



Minutes
Meeting of the Corporation
Wednesday 29 April 2020 at 4.30pm
Remote meeting via Google Meet

Part 2 – CONFIDENTIAL
 (due to commercial sensitivity)

Present:	Pippa Goodwin (<i>Chair</i>)	
	Frank Pitkin	Janet Robertson
	Jo Croft	Daniela Shanly
	Neil Dew-Gosling	Jeremy Spooner
	Chris Lambert	Signe Sutherland
	Gillian May (<i>Principal</i>)	Ian Thomson
	Gareth Osborn	Andrew Try
Apologies:	Daniel Clawson	Dave Snowden
	Student Governors	
In attendance:	Anne Entwistle	<i>VP Curriculum & Quality</i>
	Richard Munday	<i>Finance Director</i>
	Tracy Reeve	<i>Director of Governance</i>

1/20 Chair's welcome

The Chair (PG) welcomed everyone to the new format Google video meeting. She went on to formally welcome new governors Jo Croft and Signe Sutherland to their first BCA Corporation meeting since they had been appointed. PG informed the meeting that Charles McGurin had resigned as a governor of BCA in March 2020 as he had now moved away from the area. In his absence, the meeting formally thanked CMcG for his input to BCA over the last year.

PG started the meeting with a reminder that the necessity would be to focus on the Covid-19 updates. She formally thanked the Executive Team and the wider College staff for their considerable efforts during the last few weeks which had achieved amazing results. Governors also highlighted the recent news that BCA had been ranked 9th nationally (against all FE colleges) for student achievement in 2018/19. The league tables, which were issued mid-March showed the College's attainment for all 16-18 students to be at 90.6%. The Principal reminded the meeting that BCA's performance had moved from the lower quartile in 2013/14 to mid-table and then latterly to upper quartile. For the College to be in ninth place nationally was the culmination of many years work, tireless focus and re-evaluation of teaching, learning and support.

A formal vote of thanks was RECORDED for the leadership team and all staff for their considerable effort and achievement during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2/20 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Daniel Clawson and also from Dave Snowden who had tried to access the meeting but was suffering from technical Wifi issues.

The student governors were not in attendance at this Part 2 meeting due to the confidentiality around the discussion on HE provision at BCA.

3/20 Notification of any other business

The Principal had an item to add to the agenda in relation to the rental contract with Ardmore Language School.

There was no other business notified.

4/20 Notification of Members interests

There were no interests notified.

5/20 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2019

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6/20 Matters Arising

- **Student Transport provision: tracking software**

The Finance Director (RM) updated the meeting on progress with the ongoing development of a tracking system for the student transport provision at the College. The pilot of the new software had been halted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of the College. However, he was confident that progress since December would enable the system to be rolled out to additional routes in September 2020 or whenever the College was open to learners after enrolment 2020.

The verbal report was NOTED.

- ***BCA Health Science Centre: confirmation of grant funding:***

The Principal highlighted the success of BCA's bid for funding under the Local Growth Deal for the Health Sciences Centre (circulated by email earlier in the month). The meeting was reminded that the LEP funding of £850,000 for this new facility would require the work to be completed by March 2021. The Principal reminded the meeting that there was no requirement for planning consent for this work as it was essentially refurbishment of existing residential accommodation space. Current thinking was that there would be no delay to the project and the first drawdown of grant funding would be in June 2020. The meeting commended the management team on securing this funding for this new teaching facility.

NOTED

ITEMS FOR DECISION/ APPROVAL

7/20 Board Assurance Framework/ Risk Register Update to reflect Covid-19

The meeting considered the Board Assurance Framework which clearly detailed the key strategic risks against the five agreed strategic priorities for BCA. This item was now a standing item for consideration at each Audit Committee and Corporation meeting. Governors noted that this document had been comprehensively reviewed to reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic across all of the strategic priorities. This had significantly increased the risk ratings with the four biggest risks now remaining as 'red; - with a risk score of 20 or above – post mitigation. The meeting was reminded that any change to the Risk Register was made after consideration at the Executive Team (the 4 SPHs), SLT, Audit Committee and then Corporation. The meeting discussed the following changes and the key risks which were currently rated as 'red' and the ongoing mitigation that was being provided against their crystallisation. The Audit Committee Chair (NDG) confirmed that this new version of

the Risk Register had also been considered in detail at the Audit Committee meeting on 22 April 2020.

