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**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 121.30 AM IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, GREEN LANE CAMPUS**

**Present**

Mr P Smith Chair

Mrs S Fawcett Independent Member

Professor J Rapley Independent Member

Professor R Simmons Independent Member

Mr I Butchart Independent Member

Mr D Hughes Independent Member

Mr K Goldsborough Independent Member

Mr T Bailey Independent Member

Ms A Norris Independent Member

Mr I Swain Independent Member

Mrs E Hardwick Staff Member

Ms R Hare Staff Member

Ms J Havakin Staff Member

Mr S Ahmed Student Member

Dr M Raby Principal

**In attendance**

Mr S Slorach Vice Principal Resources

Mr P Chapman Vice Principal Employability & External

Relations

Mr J Waddington Vice Principal Student Experience

Mr P Trotter Co-opted Member

Mr J D Banks Clerk & Governance Advisor

Ms L Robson RSM (School External Auditors) – a.m. only.

Mr R Kane Head of Further Education - pm only?

Mike Wheaton Vice Principal Higher Education – pm only?

**Apologies**

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| **19:034** | **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**  The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. | **Action** |
| **19:035** | **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  . |  |
| **19:036** | **QUORUM**  The meeting was quorate in line with standing order 8.1 “Meetings of the Corporation Board and its committees shall be quorate when 40% of the total membership of the Governing Body or its committee, excluding vacancies, is present, except where otherwise stated within the terms of reference for that committee.” |  |
| **19:037** | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  None |  |
| **19:038** | **UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 October 2019 were agreed as an accurate record subject to some amendments.  Before moving on to Item 6, the Chair invited the Student Governor, Mr Ahmed, to speak. He referred to the shortage of BME representation not only at the School but at in his previous education experience. He set out that this may be a result of parental influence as artistic pursuits are not seen as a career choice. He referred to the need for initiatives to support a change of attitude within BME communities.  The Principal stated that this position was similar in other HE institutions. The Office for Students (OfS) is pressing on with targets in this regard and at Access & Participation Plan is a requirement of OfS registration.  The Board suggested seeking role models to encourage BAME participation. | Clerk |
| **19:039** | **MATTERS ARISING**  The Principal tabled a list of Matters Arising and it was noted that the Principal would cover the Governance & Search meeting and the Strategic Plan in his report. He invited interest from Governors to engage with the Finance Committee and set out that this invitation did not solely apply to Governors with financial qualifications. |  |
| **19:040** | **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**  The Chair brought forward Item 13 as Mrs Fawcett would need to leave early.  Mr Waddington presented the report and referred to the changes to the policy as detailed on the summary page. He highlighted that this was an annual review and drew attention to the provisions of the Voyeurism Act and that activities such as “upskirting” are now illegal. Greater commitment is being made to keeping students safe online. Other changes are to bring the School in line with best practice.  The Chair questioned if there were other matters in the general area that they should pay attention to. Topics mentioned were as follows:   1. Mental Health; 2. Governors carrying out the FE online training (HE differs); 3. Focussing on how to recognise abuse and neglect;   He also referred to the current publicity regarding drug dealing, “County Lines” and the exploitation of young people within this.  There was discussion of the scope of his activity and that technically safeguarding refers to under 18-year olds and vulnerable adults, however, there is a responsibility on Governors to take appropriate action should they be aware of or have disclosed to them information relating to Safeguarding matters.  The Principal referred to the Annual Report and that there may be a timing issue in bringing the Policy to this Board meeting and that Mr Waddington should have copies to hand for reference when the Annual Report is considered.  The Board APPROVED the Safeguarding Policy  The Principal drew attention to another agenda amendment, in that Item 14, Annual Cycle of Business of the Board, should not be considered and would be brought to the Board at a later date. | Mr Waddington |
| **19:041** | **MEMBERS UPDATE**   1. Ms Rapley apologised for absence from the Academic Board; 2. Mrs Fawcett had been unable to meet her buddy; 3. Mr Waddington highlighted that Newcastle Stafford College Group was the first college to receive a Grade 1 under the new EIF.   There was a discussion regarding the new Framework and key points raised were as follows:   1. It is harder to achieve Grade 1 now; 2. It is thought to be more “human” with more emphasis on speaking with students and less on observations; 3. It is less data driven; 4. The final report is shorter; 5. Looking forward, the line for the School is to get across what it is like to be a student at the School. |  |
