



Minutes of the North East Surrey College of Technology Corporation Meeting held on Friday 19 June at 09.00 via Zoom.

Present:	In Attendance:
Professor Sam Luke (Chair) Mrs Lynn Reddick (Vice-Chair) Mr Simon Enoch Ms Maureen Kilminster Ms Margaret Martin Mr Vince Romagnuolo Mr Peter Stamps Mrs Frances Rutter (Principal and Group CEO) Mr Graeme Hodge (Support Staff Governor) Mr Jamie Roberts (Teaching Staff Governor)	Ms Maria Vetrone – Deputy Principal (Finance and Resources). Mr Cliff Shaw – Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality). Ms Donna Patterson – Director of HR and Organisational Development. Mrs Sandra Dessent – Clerk to the Corporation.
Attendance 90%	

Meeting reference	Agenda Item
84.19	1. Apologies for absence
	Apologies for absence were received from Dario Stevens – Vice Principal
85.19	2. Declarations of Interest
	<p>The Chair reminded Members to declare any interest they may have in any of the items on the agenda.</p> <p><u>Professor Luke</u>: unremunerated Director of NESCOT Enterprises Ltd (NEL), North East Surrey College of Technology Trust, NESCOT Holdings Ltd and Epsom Downs Business Centre Ltd.</p> <p><u>Mr Stamps</u>: unremunerated Director of NESCOT Enterprises Ltd.</p> <p><u>Mrs Rutter</u>: unremunerated Director of NESCOT Enterprises Ltd, North East Surrey College of Technology Trust, NESCOT Holdings Ltd and Epsom Downs Business Centre Ltd.</p> <p><u>Mrs Lynn Reddick</u> declared her interest as the Director of Learning at the Orpheus Centre, a specialist provider in Surrey.</p> <p><u>Ms Margaret Martin</u> declared her interest as a member of Ewell Rotary Club and a trustee of Age Concern.</p> <p><u>Ms Maureen Kilminster</u> declared her former position as the Principal of a College in Surrey.</p>
86.19	3. Minutes and Matters Arising
	<p><u>3.1 Consideration for two applications for membership of the Corporation</u></p> <p>Following a meeting on 15 June to interview two prospective members, the Board received a paper from the Chair to consider a recommendation to appoint two Governors, namely Nick Vaughan-Barratt and John Willis.</p> <p>The paper outlined their background and recommendations for the committees they would be most suited to, and members of the Search & Governance Committee who had attended shared their conclusions from the discussions at the meeting.</p> <p>Accordingly, all those present agreed with the recommendation from the Chair and ratified the appointment of Nick Vaughan-Barratt and John Willis as Governors to the Corporation and they were subsequently welcomed into the meeting and introduced to members.</p> <p><u>3.2 Minutes and Matters Arising</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair electronically.</p> <p>It was noted that actions to be undertaken recorded in matters arising were included in items on the agenda.</p>

87.19**4. Quoracy**

It was agreed that the quoracy would be reviewed at the next meeting on Friday 24 July with a view to reinstating a quoracy of five members as this was the last of the additional meetings due to Covid-19.

88.19**5. Coronavirus**5.1 Re-opening of College Update

The Principal shared a verbal update on the successful return to college of foundation high needs students and reported that there was a good atmosphere which instilled confidence in the students and their parents, who subsequently requested further sessions. which were duly arranged and also went well. Distancing arrangements were in place, the college nurse was on hand to reassure nervous participants and PPE equipment was available for students and staff.

It was noted that Construction had also returned for practical sessions only which were also progressing well, and in the coming weeks the other faculties would be returning.

It was confirmed that comprehensive risk assessments were in place (and had been circulated to Governors) covering students, staff and facilities and were being constantly reviewed as the return to college progressed. Lessons learnt were integrated into the assessments as well as consideration given to potential new risks.

The Chair expressed thanks and appreciation on behalf of all Corporation Board for the dedication and continuing hard work of all the staff during such challenging times.

