WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE

CORPORATION BOARD



Minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 12th December 2019 at 5pm

GOVERNORS

PRESENT:

Sean Lyons, Chair Charles Heaton

Neil McDonald Rebecca Joyce Sardip Sandhu

Andrew Cropley, Principal and CEO

Mary Mamik Kate Truscott

Mark Williams (From 5.30pm)

Sophie Welbourn Jane Hawksford Lee Radford Jessica Stowe

Spencer Moore (from 5.30pm)

ALSO IN

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Maxine Bagshaw, Clerk to the Corporation (joining by conference call)

ATTENDANCE:

Louise Knott, Vice Principal Communications Engagement & Student Experience

Jon Fearon, Finance Director

Gavin Peake, Director of IT and Estates

Suzanna Smith, HR Director Eloise Hopkinson (until 5.30pm)

Sue Martin, interim Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality (until 7pm)

Mike Firth, ESFA observer

| 1 | DECLARATION OF INTERESTS | |
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| | The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific interests were declared and standing declarations were noted. | |
| 2 | WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE | |
| | Apologies for absence were received from Clive Pitt, Tony Westwater, | |

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH NOVEMBER 2019

Steve Sutton, Melanie Stirland and Martin Rigley.

Signed: Chair

Date: 16.1.20

ACTION

by whom

DATE by when The minutes were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 2019.

There were no matters arising.

4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered the updates, provided and were satisfied with progress being made.

In relation to line 7, the Finance Director confirmed that the management accounts requested from Chameleon Construction have now been received and will be presented to the next meeting of the F&E Committee on 30th January 2020.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

5 <u>COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT – STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING</u> HELD ON 25TH NOVEMBER 2019

The Committee Chair introduced her summary report and the full minutes of the meeting. She reminded the Board that the purpose of her report was to provide assurance where possible and also to identify any matters of concern or areas of future focus. As a general observation, the Board all agreed that the format of reporting is getting better in terms of clarity and that they welcomed this as an improved and effective process.

The Committee Chair advised that there were a number of matters for the Board to consider at this meeting; these included:

- Final review and approval of the Self-Assessment Report for 2018/19
- Consideration of the Quality Improvement Plan for 19/20, which is very much a live document
- Approval of the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) pertaining to the college's HE provision.

She indicated that it may also be helpful to update the full Board on county line issues that have been identified; it was agreed that Louise Knott would elaborate on this later in the meeting as part of her safeguarding report.

The Board considered the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) provided and all agreed that it was very comprehensive. They acknowledged the huge amount of work that goes in to preparing this on an annual basis and noted that a steer from the Committee was to try to reduce and streamline the process and document going forward, so as to ensure that staff workload in relation to this process is more manageable and

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reduced. A challenge from the Board was that the process itself needs to focus on the impact rather than considerable time being expended in summarising data.

The Board questioned the level of student involvement in the SAR process. It was acknowledged that this was quite limited and, as a consequence, the Board asked student Governors whether they felt that their voice was being listened to by the college. Student Governors confirmed that they felt that the college was good at acknowledging and recognising student views and, in particular, that the learner voice meetings were felt to be effective. The Chair of the Board confirmed that, when he is on site, he does take the opportunity to test this by speaking to students directly, and he has also seen first-hand that the student executive is very active. The Board agreed that they needed to do all that they can as Governors to hear and meet with students, and that it was important to keep the momentum going in relation to this.

It was confirmed that some Governors have been able to attend the learner voice meetings that have taken place so far this year, and those Governors who have attended agreed that it was really encouraging to see the level of student input and engagement. It was confirmed that some students within these meetings are quite quiet, but that they are encouraged to give feedback, both good and bad, so that improvements can be made. It was confirmed that a key role for the learner reps is to gather together all student opinions. Feedback from the Board to student Governors was that they should actively encourage feedback, as students are entitled to be demanding.

