

Minutes of the Corporation meeting 19.2 held on Tuesday 31 March 2020

By teleconference

Present: Ian Wilson (Chair), Anne Adamson, Paul Andrew, Yolanda Botham (Principal), Steven Esdale, Vickie Grenville, Paula Heaney, Tony Humphrey, Chris Lang, Alison Miles, Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, Jenny O'Hare, and Owen Shield

In attendance: Charlotte Hemmins (Finance Director)

For technical reasons the following were unable to participate in the meeting:

Anne-Marie Diaper (Clerk), Karen Everitt, Steve Dann (VP), Cameron Mayes, Charlie Brown, Maria Ferguson, John Godwood, Colin Greenhalgh

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The Chair welcomed participants to this first Corporation meeting to be conducted by teleconference. It was noted that some members, including the Clerk, were experiencing difficulties in accessing the meeting. In the Clerk's enforced absence the Chair took a register of attendees.

19.3.1 Apologies for absence

None.

19.3.2 Declarations of Interest

None.

The Chair outlined the main purposes of the meeting:

- i) To agree changes to the ways in which the Corporation operates so that it can continue its work effectively despite the lack of physical meetings
- ii) To ensure that the Corporation is properly informed of the challenges posed for the College by the physical lockdown and of the ways in which the College is responding, while recognising that the situation changes by the day if not the hour.

19.3.3 Board Approvals

Instruments and Articles of Government

Having summarised the main points of the proposed changes, the Chair reassured the meeting that the Clerk had taken legal advice, which had confirmed that such changes were within our powers, of low risk, in line with steps already taken by some other colleges and indeed less radical than some.

It was noted that some governors had sent to the Clerk suggestions for improvements to the wording of the changes. It would not be possible for the meeting to examine these suggestions. The meeting was therefore asked to approve the substance of the proposals but to allow

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for changes to the precise wording to be subsequently agreed by the Clerk and Chair.

Participants had the opportunity to comment on the proposals in relation to quoracy, the use of video and telephone conferencing, and written resolutions. All considered them sensible in the circumstances, several pointing out that in other fields of work alternatives to physical meetings were commonplace, even in normal circumstances.

A vote on the proposals was taken and they were unanimously adopted. It was noted that the final wording would be agreed by the Clerk and Chair.

Clerk & Chair

At this point in the meeting it was realised that several colleagues, including the Clerk, had still not been able to connect to the meeting. The option of halting the meeting and trying to start another was discussed but was considered unlikely to solve the problem. It was decided to continue. The Chair would take notes and draft minutes.

Standing Orders

The Chair pointed out that the changes to the Standing Orders set out the steps necessary to implement the changes just agreed to the I&A. Once again, governors had, prior to the meeting proposed wording changes in the interests of clarity.

It was agreed to consider these proposals in the same way as those for the I&As. The proposals were unanimously approved by the meeting, leaving the final wording to be agreed between Chair and Clerk.

Clerk & Chair**19.3.4 College Covid-19 response**

The Chair thanked governors for submitting questions prior to the meeting and the Principal for producing such a full report despite the considerable pressures on her time. The Principal pointed out that the report was a collective effort; she had pulled together information from a range of management colleagues.

The meeting considered the report section by section with the Principal and Finance Director providing updated information where appropriate. The following points emerged from the discussions:

- Over the Easter period the College would be making some facilities available to Addenbrooke's
- Arrangements were in place for the remote supervision of vulnerable students over the holiday period. More generally, the College had contacted students known to be vulnerable to check whether they wished to come into College; they did not, as has proved typical for post-16 students. The government advice is that only *in extremis* should students physically attend.

- It was expected that the process for awarding grades for A-levels, GCSEs and other qualifications would be announced by the end of the week; it is likely to include teacher-estimated grades and rank ordering. It will be certain to raise many issues for schools, colleges, students and teachers. The statement on the College website will be clarified in the light of any new information from Ofqual / DfE.
- Remote learning is developing day-by-day; increasing use of Microsoft Teams. Where necessary the relevant technology, e.g. laptops, had been provided for staff and students. The parent governor reported a very positive experience.
- At present staffing levels have not been significantly affected by staff illness. Some staff are, however, working from home in difficult circumstances. The College ensures that it is aware of such situations and enables staff to work flexibly.
- The situation for the start of the next college year is very uncertain; levels of enrolment are unpredictable for a variety of reasons; the College will have to deal with increased “churn” in the Autumn Term; marketing for the following year may also be adversely affected. This is an area of significant concern and risk; high level contingency planning will be necessary. Hopefully, current students would report positively on their current experience; use should be made of this. The Principal shared current student application figures with governors, highlighting the fall in out-of-area applications, attributable probably to school sixth forms broadening their curricula.
- Budget planning for the next College year is incorporating the possible need for additional staffing.
- Finance Director reported positively on the work being done by the Estates, IT and Finance Departments. HR looking at staff recruitment; Physics teacher the priority; other posts to follow in due course.
- Principal and Chair expressed their serious reservations about the proposed merger between CET and MET in terms of both its timing and its potential impact on post-16 provision in the Cambridge area. They would be contributing to the consultation process but believed that the merger was likely to go ahead.

19.3.5

Governance / Corporation meetings during closure

The Chair highlighted the recommendations on p3 of the supporting paper, pointing out that the issue of quoracy had already been addressed and did not require further approval. The remaining recommendation was that the Corporation should continue with its committee structure but with appropriately modified agendas and operating practices.

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There was strong support from governors for the continuation of committee work. While recognising the need to modify agendas, governors emphasised that business should not be confined to the current crisis; it would be important to continue to think strategically and plan for the future; some “normal” business would be possible, even necessary (e.g. budget planning). These considerations would be borne in mind when agenda planning.

**Clerk, Chair,
Committee
Chairs,
Principal**

The meeting unanimously approved the recommendation on the conduct of Board and committee meetings.

The Chair thanked all participants for enabling the meeting to run smoothly. He invited suggestions for any improvements / changes to be made for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 6.20

19.3.6 **Date of next meeting / teleconference**
Tuesday 19 May 2020

Signed

Date