

THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2020

MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION

Youness Abidou	present	Member
Nadia Ahmed	present	Member
Paul Butler	present	Member, Chair of the Corporation and Safeguarding Champion
Gary Davies	present	Member
Di Gowland	present	Member, Interim Principal & Chief Executive
Alison Morris	present	Member, Careers Champion
Priscile Mbuka	<i>apologies</i>	Student Governor
Renatta Nzomono	present	Member
Lutfiya Othman	present	Student Governor
Frank Royle	present	Staff Member
Tim Strong	present	Member, Chair of Search Committee & Remuneration Committee
Neil Taylor	present	Member
Kalim Uddin	present	Staff Member
Kapil Wadhvani	<i>apologies</i>	Member, Health & Safety Champion
Graham Woolnough	<i>apologies</i>	Member, Vice Chair of the Corporation, Chair of Audit Committee

CLERK TO THE CORPORATION

Val Bartlett	present	Clerk to the Corporation
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IN ATTENDANCE

Stella McManus (SM)	present	Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ)/
Andrew Haddon (AH)	present	Interim Deputy Principal Corporate Resources (DPCR)
Abena Rodman-Tay (AR-T)	present	Director of Finance & Estates (DF&E)
Andy Cottrell (observer to the meeting)	present	Deputy Principal Corporate Resources – Designate

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) the Corporation agreed that this meeting be held using Teams videoconferencing as per the Waltham Forest College Instrument & Articles, Instrument 1 (g) .

31.20 PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE - SENIOR POST HOLDER

The Corporation was informed that a rigorous and thorough 2-day selection and interview process – facilitated by AoC Recruitment - had taken place on Friday 15 May and Monday 18 May 2020.

This assessment process included the candidates meeting with some staff, students, the Executive Team and the Governor's Selection Panel.

Following due consideration of the feedback from the interviews and assessments, the Selection Panel informed the Corporation that there were two suitable appointees to this post. Following further discussion, the Corporation approved the decision for the Chair to commence negotiations.

Subsequent to the Corporation meeting, Janet Gardner was offered the post of Principal and Chief Executive of Waltham Forest College which she has accepted.

The Chair thanked all those involved in this process.

32.20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received and accepted from:

Kapil Wadhvani – work commitments
Graham Woolnough – sickness

There were no apologies for absence.

33.20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The members of the Corporation confirmed that there were no items on the agenda for the meeting in which they had a personal interest.

34.20 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETINGS HELD ON 24 MARCH 2020

The Minutes of the Corporation meetings held on 24 March 2020 were agreed by the Corporation and signed by the Chair as a true record.

35.20 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 26.20 UCU

The Principal reported that there are on-going discussions taking place with all unions including, in particular, the implications of Covid-19 and managing the planning of the campus for learners and staff to return, with safety being the guiding principle. Meetings will continue with all of the Unions and sharing of good practice has been agreed. The Chair of the Corporation is to be invited to attend the next meeting with the Unions.

Minute 30.20

PB and YA along with the SLT, met with the Bank on 11 May 2020. The discussions included the challenges which the F.E. sector is encountering, including securing access to funding. It was agreed that YA attend the next meeting with the Bank.

There were no other outstanding matters arising which were not already on the agenda.

36.20 COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The Principal informed Governors that following the Government's statement that schools are to open as from 1 June 2020, the ESFA has contacted all colleges to enquire as to their plans for opening up the site.

Governors were reassured that the SLT continues to meet twice weekly and the Executive daily, to quickly deal with strategies, relevant actions and robust responses to ensure teaching, learning, assessment, safety and well-being are central to all decision making. The Senior Team are holding dedicated workshops to scenario plan the return, in part, to a safe College-based learning environment.

The Corporation was then informed of a digital divide and that relevant support is being put in place to ensure students are not disadvantaged. This is within the context of very tight College finances and the SLT is also exploring options to raise additional funding e.g. through possible grants to support the additional and necessary spend.

Governors were informed that the DfE provided a guidance checklist on 14 May, which includes recommendations for Governing Body oversight. This includes establishing a Governance and Leadership Group to meet regularly to monitor the approved plan for increased numbers attending and an associated risk plan which will take into account health and safety requirements.

Governors then discussed the above and agreed that as the Corporation meets almost monthly, at this point, the Governor lead for Health and Safety become the main weekly contact with the SLT.

Meanwhile, the Corporation is to receive for approval at its meeting on 30 June 2020, a detailed action plan – including a review of processes - for increasing the number of learners back into College. In the medium to longer term there will be a requirement for the Corporation to be involved in the responsibility and oversight of this plan.

The Corporation approved Tim Strong as the Lead Governor responsible for Health & Safety and to meet weekly with SLT.

The Principal then updated all on the opening of the College for some students who have practical assessments still to complete over the summer as this will necessitate appropriate risk assessments, ensuring relevant PPE, guided routes etc. In addition, the Awarding Bodies have been late in providing the necessary guidance for vocational students who will need a licence to practice.