Risk 1 'Failure to address reductions in external funding results in the College being unable to remain a going concern. Failure to meet income targets. (Risk score post-mitigation at 20 'red'): This risk was now far more of a threat due to the impact of Covid-19 on commercial income and cash. The meeting noted and discussed the forecast financial impact on the College and the limited mitigation that had been put in place. The Principal highlighted the issues around the cash position which would be particularly difficult in spring 2021 and could impact on the 'Going Concern' judgement. Governors were reminded that the ESFA had now confirmed that there would be no clawback of funding for 2019/20 and allocations for 2020/21 were also secure. The meeting was pleased to note that all of BCA's apprentices were continuing in learning – there had been break in learning so this funding was also secure. The meeting noted and commended the decision to secure an ongoing overdraft facility with College bankers Lloyds.

Risk 2 'Insufficient Capital investment in the listed asset, specifically Hall Place Mansion. (Risk score at 20 'red'): The meeting was reminded that the issue of securing the requisite funding for the future maintenance of the heritage assets was still very uncertain as any development within 'greenbelt' land was still a highly contentious issue. The meeting noted that the Project Team was continuing to work continued on the fully costed conservation plan to underpin the argument for the requisite 'Very Special Circumstance' criteria. The possible delay to any planning application due to Covid-19 was noted but this was not yet confirmed. The plan was still to submit a full planning application in June 2020. GM informed the meeting that there had been more than 600 visits to the College micro-site which outlined the planning proposals; this would show good engagement with local stakeholders when the planning application was being considered. However, the meeting was reminded that the likelihood of success was still relatively low due to the ongoing constraints around development of green-belt land.

Risk 3 'Significant disruption resulting from Covid-19 pandemic' (Risk score at 16 'amber' reduced from 20 'red' after review at Audit Committee): The meeting was reminded that the issue of implementing the government guidance was very much an operational responsibility but governors should take assurance that the SLT were doing all they should to meet guidelines and all they could to secure quality ongoing learning for BCA students. GM highlighted the numerous examples of positive feedback from students and parents commenting on the move to online learning which took place on 23 March 2020. The College counsellors had continued to work with learners and worked through the Easter break; they were continuing to support learners remotely or in a few cases on a face-to-face basis to ensure that all additional needs were being met. However, GM highlighted the potential requirement for some face-to-face delivery for learners who required a practical assessment in order to finish their qualifications. Current thinking was that this could be undertaken if the lockdown restrictions were reviewed from 1 June 2020. Governors were assured that the SLT would continue to plan and implement any phased return to campus on the basis of the guidance from the DfE. The meeting highlighted that although Covid-19 was a major risk the move to online learning and digital delivery should also be seen as an opportunity to move forward with new delivery models in 2020/21.

Risk 4 'Secure a franchise agreement with the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) for all but the UoR provision. Improve the quality of the HE student academic experience as identified by the OfS' (Risk score now raised to 20 'red' from 15

'amber' after mitigation): The meeting was reminded that the HE Oversight Committee had been looking at the ongoing viability of HE provision at BCA. This matter would be discussed in more detail later in the meeting (see minute 10/20). The Principal reminded the meeting that the College was still waiting for the report from the QAA Inspection visit which had been undertaken during the first week in January 2020.

Risk 5 'IT failure with loss of data for staff and students' (Risk score at 15 'amber' after mitigation): This risk score had been raised since the Risk Register was last presented. The cyber-security action plan and the audit of this area that Audit Committee were keen for management to undertake as soon as possible would further mitigate the risk.

Risk 6 'Student Transport and lack of effective tracking of learners' (Risk score at 12 'amber after mitigation'): The meeting had already noted an update on this risk which had been added to the Risk Register in May 2019. The meeting was assured that progress was being made.

Risk 7 'Quality and funding issues associated with the apprenticeship provision are not addressed' (Risk score of 12 'amber' after mitigation): The meeting noted that NARTS data published in March 2020 showed that BCA performance for 2018/19 was in the upper quartile nationally. The meeting also noted that all of the 176 apprentices were currently still on-role with no break in learning due to Covid-19.

The Board Assurance Framework/ Risk Register was RECEIVED.

