**Meeting of the Corporation Board – Strategy Day**

**Friday 14 May 2021 at 1100hrs**

**Board Room, Hartlepool and Via Zoom Conference Call**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Members present:**  Mr P Smith  Dr M Raby  Mr T Bailey  Mrs S Fawcett  Professor R Simmons  Professor J Rapley  Mr I Swain  Mr K Goldsborough  Mr D Hughes  Mrs E Hardwick  Mr R Kane  Ms G Miller  Mr M Blanshard  Ms Jane Havakin | | PS  MR  TB  SF  RS  JR  IS  KG  DH  EH  RK  GM  MB  JH | Chair  Principal  Independent Member  Independent Member  Independent Member  Independent Member  Independent Member  Independent Member  Independent Member  Staff Member  Staff Member  Independent Member  Independent Member  Staff Member | |
| **In Attendance:** | |  |  | |
| Mr P Trotter  Mr S Slorach  Mr P Chapman  Mr J Waddington  Mr M Wheaton  Mrs L McLaren | | PT  SS  PC  JW  MW  LM | Co-opted Member  Vice Principal Resources  VP Employability & External Relations  Vice Principal Student Experience  Vice Principal Higher Education  Head of Governance | |
| **Apologies:**  Mrs A Snow  Miss G Blake | | AS  GB | Independent Governor  Student Governor | |
|  |  | | | **Action** | |
| 1. | The Chair opened the meeting at 1106.  Mr Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting. | | |  | |
| 2. | **Apologies for absence**  Apologies were received from Mrs Snow and Miss Blake. | | |  | |
| 3. | **Group 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.” | | |  | |
| 4. | **Declaration of Interests**  The Declaration of Interests was noted. | | |  | |
| 5. | **Confirmation of minutes from the previous meeting**  The Minutes from the previous meeting held on Friday 23 April, 2021 were **CONFIRMED** by all with three minor amendments. | | |  | |
| 6. | **Matters Arising**  There were no matters arising. | | |  | |
| 7. | **Strategic Issues – An Overview**  Prior to starting the overview Dr Raby updated the Board on a number of operational matters:   * FE applications up on last year * HE applications raise concerns on the level of firm acceptances. June 10th is the decline by default date. Once numbers are known we will be able to confirm the 2021/22 budget. * Capital Projects – Middlesbrough: really good to be able to show Governors the building this morning, currently ahead of schedule with a completion date of August 16th. Contingency stands at £100k * Capital Projects – Hartlepool: Delay to the Scott Building due to steel delays. Completion due September, with a planned move in over Christmas.   Mr Bailey noted that the number of people on site seems low, are there any other issues that we are not aware of? Dr Raby noted that F&G are aware we are not happy with progress and have concerns over the Project Manager. Discussions around this will be taking place in the coming days. The contingency currently stands at £49k, however, we will be seeking a breakdown to ensure that this is fully reflective of everything that has been done to date.  Professor Rapley enquired about security of the Middlesbrough building. Dr Raby advised that the building had one way in/out, with access control gates and an appropriate security fence installed around the site. Mr Waddington added that discussions had also taken place with counter terrorism and they confirmed that everything was suitable and appropriate.  Dr Raby presented the Strategic Issues Overview to the Board, setting out the School’s approach and response to the dip in HE student recruitment in 2020. The School’s key strategic objective has been growth in student recruitment, principally at HE. Rationale for this has been to improve sustainability in an era when FE and HE funding has declined.  Dr Raby noted:   * OfS would be required to sign-off on a move to HEI status * We need continued financial sustainability * Ensure we provide quality teaching and courses and initiate new courses * We need to grow numbers, and improve / become more effective with scholarly activity to help develop the curriculum. * DAPs will require time and focus and will need to be resourced * To achieve sector transfer DAPs would be beneficial, however we would require 3yrs track record and have 55% in HE criterion. This will be very much based on student numbers.   To allow us to implement the strategy, we will   * Need to change behaviours * Align strategies (strategic plan, marketing strategy, academic plan) * Improve APR processes * Improve performance management   Professor Simmons thanked Dr Raby for the very helpful update. It was unclear what the issue was around Scholarly activity. Dr Raby advised that staff had been given time in the past for scholarly activity but it was not well directed or clear. We need to demonstrate that effectiveness but unfortunately have less time to allocate. We would like to allocate a Senior Lecturer to lead on scholarly activity, however we need to review finances before we can confirm this.  We need to be mindful how this will fit in overall and should be driven by the APR to prioritise in key areas. This will be an important area to grasp for a move to HEI.  Professor Rapley noted that we were well positioned for DAPs but we do need improvement on scholarly activity. We have a foundation to bring this to fruition, we need to encourage and look at the professional practice of staff.  Mr Hughes asked what the appropriate size of growth would look like. Dr Raby suggested around 1,500 students, which would still be small in the sector. However, we do need to be bigger if we can.  Mr Smith advised that curriculum discussions need to have a raised profile and better representation within the Corporation Board schedule. Staff behaviours are difficult to change and this can be looked at through the Governance & Search Committee.  Mr Smith thanked Dr Raby for the presentation. | | |  | |
