

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Wednesday 13 October 2021, 6 pm – By Zoom

Members Present: Nick Bell (CEO), Alex Fyfe, Tony Johnston (Chair), Laura Griffin, Derrick Betts, Angela Drisdale Gordon, Ross Mackenzie, Colin Smith, Max Maalimey, Nadia Babar, Elom Tay, Amish Nathwani, Grainne Brankin, Desmond Bishop, Lee Horsley, Matthew Green.

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence, Stephen Davis, Claire Collins, Stafford Critchlow (Wilkinson Eyre)*

*relevant agenda item only

1	<p>PROCEDURAL</p> <p>Welcome and apologies for absence The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Norman Whyte, Temi Alebiosu, Natalie Dweh, and Franklin Asante.</p>
2	<p>Declarations of Interest in the agenda items The SLT, staff and student governors declared interest 8vi and v of the Confidential minutes and would leave the meeting for these items. ZL declared and interest in item 8vi of the confidential minutes.</p>
3	<p>I. Approval of Corporation minutes <i>(Draft minutes were circulated in advance)</i> The draft minutes of 13 September were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p>II. Matters arising The attrition KPIs would be included in the 2021/22 KPIs which would be brought to the December Corporation meeting. The workshop on risk appetite was to take place in November and would report to the December meeting. A fire drill had taken place at Paddington campus.</p> <p>III. Committee Terms of Reference (ToRs) <i>(Draft ToR circulated in advance)</i> The draft terms of reference for the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee had been recommended by their respective committees for approval. There were several small changes to the text. The Corporation resolved to approve the ToRs.</p> <p>IV. Request to raise Grey Box items Members were asked if they would like to raise any items in the Grey Box which were provided for information. No items were raised.</p>
4	<p>STRATEGIC</p> <p>I. KPIs <i>(KPIs circulated in advance)</i> NB explained the format of the KPIs and that the EDI data was not yet available. Due to the pandemic national benchmarks on achievement had not been published. These were hoped to be available at the December meeting, which would also include agreement of the 2021/22 KPIs. Overall, achievement on 16-18 year-old provision and apprenticeships was slightly below target. The timeliness of completion of apprenticeships had been affected by the pandemic.</p>

Staff and student satisfaction had improved but was still below target. The financial KPIs had been met or exceeded.

SD reminded governors of the difficulties in delivering education during the pandemic. Although the achievement rates overall were below target, six out of the seven career clusters had maintained the previous year's level, or reductions were only small. Research was to be undertaken on student destinations which would be a useful indicator of impact.

SD reported that English and Maths was a significant outlier in the achievement results. An internal review was being conducted in this area as the outturn deviated considerably from the predicted grades. This would be reported in detail at the TLS Committee in January and an update provided to the Corporation in December. LG commented that staff must feel demoralised in that curriculum area and asked what support was being provided to create the necessary improvements. SD said that additional management support was being provided and that meetings were taking place with staff and trade unions. MM commented that students were not motivated in relation to English and Maths and suggested that it be taught in smaller groups, communicating why it was so important. MG echoed this point stating how there were currently the largest number of employment vacancies available but 1 in 5 people don't have the basic English and maths skills and are therefore unable to get into employment. CS commented that it was often a hard sell to learners who had persistently not achieved at E&M in school, and that making them aware that this was significantly detrimental to their life chances was important.

Many students had not attended an academic institution on a regular basis for some time, which was now presenting behavioural issues within the college environment. Footage was shown of a disturbance involving students outside the Paddington campus building.

ADG expressed her disappointment about the footage, and her frustration at not receiving the EDI data on different groups of learners until December. She considered this to be too late. She thought that the actions being taken did not address the cultural and demographic issues the college was dealing with, and that there needed to be more open forums for students. SD said that the achievement data did not need to be submitted to the DoE until December.

DBish said that he had not experienced the behavioural issues at Willesden, and suggested that staff had a role to play in demonstrating the positive behaviours.

AN asked for clarity on the correlation between the behavioural issues and the E&M achievement rate. He was not clear why this only affected one area of the curriculum though acknowledged the difficult environment the college had to operate within. SD explained that the behavioural issues were for context and that there was no direct correlation.