8/20 Covid-19 Update

• Safeguarding

VP Curriculum and Students (AE) presented a comprehensive update on the significant safeguarding activity that had continued during the College closure. The Chair commended the fact that this report was first on the agenda as it was vitally important in the current pandemic situation. As part of the contingency planning for college disruption the safeguarding team, wider welfare and pastoral team and the additional learning support team (ALS) worked together to identify and capture the details of all students deemed to be the most vulnerable. Keeping sight of these young people during periods of remote working had become a top priority. Students on the list included:

- ❖ students linked to social care, YOT, Prevent and those where the college had been working in partnership with multiple external agencies to ensure student safety
- ❖ students at risk of exploitation - county lines, child sexual exploitation
- ❖ children looked after (CLA) and care leavers
- ❖ students receiving a bursary and free school meals
- ❖ students whose home life could pose a risk - e.g. known domestic abuse, substance misuse
- ❖ some students with an EHCP

Initially there were 233 students on this list but names were added as new issues and challenges came to light; the current list had 250 learners. The meeting noted that pastoral tutors monitored this cohort's engagement with online learning and contacted the student and, where appropriate, parents where sessions were missed.

The most vulnerable students had been encouraged to attend college weekly to have lunch and to walk and talk with a member of the safeguarding team. These students

were dropped off and picked up by their key worker. Only three students had accepted this invitation but more were expected after the half-term break. Governors were pleased to note that feedback from the students had been very positive.

The team was in regular contact with all of these students, ALS and pastoral tutors were also offering additional welfare and academic support during teaching sessions and at other times. The meeting noted that all students were able to access safeguarding and welfare support via the safeguarding email or via the BCA app. The college counselling service had continued to be available via phone calls and mentoring sessions had continued where required; students accessed this service via booking on the BCA App. All support and communication had been recorded to ensure a clear record and to highlight any concerns or patterns in behaviour. The BCA teams were still remotely attending regular child in need, child protection, PEP, EHCP meetings and they continued to work closely with external support agencies to ensure that the College's students were safe. Two new referrals to social care had been made during the last three weeks.

Governors sought, and were given, assurance that students who would normally receive free College meals were receiving a weekly sum to supplement their food bills. The meeting sought additional detail on the level of support being given to learners with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs). AE confirmed that where 1:1 support was required this was still being delivered but remotely.

Staff were rigorously monitoring the attendance of all students as that could be an early indicator that there was a problem. Governors were assured that Heads of Department and curriculum assistants monitored all attendance daily and contacted the student and parents usually within twenty four hours if sessions were missed.

AE confirmed that the daily team debrief meetings continued to ensure that all staff felt supported during this difficult period. Members of the safeguarding team also continued to have their monthly 'supervision' calls.

The meeting also noted the work that had been undertaken on reminding learners and their parents of the importance of online safety during this period of remote delivery. A letter offering parents and carers guidance in this important area was noted by the meeting.

The Safeguarding Update Report was NOTED

- **Academic Update**

Online delivery: The meeting was reminded that contingency planning for a college closure had ensured that all learning resources were prepared and uploaded by the beginning of March. Students and staff had practised and were comfortable using online learning tools prior to lock down. The majority of practical assessments and practical skills development sessions were front loaded in order to limit the impact on progression and employment should lock down continue for the academic year. The meeting noted that there were a small number of students studying motor vehicles who needed to undertake practical assessments and they would be invited in to college as soon as possible to complete.

The VPC&S reminded the meeting that remote teaching and learning was following normal student timetables. All teaching staff, 1:1 and class learning support assistants were attending all timetabled remote lessons. Registers were being taken and recorded and students who did not attend were followed up by a text message and a phone call home. Tutorials and 1:1 support sessions were also continuing and were being conducted through video meetings on Google Hangout or

Meet. Governors were assured that teaching staff and students had been given clear guidance on the protocol for individual meetings and additional safeguarding guidance in relation to online delivery. Marking and assessment continued as normal; staff were making reasonable adjustment to assessment methods where required e.g. practical assessments and group work. Presentations and debates continued through Google meet.