| 8. | **Strategic Plan 2019 – 24**  **A reminder & progress review**  Mr Chapman presented the Strategic Plan progress review to the Board. It was noted   * We are leaders within creative practice * Maintaining our quality with an “Outstanding” OFSTED and TEF Gold * Developing our curriculum * Externality can be challenging * Student experience has seen a marked improvement. The Student Union is growing and had good links and interaction with Management. * Marketing can be improved, responding to shifts in marketing and resource   Dr Raby noted that some objectives had gone well and some required improvement. Growth is one of the Institutions drivers.  Professor Rapley enquired about staff morale and knowledge. Mr Chapman advised that the School now had a number of mental health first aiders and toolkits to help staff. Dr Raby added that morale at HE is not perfect, the restructure in 2020 happened late and impacted on the 2020/21 academic year. If we are able to make a pay award soon and earlier in the 2021/22 academic year this would be helpful. Faculty Leads are helping develop morale and change but still work to be done.  Professor Rapley noted that some staff may not have the confidence to change and we need to ensure we bring them with us as we change. Staff morale will be an important aspect for DAPs. Dr Raby advised that Programme Strategic Meetings have been planned to encourage an open discussion on curriculum and scholarly activity. Staff are excited about the prospect of DAPs during discussions we have had. | | |  | |
| 9. | **Academic Strategy 2021 – 24**  **Emerging themes & issues**  Mr Waddington presented the draft Academic Strategy to the Board. It was noted:   * An Academic Strategy Working Group was established to review the strategy which appeared quite complex with many strands * We asked ourselves do we understand who we are? And what does it mean to be an arts school * Reviewed to identify clear objectives with a fresh approach * We are a small institution which allows our staff to really know their students   The draft had been reviewed by Academic Board and a final version would be approved at the June Academic Board, together with an operational plan. Consultation has taken place at all levels – Academic Board, Corporation Board, Academic Teams and Students.  Professor Simmons commented that there are a lot of interesting items and more focus is needed on the curriculum, with discussion at Board level, of our core business.  Mr Trotter noted that this report was one of the best documents he had seen and was valuable, clear, articulate and well presented. It carried a confident tone.  Mr Bailey thanked Mr Waddington for the discussion. Earlier in the day it was unclear where discussion was going, but now can see the aim to refocus strategic ambition, leading the journey and student experience. The School is a vibrant place with “students who could change the world”. Would it be possible to have a staff or school conference to boost morale and provide clarity in the journey we are taking?  Mr Goldsborough echoed Mr Bailey’s comments. The document was refreshing with joined up thinking. We need to ensure that we look at industry needs and bring externality, reducing the gap between creative and practical.  Dr Raby noted comments on a conference and would consider this approach. | | |  | |
| 10. | **Marketing Strategy**  **Key features, curriculum alignment & development**  Mr Chapman presented the Marketing Strategy Review to the Board. The report sets out the current draft Value Proposition which will be the heart of the new strategy driving tactical and operational activity over the next 3 years. Mr Goldsborough had been deeply involved in discussions to date to review the strategy and identify:   * Where do we want to be? * How do we get there? * How do we know we are there?   As part of the strategy review we are looking at common language to ensure a focussed and consistent approach across the strategies.  To help develop the strategy we have been speaking with student groups, looking at value proposition statements and testing areas on the core group. We have also looked at sentiment testing of words – negative, positive and neutral.  We have one and a half years to engage prospective students through awareness, conversations, consideration and advocacy.  We would like to increase market share in the north and market specific products outside of the north. We know we can grow, we need to focus on it.  Mr Goldsborough noted from a professional perspective he was comfortable with the process so far which he had been involved in and thanked the team for the work to date. We are by no means at the end of the journey however progress is being made. It is a very difficult sector with a small location and we need to be clear on what we want to achieve and be able to be reactive where necessary.  Mr Hughes asked if we are limiting ourselves with a “North” focus. We have a very good offering, if not better than other Institutions. Mr Chapman advised that we need to grow our market share and break out. We have a national offering with the Studios that will come on line later this year, however, it is unrealistic to build outside of the north due to other Institutions already out there.  Mr Goldsborough noted that budget is also a practical reason for a north focus. Budget would need to increase to do this in a strong market.  Professor Rapley noted that this had improved a lot over the last 18mths in a declining market. There was some very good research and analysis included in the paper, however, we also need to have instinct as well:   * Who are you targeting? * When do parental issues drop out of considerations? * Who are the influencers? * Who can influence prospective students?   Professor Rapley also advised on an air of caution in describing aspects of the strategy, “skilled, ambitious and professionals” would not be suitable for describing all levels of students. The internal community needs to work together to bring externality.  Mr Chapman advised that different platforms would be used to target different people at different times, as well as direct physical outreach:   * Facebook * LinkedIn * Instagram   The Marketing team, together with the Sales/Recruitment team are working together on this. | | |  | |
