Barnet and Southgate College Corporation
Board of Governors Meeting
18 June 2020

MINUTES

Time	18.30 – 21.25	
Venue	By videoconferencing	
Governors present (Quorum: 6)	Adam Goldstein	Chair
	Alessandra Almeida-Jones	
	Mervin Archer	
	Fiona Bulmer	
	Sheila Dawson	
	Graham Duncan	Vice Chair
	Imelda Galvin	
	Darren Mepham	
	Christalla Tsattala	
	Ann Zinkin	
In attendance	Neil Coker	Principal and Assistant CE (P/DCE)
	Tracey McIntosh	Exec Director Partnerships/Commercial
	Mark Sellis	Exec Director Corp Services (EDCS)
	Melissa Drayson	Clerk to the Corporation
Apologies	Nana Brew	

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

Item			Action lead
1.		**Preliminary Items** Consent was granted for the meeting to be recorded to assist with the minutes.	
	1.1	**Chair's welcome** The Chair welcomed all to his first meeting in the chair. He thanked governors with whom he had had individual conversations.	
	1.2	**Apologies for absence** As above.	
	1.3	**Confirmation of eligibility 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	
	1.4	**Notification of urgent items of other business**	

There had been no requests in advance to raise any other business.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

i. Meeting held on 14 May 2020

The Part A minutes of the Board meeting on 14 May were APPROVED as a correct record. Confidential sections were confirmed.

ii. **Matters arising and outstanding actions**

Completed actions and those due for report under other agenda items were noted. An update was provided on the following:

14 May, Item 3a, marketing and recruitment The EDPC and Alessandra Almeida-Jones had met as agreed and had identified the following priorities:

- Work to gather and use student feedback and positive testimonials in marketing.
- Positive, relevant messaging relating to Covid through advertising.
- Actively seeking the advocacy of students with sharing messaging on social media.
- The development of recruitment and marketing KPIs and monitoring mechanisms, including:
    - The number of applications compared to the same point the previous year.
    - A target of 80% for internal progression, and increase from 45 – 50%
    - Conversion rate targets from application to enrolment.
- Monitoring of the performance of the marketing agency through the number of hits and returns to the website.

The level of staff awareness of the marketing campaign was raised. Management reported that a staff newsletter on this was planned.

Governors asked what assurances were being given to students, parents and carers about college re-opening, and what they might expect in September. Communications would be released when plans were clearer, as it was important not to give ambiguous messages.

14 May, Item 6: Equality and Diversity (E&D). Governors questioned what action was being taken by the college in response to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) campaign. Management reported that the E&D Action Plan, approved at the May Board meeting, would be reviewed by the E&D Steering Group in the light of current events. Likely outcomes were that staff training would be brought forward; the Diversity Champions scheme would be reinvigorated, and imagery and the use of materials around the College would be reviewed.

The next ELT weekly video for staff would focus on BLM and invite staff to engage with the Diversity Champions group. It was confirmed that some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students had been invited to share their experiences at the college. The messaging within the video would be checked with BAME staff before being shared more widely. Governors also offered to review the video as well before its release.

28 Nov 19: Strategy day actions: An update was requested on the action to produce a template business case for bringing partnership proposals to the Board. It was confirmed that the forthcoming internal audit review on partnerships would provide the basis for this work.

11 July 29: Pensions strategy. This action was not currently considered high priority in the light of the current college shutdown and the need to stabilise the staffing base and would be taken off the actions list.

3. Principal's Report

Supporting paper by the Principal, Neil Coker

The report was taken as read, and questions invited.

Covid 19 Update/college re-opening

Governors recognised the challenges in ensuring student and staff safety and asked for an indication of how distancing would be maintained. It was not possible to give a concrete answer until student numbers and potential groups sizes in September were known. It was currently assumed that classes would need to be split, which would impact on both delivery and resources allocation. A discussion paper had been shared with curriculum managers for feedback.

The estates team were in the process of calculating the capacity of college accommodation. A 50m2 classroom would only accommodate 10 students observing 2m distancing. The spare capacity at Southgate would, however, be available as additional teaching space.

The Board discussed its role in relation to the college's reopening plans. It was acknowledged that the DfE guidance had mentioned Board 'approval' of each stage. It was agreed that changing situation required a flexible and dynamic approach. Furthermore, the detailed reopening plans were an operational matter. However, the Board should be assured that risk assessments were being carried out systematically and rigorously.

