Board meeting
Wednesday 27 January 2020 17:30-19:30
Teams

Minutes

Board	**Independent Governors**: Ian Valvona (Chair); Sue Kingman (VC); Andy Chew (VC); Elaine McMahon (interim CEO and Principal); Vincent Neate; Rosh Sellahewa; Mike Sutcliffe; Jim Marshall; Alex Gallagher; Helen Litvak; Rosemary Scully **Staff Governors:** Neal Hook; Cait Orton. **Student Governors:** Japneet Kaur; Hamish Murray
In Attendance	Jason Jones (Deputy CEO & Principal, Curriculum and Quality); Ian Rule (Interim Finance Director); Alison de Lord (Assistant Principal HR); Sheila Fraser-Whyte (Executive Director, Business Development & Innovation); Chris Dearnley (ESFA) (observer); Sarah Connerty (interim Governance advisor)
Apologies	Japneet Kaur and Hamish Murray

Item	Item Description	Action
1	**Welcome and apologies** There were no apologies received. JK and HM did not attend the meeting. CD to join after item 5 and RS departed at 18.30. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reported on the first Joint Steering Group last night which had gone very well. The Chair noted the White Paper which has been published and has landed quite well in the sector. FE Week said that the sector has given the White Paper the thumbs up. It will be a considered as part of the merger discussion item.	
2	**Declarations of interest** The Chair declared his interest for the White Paper item as an employee for the DfE working on the Paper. There were no other declarations received.	
3	**The minutes from the meeting of 9 December 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.** **The following electronic resolutions were ratified:** Sign and Seal of the Deed of Variation with Clarion Housing Limited – 17 December 2020 Approval of the College's Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan – 4 January 2021	
4	**Matters arising** The majority of items have been actioned and closed. Actions updated were as follows: Action 2 and 37 – lesson observations. JJ will address this under item 6 Action 24 - A reminder to read Part 1 of the Keeping Children Safe in Education and confirm with the interim governance advisor [Keeping children safe in education (publishing.service.gov.uk)](publishing.service.gov.uk) Action 39 – a capacity plan has been requested from FEA. It is being taken forward with the project managers with an initial meeting next Wednesday to discuss what the product will look like and how it will address the concerns around quantifying the risk of undertaking merger at this time. This will be brought back to the Board.	SC
5	**Safeguarding training for governors**	

CO provided a presentation for the Board on safeguarding and governance in the context of Ofsted visits (see presentation appended). CO suggested reading Annex 1, p.22 of Ofsted's inspecting safeguarding document
Ofsted: inspecting safeguarding (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Chair asked what an appropriate set of questions for governors would be to take to Heads of School and staff generally and he asked VN as the safeguarding link governor for his views. VN noted that he was confident in the safeguarding team and his only concern is if there was a situation that the processes are working as they should be. The Chair asked CO to report on the accompanying paper with the update on adjustments to practice and the implications for safeguarding matters related to the reduction of on-site delivery since the national lockdown announced on 4 January 2021.

[MS joined the meeting]

CO noted that the College offered the opportunity for any student that fell into the category of a vulnerable learner to come into College and this was by prior appointment either to meet the safeguarding team or to use College facilities. A designated safeguarding lead was available on-site every day with others available remotely.

Students receiving the discretionary bursary would continue to receive this plus a £3.50 home learning top up per week top up via BACS and those with enhanced bursaries would receive their full payment.

All students were contacted for their preference. A contact log was shared with the HoS and cross referenced with inclusive learning to ensure vulnerable students could all be monitored. The inclusive learning team took the lead for the majority of students with EHCPs and Supported Learning put an adapted curriculum model in place with some remote provision and some access allowing students to access their core curriculum.

From Monday 11 January any student wishing to attend was added to an attendance register. There was a moderate update and College teams maintained communication with all students.

CO reported on the expansion of the government's definition of vulnerable for this lockdown. It includes anyone who needs to be in including those with difficulty with remote learning, mental health issues or no quiet space to work. The updated number of learners for these categories at the College is 148 who are actively known to the safeguarding team.

The Safeguarding team continues to work with external partners remotely which has proved to be effective. The team are in regular contact with all students on a risk case basis and have weekly triage meetings.

The College is mindful that digital poverty is a risk to some students. There were requests from 70 students for support for laptops or data following an email sent out on the 8 January. A shipment has just arrived from Vodaphone with data and the College is awaiting a number of DfE laptops which are not anticipated until the spring term because of the priority of kit to schools. The requests are being triaged with students with multiple vulnerabilities being prioritised.

