



THE CORPORATION OF CROYDON COLLEGE

Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 6.00pm

Virtual Meeting

PART ONE MINUTES

PRESENT: Tony Stevenson (Chair)
 Caireen Mitchell (Principal & CEO)
 Tom Hesmondhalgh (Vice Chair)
 Jean Cook
 Andrew Lowe
 Nasim Jivani Hemani
 Andrew Gilchrist
 Catherine Boyd-Maunsell
 Claudine Reid
 Lucia Guetcherian (Staff Governor, Croydon Campus)
 Fiona Brennan (Staff Governor, Coulsdon Campus)
 Shyam Pillai (Student Governor, Croydon Campus)
 Abbigail Azirou (Student Governor, Coulsdon Campus)

IN ATTENDANCE: Ann-Christine Harland (VP Finance & Resources)
 Fadia Clarke (VP Training, Skills & HE)
 Odette Carew (Principal, Coulsdon College - CP)

CLERK: Clare Mitchell (Director of Governance)

QUORUM: The meeting was quorate

	Item
1.	<p>PRELIMINARY BUSINESS</p> <p>i. Apologies for Absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies for absence were received from Angela Edwards, Vice-Principal Education and Quality. Rahel Haque was absent from the meeting. <p>ii. Declarations of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Gilchrist is a Governor at Brooklands College.
2.	<p>EVALUATION OF STANDARDS</p> <p>i. Principal's Report including KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The P&CEO outlined the arrangements for online teaching and learning during the most recent lockdown. Engagement with online learning had varied; in general, students studying more academic subjects at higher levels had engaged better with online teaching and learning than lower level students studying more practical subjects. Classes had continued on site for students at the Pathway Centre, students accessing the Supported Education programme and for 16-18 ESOL Looked After Children.

- All 16-18 students had now returned to campus. Some adult students were still undertaking a mix of online and in person classes. HE students were still receiving all their teaching online and plans were being made for them to return on site after the Easter break. There had been an increase in the number of safeguarding concerns raised, particularly in the younger age group and in relation to mental health, since the return to campus. Providing additional resource in the safeguarding team was being actively considered.
- The P&CEO reported on progress on the key improvement strategies. Attendance had generally been good since the return to campus but had declined during the lockdown. Lesson observations and snapshot reviews were continuing. The snapshot review of the School of Business, Community and Access was complete and the School had been assessed as Good. The review of SEND provision was also complete and this provision had been assessed as Good. Since the paper had been written, the School of English and Maths and Skills for Life had also been reviewed and assessed as Good. However, there were some concerns in this area about the level of engagement of younger students during the most recent lockdown.
- Business planning for 2021/22 was underway. There were a number of changes to the College's forecast income for 2021/22, mostly relating to AEB funding. The changes were a mixture of positive and negative but the overall effect was that the College would need to plan for providing £99,682 less AEB provision in 2021/22. The College was applying to the GLA Good Work fund for the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23 as a way of funding the increasing demand for adult courses. The College also hoped to grow its 16-18 provision in 2021/22, but any increase would not be funded until 2022/23.
- The planned capital works at the Croydon Campus were well underway and were expected to be completed by 31 March 2021. The Board would be considering bids for capital funding to develop T level facilities at both campuses later in the agenda.
- Sadly, the College community had lost three students in this academic year at the Croydon Campus. Both staff and students had been deeply affected by these deaths and support was being provided.
- The KPI for attendance was RAG rated as red because of a decline during the most recent lockdown. A number of strategies were in place to address this and the majority of students had now returned to campus. The KPI for timely achievement of apprenticeships was also red. This had been significantly impacted by the pandemic and performance against this KPI would be affected across the sector. The College was forecasting a deficit of £166K at the end of the 2020/21 year against a break even budget because of reductions in income from apprenticeships, HE and commercial activity and an increase in low margin activities e.g. Covid response grants. The College hoped to increase income to improve this position. However, the Government had recently announced that the ESFA AEB budget for 2020/21 would be reconciled at 90%. The current forecast was that the College might need to return £60K of this income unless enrolments could be significantly increased.
- The Board queried the reasons for the low scores for the Coulsdon Campus in the QDP student survey. The P&CEO indicated that the survey had been undertaken very early in the new CP's tenure and that a lot of work had taken place since then to address students' concerns. The CP reported that the results of a more recent QDP survey had now been received. Although the overall results were still in Quartile D, there were areas of improvement. The third lockdown had also impacted on the response rate and students' engagement with their studies. A third QDP survey was taking place in May 2021 and the CP hoped to see an improvement in the scores at that point. The Student Governor from the Coulsdon Campus reported that the CP had met regularly with the Student Union Executive to ask for feedback and comment and dialogue was very constructive. The Staff Governor from the Coulsdon Campus also reported that the Heads of Faculties were