AGREED: that Covid-19 reopening risk assessments should continue to be shared with governors, and questions and feedback invited by email, between meetings CEO

Safeguarding update

Fiona Bulmer, in her capacity as Safeguarding Link Governor, provided an update from the most recent meeting of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Committee. A broad range of staff from across the College had attended. A great amount of work was taking place supporting learners during shutdown, and working on reopening plans. Summer drop-in arrangements were being explored to provide support for students over the summer break. The Safeguarding Framework reported to the last Board meeting was being developed further, to provide robust, consistent monitoring and scrutiny.

The risks associated with not having face to face contact with students was discussed. There was confidence that the college was doing everything it can to proactively engage with vulnerable students, and that issues were being identified and referred appropriately. Relationships with local Social Services teams remained strong.

Governors raised the question of increased Prevent concerns, especially the risk that some students would be drawn into gang activity. It was confirmed that there was ongoing online tutorial input on Prevent issues, and that this had been adapted to reflect current events. Students had also been given advice on cyber-risk and social media grooming by extremist organisations.

AGREED: that safeguarding activity around gangs would be checked and reported to governors by email. PDCE

14-16 potential developments

Governors referred to previous 14-16 initiatives that had not been successful and asked what would be done differently this time. Management confirmed that previous experience had been taken into account and an open and cautious approach was being taken. This included a cap on numbers and agreement on entry criteria for referrals. It was important that the College was not used only as an alternative to school for pupils with serious behavioural issues. The start date would be after October half term, which would give sufficient lead in time to ensure that students were placed on the right courses. There would be a clear financial agreement, with financial commitments in place before delivery commenced.

Whilst recognising the value of the work, Governors challenged its fit within the College's strategy, as the development preceded finalisation of the strategic plan. It was confirmed that the first cohort would essentially be a pilot, and that a decision would then be made on whether to grow or discontinue provision. If successful, the project would support the strategy aims of diversifying and growing income streams, and of strengthening positive relationships with local authorities and school Headteachers . It would also provide a potential pipeline of 16-18 students

AGREED: that an update be provided to the July Board on 14-16 developments, including a draft business case and risk/benefits analysis. DPCE

September recruitment

An update was given on the application numbers in the report, which were now 100 higher than the same time the previous year. Although some inroads were being made into recruitment to health and social care and construction courses, additional promotion was planned to boost interest in these areas. The online Open Day on 25 June now had 350 bookings.

Senior Academic Management Restructure

Further feedback was given on the outcomes from consultation with the unions and individuals affected, which would lead to possible changes to the proposed new structure. The Board would continue to be kept informed of progress.

4. College Strategy

Supporting paper by the Chief Executive

Governors noted the background and context and the request for feedback on:

a) the suggested Purpose/Mission Statement and the underlying assumptions.
b) The suggestions for two broad strategic themes, and four strategic priorities identified.

Board agreement was sought to schedule a session on 2nd July to work on the detail of the strategy.

Governors welcomed the reduction and refinement of the eleven themes identified at the November 2019 Development Day. Questions, comments and discussion included the following:

- There was support for the underlying assumption that the College should remain a general FE provider, but the questions was raised about the risk of trying to be all things to all people. As well as responding to local need, there should be a clear set of criteria for making decisions whether to discontinue certain provision. This would be a key of the 2nd July session;

- The purpose of the college as serving its community should be at the centre of the Plan. Local market need should be mentioned within the underlying assumptions. Feedback from external and internal stakeholders would be an important part of developing the Plan. The community networks already developed by Curriculum Managers would be a useful source of feedback;
- The breadth and diversity of offer was an important factor in stabilising and future-proofing the college, but the ability to give students a holistic experience was a further consideration (e.g providing business experience with hair and beauty) when making decisions about which courses to retain;
- The factors that differentiate the college from schools should be highlighted, specifically providing skills for employment, and the co-creation of curriculum with employers;
- The cost-effectiveness of curriculum was important, but there was recognition that some loss-making areas should be retained because of local need and public value;
- The expansion of successful curriculum areas was important, but so was innovation and development into new areas;
- More was needed on the strategy around enhancing and improving the student experience;
- The values of culture and behaviour that define the college should run as a thread through the whole strategy;
- It was not yet clear how the proposed strategy reflected what problem needed to be solve, in order to agree the actions to get there;
- There was a need to define what the College would look like as a sustainable entity in the future in order to determine the steps to getting there. An understanding of the current and future landscape would be important context for this exercise;
- Once the strategic aims of the college were identified and agreed, the Mission statement would arise naturally.
- It was vital for the financial plan to reflect the strategy, hence the proposal for a 2nd July session prior to budget sign-off.

