SOLIHULL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY 2020 ONLINE BY TEAMS, starting at 3pm

PRESENT:	Barbara Hughes (Chair)
	Paul Assinder
	Stan Baldwin
	John Callaghan (Principal)
	Badri Gargeshnari,
	Mark Hayes (Staff Governor)
	Paul Large
	Lucy Lee
	Tony Lucas
	Sally Tomlinson
	Raees Iqbal (Student Governor)
	Stuart Lyons (Student Governor)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal and Stratford Chief Operating Officer)
	Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
	Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum)
	Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
	Rosa Wells (Executive Director Employment & Skills and IoT) for items 6 and 7
	Adam Thomas (Director of Student Services) for item 5.3
	Theresa Lynch (Clerk)
	Claire Powell, Head of School, Animal Welfare and Veterinary Nursing
	Sandra White, Head of School, Foundation and Schools Partnerships
	Lisa Cleaver, Head of School, Visual Media and Performing Arts

The Chair welcomed all and thanked Governors for attending via Teams.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

   There were apologies for absence from Sukhdeep Nijjar and Geraldine Swanton.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

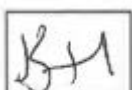   There were no new declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

   The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2020 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature.

   Progress in relation to the actions from the minutes had been reviewed and would be addressed, as appropriate.

4. **Curriculum Intent 2019/20 - curriculum design and management:**

   The Chair welcomed the Heads of School and thanked them for their presentations, as governors found them extremely useful and interesting and informative inbeing able to get to know and understand each School in the College.

4.1 **Animal Welfare and Veterinary Nursing**

The Head of School had provided a recorded presentation to the meeting and Governors had had an opportunity to watch and submit questions about the presentation. The Head of School addressed the questions posed.

Q. You mention working with about 150 employers. Can you give some examples of companies and organisations involved?
A. The Head of School explained that there were a wide range of employers and listed some to provide an example of the different types:
- Various rescue centres – from small independent ones (e.g. Wythall Animal Sanctuary, Heronfield Rescue, Birmingham Dogs Home) to larger nationwide ones (e.g. Blue Cross and RSPCA and PDSA).
- Farms/Stables e.g. Sheldon Country Park, Trumans Heath Stables, Newlands Bishop Farm.
- Kennels/doggy day care and catteries e.g. Animal Kind, Parkway, Greyhound Trust.
- Zoos/Collections - Birmingham Conservation Centre, Twycross Zoo, Drayton Manor Zoo, West Midlands Safari Park.
- Retail – Pets at Home branches, Notcutts, Shirley Pet Centre, Pets and Reptile Centre.

Q. The visual diagram of the career pathways for your curriculum area is very good. What feedback have you had from students about the visual?
A. The feedback from the visual diagram had been very positive. It had been used for open days/evenings/progress evenings. Parents have given good feedback on how helpful it was to see and understand the diversity of the sector. Current students use it to help strengthen their career plans so they know what skills to hone.

Q. Does the visual diagram of career pathways include students starting their own businesses once qualified e.g. doggie daycare etc? And if so how are students being equipped with the skills for this pathway? [post-meeting]
The Husbandry pathway does cover these doggy day care set-ups as they are definitely a growth area in the industry with changing views of keeping beloved pets in a kennel environment. The students do a business unit within the Level 2 qualification and outside of that our practical sessions would develop dog handling skills etc. In year 2 of our level 3 courses, students replace their general practical slot with 'Professional Practice' where they look at further developing skills for employability, such as communication through mentoring and supporting our lower level learners with practicals, conducting animal visits to school nurseries, charity work etc. A student interested in this specific part of the sector would be encouraged to do their best to have their work placement in this area so that they can directly gain and relate experience.

Q. The presentation noted increased interest in animal welfare, including advancement in animal health/nutrition; plus greater opportunities for accessing the industry - but what do you think is the biggest driver? [post-meeting]
A. There is definitely more awareness in the public domain of animal welfare (access to info via social media etc) leading to changed opinions. Pets have become a bigger and more important part of families and this has driven a desire for higher standards and choice of products on the market. Advances in science have also driven enhanced nutritional knowledge for products and indeed in the veterinary field with all the referral practices to get much more advanced veterinary procedures and advice which just didn't exist a few years ago.

Q. Could you explain more about the student rewards scheme and its impact?
A. The rewards scheme is used to recognise the softer skills the students are developing and runs each semester. There are 10 categories students may get commended for, including attendance/punctuality, work experience reviews, assignment/assessment performance or effort, volunteer work. They get a certificate for their achievement and are entered in to an end of semester drawer for a voucher.