Student Engagement: The meeting was pleased to note that student engagement with online delivery had been outstanding. Tutors were reporting a near normal level of attendance with learners participating readily and eagerly. This would mean that the majority of students would have completed their required learning by the end of May. However, management recognised the role that the College had in giving students structure in their day, especially at this time, and the importance of keeping the momentum going for as long as possible. With this in mind teaching staff had developed a supplementary programme of learning which would be followed once the main programme teaching was finished. Amongst other subjects this would continue to develop maths and English skills as well as wider professional development skills. Students would be supported to prepare CVs and also to research HE opportunities and UCAS application processes. All students would still have access to progression and career support in order to help them to find employment or further training if not continuing at BCA in 2020/21. Governors sought, and were given, clarity on the additional work that the College had done before lockdown to ensure that no learner was without the necessary technical equipment to access online learning. The meeting went on to discuss staff access to technical equipment for online delivery and Staff Governor (CL) assured the meeting that his experience was that staff were managing well. However, it was noted that SLT were currently planning for ongoing remote delivery in 2020/21 and the College would need a reservoir of laptops and headsets for staff to borrow.

The meeting noted a number of quotes from e-mails from parents/carers and students with positive feedback on the move to online delivery and the ongoing support during this time. The positive impact on students' mental health and well-being had been recognised on a number of occasions. Governors commended the huge strides that had been made into online delivery in a very short period of time. It was agreed that this good practice needed to be kept and built upon as the College moved out of enforced closure. The meeting discussed the need to ensure that learners and parents, as well as staff, felt confident about any phased return to campus. AE confirmed that Learner Voice feedback was currently being collated and would be shared with Governors in July 2020.

Securing student outcomes: The meeting was given an update on the proposed awarding body methodology to secure student outcomes. Governors commended the realistic approach and the need to ensure that there was no grade inflation for the current year's teacher assessments.

English and maths GCSEs: Ofqual had decided that students studying for GCSEs would be awarded grades based on teacher recommendation alongside other criteria including student rankings by institution. This would require teaching staff to grade and then rank all students from highest to lowest within each grade boundary. Following moderation the final grades were expected to be released by the beginning of August. GCSE results days for learners would stay the same as previously diarised by DfE (20 August 2020). The meeting sought confirmation on the number of learners involved and noted that there would be 470 maths and circa 400 English assessments required; this was noted as a considerable piece of work for staff. AE

highlighted that current DfE guidance stated that additional teaching and assessment was not required and that grades could be approximated from work already completed. However, BCA had decided to continue English and maths teaching; although the teams already had a good idea of predicted grades SLT believed that to finish teaching now would be a wasted opportunity. Discontinuing teaching, learning and assessment now would mean all progressing students would have taken a significant step backwards in their learning by the beginning of next academic year. Governors commended this decision which put the value of the skills and knowledge achieved above a simple compliance exercise.

Vocational & applied general: Ofqual had recommended a similar approach for vocational qualifications. This would involve input from teachers at unit and qualification level; completed unit grades would be submitted soon after the Easter break and a final predicted grade towards the end of May. It was likely that students would be graded and ranked as with GCSEs. Progress grades were being gathered currently to give some insight into how this might look. Any practical assessments required would be undertaken as soon as government guidance allowed for these learners to be brought back onto the campus.

Current plans for 2020/21: Whilst the College was awaiting DfE guidance on plans for the next academic year SLT were moving forward with plans to continue remote learning alongside face-to-face delivery. Current plans were for 50% of learners to be on site on an alternate week basis with online learning for the intervening weeks. This would allow social distancing guidance to be adhered to. Curriculum planning for the next academic year was currently underway based on a minimum group size of 15 and expected teacher contact hours of 23. The meeting also noted that BCA would be moving from City & Guilds to BTEC technical qualifications for land based qualifications in 2020/21. The meeting noted current plans for a later start date for teaching which would move to the second week of September 2020. There would also be a two-week half-term break in October 2020 for the first time which would result in a 34 week teaching year (rather than the current 36).

The Academic Update Report was NOTED

• Impact on College Financial Position

The meeting noted a briefing paper from the FD which gave a clear outline of the current assessment of the financial impact of the current coronavirus pandemic.

Current financial year 2019/20:

The main effects during the current financial year to 31 July 2020 were noted as:

- Cancellation of all commercial activities, although Ardmore monies were largely guaranteed (commercial income was expected to be £170,000 lower but this would be partially offset by cost savings amounting to about £50,000).
- Delays in payments being made by third parties, leading to concerns about cash flow in both the short and longer term, but note that the college would remain within its overdraft facility throughout the current closure period (assumed to 1 June 2020).
- The need to agree sensible arrangements with main stakeholders - including Ardmore, Busy Bees, Baxter Storey, the coach operators and parents/students – in order to protect the College's cash position and income and expenditure account, but also to look after the longer term relationships. The main potential effect related to student transport where SLT had assumed refunds of travel permits amounting to £143,000 for term three offset by cost savings of £121,000 against the coach contracts.

