Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 4 December 2017, in Room 017, Orient House.

PRESENT: Alex Jackson (Chair); Gill Burbridge (Principal); Elizabeth Crump; Helen Davenport; Hannah Eaton; Paula Imafidon; Joga Kabra and Emily Martin.

In Attendance: Dawn Hamilton-Barrett (VP, Staffing, Resources & Infrastructure); Mike Gallagher (VP, Teaching & Learning); Chris Price (VP, Wider Student Experience) and Alan Leak (Director of Finance); Saba Rafiq (SU Vice-President).

Clerk to the Corporation: Michael Wood

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Governor declared an interest.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Shah Ahmed and Taiyyabah Ijaz.

REPORT FROM GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE

13.17 The Corporation considered a Report from the Governance & Search Committee which recommended the appointment of three new Independent Governors for an initial one-year term: Elizabeth Crump; Emily Martin and Christine Quigley. The Corporation approved all three appointments.

14.17 In respect of existing Governors, the Corporation approved the re-appointment of Helen Davenport and Joga Kabra for a further three-year term of office.

WELCOME

15.17 The Chairman warmly welcomed Paula Imafidon (SU President) and Elizabeth Crump and Emily Martin to the meeting.

MINUTES

16.17 The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2017 were approved.

Matters Arising

17.17 (Minute 2.17 refers) It was noted that final student numbers, 2017/18 stood at 2,303 (43 lower than forecast). The Principal confirmed that preliminary work had already been conducted looking at possible budget reductions for the year ahead.
FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Annual Audit Committee Report

18.17 The Corporation received the Annual Report of the Audit Committee, 2016/17, including the Annual Internal Audit Report and Opinion, and the Internal Audit Plan, 2017/18, the detailed contents of which were noted. The Chairman thanked Joga Kabra for agreeing to chair the Committee.

b) Report and Financial Statements

19.17 The Director of Finance presented the College’s Draft Financial Statements, 2016/17 and Audit Findings, the following key points being noted:

i) that income had increased by £613k over the year;
ii) that the surplus of £157k was higher than 2015/16 (£59k);
iii) that the College’s cash balances had increased from £3.13m to £3.65m;
iv) that staff costs stood at 69.9% as a percentage of income.

20.17 The Corporation approved the Financial Statements for 2016/17, and noted the External Auditor’s Report on the year, thanks being recorded to the Director of Finance and all those concerned in the production of the Accounts.

c) Banking Covenants

21.17 The Corporation approved Chair’s Action in respect of Banking Covenants that were required following changes in accounting reporting standards.

d) Management Accounts

22.17 The Director of Finance presented Management Accounts to 31 October 2017, the following key points being highlighted:

i) that the budget position was still positive with an increased projected surplus of £98k (cf £64k);
ii) that the under recruitment of student numbers (43) will impact on the 2017/18 budget, for which contingency measures would be required;
iii) that staffing costs currently stood at 68.9%, although this figure would rise once backdated national pay awards were agreed.

The Corporation noted Management Accounts for the period ended 31 October 2017.

e) Financial Plan

23.17 The Director of Finance presented an update on the College’s Financial Plan, 2017-19, which had been considered by ESFA who had concluded that the College’s underlying financial health grade was ‘outstanding’. Governors welcomed this external assessment.
f) Risk Management Update & Annual Report, 2016/17

24.17 The Corporation noted the opinion of the College’s Auditors which stated that:

“the organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management”.

The Corporation approved both the Annual Risk Management Report and Risk Management Policy, 2017/18, it being noted that Data Protection may be an additional area of focus given impending changes. With regard to the College’s Business Continuity Plans, which had been favourably reviewed by Internal Audit, it was commented that the Local Authority may be able to provide additional advice and guidance in relation to a ‘lock down’ or similar scenario.

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT MATTERS

a) Principal’s Report

25.17 The Principal made a presentation to the Corporation covering the draft Strategic Plan, ‘20:20 Vision’; the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), 2016/17 and related Improvement Action Plans. Arising out of detailed discussion, the following key points were noted:

i) that the 20:20 Vision contained seven core strategic priorities focused on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience, whilst taking cognisance of the changing post-16 landscape. The Plan had three component parts:

   2017/18: Adding Value
   2018/19: Achieving Excellence
   2019/20: Extending Influence

ii) that the Plan had been informed by an extensive series of conversations with staff in the early part of term, which had included a reflection on culture and values and how the College could add value to all. A key whole College focus would be ‘stretch and challenge’ across the curriculum;

iii) that in respect of the SAR, this had been a more formal and in-depth process than previously, with the Principal meeting with every staff team to listen and reflect on their feedback;

iv) that the Improvement Action Plans, covering 2016/17 (final review) and 2017/18, highlighted the need to improve the added value in relation to A Level and vocational provision; to improve Maths GCSE performance; to address the variability in approach towards linear A Levels where grades had fallen; to improve progression rates from years 1 to 2; and to improve the support and guidance to students on non-HE progression routes.

26.17 The Corporation approved the Strategic Plan, 2017-20 and the College’s SAR, 2016/17.
REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

27.17 The Corporation noted the Minutes of the Audit Committee and the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Governance & Search Committee, held on 4 September 2017 and 10 October 2017, respectively.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28.17 The Principal informed the Corporation that an Awards Evening would be held on 13 December to which all Governors were invited. It was also noted that students had been invited to perform at the House of Parliament on 6 February 2018. With regard to the Sixth Form College Partnership, a Governor liaison event had been organised for 18 January 2018, which would include a presentation on DPA changes. Any Governor wishing to attend this event should contact the Clerk in the first instance.

29.17 There being no other business the meeting closed, the Chair wishing everyone the compliments of the season.