

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation  
held on Thursday March 16th 2017 at 8.00am  
in the Boardroom of Matthew Boulton Campus**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Apologies:</b>
Steve Hollis (Chair)	
Veronica Docherty (VD)	
Keith Horton (KH)	
Andrew Cleaves (Principal)	
Andrew Madden (AM)	
Jenni Ord (JO)	
Joel Blake (JB)	
Hilary Smyth-Allen (HSA)	
Michele Larmour (ML)	
Simon Thompson (ST)	
Amardeep Gill (AG)	
Sheetal Sahdev (SS) (Student Governor)	
Henry Millin (HM)	
Jane Smith (JS) (Staff Governor)	
Sonia Crook-Lake (SCL) (Staff Governor)	
<b>In Attendance:</b>	
Louise Jones (LJ)	
Liam Nevin – (LN)	
Simon Cosson (SC)	

**Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

SH welcomed AG and ST to their first meeting of the Corporation.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received but SH asked it to be noted that he knew ST professionally.

**Item 1 – Actions Arising from the Last Meeting**

(i) Open and Confidential Minutes of meeting held on 15 December 2016

It was noted that in the open minutes ST's name had been wrongly transcribed and subject to this correction these were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

(ii) Matters Arising and Action Log

The Action Log was noted.

**Item 2 – Ofsted Findings**

LJ presented this item and advised that the final report had now been received. There were three themes that the inspection had identified where the College required improvement:

- (i) It was not monitoring progress sufficiently and using information effectively to monitor students, particularly those on level 3.
- (ii) Teaching, learning and assessment was not of an acceptable standard and there was insufficient impact in the classroom. The College was "consistently inconsistent".
- (iii) The use of performance management to improve teaching and assessment was not adequate.

The College's Self- Assessment Report had proved accurate and all but one of the Ofsted grades was consistent with the College's own judgement.

The College needed to be self-assessing as good for 2017-18 which required it to be delivering good from September, and which also required the College to drive improvements at a greater pace. The draft Post Inspection Action Plan would be shared with the FE Commissioner during their visit over the next two days, and feedback would be used to finalise this.

SH summarised that the College had changed its business model and substantially reduced staff numbers to address its financial situation, and it had accurately assessed the impact on the quality of provision through the SAR. However, what was critical now was the journey to "good," which involved addressing cultural challenges within the College and being confident that what the Executive team were delivering would achieve that objective.

VD stated that the College had been honest with its own assessment of performance but it was disappointing to see that some areas of weakness were fundamental to classroom management. The Executive needed to consider whether they were focussing on too many things and instead target those interventions that would have the most effective and prompt impact.

LJ acknowledged that the inspection had highlighted low level disruption as a particular issue and that staff had been too accepting of this.

JO questioned what areas would need the greatest focus to achieve and sustain "good" and LJ advised that the key challenge was that every area was inconsistent in its standards of delivery and all staff had to understand that they were responsible for driving improvement.

SH asked the staff governors to comment on the evidence that would demonstrate improvement in classroom performance.

JS stated that the College needed to focus on a few key metrics including attendance, behaviour and achievement and be clearer about the impacts of interventions, including performance management. There was a view amongst some staff that "things had always been done this way."

VD stated that it was also key for the College to understand the starting point for students and their in-year progress. A key issue was whether staff were exposed enough to excellent classroom practice to understand what they should aspire to.

KH stated that the report was disappointing as it pointed to some basic weaknesses in lesson planning, and preparation, and matters that were generally "back to basics" issues. The challenge for the Board was not to be deluged by too many action plans. Instead it was necessary to be assured that the fundamentals were in place, that a sense of expectation was being conveyed to staff, that data demonstrated what was happening in the classroom as well as capturing students starting points, objectives and progress.

AG noted that Maths and English provision had been identified as a weakness in the previous inspection but had not improved sufficiently. He queried what the interventions were and why they were not effective.

LJ stated that the quality framework was not effective which had been addressed through a change in leadership positions. In addition, curriculum reviews had not been effective and the

links between curriculum delivery and the discrete English and Maths delivery had not been adequate. Work on strengthening these links was now showing some positive results with the recent re-sit results evidencing this.

AG questioned whether there were clear milestones for the next 6-18 months and LJ stated that these were in place and would be strengthened further as the English and Maths strategy was finalised. This would involve some challenging and rigorous actions including an assessment of all teaching staff in respect of their Maths and English skills.