- Potential risks associated with claims for non-delivery by, for example, the local authorities that BCA dealt with in respect of High Needs students. A provision of £100,000 had been included in the revised forecast for the year but communications received in the meantime suggested that this might be overstated.

The meeting was reminded that in February 2020 BCA's operating surplus for the year was forecast at £53,000 and that the College earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation ('EBITDA') would be £1.14 million. Cash balances at the end of July 2020 had been forecast at £764,000 and the College was expected to pass all the covenant tests set by the bank. The FD had now undertaken an extensive, line-by-line, review of the College's income and expenditure account for the period from March to July 2020 based on the college being open for business from 1 June 2020. This review now indicated that income for the year would be £534,000 lower than previously forecast but that the effect of this would be mitigated by lower costs amounting to £281,000; the net adverse effect on the college's bottom line would be £253,000. The meeting noted that this would result in a full year operating deficit of £0.2 million (£53,000 surplus less the £253,000). The adverse impact on cash would amount to £355,000 so the end year cash position would be reduced to £409,000. This new cash position would equate to approximately 11 cash days and, not the 19 previously anticipated. The meeting was reminded that the minimum required under the Restructuring Fund facility agreement was 17 cash days. Governors agreed that this was a concern due to the ongoing uncertainty as to when the College would be back to normal and what the full impact would be financially. There would have to be very close monitoring and scrutiny of BCA's financial health and the ability of the college to pass the covenant tests associated with the bank loans and the Restructuring Facility grant and loan.

Next financial year 2020/21:

The meeting noted that the Covid-19 pandemic would continue to have an adverse knock-on effect on finances into 2020-21, especially with regard to commercial income and cash. However, Governors were reminded that all FE colleges were now in the fortunate position of knowing that their main source of income, ESFA funding for 16 to 18 year olds, was guaranteed for next year. In February 2020 this income had been forecast at £10.9 million, but SLT had now received confirmation of the 2020/21 allocation and 16 to 18 income would be £0.3 million higher than previously thought at £11.2 million. This would help the College financial position from both an I&E and a cash perspective. However, the lower cash balances at the end of July 2020 would roll forward into next year and Senior Management were concerned that at certain times of the year BCA might report cash days below the 17 required and may have to approach the bank for a short term facility overdraft (as the College had to for the current lockdown closure period). Governors noted that the cash-flow issue, with immediate effect and on a continuing basis, was currently the major threat to BCA's financial health. The meeting noted the action agreed at Audit Committee (22 April 2020) that the College should approach Lloyds bank to ask for an overdraft facility to be put in place on an ongoing basis to provide additional mitigation around any cash-flow issues.

The meeting was given assurance around the mitigation currently in place to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on BCA finances and to protect cash-flow.

- Pay costs were being scrutinised in conjunction with the curriculum plan. The need to keep any non-essential staff on will be discussed by the Exec. Team in

the first instance and then with budget holders in order to meet the ESFA 65% target. The meeting noted that BCA had not furloughed any employees and it was highly unlikely that the College would so, given the agency income sources and the fact that staff had been asked to continue working, albeit from home.

- Capital spend for the rest of this year and throughout next year would be restricted to essential items only. SLT would not be asking budget holders to submit their normal wish lists for review but would, instead, limit spend to essential items in estates and facilities, IT and curriculum departments. As always, spend on Health and Safety, compliance and safeguarding would take priority. The budgeted spend for next year was £0.6 million, excluding the Health Sciences Building project; this would be reduced by at least £150K. After discussion the meeting agreed that the Capital Budget for 2020/21 should be reduced to £400,000 to be mainly spent on IT and Estates items.
- The FD and Principal would approach Lloyds Bank with a view to agreeing a year-round overdraft facility so that the College had a safety net in place for the more challenging times of the year. The meeting noted the current thinking that BCA should request that the £250,000 overdraft currently in place from mid-March to mid-April 2020 should be made available throughout the year.
- SLT would negotiate hard with customers and suppliers with regard to claims associated with the virus, whilst recognising the need to make decisions that were fair to both parties
- BCA would continue to look for new sources of income and would ensure that the College obtained best value for money on all purchases