Q. Are the standards that the department is developing related to performance or behaviours and when will they be ready? Could it be applied in other areas? Are there Animal Care Apprenticeships?
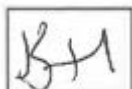
A. The rubrics will look mainly at skills and behaviours and it is based more on practical performance, but their transfer of knowledge from the classroom will come into this too. It will provide a framework showing progress and development so students can track their progress towards being 'industry ready'. Working with Landex, it has been successful in other curriculum areas so yes, it could work elsewhere. There is an Animal Care and Welfare Assistants Apprenticeships Level 2 standards, but nothing else has been approved yet. There is also a new Veterinary Nursing standard. Staff have been developing the School's standards in relation to apprenticeship standards too.

Q. How have your students responded to the pandemic and lockdown?
A. On the whole, very well although they miss their placements and contact with the animal centre. They have been engaging well with tutor support/lessons online, including Teams workshops. Approaches for learning and student support have been developed in relation to level and qualification. The most difficult level to engage is the Foundation students – it has been very difficult for them and staff are using a range of activities and interaction opportunities to support and engage these students.

Q. Are any of the animals at risk of getting COVID-19?
A. Staff are not aware of any species being at risk of COVID 19, as there are no primate related species which would definitely be more at risk. Generally, the animals seem to be enjoying the peace and quiet and are much more active than normally.

Q. What proportion of your students go into HE?
A. There are between a third and a half of the students progressing into various branches of HE (depending on whether Extended Diploma or Subsidiary Diploma) – from our own Behaviour and Welfare degrees to Animal Science, Conservation, Zoology, Marine Biology and occasionally Vet Medicine.

Q. What is the trend in student numbers?
Student numbers have been fairly static for the past 4-5 years. Prior to that the School grew very quickly from a relatively small area to the current numbers. Vector data shows the College has the vast majority of the market share of animal courses so it is likely that for 16-18 numbers the School has reached a sort of plateau.

Q. In terms of short courses for CPD – would they be funded and would there be an accreditation (or equivalent) on completion?
A. Initially we are looking at college certificates e.g. dog grooming and first aid are really useful if working in a doggy day care etc. However, Lantra are looking at the sector as a whole and undertaking research into where accredited short courses would be beneficial and the College will monitor developments in this area.

Q. Thank you for continuing to care for animals during C-19 - If the social distancing regulations continue into next academic year how will this affect delivery of this curriculum intent? What changes will need to be made? What have partner institutions proposed if anything? Would it be possible to do virtual practicals that are already being utilised by many medical schools in the UK?
A. In the first instance the curriculum is being changed to put practical based units into Semester 2. A blended approach is being planned with 50:50 attendance/online activity to prioritise face to face components and identified where independent learning can be set using Moodle and other interfaces. Where practical competency assessment is required it is necessary to have students in College and whilst it is possible to provide videos to demonstrate skills the students need to practice themselves e.g restraint and various vet nursing medical tasks, which are followed by practical based assessments. Plans are being made to be able to fully support the foundation level learners who rely on tutor support and have found working remotely challenging.

It was suggested that alongside the curriculum progression diagrams it would be useful to show the number of students progressing within the College and numbers joining and exiting at each level. A presentation would be provided in the Autumn term demonstrating progression and destinations by School. **ACTION**.
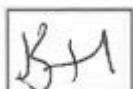
The Chair thanked the Head of School and acknowledged the very good career pathway visual and the social media stories that really engaged people who are interested in animals, particularly the Instagram posts of 3 new baby lambs and Jack the tortoise exercising indoors.

4.2 **Foundation and Schools Partnerships**

The Head of School had provided a recorded presentation to the meeting and Governors had had an opportunity to watch and submit questions about the presentation. The Head of School addressed the questions posed.

Q. This is extremely valuable work - where progression is important. Can you give a couple of case study examples of young people who have progressed particularly well?
A: There have been lots of positive case studies that could be shared and each one of our young people have a story to tell. Here are 2 examples:
- A student who spent 2 years with us on the Reach programme at Woodlands - in his first year his attendance was poor due to health issues linked to anxiety. He had been out of school for several years and found it extremely difficult to get into the classroom alone. When he did attend, he struggled to engage and often left part way through the day. With a lot of support from the teaching and support teams his attendance had improved by the end of the first year. During the 2nd year he grew in confidence, made friends and started to naturally take a lead role within the classroom. In 2019/20 he enrolled onto a Level 1 IT Diploma based at Blossomfield travelling independently each day which would not have been possible when he first started with Reach.
- A student that was enrolled on our late start Pioneer programme in 2018/19 having failed her probationary period in Health and Social Care due to poor attendance and attitude - she struggled at first but with support and encouragement she engaged fully in the programme winning one of our student awards at the end of the year. With the School's recommendation the Health and Social Care team gave her another chance. She has kept in touch and it is clear how much she has valued being given another opportunity. She has worked hard and eventually wants to go to university with plans to become a midwife. Her attendance on the Diploma was 95% this year.