meeting with groups of their students to discuss the results of the most recent QDP survey in more detail and to identify issues which could be addressed quickly at subject level.

- The Board asked whether the Government's Kickstart Scheme and Adult L3 offer were of benefit to the College. The P&CEO reported that the College had registered as a provider for Kickstart. Setting up the necessary processes had been time consuming but this was almost complete. The main financial benefit was a fee of £300 paid to the College for every candidate taken on. Those on the programme would also undertake a short AEB course and this would support the College's AEB provision. The College had been allocated £419,199 in 2021/22 to fund people aged 24+ for their first L3 qualification, but this had to be from a list of specific qualifications and did not include Access to HE, which was a significant part of the College's adult L3 provision. Many of the adults who came to the College to study were not ready to go straight into a L3 qualification. The College did not have sufficient funding for adults at L2 to provide pathways into L3 and this gap needed to be bridged.

The Corporation **NOTED** the P&CEO's report.

ii. Update on OfS Improvement Plan – OQIP and Specific Ongoing Condition (B3B)

- The VPTSHE presented the update to the OfS Improvement Plan, which had previously been reviewed by the HE Group and the Croydon Learning and Quality Committee (LQC). Progress against improvement in continuation rates, specific ongoing condition B3B.1(i), was rated as amber. However, current on programme attendance was over 80% and current on programme retention was 96%. As continuation rates were measured over a three year period, the performance of legacy courses was still impacting on this measure but there should be a significant improvement in the continuation rate by the end of the 2021/22 academic year. Progress against specific ongoing condition B3B.1(ii) was also assessed as amber. There was concern that the delivery of a material improvement in student outcomes, particularly in relation to professional employment rates for first degree students, might be impacted by the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic and lack of access to in person work experience. However, the VPTSHE reported that despite the pandemic, 49% of HE students were participating in work experience and other actions were being taken to promote links with employers. The Board congratulated the VPTSHE on the good progress in this area, despite the pandemic. In response to a question, the VPTSHE confirmed that the College was tracking student destinations, but the OfS would select their own data sample on which they would judge the College's progress against this condition.

The Corporation **NOTED** the progress to date and **APPROVED** the attached B3B actions and updated HE OQIP.

iii. Student Governors' Report

- The Student Governor from the Coulsdon Campus reported that prior to the return to campus she had asked for feedback from students on their experience of online learning. The consensus had been that students were keen to return to College and felt more engaged with face to face teaching. However, some students were concerned about the potential for an increase in Covid cases. The provision of on site testing and access to home testing kits had been reassuring. The return to College had been positive and the Student Union had held a number of events to engage and motivate students. Teachers had been very supportive in addressing students' concerns about how Centre Assessed Grades would be awarded this Summer.
- The Student Governor from the Croydon Campus reported that HE students continued to be taught online. Online lessons had improved during this lockdown as teachers and students now kept their video on, increasing interaction during lessons. Breakout rooms

were also being used to enable group seminar activities. Feedback indicated that the majority of HE students were keen to come back on site. L4 and L5 students were reporting difficulties with accessing and using the Navigate system to document work experience. The VPTSHE reported that the use of Navigate by HE students was under review.

