

BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD
HELD ON 28 APRIL 2020, 5.00PM
VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members' attendance record:

		17 Sep 2019	22 Oct 2019	3 Dec 2019	4 Feb 2020	10 Mar 2020	28 Apr 2020	9 Jun 2020	7 Jul 2020	2019/20 attendance
Alan Cavill	Independent Member, Chair	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Jane Cole	Independent Member	✓	✓	✓	A	A	V			
Kenny Gilmour	Independent Member	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A			
Colleen Hickson	Staff Member	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Lucy Holden	Student Member	---	---	---	✓	✓	V			
Chris Holt	Independent Member	---	---	---	✓	✓	V			
Kieran Hunter	Student Member	✓	A	A	A	A	✘			
Heather Knight	Independent Member	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	V			
Martin Long	Independent Member	---	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Judith Mills	Independent Member	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Lorraine Moffat	Independent Member	A	A	A	✓	✓	V			
Anne Parmley	Independent Member	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Joanne Shepherd	Staff Member	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Bev Robinson OBE	Principal and Chief Executive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	V			
Kate Shane	Independent Member	A	✓	A	A	---	---			
Steve Williams	Independent Member	A	✓	✓	✓	A	V			

Key: ✓ attended | T/V – attended by tele/videoconference | A apologies sent and accepted | ✘ did not attend

In attendance:

Linda Dean, Executive Director, B&FC for Business
Cheryl Dunn, Vice-Principal for Higher Education and Student Enhancement
Paul Howard, PDH Advisory Limited (Outgoing Company Secretary)
Simon Hughes, Vice-Principal for Quality and Curriculum
Daryl Platt, Vice-Principal for Engagement
Robby Ryan, Chief Operating Officer
Danya Young, Company Secretary

The Chair welcomed the Board members and attendees to the first wholly remote Corporation Board meeting.

The Chair reminded the Board that this would be P Howard's last Corporation Board meeting, although he was not leaving the organisation until September 2020.

33/20 Chair and quorum

Alan Cavill took the chair and noted that due notice had been given to all members and that a quorum was present. Accordingly, he declared the meeting duly convened and constituted.

34/20 Apologies for absence

The Board noted the apologies for absence as shown in the members' attendance record above.

35/20 Declarations of interest

No Board members declared an interest in any of the items of business to be transacted.

36/20 Minutes of the previous meeting and action log

The minutes and confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2020 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

The Board noted the content of the action log.

37/20 Matters arising

The Company Secretary recorded the Board's approval of the T level bid for capital monies for 2021-22 by way of written resolution on 14 April 2020 to enable the College to meet the DfE's submission deadline of 29 April 2020.

38/20 Principal and Chief Executive's report

The Chair and Vice-Chair congratulated the organisation on the College's excellent results in the National Achievement Rate Tables 2018-19 for England as recorded in the circulated report, which the Principal and Chief Executive also acknowledged.

The Board noted that B&FC had been in the top 3% of all General FE and Tertiary Colleges in England overall for the sixth consecutive year and in the top ten for each of the specific categories, which was a tremendous achievement during another outstanding year for the College.

The remainder of her report provided a high-level summary of the impact of COVID-19 on B&FC's operations and the Principal and Chief Executive drew the Board's attention to agenda item 8, which was the substantive item on the agenda, and she underlined the importance of the Board satisfying itself that the College remained a going concern.

The Corporation Board **RECEIVED** the report and noted the content.

39/20 COVID-19 impact upon B&FC's operation

The Principal and Chief Executive introduced the report, which focused on B&FC's changing operations and its ongoing assessments and mitigations of related risks, in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Principal and Chief Executive summarised the key themes that would be covered by her respective colleagues to provide the Board with a holistic overview of B&FC's operations, as well as the oversight and assurance needed.

i) B&FC's financial health and 2019-20 financial re-forecasts

The Chief Operating Officer reported on B&FC's financial health and 2019-20 financial re-forecasts by providing a comprehensive and detailed account of B&FC's solvency position; 2019-20 financial performance; 2020-21 budget preparations and indications; and B&FC's cash flow position, as determined by the aforementioned factors.