Governors asked about the dimensions of the extra demand. CO noted that it is not nearly as strenuous as the March 2020 lockdown. The students have experience of remote practices and so do staff and the lockdown was anticipated. The numbers of learners coming in are around what was expected. At the Ofsted interim visit the question was around increases in mental health around lockdown and CO reported that mental health has always been a big category for the College, and it has the right systems established. The team are not able to as effectively signpost learners onto other agencies during this time so more intense support is required in the College.

AC noted the total number of vulnerable learners and asked how 148 compares against other colleges locally. CO explained that there is no benchmarking available. There is a good relationship with Kingston College and the teams share information with the Colleges being on par percentage wise.

JJ noted that in terms of digital poverty where the College is not able to help with a device it can offer a place on site. Other students who do not overtly meet the criteria for 'vulnerable' are expressing a need to come on site due to the challenges of remote learning (e.g. sharing work spaces with siblings, or because of the relentless onslaught of online learning). The College has agreed to exercise the flexibility around identifying vulnerable students that is built into to the

	updated DfE definitions and enable additional 'at risk' students to attend on site. This will be on a school by school basis with staff requesting this from HoS and then signed off by JJ. Students can come on site to use technology for remote learning with some subject specialists available at designated times. This has been agreed at CLT today and will be organised over the next two weeks to commence directly after half term.	
	VN thanked CO for answering his question and asked how decisions are made on vulnerable learners around attending onsite. Are they asked if they would like to come in or that that College thinks they should be in College? He noted that the College needs to be quite careful not to make it look like it is putting up barriers and asked if the message is welcoming vulnerable adults. JJ reported it is not meant to be gatekeeping. The College is mindful to keep staff and students safe, so it doesn't want a free for all and does need to introduce that triaging of requests. The Chair agreed that the College should be welcoming vulnerable students in and he welcomed the flexibility on vulnerable. He noted that he completely understands the safety point but the message needs to be that physically the College is open for vulnerable students. CO clarified that the vulnerable students known to the safeguarding team will not go through this process.	
	VN noted that there is a recognised risk of disengagement for some vulnerable students and it does seem that on the one hand the College is saying that this is a very welcome piece of guidance because the circumstances of lockdown has made some students unsafe, but safety is the reason why there are more processes for students to go through which is trading one kind of safety against another. He suggested there needs to be a way of making it more welcoming. The Chair proposed that the answer to finding this balance will be VN getting alongside JJ as safeguarding link governor to see what communications are going out to students to get that understanding.	VN/JJ
	JM asked about how governors can make themselves aware of vulnerable students, for example understanding and supporting the huge numbers of young carers. He asked how do we know if we have got the right children in our vulnerable categories, are there more out there and how do we find out? CO noted that it is the question of how do we know what we don't know. All messaging that goes to students includes the safeguarding message, it is embedded in the footers and on the ID cards. The other element is how staff are informed to be aware through online lessons and digital messaging and how to pick up signs. These include lack of communication and lack of engagement and are there any changes in student's behaviours. New students have been referred since the 4 January from staff, these mostly relate to mental health, but this can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns. She agreed with JM that young carers are a huge category which is often difficult to identify as they don't recognise their own situation.	
	Governors questioned the 148 students in vulnerable category with only 1 or 0 attending most days. CO explained that in terms of engagement each student is assigned a key worker who communicates with them, their parents and professional and they are discussed weekly at triage meetings. If they are not on-site the team will have confirmed they are happy to work at home and that they are always welcome to come in.	
	The Chair noted his concern around how schools have been prioritised over colleges for laptops. He noted that in the recent round of stakeholder meetings there have been offers of support for the College and its students. He would also directly like to take forward this concern and asked for further detail from CO.	
	The Chair confirmed that the Board want to make sure that the process for vulnerable students attending on-site doesn't discourage students as this is not where the Board or leadership team is at, but at the same time the College has to be Covid safe for its staff and students. VN to follow up with JJ and provide assurance to the Board.	CO VN/JJ
	CO provided an overview of the Addendum to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy. This is the third rewrite of the addendum since Covid and has been revised to reflect circumstances at the College. There are no major changes included. **RESOLVED: The Board approved the Addendum to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.**	
6	**Quality** Quality Improvement Plan	

JJ reported as follows:

