come to fruition as Borough libraries had been redeployed instead.

An update on marketing and recruitment for 2020-21 was given. The shutdown had forced the college to approach marketing differently but this had resulted in many positive innovations, with which staff had proactively engaged Key activity included:

- A targeted marketing plan, with actions relating to individual curriculum areas. Measurable outputs included greater website traffic with visitors staying longer and often returning.
- The number of social media followers had increased, with Facebook activity up a third compared to the same time last year. It was too early to judge impact on recruitment, and application numbers were on a par with this time last year.
- A new website was to be launched on 20th May.
- A virtual open day was taking place on 25th June
- Keeping warm activities with existing students and new applicants were being ramped up by each curriculum area. A database had been set up to track and ensure regular contact with potential students.
- Online application and enrolment processes were being developed.
- An internal progression strategy was also in place to achieve a target of internal progression of 85-90%.

The staff team were in the process of developing KPIs against which the success of the campaign could be measured.

An update on apprenticeships was requested. It was reported that some apprenticeship providers and partners were reverting to normal business, with breaks in learning being reversed. Engagement levels with, and offers of support to, small and medium enterprise (SME) work experience providers had also been increased, as this was also an important strand of college business.

It was confirmed that the careers team were an integral part of the support and advice being provided to individual students on progression options.

AGREED: AAJ to support marketing team to set marketing KPIs and monitor online and social media marketing activity. TMc/ AAJ

b) Planning for re-opening

In the light of the Government's announcement about the reopening of schools and colleges for some year groups on 1st June and subsequent guidance from the Department for Education, management was evaluating the potential for reopening. Staff were fully engaged in the discussions and two Workstream groups had been set up: one to identify priority students, and the second to evaluate the logistics and risks of reopening for different student groups. Full health and safety risk assessments would form part of this piece of work. At this point, there was no assumption that the priority students would be the same as those identified by government.

A key consideration would be the willingness of staff and students to travel in using public transport. It was confirmed that it would not be compulsory for either group to return onsite.

Governors asked how the college would accommodate reluctance to come into college by students or parents of 16-18 year olds. It was considered that many students would be able to continue to study effectively online. There were, however, some students who would not be able to complete their course without a practical assessment on- site or in the workplace, eg in construction, electronics, hair and beauty and child care. The college would be prioritising these courses to make the possibility of returning as safe as possible with social distancing and timetabling. Curriculum staff were also developing a bridging programme to enable students to catch up with practical skills in September. It would be a huge challenge to get all students to an equal level in September and may take a whole term to achieve

It was known that some were shielding, and others would still have anxieties and concerns. Staff would be surveyed as part of the risk assessment to identify concerns, barriers to returning and specific support needs.

Governors requested a follow up report about the levels of risk attached to reopening across the college once the initial detailed assessment stage had been undertaken, particularly around student and staff wellbeing and safety. As this was a dynamic situation, the report would be shared before the next Board meeting.

AGREED: Risk-based report on reopening the College to be shared with the Board before the next meeting. DM

4. Principal report on Quality and the Student Experience

Supporting paper by the Principal and Assistant CE and presentation on attendance data.

The headlines from the report were discussed.

a) Learner assessment

A Level and GCSE consultation had ended and awarding body guidance was being followed to set predicted grades. There was concern that improvement work undertaken this year would not be reflected in the standardised grades, as it would have done if classroom work had continued to the end of the year. 2019-20 performance data would not be published, and Ofsted inspections would be based on 2018-19 data once these resumed. The implications of this for the college would need to be considered.

Guidance was awaited from the awarding bodies about the assessment of technical and vocational qualifications. Qualifications would fall into one of two categories: those for which grades would be awarded based on coursework to 20 March; and those requiring a practical skills assessment, often linked to a licence to practice. For the latter group, a delay might be inevitable. The assessment methodology for each subject would be advised by awarding bodies, but decisions on bringing student back on site, and appropriate health and safety measures, would be decided with the input of curriculum managers.

Governors recognised that this was a highly complex piece of work, which would place considerable additional pressure on staff. The staffing and financial implications for 2020-21 of running a bridging programme alongside delivery for new students was a concern

Assurance was sought that there would be safeguards within the grade-setting and validation process to ensure that no group of students was disadvantaged. It was confirmed that both Curriculum Managers and the Principal would validate the grades and would be alert to any discrepancies against previous grade profiles.