The Corporation **NOTED** the Student Governors' Reports.

3. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

i. T Levels Capital Fund Applications

- The VPF&R explained that the College planned to submit two bids for Building and Facilities Improvement Grants (T Level funding); one for each Campus. Bids were on a 50/50 matched funding basis. The College would also be providing a list of the specialist equipment required for each project, with a view to receiving funding from the Specialist Equipment Allocation. The outcome of the bids would not be known until September 2021. This meant that the work would need to take place in the summer of 2022.
- The Coulsdon Campus would be delivering T Level Science from 2022/23 and the bid was for an additional, state of the art, science lab equipped for all three sciences. The three current science labs were fully timetabled for existing A Level and BTEC science courses. The College expected to have covered its estimated costs from this project from increased net income by 2028/29.
- The Croydon Campus would be delivering T Level Engineering from 2022/23. It was envisaged that the existing L2 and L3 courses in engineering would continue and the T Level in engineering would provide a high quality offer to a new cohort planning to progress to degree apprenticeships or University. The grant would be used to consolidate the engineering facilities in one area with the creation of two Engineering Technology Rooms, with industry standard technology and design facilities. The College expected to have covered its estimated costs from this project from increased net income by 2031/32.
- The VPF&R outlined the governance arrangements that would be in place during the projects and provided evidence of the College's commitment to provide the necessary resources for the projects. Progress on these projects would be reported to each Finance and Resources (F&R) Committee meeting from the Autumn Term 2021. Any material slippage in time or expenditure would be reported to F&R Committee members as soon as it occurred.

ACTION: VPF&R to report progress on T Level projects to each F&R Committee meeting from the Autumn Term 2021. Any material slippage in time or expenditure would be reported to F&R Committee members as soon as it occurred

- A previous version of these proposals had been considered at the F&R Committee meeting on 24 February 2021. The VPF&R confirmed that plans to develop a permanent Pathway Centre within the Coulsdon Campus, which had been raised at the F&R Committee meeting were no longer linked to the T Level Science funding bid. An alternative location for the Pathway Centre had been identified within the Coulsdon building.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the College's two bids for Building and Facilities T Level Capital Fund grants totalling £874,484, split Science £274,443 and Engineering £600,041, for which the College would contribute £437,242 in specialist facilities.

The Corporation also **AGREED** that the College should provide a detailed list of equipment for up to £321k in total, split £147k Science and £174k Engineering, to assist the ESFA in its Specialist Equipment Allocation.

ii. Detailed Property Strategy – February 2021

- The VPF&R reminded members that the Property Strategy had been approved by the Board in July 2020. Since then, there had been a number of changes to reflect recent developments, which were outlined in the report. These changes to the Property Strategy and the recommendations within it had been reviewed at the F&R Committee meeting on 24 February 2021.
- The majority of the Property Strategy focused on the Croydon Campus as the building was in poor condition; with the exception of the sports hall, the estate at the Coulsdon Campus was category A (the highest category).
- In future the Property Strategy would be brought to the Board for review on an annual basis, in the Spring term.

ACTION: DoG - Property Strategy to come to the Board on an annual basis, in the Spring Term, from 2021/22

The Corporation **APPROVED** the February 2021 version of the Property Strategy and the recommendations within it.

