

## CORPORATION/COMMITTEE PAPER

### Meeting of the Corporation

14 July 2021

<b><i>TITLE</i></b>	Minutes of the strategic session held on 11 June 2021
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<b><i>PURPOSE</i></b>	To receive, agree and approve the minutes of the strategic session held on 11 June 2021
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<b><i>RECOMMENDATION</i></b>	Governors are recommended to note the minutes and agree their accuracy
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<i>No. of pages in main paper</i>	6
<i>Appendices/Annexes</i>	None
<i>Financial Implications</i>	None
<i>Risk Implications</i>	Failure to follow agreed and proper practices
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# MINUTES OF A STRATEGIC SESSION OF THE BOARD OF LEICESTER COLLEGE CORPORATION

HELD ON 11 JUNE 2021 VIA TEAMS



Present: Jonathan Kerry (Chair)      Chan Kataria  
John Allen      Zubair Limbada  
Zoe Allman      Ed Marsh  
Lisa Armitage      Simon Meakin  
Kathy Foster      Louisa Poole  
Anne Frost      Abigail Proctor  
Danielle Gillett      Jai Sharda  
Tim Gray      Caroline Tote  
Verity Hancock      Tom Wilson

In Attendance: Louise Hazel      Director of Governance and Policy  
Shabir Ismail      Deputy Principal  
Della Sewell      Director of HR  
Debi Donnarumma      Vice Principal  
Kully Sandhu      Vice Principal

## **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Shaun Curtis.

## **3 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS FOR THE DAY**

- 3.1 The Chair set out the aims for the day, to:
- 3.1.1 Review progress with 2018-2021 plan
  - 3.1.2 Consider the current context
  - 3.1.3 Review the Mission, Vision and Values; discuss any changes
  - 3.1.4 Discuss key themes for the new plan
  - 3.1.5 Agree the next steps
  - 3.1.6 Discuss options for Judicial Review.

## **4 SESSION 1: STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021**

4.1 The Principal provided an update on the progress against the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 KPIs. The following points were highlighted:

- 4.1.1 The KPIs did not reflect everything that the College did, nor the extent of change over the period of the plan including qualifications reform,

- notably T levels, and shifts to digital teaching and learning.
- 4.1.2 The pandemic had affected the College's operations and activities for the past two years, making data comparisons and identification of three-year trends difficult and in some cases impossible. There was very little benchmarking data available for the sector as a whole because of the pandemic. Final data for 2020/21 was not yet available.
  - 4.1.3 Achievement rates were on a modest upward trajectory, with timely apprenticeships showing the most improvement.
  - 4.1.4 16-18 student numbers had decreased slightly but were roughly stable.
  - 4.1.5 Student retention, attendance and satisfaction were all stable.
  - 4.1.6 The collection of destination data required further work as a priority.
  - 4.1.7 Income, and the College's overall financial position, had been severely affected by the pandemic but were reasonable over the life of the plan. Allocations were protected for 2021/22.

## 4.2 Governors made the following comments.

- 4.2.1 **What were the implications of timely apprenticeship achievement?**  
This meant the College was better at getting apprenticeships through their programmes in a more efficient way. There were positive impacts on achievement and finances as a result.
- 4.2.2 **What the information on destinations told us; 52% going to positive destinations did not seem right.** Agreed; it was difficult to gather reliable destinations data because it was collected some time after students had left and many did not answer the questions. The current data was not fit for purpose and the College would need to get much better at demonstrating that what it provided for students was effective in helping them progress to positive destinations.
- 4.2.3 **What the impact of internal progression would also be on the data.** Ofsted would look at all progression and destinations data and internal progression were important. It had been a difficult year but work was planned to promote the College's offer to existing students to increase internal progression.
- 4.2.4 **Should the College consider using a third-party organisation to collect destinations data?** This had been done in the past but the data was not considered good enough. This would be reviewed again.
- 4.2.5 **Was it possible to infer the College's impact on employers and the local economy; was there any intelligence on the quality of the relationship with employers?** Some inferences could be made but this would need to be looked at further when considering the KPIs for the new Strategic Plan.
- 4.2.6 **What would be a realistic target for responses to the staff survey? 50% seemed low.** The response rate had consistently been around 50% for several years and was a challenge. Internal communications would be a big focus for the next couple of years.
- 4.2.7 **Should the options around subcontracting be reconsidered?**
- 4.2.8 **Should A level provision be considered alongside T level routes?**
- 4.2.9 **The low sickness rate was encouraging but it had been a relentless year and so it would be important to monitor that there was not a build-up of mental health issues; the well-being survey was welcome.**

