

Item	Report	Appendix	Lead	For
4.1	Opening of Meeting & Apologies for Absence	Verbal	Chair	Information
Procedural Matters				
4.2	Declarations of direct or indirect interests in any of the agenda items	Verbal	Chair	Information
4.3	Appointment of Vice Chair of Corporation	4.3	Chair	Decision
4.4	Appointment of Professor Khan	4.4	Chair	Decision
4.5	Minutes of the last Corporation Board – 12 th December 2019 – <i>Clerk to be notified in advance if any suggested amendments</i>	4.5	Chair	Decision
4.6	Matters arising from the minutes	Verbal	Chair	Information
4.7	Temporary amendment to quoracy – changes to the Instrument and Articles and Standing Orders	4.7	Chair	Decision
Strategic Items – these are the key meeting items and are for discussion				
4.8	Principal's Report <i>Note this will cover coronavirus related financial and business risks</i>	4.8	VB	Discussion
4.9	Principal's Update on COVID 19 response	Verbal	VB	Discussion
4.10	Property Strategy Update	Verbal	VB	Discussion
Committee items for approval - Clerk to be notified in advance if any questions or issues				
4.11	A. HE Access and Participation Plan B. Review of historic confidential items C. Internal Audit Services Report D. Health & Safety Policy	4.11	Chair	Approval
Items for information to be taken as read				
4.12	A. Termly Safeguarding Report B. English and Maths Update C. Risk Register D. draft Committee minutes E. Application of the Board seal	4.12	Chair	Information
Postponed items – to be covered at a future date				
4.13	- Student Governors' Report - Termly Financial Summary <i>Note finances will be discussed under item 4.8 the Principal's Report</i>	-	-	To note
Other business				
4.14	Any other business <i>Clerk to be notified in advance if any items are to be raised</i>	Verbal	Chair	
4.15	Date of next meeting 2 July 2020 8am	Verbal	Chair	

Farnborough College of Technology

Corporation Board

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 2nd April 2020

Present:

Professor M Earwicker – Chair (via video conference)
Mrs S Chapman (via video conference)
Mrs G Christie (via video conference)
Mr N Crippa (via video conference)
Mrs R Etebar (via speakerphone)
Ms C Fargeot (via video conference)
Mr J Francis (via video conference)
Ms J Houzer (via video conference)
Professor O Khan (via video conference)
Mr S Hunt (via video conference)
Ms E Marsh (via video conference)
Dr F Oduneye (via video conference) - *left and re-joined part way through item 4.8*
Mr R Rendel (via speakerphone)
Mr A Smith (via video conference)
Ms K Vargas (via video conference)
Ms V Barrett – Principal (via video conference)

In Attendance:

Mr J Grindell – Consultant Director of Finance (via video conference)
Mr L Magee – Vice Principal Learner Services & General Education (via video conference)
Ms C Gillam – Clerk to the Corporation (via video conference)

Quorate: Yes

The meeting opened at 3.23pm

4.1/19.20 Opening of meeting and apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting and took a roll call of attendees. He noted that the agenda had been divided into key strategic items for discussion forming the main part of the meeting, items which were recommended for approval having been scrutinised first in Committee, and items for information. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Malins. The Chair welcomed Professor Khan to his first Board meeting.

4.2/19.20 Declarations of direct or indirect interests in any of the agenda items

Mr Grindell as a Director of Fusion Project Management declared an interest in agenda item 4.10.

4.3/19.20 Appointment of Vice-Chair of Corporation

The Board elected Mrs Gemma Christie as Vice-Chair of Corporation for a two year term.

The Board appointed Mrs Christie as Vice-Chair of Corporation for a two year term to run to the date of the spring 2022 Board meeting.

4.4/19.20 Appointment of Professor Khan

The Board appointed Professor Khan for a four year term of office.

The Board appointed Professor Khan as an External Governor for a four year term.

4.5/19.20 Minutes of the last Corporation Board

The Corporation Board minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record and would be signed by the Chair.

4.6/19.20 Matters arising from the minutes

The Chair noted that there were two actions arising from the December meeting with one action completed and one pending. The completed action was that the Adult Vulnerable Learners Policy had been produced by the Vice Principal LS & GE and Mr Crippa had reviewed the policy. The pending item was for the College's lead counsellor to give a presentation to the Board on the College's mental health provision and this would take place at the July meeting.