In considering the SAR as a whole, the Board all agreed that the Standards Committee's assessment that the document was open and honest was accurate and, on this basis, they were happy to approve.

The Board then went on to consider the QIP and they questioned how progress and impact will be measured. It was explained that it is currently a work in progress to develop short, sharp reports focusing on the QIP. A challenge from the Board was for the senior team to develop a 'roadmap' that has clear checking points, so that Governors can easily see what actions are on track and/or what may be slipping. It was confirmed that this would primarily be monitored and measured through the QIP. All agreed that the college needs to focus on the key items.

The Board were then asked to consider the HE Self Evaluation Document (SED) for 18/19, and it was acknowledged that the position going forward will change given the new partnership arrangements with NTU. The Standards Committee Chair confirmed that this document had been reviewed in detail and that the Committee were satisfied that it was an accurate summary for the year. The Board were reminded of the annual requirement to submit a Board Assurance Statement to the OfS and that the committee, having reviewed the year's arrangements, are satisfied that the assurance statement can be submitted. The proposal put

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forward was that the Principal be given delegated authority to sign this on behalf of the Board. The Board were happy to accept these proposals.

AGREED:

- a) To approve the SAR for 2018/19 as presented
- b) Approve the SED 2018/19 as presented
- c) Note the content of the summary report provided and full minutes of the meeting
- d) Note the content of the learner voice report provided, and
- e) Delegate authority to the Principal to submit the HE Annual Provider Assurance Statement for 18/19.

6 <u>COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT – AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING 28TH NOVEMBER 2019</u>

The Committee Chair drew Governors' attention to the summary report provided and also the full minutes of the meeting. Key matters that he wished to bring to the Board's attention were:

- The Committee met with auditors without management present and good feedback was provided
- There was in depth discussion and review regarding the 3-year internal audit strategy
- The Committee considered and made recommendations regarding the 19/20 internal audit strategy
- As a standing item, the Committee considered the rolling recommendations/actions and progress made against these
- The Audit Committee has put forward the requirement that the scopes of planned internal audits are available to be reviewed by the committee before work commences
- Internal and external auditors were asked to share information and work effectively together
- The Committee approved its annual report to the Board for 18/19
- In relation to rolling actions, good progress has now been made in relation to historic actions outstanding
- The committee was given assurance regarding subcontractor arrangements and, in particular, the subcontractor compliance certificate received from auditors
- The risk register is considered as a standing agenda item: it is felt to be in a good place and there is clear evidence of it being used as a live document.

The Committee Chair drew the Board's attention to

- a) The areas of assurance set out, and
- b) The areas that the Committee feels they and the Board should continue to monitor.

He concluded his report by drawing Governors' attention to the recommendations made. In general discussion, the Board questioned whether the new internal auditors appointed appear to be working

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professionally with the college. The Committee Chair confirmed that this appears to be the case and certainly there are improvements seen in terms of their documentation and presentation so far. Documents presented have been clear, although it was acknowledged that 'the proof' will be clearer once the first report has been received.

One member of the Board questioned how the college had decided that 45 days was the right amount of work required by internal auditors. It was explained that this was part of the tender process and that all firms submitting a tender had been asked to give an opinion on the number of days required, and all had put forward a very similar picture. Members of the Audit Committee all agreed that 45 days felt right and that this gave a balance between cost and effectiveness. The Board were given assurance that the areas of focus for 19/20 are those where improvements are considered to be achievable and also areas of concern.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report and the full minutes of the meeting,
- b) Endorse and approve the 2019/20 plan for internal audit activity,
- Note the content of the Audit Committee's Annual Report for 18/19, and
- d) Note the content of the updated Risk Register.

7 COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT - THE JOINT MEETING OF AUDIT AND F&E ON 28TH NOVEMBER 2019

The joint meeting Chair drew the Board's attention to the summary note and the full minutes of the meeting.