GB considered that the issues underlying the video footage required a separate discussion particularly on whether the context had actually changed. She also queried whether the KPIs were set at the right level, some targets had been missed by a significant margin. She also asked for clarity on the 'direction of travel' column. NB accepted that GB had a valid point. The KPIs were intended to be stretching but achievable and to monitor progress towards the national benchmarks. He said he would bring the KPIs for 2021/22 to the December meeting for further discussion. The direction of travel indicated whether the outturn was better or worse than the previous year, but was not an indicator of trend. TJ suggested that the format of the KPIs be reviewed by the GSR Committee. Members noted the KPI Report.

	<p>II. Enrolment Update <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>SD reported on the enrolment levels for 16-18 year-olds, HE and adults. Recruitment was continuing and there was confidence that the target level would be met, and potential that additional learners would be retained for additional in-year funding from the ESFA. Attrition was at a much lower level this year. Re-engagement activities were taking place to reduce the levels of attrition. DBish commented on the impact of re-engagement on resources.</p> <p>AN commented on the KPIs for social media and that this may have had a negative impact on enrolment. CC acknowledged this and said that some market research had been commissioned to assess barriers to enrolment. Students were also involved on social media content. The market research would be reported to TLS once completed.</p> <p>III. Modern Slavery Act Statement <i>(Draft Statement circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>The statement was approved by Corporation and will be published on the UCG website.</p>
5	<p>COMMITTEE MATTERS Property & Infrastructure Committee</p> <p>I. Olympic Office Centre – Design presentation – Stafford Critchlow</p> <p>Stafford Critchlow from Wilkinson Eyre architects provided a short presentation setting out the designs for the college building on Olympic Way. This included how the new building would use the existing frame, the layout of the floors and specialist areas, and energy efficiency. He said that there would be opportunities for further consultation with stakeholders including governors on the designs. NB confirmed that each of the RIBA stages would likely need Corporation approval. AF asked how the Corporation was to assure itself that the building was safe in view of coronavirus and cladding. SC said that the design included inherent flexibility to be able to use space safely if social distancing was needed, circulation areas were already quite wide and the building was naturally ventilated in a quiet area with minimal traffic. The early findings of the Grenfell Enquiry were already being taken into account when considering materials. NBab asked how many stairwells were included in the design and whether any of these were enclosed. SC confirmed that two of the existing enclosed stairwells in the building would remain.</p> <p>TJ asked what aspects of the design were possible to change in RIBA stages 3 & 4. SC said that the particular purpose of the space cannot be changed but its appearance could.</p> <p>Members thanked SC for attending the meeting and making this presentation.</p> <p>II. Wembley Park Project - Update <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>NB provided a short update on the project and confirmed that the stage 2 bid for the FE Transformation Fund was submitted to the DoE on 8 October. The term sheet from Barclays had been received confirming the rates. A November meeting of the Property & Infrastructure Committee had been postponed to January. A Written Resolution would be provided to approve the final arrangements for the purchase of the Olympic Office Centre in late October/ early November.</p>
6	<p>Teaching, Learning & Skills Committee</p>

	<p>I. Student Achievement <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> <i>(This item is covered under the KPIs)</i></p> <p>II. Safeguarding & Prevent Policies (for approval) <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> The TLS Committee had reviewed these policies and were recommending them to the Corporation for approval. The Corporation resolved to approve these policies.</p> <p>III. Link Governor feedback Some members of the Corporation who had attended Career Cluster SAR meetings fed back to the Corporation. All confirmed that the sessions had been useful and the discussion suitably challenged the judgements made. TJ said that he would be transferring his link governor role from ESOL to English and Maths.</p>
7	<p>Finance and General Purposes</p> <p>I. 2021/22 EoY Outturn – July Management Accounts <i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i> NB reported the EoY positive surplus position including the additional income lines and where provisions had been made in the accounts which were yet to be audited. TJ asked that since the cash position was better than expected if investment could be made in IT noting that the satisfaction from staff and students with IT was still below target. NB said that the IT strategy included the refreshing and replacement of IT kit, but some of the capital investment from 2020/21 had slipped into 2021/22. A lower level of capital investment had been made for 2021/22 to protect the financial position in respect of the RCF to purchase the OOC, and revised banking covenants. DBish commented how the poor IT had a negative impact on teaching and learning and work arounds to resolve issues were common-place. MM was in agreement. He had worked at the college for 4 years and there were persistent IT problems with no improvements. He thought that this needed urgent attention. NB asked if the issues were being reported. MM confirmed this – he had reported issues many times, emails were not answered and there was often no notable response.</p> <p>AN said how at P&I committee they had reviewed the IT strategy, but challenged how it was based on available budget, not on business requirements. He suggested that this be re-assessed to analyse the business requirements and the level of necessary investment. NB said that he would provide an update on the IT Team restructure, and these identified gaps at the next Property & Infrastructure Committee meeting.</p> <p>ET commented how this really needed to be prioritised and accelerated. He asked if there was a concierge service within the organisation to provide immediate help to users. NB confirm that the organisation did not have this level of IT support. TJ asked if apprentices could be appointed to help resource this area through use of the levy. This was considered to be a possibility but would have to be within the staff establishment.</p> <p>II. Staff Survey & Action Plan <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> CC presented the report and action plan. The staff survey results were an improvement on the previous year, but still below target in most areas. The next steps were to consult with unions and then to issue the report and action plan to staff. The SLT would be conducting</p>

