

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LEICESTER COLLEGE CORPORATION



**HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2022  
VIA TEAMS**

|                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| Present:       | Jonathan Kerry (Chair)<br>John Allen<br>Zoe Allman<br>Lisa Armitage<br>Shaun Curtis<br>Danielle Gillett<br>Verity Hancock<br>Harmeet Kaur | Chan Kataria<br>Zubair Limbada<br>Akith Maluge<br>Simon Meakin<br>Louisa Poole<br>Jai Sharda<br>Caroline Tote<br>Tom Wilson                                      |
| In Attendance: | Louise Hazel<br>Shabir Ismail<br>Debi Donnarumma<br><br>Kully Sandhu<br>Della Sewell  | Director of Governance and Policy<br>Deputy Principal<br>Vice Principal Study Programmes and<br>Apprenticeships<br>Vice Principal Adult and HE<br>Director of HR |

## **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

- 1.1 Zoe Allman and Zubair Limbada declared an interest in items 3 and 4.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Anne Frost. Ed Marsh was absent.

## **3 APPRENTICESHIPS**

- 3.1 The Vice Principal Study Programmes and Apprenticeships gave a presentation on apprenticeships. The following points were highlighted.
- 3.1.1 There were a range of external drivers. Addressing the skills gaps identified by employers was crucial and apprenticeships were a way of specifically tackling these gaps.
  - 3.1.2 Ofsted reports were now including references to gaps in learning and the impact of Covid-19 on students and apprentices. Personal Development/Behaviour and Attitudes were also key themes and the College was working on a bespoke personal development programme for apprentices.
  - 3.1.3 The sequencing of the curriculum and relating theory to practical application/development and mastery of key knowledge, skills and

behaviours was particularly important for apprenticeships, as was the coordination of on and off the job training and the relationship with employers.

- 3.1.4 The apprenticeship offer was described and new areas of provision highlighted.
  - 3.1.5 Developments to date were highlighted; the current year was seen as the foundation year in many respects during which a range of improvements were being made. These included a new onboarding process which took a needs analysis approach in working with employers to make sure that there was a good match between the employers' needs and the apprentice from the start; setting high expectations to be a gold standard apprenticeship training provider; staff development; and a focus on learner progress.
  - 3.1.6 Challenges remained staff recruitment, the complexity of the onboarding process, the legacy of the pandemic and physical resources restricting growth.
  - 3.1.7 Strategic developments included the development of three-year strategy based on quality, efficiency and growth; implementation of a College steering group; and a 'Deep Dive' model to impact on improvements.
- 3.2 The following questions were posed for governors to consider and discuss.
- 3.2.1 How can we better support the development of your own knowledge and skills around apprenticeships?
  - 3.2.2 What key performance data do you need to challenge and support confidently, build on College strengths and mitigate weaknesses around apprenticeships?
- 3.3 Governors **made a number of comments and asked the following questions:**
- 3.3.1 **How did the College compare to the sector and was it improving?** The provision was improving although there was still a way to go.
  - 3.3.2 **Would the proposed strategy look at finance or growth as both were mentioned?** Finance and growth would essentially be the same things as growth would mean increased income.
  - 3.3.3 **The questions posed were all pertinent. Whoever was doing deep dives should be well aware of the Ofsted framework. Governors would also need to be well prepared and understand apprenticeships.** Agreed.
  - 3.3.4 **Key metrics would need to include whether the recipients of the services, employers, were satisfied with the service they received; whether the provision brought in enough income to be viable; and what the impact of the provision was on the College's reputation in terms of how ready apprentices were for the world of work.** Noted. Employer feedback was good. Any negativity was about the bureaucracy involved, not about the quality of provision or the apprentices.
  - 3.3.5 **How had apprenticeships been assessed in the SAR and how did that square with the use of the language of outstanding? Further**