(Spencer Moore and Mark Williams joined the meeting at 5.30pm)

He specifically brought to the Board's attention the fact that some documents were only made available on the portal today and, in particular, documents referred to in appendix 2 and 3. The Finance Director explained that the delay was as a result of external auditors providing their final management letter and approval to the accounts. The Board were asked to note that the external audit management letter was received in draft for the meeting on 28th November 2019 and that, at that point in time, there were only three outstanding aspects discussed. Because of the delay in receiving the final documents, the Board asked the Finance Director to outline any key changes.

The Finance Director drew a number of matters to the Board's attention, including:

- The level of KPMG testing this year. He confirmed that this had been far more significant than experienced in previous years, therefore the Board can take assurance from this.
- Any non-compliance in relation to purchase order processes will

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- be tested through the 19/20 internal audit programme.
- The Letter of Representation is a sector standard document with no additional specific points added for WNC.
- The Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire is a useful annual review to ensure that all matters required throughout the year have been concluded and completed.

In relation to the 2018/19 financial statements, the Finance Director explained that there had been a delay in getting the final version back from auditors and that these were only received by the college today. He explained that there were two matters which led to the delay; these were:

- A consolidation query he explained that this was a last minute audit question and was not a common point and unfortunately was missed in the earlier reviews.
- 2) Deferred tax treatment regarding BKSB.

He confirmed that, as an overview, the queries/changes do not affect the position and results of the group; however, it does place gift aid in a different part of the BKSB accounts. He confirmed that this issue had been discussed with the Audit Committee/BKSB Chair and the reason for the changes proposed are understandable. As a consequence, KPMG will be making a note in the BKSB accounts (as an adjustment item).

The Finance Director confirmed that there is no tax due and that the change is just in relation to the way that information is being presented, and the impact will be to increase the gift aid amount. He confirmed that the impact of the change to the college's group accounts is not material. He confirmed that KPMG will describe this as a 'misstatement', however the Board can be assured that it is immaterial (as detailed on page 22). There will be no impact to the college group, but the sum of £284k will move within the accounts. The Finance Director confirmed that, on the basis that there is no impact to the college group accounts, he is happy to put forward the recommendation to the Board that they be approved.

The Finance Director also advised that KPMG have made an update in relation to the relationship that they have with BKSB via a contract with Civil Service Learning.

The Finance Director described the deferred tax treatment amendment as a very unusual issue. He advised that, to avoid a repeat next year, the whole tax computation calculation will be provided by one company rather than two. He confirmed that it is important to be clear at the point of sale that the company has removed all deferred tax balances.

The Board considered the Committee recommendations and were happy to:

- a) Note the content of the summary report and the detailed minutes of the meeting, and
- b) Receive and note the content of the 2018/19 Financial

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Statements Audit Management letter received from KPMG.

The Finance and Estates Committee Chair expressed concerns that the 2018/19 Members Report and Financial Statements had not been provided to all Governors until today. That being said, it was acknowledged that the version seen by both Audit and F&E Committees on 28th November was 'there or thereabouts'. He cross-referenced the comment made at the November meetings regarding the narrative and the feeling that certain aspects were 'boiler plate' and could be further adapted to make the commentary more specific to the WNC set of circumstances.

The Board all agreed that they would find it useful to have a short period of time to further reflect on the narrative and it was therefore agreed that the document would be circulated by email with any feedback comments to be received by the Finance Director by 18th December 2019. Subject to any minor narrative changes agreed via email, the Board were happy to provide the Chair with authority to sign the final accounts next week.

In terms of the feedback process it was agreed that silence from any Governor would be treated as agreement. The Finance Director confirmed that all previous suggestions made by Governors had been incorporated in the document presented today. Governors felt that what had not yet been captured in detail were the governance and management changes and the enhancements regarding processes and procedures. The Board all agreed that it was not their expectation that the Members Report and Financial Statements would materially change, but that they welcomed a short period of time to reflect upon the narrative. It was confirmed that the document would be circulated tomorrow, with comments to be provided by Governors on or before 18th December 2019.

