

# HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## CORPORATION MEETING

### Minutes of the virtual meeting held on Zoom – Thursday 8 July 2021 - 9.30am

Membership:	* Liz Laycock (Chair)	* Julia Fillary	* Eva Scott
	* Sotirios Adamopoulos	* Eddie Johnson	* Brian Spencer
	Paul Bartlett	Brian Keane	* Karen Spencer
	* Julian Bedford	* Ray Levy	* Paul Taylor
	* Jon Bouffler	* Lily Lin	Michael Travers
	* Rod Bristow	Peace Oduware	Gail Wootton

\* denotes present

In attendance: Will Allanson, Deputy Principal  
Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal  
Becky Jones, Vice-Principal  
Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance and Facilities  
Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

#### 1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Paul Bartlett and Peace Oduware, both due to personal reasons, Brian Keane, due to work commitments, and Michael Travers and Gail Wootton, both due to being on holiday.

#### 2 Declaration of Interests

There were no new, additional declarations of interest.

#### 3 Search Committee Update

##### 3.1 Minutes of the Search Committee Meeting – 1 July 2021

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 1 July 2021.

##### 3.2 Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

The Search Committee recommended the appointment of Julia Fillary from Raytheon UK, as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 8 July 2021.

Ray Levy, Chair of the Search Committee summarised Julia's passion for adult literacy and Harlow, and her role in supply chain management at Raytheon UK.

The Corporation unanimously approved the Search Committee's recommendation and Julia Fillary was appointed as Governor of Harlow

College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 8 July 2021.

Julia Fillary joined the meeting and introduced herself to the Corporation.

#### **4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes and the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2021 were approved by the Corporation as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed remotely by the Chair.

#### **5 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

##### **5.1 College Collaboration Fund Application (minute 11.1 – Any Other Business refers)**

Karen Spencer informed the Corporation that the College Collaboration Fund application was submitted and the College is awaiting the outcome.

Karen Spencer reported that the College is developing an application to the FE Professional Development Grant Fund which is an Essex-wide application with partners from Essex colleges and independent training providers. The focus of the application is supporting new or inexperienced teachers in the classroom, with a coaching model being developed, an advance practitioner being identified in partner organisations, teacher and trainer timetable remission and professional grants for further CPD.

The Corporation approved the College to be the lead applicant and submit the application to the FE Professional Development Grant Fund.

##### **5.2 Equality and Diversity Steering Group (minute 11.2 – Any Other Business refers)**

Liz Laycock informed the Corporation that Sotirios Adamopoulos, Lily Lin, Michael Travers and Gail Wootton have been appointed as Governor representatives on the Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

#### **6 Feedback from the Coronavirus Governance and Leadership Group**

Liz Laycock provided the Corporation with a verbal update and feedback from the Coronavirus Governance and Leadership Group.

Liz Laycock reminded the Corporation that this group meets once a fortnight. Topics discussed have included testing, assessment, government guidance and funding.

Liz Laycock highlighted that this will be covered in more detail in the next agenda item – Principal's Report.

The Corporation noted the feedback from the Coronavirus Governance and Leadership Group.

#### **7 Principal's Report**

The Corporation received and considered the Principal's Report, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

### **COVID-19 Update:**

Karen Spencer reported that a huge amount of work has been undertaken to complete the Teacher-Assessed Grade (TAG) process and that there are still some students onsite completing practical assessments. The amount of work cannot be underestimated and Karen Spencer thanked Becky Jones and Paul Whitehead for co-ordinating the College-wide effort. A sample for GCSE maths and English and A-Level biology was requested by the awarding organisation which was submitted by the College within 24 hours. It is not yet clear what will happen next with the sample and Governors acknowledged that it will be difficult for the awarding organisation to compare or set comparators with other institutions.

A-Level and GCSE results days are 10 and 12 August respectively which are earlier than usual and have compacted staff holidays. The College is anticipating there will be some appeals which the College will need to work through, in addition to being subject to two Government audits over the Summer.

The College is preparing for the return to campus next academic year. New government guidance was released on Tuesday 6 July 2021 which the College is working its way through however further guidance is expected to be released before September 2021.

