

**Orchard Hill College Committee meeting
Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 4.00pm (held virtually)**

Present: David Hobday, Chair (DH)
Michele Humphreys, Vice-Chair (MH)
Kelly Phillips, Principal (KP)
Ric Adams (RA)
Akansha Arya (AA)
Neil Mears (NM)

In attendance: Kelly Phillips (KP)-Principal
Kirsty Cottrell (KC)-Deputy Principal and Sutton Regional Lead
David Thomas (DT)- Deputy Principal and Sutton Regional Lead
Mel Shepherd (MS)- Assistant Principal and Southwark Regional Lead
Amy Thoreau (AT)- Assistant Principal and Hillingdon Regional Lead
Craig Van-de-Velde-Assistant Principal and Kingston Regional Lead
Sue Curran, Management Accountant (SC)
Tracey Goodsell (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence. Apologies for lateness were received from KP.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations made.

3. Constitution and appointments

Governors noted that the term of office for Dave Hobday and Michele Humphreys finishes on 16.3.21.

It was **AGREED** to recommend the re-appointment of DH and MH for a further three-year term of office to the OHC Board, for ratification at their meeting on 26.3.21.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters arising

There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Clerk's note It was agreed to take the agenda out of order to accommodate attendees that were unavoidably late or needed to leave the meeting for a period of time.

6. Portfolio Visits

i) Ethos, Vision and Strategy

DH reported that he had met with DT. They had discussed how the College has been managing during the pandemic and the challenges that have been posed. One of the issues has been identifying the appropriate guidance from the government. As a specialist college, guidance has been difficult to apply and at times contradictory.

Student attendance has been good which is a huge credit to the college. A number of the students have been supported with blended learning.

From 8th March 2021, in line with guidance, the College has opened for all students, although the community based provision is not available, which has had a big impact on the students. However, good alternative arrangements are being made with local partners.

There have been some concerns from staff about returning to work safely. Senior leaders are in regular conversation with staff teams and their representatives to discuss and alleviate concerns.

DH said non-Covid issues were also discussed, including how the college continues to focus on programmes planned before the pandemic. These include further improvements to supporting students with behaviour management and the programme around being a Trauma-informed college.

ii) Teaching and Learning

MH reported that she had had a telephone conversation with Mel Shepherd for a general update. The lockdowns have presented daily challenges, but the College has responded positively and has shown great ability to adapt to change, often at short notice. Some students have found it hard to engage in remote learning. Laptops have been provided where possible and parents have been very supportive.

Some of the Workstart students are very independent and have missed travelling to work and being with other people. They have had to learn on-line protocols e.g. being appropriately dressed. Job coaches are currently contacting employers and reviewing Risk Assessments with a view to restarting work placements as soon as possible after Monday 8th March.

The College is holding virtual EHCP meetings which have been positively received and have allowed for better attendance.

DH asked when work placements would be likely to return. KP said realistically this will probably be next term, with robust risk assessments in place.

iii) Health and Safety, Child Protection and Safeguarding

NM reported that he had had a telephone conversation with KC. NM also welcomed DT back to the College after his secondment to Unified Academy. NM said that despite the restrictions, the College was operating well. Attendance is as expected and students are making good progress. There has been an increase in referrals made by staff about individual students, mainly due to concerns about their mental health. The College has also expanded the offer of therapies to those in need of support. KC had also reported that safeguarding across the College sites will be enhanced further with the introduction of Regional Safeguarding Leads. NM said that he would like to acknowledge the amazing work being done by the college every day for the students. He also thanked KC for inspiring the people around her.

iv) Finance and Resources

AA reported that she had had a Zoom call with SC, Management Accountant. She said a lot of thought had gone into the forecasting, planning and tracking of the budget. The College has recognised a surplus, due to Covid Related reduced expenditure. Less agency staff have been needed as much of the learning has been remote. More junior lecturers have been recruited which are less expensive. AA said that she acknowledged that this has been a challenging environment in which to forecast and thanked SC for the thoughtful forecast.

Governors **RECEIVED** the portfolio reports.

7. Finance and Funding

i) Management Accounts

SC reported that as at the end of January, the forecast was for a £275k surplus. An operating surplus of £539k is projected for the full year.

RA asked about Element 3 students. SC explained that Element 3 is for students that need greater support. The LAs are charged for a place at the College.

NM asked whether the College is able to rollover the surplus. SC said that the money that isn't spent falls into the reserves. The college would look at Capital Expenditure to spend on the students.

The Statutory accounts for year-end 31.7.20 have been approved and published.

There has been a significant increase in the pensions liability in the LGPS. Over £10.5 million are related to our obligations. This puts the College in a negative funds position. This can have an impact as suppliers could be reluctant to work with us. The College is trying to pay this down but the current interest rates are low.

DH asked whether there were likely to be any further significant increases. SC said that the regulatory environment means that the College received continual evaluations carried out by the actuaries. People are living longer and the interest rates are low.

