

Meeting of the Kendal College Corporation

Wednesday 7th March at 5.00 pm

(re-scheduled from 28th February following postponement due to weather)

Conference Room 3

MINUTES

Present:

Naomi Chessell (Student Governor)

Cath Dutton (Chair)

Eve Martin

Zaeed Mohammed (Staff Governor)

Amanda O'Brien

Isaac Roach (Student Governor)

Gordon Watson

Graham Wilkinson (Principal)

(Attendance 58%)

It was recorded that the meeting scheduled for 28th February had been postponed due to the College being closed as a result of heavy snow fall in Kendal and outlying areas. As a consequence, attendance at this meeting was significantly lower than expected and some members had contributed comments on papers reviewed.

In attendance:

Maggie Cawthorn, Director of Curriculum & Quality

Carole Drury, Director of Governance

Craig Owen, Director of College Information Services

Louise Shrapnel, Director of Finance & Resources

Sarah Tatham – Link Presentation only

Kelli Horner and Suzanne Horner, 1795 only

Governor Link Programme – High Needs Learners – Gordon Watson & Sarah Tatham
Sarah provided governors with an overview of learning support and the work of the Learner Services team.

Governors received the presentation that explained statutory guidance in respect of the setting up and monitoring of Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP) for 59 students from Cumbria and neighbouring counties, funded via local authorities. It was reported that 380 16-18 year olds and 115 over 19 year old students had disclosed a need for learning support at enrolment this academic year, with support programmes put in place.

Sarah explained processes undertaken by her team to ensure effective transition from schools, setting up and agreeing EHCP which was very time consuming. Following agreement, staffing and other resource requirements needed to be met with an emphasis on ensuring that the student experience was of high quality, including progression onto higher levels of vocational training. Regular meetings were required with local authorities to monitor progress and to ensure effective use of funding allocations for high needs learners.

Gordon Watson reported that he had met with Sarah and the team and was very impressed with their integration of learning support into main vocational areas.

Zaeed Mohammed questioned how additional funding was sourced for enrolments of high needs learners outside the allocation and it was explained that the College had a statutory duty to provide the support even if funding was not sufficient. Students were only turned away if the College was unable to provide the right level of support based on the EHCP requirements but it was noted that numbers were increasing year on year with 15 new students with EHCP already identified for next academic year.

Student mental health was raised, noting that the approach had to be about developing resilience in students and signposting to external resources. Eve Martin suggested that the Brook website would be a useful additional resource on relationships. In respect of looked-after children and the duty of care, it was reported that most have an EHCP.

Sarah Tatham was thanked for her insight into this important curriculum area and governors agreed that link governor presentations provided them with key information on different aspects of the College.

1788 Apologies for Absence

Michelle Clement, Emily Harris, Pat Mclver, Rebecca Sandham, Mike Southworth, Jon Thedham (see note above)

1789 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest

1790 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2017

The minutes of the meeting of 13th December 2017 were approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

1791 Matters Arising from the Minutes & Action Plan

There were no matters arising not noted on the action plan. Updates to actions were noted.

1653 – it was agreed that this visit would still be of benefit to the Board and that the Principal would progress with Rebecca Sandham

1792 Strategic Planning Update

This was a key agenda item and significant discussion took place following consideration of the notes from the event. Key themes from the planning event, facilitated using National Leader of Governance funding, had been:

- Improving financial resilience
- Structural options
- Strategic decisions and recommendations
- CEO/Principal appointment.

A draft action plan was considered that would be issued to the ESFA Early Intervention team once complete, noting that many of the actions had already been completed

The Principal tabled a letter from the Board of Lancaster & Morecambe College where agreement had been reached to set up a task & finish group with representatives of Kendal, Lancaster & Morecambe and Craven College boards along with senior managers to consider opportunities for collaboration and shared services. The group would not have delegated authority however. In respect of Craven College, the Board had not agreed to work on curriculum rationalisation due to the distance between the colleges.

The Chair asked members to consider their membership of the group and to advise the Clerk if they were keen to be involved.

In her absence, Emily Harris had asked about board interaction with staff following comments made by one of the staff governors at the event and whether the current board structure allowed best involvement of board members on key College provision. It was agreed that time constraints on governors meant that the current structure worked well in terms of overall involvement but it was also agreed that Search & Governance Committee would be asked to review the structure to ensure it remained fit for purpose. It was felt that link governor presentations were particularly helpful in enabling governors to understand more about different College provision and that more time should be allocated to them. Short curriculum visits prior to the start of a meeting would also be useful.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Approve participation by 2 board members in a three college task & finish group (Kendal, Craven, Lancaster & Morecambe)
- Request that Search & Governance Committee review the current board structure to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Approve the draft action plan from the strategy day

1793 **ESFA Early Intervention update & FE Commissioner Team visit**

The Board was provided with notes from the meeting and the requirement from the Early Intervention team to develop a three year action plan with milestones and impact measures which would use the strategy day action plan as a starting point.

