

THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 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	<i>apologies</i>	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	present	Member, Vice Chair of the Corporation, Chair of Audit Committee

CLERK TO THE CORPORATION

Val Bartlett	present	Clerk to the Corporation
--------------	---------	--------------------------

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 teleconferencing as per the Waltham Forest College Instrument & Articles, Instrument 1 (g) and it was agreed by the Corporation that this meeting only consider items of urgent business.

20.20 PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE - SENIOR POST HOLDER

The Corporation ratified the decision made by written resolution that Di Gowland be appointed as Interim Principal & Chief Executive effective from 3 March 2020.

The process to appoint a permanent Principal and Chief Executive is to now commence.

The Chair welcomed Di to the College.

The Chair also welcomed Andy Cottrell – Deputy Principal Corporate Resources Designate - as an observer to the meeting.

21.20 RE-APPOINTMENT OF CORPORATION MEMBERS

The Corporation approved the recommendation from the Search Committee that Nadia Ahmed and Neil Taylor be re-appointed as Corporation members for a further term of one (1) year, effective until 23 March 2021.

22.20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received and accepted from:
Kapil Wadhvani – work commitments

There were no apologies for absence.

23.20 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.

24.20 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETINGS HELD ON 4 FEBRUARY 2020 AND 25 FEBRUARY 2020

The Minutes of the Corporation meetings held on 4 February 2020 and 25 February 2020 were agreed by the Corporation and signed by the Chair as a true record.

25.20 MATTERS ARISING

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

26.20 COLLEGE REPORT

The Principal introduced this report and the following was noted in particular:

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Following the Government's statement that all schools and colleges are to close, the College moved to full-time online learning as from Monday 23 March 2020 and staff are following Government guidelines regarding working from home.

Governors were informed that staff have provided a fantastic response and sterling efforts to move from a physical to virtual campus at such short notice, and there have been very few issues as all staff pull together. The current positive use of the on-line learning systems bodes well for the future, as and when more blended learning will be undertaken.

It was confirmed that a small part of the campus is remaining open for vulnerable learners and some staff. The College has also linked up with the LBWF and colleges in East London to support each other.

The key funders, GLA and ESFA, have assured colleges that in-year grant income will not be affected with, in all likelihood, no clawback or reconciliation at year-end. Guidance regarding Apprenticeship provision is still awaited. However, there may well be loss of some planned income particularly from commercial sources.

Meanwhile, the focus has been on key aspects of College business including:

- Fully costed curriculum planning for 2020/21
- Curriculum and quality management structures
- Information regarding the mid-year financial position
- Work on budget planning

The Corporation noted that the FE Commissioner's Diagnostic Assessment visit on 2-3 April 2020 has been postponed due to Covid-19. This visit will, in all likelihood, now take place in 2-3 month's time. Meanwhile, the Principal has provided a verbal position statement to both the FEC and the ESFA on the proposed financial recovery and curriculum plans. Both agencies have asked to be kept updated where appropriate and are supportive of the intended action plans.

The Principal then updated Governors on actions taken regarding the outcomes from the staff survey. These include developing a staff communication strategy based around the principles of transparency, visibility and responsiveness plus the launch of a 'Colleague Appreciation Scheme' to reward staff.

The Corporation then discussed recent communications from one of the Unions represented in the College, namely UCU, who have expressed concerns around governance and management. Central to the UCU issues are pay and pay anomalies, historic poor communications and perceived increased in workload, which are also issues found in most other colleges too. Governors were informed that meetings with UCU, the Chair of the Corporation and the Principal are being arranged in order to explore these concerns further whilst confirming that the key issue for the Corporation remains one of sustainability. It was noted that there have been no communications from UCU to the Corporation for over 2 years, and that this UCU vote of no confidence was most unexpected.

The Principal informed Governors that talks are being held with a number of potentially interested partners to explore the swimming pool facility which is currently not in use.

Governors then returned to discussion on Covid-19 including how on-line learning was taking place and were assured that any issues around any practical assessments and the completion of all theory learning on-line are both in-hand. Recording attendance and monitoring learner engagement is also being checked. Confirmation and assurance were also provided to Governors that all vulnerable learners do have the necessary support in place during this national lockdown period with relevant agencies being included where appropriate.

