

**Minutes of the Corporation
held on Thursday 12 November 2020 at 8.00 am
By Microsoft Teams**

Birmingham Metropolitan College

Present	Apologies
Sir Dexter Hutt (DH)	
Veronica Doherty (VD)	
Hilary Smyth-Allen (H-SA)	
Prof. Prue Huddleston (PH)	
Simon Thompson (ST)	
Cliff Hall (CH)	
Tracey Pearce (TP)	
Peter Croom (PC)	
Asha Devi (AD)	
Helen Miles (HM)	
Angela Myers (AM)	
Iqbal Mohammed (IM)	
Natalie Alleyne (NA)	
Christine Tolley (CT)	
Alaric Rae (AR)	
In attendance	
Louise Jones (LJ)	
Martin Penny (MP)	
Hilary Barber (Clerk)	
Ben Gamble (BG) from 8.45 am – 9.00 am	

Reference	Agenda item
	DH welcomed Christine Tolley and Alaric Rae to the Board.
1.1	Apologies
	No apologies were received. ML was absent. DH reported that it was possible that ML was still working in North Africa.
1.2	Declarations of Interest
	Alaric Rae's position as Deputy Director of External Relations and Director of Student Recruitment at the University of Birmingham was noted.

	No other declarations were received in addition to those contained in the College's Register of Interests.
2.1	Minutes
	<p>Amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020 were noted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Item 4 Academic Results, 3rd bullet point should read "Individual Learner Record" ▪ Item 4 Academic Results, C21: 03 should read "Academic Results" ▪ Item 10 Enrolment Report, Q1, response should read "learners will choose ..." ▪ Item 11 Finance, H-SA presented the report <p>Subject to the amendments noted above</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>C22: 01</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 September 2020 be approved.</p>
2.2	Action Log and Matters Arising
	<p>Action 8: CH reported that he has not yet approached Birmingham University to offer support with the Rail Academy as there is currently a review of the College's engineering provision ongoing. It was agreed that CH should not contact Birmingham University until the review is finalised. AR offered to facilitate conversations with the relevant University personnel if and when that would be helpful.</p>
3	New Principal Appointment
	<p>DH reported that Pat Carvalho (currently Principal of Harrow College and Vice CEO of the merged Harrow and Uxbridge Colleges) has been appointed. It is anticipated that she will take up post in April/May 2021 having served her 6 months' notice period. It is anticipated that Ms Carvalho will be involved in some handover days during this period. VD clarified that the offer of employment was subject to satisfactory references and DH confirmed that satisfactory references had been received.</p> <p>As requested by CT, DH agreed that he would arrange for a copy of Ms Carvalho's CV to be circulated to governors.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>C22: 02</p> <p>The appointment of the new Principal be ratified.</p>
4	James Watt Vice Principal
	<p>DH welcomed and introduced Ben Gamble who took up post as the new Vice Principal of James Watt College on 02 November 2020. Ben reported to governors on his first eight days in post and highlighted the supportive staff team and good induction process. He is currently holding 1:1 meetings with staff.</p> <p>DH invited AD and BG to comment on the suggestion that the front of the James Watt building is not inviting to students and needs development. BG agreed and commented that, in addition, during tours of the college, he had identified other internal areas that need modernising and improving.</p> <p>AD suggested the potential of using digital art and lighting that could be projected on to facades to "tell a story" without being overly costly.</p> <p>BG commented that as part of his induction he is identifying priorities, eg ensuring data compliance, rail issues etc alongside innovation and curriculum development opportunities.</p> <p>PH introduced herself as the link governor for James Watt College and she and BG agreed they were looking forward to working together.</p>
5	Principal's Report

