

Colchester Institute Corporation

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporation Board  
held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
at the Colchester Campus**

**Present:**

Kevin Prince, *in the Chair*  
Alison Andreas  
Lisa Blake  
Richard Block  
Peter Cook

Chris Donovan  
Thomas Empson  
Brenda Rich  
Dawn Swainson  
Caroline Williams

**In Attendance:**

Maeve Borges  
Gary Horne  
Hazel Paton

Vice Principal: Student and Information Services  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Clerk to the Governors

**Observer**

Fiona Chalk

External Board Reviewer

Chris Donovan and Thomas Empson were welcomed to their first Governors meeting. Fiona Chalk was also welcomed to the meeting.

**Pre Board Briefing – Safeguarding Update 2023/24**

The meeting was preceded with a Safeguarding update from the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Maeve Borges. The presentation covered:

- Statutory Duties for safeguarding as an organisation – legal frameworks
- Key responsibilities for the College
- Role of the Governing Body
- Safer Recruitment Overview
- Raising Awareness for Staff
- How we Safeguard Students
- Key risks for our students

It was noted that:

- The key requirements for schools and colleges is set out in the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education(KCSIE). The College must also comply with Southend, Essex and Thurrock Procedures for Safeguarding Childrens and Adults, which puts the statutory requirements into a local context.
- Safeguarding is a key priority in Ofsted inspections and could result in an overall rating of Requires Improvement, regarding of outcomes in other areas.
- As an organisation the College musy have a policy, which sets out its processes, is reviewed annually and is published on the website.
- There is a duty to have safer recruitment practices; to ensure there is a safe environment for all our students; and to have clear processes for managing any concerns.
- Staff need to be aware of how to keep themselves safe, particularly in terms of any allegations that may be made about them.
- There is a duty to participate in multi agency working and also to promote and work within Prevent guidance to prevent students or staff from becoming involved in any form of terrorism.

- Recent updates to KCSIE had increased the requirements around online safety for students. These updates include a requirement for the College's network to be filtered and monitored and for any concerns to be flagged up.
- The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that policies, procedures and training are effective and comply with legislation. The Curriculum and Quality Committee receives a safeguarding report three times a year, which includes information on the College's compliance with statutory duties, as well as a summary of the issues and concerns that the Safeguarding and Welfare team are dealing with.
- Safer recruitment processes including ensuring that everyone who comes on site to potentially work with children is recorded on a Single Central Record, have a full employment history, and have established a right to work in the UK. Every single role within the College is required to have an enhanced DBS check in place and to provide references from the previous two employers. Refresher training on safer recruitment was currently being delivered to all line managers.
- Any allegation against a staff member which results in dismissal must be disclosed to the Disclosure and Barring Service. It was reported that 50 thousand people in this country are unable to work with children.
- Safeguarding is covered in all student inductions. As adult learners on evening classes do not access the full induction, a shorter video has been developed which is shown at the beginning of every adult class to ensure they receive the same messages as other students.
- Currently, just over 40 students were on active suicide support plans at the College., compared to 64 at the high point in the previous year.

In response to questions from Governors it was reported that:

- Anecdotal evidence confirms that students are well supported. The Team that works with the students keep a monitoring eye on them throughout the year, and work with curriculum areas to ensure the students receive ongoing support. Through the Fitness to Study Policy and Admissions Review Process there may come a point where it is recognised that the College is potentially not able to keep a student safe, or that Colchester Institute is not the right environment for them. Where a student is longer able to study at the College, they receive help with referrals to other services.
- The team at the College are not professionals in this area and work with external services. A student not engaging with external services and the professional people working with them might be a reason for the College not to retain the student.
- The College has signed up to the mental health charter for staff and students.
- Monthly supervision is available to the Safeguarding and Welfare team from a former member of the team who is a trained counsellor. This can be on a group or one-to-one basis.
- The Learning and Development Day at the start of term included an update on Safeguarding and KCSIE which was well attended. Staff had either attended the session in person, watched the live stream in their groups in classrooms or at home, or viewed a recording of the session.

The Vice Principal: Student and Information Services was thanked for her presentation.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Stephanie Bettinson, Irene Kettle and Jasmin Patel.

2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest**

None.

3. **Agreement to Starred Agenda Items**

Governors were invited to indicate any items which they wished to star for discussion or question. Items that had not been starred were noted and/or approved without discussion.

4. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023 (CIC/23/5/1) were received and approved as an accurate record. The Chair signed the minute book.

5. **Matters arising from the Minutes**

CIC/23/5/2, Corporation Board Action Sheet, was received and noted. The Chair reported that he had asked the External Reviewer to look at whether the Board was sufficiently strategic or too reflective as part of her review.