- The QIP starts off with the CQS KPIs as a reminder of the targets for the year and benchmarking against the last two years and national average/sector

JJ noted that he would focus on the amber areas and areas that need to be closely monitored:

- Increase collaboration with key employers and vocational bodies to support more effective curriculum design and development in IT, Science and Construction - the Chamber of Commerce are onboard and there is a really good relationship. The College is engaged with the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) Generally the work is on track but needs to be pushed on in terms of employer engagement and there is further work to do
- Work experience has historically been red or amber and is now green as the College has made significant progress with virtual work experience, e.g. Speakers for Schools [Speakers for Schools - Our Home](#) giving opportunities for students to engage with a wide range of employers. AC reported that he is part of that programme which is very broad and there are a lot of high-quality people available to come in to engage with students. JJ agreed that it is something to be pushed further. SFW noted the College has applied to be a partner with Speakers for Schools. She reported that ISG are doing a presentation next week to look at careers within the construction industry as part of the opportunity to look at the STEM centre with the aim to give a bit of hope for the young people
- Careers strategy – Rachel Scarborough (Head of Student Experience) and JJ are having conversations to enhance the strategy, it is due to be reviewed at half term and will report back to the Board
- Tutorial Scheme of Work – there needs to be more opportunity for tutors to support students in tutorial time and a revised tutorial programme is being developed to be more effectively tailor to learners' progression plans and more effectively embed within the core curriculum
- Online enrichment and support opportunities for students – staff are reaching out to get a view from students
- Improved Information Advice and Guidance for non-HE progression – this is being monitored this term and some work is going on with the Careers department
- Made in Richmond – the College wants to set this up but there is no capacity at the moment and so this will be held over for commencement in 2021-22
- Other target setting – there are more robust procedures, parent reports have gone out and RAG rating against all target grades has been done so improvements are on track. In Curriculum Performance reviews JJ and HoS will be checking on whether students are on track to achieve
- Embedding a new developmental enquiry approach – the team have talked in depth about adaptations to the lesson observation process. Lance Finn (Head of Quality Assurance and Improvement) has worked on it extensively last February, adapting the approach in light of the current lockdown. Proposals have been presented and shared with the Chair last week. It will be a school enquiry walks process to enable a quality assurance and quality improvement focus on peer observations of remote delivery. It started this week and is a two-stage process and cycle. The first stage is school based, asking volunteers to work with their HoS to agree themes to ensure a quality assurance process. This week teams are all meeting together to determine the themes of their school i.e. questioning strategies, engagement. There is freedom for schools to identify what they are going to work on. Next week is the observation stage, the crucial part being before the observation with the opportunity for discussions, then there is the lesson visit and post reflection after that. The teams will then come back together and draw up actions plans for further improvements. For the College enquiry walks everybody in every school is required to be involved. Managers will be shadowing and governors will have the opportunity to come in and shadow College enquiry walks to see what is going on in terms of remote delivery. It will then flip to an onsite delivery model when students are back in College