A zoned approach to enrolment will remain as per this year academic year. Students will have to take two lateral flow tests before returning to campus in September and this has been built into the induction and enrolment plans.

Staff will be back on campus after their Summer break and the Principalship is working its way through potential flexibilities that can be introduced for staff, based on what has been successful to date.

Students have reported they prefer to be on campus and in class however the College does not want to lose any e-learning strengths that have developed.

Funding guidance and the required onsite / online split has not yet been announced.

Governors were informed that there has been no list of fundable adult qualifications therefore it is impossible for the College to plan for this delivery without the guidance and this has been raised by the Association of Colleges.

The Corporation noted the COVID-19 update and Governors were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Rod Bristow asked if the College was considering the impact of TAGs and exam results for students entering the College and if the College has a plan to address this.

Karen Spencer reported that last year the College undertook a three-week and five-week health check with each student and a significant number of students asked to drop down a programme level. This system will be implemented again this year

however there is potential for the situation to be worse this year as students have had two periods of lockdown and home-learning. The College is expecting students to be behind and this has been planned for

Karen Spencer reported that an audit is taking place of the College's FE Tuition Fund funding which has been used for the health checks and assessment of students. The auditor is however currently saying that this type of activity is ineligible as it is not classed as tuition. This is despite the guidance stating that the funding can be used by the College to best support local student need and giving the College autonomy to design their delivery model. The College has written to the ESFA to express its concern over this issue. Governors agreed that this is a nonsense. Paul Whitehead reported that all evidence has been supplied by the College and it is clear that the sample selected for audit is only the initial working with students and not across all categories of support provided. The auditor was given the opportunity to change the sample however they refused and the College is contesting their judgement of eligible activity. The College is waiting to hear back. The College has focused on diagnosing issues, getting students into smaller groups in the classroom and providing coaching and mentoring for students. The College is convinced its approach is the right approach. The funding equates to just £150 per student therefore it is not a lot of funding overall and similar amounts are expected next year. Liz Laycock highlighted the need for the Corporation to keep the pressure on regarding this issue and to support the College.

Ruth Lucas reported that in light of the Tuition Fund audit and a large-scale Office for Students audit, the internal audit plan for the remainder of this academic year will be reviewed and amended where appropriate. The Corporation approved this approach.

Karen Spencer highlighted that there is no additional funding to support adults or apprentices and that huge gaps are emerging.

Paul Taylor asked if there was an increased, more than usual risk, with maths and English resits.

Karen Spencer reported that this is currently a big unknown. The College's early assessment from last year showed that some students may not have achieved a grade 4 or above if it was not for TAGs. Karen Spencer reported that due to the lagged funding model, the College will potentially receive less funding next year however the risk is that there will be significantly more students with gaps having to study GCSE maths and English.

Julian Bedford highlighted the need to not underestimate the challenge of students getting back into education and getting back into normal working or studying practices will be hard. Liz Laycock highlighted the need to focus on education discipline on top of students' euphoria of being back onsite.

### **Strategic Plan Update:**

Karen Spencer highlighted the areas which were discussed by the Corporation at its meeting on 20 May 2021.

Governors agreed the updates to the Strategic Plan as listed in the report and noted that the updated Strategic Plan will be presented to the Corporation at its meeting on 21 October 2021.

The Corporation noted the Principal's Report and agreed to the updates to the Strategic Plan as set out in the report.

## **8 Finance and Resources Reports**

### **8.1 Resources Committee Reports**

#### **8.1.1 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting – 22 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021.

#### **8.1.2 Item 1 – ESFA Financial Health Rating Letter**

The Corporation received and considered the ESFA financial health rating letter, the ESFA finance dashboard and the College's and ESFA's response to the query on the loans raised in the letter from the ESFA.

The Corporation noted that the ESFA has confirmed that the query regarding the loan raised in their letter has been closed off by the ESFA.

Governors questioned the debt charge as a percentage of borrowing in the finance dashboard. Deanne Morgan reported that the spike in the graph is due to the loan which was due to be repaid in May 2021. The graph does not take into consideration the new loan which was agreed in May 2021 and purely shows debt to be repaid in 2021. Governors noted that this spike should not appear on next year's dashboard.