## **5 SESSION 2: THE POLICY AND FUNDING LANDSCAPE 2022-2025**

5.1 The Principal gave a presentation on the policy and funding landscape. The following points were highlighted:

- 5.1.1 The current government was likely to be in power and setting the policy and investment framework for the foreseeable future.
- 5.1.2 FE was centre stage with a focus on skills for jobs and an emphasis on higher level skills with employers' needs a priority. There was an increasing interest in outputs rather than inputs.
- 5.1.3 The appointment of a local MP Neil O'Brien to lead on the levelling up agenda was helpful; he was a good advocate for FE. The College would need to think about how it could contribute to the levelling up agenda; it should keep making the point about core and basic skills being crucial to social mobility. The plans for T levels and the Institute of Technology would help address key government priorities.
- 5.1.4 The Education Secretary had championed FE and this was now covered in a Bill; there might be some backlash if he were replaced.
- 5.1.5 The Treasury was still calling the shots. There was a sense that FE should be the 'passport to a progressive labour market.' The CSR would be crucial and long-term core funding was still needed.
- 5.1.6 Leicester was hampered by a lack of devolution although there were good relationships with the LLEP and the Chamber.
- 5.1.7 All previous assessments of the College's offer indicated it was in the right territory in terms of local skills needs. If it was to make more impact around specialist technical skills, it would need more investment.
- 5.1.8 The College had many strengths when it came to supporting Government policy including its STEM, digital, construction and engineering provision, work on T levels, apprenticeships and credibility with employers. Its whole focus was on levelling up. Weaknesses might be considered to be the extent of adults studying at lower levels and the large creative and performing arts offer. It also inherited poor attainment in schools but this was not a popular narrative.

5.2 **Governors made the following comments.**

- 5.2.1 **Any future Conservative Government was likely to have similar approaches to the current one. The East Midlands was not well understood by Government.**
- 5.2.2 **There was investment coming into the City including through Council projects. There was an issue with graduate retention locally.**
- 5.2.3 **There were some things the College could not change. It needed to ensure what it did fitted with what Leicester was and needed; it was about having the right ideas not just big ideas.**
- 5.2.4 **Leicester had an important role in improving regional productivity and was critical to the region's success.**

## **6 SESSION 3: MISSION AND VISION**

- 6.1 The Principal gave a presentation on the College's Mission and Vision including the College's current offer and student profile, highlighting the numbers of students 16–18-year-olds studying below Level 3 and the numbers of adults particularly on part-time programmes.
- 6.2 Governors were asked to consider the following:
  - 6.2.1 The Mission, and offer, is inclusive. Should we shift the balance away from inclusivity to more specialist provision? Does our Mission need amending?
  - 6.2.2 Will Government continue to fund sub level 3 provision? Are there implications for us?
  - 6.2.3 SEND funding is currently inadequate. Do we need to rethink our commitment?
  - 6.2.4 Policy and funding emphasis is all on STEM. Is our Arts offer sustainable?
- 6.3 **After discussion in groups, Governors made the following comments.**
  - 6.3.1 **The value of following the funding was discussed; it was important but the College also had an important role in meeting community needs.**
  - 6.3.2 **The emphasis on subjects linked to jobs in the White Paper was very clear. The College should continue to support creative sectors while recognising the priority placed on STEM.**
  - 6.3.3 **The Mission should still stand. It meant welcoming everyone; this was still needed in Leicester and the College's inclusiveness was a core Value. This inclusiveness could be used as a lever to grow areas of specialism.**
  - 6.3.4 **The College needed to be clear about what it did well, help people understand what it did and be recognised for it.**
  - 6.3.5 **The Mission might not change but the way in which the College met its Mission might. It should not change its Mission every time Government policy changed.**
  - 6.3.6 **The College's breadth was a strength; there might be some unintended consequences if it decided to shift its focus significantly (e.g. impact on gender balance).**
  - 6.3.7 **Discussion covered inclusion vs specialism. The offer needed to be relevant locally; the offer was wide and it was right to review it; was it trying to do too much? When looking at growth, it would be sensible to target the STEM areas.**
  - 6.3.8 **There was a strong sense the Mission was the right one. It was also necessary to be pragmatic; there were issues beyond the College's control which would always shape what it did. It should be prepared to have a Plan B if funding for some types of provision reduced or was withdrawn.**
  - 6.3.9 **The College would need to evolve and still had to follow the funding. Inclusivity meant the College was broad enough to give people a choice; in some ways that was a safer approach because**