KH stated that page 10 of the report stated that only a minority of lessons were challenging and that statement encapsulated the size of the challenge. The Corporation needed to see evidence of how this was being addressed with health checks at key points in the year that would include the student body providing views on organisation and delivery.

The Principal stated that the College had made changes in leadership positions at the end of the last academic year because it recognised that not enough progress was being made. The lead inspector had also stated that he wanted the College to do more of what it was currently doing and that the Corporation should take some comfort from this. He acknowledged that the Annual Operating Plan needed to be developed further so that there was greater insight that would inform sense checks. In addition, real time data on student satisfaction in the classroom was necessary. In relation to performance management he agreed that this needed to improve and required greater clarity of expectation, quicker intervention and reporting on impact.

JO stated that it was also necessary to ensure that students kept their side of the bargain and that to this end motivation had to be instilled into students through induction and tutorials.

The Principal stated that one of the outcomes from the Leadership Conference in the previous week was that students would be encouraged to agree to a pledge during induction that would commit them to standards of performance that they had agreed.

HM stated that students needed to be clearer about the consequences for failing to adhere to an agreement.

SH stated that the Executive should consider the feedback from the Corporation and report back to the next meeting on the evidence base that would be used to capture these points.

Accordingly it was

## **RESOLVED**

- **That the Ofsted findings be noted and that the Executive report to the next Corporation with details of the evidence base that will be used to highlight progress as identified in the preamble to this minute.**

## **Item 3 – 2015-16 Accounts**

Note – part of this minute is recorded in the confidential minutes

SC introduced the report and advised on the changes that had occurred since the last meeting of the Corporation in December. The external auditors, KPMG, had included within the management letter an emphasis of matter in relation to the ongoing reliance of the College on the support of the SFA and the banks, and this was reflected in a going concern statement on pages 19 and 31 of the draft financial statements.

There had been some changes to the draft financial statements since the Audit and Finance Committees as a result of late changes identified by KPMG and these had been highlighted in track change. However, these changes did not in substance alter the position since the committee meetings.



As well as approval of the financial statements, the regularity audit questionnaire and the letter of representation were also before the Corporation for approval.

AC then advised the Corporation that late on Tuesday evening he had received an e mail from the SFA to be told that the College had been excluded from the register of apprenticeship training providers following the recent procurement exercise. He was now in discussion with senior officers of the SFA and the Chief Executive with a view to reversing this decision.

Following discussion, governors agreed that this late development in itself precluded the approval of the financial statements without condition as it was not possible at this late stage for the Corporation to assess the impact on going concern, and there had been no opportunity to discuss the matter with the external auditors.

Accordingly it was

#### **RESOLVED**

- **That the Management Letter be noted**
- **That the financial statements, letter of representation and regularity audit questionnaire be approved subject to the SFA reversing their decision to exclude the College from the Register of Apprenticeship Providers.**

#### **Item 4 – Report from the Chair of the Finance Committee**

JO introduced this item and advised the Corporation that there had been a rigorous discussion within the Committee concerning the draft financial statements but as these had been debated separately by the Corporation she would not address this further.

##### (i) Draft Minutes 1.3.17

These were presented for information

##### (ii) Operating Plan Update

JO advised that the Committee had reviewed the Operating Plan dashboard and were satisfied that the Executive had responded to the challenge to improve the presentation and efficacy of the data reported. However, there was still room for improvement in relation to the profiling of trajectories so that the governors could quickly see whether performance was slipping. Moreover, the key issue was whether the approaches to drive teaching and learning improvements were reflected in the key indicators and whether they were showing impact.

Accordingly it was

#### **RESOLVED**

- **That the Operating Plan update be noted.**

##### (iii) Management Accounts

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

##### (iv) Pay Award 16-17

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

(v) Partnership Update

JO summarised the paper before the Corporation and advised that some remedial action was being taken to address underperformance by a small number of sub-contractors and which was set out in the report. These actions would help mitigate the risk of the College not achieving its Adult Education Budget target.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the variations to contract as identified in Appendix A of the report be approved.**
- **That the actions being taken to address performance issues and potential underspend against allocation be noted.**

(vi) Property Disposals

This item is recorded in a confidential minute

(vii) Framework Policy for Fees

JO advised that the policy was presented for approval with two minor changes. The first of these would not require HE students who withdraw from their course to pay the remaining fees, which would bring the College into line with the practice of other HE providers. The second change would allow for employer refunds in relation to apprenticeships to be determined on a case by case basis by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Director of Sales.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the Fees Policy 2017/18 be approved with the amendments as summarised in the preamble to this minute.**

**Item 5 – Report from the Chair of Audit Committee**

AM advised the Corporation that substantial discussion had taken place around the management letter, letter of representation and financial statements and the changes post the meeting were more significant than the Committee had been led to expect. However, as this matter had been dealt with by the Corporation as a substantive item he would not address it further.

(i) Draft Minutes 2.3.17

These were noted

(ii) Risk Management Update

The Corporation were advised of the progress with the College's risk register and to note that the risks from the old register had been addressed in the development of the current iteration. In addition, the risk appetite exercise recently completed by the Executive and governors had been evaluated against risk scores on a mitigated and unmitigated basis, with further consideration being given to three risks that may fall outside of the risk appetite.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the Risk Register be noted.**

(iii) Health and Safety Update

AM advised that the report was now more useful and informative but that it was acknowledged by the Executive that there was still room for improvement in this area particularly in relation to work related stress.

The attention of the Corporation was drawn to the occurrence of two RIDDOR accidents over the reporting period.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the report be noted.**

(iv) Counter-Terrorism Progress Report

The Corporation were advised that a considerable amount of work had been done in relation to Matthew Boulton College. The key remaining issue was to test the systems with students and staff in a practice situation.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the report be noted.**

(v) Sub-Contractors Control Assurance

It was noted that the College' systems for procuring and managing sub-contractors had been deemed satisfactory and that the College had addressed the three recommendations made by BDO, and that the Principal had accordingly submitted a compliance statement to the SFA.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the report be noted.**

(vi) SFA Investigations

This information is recorded in a confidential minute.

(vii) External and Internal Audit Arrangements 2017/18

AM advised that the Committee had expressed concern about the late amendments to the financial statements by the external auditor but that this did not warrant a re-tender of the service. The internal audit arrangement was working well, and the Committee were satisfied that the arrangements should continue for 2017-18.

Accordingly it was

## RESOLVED

- **That the existing arrangements for internal and external audit continue for 2017-18.**

### **Item 6 – Report from the Chair of Academic Standards and Quality Development Committee**

#### (i) Draft Minutes 7.3.17

These were noted.

#### (ii) Quality Improvement Plan Update

VD explained that the Committee had requested that the QIP action plan include milestones and RAG rating to show in-year progress and this had been addressed in the latest report. There was some positives in the six themes being reported on, in particular that attendance was slightly higher compared to last year, and there were improvements in English and Maths re-sits.

LJ advised that the Post Inspection Action Plan would now be finalised and this would be circulated to the Corporation.

Accordingly it was

## RESOLVED

- **That the Quality Improvement Plan update be noted.**

#### (iii) Equality and Diversity Strategy

VD advised that the proposed strategy would involve a smaller and more senior group co-ordinating the College's activity and it proposed three strategic objectives under which there were a range of activities. The Committee had felt that the strategy needed a greater focus on diversity and that whilst the first two objectives as proposed in the draft strategy were supported, the third proposal lacked clarity and needed to be reconsidered. Accordingly, the Corporation were being asked at this point to endorse the broad approach and to note the further work directed by the Committee.

JO stated that as the equality lead she welcomed the involvement of senior staff in the strategy group as its previous membership had not delivered a consistently high quality of debate and decision making. Strong leadership was needed to ensure that equality and diversity was embedded in the Quality Improvement Plan.

Accordingly it was

## RESOLVED

- **That progress with developing the Equality and Diversity Strategy be noted along with the further steps requested by the Academic Standards Committee.**

#### (iv) Harborne Academy Update

VD advised that the Committee had received a report detailing a considerable number of improvement initiatives although it was not clear what impact these were having on forecast

results. The Committee had therefore requested RAG ratings against key actions to give clearer evidence of progress.

The remainder of this minute is contained in the confidential minutes.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That the report be noted.**

**Item 7 – Any Other Business and Governors Confidential Discussion**

(i) Future Meeting Arrangements

LN advised that the recent poll of governor preferences for meeting venues and start times had been undertaken because the issue had been discussed at the governors Strategy Day and also in light of the number of new governors that had joined the Corporation. The results indicated a strong preference to continue with Corporation and Committee meetings at Matthew Boulton College with an 8.00am start.


JO stated that in order to also provide an opportunity to meet students, provision should be made for four occasions a year where governors could join existing events to meet students.

Accordingly it was

**RESOLVED**

- **That Corporation and Committee meetings continue to be held at Matthew Boulton College with an 8.00am start.**
- **That governors be invited to four events a year that will facilitate meeting with students.**

**Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 18 May 2017**

Signed.....

Chairman  
Date.....