	<p>several sessions to talk to and engage staff to try to increase the response rate. Consideration was also being given to reducing the number of questions in the survey.</p> <p>LG noted that only 50% of staff reported to having had a performance review with their line manager. She emphasised the importance of these developmental conversations and the absence of them can have a negative impact on staff morale. CC said that the PDR process was being developed and would be used to try to change the culture.</p> <p>MM said that many staff considered the staff survey as a tick box exercise which did not result in meaningful change. The survey results from 2019/20 had not been published and some time had passed since this survey had been conducted and there was no communication with staff on the outcomes. This resulted in a lack of participation. He said there needed to be more transparency and the feedback and actions needed to happen quickly. He was interested in the breakdown of those respondents who had replied positively in regard to job security as there was a significant increase from the previous year. CC said that there were concerns about staff being identified so breakdowns of the data in this way were difficult.</p> <p>AN noted the action plan and suggested that the SLT send out monthly updates of their activities to be cascaded in team meetings. He noted the low scoring for internal communications, and that the staff intranet portal was still not ready. ET said how he had heard similar comments from MM at previous meetings and was concerned that no action had yet been taken. He said it needed to happen much quicker. CC said she was developing an internal communications strategy in consultation with staff which would expand the action plan in response to that.</p> <p>III. Bullying & Harassment Policy – Update <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> Members noted the bullying and harassment awareness training that was being delivered as part of the CPD in October.</p> <p>IV. Probation Policy <i>(Draft policy circulated in advance)</i> The Finance and Resources Committee had reviewed this policy and were recommending it to the Corporation for approval. The Corporation resolved to approve this policy.</p>
8	<p>Governance, Search and Remuneration Committee</p> <p>I. Governor Policies Conflicts of Interest Policy Governor Expenses Policy Governor Code of Conduct <i>(Draft policies circulated in advance)</i> These policies had been reviewed by the GSR Committee and were recommended to the Corporation for approval. The Corporation resolved to approve these policies.</p> <p>II. CEO Appointment <i>(Paper circulated in advance to independent members only)</i> See confidential minutes</p> <p>III. SPH Objectives <i>(Objectives circulated to Independent members only)</i></p>

	See confidential minutes. IV. Director of Governance Remuneration See confidential minutes.
10	AoB The date of the next meeting 15 December 2021 The meeting closed at 9.04 pm

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 14/ 10/2021

SIGNED: **Date:**

Tony Johnston, Chair

ACTIONS

Ref	Action	Owner	Status
16/12 04i	To include attrition/ retention rates in the KPIs	SD	On agenda
04i	Completed 2020/21 KPIs including EDI data to be provided to the December Corporation meeting.	SD	On agenda
04i	Proposed KPIs for 2021/22 to be agreed at the December Corporation meeting.	SD	Deferred due to new CEO
04i	A review of the format for KPIs to be undertaken by the GSR Committee	ZL	GSR to meet in Spring term
04i	Update on E&M achievement rates to be provided to the December Corporation meeting	SD	On agenda
07i	An update on the IT Team restructuring and resourcing and the unmet organisational IT requirements to be an item on the next Property & Infrastructure Committee.	NB/AT	On agenda for P&I meeting January 2021