| **19:042** | **CONFIDENTIAL ITEM** |  |
| **19:043** | **KPIs**  Mr Slorach presented his report and highlighted the following points:   1. Recruitment & Retention – while these are key factors it is early to be certain about them, nonetheless, recruitment is good for both FE and HE. 97 FE applications are in, which is ahead of last year. A handful of HE applications are in but it is really too early for accuracy; 2. Attendance – HE attendance is at 92% which is good while on the FE side attendance and retention are good but it is early to judge;   The Board questioned the Maths & English attendance in FE which had already dropped 1% below target and is unlikely to rise as the academic year proceeds?  This is normal and is a problem against the sector, the 90% is a stretch target. The challenge is slow the decline as much as possible.  The Board NOTED the KPIs monitored in the Master Target Book. |  |
| **19:044** | **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS SEPTEMBER 2019**  Mr Slorach presented his report set out that as previously stated, it is very early in the year. He highlighted the following key points:   1. Cash balances at £1.4m; 2. Cash received from Devco at £1m excluding balances; 3. Covenants not in question at this point; 4. While cash not problematic now, if there is significant delay in the funding agreement for the Middlesbrough Project difficulties could arise as in April, May and June there will be significant sums of money to expend.   The Principal offered assurance that the TVCA anticipated transferring £4m to the School before the end of March 2020.  Mr Slorach referred to the impending January forecast for the ESFA and identified that while all looks good at present there was a risk of surprise elements, such as the water leak here at Green Lane, which may be claimed against insurance but could be expensive. Another factor could be falling short of the HE target recruitment.  Within the I&E account, there would be the opportunity to capitalise salaries to provide some headroom.  The Board questioned the amounts involved and it was stated as £150 – 200k in the previous year. In the past the auditors have been fairly relaxed but the costs must be sensible  The Board NOTED the Management Accounts to September 2019. |  |
| **19:045** | **SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QUIP)**  Mr Waddington thanked Mr Kane, who put most of this together, presented his report and set out that a draft had been presented to the Academic Board. It is sent to OFSTED and used for Risk Assessment purposes. He reminded the Board that as the School has an Outstanding rating it is not subject to regular review by OFSTED. It is good practice to carry through a rigorous SAR process and in this SAR has been judged against the new Education Inspection Framework. A range of differing FE courses were covered.  He directed the Board to page 5 and the overall gradings. He explained that the top box shows the change from Teaching, Learning & Assessment into Quality of Education. For the first time weighting has been applied to the differing elements; the box sets out the differences and Quality of Education is the heaviest weighting and the School is rated as Outstanding in this area.  Each individual course is graded, the worst grading is against school A level rating and this has consequently been receiving most attention and this is shown in the Quality Improvement Plan.  The Board questioned the numerical grading, which was explained as 1 – Outstanding, 2 – Good, 3 – Requires Improvement and 4 – Inadequate.  Mr Waddington directed the Board to page 16 which listed the key strengths (16) and key areas for improvement (5) for the School. The former were all in the highly weighted segments whereas the latter were in more lowly weighted segments which OFSTED would not see as critical.  The Board requested an explanation of the Gatsby benchmark which relates to all students receiving Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) from someone formally qualified in IAG (careers). The School is working towards this benchmark and has a plan in place and identified a funding source through the TVCA. Mr Waddington did not believe that the Gatsby benchmark is the best way for the School to deliver IAG which it is believed is currently excellent. There are other standards, such as the Matrix, and previously the School was graded excellent on this standard; this was recently refreshed and remains in place.  The Board questioned the student feedback on careers advice and it was stated that students thought it excellent, with an approval rating in the 90% range.  Mr Chapman provided a historical perspective on the Gatsby benchmark.  The Board suggested that the School should apply for a dispensation from Gatsby in terms of specialist provision that the School delivers.  The Board questioned the role of staff in compiling the SAR or how does it work? How likely are OFSTED to look at this and think, “we really need to inspect them”! It was explained that the scores are validated and challenged but that this is in terms of staff under-rating as well as over-rating.  