	<p>CH presented the report in the Board Pack entitled “Principal’s Report” and further advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covid 19 update. An update was sent to all staff on Tuesday 10 November informing them that there are currently 28 positive cases across the colleges of whom 2 are staff and 26 are students. 155 students/staff are self-isolating. Incidence is highest at Sutton Coldfield College. CH reported that Birmingham City Council had received a complaint from a whistle blower suggesting that safety measures were not sufficiently robust. Senior members of staff met with BCC representatives and CH has subsequently received an email from the Council stating that the colleges’ measures are “exemplary”. ▪ The Association of Colleges are running a virtual “Colleges Live” event on 18 November with notable speakers. Zoe Lee has sent an invitation to all full-time students. ▪ CH noted that the reference in the report to the opening up of T-Levels to all providers should read from 2023 not 2022.
	<p>Governors’ Questions and Observations:</p> <p><i>“The Board should be aware that the Peddimore project, whilst a housing development, is classed as a “strategic industrial site” and its purpose is also to create jobs including in construction.” (VD)</i></p> <p><i>“How many laptops have been issued to students?” (DH)</i></p> <p>CH advised that it was about 150 for the 16-18 group. Further assessment of the IT needs of adult learners is being undertaken.</p> <p><i>“Could Birmingham University students be given the opportunity to support the mentoring of BMet students alongside those of Birmingham City University as part of the catch-up strategy?” (AR)</i></p> <p>This was agreed.</p> <p><i>“Are the large numbers of GCSE English/Maths re-sits due to the Covid situation?” (CT)</i></p> <p>CH advised that arising from government guidance on resits, discussions were held with subject leaders whose preference was that all students, regardless of their initial grades, should be given the opportunity to re-sit. Lecturers felt this would be highly useful in identifying where the gaps in learning exist and enable staff to target teaching at an individual level.</p> <p><i>“Are employees leaving the college interviewed for their views on the culture of the organisation? It was suggested that these observations could be very honest and helpful.” (AR)</i></p> <p>CH advised this was not currently the case but should be considered moving forward.</p> <p><i>“CT agreed that this practice was thoroughly recommended. How were staff selected for inclusion in the staff survey? When would feedback be available?” (CT)</i></p> <p>CH advised that it would be a random selection; however, staff would be interviewed in groups with their peers to facilitate more open discussion. It is anticipated that feedback will be available by the end of this term.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>C22: 03 The content of the Principal’s report be noted.</p>
6	KPI Progress Report
	<p>DH introduced this agenda item noting that there is agreement following discussion with LJ of the need to refresh the KPIs and ensure that they are simple and measurable. Recommendations will be circulated to board members prior to the next Corporation meeting.</p>

	<p>LJ highlighted the two major risk factors as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 16-18 enrolment is short of target. Whilst this year’s income is not affected, due to the lagging process there will be an impact on next year’s funding. ▪ There is currently an underspend in the IT/Estates budgets. This is partly due to the emphasis on ensuring a safe environment for the college to open to students in September. Both departments have clear plans to address the underfunding with a large IT replacement of switches and servers during this half term and a plan to progress identified infrastructure issues to ensure all buildings are fit for purpose.
	<p>Governors’ Questions and Observations:</p> <p><i>“Is the underspend linked to James Watt?” (DH)</i></p> <p>LJ confirmed that part of the spend is identified to address infrastructure issues at James Watt.</p> <p><i>“Is there a link to the Covid Capital funding?” (IM)</i></p> <p>LJ advised that capital funding has been allocated as part of the government’s spending review and £1.9 has been released to the college. Procurement is in process and the priority is to upgrade issues classed as “C” on the Conditions Survey to “B”. It was noted that the funding needs to be spent by the end of March 2021 although a Business Case is being compiled to request an extension to this date.</p> <p><i>“Is the dip in enrolment numbers across all areas? Does it indicate a longer-term trend?” (AR)</i></p> <p>LJ advised that the main impact was being felt at Sutton Coldfield college. The reasons for this were being investigated although it was noted that with the whole sector being in a state of flux it was difficult to assess the reasons. No pattern has emerged regarding the distance to travel. DH noted that Sutton Coldfield has a greater number of schools with Sixth Forms and it was suggested that students who have received assessed grades in summer 2020 that enabled them to take A Level cases have opted to stay in their schools and Sixth Form Colleges. As an example, Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College has enrolled 200 more students than anticipated for A Level courses.</p> <p><i>“Have more NEETs been identified this year?”</i></p> <p>LJ confirmed this was the case and emphasised the critical importance of engaging with the 16-18 group. CH noted that Jan Myatt, Vice Principal of Matthew Bolton, is part of the Post-16 Forum and working hard to enrol students between now and January.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>C22: 04</p> <p>The KPI Progress Report be noted.</p>
7	<p>ASQD Committee</p>
	<p>To complement the report in the Board Pack entitled “Report from the Chair of the ASQD Committee” PH advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enrolment onto Apprenticeships is comparatively steady and in line with planned recruitment.
	<p>Governors’ Questions and Observations</p> <p><i>“What was the nature of questions asked by the Student Forum as part of the interviews for the new Principal?” (CT)</i></p> <p>PH advised that the questions were around</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The work of the Principal ▪ The vision of the Principal ▪ How the Principal would work across three colleges which make up one team <p>Students were keen to ascertain that a new Principal would be approachable.</p>