The Corporation noted the ESFA financial health rating letter, the ESFA finance dashboard and the College's and ESFA's response to the query on the loans raised in the letter from the ESFA.

#### **8.1.3 Item 2 – Management Accounts for the Period 1 August 2020 - 31 May 2021**

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts for the period 1 August 2020 – 31 May 2021, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance and Facilities.

The Corporation was informed that this set of management accounts was considered and discussed at the Resources Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021.

Governors noted that the year-end deficit is less than originally forecast however the outcome of the Tuition Fund audit could have an

impact on this.

The College is predicting to have good financial health and to meet both bank covenants at year-end.

The College continues to monitor its finances throughout the year and at present there are no new concerns or issues to raise with Governors.

Governors noted that the May accounts will be submitted to the ESFA on their template.

The Corporation noted:

- the management accounts for the period 1 August 2020 – 31 May 2021;
- the new loan from May 2021;
- the forecast position in terms of financial health and bank covenants;
- the banking facilities with Clydesdale as set out in the report.

## **8.2 Joint Resources and Audit Committee Reports**

### **8.2.1 Minutes of the joint Resources and Audit Committee Meeting – 22 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the joint Resources and Audit Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021.

### **8.2.2 Item 1 – Two Year Financial Forecast 2021 – 2023 and Draft Budget 2021 – 2022**

The Corporation received and considered the two-year financial forecast 2021 – 2023 and draft budget 2021 – 2022, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance and Facilities.

Governors were informed that the two-year financial forecast is based on figures presented at the joint Resources and Audit Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021. The College is not expecting any significant changes to the figures however it was noted that the final Tuition Fund allocation for next year has not yet been confirmed.

The underlying assumptions were highlighted including a 1.5% staff pay award from 1 August 2021. This proposal has been discussed and accepted by the Unions.

Liz Laycock reported that the Remuneration Committee had met prior to the Corporation meeting, the minutes of which will be presented at the next Corporation meeting on 21 October 2021. The Remuneration Committee approved a pay award for Senior Post Holders and the Head of Governance in line with the College's pay award for staff.

The Corporation approved the figures used in the two-year financial forecast 2021 – 2023 and draft budget 2021 – 2022 and the supporting commentary and approved their submission to the ESFA.

## **9 Audit Committee Reports**

### **9.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting – 22 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021.

### **9.2 Item 1 – Internal Audit Strategy**

The Corporation received and considered the internal audit strategy 2021 – 2022, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that the internal audit strategy was considered and discussed in detail at the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021 and that the Audit Committee is recommending to the Corporation its approval.

Paul Whitehead informed Governors that there is a more significant reliance on internal audit by external audit arising from the updated Audit Code of Practice.

The Corporation approved the internal audit strategy 2021 – 2022.

### **9.3 Item 2 – Review of the Risk Register and Risk Management Policy**

The Corporation received and considered the risk register and the Risk Management Policy, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that the risk register and Risk Management Policy were considered and discussed in detail at the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021 and that the Audit Committee is recommending to the Corporation to note the risk register and approve the Risk Management Policy.

The Corporation noted the risk register and approved the Risk Management Policy.

## **10 Quality and Curriculum Reports**

### **10.1 Minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting – 29 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 29 June 2021.

Becky Jones highlighted one typographical error which will be changed.

### **10.2 Item 1 – Key Performance Indicators 2020/2021**

The Corporation received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2020/2021, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer informed Governors that KPIs linked to a Career-Led Curriculum have been added since the last Corporation meeting and that this version of the KPIs had been discussed in detail at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 29 June 2021.

Governors noted that the main issue is maths and English, particularly Functional Skills. Students studying Functional Skills are severely disadvantaged by the system. These students are still having to sit exams and no adjustments have been made for what has been learnt and any lost learning. Furthermore, the standard of the qualification changed pre-COVID making the exams harder to pass. TAGs were awarded last academic year however this is not the case this year and there are significant gaps in knowledge. The College historically achieved a 65% - 70% pass rate however the current position is 16% with assessment still taking place. The College has asked via the Association of Colleges to raise this issue with the Department for Education however no response has been received to date. It is hoped that centres' previous results will be looked at with a view to smoothing the curve. The College has taken the decision to only do entry level Functional Skills from next academic year, with all other students taking GCSEs.