|  | **Break for lunch at 1320**  **Reconvened at 1338** | | |  | |
| 11. | **Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs)**  **Rationale, assessment of readiness, timescale**  Mr Wheaton presented the paper on the School’s intention to apply for Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) to the Board and noted that Principalship had discussed the process at length.  At present the application process for DAPs was suspended due to Covid and we do not know when this will open.  Mr Wheaton noted that he had listed the questions which had been asked to recent applicants going through the process and these had been circulated to the Board for review. There are 33 questions to focus on. The School has a number of positives with links between the Governors and the operations/overview of the School. However, messaging from lower levels may differ from those in more senior or governor roles.   * Is there a way to ensure everyone has the same voice/message; * How do Governors fit into the skills? * Are Governors central to the process * How clearly can we answer the questions outlined?   Mr Smith asked all Governors to return a completed questionnaire to Mrs McLaren by May 21st to help benchmark the knowledge of governors on this area.  Professor Rapley advised that she felt well informed and connected to people in meetings. The “Buddy system” was missed to gauge general mood and views on the ground and appears to make us less visible/accessible. Dr Raby advised that we would be looking to re-launch the Buddy system and have a more focussed approach to help prompt discussions.  Ms Havakin concurred with Professor Rapley’s comment, programme staff missed the conversation and interaction with Governors.  Mr Bailey noted that this was an exciting prospect with a good level of detail. Preference would be to   * have a central model for Governors * re-introduction of the Buddy system * spend time in the lesson/teaching environment * involvement in student forums   Mr Bailey also asked if it would be possible to have more notice of upcoming events to allow Governors to plan them into their diaries.  Mr Slorach asked if AUB could be a “critical friend” to review any documentation before submitting. Dr Raby agreed that this may be possible, however there were other people that could also be used.  Mr Blanshard asked why AUB would help? Dr Raby advised that the former Vice Chancellor was supportive of the School going for DAPs as he believed there was a need for more specialist institutions.  Ms Miller asked if there were any political aspects with our stakeholders in Hartlepool to consider in going for DAPs. Dr Raby noted that both Hartlepool Council and TVCA were aware of the School’s aspirations. | | |  | |
| 12. | **Short-term challenges**  **Key issues 2021-22 & 2022-23**  Dr Raby presented the short-term challenges paper to the Board. The main focus would be:   * Relevance of curriculum offer, development of programmes * Scholarly activity * Staff communication, understanding issues and performance management.   Dr Raby posed the question to Governors, have members a good/better understanding of where we want to go with the School’s Strategy?  Mr Blanshard noted that as a new governor today’s overviews were very useful to give an understanding of the School’s strategy and approach.  Mr Bailey advised that he was enthused hearing this. At the beginning of the day it was very much going over old ground, however, to look at an approach where the Corporation Board is central, will allow us to be better connected and give the space and time to undertake DAPs.  Mr Goldsborough agreed that he was more informed on the Academic strategy and had been actively involved in discussions on the Marketing strategy.  Mr Trotter thanked the team for the stimulating discussion around academic and marketing. It was very good to be able to have these discussions and identify clear central issues.  Mr Swain advised that the last year had been extremely difficult to engage remotely, however todays discussion and visit to the new Middlesbrough site was inspiring and helped re-engagement.  Professor Rapley agreed with all the comments. The quality of papers was always impressive leading to good discussions. Communications with Governors is always good; however, it would be good to see more presentations on academic programmes, possibly before the main meetings. Allowing Governors to interact with programme teams. Mr Bailey agreed that it would be good to see the teams in their own environment rather than the Boardroom. Mr Kane noted that he would be supportive of this idea within the FE campus.  Mr Hughes concurred that it was exciting times. We need to balance the internal difficulties with wisdom and hard work.  Dr Raby thanked the Board for the feedback. Re-engagement is key as we come out of Covid and the School’s staff have been excellent throughout Covid keeping the student experience. | | |  | |
| 13. | **OFS Reportable Events**  None. | | |  | |
| 14. | **Confidential Items** | | |  | |
| 15. | **Any Other Competent Business**  Dr Raby advised that the Graduation for students of 2020 would take place on Tuesday July 6th at 1000hrs. Invitations would be sent out as soon as possible. | | |  | |
| 16. | **Review of Meeting**  The meeting was viewed to be good and was very helpful in terms of breadth and depth of papers. | | |  | |
| 17. | **Date and time of next meeting**  The next meeting of the Corporation Board will take place on Monday 5 July 2021 at 1330hrs.  The meeting will be held in person and via Zoom. | | |  | |
|  | The Chair thanked the Corporation Board members for their useful discussions.  The meeting closed at 1430hrs. | | |  | |

**Confirmation of the minutes of the**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signed: | |
| Chair of the | Date: |