



**MINUTE**  
**NO.**

**ACTION**

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 20 April 2020**

The Board reviewed the matters arising from the meeting on 20 April 2020, and noted complete and future actions.

5. **COVID-19 Update**

The Board received the COVID-19 Update report and the CEO advised that the colleges had reopened that day to a small number of students; the campuses were operating well and therefore the CEO recommended that business continuity reporting be downgraded to exception reporting only and the COVID-19 Working Group be closed.

The Board advised that they would like to have sight of plans around blended learning, and it was agreed that the deep dive into Digital Education, previously planned for the Working Group meeting, would be held at a future Corporation meeting, which could incorporate curriculum design as well as the COVID-19 response. The Chair of the Working Group confirmed that she agreed with the closure of the group and supported the proposal for a Digital Education deep dive at a future Corporation meeting.

**Action:** Agenda item, future Corporation meeting: Deep Dive – Digital Education and Curriculum Design

**Clerk**

The Board further advised that they would like to track student attendance (both onsite and online) and engagement, against other institutions if possible.

**Action:** Submit an analysis of student attendance (on site and online) and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, in comparison with other institutions

**DCEO**

The Board approved the Campus Re-emergence Project Plan and the Group Risk Assessment. The Board approved the recommendation to report to governors by exception from this point onwards and to close the COVID-19 Working Group. **All members were agreed.**

6. **Guildford Estates Strategy**

*PW and MH joined the meeting at 16:20.*

The Board received the Surrey Estates Strategy report, and noted the work done to date and the clarity of the reporting. The CFO provided an overview of the process followed and the conditions of funding under the merger agreement; the CFO advised the Board that approval was being sought to pursue the recommended options, and further approval would be sought before activity identified in the strategy was committed to.

The Consultant outlined the process undertaken by the team of specialists, and the relevant constraints and factors in play. The work had identified five options for the Stoke Park campus of Guilford College and two options for the Merrist Wood campus, which were intended to bring the campuses up to an acceptable standard and to improve space utilisation and educational resources.

*DG joined the meeting at 16:30.*

The Consultant advised that informal discussions with the local planning authority had proved fruitful and secured a recognition of the needs of the colleges. It was therefore recommended that a formal planning process be undertaken as part of the next steps. Following approval by the Board, the team intended to proceed with developing a brief for both curriculum and the physical environment, conducting a detailed review of the planning framework, exploring procurement options (including joint venture opportunities) and developing a finance strategy.

The CFO assured the Board that, given the very low utilisation of the campuses, any reduction in footprint was not expected to impact delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby some other estates may be put under strain.

The Board challenged dependencies between the Estates Strategy and requirements for security for the Local Government Pension Scheme, and were assured that decisions around any disposal of estates would be taken within the context of strategic decisions around the best use of the Group's properties.

The Board noted the time commitment involved in such a strategy and were assured that the Estates team leadership had been strengthened in preparation for this work, to allow the Group Director of Property & Facilities to focus on strategic development.

The Board stressed the importance of considering sustainability within any estates decisions.

The Chair of the Surrey Stakeholder Board advised that she was supportive of the proposed approach and considered the strategic plan to be an important step and would enable conversations with key external stakeholders.

The Board approved the master plan as presented, subject to regular updates to the Corporation and appropriate controls. **All members were agreed.**

The Board thanked the Group Director of Property & Facilities and the Consultant.

*PW and MH left the meeting at 16:40.*

**7. Finance Update**

*Budget*

The Board received the Financial Update report and the CFO provided an overview of the current position of the 2020/21 budget, which would be presented at the next board meeting for approval. The CFO presented a summary of financial performance over the past few years across the newly consolidated Group, noting the impact of operating deficits in the merger colleges and the end of the Transaction Unit merger funding.

The CFO reminded the Board that the financial planning submitted to the Transaction Unit during the merger process had not forecast a significant surplus in the two years post-merger, based on the assumption that the recovery of student numbers in Surrey would take some time; the Education Skills Funding Agency had been comfortable with this forecast.

The CFO highlighted key changes that had occurred since the submission of the financial plans in the merger process, as follows: increased contributions to the Local Government Pension Schemes; curriculum investment requirements; investment requirements for campus communities; and an increase to the core funding rate. The net effect of these changes was negative, however the CFO advised that the Group Executive Team remained committed to achieving the plan as set out if possible.

The CFO advised the Board of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which would result in under-delivery against the 2019/20 budget and would require significantly blended core delivery in the next academic year.

The Board noted that there would be a need to prioritise investment and potentially consider a deficit budget; the CFO assured the Board that a full rationale would be provided if a deficit budget were to be recommended, that scenarios would be modelled and presented to the Board, and that the need to keep a stable and sustainable cash balance would be paramount.