Q. The presentation really helped in improving understanding of the range of provision in the area. On the Reach and Access provision - what proportion of your students' progress to other courses in the College?
A. About 64% of the Reach/Access learners progress onto other courses within the college. 12 were at Entry level, 24 went onto Level 1 and 5 progressed straight into Level 2 programmes.

Q. How is the integration of the students into mainstream GCSE maths and English going - what are the issues of successful integration?
A. This year we have streamed the Reach provision. At Blossomfield there are 3 groups, 2 have been in GCSE classes and the lower group have completed Step Up to English/Maths. It is not anticipated that any of the learners will achieve a Grade 4 this year, but the majority have enjoyed the challenge. The teachers have been excellent with the groups and this is a crucial factor. It would be better to have the options of GCSE for those learners who can cope with it and an alternative for those who can't. Often the learners come to the College with additional needs, but also anxiety and other mental health issues and GCSE may not be right for all.

Q. The 14-16 provision is very successful in maths and English (against a low national base) - why is this and are there any lessons for other students in maths and English?
A. The 14-16 provision is very successful. The bespoke provision is run in small groups or in some cases on a one to one basis. A variety of initial assessment methods are used. Time is taken to get to know the learners very well. The pre-16s get a high level of support from the teaching staff but also from the Programme Co-ordinator.

Q. Are there any lessons that can be shared with the rest of the College in relation to success with maths and English?
A. Arrangements in the area are very specific to the needs of the learners and often provide very small group sizes and sometimes 1:1. There is a lot of nurturing and pastoral support for students through really intensive programmes of study designed for these types of learners. So, in terms

of comparing with other areas in the College and being able to share good practice, the environment is very different to group sizes of 22. Further, many of the students are taking maths and English for the first time and the School is able to start with Functional Skills and move students on to GCSE when they are ready, which often isn't the case for the vocational areas, where students are often re-sitting.

Q. How have the students responded to the pandemic and lockdown?
A. Students have continued to be offered online workshops. The Workshops for the Reach students run at the same times each week. The learners do require a lot of support but many of them have completed work and submitted online. Some learners have not engaged at all. One of the challenges going forward is ensuring that all our learners have IT access. Some struggle due to not having the right equipment, internet access and/or the support from parents/carers. Pre-16 tutors are making regular contact with their students and continuing to set work etc. There has been a mixed response.

Q. Thinking of the College as an employer does it host any of the supported internships? How many of the College's staff overall are apprentices? What is the strategy?
A. The conditions of supported internships do not allow for the College to take any direct placements but there may be scope through one of our contractors eg catering.

Q. The pre-16 contract work looks excellent in a very challenging environment, how is the funding provided/negotiated?
A. Fees are set and charged directly to schools and local authorities. A Service level Agreements in place with all providers. An annual fee is charged for all young people who infill into main programmes and an hourly fee for those who just come to do maths and English. These are invoiced 3 times per annum.

Q. How do you transition the learner who does not continue within the College?
A. It is very hard to keep young people with us in all cases, but everyone has a careers meeting and is supported by our team and the additional support team if moving to another organisation. Support Tutors and Student Support Officers work with a range of organisations including parent/carers and social workers to help young people to make the right choices at the end of their time with the College.

Q. Are you able to offer continued support when a student progresses to another institution or into the workplace as part of a wider virtual delivery?
A. The College is developing links with organisations to help supported interns progress into and sustain employment. Two interns from this year were offered jobs by their placements at Touchwood and Birmingham Children's Hospital. Hopefully these offers will still be open to them after the lockdown period.
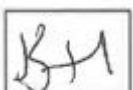
The Chair thanked the Head of School and acknowledged the work being done particularly to supported internships.

4.3 **Visual Media and Performing Arts**

The Head of School had provided a recorded presentation to the meeting and Governors had had an opportunity to watch and submit questions about the presentation. The Head of School addressed the questions posed.

Q. The presentation suggests that much of the work in the creative sector being short term and freelance. The importance of transferable skills is therefore highlighted. What is your assessment as to the proportion of students who will find full time careers in the creative sector as against those who will use their learning in other contexts?
A. Last year there were 3.04 million jobs in the Creative Industries accounting for 1 in 11 jobs in the UK and an economy worth 91.8 million. The research goes on to detail a 5% year on year growth. However creative careers are found not only in the creative industries but in other sectors as the graphic below demonstrates. The means students need to have a robust understanding of their skills and how they can be applied in other sectors.