DH thanked SC for her clear report.

Governors **RECEIVED** the Management Accounts.

8. A) Principal's Report

The following matters were discussed.

i) Introduction

KP said that the third lockdown has presented the biggest challenge so far. There has been a lot of representation from the unions, which has been common in the FE sector but this is being well-managed and there are robust risk assessments in place.

KP said the College had been excited to have students back from 8.3.21. Although the centres have never shut, attendance has been at about 33% onsite, but it is now at 69%, with 80% expected to be on-site within the next few weeks.

The Covid Catch-up funding will be used creatively for the recovery curriculum. Students are being offered external specialist support and opportunities, which include canine therapy, dance and movement, music therapy, drama therapy and counselling.

There are plans to take 6 students away in July, who have suffered a bereavement during the pandemic.

The College has lost the first floor of VPC, leaving a lack of premises for the AEB students. KP is currently in negotiation with two alternative places.

The College is also looking for premises in Lewisham to meet demand in that area. An expression of interest has been made on a site in Beckenham. DH asked whether these are additional premises. KP said that demand is high in that area. The site in Beckenham offers a lot of land which would enable the college to have vocational zoning e.g mechanics, upcycling.

Planning of building projects for Wyvern has begun in preparation to increase capacity for September 2021.

A new lift has been installed at Beaconsfield.

RA asked about the impact of vacating VPC. KP said that there are 21 students on that floor. It is hoped that any new premises will be better and the Diploma for Education and Training (DET) will also be run from that hub.

Students and staff who are on the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list received an additional letter instructing them to shield until 31.3.21. This has meant that staff with the correct skillset has been depleted, but teaching and learning remains excellent.

ii) Student numbers

Governors **NOTED** the student numbers.

iii) Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching has benefited from a revised approach to observations across the college. Lectures receive three short observations across a term. A grade is attributed to the final observation, taking into account the observations across the term. This has meant that observation of classroom practice now gives a more secure view of the typicality of teaching being delivered. This process has seen better engagement from staff. In a survey 100% of staff said they preferred this way of working compared to the original single observation model.

DH said that students will leave this year having missed so much. He asked how the College is managing this and whether some students can repeat the year if they want to.

KP said that the budget savings had allowed the College to increase the agency numbers by 10 each day. There is an emphasis on Year 3 students going out in the community every day, although some facilities such as swimming pools won't re-open for some time. KP said she may need to extend the term into the holiday period. She said the College will do everything possible to ensure that students don't leave for unacceptable destinations.

KP said it is not usually possible for High Needs students to repeat a year, but she has had made a case to the LAs for four students to return.

AA suggested there could be an opportunity to set up alumni students. KP said this was an excellent suggestion. She said past students are offered 2 free days for enrichment but there is not enough building capacity at the current time to offer more. She agreed she would look into this further.

Governors agreed that the College has achieved extraordinary things during very challenging circumstances.

iv) Human Resources

KP said that AT is the Regional Lead in Hillingdon and there is a HoLC acting up at Wyvern to add capacity. The centre has expanded quickly and there is a need to focus on embedding the ethos and values there.

v) CPD and Organisational Development

A whole staff CPD day was held virtually on 22.2.21. This had been accessed by 225 staff and feedback was excellent.

vi) Safeguarding

KC said that referrals have increased by 125% in term 1 for 2020/21 compared to the same period last term. This term to date, there has been an increase of 81%.

An advert has been placed for four Safeguarding and Welfare Officers, two people are currently covering all sites and feedback has been positive.

Staff well-being has naturally been impacted by Covid and the College has been creative in supporting staff by organising virtual quizzes, a weekly reflection group etc.

OHC&AT has launched Edupod, which is a system which supports schools/colleges to become mentally healthy. An initial assessment has been completed, and the College has scored enough to enable it to apply for the first stage to become accredited.

The journey to become a Trauma-Informed College has been delayed due to Covid but a three day course has been held and as a result further strategies have been implemented across sites. An action plan will be drawn up.

DH asked about therapies and how this has impacted on student access. KC said that virtual therapy sessions have been run and the majority of students have been able to access them in some form. There have also been virtual assessments and therapy packs have also been sent home. Reintegration is challenging, and the therapy teams will be crucial in the students' phased return.

Governors **RECEIVED** the Principal's' report

B) Dashboards

DH noted that variations in student attendance between sites. KP said this is likely to be because some regions, such as Kingston, have more Clinically Extremely Vulnerable students who are shielding.

Governors **RECEIVED** the Regional and Consolidated Dashboards.

9. Policies and Procedures

Governors **NOTED** the policies and procedures approved by the OHC&AT Board at their Autumn term 2020 meeting.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The following dates were agreed and noted:

- Tuesday 15th June 2021 at 4pm
- Tuesday 9th November 2021 at 4pm
- Tuesday 15th March 2022 at 4pm

The meeting closed at 5.20pm.

CHAIR: _____ **DATE:** _____