The Board noted that the outstanding balance from the 2018/19 year from The Oxford Partnership had now been received, and were advised that the disposal of the Farnham tennis courts had not yet been completed due to planning delays, but there was confidence that the sale would proceed.

The Board confirmed their support for the approach outlined.

*Management Accounts*

The Board received the Management Accounts and the CFO advised that the budget risk arising from the COVID-19 pandemic was in line with previous predictions; the focus remained on reducing costs without impacting the learner experience. Claims through the job retention scheme, amounting to £150K per month, were anticipated to continue into August 2020.

The Board challenged the financial performance of the Group as compared with other colleges, and were assured that Activate Learning was performing relatively well. A large number of colleges had sought emergency financial support, but due to the size and cash position of the Group, this had not been necessary for Activate Learning. The Group had adapted quickly and were anticipating to recruit students over and above the targets for 2020/21.

*KPIs*

The Board received and noted the Strategic Plan 90-day Targets and the DCEO reminded the Board that performance was presented against the updated targets, including the whole post-merger Group. The Board noted that trends were consistent with previous reports, with Apprenticeships and the Technology faculty continuing to underperform; the DCEO highlighted the mitigations in place and advised that the impact of those mitigations was expected to show in the next round of reporting. The Board were advised that the Higher Education student satisfaction survey results were expected in June and it was hoped that the results would be much improved on the past year due to efforts to improve engagement with the survey.

The Board queried the COVID-19 RAG-rating system, and the DCEO outlined the process for the RAG rating; students who were assessed as 'red' received focus and rapid intervention. Student feedback confirmed that students were receiving regular contact from their tutors, and there was anecdotal evidence that engagement had improved in the move to online delivery in some programmes, such as English and maths. The Board noted that there was research to suggest that a large number of students in the country were struggling during this time and challenged whether adequate support was being provided; the DCEO advised that the newly created performance coach roles were intended to provide the extraordinary support required by students during and after the pandemic.

The Board considered the impact of labour market changes on student recruitment and were advised that increased unemployment, upskilling requirements, and government support for apprenticeships were expected to present opportunities for Activate Learning. Contact with the Department for Work and Pensions through project work would also place the Group at an advantage.

**8. Finance and Performance**

This item was covered under the Finance Update.

**9. Link Governor Update - Health & Safety**

The Link Governor for Health & Safety provided a verbal update on the progress of Health & Safety within the Group. The Link Governor advised that the new Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing had been in post since March and had been instrumental in updating policies and procedures and preparing the campuses for reopening. Due to campus closure, few inspections had been carried out and accident rates were low; work was underway to increase the number of trained first aiders across the Group and risk assessment training had been provided to managers in preparation for the reopening of the campuses. The CFO was reviewing the Health & Safety reporting structure to improve quality and minimise duplication. The Link Governor assured the Corporation that the team was strong, with a clear strategic focus.

**MINUTE**  
**NO.**

**ACTION**

**10. Use of Corporation Seal**

There were no applications of the Corporation seal for approval.

**11. Reflections from the Away Day**

The Board received the reflections from the Away Day and were asked to provide any feedback to the CEO and the Clerk. The Board were advised that plans were being made to schedule a face to face Away Day, subject to government restrictions, on 26-27 October 2020.

**Action:** Provide any feedback on the reflections from the Away Day the CEO and the Clerk

**ALL**

The CEO advised the Board about her response to the Black Lives Matter movement and her recommendation that a focus on diversity be included in the next strategic plan. The Board supported this intention and one governor expressed a particular desire to support the BAME community at Activate Learning.

The Board further stressed the importance of sustainability within the strategic plan.

**12. Minutes of Committees**

The Board received and noted the minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting on 20 April 2020 and the COVID-19 Working Group meeting on 18 May 2020. It was noted that the terms of reference of the COVID-19 Working Group did not require approval, as the group had been disbanded under item 5.

**13. Stakeholder Report**

The Board received and noted the Stakeholder Report and were reminded by the Clerk that in line with the request of the Board arising from the previous evaluation, a stakeholder report would be received on an annual basis moving forward.

**14. Policies**

The Board received and approved the Safeguarding Policy and the Risk Management Policy. **All members were agreed.**

**15. Any Other Business**

No other business was raised.

**16. Dates of Upcoming Meetings**

20 July 2020

**The meeting closed at 17:20.**



Chair .....

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Date 23 June 2020

## Summary of Actions

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
Agenda item, future Corporation meeting: Deep Dive – Digital Education and Curriculum Design	<b>Clerk</b>
Submit an analysis of student attendance (on site and online) and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, in comparison with other institutions.	<b>DCEO</b>
Provide any feedback on the reflections from the away data the CEO and the Clerk	<b>ALL</b>