The Board then considered the content of Letter of Representation and the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire and agreed that both were appropriate.

AGREED:

- a) Subject to any minor narrative amendments proposed on or before 18th December 2019, to delegate authority to the Chairman to approve the finalised version of the 2018/19 Members Report and Financial Statements,
- b) To approve the signing of the Letter of Representation for 2018/19, and
- c) To approve the signing of the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire as presented.

| 8 | COMMITTEE | CHAIR'S | REPORT | _ | FINANCE | & | ESTATES | COMMITTEE |
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The Committee Chair drew the Board's attention to the summary report and the full minutes of the meeting. In terms of areas of assurance, he confirmed that there was good confidence regarding the management accounts and that the college was on track in terms of the planned position for 19/20. Cash position is strong and there is currently good headroom in relation to this. That being said, the college will need to manage cash carefully going forward, and he explained the ESFA's clawback request.

Key matters noted were:

- Cash flow will now be shown with both the position of original forecast and current position, so that Governors are able to more effectively track.
- As at November, the college has £8 million in the bank and access to a £3 million revolving credit facility.
- Because of the high level of cash reserves, it has been agreed that clawback will be repaid to the ESFA and repayment is planned over a 3 year period. The Board were advised that Lloyds bank have to consent to this and that, as part of these discussions, they have also asked for the college to review/reduce the RCF facility available. The Finance Director confirmed that the college is not currently accessing RCF and there is no expectation of a need to draw down; however, any removal/reduction would impact upon covenants and this has to therefore be clarified with the bank. It was confirmed that Lloyds may have to review the covenants in place but that they want the college to meet all of the previously agreed conditions subsequent first i.e. the dissolution of the two Safety Plus subsidiary companies. Once taken place, the bank will need to seek further approval from the credit committee to amend any of the existing covenants. He confirmed that he was currently trying to establish a timeline with Lloyds, but assurance was given that, from the cash flow forecast perspective, it is clear that the college is ahead of the planned position. The ESFA want to get an early resolution with Lloyds and therefore their target date is mid-January 2020.

A question and challenge from the Board in terms of the cash flow was the college's position without the benefit of BKSB. The Board indicated that in future forecasts they would like to see the position reported with and without BKSB, the impact of reduced RCF and the impact of repayments to the ESFA. The Finance Director confirmed that the current forecast does not take account of the fact that the college is ahead and he explained that the finance team is doing some work so as to be able to clearly show the position regarding headroom, given all of the variables currently being discussed. He confirmed that the college has done some testing with colleagues in the specialist finance team at the ESFA to ensure that a clear position is agreed between the college and all stakeholders. He described the college as being in a much stronger position than is currently shown in the management accounts. He

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confirmed that the F&E Committee have asked for modelling regarding the variables, and this will be presented to the next meeting.

The Committee Chair indicated that the Committee had had the opportunity to consider a comprehensive health and safety report. Some concerns were identified but assurance was given that the executive team is addressing this. The Committee were pleased to see near miss reporting and agreed that this was indicative of a good culture. One member of the Board asked for an overview of health and safety trends. The Director of IT and Estates confirmed that the position was mainly static but that there was evidence of some improvements last term. In terms of near misses, he confirmed that any member of staff can report this but that it is not usual to receive reports from students. The Board queried whether this was something that student Governors could explore further if considered helpful. The Committee Chair flagged up concerns regarding the construction centre, in particular poor practice and poor responsiveness. The Principal confirmed that Governors will hear the 'construction centre' and 'construction provision' mentioned in a number of contexts, and he provided assurance that this is a focus, with known improvements identified and being addressed.

In terms of areas for future and continued monitoring, the Committee Chair drew Governors' attention to the increase in the number of first aid requests and the impact that this is having upon resource. It was confirmed that there are lessons to be learned from this year, which are being implemented.