AGREED:

i)	**Governors to contact the CEO with any further comments or suggestions on the paper**	Govs
ii)	**A Strategy Session to be organised on the evening of 2nd July in place of the Search and Remuneration Committee meetings. Topic papers would be distributed in advance.**	CEO

5. Finance and Resources

5.1 Report from the Finance Scrutiny Group

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

The Chair of FSG reported on the key issues and risks identified as part of its scrutiny of the period 9 (April) management accounts. These included:

- The risk to financial health category
- The importance of cash as the college was now in the position where it was important not to allow cash balances to reduce further
- The renegotiation of the bank loan and the assurances needed on this by the auditors.

a. Management accounts

The Board was assured from the FSG minutes that the management accounts had been scrutinised in detail. Clarification was requested on the refund of the service charge from Barnet Council for the library at Colindale. This was now included in the budget.

b. Draft budget 2020-21
Supporting paper and Presentation by the EDCS on the business improvement plan

Some parts of the discussion were resolved to be confidential on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.

The current context was outlined:

The risk of decline in financial health grade was recognised and the consequences were discussed. The College was currently in frequent conversations with the ESFA, and submitted monthly financial information. However, it was known that there would be colleges in a worse financial position following the Covid pandemic, particularly those for whom cashflow was at risk.

The background paper showed the measures available to reduce the year-end deficit. Management was still considering options around the staff pay award, and would share updates on this with governors.

It was believed that the situation was recoverable but that doing nothing to address the structural deficit was not an option. It would be likely to take three years to turn achieve a small surplus, and there would be risks attached to some of the measures that could be taken.

There were three broad themes to achieving the plan: a) tackling the staff cost base; b) reviewing the use of the campuses, including maximising income-raising opportunities and c) decisions about the overall business shape. The importance of addressing the situation in one go was agreed, to avoid having to repeat the exercise in successive years.

Governors supported the integration of financial and business planning with the strategy work and requested that a more concrete set of figures for 2020-21 should be brought to the July strategy session, including a Covid contingency sum and a sensitivity analysis particularly around income risks. Other points made included:

- The impact of Covid was unknown, including whether this would result in any long-term changes to curriculum delivery which would impact on the need for physical teaching space.
- Governors needed complete confidence in the accuracy of financial figures, given the experience of recent years.
- The proposed plan included some big changes, and a greater understanding of the implementation of these would be needed by the Board.

The timeline leading up to final approval at the 16 July Board meeting, including a further FSG on 7th July, was noted.

5.2 Capital Projects update
Oral update by the EDCS

The M Block work was on track to be completed by the end of month, allowing for the decant from R Block which would then be occupied by Enfield Enterprise.

5.3 Fees Policy

RESOLVED: that the Fees Policy 2020-21 be APPROVED

6. Governance and Policy
Supporting paper by the Clerk and Chair
Graham Duncan withdrew for this item

Key points were:

- The recruitment of new governors was a priority, to allow a long handover before the departure of long-standing governors in summer 2021
- Governors were requested to complete a new skills audit to assist with targeted recruitment
- The Chair planned conversations with individual governors about committee membership and chairing arrangements to ensure smooth succession.
- In order to provide continuity of support in his first year, a proposal was made to extend the tenure of Graham Duncan as Vice-Chair for a further year.

The need for gender balance and diversity in terms of overall board membership and committee/TFG chair positions was stressed. Governors were invited to contact the Chair any further thoughts.

RESOLVED:

i) **That Graham Duncan be appointed as Vice Chair for a further year, to 31 July 2021 and, in order to facilitate this:**

ii) **Current governance policies around the term of office and election process for the Vice Chair be temporarily waived;**

iii) **That Graham Duncan's end-date as governor be extended from 15 June 2021 to 31 July 2021**

AGREED: all governors to complete the skills audit by 30 June 2020.

7. Other urgent business

There was no other business

8 . Dates of forthcoming meetings

Strategy Session: 2 July at 18.00
Board of Governors: 16 July at 18.30

The meeting closed at 21.26

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

16 July 2020