4. BUSINESS PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

i. FE Commissioner Benchmarks

- The P&CEO reminded the Board of the context in which the FE sector was operating. There had been a decline in income in real terms across the sector for many years, as evidence by the September 2020 NAO report on “Financial Sustainability of Colleges in England”, and the financial health of the FE sector remained fragile. Croydon College was in a better financial position than many in the sector, and the College’s performance against the revised FEC benchmarks needed to be seen in that context.
- The VPF&R explained that the benchmarks used by the FEC were different from those used by the ESFA when calculating the College’s Financial Health grading. However, both sets of measures focused on cash flow and debt cover. The Board had taken the decision to hold the proceeds of the sale of the Barclay Road building as cash reserves, rather than paying off the variable rate bank loan. This had enabled the College to submit bids for matched capital funding for estates work, including the T level bids, but meant that the College’s debt service cover ratio would remain below the FEC benchmark until the bank loans were repaid. The College’s adjusted operating surplus/(deficit) as a % of income was also RAG rated as red. The College’s recent increases in income from areas such as additional learning support and SEND, did not provide the same level of contribution to central costs. The Executive would need to focus on increasing the College’s surplus from 2021/22 to improve this rating. The Board emphasised the importance of continued monitoring to ensure that the College was not using its reserves to support day to day expenditure.
- Pay costs as a % of income were RAG rated as amber against the revised FEC benchmarks. The method used to calculate this figure differed between the ESFA and the FEC. There were still some legacy issues following the merger, e.g. contracts that needed to be retendered, which were adversely impacting on this figure.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VPF&R reported that the College's performance against the revised FEC benchmarks would be monitored from February 2021 as part of the management accounts. In response to a challenge from the Board about what action the FEC might take in response to the two red RAG ratings, the VPF&R explained that the FEC would not intervene in a College with a good financial health rating unless the College specifically invited the FEC to undertake a diagnostic assessment. <p>ACTION: VPF&R to monitor the College's performance against the revised FEC benchmarks from February 2021</p> <p>ACTION: VPF&R to confirm that the College had received a Good Financial Health Rating from the ESFA for 2019/20</p> <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the report.</p>
5.	<p>RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020/21 SPRING 2021 UPDATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VPF&R reported that the version of the risk register presented to the Board had been scrutinised at the Audit Committee meeting on 11 March 2021 and highlighted the key changes to risk. HE retention was strong and application numbers for the Nursing Degree to be provided at the Croydon Campus from September 2021 were strong. The contract for the construction of the Clinical Simulation Centre was due to be signed mid-April. Apprenticeship recruitment was an area of increased risk. The current income forecast was under plan for 2020/21 and documentation processes also remained challenging. HR risks remained medium but were being progressed. The College was still forecasting a deficit in the February management accounts. Some central funding for the mass testing centre was expected in April, but the amount was not yet known. The education sector generally had been identified by the National Cyber Security Centre as being at a high risk of cyber attacks. To mitigate this risk, cyber security insurance had been taken out at the end of 2020 and this included regular checks and patching of College IT systems. The Executive was also considering increasing the size of the IT team to ensure that IT security was covered appropriately. There had been an internal audit of cyber security following the merger, which had included some penetration testing, and the recommendations from the audit had been implemented. The College was also working toward Cyber Security Essentials Certification. The College had had a phishing attack recently. While no losses had resulted from this attack; the passwords of a very small number of staff had been compromised. The Board asked the Audit Committee to review the adequacy of the actions being taken to address cyber security risks, including external assessment of those risks, at its next meeting. <p>ACTION: Chair of Audit Committee/VPF&R – Audit Committee to review the adequacy of the actions being taken to address cyber security risks, including external assessment of those risks, at its next meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board asked that the Executive led Covid meetings consider the potential risks around accommodating increased requests from staff for flexible working and vaccination policies for staff. The P&CEO reported that work was already underway with staff to look at new ways of working. This would include a review of flexible working arrangements post pandemic. A management charter was also being drawn up, in part to address EDI issues, which also linked to working arrangements. The Executive would be closely monitoring national developments in terms of vaccine requirements.
6.	<p>GOVERNANCE</p> <p>i Appointment of a new Governor</p>