Discussion then turned to IT resources including laptops and the digital divide. Governors were reassured that work is in progress to ensure resources are in place for September and it was noted that curriculum staff have made an outstanding effort to keep students engaged and online whilst sourcing potential external funding for additional laptops is ongoing. It was noted that there had been some technical issues with Office 365 and remote connections which have now been resolved.

The Chair then made the point that as well as the additional infrastructure resources needed to open up the College and concerns around the learning environment and travel, there is also an element of personal anxiety and how safe students and staff may feel. It was confirmed that that action plan to open up the site includes well-being.

The financial impact of CV-19 continues to be monitored very closely including the effect on the forecast outturn. The current cost of CV-19 to the College is estimated at c.£150k. The Financial Statement's auditors have written to the College regarding the challenges which will need to be addressed during their audit work.

The Principal will continue to provide weekly updates to Governors, and it was agreed that Covid-19 be a standing item on Corporation agendas.

37.20 COLLEGE REPORT

The Principal provided an update on the College with the following being noted in particular.

The College moved to full-time online learning as from Monday 23 March 2020 and staff are following Government guidelines regarding working from home.

The Principal informed Governors that staff have provided a fantastic response to move from a physical to virtual campus at such short notice and that clear, regular, relevant and supportive contact and information is being provided in a number of ways.

The sale of a portion of College land to Circle Housing completed in 2016. This land has now been resold to L&Q Housing Association who are to build a 12-unit residential block. The College has set up a small project group to work with the contractors on issues which may impact on the College. Meanwhile, due to an objection from a neighbour, all work has currently ceased.

The College swimming pool was closed earlier this year and a small task group has been established by the Principal to explore possible funding options to bring this facility back into fully compliant use. Further discussions with interested parties are being held including the Borough Council who, as part of the Town Hall campus project, are to build housing behind the Town Hall and considers the pool may be a possible community resource

The College Risk Register was noted, and a Governor made the point that it must be used to flag up to management how the controls and/or mitigations are effective and are working to ensure the management of the risk.

Governors then discussed the curriculum update, including a verbal report from the Chair of the Corporation Curriculum and Standards Working Group which had met on 13 May 2020.

The Corporation approved the appointment of Gary Davies as a member of this Working Group.

The members of the Curriculum Group had been provided with an opportunity to discuss in-depth a number of issues including:

- the very good response by curriculum staff to CV-19
- detailed engagement by each of the curriculum areas
- the challenges being presented by late guidance from Awarding Bodies
- an update on predicted success rates which are not anticipated to fall below last year with some significant improvement in a number of areas e.g. construction
- Information, Advice and Guidance Policy

The number of applications for 2020/21 is very good with progression being conducted on-line for the first time. The challenge currently is to implement enrolment on-line. Meanwhile, the first virtual on-line event is to take place tomorrow. Credit was acknowledged to the Marketing Team who have worked very hard to build up this on-line event in particular.

The DPCQ then updated Governors on blended learning with the target prior to CV-19 being c. 17% and to be an on-line project with a gradual approach to implementing this more fully. However, as a result of CV-19, staff have immediately grasped and fully implemented the digital learning strategy - with support being given in 3 phases - and this will now influence future thinking.

A Governor then queried the subcontracting provision. The Corporation had held discussions about this area over a year ago, and reassurance was therefore being sought that proactive actions were being taken. It was noted that this area is currently undergoing a thorough review and an update will be provided to the Corporation on 30 June which will include moving more provision in-house thereby providing a greater financial contribution to the College's bottom line.

The DPCR informed the Corporation that an external report on the current Catering provision had been undertaken. The report recommendations include:

- disaggregating teaching and learning and the commercial activity which provides in-house catering services to staff and students
- investigate the outsourcing of the commercial activity
- undertake a full review of the 'Free school Meals' offer

Discussion was then held regarding the 'Free School meals' (FSM) offer including how this will impact on the budget planning going forwards, noting that relevant learners are currently being supported during CV-19 with vouchers or bank transfer and to ensure the welfare of students who rely on a hot meal is taken into account. The legal framework based on the FSM offer, what the College currently offers over and above this and benchmarking against other colleges are also to be reviewed to ensure there is efficiency and effectiveness in the FSM offer, as the College's finances are extremely tight.

The Finance Working Group is to be provided with a further update on Catering options at its meeting on 4 June 2020.

The Corporation was informed that as a result of CV-19, the Safeguarding Policy has been amended with an appendix to the main document, making specific reference to CV-19.

The Corporation approved the Safeguarding Policy.

The Careers Education Policy has also been updated in line with the curriculum intent providing impartial advice and clear guidance to inform learners.

The Corporation approved the Careers and Guidance Policy.

The Corporation received and noted the College update.

38.20 MONTHLY MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – 31 MARCH 2020

The Corporation was informed that the March 2020 Management Accounts had been subject to scrutiny and discussion at the Finance Working Group meeting held on 30 April 2020.