Impact on Financial Health Grade:

RM confirmed that he had reworked the IFMC to reflect these new financial assumptions after the advent of Covid-19. The meeting noted the detailed changes to the KPIs generated by the post-Covid Integrated Financial Model for Colleges (IFMC). The financial health score for the current year would move from 'Requires Improvement (RI)' to 'Inadequate' and the forecast for 2020/21 was for a RI grade. The meeting was reminded that under normal circumstances an 'Inadequate' financial health grade would trigger intervention by the FE Commissioner. However, the FD assured the meeting that having seen comments on various forums and having listened to the College's main contacts at the ESFA, it had become clear that many colleges would see a similar deterioration in their financial health and that relief in the form of an uplift, via moderation, to 'Requires Improvement' might be granted.

***The Finance Update on the impact of Covid-19 was NOTED and RECEIVED.
It was AGREED that the Capital Budget 2020/21 should be reduced to £400,000.***

• **Planning in case of Senior Post-holder incapacity**

The Principal (GM) presented a paper which outlined the planned actions in case of the incapacity of any of the Senior post-holders (SPH). This had been asked for by the Audit Committee (22 April 2020 meeting) in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic in order to give Governors some assurance around continuity during any SPH illness or capacity. GM reminded the meeting that in order to mitigate losses to the small SPH team the notice period was previously revised to 6 months. Governors were assured that this planning to manage any incidence of illness and incapacity would be repeated at lower tiers of management throughout the College.

The plans in case of any SPH incapacity/ absence at BCA were APPROVED.

- **Governance good practice (DfE Briefing)**

The Clerk highlighted a presentation from the FE Commissioner's Team which outlined good governance practices during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting agreed that the focus on identifying, evaluating and mitigating risks was the right way forward for governance during the current national crisis.

NOTED

9/20 Applications 2020/21

- **Applications 2020/21 at April 2020**

The meeting noted the current position with applications for the next academic year at 10 April 2020. The total number of applications was currently 1,213 compared with 1,205 at the same point last year. Areas which were below their position last year were noted as Land and Animal Management. The Principal highlighted her expectation that the College would not see large-scale growth for the 2020/21 academic year; anecdotally when Animal Management applications were flat this was reflected in the overall enrolment. The meeting discussed the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on applications and agreed that the current level of uncertainty might encourage more learners to stay on into school sixth forms. This would be compounded by the lack of GCSE exams which might mean more learners staying on to undertake A levels rather than moving into vocational education. In order to deal with this possibility BCA would keep its enrolment window open for longer than usual. Governors were assured that online interviews were taking place and feedback from learners had been positive. A Remote Student Interview Protocol had been put in place to ensure consistency. Applicants were being contacted by tutors to agree on a time for a remote interview. Expectations were shared and the tutors were checking that the interviewees had the required technology and was comfortable with the interview method. A member of the welfare team and/or additional learning team was also invited where appropriate. AE confirmed that feedback had been positive from all concerned. The meeting was reminded that the last Open Day event in May had been postponed; a new date was set for Saturday 1st August 2020 and taster days would take place in June and July if DfE guidance allowed some degree of campus re-opening. Governors asserted the need for strong messaging in the College marketing to ensure that the target audience knew the College enrolment period would be open longer than usual and that an enhanced induction would enable later-starters to catch-up. Governors sought anecdotal evidence from other Berkshire Colleges on their current level of applications – the Principal agreed to canvas other Thames Valley principals at their regular meeting (timetabled for 30 April).

The Applications Report was NOTED

- **Plans for enrolment September 2020**

The Principal informed the meeting that plans were now well ahead to move enrolment for September 2020 onto a virtual platform; it would not be sensible to have such large numbers on site at one time.

It was AGREED that AP Digital (Dan Fairbairn) would attend the next meeting (3 June 2020) to present plans for the online enrolment process 2020/21.

10/20 Higher Education Provision at BCA

The meeting considered a proposal from the HE Oversight Committee in relation to the future of HE provision at BCA. Governors noted that the Higher Education

Oversight (HEO) Committee met to review the current recruitment and financial position of the College's HE provision on 21 April 2020. The HEO committee had considered a very detailed document outlining the options for HE provision; this would be made available to any Governor who wanted to see the detailed background. The meeting was reminded that HE provision at BCA had presented numerous financial and compliance challenges and risks for several years which had been recorded and discussed through the College Risk Register.