5.2 Management Accounts – April 2020

The Deputy Principal (Finance & Resources) presented a paper detailing the management accounts for April 2020 covering the first three quarters of the year.

It was noted that the current worst case forecast outturn was an operating deficit of £1,874k. At risk, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, were: High Needs recharging of around £350k; full cost income from Gas, Foundations, and Osteopathy £443k; catering income £147k; income generation from Innovations hair salon, the Sports facilities, Adrian Mann theatre, room hire and Osteopathy clinic amongst others £117k; and income from the Nursery of £132k.

Apprenticeship income was reported as no longer at risk. Furloughing of staff in the commercial areas is anticipated to recoup around £150k of wage costs at current estimates, along with non-pay cost savings of around £595k.

Members were advised to view the figures against a backdrop, pre-COVID-19, of an approximately £4m reduction in funded income in 2019-20, as a result of the impact of lagged funding from under-recruitment of 16-18 year-olds last year (2018/19), and the move to devolved budgets for adult learning in some regions. The College currently has 1,757 16-18 year-olds in learning but is being funded for only 1,537 students. This will result in an increased funding allocation next year (2020-21).

It was noted that NEL was now successfully being used as a vehicle to reduce pension costs and a profit on the balance sheet of £11,000 would be used to repay part of the loan of £50,000 from Nescot to support the restaurant (now closed).

The overall big picture of Key Performance Indicators was discussed and it was agreed that all things considered, the balance sheet remained strong.

(Postscript: Following a question regarding Sports Hall and Pitches a full response was circulated by the Deputy Principal after the meeting).

5.3 Covid-19 Risk Register

The Deputy Principal (Finance & Resources) presented the updated Risk Register and highlighted the following:

- The re-opening of the college had necessitated the procurement of large amounts of PPE products. However due to the exceptional diligence of the procurement team in response to reports of scam companies setting up, measures had been put in place to ensure that the risks were mitigated. Whilst there was increased risk associated with all financial listings (including risks 7. Misappropriation, 8. Supplier interaction, 9. Invoice fraud and 10. Expenses) the net risk remained acceptable.
- **NEW risk – No. 20 Student Recruitment:** There is a risk of lack of engagement of students in online engagements processes which could result in delays in the start of teaching due to Covid-19 contingency plans needing to be in place. However, controls have been implemented to ensure maximum engagement with students, in particular around the new PURLOS platform. Currently the risk is high because at the start of the process it is not yet possible to determine how effective the controls will be.
- It was noted that all staff and employer and stakeholder risks remained significant due to the circumstances associated with Covid-19

It was noted from the net risk pie chart presented to members that the majority of risks were at an acceptable level and being regularly reviewed.

5.4 Curriculum Update including safeguarding

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) presented an update on final grades/achievements and highlighted the following:

- The delayed status to the City & Guilds qualifications has an impact on Plumbing and Electrical Installation. Safety critical units have been identified as being 'delayed' which means they remain unaltered and are delayed until the assessments can take place safely and as 'normal' in technical workshops. An additional consideration is that these students have had limited practical training since the lockdown in March, and it is estimated that these students will need approximately 6 hours training before the assessments start. Social distancing and the number of assessment bays available constrain the volumes and speed of getting students through.
- A number of adult learners have been enquiring about how they will complete their qualification as many of them have taken out learning loans for the level 3 qualification. The Director is planning to progress these assessments across the summer period.
- 40 hairdressing students need to undertake adapted assessments on site and in the salons. Due to government guidance these cannot be started until hair dressing salons reopen in July.

In order to maximise student engagement and empower them to present their views and become involved with decision making it is planned to set up a diverse student action group supported by staff. It was recognised that this would enhance the opportunities for staff to listen, learn, empathise and be seen to be acting.

Feedback: The College continues to receive compliments from parents and carers about our engagement with students, these have been collated by the Quality Team. The vast majority of these have recently been in relation to foundation learning and many centred around learning support and the role these staff have played in keeping learners engaged. Once again, no complaints had been received to date.