Cath Dutton and Mike Southworth had both attended the meeting along with the Principal and senior team, where updated statistical and financial forecasting information had been provided. The team were also advised of the forthcoming ICCA scrutiny of the curriculum plan and funding forecasts requested by the Board along with approaches already underway in respect of collaborative working including shared service consideration identified in 1792 above.

The second part of the paper focussed on the forthcoming visit by the FE Commissioner's team following diagnostic assessment of the College based on being in early intervention, having a "requires improvement" grade for apprenticeships from Ofsted and not having appointed a principal to date. The visit would take place on 20th and 21st March with a large requirement for data and papers to be submitted by 12th March, including 3 years of Board and Committee papers and profiles of Board members. Sample questions on leadership and governance were shared with the board and a discussion took place on self-assessment with the Clerk advising that the Board has a range of measures in place to review its performance including evidential assurance of performance against the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges. Emily Harris had asked about publication of the FE Commissioner's report and any impact it could have on reputation with stakeholders. The Principal agreed to find out and report back to the Board.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Note the progress in respect of Early Intervention
- Receive information on the FE Commissioner's Team visit and the likelihood of open publication of the report

1794 **Principal's Report and Data Dashboard**

The Principal presented his report, summarising national issues such as the government reshuffle for education, institutes of technology and nursing apprenticeships.

He reported that the planned review of the operating plan from the strategic plan would take place at the board meeting following completion of the external scrutiny of the curriculum plan by the Internal Audit team (likely to be in April).

The objectives for the proposed collaborative task and finish group were presented and subject to approval would be included in the next draft of the strategic plan. The Board agreed that specific reference to collaborative activity with external partners should be included but not naming actual providers to ensure opportunities remained open for wider collaborative activities outside the two named providers.

Data Dashboard

The data dashboard presented key performance data to end of January 2018, providing comparative data with the previous month and previous year, along with target data and national benchmark data where available.

Concern was raised over declining attendance rates for students that had dropped by 1% from December and against target, and attributed to poorer attendance at maths and English sessions, both of which were significantly lower than main programme attendance. However, Craig Owen reported that the attendance data was now out of date and that it was overall an improving picture that would be shown in next month's report.

Board members challenged what was being done to improve the position and were advised that students with poor attendance were subject to the College's disciplinary policy. However, they also questioned the effect of using the policy as a deterrent to poor attendance, particularly if it was not carried through to exclusion. The student governors cited disillusion with changing syllabi, changes in exam boards and never having liked the subjects at school as being significant reasons for poor attendance. Recognising English and maths as transferable skills through embedding into vocational sessions was the best incentive but that would not work for the requirements of the GCSE syllabus. Lobbying of Government through AoC was considered to be the best way ahead.

In respect of financial data, concern continued to be raised over the cash balance position, explained by changes to the payment schedule of adult apprenticeship monies and the situation of lagged funding for growth.

Income lines were considered with concern raised over the adult education budget which was currently £300k below target although Board members were assured that improvements were starting to come through and a curriculum developed to ensure the income target was met.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Approve the amendment to the strategic plan
- Receive the updates to the operating plan at the March meeting

1795 **Teaching, Learning & Assessment report**

The Director of Curriculum & Quality presented her report that included reference to new processes for reviewing curriculum performance, and provided an example of the reporting structure and expectations following the review.

The report provided an update on the Ofsted and SAR action plans. The College's 2 Work-Based Learning & Corporate Client managers spoke to the Board about changes in the apprenticeship structure and processes implemented since the inspection, providing confidence that a re-inspection of this area would be more positive. They explained how they had prioritised actions from the report and had put in place a range of new measures and processes that would impact on improvements in timely success rates, goal setting and feedback to learners. However, they emphasised that there was already much good practice across the college but that it had not been consistent. Improvements would be evidenced by data on timely success rates, effective use of end-point-assessment (EPA) and new processes embedded in respect of new standards.

Recruitment of new apprentices was discussed, noting that the peak of recruitment before the introduction of the employer levy had not been achieved this year. Eve Martin questioned the high risk of EPA for students who had not chosen an academic route with confirmation that students only get one additional attempt if they fail the first time, paid for by their employer which in turn could impact on timely success rates.

It was recognised by Board members that the significant changes to the apprenticeship programme had resulted in a lot of additional work by the team to ensure funding was maximised, quality delivery took place and that processes were embedded. Some provision had been dropped where there were low numbers and new standards were being introduced as they became available.

Kelli and Suzanne were thanked for their informative update on apprenticeships and progress today against the Ofsted action plan.

The Board had previously asked for an update on student Prevent training with concern raised over the number of students who had reported they had not received the training in the induction questionnaire. An investigation has been put in place within curriculum schools to identify where the problem lies and would be further scrutinised through performance review. Ofsted had reported positively on the College's delivery of the Prevent agenda. The Director of Curriculum & Quality reported that the first referral to the Prevent Channel programme had been made.