The Chief Operating Officer provided detailed responses to the questions and comments raised by Board members regarding B&FC's cash flow and financial resilience and stability.

Following the in-depth and lengthy discussion, the Board noted that it was assured as to the current financial viability and solvency of B&FC and that it remained a strong going concern.

ii) B&FC's approach to pay

B&FC's Executive Director for Business updated the Board on the latest developments with the Government's Job Retention Scheme (JRS) and reported on B&FC's current approach to pay and furloughing, and the rationale for its decision-making.

The Executive Director for Business emphasised that all available guidance on furloughing had been considered in detail and had been referenced with the ESFA and appropriate external legal advice from a variety of sources, to ensure B&FC's approach was consistent with the requisite guidance and well within the parameters of the JRS.

iii) B&FC's core business of learning, teaching and assessment and supporting student wellbeing

The Vice-Principal for Quality and Curriculum and the Vice-Principal for Higher Education and Student Enhancement presented in-depth accounts to the Board on the transition to and effectiveness of remote learning; ongoing quality assurance to drive continuous improvement; the continued close monitoring of student progress; and the support, wellbeing and safeguarding of all students, which remained a continuing key focus, as detailed fully in the circulated report.

The Board noted the positive progress that was being made and the examples of vibrant learning and teaching. The Board was provided with assurance as to the safeguarding and other measures in place to support vulnerable students including those who continued to attend B&FC premises throughout the lockdown period.

iv) Communication strategy

The Vice Principal for Engagement provided an overview of the multi-phase communication strategy that had been implemented in March 2020 to provide proactive and reactive reassurance and support to students, stakeholders, employers, members of the local community and all employees. He also summarised the ways in which the effectiveness of the various communication channels were being assessed and measured and the positive responses and feedback received to date.

The Principal and Chief Executive asked L Holden if she wished to provide any further insight or feedback from her perspective as a B&FC student. In response, L Holden confirmed that she had found that the quality of teaching had remained the same despite the transition to remote learning, and she provided positive feedback on the communication, engagement and support from her tutors.

Similarly, J Cole confirmed that the Blackpool Transport students were continuing with their training and the feedback received from her training team was that the students were receiving all the support they needed.

v) Health and safety and risk management

The Company Secretary drew the Board's attention to the key measures that had been introduced or adapted to ensure the appropriateness of the College's oversight and systems in the context of COVID-19, which were detailed at Appendix A of the report for the Board's information.

The Board noted that the measures provided assurance that the College had robust processes in place to ultimately protect and promote the health and safety of students, employees and third parties, and thereby consequently to mitigate against any potential future associated risks.

The Company Secretary confirmed that written legal advice would be obtained for completeness.

vi) Webinar - 'College Governance and COVID-19: Sizing the problem, addressing the risks'

The Company Secretary provided a brief overview of the key themes of the Association of Colleges-led webinar delivered on 3 April 2020, which was available for Board members to view in the Board portal, and she signposted the Board to the headlines set out in Appendix B.

The Company Secretary confirmed that the seminar had provided her with comfort, confidence and assurance that B&FC had already been proactively considering and actioning all of the key issues and recommendations addressed at the seminar.

The Board thanked the Executive for the clear, comprehensive and informative report which gave the Board comfort that everything that could possibly be done was being done to ensure continuity for students' learning and promote and protect their safety and wellbeing.

L Holden also expressed her gratitude to the College's tutors for the speed at which they had implemented online learning and for providing a source of comfort and support to students who were trying to continue with their studies during the stressful circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Principal and Chief Executive thanked L Holden for sharing this feedback, acknowledging that B&FC was always keen to receive any feedback to enable continuous improvement and she noted that the College would continue to work with the student body to be as responsive as possible.

The Corporation Board **RECEIVED** the report and noted the content.

In response to a question raised by H Knight on onward scenario planning, the Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that a detailed report on recovery planning was scheduled to be brought to the next meeting. However, she took the opportunity to update the Board on each of the areas that the report would cover substantively and provided a high-level summary of the steps that had been taken to date.