Safeguarding: It was reported that there were 89 open cases, ten of which were rated as red. It was noted that safeguarding staff were in contact with them weekly via phone/email /text/zoom to check on wellbeing and offer further support as required.

Following requests from members in the previous meeting, a paper on the benefits of Google Classroom and details of feedback and compliments were received for information.

5.5 College Response to Covid-19 and the Way Forward

The Principal presented a report produced to highlight the notable achievements of staff and students in response to the considerable challenges posed by Covid-19. The key conclusions were as follows:

- The majority of successes were heavily reliant upon IT and the ability to work remotely and the implementation of rapid changes safely whilst minimizing risk to college networks and information.
- Positive and innovative staff response demonstrating agility and flexibility
- Strong communication and regular staff updates contributing to positive feedback in the staff survey around feeling part of the team and well communicated with.
- Lots of positive feedback from parents and guardians, particularly of students with high needs.
- Appreciation of parents and carers to the college's proactive and inclusive approach.

The document concluded with the strategy for the Way Forward, which is summarised as follows:

- Continue to innovate and implement the lessons learned in the forthcoming academic year
- Consideration to be given to the continuing uncertainty around Covid-19 restrictions in areas such as timetabling and resources.
- Effective communications to reassure staff in consultation with Unions and Staff Consultative Group
- Careful planning of health and safety measures
- Focus on IT and the investment in networks, hardware and software. Security and integrity of IT systems to remain paramount.
- Acknowledgement that despite the devastating effects on individuals, business and the economy, Covid-19 has presented significant opportunities for the re-skilling and up-skilling of individuals and business support and development teams to support the economy and local community going forward. Nescot will strive to meet these needs and continue to learn and innovate to best effect in delivery of the new academic year.

The Principal reiterated that due to the continually changing landscape it was not possible to be more specific about the plans for the new academic year however the focus on enrolment, student and employer engagement would help to produce the best possible outcome and everyone was committed to meeting the demands of modern audiences in a better way.

On another positive note the Principal announced that to further enhance the reputation of the college and as a vehicle to attract students, the fitness guru Joe Wicks had agreed, as a former graduate of Nescot to promote the college by becoming the 'face' on the Prospectus.

89.19	6. Update Reports
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6.1 HR Update

The Director of HR followed up on the We Thrive staff wellbeing survey discussed at the previous meeting and presented two papers detailing the results of the survey and details of the responses. It was concluded that the majority of responses were very positive and where there were concerns it was mainly with aspects of IT and suitable office equipment for home use.

The highest scores from staff were for feedback from their managers and feeling like part of a team, which we appreciated as this was a new situation for our managers to contend with and provide direction to staff on.

It was noted that getting used to using IT working from home was always going to be a challenge but it was acknowledged that the IT Services team had worked hard to resolve any issues and we were also able to help staff by providing some of them with laptops.

The ability to disconnect from work and maintain that home/work balance is challenging for some and to facilitate the changes online hints and tips have been made available about balancing home and work life in addition to developing a wellbeing section on the staff intranet for all staff to benefit from, and the 24 hour access to our independent Employee Support helpline.

The Director of HR advised that the focus going forward would be the re-opening of the college in September around which there were staff concerns about vulnerable staff or those shielding vulnerable people as well as the impact resulting from the possibility of schools not opening in September.

It was noted that the government had issued new guidelines regarding vulnerable employees and split the categories into two groups of people – those who are vulnerable (and could return to college with social distancing measures in place) and extremely vulnerable people (for whom it would not be safe to return to college). There are currently 44 college staff in the vulnerable category and the process to identify their status and make appropriate arrangements will be undertaken in the coming weeks and reported back at the next meeting.

It was further noted that for those staff feeling anxious about returning to campus answers to FAQs were available on Sharepoint and it was planned to run induction days in July and August to further put minds at ease.

Members were advised that the Unions were working closely with HR through weekly meetings.