6. **Student Enrolments 2023/24**

The Principal updated the Board on student enrolments 2023/24. Student numbers were reported as:

- FE full time – 3805 against a funded target of 3750. This was higher than at the same point last year. It was reported that students are counted for funding purposes if they remain in learning count for 42 days under the lagged learner methodology any under recruitment this year will impact next year's funding. The depression in GCSE results this year had resulted in a few more Level 2 learners who did not meet the requirements for the Level 3.
- Apprenticeships – 425 students had either fully enrolled or were in the process of being enrolled against the target for the end of October of 398. Another 100 students were in the pipeline.
- HE – 177 full time students against a target of 186; 107 part time students against a target of 112; and 36 apprenticeships against a target of 38.
- Adults – it was too early to report. It was reported that the College's funding allocation was 10% down on the previous year.

Governors noted that the College had set a curriculum target for 16-18 learners (3930) which was much higher than the funded target (3750) and questioned this. It was reported that the funded target was used in the budget and no additional student enrolments were assumed; the curriculum plan target was not expected to be achieved.

Referring to the discussion at last year's planning day, a Governor asked how enrolments compared to what they were forecast to be one year ago. It was reported that HE numbers were close to where they were expected to be as a result of the decision to rationalise the provision. There were now only four full time degree programmes. These were in Fine Art, Business and Management, Early Years, and Counselling. The College was trying to grow part time Construction and Engineering and maintain or grow Education programmes. The costs associated with delivery had been reduced to ensure that there is a viable offer. There would be further cost and space savings as programmes teach out. It was reported that all colleges in the Eastern region had seen a downturn in HE recruitment.

Governors asked what had led to the increase in apprenticeship numbers. It was reported that the College was benefitting from its work with large employers and growing its professional apprenticeships, which had contributed to a higher number of apprentices this September.

Governors asked if the increase in apprenticeships was in a specific area and, if so, if there were any concerns about staffing and resourcing them. It was reported that Electrical was the only area where it may be necessary to turn students away because of staffing. It was reported that numbers were up in Engineering and Professional Apprenticeships, but lower in Plumbing and Brickwork. The College had had to disappoint a number of Engineering employers, particularly in the Braintree district, because it had been unable to find apprentices.

7. **2022-23 and 2023-24**

CIC/23/5/3, Academic Targets 2023-24 and update on outcomes in 2022-23, was received and presented by the Principal. It was reported that some outcomes in 2022/2023 were still predicted. Final outcomes would be discussed at the Curriculum and Quality Committee as part of the Self-Assessment Report.

It was reported that there was a proposed change to the HE targets approved by Governors in July. This was approved by Governors.

A Governor asked if apprenticeship achievements, which were in line with national rates, had been impacted by learners achieving the qualification and leaving the apprenticeship early. The Governor also asked about the financial impact of not receiving the 20% completion funding for students who do not complete, and any implications for the College's plan to grow apprenticeship numbers. It was reported that in many instances it was not that the student did not complete the apprenticeship, but they did not complete it on time., and the End Point Assessment and the funding was moved into the following year. When the budget for the current year was set, the 20% completion funding was not included for anybody due to complete their apprenticeship after April 2024. It was reported that a lot of students withdraw from an apprenticeship because they leave or lose their job.

Governors observed that for various reasons a number of targets had not been achieved. The Principal reported that whilst it was disappointing that the targets for 2023/24 were lower, they were a better reflection of the post Covid world, and the changes in student behaviour and attitudes, and family behaviours and attitudes that have been seen in the last three years. As an example, it was reported that no educational establishment now achieves 90% attendance.

## 8. **Strategic Plan – Special Focus**

CIC/23/5/4, Strategic Plan – Deep Dive into Goal 5, was received and presented by the Principal. It was reported that it remains important for the College to become a provider of choice for more employers, but the way in which this is achieved had changed since the Strategic Plan was written in late 2020/early 2021.

It was reported that the College had set ambitious targets of doubling both full cost income and apprenticeship starts which were not going to be met, but that there were different ways of meeting employer and local economic needs. Specific project funding had grown rapidly in the last 12 months and a different mix and balance of apprentices meant that the College would get close to the funded target.

Governors noted that the College was in contact with over 3500 employers locally and regionally and were interested to know if these were small or large employers, and how many employers the College was working with. The Principal commented that if the numbers were representative of the local economy, then 97% would be SMEs. It was acknowledged that engaging with fewer, larger employers, would be more cost effective. It was reported that the Business Team were in contact with 3787 employers, which could be in the form of a quarterly email, and working actively with over one thousand employers. Governors asked what impact this engagement had had on the local economy and were advised that it was difficult to measure. Governors suggested using staff, employers and business to tell their stories as a powerful way of marketing what the College does for the local economy.

