Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 29 June 2017, in Room 017, Orient House.

PRESENT: Alex Jackson (Chair); Mark Carroll; Helen Davenport; David Hatchett; Rabarb Hussain; Taiyyabah Ijaz; Joga Kabra; Sonia Watson and Kevin Watson (Principal).

In Attendance: Gill Burbridge, Principal-Designate; Alan Leak (Director of Finance).

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; Hannah Eaton and Katherine Hewlett.

MINUTES

52.16 The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2017 were approved.

MATTERS ARISING

53.16 (Minute 41.16 refers) It was noted that an external advertisement would be placed over the summer in respect of Governor vacancies. The Chair encouraged Members to forward any suggested nominations to the Clerk in this respect which would then be considered by the Search and Governance Committee.

54.16 (Minute 50.16 refers) It was noted that it was likely that the Corporation Strategy Day would be held at the end of September and that a date would be finalised in the near future.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

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

i) that the budget position was still positive with a projected surplus of £277k;

ii) that lettings income had increased over the year;

iii) that a development session for new Governors on the College budget should be organised early in the new academic session.

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

56.16 The Director of Finance introduced discussion on the Budget, 2017/18, the following key points being noted:

i) that there had been an increase in recurrent funding of £108k than originally forecast due to a planned increase in student numbers;
ii) that staffing costs had increased due to incremental progression and pension costs, although a 1% pay increase had been assumed for 2017;

iii) that the projected surplus on the year was £39k;

iv) that, in response to a question over the College’s preparedness for a cyber attack, it was commented that this major risk was included within the College’s IT security policy.

The Corporation approved the Budget for the 2017/18 financial year.

57.16 The Director of Finance introduced discussion on the Financial Plan, 2017/18, the following key points being highlighted:

i) that the College had been rated ‘outstanding’ for the 2016/17 year, although this would be temporarily modified to ‘good’ for 2017/18 due to a change Funding Agency guidance linked to borrowings;

ii) that a higher potential increase in pay costs had been modelled under the sensitivity analysis.


58.16 The Corporation noted the ESFA Guidance Letter for Principals and Chief Executives, dated 13 April 2017 which highlighted the fiduciary duties of Governors. The letter would be considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its next meeting.

PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

59.16 The Principal provided a detailed update on the Sixth Form College Partnership, which was regarded as a going concern making real impact. It was noted that the Principal (in his role as Director) would be addressing the Governors of NewVic and BSix in the near future, and that three development sessions had been planned with NewVic’s Board during 2017/18. The Principal further commented that Coventry University were keen to work collaboratively with the Partnership moving forward.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his valuable on-going work with the Partnership.

HR REPORT

60.16 The Corporation received the College’s annual HR Report, the following key points being noted:

i) that the College was currently being re-inspected with regard to its Investor in People (IiP) status and was hopeful of retaining at least its Gold award;

ii) that a new Vice-Principal (Teaching, Learning & Student Achievement), Mike Gallagher, had been appointed internally;

iii) that the number of staff sickness days had increased over the year to 6.3%, but this still remained below the sector average of 8.9%;
iv) that with regard to staff development, teaching staff would be encouraged to undertake post-graduate certification.

The Corporation noted the HR Report.

STUDENT APPLICATIONS

61.16 The Principal-Designate presented a report on Student Applications, 2017/18, it being commented that more students would be progressing to year 2 due to a change in the delivery of A levels. Governors noted that over 80 external marketing events had been held in the face of increased competition from schools and academies.

The Corporation noted the report.

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

62.16 It was reported that there was no report from the Audit Committee as the June meeting had been postponed to September.

PREVENT & COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY

63.16 The Principal introduced discussion of this item, stating that the key watchword for the College was to retain a sense of balance and vigilance. Governors were informed that a number of students were taking part in community action programmes with local schools and mosques which represented a model of good practice. It was further noted that the Vice-Principal (Student Experience) continued to work closely with the College’s Islamic Society, and that one student had been reported for neo-fascist tendencies in recent times. All external speakers continued to be scrutinised closely. The personal tutor system was regarded as a key mechanism for the early identification of potential radicalisation and changes in student behaviour.

Given that the College had received some national acclaim for a Prevent video, it was proposed that this best practice should be showcased with the Local Authority, and Helen Davenport undertook to progress this further in discussion with the Principal-Designate.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, 2017/18

64.16 The Corporation received the Schedule of Meetings for 2017/18, it being noted that the next Corporation meeting would take place on 2 October.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

65.16 The Chair, on behalf of the Corporation, wished to record his sincere thanks for the dedicated and long service of retiring independent Governors Mark Carroll, David Hatchett and Katherine Hewlett, who collectively had almost 55 years service between them. A dinner to commemorate this remarkable service to the College would be held following the meeting.

66.16 The Chair also paid tribute to the Principal, Kevin Watson, who would retire from the College on 31 August 2017 after eight years’ service. During this time, the institution had gone from
strength to strength with three successive ‘good’ Ofsted ratings, a major estates re-modelling and sustained student achievements. The entire Corporation wished the Principal well in his retirement.

67.16 There being no other business, the meeting closed at 6.25 pm.