6.2 Application 2020/21

Members received a paper summarising the applications for 2020/21 and the new online enrolment processes, the main points were as follows:

2,067	FE 16-18 applicants (1,740 in June +19%)
538	FE 19+ applicants (700 in June 19 -23%)
258	HE applicants (281 June 19 -8%)
407	FT FE L3 continuers enrolled
452	FT FE internal applicants (progressors) process commenced
1,130	New FT FE applicants scheduled for phone interviews between 15 and 26 June (117 have withdrawn from the process)

The paper also included details of the summer activity designed to maximise recruitment and a sample of comments from students through the recently introduced PURLOS platform conveying the positive interaction and rapport with students.

6.3 Progress Towards the Strategic Objectives

It was agreed to carry the item forward to the next meeting.

90.19**8. Meetings****8.1 Meeting Evaluation**

The Chair invited members to review the effectiveness of the Corporation Board meeting, and the following comments were made:

- It hasn't been easy in the past three months but in difficult circumstances the college staff, teaching staff and management have done a lot to get people through this period. There are exciting times ahead.
- Looking forward to getting back to work on campus. In terms of enrolment it would be useful to understand more on the recruitment strategies for ASTML and apprenticeships as they will affect the financial cycle in the forthcoming academic year.
- Good meeting and particularly interested in the response document and the thinking around furlough.
- It has been a tough few months and there are tough times ahead. You don't get to realise quite how tough it's been until you come to a meeting like this and reflect – it is good to share with this group.
- A huge amount of work has gone on behind the scenes – well done to everyone. The future looks much more positive.
- Congratulations on the excellent documentation, especially the Covid-19 response document.
- Very impressive response to the crisis – human ingenuity is extraordinary, and it is amazing how people have adapted so positively to this crisis.
- It is good for us all to get together and compare how far we have come.
- The Covid-19 response document is important and enables us to reflect on how the college has coped and the amount of changes that have been made in a short amount of time – especially Google Classroom which is amazing.
- Very excited about the future – we have done so many things to respond to the crisis ensuring we will be in good shape going forward. Regarding finances we have to make sure we have all we need going forward and that is going to be a massive challenge.
- Huge amount has been going on behind the hedge and it is now time to bring it over the hedge to the wider world. The financial situation is tough and perhaps we can concentrate a little more on income as opposed to cost savings. We need to capitalize on all the hard work we have done and use it to generate income. There is a great story to be told.
- The HR update stated that 20% of the staff said that while working from home they were unable to switch off - need to be aware of this when considering staff welfare.
- Important to recognize the need to drive student growth and business engagement – we should capitalize on what we have learned in the past three months and push forward.

The Principal, with the new Governors in mind, felt it was important to present all the information at the meeting and to emphasize that life is always interesting at Nescot with lots going on. Along with the rest of the team very excited about the new academic year – there are massive challenges ahead but also lots of opportunities. A big thank you to all staff and in particular ELT and the wider SMT who have come through some difficult things together but a fantastic team that delivers even in the most difficult circumstances promoting a feeling of great optimism.

The Chair summed up firstly with a big thank you to the team for doing an amazing job and stated that without exception the college's response to Covid-19 in his experience was the best he had come across. There is a high level of rigour in the area of finance and risk assessment which should be shouted about – well done. However, the college is not yet out of the woods and there is a need to generate additional income as expenditure can only be

sliced to a certain level and there will be further discussion about this at the next meeting in July. Thanks were expressed for Nick and John, the two new Governors joining the team - looking forward to working with them both, to provide what is wanted and needed -additional challenge on different aspects of the college strategies.

8.2 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next FE Corporation meeting will be held on Friday 24 July June at 09.00

8.3 Future Meetings and Events

Audit Committee	Monday 13 July	14.00
Finance & General Purposes Committee	Friday 17 July	09.00
Senior Staff Performance and Remuneration Committee	Friday 24 July	08.00
FE Corporation	Friday 24 July	09.00

Signed



Date

24th July 2020

Professor Sam Luke, Chair of the Corporation