912,000
A
Non-creative/support jobs within the creative industries

1,047,000
C
Creative occupations within the creative industries
B

1,076,000
Creative occupations outside the creative industries

(*Policy Paper: Creative Industries Sector Deal gov.uk*).

The second reason we place so much value on transferable skills is the amount of jobs which are freelance. Working freelance requires learners to consider themselves as micro-businesses taking on their own accounting, marketing and administration functions. The majority of our learners move onto HE to study arts subjects though some leave at Level 3 to pursue other career options.

Q. There are an impressive number of staff members working for high level qualifications. Please give examples of how, as you indicate, this helps improve the quality of student learners experience and opportunities.
A. The numbers of staff with higher level qualifications means we have a greater number of staff able to teach on our HE courses. Whilst studying for MA's staff are actively engaged in the process of making work and reflecting on their work which improves their practice and feeds directly back into their delivery with all learners.

Q. What provision is located at each of the 3 College sites?
A. All provision is located at Blossomfield.

Q. Please explain more about the Create Central Bootcamps and Outpost programmes and what is their impact?
A. Outpost is an application which has been submitted to the LEP to develop two spaces in the College. A large art studio and the area outside the conference centre. The largest art studio, on the second floor, will become a flexible teaching space which brings together all HE arts students to work together to develop a wider range of projects in a live studio context. Alongside this we have just written and had validated a new BA in Creative Professional Practice which will be taught across disciplines and focus on students developing themselves into multi-skilled creative practitioners. The area outside the conference centre will become a flexible meeting and workspace which we will be able to use as a hatchery to support graduates into the workplace.

The Create Central Bootcamps are co-delivered with WMCA and Create Central. The screen industry is growing fast in the West Midlands and the sector is struggling to recruit in several areas. In the pilot phase we will be targeting the roles of Researchers and Production Assistants. Participants will take part in a five-week full-time training and a three-week placement in industry. At the end of the Bootcamp all participants will interview for a role at one of the independent TV production companies in the region.

Q. What proportion of the students achieve jobs and what proportion progress to HE?
A. The majority of learner's progress into HE as the industry still looks for degrees even for most entry positions. The latest progression data suggests 21% of media students continued to study HE at the College and 38% at other universities, 60% of Performing Arts students continued to university and 14% of Visual Arts students continued at the College with a further 44% going to other universities. Level 3 learners going into employment stands at Media 15%, Performing Arts 21% and Visual Arts 33%.

Q. How have your students responded to lockdown and Covid 19?

Where resources have allowed students have continued to make work and engage positively with creative learning. Performing arts students have been utilising Teams to share performance work, media students have been uploading video content and engaging in online groups critiques to analyse work and art students have been creating blogs. Although they won't be assessed many students have continued to work on their final major projects. Examples of which can be found here:
https://sakinahprivatework.weebly.com/research-assignment-planning.html
https://youtu.be/JhkJNelfK90

Q. What will be the positive effect on curriculum delivery and how do you see this offering developing in response to these changes going forward?
A. Finding meaningful online content for creative subjects has always been quite difficult however the creative industries have responded to these challenges and far more resources have become available. New and exciting ways of creating art and performance are being explored all the time and the industry is developing new creative language which staff are engaging in. Staff have been very proactive in engaging learners with group critiques, tutorials and Teams which has been very successful. The lack of a live audience has been disappointing for learners and despite online gallery spaces etc it is hard to replicate the impact of live performance and exhibition.

Q. What will happen this year in relation to the end of year exhibitions – will they be online or deferred?
A. It is hoped that some work will be shared online, but if possible, it would be good to have a graduation exhibition event in the Autumn term for the HE students.

The Chair thanked the Head of School and acknowledged the positive activity of Performing Arts students who were putting their work on Instagram.

5.   **Principal's Update– Strategic Direction, Priorities and Risks**

5.1 Principal's Update Presentation and Questions from the Chair of the Corporation

The Chair explained that normally at this meeting there would be a discussion relating to the development of the Strategic Plan for future years. The current plan continues to 2021. The Principal has suggested that given the situation with the COVID-19 crisis developing a normal strategic plan would not be helpful at the current time. Guidance and responses are changing daily in relation to the current crisis and financial planning and initial issues regarding re-opening are the main priorities. The current Strategic Plan includes 2019-2021.

The Principal provided an update regarding the on-going strategy in response to the COVID-19 crisis and confirmed that on-going financial planning was starting to show a similar outturn of the February 2020 position. Going forward the 2020/21 financial year needed to be addressed. Financial health was maintained as Good.

The Chair welcomed the good news regarding the work that had gone into the financial update, where savings could be made and reassurances from ESFA and for adult funding from WMCA.