JJ

	• Focus groups with students – A pilot at the moment is looking at the unit review process with students being able to reflect on their units chosen and how effective they are in helping them towards their career The Chair noted that he really welcomed the thoroughly worked up College enquiry walks process and given the diaries of governors asked that an email goes out with some mechanism for interest and availability. JJ noted that he would put together a menu of choices for governors to select from and would then broker the relationships. • Attendance – at 80.6% this is better than this time last year but still below the 84% target which is low. Attendance is still an issue and is being looked at at school, qualification, course and individual student level. The Chair noted that 84% isn't a very stretching target and questioned when the crisis point is reached to tip it into a red risk. JJ reported that attendance has been red before and is now amber because there are signs of improvement, but it is slow and better in some areas than others. JJ noted that it is his biggest amber concern • Behaviour management CPD will take place later this term • The EDI action plan is included in the QIP and most actions are ongoing and for review in February The Chair noted that the QIP is a really thorough document and asked colleagues for questions. He questioned what the next step is with the QIP. MS noted that it will come back to the CQS and Board on a regular basis. MS noted his concerns about attendance. He questioned how this is looked at in relation to engagement and the importance of looking at actual numbers. It does raise alarm bells and doesn't seem to be making any traction. JJ noted that he was happy to turn the risk red if that is the feeling of colleagues. He noted that traction is being made but not at the speed wanted. The Board asked for the risk to be escalated to red and the Chair requested that CQS meet for a deeper dive into the area of attendance. EM reported that compared to some of the other London colleges 80% is about right as a comparator for remote learning and noted that the College will do further work on benchmarking. She explained that the context is unknown on the understanding of the impact. The enquiry walks will help and further detail on attendance will be shared with CQS because the data is very variable with low attendance in English maths and functional skills which impacts on the whole. This way CQS can consider whether the plans in place are sufficient. EM noted that JJ is leading well on attendance through this pandemic period. The Chair thanked JJ for his report.	JJ JJ/MS/SC EM
7	**Update from the Principal and CEO** EM provided an update to the Board which included: **The White Paper** (Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth) <ins>Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</ins> The paper is important for what it means to us as a Board. There is an opportunity when looking at vision, culture and the way forward with HCUC to explore the White Paper. FEA are organising a joint workshop which dates to be circulated soon so that both Boards and senior teams can have an input into the direction going forward. The AoC, as a key stakeholder, has been very involved in the development of the White Paper. The sector has really welcomed it, it is blueprint for change that should mean FECs are in a better position to meet the demands of learners, employers and the economy going forward. It links to the aims of the Independent Commission on the 'College of the Future'. It takes into account evidence from the FE sector and strengthens the FE position in education and the economic landscape and can have a significant impact on the College. RuTC is strategically positioned for implementing the White Paper. The college can further strengthen connections with communities and the regional economy. Employers are placed at the heart of the paper and the College already has this agenda and is upskilling the FE workforce, preparing learners for lifelong learning and the digital workplace. The College has been training staff for several years for the digital workplace and has excellent teachers who are enabling digital learning to take place through the pandemic. There is more the College can do to increase access to high quality and accessible digital content across all subjects and levels.	FEA/SC

	The College can respond to qualifications and assessment reform and employer demand, making sure there is connectivity with businesses. It is working with the Chamber of Commerce, who have an office on-site, on the development of employer links, especially for delivery of apprenticeships and a joint bid has been submitted to deliver the Kickstart programme. The Paper also positions FECs well for the next spending review. Colleges need to be resourced and have parity of funding with schools in order to be able to deliver on the Paper. There are a few buts, the main ones are: • What the new powers will be for the Secretary of State and what is the new approach for intervention? • There is little new money • It is mainly a post 18 focus and there is a lack of focus on the wider role of colleges for adults which FE does really well. It underplays the wider role of colleges in the community • It lacks pace in terms of the life of this parliament EM noted that this FE White Papers feels like a positive major change for Colleges. **Strategic priorities – EM updated as follows:** • JJ has done an amazing job covering off priorities apart from the 'Made in Richmond Award' implementation of which has been delayed due to the pandemic • The Princes Trust published the Aspiration Gap report in September 2020 The Aspiration Gap Report 2020_FINAL.pdf which shows that the toll on young people's mental health through the pandemic is huge with 1 in 4 young people experiencing mental health issues. EM reported that this will be stepped up on the College's agenda • IR has led the College through the financial recovery plan and there is some good news and some challenges to face • AdL and Mark Brough have prepared a very good estates strategy which came to CLT today and covers the key agenda of sustainability • The STEM building was rated RED on the risk register in December because of the position of vacant possession to Clarions. Project management by SFW meant that VP was achieved on the 17 December. There remain challenges ahead to secure capital receipts in line with projections and scenario planning has looked at the worst and most likely outcome. The College's capital project is particularly large for the size of the College. The strategic priorities and targets are currently being updated and will be linked to CLT appraisals in February. • **Covid 19 lateral flow testing –** this is rolled out, effective and going well. The Chair asked colleagues for any questions on EM's report. RS noted that it is clear that colleagues value the White Paper and asked what the level of industry engagement support is. EM explained that the Chamber of Commerce has been involved, employers have been put at the heart of the engagement reform and there is a sense of real potential for local skills improvement plans and how colleges can be part of that working with chambers of commerce. EM and the Chair will speak with Ann Newton (Chamber of Commerce) to get her view on the White Paper. It is important to know how the work is going to be piloted and how the College can get involved. The Chair noted that there have been very positive responses to the Paper. There are questions around how it will be funded and the disappointment of the one year rather than three-year spending review, but it has landed well. The Chair noted that he had worked on the outstanding teacher chapter which recognises that our staff are central to what we do and is devoted to the view that in order to achieve you need outstanding teachers.	EM EM/IV
8	**Merger –** EM reported that a JSG meeting took place last night and the papers are included for Board members to dip into and governors are welcome to get in touch on any queries or further details required. Merger progress is a standing item for the Board with regular updates on the implementation plan with HCUC. In terms of development, it is amazing what has been covered,	

