Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 12 October 2015, in Room 017, Orient House.

PRESENT: Pat Edwards (Chair); Asiia Abassi; Mark Carroll (Vice-Chair); Lewis Coakley; Coral DeCourcy; Steven Crane (Vice-Chair); Liz Daniels; David Hatchett; Katherine Hewlett; Taiyyabah Ijaz; Arshed Mahmood; Barbara Matuskovioova; Ian Rogers; Naihum Levi Stevens and Kevin Watson (Principal).

In Attendance: Beno Azebiah (HR Manager, substituting for Clerk to the Corporation)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Hannah Chapman.

WELCOME

The Chair formally welcomed the new President and Vice-President of the Students’ Union to their first meeting of the Corporation.

MEMBERSHIP

The Chair informed Members that Gavin Williams had resigned from the Corporation with effect from 30 June 2015, and wished to record his thanks for the contribution that Mr Williams had made to the Board, especially in his role as Chairman of the Audit Committee.

MINUTES

00.15 The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 29 June 2105 were approved.

MATTERS ARISING

01.15 (Minute 88 refers): it was noted that there were vacancies for both a Chair of the Audit Committee and a Committee member, in addition to the office of a Vice-Chair of the Corporation, which would need to be addressed as a priority by the Search Committee. It was proposed that the Search Committee should consider succession planning matters, given that both Vice-Chairs had indicated that they did not wish to be considered for the office of Corporation Chair.

REPORT ON TEACHING & LEARNING

02.15 The Corporation received a report on Teaching & Learning, as presented by the Principal, the following key points being noted:

i) that the College had enjoyed a record-breaking enrolment for 2015/16, with 200 students above the target recruitment figure. It was noted this figure would fall during the induction period as some students decided to leave or not show sufficient commitment to their studies. However, numbers would remain appreciably above the initial target. Student numbers for the six week census would be provided at the next Corporation meeting;

ii) that the increased enrolment would help to mitigate against the impact of proposed funding reductions;
ii) that with regard to gender breakdown, there had been a slight increase in the proportion of male students taking Level 3 programmes, but a slight fall in the population of male students taking A Levels;

iv) that the average GCSE points score was 33 for all students, which was higher than last year;

v) that in terms of feeder schools, George Mitchell occupied first position, with significant numbers from Buxton, Newham, Kingsford and Rokeby (whose numbers had nearly doubled this year). It was noted that the significant increase in student numbers was not a typical trend for other Post-16 education providers in Waltham Forest or neighbouring boroughs;

vi) that the College had created additional classrooms by converting offices where possible, to avoid any adverse effect on teaching.

vii) that, in response to a question on feeder school analysis, the Principal commented that detailed analysis had not been carried out with regard to the Ofsted rating of the 100 or schools from which the College recruited. However, those students who had enrolled succeeded in achieving grades appropriate for a place at the College;

viii) that, in theory, there was no upper limit on the number of students the College could take, subject to the availability of space.

03.15 The Corporation recorded its thanks to all staff involved in such a successful student recruitment for 2015/16. Interest was expressed by a Governor in having more information related to student achievements where these were significantly better or worse depending on the performance of the school from which students had been recruited.

REPORT ON RESULTS, 2014/15

04.15 The Principal presented a Report on Examination Results, 2014/15, the following key points being noted:

- that the College’s A Level pass rate was the best ever at 99.7%, with almost two out of five entries at A*- B;

- that AS results were slightly lower than the previous year, but still the second best on record. BTEC Level 3 results stood at 99.68% pass, with a record number of distinctions;

- that data on the progression of students to HE or employment was provided to the College, but there was a time-delay with this. The College subscribed to a national system of added value (ALPs) which was useful for statistical benchmarking purposes and which would be shared with the Corporation through the Self-Assessment Report.

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

05.15 The Principal highlighted the College’s Self-Assessment process for 2015 and confirmed that an overall College Self-Assessment Report would be presented to the Corporation in advance of the next meeting. The full Board would be responsible for the validation of its constituent parts and totality, in accordance with the approach agreed by the Corporation last year.
Post-16 Sector Review

06.15 The Principal confirmed details relating to the commissioning of Post-16 regional reviews by the Government. The aim was to create fewer, larger and more resilient providers of vocational and technical education usually associated with FE colleges. The position of Sixth Form Colleges remains uncertain, although schools were excluded from the review process. It was noted that a meeting had been held on 22 September aimed at Chairs at which more information on the review process had been forthcoming. The situation remained very uncertain, however, with regard to the potential impact on the College and other neighbouring providers. In London, the Mayor’s Office would co-ordinate the review process, although concern had been expressed over the size of the review areas.

07.15 It was further commented that it might be useful for the College to model the impact of potential cuts (yet to be quantified) by way of preparation for certain scenarios, including mergers or federations. The observation was made that mergers based purely on financial expediency were unlikely to succeed: there needed to be a sound and sustainable academic rationale.

08.15 It was proposed that the Strategic Plan Working Party should include consideration of the potential impact of the area review, albeit very little concrete information existed at present.

Strategic Plan, 2016-18

09.15 It was noted that a further meeting of the Strategic Plan Working Party on 7 October had been cancelled due to a Governor’s illness. It was agreed, therefore, that in order to maintain momentum, the Working Party should be convened in the near future to finalise the draft Strategic Plan for Corporation approval. It was further agreed that the Chair, M Carroll and an SLT member should also be co-opted on to the Working Party.

Child Protection: Annual Report

10.15 The Corporation received an annual report on Child Protection. Additional information and clarification was requested with regard to what groups of students faced which particular issues, whether any issues were escalating or improving and possibly how Leyton compared to other institutions in addressing student issues. It was noted that these queries would be referred to the Vice-Principal (Wider Student Experience) for action.

Student Suspensions & Exclusions: Annual Report

11.15 The Corporation received an annual report on student suspensions and exclusions.

The Principal reported on the recent incident in Walthamstow which had received significant media coverage and a direct number of press enquiries to the College. The Principal had sent an email to Governors regarding the incident, to which he had received only one response.

12.15 Confidential Item - not for publication

Board Etiquette

13.15 The Corporation adopted a guide to board etiquette, as produced by the Clerk-elect and based on established principles of good governance within the sector.
External Review of Governance

14.15 The Principal advised the Corporation that Ian Wilson, a former Sixth Form College Principal and current Chair of Governors at an SFC, had been recommended by the SFCA to conduct the College’s review of governance. Detailed terms of reference had been drawn up by the Principal and agreed by the Chair and Vice-Chair (S Crane), as requested by the Board.

15.15 It was intended that the review should commence as soon as possible (with a report being produced in early 2016) and that an observation of a meeting of the Corporation would form part of the process. In this regard, it was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Corporation would need to be changed to facilitate Ian Wilson’s attendance and the Clerk-elect would canvass alternative dates in the near future.

16.15 Confidential Item - not for publication

Appointment of Clerk to the Corporation

17.15 The Corporation approved the appointment of Michael Wood as Clerk to the Corporation following an external recruitment and interview process.

Management Accounts

18.15 The Corporation received Management Accounts for the period ended 31 August 2015 and future budget estimates.

College News

19.15 The Principal provided an update on a number of College events and developments.

Date of Next Meeting

20.15 To be confirmed.