In response to a question, it was reported that the College had received funding to help take forward the priorities in the Local Skills Improvement Plan, including to support capital development; the development of new courses; knowledge transfer and the upskilling of College staff; and to develop students soft skills.

Governors noted that some of the actions had not been achieved and the reasons why and, recognising that the Strategic Plan had been put together three years ago, suggested that there ought to be an opportunity to respond to this by adding to the Strategic Plan.

## 9. **Reports from Committee**

### 9.1. **Finance and Resources Committee**

#### 9.1.1. **Report from Committee Chair**

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee presented his written report (CIC/23/5/5). It was reported that at its last meeting the Committee had:

- Reviewed the final outturn position July 2023 and considered what issues and pressures might impact on the current financial year.
- Reviewed venue hire rates and noted that the College Executive was maximising income opportunities whilst complying with safeguarding requirements.
- Considered, and were recommending to the Board, the UCC Fee Proposals for 2024-25. The Committee had concluded that in future there should be incremental year on year increases to the fees to keep them in line with the increased cost base.
- Noted improvements in the HR key priorities and HR dashboard.
- Reviewed and approved updated Pay and Reward and Sickness Absence policies.

#### 9.1.2. **Monthly Management Report**

CIC/23/5/6, Monthly Management Report and Accounts July 2023 [Period 12], was received and noted.

#### 9.1.3. **UCC Fee Proposals 2024-25**

CIC/23/5/7, UCC Fee Proposals 2024-25, was received, considered and APPROVED. It was reported that there was no evidence that increasing fees would impact students numbers because the fees are repaid in the future. HNC fees might be more price sensitive because they are more likely to be paid by an employer.

#### 9.1.4. **Update on Property Issues**

It was reported that the summer work programme was now complete. Work had included:

- The installation of new photovoltaic (PV) panels, bringing the number to PV panels across the Colchester and Braintree campuses to c1000. It was reported that the College had been shortlisted for the Essex Countywide Business Awards environmental category.
- New laundry facility in CH&FS building to reduce the revenue costs associated with outsourcing cleaning.
- Completion of Block H refurbishment programme.
- Reconfiguration of four classrooms in B Block.
- Installation of LED lighting across West Wing.

It was reported that changes being implemented during this academic year included renewal of the data centre in West Wing. Work was planned to be completed during half term to avoid disruption to teaching.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that he was meeting with an external company the following day to discuss their sponsorship of the Net Zero Centre, which could include smart technology.

In response to a question on the impact of the sustainability initiatives it was reported that the PV arrays at Braintree and Colchester and the decarbonisation of the Colchester campus would save over 500 carbon tonnes annually. Because energy prices keep moving it was difficult to put a figure on the financial savings. A full report on net zero would be received at the December meeting within the Annual Report and Financial Statements. A third party was being used to calculate the streamlined energy carbon report.

## 9.2. **Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee**

#### 9.2.1. **Report from Committee Chair**

CIC/23/5/8, report from the Chair of the Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee, was received and noted.

#### 9.2.2. **Board Membership**

On the recommendation of the Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee the Board re-appointed Jasmin Patel for a four year term of office with effect from 01/01/2024.

It was reported that Terry Smyth had resigned as a Governor, creating a vacancy for an Independent Member, and Lead Governor for Safeguarding. The Corporation Chair reported that had taken on the role of Lead Governor for Safeguarding in the short term.

9.2.3. **Board Attendance Report 2022-23**

CIC/23/5/9, Board Attendance Report 2022-23, was received and noted.

10. **Scheme of Delegation – approval of policies and procedures**

CIC/23/5/10, Scheme of Delegation – approval of policies and procedures, was received and considered. Governors discussed if there was scope for more policies, such as staff management policies, to be delegated to the College Executive, or for policies to only be referred to the Board where there was a complete rewrite. It was agreed to ask each Committee to review the proposals and make recommendations in respect of the policies relevant to their terms of reference.

11. **Register of Interests**

CIC/23/5/11, summary of changes to the Register of Corporation Members' Interests, was received and noted.

12. **Review of Effectiveness of Meeting**

Governors reviewed the effectiveness of the meeting. A member suggested greater use of graphs in some of the reports.

13. **Next Meeting**

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 4.30pm at the Colchester Campus. The meeting will be preceded with a Board briefing at 4.00pm.

14. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no items.