Management was asked about the communications plan for students, particularly in the light of changing government advice and directives. Indications were that students were continuing with online learning willingly, and few queries had been received. Further communications were planned to tie in with information about course assessment in the next couple of weeks. It was important to provide the right information at the right time, rather than an incomplete picture that might create more confusion.

b) Attendance – online learning

Data was presented on attendance statistics by department as a percentage of lessons that had taken place (attendance was recorded by the teacher on a register). The expectation had been that, in some subjects, attendance would drop off significantly. The overall picture was, however, much more positive with 75-80% attendance. In some areas, attendance was better than it had been before lockdown. Lower attendance was seen, as expected, by students in foundation learning as they were less likely to remain motivated. Staff were currently working on re-engaging these students. Some practically based subjects were also seeing lower engagement in online learning.

The breakdown by level showed Level 3 students were attending the most. A gradual decline had been anticipated once the grade awarding methodology had been published, but this had not yet been seen.

The Board recognised that attendance levels were a reflection of the hard work, commitment and positive attitude of both staff and students.

Governors recognised that this was an impressive picture but asked how the 25% not attending were being supported. The idea of a skills passport for returning students was being considered, along with 'headstart' packs, to allow a tailored approach to bring students up to an equal level of knowledge. It was inevitable that reparatory work might be needed in September and this would present a major challenge.

c) Safeguarding

The report gave detail of safeguarding activity pre and post-lockdown. Credit was given to the strong safeguarding team, who had adapted safeguarding mechanisms to deal with the remote student population.

Governors asked what welfare checks were being undertaken to ensure that students that the college had lost contact with were safe. Personal tutors were flagging students who they hadn't seen, and steps were being taken to contact them. Students on the record as vulnerable or high risk including looked after (LAC) students, were already receiving a higher level of support in close association with the local authorities.

An progress report was given on the recommendations and actions from the LLDD safeguarding report. Progress was on target and was being tracked by the Safeguarding and Wellbeing group, attended by Fiona Bulmer as Safeguarding Link Governor. Specifically, actions to consolidate and improve record keeping had been completed; a detailed staff training plan was in place; provision of resources for dedicated staff had been improved, and a new framework for reviewing safeguarding provision annually had been approved.

The Safeguarding Link Governor reported that she had attended a team meeting the previous week, and was reassured by the response of the team to supporting students during the current situation, and the robustness of future plans. A big step forward was widening the membership of the group to include a broad range of staff involved in student safety and welfare. Further work was needed to bring the outcomes of the new, highly comprehensive, safeguarding review framework to the Board in a digestible form.

d) **Re-opening plan**

Further information was given about the June 1st reopening for some students. The rationale would be not only academic, but would take into account student and staff welfare and wellbeing. Social distancing was a key consideration in all college sites, and students would be continuously reminded to follow safe practices.

A piece of work had commenced, involving curriculum managers, to build communities of students in preparation for the return to college when social interaction might still be difficult and the return to more formal learning might be challenging for some.

In response to governor questions, it was clarified that the volume of students who might be expected to be in college at any one time was still being assessed. Decisions about timetabling, including the option to extend the college day, would be based on this data.

5. Finance and Resources

5.1 Report from the Finance Scrutiny Group

Minutes of the meeting presented by the FSG Chair, Graham Duncan

The minutes of the FSG were noted.

It was reported that the timescale for staff restructuring was still under review in light of current circumstances and sector advice.

5.2 Financial position 2019-20 including updated forecast

Supporting paper: p8 (31 March) Management Accounts presented by the EDCS; presentation of budget savings tracker graph,

Governors were presented with an updated graph showing revised five-year financial out-turns including detail on where savings would be found. The new draft forecast was presented against the position set out within the IFMC in February.

This represented a worst-case scenario, resulting in an estimated deficit larger than the IFMC year-end forecast. This put the college back a year in terms of the financial recovery plan timescale. The draft budget would be refined further at the FSG and Board meetings in June before final sign-off by the Board in July.

A summary of savings within the Financial Improvement Plan were given for the first three years.

A second budget tracker bar chart highlighted areas where a variance had been identified against the original budget, plus areas where actions had been implemented to reduce the YE deficit.