School staff were collating grade predictions. Academic grades would be submitted by end of May 2020, however, vocational subject awarding bodies had not yet confirmed guidance on submitting grades.

Staff are working well to support each other and encourage wellbeing to ensure any vulnerable staff are looked after. When arrangements for re-opening are clarified staff will be supported in coming back to work. There will be arrangements for staff to be able to come back onto sites and where there may be situations where students need to come in to complete assessments, but the priority is health and safety for all, so risk assessments are taking place for any activities that need to take place over the summer.
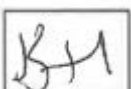
Guidance is received daily and sometimes tends to be conflicting, so a range of staff task and finish groups have been set up to plan for re-opening, health and safety in all areas and teaching and learning arrangements for September 2020.

Q. The comments in the presentation on applications is positive. The College does tend to have later HE applications and acceptances more than universities, but for some universities it seems that applicants seem to be holding off accepting their offers this year. What is the College's experience? Have we made as many offers as the same period last year?
A. A HE strategy meeting took place this week to review the current situation and it would seem that applications are good and compare well with the same point last year. There were no current concerns. More offers had been made so far this year, but as students did not have to accept until June/July the final position was not yet clear.

Q. People operate at different levels on the working-from-home continuum - how is this being picked up - for example the peer support mentioned in the presentation?
A. The Heads of School gave an indication of how staff have responded to working from home and generally, across the College, staff seem to have adapted well. It is clear that online has a role, but there is very much a need for the College in terms of face to face teaching and support for students. EMT have discussed the approach to supporting staff to come back to work and will ensure all feel safe and supported to get back to work. CIPD advice had identified 3 tests that the College would use to support staff to come back into the College and these were 'Essential', 'Safe' and 'Mutually Agreed. There were some concerns around staff who may be vulnerable, but also anxiety about coming back to College.

Q. It is pleasing to note the levels of virtual learning. Is it possible to identify the difference in learning time between virtual learning and college attendance? What would be the best measure of the effectiveness of virtual learning?
A. When awarding bodies said they would only look at work handed in before the lockdown, it had a terrible effect on virtual classes. In some areas students have really engaged and it is possible to see that work received can be used for predicting grades. New applicants have asked for work, though and this is encouraging. Attendance is difficult to ascertain, but for some areas practices will be changed, for example, assessors will be able to use MS Teams to contact apprentices, rather than spending a lot of time travelling to make face-to-face visits. The College will use the learning that has taken place during this time to improve and change practices, where appropriate. Measuring the whole effectiveness is difficult. Ofsted will be looking at some pilot projects to assess the quality of online teaching and whether it provides high enough standards.
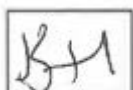
Q. Many employers are saying that the COVID-19 crisis will revolutionise working practices once lockdown ends (e.g. reduced office space, virtual meetings, less travel, etc). Can we predict a comparable change in FE learning across certain disciplines? If so, should we review e.g. our accommodation needs, particularly work planned / underway?
A. The College will definitely review working practices through lessons learned during this crisis. It has demonstrated that it is not necessary for all members of staff to be physically in College 5 days per week, particularly during the transition period, but maybe going forward. Roles can be assessed in terms of functionality and this will have an impact on the College going forward.

The Chair confirmed that it was reassuring that staff were being supported during the period and in coming back to work, but also how students' needs have been addressed in specific occupational areas.

Q. The Principal has referenced the mental health of staff and learners on a number of occasions. The Corporation had information recently about staff who had undertaken mental health practitioners training. Are these staff available and taking part in supporting staff during this period?
A. Mental Health First Aiders – a number of volunteers took the qualification and are available during this time. Staff and students also have access to the College services, e.g. Counsellor and Mental Health professional. There is peer support to identify where people may be struggling to ensure support is targeted and expectations are moderated and communicated. Managers and teams are working together to ensure on-going support.

The Principal confirmed that the Deputy Principal and Director of MIS were working together to transfer all enrolment activity online. This was a very important change that would reduce the queues and large numbers of students coming in initially in September and would make enrolment more effective.

Q. It would seem that the College's IT systems have coped well with the increased demands during the COVID-19 crisis. Given the increase in digitalisation is there any capital funding that can be brought forward to support investment in IT hardware and software that would make the College a new breed of digital college?
A. The IT strategy is being reviewed and the capital plan for 2020/21 to ensure there is investment in the most appropriate areas. More information will be available in the summer, however, the work we have done on next year's budget so far indicates it will be challenging.