- support on conducting deep dives could be provided; Ofsted would speak to curriculum leads and employers when conducting deep dives of apprenticeship provision. The provision was assessed as requires improvement but it was still important to make staff familiar with what outstanding provision looked like and aim for that.
- 3.3.6 **Further feedback from students and employers on their experience of apprenticeships and the impact on them would be helpful.** Noted.
- 3.3.7 **There had been an issue with the quality of apprenticeship provision for several years. It would be helpful to know through the metrics if it was improving quickly enough.** Noted.
- 3.3.8 **It would be helpful to know more about the College's wider contribution to the B2B agenda and particularly how well vulnerable groups such as SEND and LAC were being supported.** Noted; this was a key focus and something which the apprenticeships team would be looking at in detail.
- 3.3.9 **CSQI had been looking at apprenticeships regularly and reviewing data. A target had been set to improve achievement within two years and this was now due.**
- 3.3.10 **Was recruitment now back to pre-pandemic levels, as reported in the press?** New starts were looking better but there was a legacy issue from low recruitment during the pandemic which meant that income was still down.
- 3.3.11 **Apprenticeships were also discussed at every F&GP; there was a complicated funding environment. It would be interesting to see growth within the new strategy but important to be clear what was meant by growth and agree appropriate performance data to assess how the College was doing.** Agreed; clear KPIs would be crucial.
- 3.3.12 **The reform of the funding and accountability system, changes to funding rules and feedback from internal audits showed that the apprenticeships funding system was a minefield and it would be important to keep abreast of any changes. What was the risk of being penalised or facing clawback because of the impact of COVID-19?** Work had started on a reforecast after the R06 return. Apprenticeship recruitment was very sensitive to the pandemic but the risk was spread because of the number of SMEs with which the College worked rather. The internal audit programme continued to look at apprenticeships every year and an audit was underway. The College was not alone in finding the system complex and so colleges were asking the ESFA to review the framework because it was putting employers off recruiting apprentices.
- 3.3.13 **When would be strategy be ready?** It should be ready in May for consideration by governors in June.
- 3.3.14 **All governors would benefit from a masterclass on apprenticeships.** This would be arranged.
- 3.3.15 **Students reported that they did not always know about apprenticeships as an option but those who were doing them were enjoying their courses and found them helpful.** Acknowledged. It was difficult for the College to get into schools to

promote apprenticeships as possible pathways.

- 3.4 **Governors were invited to put themselves forward as an apprenticeships champion. More information about the commitment would be circulated.**
- 3.5 **Governors thanked the Vice Principal for her presentation and endorsed the planned developments.**

#### **4 ADULT AND HE**

- 4.1 The Vice Principal Adult and HE gave a presentation on the diversification of adult provision. The following points were highlighted.
  - 4.1.1 The Adult Education Budget (AEB) had been subject to significant cuts over recent years but there was still need and demand locally for adult education. The pandemic and enforced closure had exposed the College's vulnerability in terms of the scale and type of the provision.
  - 4.1.2 Market analysis showed where there were likely to be employment increases and decreases. There were expected to be 146,000 vacancies through replacement demand.
  - 4.1.3 There remained a large demand for lower-level qualifications in the City.
  - 4.1.4 The pandemic had led to a rise in the unemployment rate to 6.6% in the City and 3.1% in the County. It was unclear what the impact of the end of the furlough scheme would be but forecasts suggested there would be up to 21,297 additional claimants in August 2022. The pandemic had impacted hardest on the accommodation and food services, arts, entertainment and recreation sectors.
  - 4.1.5 In 2019/20, the College's market share of all adult courses was 30% (5,300 students) for the LLEP area and 49% for the City. These figures were largely static.
  - 4.1.6 Opportunities for diversifying the offer were outlined and included the lifetime skills guarantee; the potential to increase market share in some sectors; new adult offers in several vocational areas; and the new Multiply programme.
  - 4.1.7 Challenges included the ongoing changes to fee eligibility, the impact of T levels which would not allow adult infill, funding rates, the continued reluctance of some people to participate because of COVID-19 and restrictions in the ability to grow because of suitable accommodation.
- 4.2 **Governors made a number of comments and asked the following questions:**
  - 4.2.1 **Growth was important but how was the College currently performing this year?** The plans were not just about growth but about diversification. The College was not on track to achieve 97% but would do everything to get as close as possible to this. The pandemic and further restrictions were still impacting and there was continued reluctance among some adults to participate. The funding rates for adult provision had not increased since 2011/12 but all costs