Discussion then moved to the capability and capacity of the IT infrastructure to handle on-line learning and staff working from home due to Covid-19. It was acknowledged that, to date, there have been no major issues for staff or students.

The Chair then queried how the College may change in the coming months. It was noted that there is on-going work to stabilise the College finances, re-shaping of the curriculum plan to include more on-line learning thereby creating efficiencies, a thorough review of the current management structure and other areas to address over staffing and bring it in line with the sector norm guidelines, ensuring staff and teams are engaged with the College strategic direction and values and that a clear and focussed direction is being communicated to all staff. It was acknowledged that there is still work to do including certain changes in working practices and culture, but the recent Ofsted Safeguarding monitoring visit was a positive example of staff coming together to work as a team.

The DP C&Q then updated the Corporation on the rationale for the Curriculum Plan for 2020/21.

The Curriculum Teams have all been included in this thorough and robust review in order to re-align priorities and address the challenges. Whilst recognising the strong position of 16-19 recruitment numbers, progression with mapped out pathways does need to improve. This was an issue raised at the recent Corporation Strategy Day, including how to get employers involved in ensuring the right skills are being developed by learners for entry into industry and work.

Governors were informed that 'Create Your Future' is being developed as an on-line package and will help address learners' confidence and skills building. The move to on-line learning is very important for the College, not just in terms of addressing financial savings, but will form an integral part of how all future students will learn.

The Chair of the Finance Working Group then outlined the recent financial discussions this group had held at its meeting on 19 March 2020 including data regarding staff numbers, teaching hours and remission and the financial challenges facing the College due to its relatively small size.

As part of the curriculum planning, a strategic decision has been taken to carry some additional staff into 2020/21 to cover growth in the AEB and Apprenticeships, but otherwise there have been reviews at a number of levels including average class sizes, contribution analysis, resourcing, staff hours and remission, curriculum plans and funding allocations all of which are to ensure there is a flexible curriculum plan and staff upskilling in blended learning in place for 2020-21.

The Corporation was assured that the Curriculum Plan has been built with staff involvement in order to ensure a sense of buy-in and confidence that it is deliverable and will contribute to the College's future stability. The Corporation agreed that a Curriculum and Quality Working Group meeting be held in the next 4 weeks to review the progress to date with the implementation of the curriculum plan for 2020/21.

The Corporation received and noted the College update.

27.20 MONTHLY MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – 29 FEBRUARY 2020

The Corporation was informed that the February 2020 Management Accounts had been subject to scrutiny and discussion at the Finance Working Group meeting held on 19 March 2020.

As proposed by the Finance Group, the summary financial KPI's are now prominently displayed on the front page of the Monthly accounts including the relevant RAG ratings, for immediate attention.

It was acknowledged that whilst borrowing as a percentage of income is low and RAG 'Green', the staff costs as a percentage income are high and RAG rated 'Red', therefore, requiring continued focus including forming part of the curriculum planning review and financial recovery plan.

The mid-year forecast as at February 2020 is showing a year-end deficit of £95k, mainly due to the increase in restructuring costs of £110k. The Corporation was also updated on the forecast and movements to the end of the year.

Cashflow is still an area under strict monitoring and the Bank overdraft facility of £500k for the pinch point months of March and April is in place if required. In order to preserve cash, capital expenditure has been reduced with only essential capital items being approved.

It was noted that the two main funding agencies, GLA and ESFA, have confirmed that, in all probability, there will be no clawback of funds as Covid-19 continues to impact on the business of every college.

It was acknowledged that the key risk areas for the College are cash days, liquidity and pay costs. Cashflow is the major concern and is the main strategic driver for the recovery plan in order to safeguard the College and ensure its longevity.

Discussion then took place around the reduced capital budget and in particular a reduction in IT expenditure given the uncertainties around Covid-19 and staff and students now being required to work from home. It was noted that investment will be needed in IT and that preparations for September 2020 are in hand, meanwhile it was agreed that management explore any possible council grants as funds for IT equipment may still be available during 2019-20.

Due to Covid-19 it was also noted that there may be other potential savings as less staff are on site e.g. utility bills, and management are to review the conditions of accessing the Government's furlough scheme.