The Principal referred to the review of the SAR through the Academic Board and his use of the previous year statistics to monitor the variance across the year and explore the consistency of grading; it was not produced by Rob and Amanda in isolation.  The Board questioned what level of external challenge would it withstand? The Principal explained the two routes:   1. For the SAR, through the Academic Board and the benefit of external expertise available through that process through Mrs Rapley and with the Clerk as an observer; 2. For the Annual Report of the Academic Board to the Board and he suggested that the FE Academic Committee, although not a committee of the Board (and not needing to be) would nonetheless benefit from an additional level of oversight from someone such as Mr Simmons with experience of teaching of FE and more widely.   He referred to the success rate of 93% (without short course provision), up on last year, which should provide the Board with a level of comfort.  It was suggested that a colleague from the FE Plus Quality Group could be invited to review the SAR, this is done within the Groups but not for some time at the School. There is also the option to utilise the experience of an OFSTED Inspector, already engaged with the School for other purposes, to review the SAR.  The Principal suggested that if the Board were minded to approve the SAR and QIP comfort could be provided at the December Board regarding additional external challenge; submission to OFSTED not until January 2020.  The Board APPROVED the Self Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan. |  |
| **19:046** | **ANNUAL REPORT BY ACADEMIC BOARD**  The Principal set out that this follows the format used last year and draws heavily on the annual overview report submitted to the Arts University Bournemouth. The informal feedback was that it is a good report. This provides comfort that the data element satisfies the validating university.  He referred to the, now redundant but retained at the School as good practice, HEFCE mechanism. The Annual Overview report was reviewed by the Academic Board and as stated is a key source for the Annual Report by the Academic Board 2018-19  He invited the Board to endorse the assurance statements set out at page 22 of the Annual Report by the Academic Board 2018-19. He reviewed particular elements of those assurances and set out the basis for them.  The Board invited the staff to confirm whether they had seen and read the report and to express their opinion of it. It was confirmed that the staff had seen and read the report in many guises during its preparation and there were no surprises in it.  The Board commented that at page 11 bullet points 1 and 3 repeated each other and is there enough data about the reason why students are lost between level 4 and level 5.  The Principal set out that there has been a tightening of process on reporting student attendances and the follow up on non-attendance to enable identification of students with issues and groups of students with issues.  He set out that there had been less academic failure last year at 12, compared with circa 50 the previous year and this reflected the improvements being made in attendance monitoring and support. Early work is now being carried out with Level 4 students to support transitioning into HE. Level 4 has historically been a problem.  There was a discussion of the unconditional offers and the Principal had carried out research into the accuracy of interview processes as a predictor and it was relatively sound. Other issues, for example undeclared mental health issues, which adversely impacted on transition.  Mr Waddington set out that there was a report going to the Academic Strategy Review Group which referred to first semester drop out relating mainly to financial and personal reasons while in the summer drop out related more to course issues. A key factor, apparently, in reducing dropout rate was the use of face to face interviews and feedback prior to the summer break. It also appears that across the sector there is a break point at Level 4 as there is an influx from other institutions at this point as well as leakage from the School.  An update under operating partnership arrangements was that AUB has confirmed that the conditions have now been met enabling the School to validate its first Masters degrees from April 2020.  The Board APPROVED the Annual Report by the Academic Board 2018-19 |  |
| **19:047** | **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**  Confidential Items were noted. |  |
| **19:048** | **ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**  None |  |
| **19:049** | **REVIEW OF MEETING**  The Board view was that the meeting achieved the objectives and participants had sufficient opportunity to speak. |  |
| **19:051** | **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**  Friday 06 December 2019 at 12:00 noon in the Boardroom at Church Street, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough. |  |
|  | **Meeting closed at 14:25** |  |

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………………….

Date: ……………………………………………………………………………………………