

Agenda No: 02



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MONDAY 27 APRIL 2020

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 April 2020
Author: Clerk
Action: Approve
Status: Open

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Present: John Hogg (Chair)
Andy Cole (Interim Principal / CEO)
Aneela Ali
Martin Gannon
Martin Hedley
Darren Heathcote
Chris Macklin
David Mitchell
Kirsty Paterson
Claire-Jane Rewcastle
Sarah Stewart

In attendance: John Gray
Nadine Hudspeth
Ivan Jepson
Keith Oxspring
Mark Thompson
Chris Toon
Emma Moody (Clerk)
Suzanne Clark (Minutes)

3050 Chair's welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Andrew Haddon, Andy Lorimer and John Taylor who was experiencing technical difficulties accessing the meeting using Microsoft Teams.

No governor declared any conflict of interest at this stage but governors were reminded that if a conflict arose during the meeting, they should declare it as soon as they became aware of it.

3051 Minutes of the last meeting dated 26 March 2020

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 26 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3052 Matters arising

Updates were given on the matters arising recorded at the meeting on 26 March 2020.

The Interim Finance Director advised progress is being made in relation to the discussion required with the bank to obtain a waiver letter in relation to the breach of covenant for 18/19 and 19/20. The bank has been asked to give an update and the Interim Finance Director confirmed that the letter received by the College was a standard letter used in these circumstances. The College was liaising with the bank to obtain a more formal assurance in the form of a waiver letter.

The Chair confirmed that as a result of the previous meeting the task and finish group have now met to discuss in detail what is required in relation to the signing off of the financial statements for 18/19. The Chair recorded his appreciation that the Chair of the Audit Committee, Chris Macklin, had chaired the first meeting and asked that he give an update. The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that the task and finish group had talked through many of the issues governors need to have in place satisfy themselves to be able to sign off the accounts on a 'going concern' basis, and noted that the financial statements would declare the nature of material uncertainties existing at the date of sign-off. Substantial work was ongoing to ensure that the financial statements provided an adequate reflection of the College's current position. Further meetings are planned and regular updates will be provided.

3053 Update on Business Development Plan / General Update

The report was presented by the Director of Marketing & Communications and the Director of Business Development.

The Director of Marketing & Communications drew out particular themes from the report. This included work undertaken in relation to the College's brand reputation and positioning and how the College is perceived externally. Members were made aware that letters of support from key stakeholders have been included as part of the College's business case. The Director of Marketing & Communications also referred to the College's culture stressing that it has always prided itself on being highly regarded in the sector and viewed as a high performing organisation. The recent financial issues had clearly caused some damage to the external perception of the College but nevertheless it was very encouraging that the College's relationships with many stakeholders had remained strong during this time.

The Director of Business Development added that in preparing the business case it was critical to include external validation. This shows that the college is agile and responsive and he felt that the College's networks are vital to evidencing its strong relationships with partners, showing that the approach is valued by employers. A governor added her endorsement to this and was in complete agreement with the support from the business community and key stakeholders in the north east region.

The Interim Principal / CEO reported that the FEC have specifically requested evidence of key stakeholder support.

In response to a question from a member, the Director of Marketing & Communications confirmed that PR and communications very much sits within the report. This underpins the plan and reinforces the College's position.

The Director of Business Development gave members reassurance that the team will be looking to deliver the same quality of service with less resource acknowledging that this is a significant challenge. The Executive Team have all been very much involved in the production of the plan and know what needs to be done to achieve it.

The Director of Marketing & Communications gave an update in relation to the Estates Strategy. The team has recognised the need to be able to demonstrate a robust strategic plan. They are now at a point now where information has been collected and they are looking at how best to present this. The Chair acknowledged that these were important issues to be focused on and suggested that governors should be constantly asking whether efficiencies impact on effectiveness. Financial recovery should be at the heart of the plan but the Board and the Executive Team must not lose track of the College's primary objective.

The Director of Marketing & Communications reported that communications in recent months had been very much focused on crisis management. As part of this the Executive Team had committed to visible leadership, consistent messages and transparency with staff. The team are now focused on crisis management in relation to Covid-19. She recognised the need to have good strong internal communications. Acknowledging that the response to Covid-19 will bring complications for the new academic year, the Director of Marketing & Communications reassured members that it is very much 'business as usual' in terms of new applications. The Team are being creative to ensure that applications are processed and potential learners continue to have personal contact and reassurance that their places are safe at Gateshead College for 2020/21 academic year.

The Director of Business Development reported that the College had recently secured funding through North of Tyne AEB which was good news for 2020/21. The College has also been invited to bid for some further additional funding and the Board will be updated as this progresses. Members were made aware that there are some issues around apprentices in terms of new starts as a result of Covid-19. The College are supporting current apprentices remotely and are awaiting further detail on what will happen if businesses make the decision to furlough apprentices.

The Chair thanked the Director of Marketing & Communications and the Director of Business Development for the report adding that the positive trend in relation to full-time applications for 2020/21 was systematic of the College's Culture.

The report was noted.

3054 Draft Business Case

The report was presented by the Interim Principal / CEO.

THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

The report was noted.

3055 Recovery Plan - update

The report was presented by the Interim Finance Director and the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

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The report was noted.

3056 Gateshead College – Supervised Status

The report was presented by the Clerk.

The Clerk reported that the purpose of the report was to remind governors of the jurisdiction of the FE Commissioner and the ESFA and the implications for the College of being in supervised status. For new governors in particular, this should be helpful to take them through the history of the circumstances leading up to formal intervention and the issuing of a financial notice to improve to the College. It also outlined the various agencies involved in the process and their respective responsibilities and powers. The Clerk commented that the reports presented during the meeting, and the action tracker document, show the substantial progress being made by the College in complying with the directions and recommendations of the FEC. The Clerk also stated that she felt that the Business Plan, the Estates Strategy and the Curriculum Plan appeared to be of a very high, professional quality and presented the College's case in a much more comprehensive and compelling way. She noted the substantial contribution of the authors to these documents.

The report was noted.

3057 Action Tracker

The report was presented by the Clerk.

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The report was noted.

3058 Any other business

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3059 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 23 April 2020 at 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 11.25am.