Karen Spencer reported that the colour coding in the KPIs and management accounts will be reviewed to align with each other from next academic year.

The Corporation noted the Key Performance Indicators 2020/2021.

### **10.3 Item 2 – Student Voice**

The Corporation received and considered the report on Student Voice, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Becky Jones reported that historically student surveys were lengthy with long-worded questions and took place twice a year. The format of the survey has been revised and now five or six focused questions are being asked on a more frequent basis linked to specific themes or emerging issues identified by the Student Ambassadors.

The latest survey focused on how the College acts on student views, the effectiveness of tutorials and online learning.

Overall satisfaction has dipped slightly from 83% to 80%, however it was noted that there was a lower response rate of 63%, compared to historically approximately 80%. It is envisaged this is due to the timing of the survey.

The survey results show that the College is doing well on listening to students and acting on their views and students are reasonably happy with feedback received from staff. The College is focusing on those teams who scored lower on this question. Skills and knowledge development are good.



The College is working on the consistency of tutorials and how they will work next academic year. It was agreed that tutorials are better if delivered face-to-face. Staff training to strengthen tutorials, improve consistency and explore what it is like to be learner mentor will be a focus on the August staff development day.

Eva Scott confirmed that all key points had been covered by Becky Jones.

Eva Scott highlighted that students are feeling incomplete because they have not had end of year celebrations and feel like their course has not finished and this could have led to the dip in satisfaction.

Karen Spencer reported that it is hard for the students as the College has not been able to have any end of year celebrations however it is looking at what can be done on results day in line with the latest government guidance at the time. Student celebration packs have been sent out to all students which have been positively received however it is not the same as face-to-face interaction and celebration.

The Corporation noted the report on student voice.

## **11 Reports from Committees**

### **11.1 Safeguarding Committee**

#### **11.1.1 Ofsted's Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges**

The Corporation received Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges.

Karen Spencer reported that all Governors should read the review however note that a more collective approach between education providers, government, parents and the young people is required to tackle societal issues. There is no one definition of abuse in the report and it covers a broad spectrum, from name calling to more significant sexual abuse.

Karen Spencer informed the Corporation that the College is reviewing its policies and procedures internally in line with the published review, along with the programme of tutorials.

It is important that students are really clear on how to report concerns and how the College actions them.

Governors were informed that the review and action being taken by the College was discussed at the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 17 June 2021 and the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting on 29 June 2021.

A training session from the recent staff development day on this topic has been recorded and will be circulated to all Governors to watch.

The Corporation noted Ofsted's review on sexual abuse in schools and colleges.

#### **11.1.2 Minutes of the Safeguarding Committee Meeting – 17 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 17 June 2021.

#### **11.2 Health and Safety Committee - 17 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 17 June 2021.

#### **11.3 Equality and Diversity Committee – 30 June 2021**

The Corporation noted that the minutes of the Equality and Diversity Committee meeting held on 30 June 2021 will be presented at the next Corporation meeting on 21 October 2021.

#### **11.4 Stansted Airport College Advisory Group – 29 June 2021**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Stansted Airport College Advisory Group meeting held on 29 June 2021.

Karen Spencer reported that she had provided the figures to Caroline Betts and it was agreed that the minutes would be amended accordingly.

### **12 Governance Issues**

#### **12.1 Standing Orders 2021 – 2022**

The Corporation received and considered the Standing Orders for 2021 – 2022, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Ruth Lucas informed Governors that the Standing Orders have been reviewed and references to relevant agencies have been updated throughout the document. In addition to this, the following changes were proposed:

- Section 1.2 – “first Board meeting of the College academic year” has been changed to “last Board meeting of the College academic year” to accurately reflect practice.
- Section 2.3 – “Harlow College student body” has been changed to “Student Ambassadors” to accurately reflect practice.
- Section 4.3 – “the Corporation reserves the right to hold meetings virtually” has been added.
- Section 12.1 – the Standards Committee has changed to the Standards and Curriculum Committee.