The Board were asked to consider the approval of two new subcontractor agreements. It was confirmed that the Committee were satisfied that both align with the D2N2 and college strategy. It was confirmed that there will be periodic reports on activity and quality assurance. In terms of the contract proposed with the Development Fund, a challenge from the Board was in terms of bringing the benefit/product of this contract to Mansfield. The Board asked whether there were other bus companies who could be approached locally. The Finance Director confirmed that this was an opportunity but made it clear that the contract being considered was not related to the training of bus drivers. Instead it is more to do with the development of employability skills.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report and full meeting minutes.
- b) To note the content of the October 2019 monthly Management Accounts,
- To approve, subject to due diligence, that a contract be entered in to with White Rose Beauty School for the gross sum of £300k, and
- d) To approve, subject to due diligence, that the college enter into a subcontract with the Development Fund for a figure of circa

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£60k (this is subject to the agreement that 35% of payments will be returned to the college to offset historic debt).

9 <u>MINUTES OF THE VBSS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 28TH NOVEMBER</u> 2019

The Board were happy to note the content of the minutes provided.

10 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman provided a verbal update and confirmed that, since the last meeting, he has been able to participate in the Oxford Saïd Business School programme, which is a 24 hour immersive experience. The purpose of the event is to identify new issues from a regulator's perspective and also for Chairs to network and share their experience. He confirmed that, throughout the day there had been an opportunity to explore the role of the Chair and particularly discuss how Chairs are appointed/recruited. Discussions took place regarding the voluntary nature of the role and board dynamics. A key function of the Chairman was described as assessing Board interaction and also working with colleagues to safeguard reputation and the role of the Board in enhancing this. He confirmed that the initial experience will be followed up by three mentoring sessions. He confirmed that, from his discussions with others participating, it is clear that WNC is not the only college in the sector to have challenges.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal drew Governors' attention to his detailed written report; key matters that he wished to bring out in the meeting included:

1) KPIs for 2019/20 and Data Dashboard

He confirmed that there are a number of curriculum areas which are a focus, including construction. He provided assurance that this was a real current focus but that for some aspects there are no 'quick fixes'. He confirmed that the team are developing a business plan and that there is a need to look at both staffing and quality. A challenge from the Board was that, given the issues identified, there needs to be evidence of quick improvements.

In terms of maths and English he confirmed that there were many actions being taken, including:

- A link with Leicester College
- Increased staff recruitment
- A review of the structure of the team/delivery
- A plan to re-launch the college's position for maths and English
- Outcomes need to improve and all agreed that it was critically

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important for this to take place before the next Ofsted inspection. Because of Governors' concerns in this area, and the lack of improvements seen over previous years, it was agreed to bring back conversation on this to the Board.

Principal

January 2020

A challenge from the Board was to involve students more in the development discussions for maths and English.

The Principal expressed the view that outcomes have been negatively impacted by the loss of progress mentors and the reduction in administrative support roles and that this is being reviewed. He advised that student discipline is an issue raised by a small minority of staff and, it appears to be the case that, the number of people 'walking the corridors' is less than in previous years and therefore the first term has been tougher than is usually the case. The Principal explained that there is a need to make student discipline policies sharper and less vague. He expressed the view that the disciplinary process is a classic example of being overly bureaucratic and not efficient enough and he described it as being a relatively quick fix to address this.

The Principal confirmed that there had been a positive consultation meeting with the Trade Unions yesterday and that they are supportive of the college engaging with a company to review the internal processes. The focus will be on where the college can positively make an impact on staff workload.

2) NTU

The Board were provided with an update on the consultation process and the differences between programmes that can and can't transfer. She explained that, for students within the franchise envelope, the issue is where delivery takes place and concerns from students that staff who deliver will remain the same. In terms of direct validation, this will be a simple transfer. In terms of consultation, there has been a low student response rate and therefore the college needs to directly approach the students to ensure that the process is statistically valid.