40/20 Recruitment and Succession Planning for the Chair

The Company Secretary introduced the report, which had been circulated with the agenda to enable the Board to consider and agree the role descriptor and proposed recruitment plan for the future B&FC Chair.

The Principal and Chief Executive drew the Board's attention to the revised timeline for the recruitment, which had been extended in view of the Government's current lockdown and social distancing restrictions.

Following consideration, the Board **APPROVED** the following:

- a) The draft role descriptor as presented, subject to a small amendment to the role purpose and person specification proposed by H Knight, which was agreed.
- b) The proposed recruitment plan as presented, including the attendance of Martin Doel OBE, Professor of Leadership in Further Education and Skills, University College London and former Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, at the panel interviews.
- c) The hiring of a head-hunter to assist with the process.

The Board also agreed that the role profile and recruitment plan could be revised slightly as appropriate, if so recommended by the head-hunter.

A Parmley asked whether the College's governance arrangements permitted the extension of the incumbent Chair's term of office in the event that the current public health emergency negatively affected the level of interest in the vacancy.

The Principal and Chief Executive reminded the Board that the incumbent Chair's term of office did not end until December 2021 but confirmed that it would be possible for the Board to revise its governance arrangements to allow for such a contingency, which could be considered further in due course. The Chair did not participate in this discussion.

41/20 Annual Capital Programme 2020/21

The Chief Operating Officer presented a report, which had been circulated with the agenda to:

- a) Seek qualified Board approval for the 2020/21 capital expenditure budget to allow sufficient lead time for appropriate market research and procurement compliance to be completed.
- b) Allow the Executive team to vire between the proposed budget lines in the 'Breakdown of Proposed Annual B&FC Capital Budget 2020/21' table on the second page of the report, staying within the overall budget envelope.

The Chief Operator Officer confirmed that final approval to incur expenditure would be requested from the Board at its meeting in July 2020.

In response to a question from S Williams, it was confirmed that whilst the Board's decision at this stage was important for planning purposes to enable the requisite infrastructure, equipment, learning systems to be in place for the start of term, no purchase orders nor related commitments would be made until the Board approved in the budget formally in July 2020. Furthermore, should there be any risk to the financial health of the organisation, the College would not commit to any expenditure.

The Board noted that due to the uncertainty around COVID-19 and the need for B&FC to conserve cash, the Executive was not utilising the option to seek the Board's early approval of capital expenditure at this time.

The Corporation Board noted the report and following consideration **APPROVED** the recommendations as presented.

42/20 Quality and Standards Committee matters

In the absence of the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee, the Vice-Principal for Quality and Curriculum presented the minutes of the meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee meeting held on 26 November 2019.

The Vice-Principal for Quality and Curriculum and A Parmley also provided a verbal summary of the business transacted at its most recent meeting on 2 April 2020.

The Corporation Board **RECEIVED** the minutes and noted the content.

P Howard presented the slightly revised Quality and Standards Committee terms of reference as recommended by the Quality and Standards Committee for the Board's approval.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the revised terms of reference as presented.

43/20 Board members' forum

The Chair thanked the Principal and Chief Executive and Executive team for the quality of the information shared with the Board since the last meeting, and for the well managed and effective remote Corporation Board meeting.

The positive feedback was echoed by other Board members who thanked and congratulated the Executive on the comprehensive reports, for all their work during the extraordinary circumstances without any precedents to rely upon,

and for providing the Board with the re assurance that the College was in good hands.

The Principal and Chief Executive reminded the Board that their feedback on the meetings was always welcome and she encouraged Board members to share any suggestions they may have on the facilitation of future remote meetings with herself or the Company Secretary to enable continuous improvement.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked P Howard, the outgoing Clerk to the Corporation and Company Secretary, for his service to the Corporation over the last four and a half years.

44/20 Date, time and venue of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporation Board would be held on 9 June 2020, 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams.

Approved by the Corporation Board on 9 June 2020.