Governors noted that current applications for the FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare were very low and the College had yet to receive any confirmed acceptances of offers. This provision was currently operating at a 5% gross contribution rate (college benchmark 50%). The BSc (Hons) Veterinary Physiotherapy had shown a year-on-year increase in applicants of 5%, although the quality of applicants continued to be very mixed, leading to a high rejection rate. The Vet Physio provision was operating at a 18% gross contribution rate and negotiations to move to a franchise agreement with the RAU had now stalled. The FdEd Children's Development and Learning was the only fully franchised provision through the University of Reading (UoR). This provision had a history of recruiting and retaining students well and currently generated a 48% gross contribution.

The meeting was informed that when the BCA HE Oversight Committee had met on 21 April 2020 they had agreed to recommend to the Corporation that HE provision – apart from the franchised UoR provision - at BCA should cease after a one-year teach out of the Foundation Degree Animal Behaviour and Welfare.

The detailed recommendation from HE Oversight Committee was considered as follows:

- i) Retain the *FdSc Children's Development and Learning* delivered under franchise from the University of Reading.
- ii) Transfer the *BSc (Hons) Veterinary Physiotherapy* to Sparsholt College with effect from September 2021; continue to teach all three years of the programme for the academic year 2020/21 only. This was an on-line programme, with 4 x 1 week campus delivery each year. Sparsholt College is a University Centre and operated a well regarded Foundation Degree in Vet Nursing validated by the University of Portsmouth. The meeting noted that there would be some TUPE implications for staff.
- iii) Withdrawal/ Teach-out of *FdSc Animal Behaviour & Welfare (ABW)*. The low number of applicants/acceptances at the current point in the year, combined with the Covid-19 situation rendered a Level 4 intake for the FdSc Animal Behavior in September 2020 non-viable. In addition to the cost of delivery having a further negative impact on the bottom line, an initial Level 4 cohort size of less than six had been shown to have an adverse effect on student experience and thus would attract the attention of the OfS and the QAA. Historical decline in continuation rates for the FdSc Animal Behaviour & Welfare, coupled with a predicted progression rate of circa 60% into 2020-21, indicated that the programme is no longer viable for BCA. There will be some restructuring for staff whilst this provision is taught out.
- iv) The BSc Top Up ABW programme should be continued for one further academic year (2020/21) only.

Corporation Members confirmed their support for this decision, as well as low contribution rates there was high opportunity cost for the resources currently assigned to HE provision eg. Greenacres House and space in the laboratories. The suggested solution would provide the best long-term outcome for the students, staff and the business. The meeting noted that this had also been the thinking when

discussed at Audit Committee on 22 April 2020. The Principal confirmed that she would keep the HE Oversight Committee and the Corporation updated on how this transition would be managed for learners and BCA staff over the next year. Governors noted that a specialist external HR professional would manage the consultation process with staff to ensure that they were fully supported; this process would commence week commencing 4 May 2020 so the decision would remain confidential until that time.

The meeting unanimously AGREED to APPROVE the recommendations of the HE Oversight Committee as outlined in (i) to (iv) above.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

11/20 Estates Strategy: Planning Update

The Principal provided an update on progress with work on the Estates Strategy for BCA up to the 23 April 2020. Inevitably this had been impacted by the Coronavirus situation, but as mentioned earlier in the meeting the project team was still progressing the planning process within the new constraints.

The meeting was reminded that the full amount of the Heritage Deficit would be £6.45m reflecting the VAT position as well as the detailed cost plan. This figure had been used to inform the size of the residential development scheme necessary to provide a sufficient land value. A proposal for larger, higher value detached houses on the Honey Lane Land had now been developed in line with the marketing advice received; a scheme of 20 dwellings would provide the necessary land value. This was achievable with a slight increase in the site area proposed. However, it had the benefit of fewer numbers and less traffic whilst still avoiding an impact on the setting of the heritage assets. It also meant that the former Sewage Works land in the centre of the campus would not be required. The plans were also aiming to include 6 key worker units as this would be considered a significant gain which would assist the planning balance in favour of the scheme.