4.7/19.20 Temporary amendment to quoracy – changes to the Instrument and Articles and Standing Orders

The Board considered a recommendation for a temporary amendment to both the Instrument of Government and the Standing Orders to reduce the Corporation's quorum during the coronavirus outbreak. The Board chose to adopt a suggested wording provided by the law firm Eversheds to change the quorum from 40% of the determination of the Corporation to 30%. This would reduce the number of Governors required for a meeting to be quorate from 8 to 6. The amendment would be temporary and kept under review with the intention that it be reversed once circumstances allowed. Governors enquired whether a similar amendment was required to reduce the quorum for Committees and the Clerk advised that for all Committees a quorum of 3 was required. The Board concluded that this figure was achievable and this should be maintained and did not require reducing.

The Board approved the following changes:

- *Instrument of Government* "Meetings of the Corporation shall be quorate if the number of members present is at least ~~40~~**30**% of the total number of members"
- *Standing Orders* "Meetings of the Corporation shall be quorate if ~~40~~**30**% or more members are present."

4.8/19.20 Principal's Report

In addition to her report included in the pack of meeting papers the Principal gave a presentation covering the following areas: the College's response to Covid 19; the LEP's economic stress analysis; FCoT's strengths and vulnerabilities; what has changed for this year; balancing firefighting with a strategic response; next steps.

Covid 19 response

The Principal reported that there was good engagement with the DfE which was being responsive to issues and that the OfS was also being more flexible and hands on. Since the end of January the College SMT and key operational managers had met regularly to discuss FCoT's response to the coronavirus covering topics such as staff and student wellbeing and business continuity.

LEP economic stress analysis of the south east

The LEP had found that prior to the outbreak of Covid 19 the region had a diversity of sectors and a skilled and resilient workforce which had weathered the economic crash of 2008. Productivity had been high and unemployment had been low. The coronavirus was an extraordinary situation with a near total lockdown affecting most business sectors. There were reports of apprentices being made redundant or furloughed in the hospitality and construction industries.

FCoT's strengths and vulnerabilities

Whilst the impact of the coronavirus would present challenges to the College there were also opportunities. FCoT offered a diverse range of courses covering everything except agricultural studies. The 16-18 demographic was growing. The College's Programme Manager structure was a key strength with committed and engaged Managers overseeing effective online teaching and student care. The College's online capability had enabled it to switch quickly to delivering the majority of its provision online. Finally the College's cash reserves would enable it to continue to pay staff.

Q. Will the College be looking to furlough staff?

A. The current approach was that it would rather not. There were implications to be considered in being a publicly funded body accepting further public funds. That said, it was noted that there was a limited window of opportunity to apply for furlough payments and that a case could be made to furlough staff working in certain areas of the College such as the nursery and refectory. Further guidance was expected from the Government so the College would review the situation as more details emerged.

What has changed for this year?

The Vice Principal LS & GE reported that student attendance and engagement was good. Adult attendance was excellent in the 80-90% range. However, attendance for GCSE English and maths had halved from 60% to 30% now that the examinations would not be taking place. 300 laptops had been loaned to students. All students had been written to regarding what adjustments would be made to their assessment and reassured that no one would receive a lower grade than their average grade during their course. An annex to the Child Protection Policy had been adopted regarding how to safeguard students whilst at home and an e-learning policy had been written. The Principal noted that the BKS system purchased to support English and maths learning was being well utilised, and other online platforms such as Teams, Zoom and Moodle were also being used to support learning across the College. The only areas experiencing difficulties in switching learning online were the heavily practical subjects such as construction and motor vehicle. The Vice Principal LS & GE also noted that there were some technical access issues particularly for ESOL students and thus the College was providing dongles to these students to enable broadband access.

Q. What further investment would be required to support vulnerable learners?

A. Much of the investment already featured in the College's 5 year IT plan but if the lockdown continued after Easter then the College might need to purchase another 100-150 laptops to loan to students.

Q. Some Universities were not renewing contracts for hourly paid lecturers. Although HE was relatively small at FCoT would a similar move be considered?

A. The College would maintain a balance between full-time and sessional contracts for teaching staff. Sessional contracts were issued annually and would be reviewed in September so that demand could be assessed based on student numbers. Staff would continue to be required to deliver online courses as well as face to face delivery and even once the lockdown was lifted the College would be seeking to increase its range of online course.