- The Chair of the Board reported that a small number of Governor vacancies had been advertised in January 2021 with the aim of recruiting Governors with skills/experience in FE/education, commerce and audit and risk. The Search and Governance Committee had shortlisted three candidates with an audit and risk background, who had been interviewed by a panel made up of himself, Nasim Jivani-Hemani and the Chair of the Audit Committee.
- On behalf of the Search and Governance Committee, the Chair recommended the appointment of Frederick Law as a Governor and as a member of the Audit and Risk Committee. Frederick Law's CV had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the appointment of the Frederick Law as a Governor for a four year term.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the appointment of Frederick Law as a member of the Audit Committee.

ii Meeting Arrangements and Governor Day – Summer Term 2021 and Academic Year 2021/22

- The DoG set out the proposed arrangements for Board and Committee meetings for the Summer term and 2021/22. Committee meetings would continue to take place during the Summer term and in 2021/22, subject to a review at Easter 2022. Board meetings would take place in person at the Croydon Campus on Wednesday evenings, with the exception of the two Governor days each year in July (at the Coulsdon Campus) and December (at the Croydon Campus), where the Board meetings would be incorporated into the Governor day. The Governor Day on 7 July 2021 would be the first meeting to take place in person, subject to Covid restrictions being lifted by the Government as planned on 21 June 2021. A clash in the proposed meeting dates for 2021/22 was identified and would be addressed. A revised version of the meeting schedule for 2021/22 would be circulated.

ACTION: DoG to amend the meeting schedule for 2021/22 to remove clash and recirculate the amended meeting schedule

The Corporation **APPROVED** the proposals for Board and Committee meetings in the Summer term 2021 and 2021/22 and **APPROVED** the meeting schedule for 2021/22 subject to addressing the clash between two dates.

iii Amendments to Committee Terms of Reference

- The DoG confirmed that the proposed amendments to the terms of reference of the Croydon and Coulsdon LQCs and the Remuneration Committee had been reviewed by the respective Committees and were recommended to the Board for approval.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the amended terms of reference for the Croydon and Coulsdon LQCs and the Remuneration Committee.

7. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

i. Croydon College Corporation Minutes of 27 January 2021

- The minutes of the meeting were **APPROVED** by the Corporation.

ii Matters Arising (Action list)

- The DoG reported that the first action relating to the Property Strategy could now be marked as complete as the February 2021 version had now been approved by the Board.

	<p>The Corporation NOTED that a written resolution to approve the submission of a bid from the College for Further Education Capital Transformation Funding had been passed on 11 March 2021. This matter had been dealt with by written resolution as the deadline for the submission of bids had been prior to the date of this Board meeting.</p>
6.	<p>FOR INFORMATION PAPERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i Management Accounts for January 2021 ii Unconfirmed minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting on 17 February 2021 iii Unconfirmed minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee meeting on 24 February 2021 iv Unconfirmed minutes of the Coulsdon Learning and Quality Committee meeting on 3 March 2021 v Unconfirmed minutes of the Croydon Learning and Quality Committee meeting on 10 March 2021 vi Unconfirmed minutes of the Audit Committee meeting on 11 March 2021 <p>The Corporation NOTED the papers provided for information. No questions had been submitted prior to the meeting.</p>
7.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i The Chair reported that Tom Hesmondhalgh would be leaving the Board on 1 September 2021 as he and his family were moving out of the area. The Chair thanked Tom for his significant contribution during his term on the Board. An election for a new Vice-Chair would take place at the October 2021 Board meeting and the strategy for recruiting a further Governor would be considered by the Search and Governance Committee. <p>ACTION: DoG – Election of Vice-Chair to take place at the October 2021 Board meeting</p> <p>ACTION: Chair/S&G Committee to consider the strategy for recruiting a further Governor to replace Tom Hesmondhalgh</p>
8.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Governor Day – Wednesday 7 July 2021 10am to 5pm (to include Board meeting)</p>

Signed:

Date: