

THE CORPORATION BOARD OF EAST SURREY COLLEGE

OPEN MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 25 MARCH 2021

Meeting held by video conference facility using Microsoft Teams

Meeting commenced: 18.00hrs

Meeting ended: 19.15hrs

Participating

Andrew Baird	Independent Member	Chair
Liz Rushton	Independent Member	Vice Chair
Jayne Dickinson	Chief Executive (College Group)	Principal (ESC)
Simon Bland	Independent Member	
Derek Galloway	Independent Member	
Phillip Kerle	Independent Member	
Colin Monk	Independent Member	
Alex Hayman	Independent Member	
Bob Pickles	Independent Member	
Anne Smith	Independent Member	
Grace Marriott	Independent Member	
Lily Franklin	ESC Staff Member	
Natalie Watkins-Khan	JRC Staff Member	
Alex Parker	ESC Student Member Designate	
Edison Rama	JRC Student Member Designate	

Apologies for absence

Simon Potten	Independent Member
Ganesh Kumar	Independent Member
Peter Papanastasiou	Independent Member

In attendance

Kevin Standish	Principal (JRC) Quality Lead (College Group)
Jyoti Baker	Chief Operating Officer (College Group)
James Marshall	External Co-opted Member of the Audit Committee

Clerk

Sue Glover	Director of Governance
------------	------------------------

C.01.21 Declaration of Interests

Members and officers were reminded of the need to declare any personal or financial interest in any item to be considered during the meeting.

Andrew Baird declared that, as part of his role with the FE Commissioner's National Leaders of Governance team, he has been seconded to Brooklands College as the interim Chair.

Phillip Kerle declared that he is a governor of West London College.

There were no other declarations of interest.

C.02.21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from

Simon Potten	-	business commitments
Peter Papanastasiou	-	business commitments
Ganesh Kumar	-	business commitments

Agreed

The Board accepts the apologies for absence.

C.03.21 Notification of Any Other Business

Members agreed that there was no other business to be considered.

C.04.21 Unconfirmed minutes of the part 1 meeting of the Corporation Board held on 10 December 2020

The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

C.05.21 Matters arising and action points from the minutes of the meetings

Members reviewed the schedule of action points arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

It was agreed that all actions had been satisfactorily completed and there were no other matters arising from the minutes of the meeting.

C.06.21 Membership of the Corporation

The Director of Governance presented a report, which identified issues relating to the current membership of the Corporation Board and its committees.

Members were advised that

- there are currently no vacancies for independent members and there will be two reappointments due in the summer term
- although the Board agreed not to increase the size of membership at this time, an up to date Skills Audit will be carried out to identify whether there are any skills gaps in experience or expertise in the light of recent retirements and the outcome considered by the Search and Governance Committee in the summer term

Gender Balance and Diversity

Members noted the current gender balance and diversity of the Corporation Board

- 12 male; 7 female
- 4 male chairs of the Board and committees; 1 female chair of the committees

Governance arrangements

Members were reminded that, at the meeting held on 26 March 2020, the Board agreed to put in place the following temporary arrangements during the current Covid-19 pandemic:

- Telephone conferencing: verbal discussion with all members
- Video conferencing: use of Microsoft (MS) Teams
- Email approval of resolutions
- reducing the quoracy requirement to 30% of the determination of the Corporation, giving a quoracy requirement of 6

The Board was advised that

- since March 2020 the Board and Committees have held all meetings via MS Teams
- at the meeting in October 2020, the Board agreed that the level of quoracy for meetings is returned to the normal level of 40%

In discussion, it was agreed that the Board and Committees would continue to hold meetings using MS Teams during the summer term, with the potential to hold the July meeting of the Corporation Board in College if restrictions permit

Link Governors' Scheme

The Director of Governance presented, for consideration and approval, a report detailing the Link Governors' Scheme.

Members were advised that the proposal to formalise the Link Governors' Scheme had been considered by the Search and Governance Committee at the meeting held on 11 February 2021 and is recommended to the Corporation Board for approval.

The Board was advised that

- a number of FE College Boards have Link Governors for specific areas
- Link Governors can play an important role in keeping the governing body informed on the work of the College as well as enabling the governing body to monitor key areas of college evaluation and improvement plans
- they are a useful way for positive links with staff to be developed
- there has been a Link Governor for Safeguarding and Prevent in place for a number of years and, more recently, one added for Higher Education
- to help support the College with its Careers Strategy and their involvement with The Careers and Enterprise Company (Coast to Capital), a further Link Governor for Careers has been added
- as there are now three Link Governor roles in place, the Search and Governance Committee is recommending formalising the Link Governors' Scheme, their roles and that they will keep the Board informed by way of a standing item being introduced on the agenda for meetings of the Corporation Board to enable each Link Governor to report on activities undertaken during the term

Members reviewed each of the role summaries and agreed they were appropriate with no changes required.

Resolved

The Corporation Board

- Agreed to receive and note the report
- Approves continuing with arrangements for all meetings of the Board and Committees to be held on MS Teams during the summer term, with the potential to hold the July meeting of the Corporation Board in College if restrictions permit
- Endorses the recommendations of the Search and Governance Committee and approves
 - The Link Governors' Scheme and the role summaries for
 - Safeguarding including Prevent
 - Higher Education
 - Careers

C.07.21

Learner Voice

The student members gave a presentation on the student activities during the spring term 2021.

East Surrey College

Alex Parker informed the Board on the outcomes from the recent College Council meetings as well as surveys completed to collect headline responses to key college themes. Facilitated discussions on students' experiences indicated that a high percentage of students agreed that

- remote learning has been interesting and engaging
- the college has been effective in supporting students' progress and well-being during lockdown

John Ruskin College

Edison Rama informed the Board on student activities during the term, which included

- JRC Community Wellbeing Hub
- Tutorial Themes
- Themed Weeks
 - National Apprenticeship Week
 - National Careers Week
- Progression Talks
- Services available for students
- Return to College and Testing

The Board thanked the student members for their excellent presentations and it was particularly encouraging to hear from the students' perspective about the level of support they have received during the periods of lockdown.

Agreed

The Corporation Board agreed to receive and note the reports

C.08.21

Report of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive presented her report, drawing attention to issues not otherwise covered in the agenda, under the headings:

- The Further Education Landscape
 - Covid-19 impact
 - Test Centre operations
 - FE White Paper: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth
 - ESFA Annual Strategy Conversations
- Enrolments and Applications
 - Applications for 2021/22
 - Apprenticeship recruitment
- Quality
 - Student Feedback
 - LEAP re-engagement programme
 - Grading of qualifications
- Skills Growth Initiatives
 - Procurement and Bids
 - Green Technologies
 - Youth Hubs, Traineeships
 - Work Experience and Industry Placements
- Higher Education
- Build Projects
- Financial Health

Members were advised that

- the impact of Covid-19 continues to dominate College operations
- Test centres at both Colleges were set up swiftly and efficiently with community volunteers supporting staff who were redirected to the initiatives; with a high percentage of students at both colleges taking at least one supervised onsite test
- distribution and tracking of home test kits for staff and students is fully in operation
- indicative 16-18 allocation for 2021/22 received matches the 2020/21 over-delivery position
- full time applications for 2021/22 continue to grow with progression applications from internal students being added to the database together with applications from schools in the local area, many courses at ESC are showing high recruitment, particularly in Technology and Services departments
- Apprenticeship enrolments continue to go well and are slightly higher than at this point last year, with the majority once again in STEM subjects
- most awarding bodies have confirmed the process for grading this year, based on centre-assessed grades and curriculum managers have been working to confirm a strong evidence based process for grading

The Board thanked the Chief Executive for a very informative report, noting in particular the continuing impact Covid-19 is having on the FE sector.

The Board agreed that the College continues to have satisfactory arrangements in place, which cover all areas of the business during the current Covid-19 Pandemic and that the College is taking good care for the wellbeing of all students, particularly vulnerable students, and staff at both colleges.

Agreed

The Corporation Board agreed to receive and note the Report of the Chief Executive

C.09.21

Annual Schedule of Meetings of the Corporation Board and Committees: 2021/22

The Director of Governance presented, for consideration and approval, the Annual Schedule of Meetings of the Corporation Board and Committees: 2021/22.

Members were advised that the Annual Schedule of Meetings had been considered at the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 4 March 2021 and had been commended for approval by the Corporation Board.

Members were advised that the schedule

- reflected that of the current and previous years
- provides for termly 'training and development' meetings in addition to meetings of the Corporation Board and Committees

In discussion, it was agreed that the schedule presented a clear schedule and should be accepted, subject to a minor date change.

The Board was advised that the Committee had also given consideration to the basis for the continuation of virtual meetings post Covid-19 restrictions. The Committee considered that virtual meetings have been successful since the start of lockdown in March 2020, not only by allowing the Board and Committees to continue their business without interruption, but had also greatly improved the attendance by members with the convenience of virtual meetings and the benefit of attendance of college events online and recommended they continue post Covid restrictions, where practical.

In discussion, members agreed that, whilst virtual meetings were a more convenient way of meeting, it could not replace 'face to face' meetings in the long term and it was considered not practical for meetings to operate with a 'hybrid' arrangement, i.e. some members attending virtually and some in College.

The Board agreed to review whether to put in place virtual meetings at the start of 2021/22 at the next meeting in the light of restrictions being lifted.

Members noted the key impact measures arising from the report, in particular the Strategic and Risk implications.

Resolved

The Corporation Board endorses the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee and approves

- the Annual Schedule of Meetings of the Corporation Board and Committees: 2021/22, subject to minor amendment as discussed
- the continuation of virtual meetings post Covid restrictions in 2021/22 to be reviewed by the Board at the next meeting

C.10.21

Appointment of Internal Audit Provider

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented, for consideration and approval, the recommendations from the Audit Committee at their meeting held on 11 March 2021 to approve the reappointment of Scrutton Bland as the College's internal audit service for a 3-year period from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

Members were advised that

- Scrutton Bland were appointed for a one-year period in March 2020 to carry out specific key internal audits to give assurance to enable the 'sign off' of the financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2020
- the College has developed a good working relationship with Scrutton Bland, their audit processes conduct deep dives into areas, which enable them to identify any weaknesses in the system of controls operating in an area

Members received, for information, the draft internal plan prepared by Scrutton Bland and presented to the Audit Committee. It was noted that the profile of days proposed over the 3-year cycle together with the anticipated costs will be further reviewed by management who will look at each of the areas proposed to identify whether assurance can be gained elsewhere so that the plan can focus on areas where assurance is required from the internal auditors. A revised plan will be presented to the Committee at their next meeting in June for consideration and approval and recommendations will be presented to the Corporation Board in July.

The Board was advised that as Scrutton Bland would be continuing to conduct internal audits during the summer term as part of 2020/21 their reappointment is required to be confirmed at this meeting. In discussion, this was agreed with the caveat that their appointment for the 3-year period to 2022/23 would be confirmed at the July meeting when the final internal audit plan will have been completed and presented for approval.

Resolved

The Corporation Board endorses the recommendations of the Audit Committee and approves the reappointment of Scrutton Bland as the internal audit service to complete internal audits during the summer term as part of 2020/21, with the 3-year period to 2022/23 confirmed at the next meeting when the final internal audit plan will have been completed and presented for approval

C.11.21 Search and Governance Committee

Meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held on 11 February 2021

Members received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

Report of the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee and issues for consideration and approval

The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee reported on the key issues considered at the meeting, not otherwise considered at this meeting of the Corporation Board, for formal consideration and approval:

- Risk Management: Spring Term 2021
- Governors' Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21: Spring Term 2021
- Review of College Governance with Members of the Corporation 2020/21
- Governors' Development and Training Programme 2020/21: Spring Term 2021

C.12.21 Learning and Quality Committee

Meetings of the Learning and Quality Committee held on 21 January and 25 February 2021

Members received the unconfirmed minutes of the meetings.

Report of the Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee and issues for consideration and approval

The Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee reported on the key issues considered at the meeting, not otherwise considered at this meeting of the Corporation Board, for formal consideration and approval:

- College Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21: Spring Term 2021
- College Policies and Strategies
 - OSC08 Client Feedback Policy
 - ESC04 HE Assessment & Appeals Policy
- Risk Management: Spring Term 2021

Members were advised that the Learning and Quality Committee had also received a very informative termly report from the Principal JRC & Group Quality Lead, which had provided an Executive Summary with appendices on the current activities and priorities of both Colleges in respect of the Spring Term 2021.

C.13.21 Finance and Resources Committee

Meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 4 March 2021

Members received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

Report of the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and issues for consideration and approval

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee reported on the key issues considered at the meeting, not otherwise considered at this meeting of the Corporation Board, for formal consideration and approval:

- Risk Management: Spring Term 2021
- Termly HR Report – Spring Term 2021

Members were advised that the Committee had considered the January management accounts, which were subsequently circulated to all members of the Board, noting that, whilst these show an operating surplus of £411k, there are savings to be identified of £1.1m, of which £200k of savings have been identified. The worst-case scenario currently forecast is a deficit of circa £700k with measures underway to mitigate this.

The Committee acknowledged that, although some of this is due to Covid, student numbers have not grown as much as anticipated at JRC and the level of JRC pay costs is in an unsustainable position, with a number of teaching staff at JRC under utilised through having pre-merger employment contracts. The management accounts from March would start to reflect the budget pressures if savings have not been identified as anticipated.

C.14.21 Audit Committee

Meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11 March 2021

Members received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

Report of the Chair of the Audit Committee and issues for consideration and approval

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the key issues considered at the meeting, not otherwise considered at this meeting of the Corporation Board, for formal consideration and approval

- Risk Management: Spring Term 2021
- Outstanding audit items (audit tracker)
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy

Resolved

The Corporation Board

- Notes the reports of the Chair of each of the committees of the Board
- Endorses the approval by each committee of the key issues considered and approved at the meetings
- Endorses and approves the reports submitted by each committee for consideration and approval

C.15.21 KPI Dashboard

Members received the KPI Dashboards for:

- Apprenticeships
 - retention and achievement rates by age, level and ethnicity
- Three year classroom based retention
- Finance: January 2021

Agreed

The Board receives and notes the KPI Dashboards for Apprenticeships, three-year classroom based retention and Finance.

C.16.21 Any Other Business
There was no other agreed any other business.

C.17.21 Dates of Corporation Board Meetings: 2020/21
Friday 25/Saturday 26 June – Corporation Self-Assessment Meeting
Thursday 8 July, commencing 6pm – main Corporation Board

The Board agreed to hold the self-assessment meeting as a virtual event, in the light of Covid-19 restrictions, on Friday 25 June, commencing at 4pm. The length of the meeting would be dependent on the agreed agenda nearer the time.

At the conclusion of the Part 1 meeting, the Corporation Board moved into a meeting restricted, in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government and with Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, to the independent members of the Board, the external co-opted member of the Audit Committee and to the senior postholders.

Signed as a correct record:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Baird', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 8 July 2021