Turning to the table on page 7 of the presentation the Consultant Director of Finance explained that this showed the potential impact of Covid 19 on the College's various income streams for 2020/21 (referenced against the IFMC forecast data) and upper and lower forecasts for 2019/20. The February year end forecast for 2019/20 was included as well as actuals to February 2020. Some income streams for 2019/20 were secure as many were fixed ESFA funded streams. Areas of concern were apprenticeships, adult education, advanced learner loans and full cost fees. Other areas of income such as the nursery, the Gallery restaurant, the refectory and the beauty salon were all currently dormant and thus not generating income. However, work was taking place to ensure that the drop in apprenticeship income might be better than feared. Adult learning had moved online but there were risks in achieving the total

amount of funding allocated for the year. However, it appeared the government may fund the full year's AEB grant allocation so there was cause for cautious optimism. Adult learner loans would probably reduce as some students withdrew from learning due to other commitments and pressures. The College was attempting to move its full cost courses online, but it was unlikely that take-up would be as high as for pre Covid 19. Financial pressures would ease if students could return to College before the summer holidays but would increase if this was delayed until September. The worst case forecast overall for 2019/20 was a drop in income of £1.5-£1.6m with a best case reduction of £350-£400k. This would bring the College to around a break-even figure or just below. It was much harder to predict the impact for 2020/21. One positive was that core funding for 16-18 would be higher than this year due to the lagged funding of increased student numbers. However, there was no news yet on how the roll out of T Levels in September would be affected. Apprenticeship numbers could decline as financial pressures hit both large companies and SMEs. It was harder to predict the impact on HE and adult learners. So in conclusion there were a lot of unknowns, but the College was over 70% reliant on Government funding which was positive position to be in in these difficult times. With large numbers of adults being furloughed or made redundant it was even possible that there might be increased interest in training. The College was working to meet this need by increasing its online presence and offering new courses online.

Q. Had the College looked at the best and worst case scenario cost analysis?

A. Yes, as well as looking at the impact of Covid 19 on income the College had analysed costs. Much of the College's costs were staff related and thus would continue. There would be cost savings in not having the whole College open, but these were likely to be cancelled out by the additional costs incurred by Covid 19.

Dr Oduneye left the meeting.

The Principal announced that health and safety issues associated with homeworking were being addressed such as working safely with computers to prevent strain injuries. Staff morale was high and managers were reporting that staff were looking out for each other.

Balancing firefighting with strategic response

The College had established its capability for remote working before the shutdown. Online delivery of learning seemed to be going well for most students and now the College was looking to ensure credibility by adapting quality processes for online learning such as deep dives and provide refresher training for assessment and verification. Policies were being reviewed to ensure they were fit for purpose for the new ways of working.

The Consultant Director of Finance shared with the Board email correspondence between himself, the Head of Finance and the Nationwide Building Society. With interest rates falling the Nationwide had offered the College a one year fixed term interest rate. The College currently had £5m in the Nationwide's 95 day account earning 1% interest but the rate would be reduced to 0.55%. If the College moved to a one year fixed account it could achieve a rate of 0.75%. Mr Grindell proposed that to help manage risk in these uncertain times that the College move 50% of the funds (£2.5m) into the one year fixed account. Governors discussed and agreed that this was a sensible action balancing flexibility with accessing the best rate that the building society could offer.

The Board approved the transfer of £2.5m from the Nationwide Corporate 95 day saver account to the Nationwide Corporate 1 year saver account.

The Principal then turned to look in greater detail at apprenticeships as this was an area of significant financial risk. For 2019/20 apprenticeship levy income had been forecast at just under £900k. The Apprenticeship Manager was working hard to maximise the completion rate for apprentices and as of today the College's completion rate was 73.7% compared to a national average of 59%. 243 apprentices were still due to complete and if apprentices started to

withdraw due to redundancies or furloughing then the completion rate would fall. However, the College would look to match redundant or furloughed apprentices with new employers. It was thought that through efforts to complete apprentices as and when awarding bodies published their adapted requirements for end point assessments, the risk might be reduced to £200k of that £900k but this was hard to predict. One positive was that the College had moved from 4 corporate employers in 2008 to 86 corporate levy employers in 2019/20. This meant that a third of apprenticeship employers were levy employers which would be a helpful buffer. It was expected that corporate employers might be more financially resilient than SMEs.
Dr Oduneye returned to the meeting.

The Principal explained that some staff were helping the NHS by sewing scrub bags and one staff member was making a prototype for visors for Frimley Park hospital with the Farnborough Aerospace Consortium offering to help with materials. The College had opened up to allow charitable organisations to print materials and was looking at whether it could assist with foodbanks.