The third graph demonstrated a 29% drop in 16-19 numbers since the college merger in 2011/12, although this had levelled out more recently

Part of the reason for the drop was that subcontracting of 16-18 year provision had been discontinued.

The final table showed a decrease in income and growth in expenditure over the previous four years resulting in an increased deficit.

The question was raised over additional savings related to Covid-19. These had not yet been incorporated due to lack of certainty but could include savings in monthly security, cleaning costs and utilities.

A concern about student debt was highlighted. Student Loan Company loan payments were secure, but there was risk around receipt of fees for commercial and full cost adult courses.

Some debt related to High Needs Funding from local authorities. At present the bulk of this this was considered to be secure.

Governors noted that the aged debtor analysis was no longer in the management accounts, although it had been specifically requested by governors. This would be reinstated.

The Board welcomed the report but asked for the rag-rated budget savings tracker to be reinstated, as it enabled governors to see at a glance where savings were being achieved.

There was acknowledgement of the college's predicted financial health score. The key measure was the current ratio, and it would be monitored closely.

AGREED:

(i)	**that the aged debtor analysis would be restored within the monthly management accounts**	MS
(ii)	**That the management accounts would include a version of the RAG-rated budget savings tracker for board monitoring.**	MS
(iii)	**That the management accounts would include an assessment of current ratio as a key financial health indicator**	MS

5.3 Budget assumptions 2020-21

Supporting paper presented by the EDCS

The outline budget currently presented three scenarios based on different possible reopening dates. The figures were based on Scenario B – a late summer opening. It was noted that scenario A was now more likely, but the difference in financial terms was small. The return of adult learning, including ESOL, would also need to be factored in subject to further government guidance. Scenario C, which assumed a return after the start of the 2020-21 academic year, would be overlaid on the budget for comparison.

Headlines were:

- Due to Covid, income was now projected to be significantly lower than previously forecast. The main factor was the removal of the planned growth in levy-funded apprenticeship income. This was, however, partly offset by savings in delivery costs;
- Pay costs were slightly higher, although some of this was due to an increase in Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) contributions.

It was recognised that all colleges would be experiencing similar issues, but it was not known whether additional financial support would be provided. It was difficult to predict how the sector would be affected in future. However, potential opportunities for Colleges might arise as well as risks.

The FSG was thanked for its detailed scrutiny of the management accounts and outline budget document.

6. Equality and Diversity and gender pay report

Supporting paper presented by the CEO

Governors welcomed the shorter annual report and noted that this had been discussed prior to the meeting with Mervin Archer, in his capacity as Equality and Diversity link governor. Several detailed appendices had been referenced but not provided, although digital links to these would be included in future reports.

The action plan set out how discrepancies between different groups in a number of areas would be addressed. This would be monitored by a steering group chaired by the Chief Executive. Governors noted the ambitious timeframes against the actions and that these reflected their importance. Any slippage would be monitored and reported.

There was discussion of the proposed actions to increase numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff at senior levels. These included development opportunities for existing BAME staff to help them progress into management, including an acting up scheme and a review of recruitment practices. It was agreed that a proactive and creative approach was needed. It was considered that the low ethnic representation at senior management level might also be generational, given the age profile of management and that this might be addressed through the recruitment pipeline.

Questions were raised about actions to address gender imbalances in some curriculum areas. The intention was to clearly understand and address need and the market rather than take a tick-box approach. Restoring gender balance in STEM subjects was of national importance. In other subject areas, such as sport, one of the objectives was to influence the campus culture at Southgate arising from a largely male population, as this might be a deterrent for potential female students.

It was agreed that the report should include a section on governor diversity, in line with the Board's stated commitment.

The frequency of monitoring of the action plan was also discussed.

AGREED: that the E&D report and action plan would be monitored twice a year by the Board. DM

7. Other urgent business

Ann Zinkin was thanked by all present for her considerable contribution and achievements as Chair. Ann responded that she looked forward to remaining on the Board to support Adam Goldstein in his new role. Adam replied that he was very excited about the opportunity and looked forward to speaking to each governor individually.

8 . Dates of forthcoming meetings

18 June at 18.30
16 July at 18.30

The meeting closed at 16.46

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

18 June 2020