

# MINUTES



## RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

**Date:** Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**Time:** 5.00pm

**Venue:** Video Conference

### **Present:**

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)

Bill Webster (Principal)

Kate Flood

Tony Unsworth

Professor George Holmes

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi

### **In Attendance:**

Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)

Jane Marsh (Executive Director of HR)

Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)

Tim Openshaw (Asst. Vice Chancellor, UoB)

Jill Hebden (Minute Taker)

## **1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE**

### **1.1 Welcome to Members**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, which commenced at 5.01pm.

### **1.2 Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence had been received.

### **1.3 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed.

### **1.4 Request for an item to be unstarred**

No requests were made.

### **1.5 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held 28 September 2021 had been previously circulated to members for consideration.

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**Agreed:** that the minutes are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication.

## 1.7 Matters arising from the Minutes and Action Progress Log

The Clerk presented the action progress log and confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed with the exception of health and safety training that would be reviewed against the College's current health and safety provision.

### **Governor Questions:**

Is the Community Asset Transfer still ongoing?

Yes. The transfer has been approved by both the College and University Boards and is currently with the Council.

## 2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

### 2.1 Current COVID-19 Situation Update

The Principal and Executive Director of HR provided the following update:

- The College remained open as normal and continued face-to-face teaching.
- Current measures, including wearing of face masks in classrooms continued to be enforced.
- Since returning in January, there had been 249 positive cases, 76 staff and 173 learners. In comparison, from Sept - Dec 2021 there had been 159 cases. This mirrored the local and national picture.
- Staff absenteeism due to isolation presented the biggest challenge at 6-8% on top of a 'normal' absence rate of 3-5% with not all teams having the ability to work from home. For example, isolation had hit the estates and learner support teams.
- Prior to Christmas COVID-19 cases in the Bolton area had peaked around 350 per 100k, last week at 2200 per 100k and the case rate had now dropped to 1315 per 100k.

### **Governor Questions:**

- Had the changes to the isolation period being reduced had an impact?

There has been a lot of confusion and questions over how the reduced isolation period works. It is too soon to say if it has had an impact as the latest isolation rules only came into effect on 17 January 2022.

### **RESOLVED:**

The Committee noted the update provided.

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## **ACTION:**

Executive HR Director to circulate the impact of changes to the isolation period to the Committee.

## **2.2 Financial Update – LEO1 Update, Cash Flow and Agency Spend**

The following update was provided by the Executive Director of Finance:

- The College had a £762k operating surplus.
- The AEB funding position for 2021 remained outstanding. The College had submitted the data requested by GMCA and further additional information. It remained with the GMCA to conclude their assessment of the College's business case for the retention of funding.
- The operating position would be presented to the Board when the work on LEO1 had concluded.
- Staff had seen a reduction in pay of 30% over the last 10 years. The College had been in a position where it was struggling to recruit and retain staff in certain areas due to salary. The Executive Team had worked on proposals to implement a pay award.
- Staff retention was a Greater Manchester issue for Colleges in the region particularly where wages were inflated in certain industries.

## **Governor Questions:**

- Will the new funding settlement for next year have an impact on income for the College?

The College will receive its funding allocation confirmation in March with the ESFA toolkit providing an indication of the funding the College will receive. Due to a number of things, including an increase in delivery hours, there is a real time increase of 3.5% on income. However, inflationary pressures need to be considered in the context of other organisational costs ie. utilities bills.

- Is agency spend an issue?

The College has a number of agency staff due to difficulties in appointments. There is no backfill provided for non-teaching staff when absent due to COVID-19. However, there is for teaching staff with pressure on agency spend to backfill programme delivery.

- Was it difficult to recruit agency staff?

Yes, there are quality as well as recruitment issues.

**(Kate Flood left the meeting at 5.25pm)**

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- Are all other Greater Manchester colleges in the same position as Bolton College in relation to the AEB funding?

The majority were in the same position as the College.

- Are there potential roles at the College for University graduates?

There is a relationship in place, particularly in relation to teaching roles with students from the University delivering their placement hours at the College and a number of these going on to secure permanent positions within the College. However, the positions that the College is struggling with ie. trade positions, the University is unable to provide help. Prior to Christmas, the Heads of Schools at the University and College met to discuss how working together could improve.