Next steps

The Principal suggested that after the Easter break she could hold fortnightly meetings for Governors to update them and answer questions and she could ask the Clerk to set up a WhatsApp group for Governors for urgent communications. Looking to the longer term she would start to consider what the economic landscape post Covid 19 might mean for the final years of the College's Transformation Strategy which was due to run until 2022. It might be appropriate to create a new Strategy to cover 2020 to 2025. The Chair agreed that whilst it was important to keep the Board informed he did not want to divert management attention. It would be useful to have an update via video link after Easter and if the Board's approval was required for something then an extraordinary meeting could be convened again via video. It was not felt that the WhatsApp group was required. Governors asked what the line of succession was if the Principal fell ill and the Principal explained that the Vice Principal LS & GE would take over in that circumstance. The Board expressed its thanks to the Principal and her staff for their achievements in these difficult times. It appeared that management was striking a balance between a short-term and long-term response to the crisis and it was important to keep the long-term picture in view. There might be opportunities arising out of Covid 19 such as introducing the College and wider society to the benefits of working digitally which could be considered in a refreshed Transformation Strategy. Governors also suggested that it might be appropriate to consider lines of succession for the College's excellent Programme Managers and cascade down from there who would step in for whom if people become ill.

The Vice Principal LS & GE said that work would be undertaken to look at the impact of the online learning environment upon students. It was very different learning wholly online compared to blended learning. Attention also needed to be paid to students' wellbeing as the Board was already aware of the increase in suicidal ideation prior to the Covid 19 outbreak. The Support Staff Governor as Head of Marketing informed the Board that the College was rolling out a positivity campaign to students and also signposting support services. The counselling team were working to support students online and via telephone. A student survey had been conducted via email to ask how students were and two thirds had given a positive response with between a fifth and a sixth reporting issues. The Vice Principal LS & GE noted that students were being made aware of courses on mental health and isolation and also being sent ideas for enrichment activities. The College was monitoring students for whom concerns had been raised. The Principal agreed that the College was doing as much it could, but it could not provide all the counselling support that all its students might need and if the lockdown continued beyond Easter then greater support might be required. Governors agreed that student welfare was a key area to monitor as were levels of student engagement if the lockdown continued. However, Governors noted that the level of student engagement at College was much higher than at some universities. It was suggested that lead times for

purchasing laptops were running at more than 3 months so the College might need to order now. Governors also discussed staff wellbeing and noted that the College was closing for two weeks over Easter in order to give staff a complete break.

4.10/19.20 Property Strategy Update

The Consultant Director of Finance updated the Corporation on property developments for ARIC and the T Levels. Placing contracts at this time for building work was a significant risk. Fortunately the LEP and the DfE who were providing funding for ARIC and T Levels respectively understood the situation and had lifted restrictions on their grants. The next step in the construction of the ARIC building was for asbestos removal and demolition of C block and the College was looking at the issue of appointing contractors for this work. An issue had arisen with the original appointment of contractors and so the tender returns were being revisited. The programme of works for the ARIC building to open in 2021 did contain a three month window so there was potentially some leeway in when to place contracts. Regarding the work to refurbish areas of the College for T Level delivery the College was awaiting clarification from the Government as to whether the roll out of T Levels would proceed as planned in September 2020. It was possible that these refurbishment works would have to be paused and picked up at a later date. The Board agreed that it seemed wise to proceed cautiously with work on ARIC and temporarily pause work on the T Level refurbishment.

4.11/19.20 Committee items for approval

The Board approved the following items as recommended by the relevant Committees:

- HE Access and Participation Plan (Curriculum & Standards Committee)
- Review of historic confidential items (Search Committee)
- Internal Audit Services Report (Audit Committee)
- Health & Safety Policy (F&GP Committee).

4.12/19.20 Items for information

The Board noted having received the following documents:

- Termly Safeguarding Report
- English and Maths Update
- Risk Register
- Draft Committee minutes
- Applications of the Board Seal

The Board noted the increase in mental health issues reported in the Safeguarding Report and the rise in suicide attempts and sadly the one resultant death. The Principal added that initial emergency triage sessions were available for students with a member of the counselling team and then three appointments afterwards. But demand was high and if the lockdown continued for a long time then demand could increase further which would place greater strain on the College's counselling service.

4.13/19.20 Postponed items

The Board recorded that in order to streamline the agenda for this meeting and maximise focus on Covid 19 related strategic issues the following agenda items had been postponed and would be covered at a future meeting:

- Student Governors' Report
- Termly Financial Summary

However, it was noted that finances had been discussed under item 4.8 the Principal's Report.

4.14/19.20 Any other business

No other items were raised.

4.15/19.20 Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 2nd July 2020 at 8am.

The meeting closed at 4.55pm

Minutes agreed as being a true and accurate record by the Chair.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....