Governors noted that the planned meetings with Bisham Parish Council and Burchetts Green Association on 16 and 19 March were cancelled due to the current lockdown. However, the project team were able to provide a web-link to both organisations to enable them to access the presentation and provide stakeholder feedback on the proposals. The Corporation meeting noted this presentation in the meeting papers; Governors commended the level of detail provided for stakeholders.

The meeting noted that whilst the College had an initial response from the Interim Head of Planning indicating that officers would engage with discussions on the pre-application and planning process this has not yet been followed up by any further response. The Project Team had prepared a document to update RBWM planners on the progress made, to seek further discussion on the proposals but also, advising that the College would be submitting an application by 30 June 2020 due to the risk of further deterioration of the heritage assets. This would be in the form of an outline planning application. Associated listed building applications for the heritage works and the conversion of the South Wing, would follow depending on progress with the main application.

The Principal confirmed the current timetable as follows:

- Submit Summary document to officers 1 May 2020
- Subject to response to Summary document further discussions with RBWM planning officers during May 2020

- Submission of outline application 30 June 2022
- Submission of listed building consent applications in summer 2020.

Governors commended this detailed update and the considerable amount of work that had been undertaken on this important project. As previously discussed the need to secure the future of the heritage assets at BCA continued to feature prominently on the College Risk Register.

The Planning Update Report was NOTED and RECEIVED

12/20 Reports from Committees

- **HE Oversight Committee – 21 April 2020**
- **Audit Committee - 22 April 2020**

The Director of Governance informed the meeting that the minutes of these two meetings would be circulated once they had been finalised and approved by the committee chairs.

H&S Risk Assessment: The Audit Committee Chair (NDG) highlighted that the Audit Committee had spent time considering the Health & Safety Risk Assessment document RA.HAS.120 which had been drafted by the College's Health and Safety Manager to monitor site operations at BCA during the Covid-19 'lockdown'. The nature of BCA meant that the site could not close and staff would have to be on site to manage the animals and horses. Governors were assured that the SLT would be using this H&S Risk Assessment to develop an action plan for any plans of a phased return to campus when DfE guidance suggested that this was feasible.

External Audit Contract 1 August 2020 – 31 July 2021: NDG also highlighted that the Audit Committee had agreed to extend the contract with RSM LLP for the College's external audit provision for one more year from 1 August 2020. RSM knew the College well and provided a good service; it would also ensure continuity during the financial complications around Covid-19 and the recruitment of a new Finance manager/ Assistant FD in summer 2020. However, this was contingent upon the contract from 1 August 2021 being put out to commercial tender in spring 2021. Governors suggested that in the current climate the College should seek a fee reduction from RSM for the ongoing external audit service during 2020/21.

NOTED

It was AGREED that SLT should seek a fee reduction from RSM LLP for the external audit provision 2020/21.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13/20 Any Other Business

- **Ardmore Language School**

The meeting noted a paper which outlined recent discussions between the College Executive and the management at Ardmore.

The meeting asked the SLT to investigate the possibility of Ardmore being able to claim their rent payments from insurance under a Cessar Rent clause.

There was no other business.

14/20 Date of Next Meeting

The next Corporation meeting was timetabled for Wednesday 3rd June 2020.

SUMMARY ACTION POINTS – Part 2

Minute Ref	Action	By who	By when
8/20	<u>Covid-19 Financial Impact:</u> BCA Capital budget 2020/21 to be reduced to £400,000	Finance Director	July 2020
9/20	<u>Online enrolment September 2020:</u> AP Digital (DF) to attend Corporation meeting to present plans for online enrolment 2020.	Dir of Governance DF	3 June 2020
10/20	<u>HE provision at BCA:</u> Apart from the franchised UoR provision, HE provision at BCA should cease after a one-year teach out of the FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare. SLT to progress transfer of BSc (Hons) Vet Physiotherapy to Sparsholt College from September 2021.	Exec Team SLT	September 2020/ 2021 September 2021
12/20	<u>External Audit 2020/21:</u> A fee reduction should be sought from RSM LLP for the one-year extension of the College's external audit contract.	Exec Team	July 2020
13/20	<u>Ardmore contract:</u> Deferral of Ardmore rent – 50% deferral during 1 May to 31 December 2020 noted. College to investigate whether a Cessar Rent clause available in insurance cover for Ardmore Rent.	Principal Principal/ FD	1 May 2020 May 2020