- had gone up. New government funding was dedicated to higher level skills which was not always appropriate in meeting the needs of local communities. The introduction of T levels had also impacted as adult who would previously have infilled into study programmes could not do so onto T levels; new bespoke provision for adults was being planned.
- 4.2.2 **The emphasis on diversification was very welcome and should help to future proof the College. Funding was so tight it would be important always to come back to how much funding provision would bring in.** Agreed. Nothing would be done in haste. Since basic skills provision was run on a termly basis, it would be possible to turn the tap off on that if provision in vocational areas grew as planned.
  - 4.2.3 **If the College wanted to increase its market share for basic skills, would it want to do more in community venues?** This was always a possibility but it could not afford to operate in multiple centres across the City.
  - 4.2.4 **Might the Multiply programme cause tensions with achievement of the AEB?** More detail was needed but it was expected to be separate from the AEB and so it would be important to make sure that it did not divert from the AEB and reduce the College's ability to earn its allocation.
  - 4.2.5 **What was the margin from the AEB activity?** This varied between curriculum areas with some courses such as those at the City Skills Centre running at over 40% and others such as community learning at around 26%. Overall contribution was at 36% for all funding streams.
  - 4.2.6 **In terms of future proofing, how much contact was there with the universities to help fill their gaps in areas which were not attracting young people such as social work and health and social care?** There was a strong GCSE pathway and Access to HE programme which had good progression into HE. There was a gap in health and social care and the College was planning to develop new level 4 provision in this area. The College had a relationship with DMU and had collaborated over the square mile project and was always open to more collaboration.
  - 4.2.7 **Would the intention be to use existing infrastructure and resources for the new provision? Had money been set aside to fund the piloting of new courses?** The planning process was underway now and the resource implications would be factored into this. Existing staff would be used wherever possible. If courses looked to have a low contribution rate, it would be expected that there would be a higher contribution rate elsewhere. Any additional costs or resources would need to be supported with a business case.
- 4.3 The Vice Principal Adult and HE then gave a presentation on higher education (HE). The following points were highlighted.
- 4.3.1 The context for the College's HE offer, its relationship with DMU and its high-quality provision were outlined.
  - 4.3.2 Market analysis showed that there was a need to increase levels of workers qualified at Levels 4 and above, particularly in the engineering and construction, logistics, STEM and health and social care roles.
  - 4.3.3 The College currently had 12% of market share for level 4 and 5

- provision in the LLEP area.
- 4.3.4 It offered three of the top 10 most popular level 4 and 5 courses locally and so there was scope to grow in the other seven courses or related areas.
- 4.3.5 Opportunities included the development of new higher technical qualifications (HTQs); increasing internal progression; the partnership with DMU; and the potential for further capital funding from the OfS.
- 4.3.6 Challenges include the continued competition from universities, the recruitment and retention of staff, access to capital funding to refresh specialist equipment and accommodation for growth and the introduction of new regulatory fees.
- 4.4 Governors asked a number of **questions** including:
- 4.4.1 **It would be difficult for the College to compete with universities; did it have the right accommodation and facilities to ensure that students who were paying a lot of money were in a learning environment appropriate to the fees paid?** The College had a different offer with smaller group sizes and lots of support. It was using capital money from the Office for Students (OfS) to invest in capital and refresh some of the older, dated equipment. Part of the reason for the relationship with DMU was to enable students to access DMU facilities although this was not always happening.
- 4.4.2 **Some universities were not allowing T level students to progress to their courses; was this a good opportunity for the College to progress its T level students onto its HE programmes?** It was a good opportunity although local universities would be accepting T levels; it was mainly Russell Group universities that would not. T Level students would complete in 2023 and the College needed to get HTQs up and running.
- 4.4.3 **What would the lifelong learning entitlement provide and how would this benefit the College's students?** This would be introduced in 2025 and would give adults access to the same level of funding as if they were on a three-year undergraduate degree. It could be used over multiple years and broken into modules which would provide greater access and be more attractive to adults.
- 4.5 The Principal reported that the OfS had released a consultation on quality and standards aimed at eradicating poor quality provision. This was uncompromising and whatever the College decided to do it needed to be sure it could meet the minimum standards.
- 4.6 **Governors thanked the Vice Principal for his presentation and endorsed the planned developments.**

## **5 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- **16 March 2022**
- **10/11 June 2022 – Away Day**
- **6 July 2022**

*All staff and students left the meeting*

**6    ANY OTHER BUSINESS - confidential**