The Corporation acknowledged that the College finances still remain fragile and noted the key financial risks being managed and the mitigating actions being taken by the College.

The Corporation noted the contents of the mid-year Financial Review and the in-year budget planning alongside the proposed management restructure which is also aimed at finding the necessary financial resources to fully address outstanding pay anomalies effective from August 2020.

19:10 KU and FR left the meeting

28.20 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE – STAFFING

29.20 RECRUITMENT OF A PERMANENT PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Corporation was informed that AoC Recruitment representatives had met with the Remuneration Committee members and had outlined their approach to recruiting to this permanent role and an associated timeline.

The Corporation approved the Job Description and Person Specification for this role.

The AoC microsite for this position will, therefore, go live this week. It was acknowledged that the usual interview and assessment arrangements may need to be reviewed given the impact of COVID-19.

It was agreed that the Chair of the Corporation is to speak to individual Governors regarding being part of the selection panel.

30.20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Principal is to provide a weekly update to Governors during the COVID-19 period.
- The Principal and DPCR are to meet with the Bank on 26 March 2020. PB and YA plus the Principal, DPCR and the FD are also to arrange a meeting with the Bank in the next few weeks.
- The Risk Register and College Disaster Recovery Plan are to be updated to include COVID-19 issues and include the potential loss of senior staff due to illness.
- All Governors are to be invited to attend the Finance Working Group meetings where it is deemed relevant by the Chair of the Corporation.
- The Principal and Head of IT are to explore the use of Skype/Zoom/Teams for future meetings.

The Chair thanked all Governors and the Clerk for their valuable input at what is a very difficult time for all.

These minutes have been approved by the Corporation and signed by the Chair as a correct record.



**Paul Butler
SIGNED**

**19 May 2020
DATE**

The meeting closed at 19:50



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	FEC/ESFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Management to keep in touch with key stakeholders to assure them we are addressing the concerns in order to ensure WFC future sustainability 	AR-T DG		
26.20	FEC/ESFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Management to keep in touch with key stakeholders to assure them we are addressing the concerns in order to ensure WFC future sustainability 	DG/AH	May 2020	
26.20	STAFF SURVEY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SLT to put actions in place to ensure transparency/visibility/openness 	DG	April 2020	
26.20	UCU – VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair and Principal committed to meet with UCU Principal to provide information UCU are requesting and to provide them with feedback from the Corporation meeting 	DG/PB DG	April 2020	
26.20	CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC - COVID-19			
	COLLEGE PREMISES Small part (LRC) is to continue to remain open	AR-T	March 2020	
	I.T. INFRASTRUCTURE Stability of this so far is working well- no major issues – careful watch to be ensured Check on availability of any possible IT grants	KU	March 2020	
	To review Government’s furlough plans to see if this may include some of our staff	AR-T AH	April 2020 April 2020	
26.20	CURRICULUM PLANNING 2020-21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checks to ensure employers inform the curriculum offer - Marketing and Curriculum Teams working on a visual diagram/brochure Agreed Curriculum & Standards Group to meet in the next 4 weeks 	SM SM/VB	April 2020 May 2020	
28.20	RECOVERY PLAN 2020-21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation is an issue due to COVID-19 - to keep under review Need to ensure continuity and ownership of this plan within the existing SLT - the Chair to hold follow-up discussions with SPH Specific risks and mitigations to be drafted 	DG PB AH	May 2020 May 2020 May 2020	



29.20	PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT PROCESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment process to still go ahead and to monitor this alongside impact of CV19 • To share with the new Principal the thinking, rationale and drive for WFC future • To confirm wording of the advert to AoC 	VB PB VB	April/May Summer April	
30.20	AOB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT to provide weekly updates to Governors • Principal and DPCR meeting with the bank this Thursday – PB/YA to also arrange meeting with bank in due course • Risk Register/Disaster Recovery Plan- to ensure this includes CV10 and covers potential absence of key Senior Staff • Finance Working Group meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 23 April/21 May/25 June - All Governors to be invited to attend these meetings if necessary and/or to use these dates for Corporation meetings if necessary - To investigate use of Skype/Zoom/Teams for future meetings 	DG DG AH VB	April April/May April May	