it spread the risk.

6.3.10 **There was scope to place more emphasis on the relationship with employers in the Mission and Vision.**

6.4 **Overall, governors agreed that the Mission was still largely appropriate; there was an opportunity to make some minor amendments.**

## **7 SESSION 4: COLLEGE VALUES**

7.1 The Principal gave a presentation on the responses to a consultation on the College Values. Responses showed that:

7.1.1 There was no strong desire among students, staff or governors to change the existing College Values.

7.1.2 There was a clear feeling that Inclusion/Respect/Equality should be a Value/Values.

7.1.3 A quality/standards related Value was important – e.g. Ambition/ Excellence.

7.1.4 Sustainability came out in the top four for both students and staff.

7.1.5 The concept of a moral/ethical Value (Integrity/ Honesty/ Responsibility) also came out relatively strongly.

7.2 **After discussion in groups, Governors made the following comments.**

7.2.1 **A narrative which explained the Values in more detail would be helpful. They needed to describe the passion and energy of the College and be forward looking.**

7.2.2 **Words that had meaning for a contemporary audience (students) would be important – Respect would mean a lot to young people.**

7.2.3 **Collaboration was a behaviour not a Value.**

7.2.4 **Sustainability would be a challenge and there would be costs and possible financial risks; that was not a reason not to sign up to it.**

7.2.5 **It should be described clearly what was meant by Sustainability. It should cover more than just the environment and include financial sustainability and progressing students into sustainable jobs.**

7.2.6 **Excellence was the right standard and more appropriate than Ambition.**

7.2.7 **Values should be policy-proof.**

7.3 **Overall, the Values most supported were Inclusion, Excellence, Respect, Sustainability and Equality.**

## **8 SESSION 5: STRATEGIC THEMES**

8.1 The Principal set out three suggested themes for the new Strategic Plan which had been previously discussed at special meetings. The following points were highlighted:

8.1.1 Sustainability. This would include local and national action to combat climate change. The City Council was launching a partnership to focus on this to which the College would contribute. Students would

increasingly be working in sectors affected by climate change either directly or indirectly, as well as new ways of working. The College would need to review its curriculum offer as well as its operations. There would be challenges and costs and so some parameters would need to be put around what was achievable.

- 8.1.2 Race and equality. Trying to be fair was not enough and the College should look at what extra action was needed to get to a more equitable position. Students were looking for more visibility on this issue. There was an opportunity for the College to be a leader in the sector.
- 8.1.3 Skills for Jobs. The College would need to increase and improve its work on impact and destinations, and how it addressed the needs of employers without losing its commitment to inclusivity.
- 8.1.4 The government's exhortation to collaborate would be taken seriously and would be a feature of the next three years.

## 8.2 **Governors made the following comments.**

- 8.2.1 **Some caution was needed in the terminology used around equality/equity; the College should avoid aligning with any one particular group or movement and remain inclusive.**
- 8.2.2 **It was a case of evolution rather than revolution. The College should be aware of where funding was coming from and support growth in STEM and high technology areas while continuing to support and use the lower-level courses as a pathway.**

## 8.3 **Overall, governors agreed these were the right themes.**

*Chan Kataria and Tim Grey left the meeting*

## 9 **ADDITIONAL ITEM: JUDICIAL REVIEW - confidential**