She advised that Derby University will not move in terms of their stated position on IP. She explained that this will impact upon the Children and Young Person Services Foundation Degree, with 22 students where there is a teach out obligation. It will also impact on Cert. Ed./PGCE, with student numbers being in the mid-20s and therefore a total of between 50 and 60 students impacted. She advised that NTU are being asked to transfer these students on to their second year and this is currently being assessed as an option. The Board questioned whether there were any arbitration processes that could assist in identifying a resolution. It was confirmed that there are none in place but that it is possible to take a formal complaint to HEFCE and/or OfS. The Board were advised that the college is hoping to have an option with NTU next week.

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In terms of the employment position for staff, the HR Director confirmed that she was working closely with NTU particularly regarding the principles and criteria for TUPE. There are 12 individuals in scope for TUPE and 13 individuals impacted by the teach out arrangements. She confirmed that the college is working with legal advisors as TUPE is a specialist position that changes over time and therefore it is important that expert advice is received. She confirmed that the college has developed a timeline and the language to be used with NTU. It is anticipated that there will be some amendments to roles and responsibilities and she explained that it is important to be clear in terms of what it means to be 'in' and 'out' of scope. She expressed the belief that it is important to give staff the right to object and provided assurance that there was plenty of time to deal with this and that she and the team are just working on the process and the timings. She provided assurance that the timetable is built on good stepping stones around any holiday periods.

The Principal confirmed that he had recently attended a wider engagement activity with NTU colleagues and that this had been very helpful.

3) Staff workload and wellbeing

Jane Hawksford, the Staff Governor and TU representative, confirmed that she was happy with the college's response to issues identified regarding staff workload.

(Jane Hawksford left the meeting at 6.30pm)

The Board were invited to consider the full content of the report provided and, in particular, Governors were asked to express a view on the next planned Governor training session in January. The Board all agreed that they would wish to use the next slot as an opportunity to 'demystify the ILR'. It was confirmed that ESFA colleagues will be asked to make a contribution to this session. It was agreed to schedule a further Q&A session for later in the 2020 year.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

12 SAFEGUARDING, PREVENT AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Board were invited to consider the detail of the written report and an update was provided in a number of areas. The Board were advised that the college has had to convene two harmful sexual offences panels, both related to offences not known at enrolment. The board were advised that, if they had been known, the college would have undertaken a risk assessment with actions in place from the start of the year. She confirmed that a multi-strategy meeting had taken place and that the issue was related to a sexual offence made by one minor against another minor.

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The Board were also advised that there are two students with concerns regarding county lines issues. This week one learner has stopped attending, therefore the issue for them has been escalated with social care and the police. One student is supported by parents whereas the other is not. One is in alternative provision, therefore this can be more closely monitored.

She advised that in 18/19 there were no known county lines issues however, by comparison, this year (in December) there have been three. This is a significant issue and a challenge with issues bubbling under the surface.

The Board took the opportunity to discuss the welfare and wellbeing of the safeguarding team and it was explained that they are really starting to feel the pressure and the stress and, in particular, the week before Christmas is always a huge challenge. Peer support is in place, however, it was acknowledged that this may need to be extended with external support provided.

The Vice Principal flagged up an issue regarding ongoing challenges in terms of the use of the disabled car parking spaces. The college is trying to police usage as best as it can, but is receiving complaints.

The Board took the opportunity to commend the safeguarding team and express the view that they were a resilient group doing an amazing job. The Board acknowledged the tough job that they do and all agreed that it would be great for Governors to recognise this when they are out and about meeting staff.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

13 AOB

There were no items of additional business.

14 EXCEPTIONS

The Chair confirmed that there were no exceptions to report at this meeting.

15 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Clerk confirmed that the next scheduled meeting was Monday 16th January 2020 at 5pm. She drew Governors' attention to the draft agenda provided and Governors were invited to provide feedback or request additional items if considered appropriate.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

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It was agreed that confidential items would be recorded on a separate basis.

The Board took the opportunity to thank Sue Martin for all of her work as the interim Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality, it being the case that she leaves the college this month.

Students and staff Governors left the meeting at 6.50pm.

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