5.2 Financial Report 2019/20 – Financial Impact to Date

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that the report demonstrated the change in financial position from the February IFMC return, through the initial COVID-19 forecasts, to the current outturn forecast for the year. The difficulties regarding apprenticeship funding was not anticipated to be as bad as initially thought and there had been some contingency built into the original budget to allow for uncertainties regarding timing of new starts. Pay costs were certain until the end of the year and there were some savings. Budget holders had also clarified any further planned expenditure and potential savings for the rest of the year. Cashflow was stable and financial health remained in the 'Good' category. There may be longer term implications that will become apparent that could have an affect on 2020/21 and the budget was currently being prepared for July approval. The Activity Analysis appendix responded to a Governor's request to show how pay and non-pay was impacted by activity. It was confirmed that this was a helpful and informative report. The AOC Survey had also been appended and provided a useful context for the sector in all areas including financial issues.

Q. A good report and helpful for seeing the financial position clearly. Some companies are renegotiating interest payments with their banks. Would there be any benefit in approaching the bank to negotiate the £883k interest payment?
A. Half of the interest payment identified is with NatWest and half relates to the pension funds. It may be possible to negotiate with NatWest, however, the current financial position allows on-going payment, but it is a useful element to consider if the budget for 2020/21 is particularly challenging.
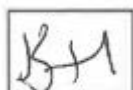
5.3 Safeguarding Report

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and noted that an annexe had been added to the Safeguarding Policy, which reflected the guidance that had been published at the beginning of the lockdown.

The Director of Student Services confirmed that staff across the College had been supporting students well and continuing to apply the keeping children safe approach for all. He noted that remote working did make safeguarding a little more difficult, as just seeing the students around College each day provided some level of assurance of their well-being. Whereas in the current situation all contact had to be by email, phone or by arranged Teams calls etc.

The Director of Student Services provided information regarding 2 case studies where the College had continued to support learners through the COVID-19 crisis lockdown:
- One case study demonstrated the continued work with an external agency to support our students. A student who is the sole carer for her father, who had had COVID-19 had to self-isolate. She already has support form the Solihull Carers Trust and in liaison with the College arrangements were made to supply art materials for the student, so that should could carry on with her work.

The safeguarding team had to had to risk assess all safeguarding students quickly to identify any issues. Student with previous issues.

- A student who had had previous safeguarding issues and whose family were involved with Social Services had been supported since November for a range of issues. Following lockdown the College continued to support her with daily phone calls, until contact was lost. After a couple of days and in liaison with Social Services a member of staff continued to try to contact her and eventually the student contacted the member of staff. The member of staff encouraged her to contact her social worker and contact and re-engagement was ensured.

Key challenge is around maintaining contact and where contact is lost ensuring it is followed up. Students were continuing to engage with Student Services and were raising issues regarding friends and others, so even though remotely, College systems were still working to support and safeguard all students.

Q. Will there be consideration regarding post-COVID-19 support and resilience through the tutorial system?
A. It will be important to plan the transition period and those that will be re-joining the College to manage and support their anxieties. New students too may be invited into College in June and July. There are a range of issues to consider including anxiety, isolation and for some bereavement. There are 12 Mental Health Champions at Blossomfield who will have a role in supporting students, however, they have only done a 2-day course, so are not mental health specialists, but they will be able to support and reinforce the Mental Health specialist support that is available. Tutorial training for learners – the content and curriculum is being reviewed for September and students will be supported and empowered to identify issues themselves. How this will be delivered is being explored and it may be a blended learning approach, but will still provide robust tutorial training for students.

Q. The College has an excellent record in this area – is it adequately resourced?
A. Yes, currently the Service is managing the volume of cases and student needs. It will be interesting to see the impact on services in September. This period has ensured more development of a blended offer of support with a combination of online and in-College support services and a lot of work has been done to update online materials and support mechanisms, which will help with increased demand.

The Chair thanked the Director of Student Services and he left the meeting.

> **RESOLVED** to approve the Safeguarding Policy Annexe, as set out.

6. **Apprenticeships Report**

6.1 Apprenticeship Report (Interim)

The Executive Director Employment & Skills and IoT presented the report and explained arrangements and funding changes during the COVID-19 crisis. Employers have struggled to find information and are nervous about ensuring they meet HMRC rules. Some rules for apprenticeships have been relaxed, including rules relating to break of service and end point assessment. Some apprentices had achieved a distinction in Business. Clarity has now been obtained regarding whether apprentices can continue to study whilst furloughed and this has been confirmed that they can. Although it was noted that some employers had closed apprentices' access to email and work systems, so they could clearly demonstrate that they were furloughed, but this was an issue for them in continuing their studies. There were a small number of students in this situation. It was noted that the rule for Level 2 apprentices to have Level 1 Functional Skills and be working towards Level 2 had been suspended.

Staff have been supporting apprentices, as with all students. Some of the College's apprentices work for the council and NHS trusts and some have been working at the NEC setting up the Nightingale Hospital.