	there has been good project leadership and staff are responding well. A useful document on steps to the proposed manager which gives month by month explanations of how it will play out is included in the papers. The deputy Principals of both colleges have been asked to join the JSG and forward dates are planned. The timetable for merger is detailed and Board meetings dovetail to the JSG. Workstreams are meeting fortnightly with a lead from each college. EM and the Chair are meeting with key stakeholders and this is helpful for positive profiling of the College and addressing merger questions. The Marketing and Comms plan is included in the papers and RuTC will be aligning communications with HCUC. Due diligence is underway with Eversheds Sutherland contracted for legal due diligence; this exercise has a large amount of work for the senior team and their teams and extra support in IT and HR has been brought in to meet the 2 February deadline. Alliots have been appointed for financial due diligence. The significant amount of work and risk around this is being carefully monitored and additional resource is being brought in where needed with a careful eye on the budget. Capacity is the subject of a separate plan as requested by the JSG and linked to completing the due diligence and going through a pandemic while undertaking the merger. There is a joint risk register for merger which the two College have been populating and this is a standing item on the JSG agenda.	
	The Chair thanked EM for the update and recommended governors to the Steps to merger document which is a handy brief overview of the stages of merger as a process. The first draft of the consultation document is included in the papers; it is relatively early days but is developing quickly. It will iterate and evolve before its final presentation and approval to the Board on the 24 March. Governors will have the opportunity to contribute to the document as part of the governor workshop that is being organised by FEA.	FEA/SC
	VN noted that he had written down some thoughts following last nights' JSG and asked if it would be appropriate to share them with the Board which the Chair welcomed. Thoughts were - the comment around dead donkey courses and whether this referred to courses that the Colleges decide are no longer worth running. VN asked that going into merger there is a clear criteria on this for the future. The question of appointment of RuTC governors to the new Board and how this will be done on a skills matrix and whether this should be thought of more in the medium to long term. How long will the HCUC Principal and CEO be around and is there a succession plan and a longer-term sense of where that is going. The risk register and how IT and systems have been underplayed on it around compatible systems for the merged college and the preference to acknowledge this and focus on how to address this. Capacity issues and how the project manager will spot if something is being dropped in the merger workstreams but the Board is collectively concerned from the perspective of keeping RuTC running and the pressures on our team.	
	The Chair thanked VN for the really helpful questions and agreed there needed to be further discussions and thought about the process for governor expressions of interest and appointments and this will be coming to the SRP next week and he asked that the succession point is also considered at this meeting. The risk register and IT point should go to the IT workstream for consideration. The matter of capacity specifically arose as an RuTC issue and that is the way it will be discussed at a meeting with FEA, AC, EM and the Chair next Wednesday and will be reported back. JJ explained that there is clear criteria for closing courses around declining enrolments over a long period of time, poor student outcomes and poor progression outcomes. This will be picked up for discussion at CQS.	SK/SC IR IV/SC JJ/SC
9	**Finance** **December 2020 management accounts and financial position update** IR reported that two sets of papers have been included. Item 9 – the draft management accounts which will now be related with the new cashflow figures. The same patterns are in place for income and expenditure and there is not a lot of news. A close eye is being kept on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and contact delivery with plans being revised on an ongoing basis and FRC will be kept up to date on this. There is no massive cause for alarm despite a £200k adverse variance. Expenditure is under profile which is helpful. [confidential item]	

	Update on Integrated Financial Model for Colleges (IFMC) return – The Chair asked about the IFMC and IR reported that the ESFA plans have changed and a standard return that doesn't need Board approval has been put in place. [this was submitted to the ESFA on the 29 January 2020].	
10	**College Redevelopment Project Group** **Report from the meeting of 20 January 2021** AC noted that the majority of the item had been covered under the agenda. [confidential item]	
11	**Any other business** There were no additional items of business. The Chair thanked everyone for a really good meeting which had debated the priority areas of safeguarding, quality and finance. He noted the critical period for finance which would be closely monitored by the Finance and Resources and CRPG chairs alongside the CLT and reported back to the Board.	IR, EM, AC, JM
12	**Meetings for 2020-21:** 24 March 2021; 28 April 2021; 10 June 2021; 23 June 2021; 14 July 2021 (all 17.30 starts)	

Meeting closed: 19.45