It was reported that full time applications were 22 down on the same period last year, however recognising that it was still early in the admission cycle. Concerns were identified in recruitment to beauty, music, technical theatre and animal care programmes. No patterns in recruitment decline had been identified although some variations in recruitment from feeder schools had been noted and would be followed up against planned school visits by the Student Services Manager.

However, it was reported that recruitment was higher than last year for HE programmes and with new degree apprenticeships being developed through Bolton University.

Maggie Cawthorn reported on improvements to the value added scores, with an increase in all areas except A level provision.

An issue of ongoing teaching staff sickness was raised and the impact, both financial and qualitative. Louise Shrapnel confirmed that several staff had been off because of flu but that two staff were currently off with long term stress. She reported that tighter control and management of staff was in place with earlier referral to occupational health. Zaeed Mohammed suggested that not enough was done to celebrate how much staff do and the Chair requested that the Board revisit this issue going forward with an aim of being a "healthy college", recognising that many staff have to deal with significant ongoing change as evidenced by the presentation on apprenticeships.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Note progress against the Ofsted action plan on apprenticeships
- Gain assurance over delivery of Prevent to all full time students
- Note recruitment for 2018/19
- Receive updates on staff sickness levels and impact

1796 **Audit & Risk Committee**

The Chair of the Committee presented to the Board following the meeting of 6th February. Findings of two recent internal audits (03 and 04) were presented. The Committee had discussed in detail the proposal for the Internal Audit Service to conduct an audit into the

College's curriculum planning and funding assumptions in response to the Board's request at the Strategy event.

The internal audit outstanding actions plan had shown good progress against internal audit recommendations. The updated risk register had been robustly scrutinised and was presented for the Board to consider. Eve Martin questioned how quickly amber rated risks progress to green but that it some risks were likely to remain on amber. It was noted through the minutes of that committee provided assurance that risk was being robustly monitored and managed by the College. Eve also requested that the College's risk appetite should be considered at a future meeting.

The position in respect of bank covenants had been reviewed noting no concerns. The policy list had been reviewed and the freedom of information policy accepted, with no amendments.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Accept the notes from the meeting, taking assurance that the Committee was meeting its terms of reference
- Receive the updated risk register and agree with the committee on the scoring of risk taking assurance that risk is being robustly monitored and managed
- Request future consideration of risk appetite

1797 **Search & Governance Committee**

Cath presented the findings of the Committee. The updated governor development & improvement programme had been received and was now shared with the board in respect of the training event scheduled for 25th April where speakers had been invited on insolvency regime, role of governors as trustees and an update from the Association of Colleges. The annual safeguarding update would also be included. It was agreed that meetings would again be offered with the Director of Finance & Resources to support governor understanding of the College's finances and funding.

The register of interests had been reviewed and had now included senior staff and the Clerk as routine. Annual checking of interests was recorded as part of the governor performance review.

Membership of the Board had been reviewed along with attendance and committee membership, with particular reference to the skills audit. One application had been received with good finance and funding experience and would be invited to meet with the Corporation Chair.

The Corporation's standing orders had been reviewed and minor amendments considered along with an additional paragraph on communication with members between meetings where the reputation of the College could be impacted. The Committee recommended the update to the Board for approval.

Draft dates for next year's Corporation and Committee meetings had been considered and were recommended for approval to the Board.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Receive the notes from the meeting, taking assurance that the Committee was working to its terms of reference
- Approve amendments to the Standing Orders of the Corporation
- Approve dates for the 2018/19 Corporation and Committee meetings
- Receive the updated governor development and improvement programme, noting the programme for the training event

- Request opportunities to meet with the Director of Finance & Resources over finance and funding

1798 **Management Accounts**

The Director of Finance & Resources presented the management accounts to the end of January 2018, showing a forecast operating surplus for the year of £115k, to be achieved through payroll savings and scrutiny of non-pay budget lines.

Commentary to the accounts provided comprehensive explanation of the forecast outturn position and income forecasts as well as forecasts for pay and non-pay budget lines.

It was reported that cashflow in year had been significantly impacted by the change in payment structure for apprenticeship monies, now paid in arrears and other issues that had been reported to ESFA. Improvements in the cashflow position were expected in May 2018.

Board members reviewed the statement of comprehensive income showing a positive end of year outturn position although lower than budgeted.

Financial performance indicators were reviewed, noting in particular the satisfactory financial health score and the position in respect of covenants. The summary and comparisons to prior year report summarised the more optimistic position when compared with the same period last year, leading to a financial health score of 170, at the top of satisfactory range.

A comment had been submitted from Emily Harris on the presentation of the management accounts requesting that Board members discuss how they would prefer to receive the accounts. The Director of Finance & Resources had explained that the College was required to use an agreed presentational requirement but agreed to provide a top level summary of key issues.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Note the position of the management accounts and improving position
- Request top level summary information on key areas of concern

1799 **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 28th March 2018