It was noted that the DfE would not be publishing the institutional achievement rates for 2020.
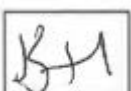
The Risk Register had been updated with enrolment for 2020/21 and how 16-18 year olds can be supported that may have been on apprenticeships.

Q. In terms of employer feedback – what would be one thing that could be done to improve satisfaction level?
A. It is difficult because there can be equal numbers of employers completely satisfied with an area, and those that are not, so difficult to pin point things that would satisfy all. However, from the feedback areas are being addressed through an improvement fund including provision of employer information and employer booklets at enrolment to clarify expectations and arrangements from the beginning and then employers will be given access to see how the student is progressing throughout the programme.

This is a high-risk area and obviously very complex – it would seem that the team have been very creative and seem to be making improvements that are working well.

6.2 Apprenticeship Survey Results

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and explained that there had been really high levels of satisfaction in some areas, including Retail and Commercial, Motor Vehicle, Business, Management & Professional and Care & Education. Lower levels were identified in in Engineering and Built Environment. Also had open-text comments on the survey, so it is possible to really get an understanding about how to address any issues. Information to inform improvement will go into individual school QIPS.

Preparation for End Point Assessments (EPA) showed a satisfaction level of 83%. This was an oversight in designing the survey as some apprentices are still on frameworks that don't have an EPA and therefore may have replied negatively.

It was noted that students had indicated a high level of understanding in relation to the potential dangers of radicalisation and extremism, which was positive in response to a Governor question at a previous meeting.

Q. Only half of apprentices completed the survey - what are your thoughts on that?
A. Would have liked a higher return, however, timing was probably a problem. The period of completion was at the height of the COVID-19 crisis and this did not help with response rate. It is a good starting point for the first survey and lessons have been learned for next year – to have a longer return period and review the questions.

Q. What changes have there been to these responses since the previous survey and what effect have those changes had on responses?
A. This is the first year we have conducted this survey so we can't make any comparisons at the moment – we will use this year's data as the benchmark for future years.

7. Institute of Technology (IOT) Report

The Executive Director Employment & Skills and IoT presented the report and explained on-going tasks being completed to continue development of the IoT and where the COVID-19 crisis had slowed progress. She confirmed that building work had commenced. The annual membership would be proposed for this year based on the actual costs, due to approval being mid-year.

The Executive Director Employment & Skills and IoT explained that she had weekly progress meetings with the DfE and that it had been confirmed that the DfE rated 3 of the IoT projects as green and 2 as amber and were happy with progress to date.

The Woodlands Workspace Building & Design (WD&B) was progressing well. The Nova Project Management report provided an update.

Quarterly learner number meetings would be taking place, although performance management by the DfE would be informal during the first year.
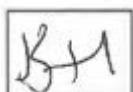
The risk register had been undated to reflect issues in relation to the COVID-19 crisis and how risks were being managed and mitigated.

Q. Where does the membership fee appear in the budget?
A. There is a cost centre for the IOT with membership fee included. Net cost is shown as there will be contributions from partners.

The Executive Director Employment & Skills and IoT was thanked and left the meeting.

8.   **Property Report**

The Chair of the Corporation left the meeting during consideration of this item and the Vice-Chair took the Chair for the Sanctuary Housing item.

Sanctuary Housing – *was deemed confidential.*

The Chair returned to the meeting

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and provided an update on the following areas:

Phase 1 Stratford Re-development A Block and New Entrance – it was noted that the project was progressing well and that there was likely to be a 2-week slippage, as obtaining materials due to COVID-19 restrictions and ensuring social distancing for some tasks was difficult. The completion date was June, but the building is not needed until August, so there is no concern regarding the current slippage period.

Phase 2 Stratford Re-development B Block (current agreed budget £913K) – the Vice Principal explained that a review of the original plan to do light-touch refurbishment work would not really provide enough of an impact in terms of visual impact and would only do M&E and fire-work. There were 3 options to consider:
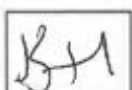- Refurbish all 3 floors properly currently costed at £1.4m;
- Reduced scope of only Ground and 1st Floor currently costed at £1m;
- Only do the fire-works to be compliant, however, some of this would need to be re-done when re-furbishing the building at a later date.

An initial discussion had taken place with a small group of Governors regarding the options and it seemed that the most appropriate approach was to opt for the first option, as this provided a complete finish and the best value for money. In summary: a further £500k would be required for the full refurbishment as outlined. The Vice Principal Finance explained that the additional costs could be taken from the Phase 1 contingency that was available (£161k) and expected income from the car park sale (£600k). Further she noted that the government had announced capital grants for FE and if these became available in the future this may help with later phases of the overall project.