The concerned 'pinch point' for cash during March 2020 was carefully managed, therefore use of the arranged overdraft facility of £500k was not required and by the end of April the cash position indicated c. £1m in the bank.

Discussions regarding the financial impact of CV-19 continue and its impact in-year and going forwards. The AoC has produced in a Briefing memo and Aide-Memoir and the College assured Governors that it is taking all the steps and action as identified in this document.

It was noted that funders have confirmed that both 16-18 grants and AEB income allocations for 2019/20 will be released in year and in line with profiles and the College expects to receive these grants in full.

Apprenticeship income for the year has largely been secured, but it is clear that shortfalls in commercial income will impact on the College although it is envisaged these may be relatively small and can be managed.

A high-level Income and Expenditure account forecast indicates a net impact of c£(158)k.

Governors were informed that the Finance Group had discussed the possibility of furloughing some staff and had asked that the SLT explore and progress this as appropriate.

The Corporation ratified the decision to furlough staff where deemed to be appropriate by the Senior team and within the Government's framework. The College is to make up the 20% difference in Government support to all affected staff.

The Corporation was assured that as finances are extremely tight any decisions regarding expenditure and potential savings are made in the light of, and awareness of, this delicate position.

The Interim DPCR reported that the handover to Andy Cottrell - who will commence his duties on 1 June 2020 - is going well. It was agreed that Andy Cottrell, Andrew Haddon and Youness Abidou meet informally twice per month to keep all updated.

It was noted that going forwards, there will be more expenditure relating to CV-19 and these additional costs will have an impact on the already tight margins. The Corporation reaffirmed that support and investment must be in place for students as learning is the College's core business and Governors are committed to ensuring this happens.

The Corporation:

1. Received and noted the Management Accounts to 31 March 2020 relating to the financial position of Waltham Forest College.
2. Noted the impact of Covid-19 on the College's Income and Expenditure Account 2019/20.
3. Noted the key financial risks being managed and the mitigating actions being taken by the College.

39.20 GOVERNANCE UPDATES

The Audit Committee Vice Chair informed the Corporation that following a tender exercise using Crescent Purchasing Consortium, 3 Internal Audit firms had submitted tender bids for the College's Internal Audit Service as from 2020/21.

Interviews with all 3 firms were held on 14 May 2020 and the Audit Committee agreed to recommend the appointment of Wylie Bisset to the Corporation.

The Corporation approved the appointment of Wylie Bisset as the College’s Internal Audit Service for a three-year period effective from 1 August 2020, subject to annual review.

The next meeting of the Audit Committee has been changed to 8 July 2020 at 6pm.

Following an internal audit review of governance, a recommendation was made to undertake a review of the current governance structure including committees and delegated responsibilities. Subsequent to this internal audit, there is to be a new Principal starting in post and a FEC Diagnostic Assessment later this year. It was, therefore, pragmatic to retain the current governance structure until the new Principal has been in post for a period and the FEC visit has taken place, thereby ensuring if there are any emerging pertinent governance recommendations these can be fully considered and implemented as necessary.

The Corporation agreed to retain its current governance structures for 2020/21.

The Corporation approved the cycle of business, meeting dates and Committee membership for 2020/21.

The Corporation noted the F.E. Commissioner’s letter to Colleges which includes reference to Covid-19 and the need for governors to meet regularly so that, in particular, they can scrutinise finances, risk registers and cash flow forecasts and the impact on learner recruitment for 2020/21.

The Corporation noted the F.E. Week Article on the Government’s White paper and the AoC responses regarding potential reforms of the F.E. sector.

19:53 KU/FR/LO left the meeting

These minutes have been approved by the Corporation as a correct record.	
CHAIR:	DATE:
	REMOTE CONFIRMATION:
	OR SIGNED:

The meeting closed at 20:30



ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETINGS OF THE CORPORATION				
Minute No.	Issue and Action	Who is responsible	Target Date	Achievement Date
8.20	SWIMMING POOL			
And	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Corporation requested further details of debtors The Corporation requested a report from the Senior team on the headlines of lessons learnt for the swimming pool closure Principal to work on viability of the pool and explore options re other possible interested partners 	AR-T	May 2020	
26.20		AR-T		
26.20	FINANCE			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YA to be invited to next College meeting with the bank 	DG	June 2020	
36.20	COVID-19			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed Action Plan and review of processes to increase learner numbers back into College 	DG	30 June 2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 to be a Standing item on Corporation Agendas 	VB	30 June 2020	
37.20	COLLEGE REPORT			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of sub-contracting -update report 	DG	30 June 2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering Review and options to next Finance Working Group meeting 	AH/AC	4 June 2020	
38.20	FINANCE			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YA/AC/AH to meet regularly (2 x per month) 	AC	June 2020	
40.20	FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan and update to Finance Working Group prior to Corporation meeting on 30 June 2020 	DG	June 2020	