- Is work ongoing to look at shared services with the University?

Yes. The AVC and MD of Professional and Academic Services at the University is leading on a staff engagement exercise across the University Group. Following the completion of this exercise recommendations will be made in the Spring Term.

## **RESOLVED:**

The Committee noted the financial update provided.

### **2.3 College KPI Dashboard**

The KPI dashboard was reviewed and the following points noted:

- Achievement rates had shown a favourable improvement.
- English and maths had some issues concerning progress that had been previously highlighted. The College had plans in place to address these issues.

### **Governor Questions:**

- Is there a need for more resources to solve the maths and English problem?

There is a full paper going to the Standards & Performance Committee tomorrow outlining the plans in place and how these issues will be addressed. Whilst the result is not good for English and maths, it is not that far away from previous years considering learners are starting from a low base on enrolment. On-line delivery has been the differentiation and was kept online due to the pandemic and not mixing learner groups. English and maths will be delivered in curriculum areas that should increase learner attendance. The big ticket was face-to-face teaching.

The College was recruiting a new Head of English and maths and was confident that the College would see an improvement in this area.

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## **RESOLVED:**

The Committee noted the contents of the KPI Summary Dashboard.

## **2.4 ADA and First Pass Commercialisation**

The Principal noted the following key updates:

- The College had a partnership with JISC as part of its National Centre for Artificial Intelligence with the first major project being the 'Ada Light' pilot. Feedback following the 12-month pilot would inform changes to the final product before further roll out across the country.

It was noted that Northern Gritstone supported a number of Universities to commercialise potential opportunities. The College would explore any opportunities available.

## **RESOLVED:**

The Committee noted the update provided.

## **ACTION:**

Principal to review opportunities provided by Northern Gritstone.

## **2.5 ESFA Update**

This item was discussed under Item 2.2

## **2.6 HR Mid-Year Annual Report 2021/22**

The Executive Director of HR highlighted the following points:

- Sickness absence was at 5.85%, an increase of just over 2.5% that was in the main due to a small number of colleagues on long-term sickness.
- There had been a reduction in formal employee relation work, mainly due to some cases during the last year being interconnected.
- There was a new initiative around intensive support with curriculum areas and cross-College multi-disciplinary systems in place.
- Enrichment activities were restricted due to the pandemic that were to be re-visited with the College working with the AoC on a range of mental health initiatives.
- The College had CO2 monitors across the campus with four areas identified with ventilation issues. An application had been submitted to the DfE for air cleaning machines.

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- Are we doing enough to remind staff of the measures that are in place to keep them safe?

Numerous communications have gone out to all staff. The Senior Management Team are briefed on a fortnightly basis and CMT on a monthly basis. 99% of staff who took part in the survey at the end of last year stated that they had received a good level of communication and were kept informed.

## **RESOLVED:**

The Committee reviewed and noted the report.

## **2.7 Staff Development Review 2020/21 & Key Priorities 2021/22**

The Executive Director of HR highlighted the following points:

- The staff training team ensured that all staff had the appropriate digital skills to achieve the College digital agenda.
- Since joining the University Group 51 members of staff had accessed the fee waiver scheme and of those, 40 colleagues so far, had secured a higher qualification. The scheme remained both a staff attraction and retention tool and was highlighted during staff recruitment and induction as well as at other points in the employee journey.

## **Governor Questions:**

- Based on the 40% budget cut on the previous year and our ambition of 'road to outstanding' are we happy that we could give a robust response to any challenge we might get e.g. Ofsted etc?

The current staff development budget is reflecting the budget set during the height of the pandemic with a request that the budget is reinstated back to pre-COVID levels. If this can happen then we will be in a better position to deliver on the range of CPD activities the SMT have requested are in place as part of our journey to becoming 'outstanding'.

We believe Ofsted's focus will be more aligned to whether the CPD programme directly maps across to the College's development plans, which it does. They will also want to consider the breadth and impact of staff development and this will then be triangulated through conversations with staff and learners. We are confident we have a good story to tell on this area of our work.

## **3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED**

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## 4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The College had received notice of the date for the ESFA/FEC Section 28 follow-up review.

## 5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 at 5.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 6.11 pm

**Chair's Signature:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Neel'.

**Date:** 22 March 2022