The Vice Principal Finance confirmed that the overall budget for the project of £8.2k would be revisited and re-assessed in terms of projected student numbers and the potential for capital grant funding.   The whole project was phased to allow on-going review and approval by Governors.

Detailed discussion took place and the following issues and comments were highlighted:
- the College has a good record for bringing projects in on budget. On this occasion the budget needed to be increase, but the overspend can be covered from savings on phase one and projected income from the car park sale. It is important to do a thorough job and ensure value for money, but it is also important to review the investment strategy for this project on-going;
- it was noted that currently the College was in a difficult position with the COVID19 crisis, but that going forward it was very important to consider the impact of online provision and the changing requirements for physical buildings. The digital infrastructure is key and needs to be part of the investment strategy. It was noted that part of the M&E elements of the Part B phase would strengthen and underpin the digital infrastructure. A review would take place

regarding requirements for C Block and it was noted that 50% of the footprint was being removed with the student number projections and changes in terms of online provision;

- it was important to do a thorough refurbishment for the staff and students at the College and often reducing the building work turns out to be a false economy, as is the case in some of the work that has taken place at Stratford campus pre-merger;
- it was noted that costing re-furbishment projects was always difficult because there are often hidden costs, unknown until work begins and this needed to be factored into all refurbishment projects.

It was **agreed** to approve the increase in budget for Phase 2, in principle, and that Chair's Action to agree award of the Contract, be taken once the final costs were submitted by the Contractor, as long as, they were in the region of £1.4m.

The Vice Principal Finance provided an update regarding the following projects:

- Stratford Car Park – progress was slow due to the COVID-19 crisis;
- Tudor Grange House – the 2nd overage payment would now be deferred to be included in the 2020/21 budget, as the planning application had still not been approved, due to the COVID-19 crisis. Discussion took place regarding whether the increased provision of retirement accommodation in the Solihull area was having an impact on this project and the Principal explained that there was some concern by Solihull MBC about a request to increase the number of units and some issues regarding the garden area, but that it was close to being resolved.

The Vice Principal Finance explained that there had been an approach to the College regarding a broadband unit on the Astro-turf on the Blossomfield campus. Legal advice was currently being sought and an update would be provided in due course.

9. **Dashboard**

9.1 Quality Section – it was confirmed that the Quality Section of the Dashboard would be suspended for the rest of 2019/20, due to the interruption of quality processes/teaching, due to the College closure in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that the most up-to-date QIP was available on the Dashboard. The College had conducted Faculty Health checks and MOTs throughout the COVID-19 closure.

The Chair confirmed that the student enrolment data would be updated in the new academic year after the first 6 weeks.
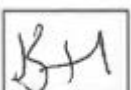
9.2 PMR March 2020 - the contents of the PMR for March 2020 were noted for information. It was noted that the risk section needed to be updated to show total income RAG rating.

Q. How much of a concern is it that pay will increase by £1.6m between July 2019 and July 2020 when income is essentially static (see section 4 HR Information)? Or £1.2m in the Executive summary for total staff costs?
A. The increase was discussed at the Corporation meeting on 3rd July 2019. At the time it was flagged as a concern and would still be if the ESFA had not agreed to increase our funding rates. At that time the sector was faced with increasing pay costs and frozen funding which wasn't sustainable going forward. Fortunately, since that time (as reported to Corporation in Feb 2020 as part of the IFMC presentation) 16-18 funding which makes up half of the College's turnover has increased for 2020/21. This has relieved the pressure on the budget for 2020/21. The increased costs relate to pay awards, increments and increased pension costs (of which we get some funding in the short term towards the Teacher's pension fund costs).

10. **Final Dates for 2020/21**

The dates for 2020/21 for Corporation and Committee meetings were approved.

11. Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and Annual Report

The Clerk presented the report and FOI Publication Scheme and noted that some minor changes had been made in relation to postal submission and clarity regarding the process for subject access requests.

Q. What type of FOI requests are received?
A. The nature of the requests received by College is extremely varied – anything from details of salary bands through to the amount of agency spend or dates when contracts for services are due for renewal.

> **RESOLVED** to approve the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.

12. Bids and Projects Report

The contents of the Bids and Projects Report was noted for information.

13. Regular Update Reports:

13.1 **Use of the College Seal and Chair's E-Signature**

The contents of the Use of the College Seal and Chair's E-Signature Report were noted for information.

13.2 **Tender Update Report** – *commercially confidential*

The contents of the Tender Update Report were noted for information.

14. Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 8th July 2020 start time to be confirmed.
The Annual Dinner will not take place in July 2020.

The meeting finished at 5.15pm.

Signed:_____

02 July 2020

Date:_____

Chair's electronic signature applied during Covid-19 College closure, with approval