- Section 12.2 – the Equality and Diversity Committee has been added in.

The Corporation approved the Standing Order for 2021 – 2022 subject to the changes outlined above.

A discussion was held around meetings next academic year and Karen Spencer reported that the Association of Colleges and other colleges are planning for all Autumn Term meetings to be online with a mixture of online and face-to-face meetings after this. It was agreed that Liz Laycock, Karen Spencer and Ruth Lucas would meet in September to discuss this further and part of the October Corporation meeting will be a group discussion on this topic. All Governors and staff reported that they would not want all meetings to be online.

The Corporation received and considered the Committees' Terms of Reference. Ruth Lucas informed Governors that each Committee had reviewed their Terms of Reference and amended them where required.

The Corporation approved the Committees' Terms of Reference for 2021 – 2022.

The Corporation received, considered and approved the Scheme of Delegation for 2021 – 2022 without amendment.

The Corporation approved the Standing Orders 2021 – 2022, the Committees' Terms of Reference 2021 – 200 and the Scheme of Delegation for 2021 – 2022 as outlined above.

## **12.2 Governor Training and Development**

Karen Spencer reported that Brian Keane and Michael Travers had attended the new Governor induction training delivered by the Association of Colleges and Brian Keane had fed back that the training had been beneficial.

Liz Laycock reported she had attended a tutorial as part of the Education and Training Foundation's (ETF) Chairs' Leadership Programme.

Lily Lin reported that she had attended two workshop sessions on the ETF's Governor Competency Framework and provided an overview of the sessions. A further session is scheduled for October 2021.

## **13 Policies for Approval**

The Corporation received and considered the following policies, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal:

- Access & Participation Statement – HE

Governors noted that a full review of the statement had taken place and proposed amendments were highlighted in yellow throughout the document.

- Student Protection Plan – HE

Becky Jones reported that there were some minor changes to the plan as detailed in the covering paper and highlighted in yellow. More information has been included on Stansted Airport College as HE provision will be delivered there from September 2021.

- Teacher Assessed Grades Academic Appeals Process – FE

Governors were informed that this is a new policy which will be given to students when they collect their results.

Becky Jones highlighted the template letters and the timescales included in the policy.

Karen Spencer asked what the closing date for appeals was from the government and the Corporation agreed that this should be added into the policy.

The Corporation approved the Access and Participation Statement and Student Protection Plan as presented to the Corporation. The Corporation approved the Teacher Assessed Grades Academic Appeals Process subject to the closure date for appeals to be submitted being included. The Corporation agreed that this addition to the policy could be approved by Karen Spencer on behalf of the Corporation.

## **14 Any Other Business**

### **14.1 Register of Interests**

Ruth Lucas informed Governors that the annual refresh of the Register of Interests and Declaration of Eligibility will be sent out to all Governors. The Regularity Audit, part of which looks at the Register of Interests, is taking place earlier than usual this year therefore Ruth Lucas asked for a prompt return of the forms by Governors.

### **14.2 Thank You to the Student Governors**

Liz Laycock informed Governors that this is the last Corporation meeting for Eva Scott and Peace Oduware.

The Corporation thanked Eva and Peace for their contributions and attendance over the year and wished them the best of luck for the future.

## **15 Dates of Future Meetings**

The Corporation received and noted the schedule of meetings for 2021 – 2022.

Ruth Lucas requested that Governors inform her of any potential issues with the proposed dates.

Ruth Lucas informed Governors that meeting requests will be sent out.

Proposed dates of the Corporation meetings for next academic year are as follows:

Autumn Term 2021	Thursday 21 October 2021	8.30am / 9.30am
	Thursday 16 December 2021	8.30am / 9.30am
Spring Term 2022	Thursday 24 March 2022	8.30am / 9.30am
Summer Term 2022	Thursday 19 May 2022	8.30am / 9.30am
	Thursday 07 July 2022	8.30am / 9.30am

Liz Laycock thanked all Governors and staff for their contribution over the last academic year. Liz reported that the virtual meetings had worked well and that Governors had made her role as Chair easy to manage the meetings.

The Corporation passed on their thanks to all staff and highlighted the need for all staff to take a holiday or a break from the College over the summer.