	<p><i>“Re complaints. Is 26% of complaints being fully or partially substantiated a typical outcome?” (IM)</i></p> <p>CH advised that a number of complaints had arisen from delays being experienced by students in receiving relevant information or certificates and the college accepted some culpability in this regard. CH advised that there had been a high volume of complaints at the end of the academic year relating to grade awards which resulted in a higher total than in the previous year. PH, AM and VD assured governors that committee members were reassured at the outcome of what had been a lengthy and in-depth discussion around this issue.</p> <p>CH agreed that he would interrogate the complaints data further and report back to the Board.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>C22: 05</p> <p>The report presented by PH be noted.</p>
8	<p>Finance Committee</p>
	<p>To complement the report in the Board Pack entitled “Report from the Chair of the Finance Committee” H-SA advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the need for the capital grant to be spent in a timely manner. <p>MP advised that the pension liability has been finalised. The Actuarial report reflects prudence by the fund managers, however, auditors suggest that the figure is over prudent. This needs to be clarified to ensure correct provision is included in the final accounts. MP noted that the budget is currently being reviewed to reflect the dip in enrolment numbers. LJ and Fiona Yardley are meeting with each college Vice Principal to ascertain a clear picture. MP advised he would circulate a detailed briefing to the committee prior to the next meeting.</p>
	<p>Governors’ Questions and Observations</p> <p><i>“Has there been any saving on non-pay expenditure due to Covid that offsets the impact of non-delivery of some courses?” (AR)</i></p> <p>MP advised that this is the case but the college has also incurred some additional costs due to Covid. These have been accounted for in the budget.</p> <p><i>“Is there a national drop in the numbers of Adult Learners enrolling on courses and if so, why is this at a time when there are many job losses and job seekers are being encouraged to reskill/upskill?” (DH)</i></p> <p>CH advised that although BMet’s apprenticeship enrolment rates are in line with predictions, nationally there is a drop. He suggested that uptake will increase to meet the needs of the current climate but it will take time. The college needs to respond rapidly to new developments and ensure that it has appropriately trained specialist staff.</p> <p><i>“CT advised that the company for which she works is currently undertaking a round of redundancies and suggested how beneficial it would be if staff could be advised to consider further education as a means of upskilling rather than simply being advised to search for alternative employment.” (CT)</i></p> <p>DH advised that he would discuss with CT how staff in her company could best be signposted towards BMet’s provision.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:</p> <p>C22: 06</p> <p>The report presented by H-SA be noted.</p>
9.1	<p>Forward Planning: December Board Meeting</p>
	<p>The date of the next meeting of the Corporation is Thursday 17 December 2020.</p>

9.2	Forward Planning: Board Development
	DH noted that the current Strategic Plan was initiated at the Corporation conference held in December 2019. In the context of Covid it is not possible to hold a similar event so a priority going forward is for the Board to evaluate how it continues its strategic planning virtually. It was noted that this planning must include the new Principal. DH suggested the possibility arranging a half-day virtual conference in the new year.
10	Any Other Business and Governors' Questions
	<p><i>“When is the college closing at the end of term?” (VD)</i></p> <p>CH advised that the college would close for students on Friday 11 December and for staff on Friday 18 December. Monday 14 December will be a whole staff development day and from 15-18 December all staff will be encouraged to work at home although some teaching will continue in college. This additional time will provide opportunity for the Estates Team to continue their work. College will open on 04 January 2021. NA asked CH to send a reminder of these dates to staff.</p> <p>DH concluded the meeting by asking independent governors to remain online for a confidential discussion. Accordingly, NA and TP left the meeting at 09.43.</p>



Signed: _____

Chair: Dexter Hutt