**CORPORATION OF SIR GEORGE MONOUX COLLEGE**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the External Relations Committee held online on 1 June 2020**

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| **Present** | Stewart Maclean (Chair), Talia Chirouf, Tom Foakes, Farhana Juhera, Maurine Lewin, David Vasse. |
| **In Attendance** | James Gould (Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment), Robert Smith (Clerk to the Corporation). |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence & Quoracy**  All members were present. |
| **2** | **Declarations of Interest**  None. |
| **3** | **Draft Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Ordinary Business): 3 March 2020**  It was noted that the draft minutes had been approved by the Chair of the Committee for circulation.  The minutes were approved as a correct record of the business transacted, and *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings to which they relate. |
| **4** | **Matters Arising from the Draft Minutes (Ordinary Business): 3 March 2020**  None. |
| **5** | **Risk Management Report**  It was noted that the Board level risk falling within the remit of the Committee is considered under Agendum 6 below.  It was also noted that any other risks requiring the Audit Committee’s attention were to be identified in the course of the meeting and duly reported to the said committee.  In the latter regard, it was noted that the Risk Assessment attending the student entry 2020-21, especially the size of the cohort and resultant financial impact on the 2021-22 financial year, as well as issues attending the safe operation of the College, would be referred for consideration by the Audit Committee at the meeting to be held on 16 June 2020. |
| **6** | **Communications and Marketing, with Special Reference to Student Recruitment during the Present Health Emergency**  A report prepared by the Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment was received and considered.  It was reported overall that |

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|  | **.** | the number of applications had remained significantly above that recorded at the same point in the previous year though, due to the impact of Covid-19, the College had not been able to match the previous year in terms of the number of offers made, but is expecting this to change with the introduction of telephone interviews; *and* |
|  | **.** | the overall projection remains the same as reported to the previous meeting of the Committee (i.e. 1,820 students enrolled from September 2020, which would also represent maximum capacity). |

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|  | It was reported in more detail that |

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|  | **.** | there had been a significant increase of 21% in the number of applications compared to last year, and that the application rate had been sustained during the closure period, driven by the continued improvement in school liaison, the College’s enhanced reputation, and a new online application system; |
|  | **.** | however, the relative ease of application may have led to an increase in students who submit an initial application but do not follow it through - there is also a ‘Stage 2’ which needs to be completed prior to enrolment, and may be a better measure to track (800 prospective students have completed Stage 2 to date); |
|  | **.** | Covid-19 had had a significant effect on the number of offers, with a drop-off in interview attendance, face-to-face interviews having been suspended from 18 March, and an Open Evening (which would have also included interviews) having been cancelled; *and* |
|  | **.** | there is a backlog of approximately 600 new applicants, and approximately 800 ‘no-shows’ who would be going through the process of being re-invited, though this is expected to improve following the introduction of telephone interviews from the week commencing 4 May. |

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|  | In relation to the revised marketing strategy, it was reported that the following actions had been put in place during the closure period to maintain the engagement of potential students with the College: |

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|  | **.** | during the weeks commencing 1 May and 8 May, telephone interviews had been successfully piloted for new applicants, with approximately 50% resulting in offers – the initiative had been expanded for implementation by a larger group of support staff, with a further expansion to teaching staff planned; |
|  | **.** | “keep warm” materials are continuing to be circulated to holders of offers, along with Q+A information to provide re-assurance; |
|  | **.** | a series of online ‘taster lessons’ (two per pathway) had been delivered during the recent half-term to give an introduction to a particular topic as well as a “stretch activity” to support transition to post-16 study; |
|  | **.** | marketing campaigns are continuing (Apply Now, Summer Campaign, Enrol Now), but with changes to the types of College expenditure (e.g. to finance a larger online focus); |
|  | **.** | the College is exploring the feasibility of an enlarged programme of ‘taster sessions’ using a college / summer school approach but, given that significant measures to maintain “social distancing” are likely to be in place for the remainder of the academic year, this may not be permitted to happen; *and* |
|  | **.** | a project team had been formed to ‘re-imagine’ enrolment in the context of maintaining “social distancing” with the majority of the process taking place online or via telephone calls. |

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|  | It was suggested that it is too early to draw firm conclusions on the impact of Covid-19 on student recruitment numbers, and therefore the overall projection at this point is the same as that reported to the February meeting. However, a larger number of ‘walk-ins’ is anticipated compared to offers, and a greater degree of turbulence over the first 42 days (i.e. up to the census date) as students locate and settle into the most suitable course.  In mid-June the College expects to be able to give a firmer projection of internal progression. Current indicators are that retention (i.e. the percentage of students who stay in college following the census date) is looking the same, or marginally better, than the equivalent point last year.  An overall update on projected enrolment numbers will be available by mid-July, and will be circulated to Committee members at that time.  In response to concerns raised by members, it was reported that: |

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|  | **.** | the absence of examined GCSE’s is expected to result in a greater degree of difficulty in enrolling students on to the courses most appropriate to them, and may lead to a higher level of course changes at the start of the year; |
|  | **.** | a range of issues concerning “social distancing” requirements are being actively considered, in particular to safely accommodate: |

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|  |  | **.** | around 200 students from 15 June in the current year; *and* |
|  |  | **.** | a range of possible numbers at the start of the 2020-21 year, dependent on the public health situation pertaining at the time and the attendant government guidance. |

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|  | In relation to the latter, it was commented that: |

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|  | **.** | all providers will be similarly affected; |
|  | **.** | a mix of face-to-face and online learning may be needed, concerning which it was reported that attendance had not suffered as a result of the switch to remote operation, and that the College is building up a wealth of experience in, and a strong capacity for, delivering online learning; |
|  | **.** | budgetary provision will need to be made for possible Saturday and evening teaching hours, as well as for “summer school” activities; |
|  | **.** | continuing contact with students unable to attend on a regular face-to-face basis is crucial; |
|  | **.** | how the College promotes a safe environment for learners needs to be communicated effectively to both actual and prospective students and their parents, though this must be adequately updated to reflect developing government guidance; |
|  | **.** | there are implications for the College’s well-being programme for students, in particular around developing appropriate resilience, as well as dealing with adverse events (e.g. bereavement). |

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|  | In response to a question concerning how staff view a return to face-to-face working, it was reported that: |

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|  | **.** | an audit had been conducted of the circumstances applying to each member of staff; *and* |
|  | **.** | staff representatives, notably the NEU, had actively participated in the process of ensuring that the College creates and maintains a safe working environment, and are supportive of the measures being taken (which in many instances exceed those laid down in national guidelines). |

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|  | In response to a question concerning the proportion of student enrolments from schools who have sixth forms, and the likely negative effect of Covid-19 on their numbers, it was stated that a principal difficulty results from the Transport for London’s decision to suspend free travel for young people which might make them reluctant to travel to the College from neighbouring boroughs. The College’s bursary allocation had been cut by the ESFA on the precise grounds of the availability of free travel. A solution would be to restore it and apply it to travel costs. A Sixth Form Colleges’ Association representative has stated that the issue is being pursued with government ministers.  The role of the College, especially of extra-curricular staff, in preparing young people for life in the very different world they are moving into was raised by members. For example, there are potentially additional opportunities for entry to the most competitive university courses resulting from the restrictions on international student travel, and the College’s support of students in formulating their applications might for this reason assume additional importance. |

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| **7** | **Work Experience**  A report prepared by the Vice-Principal (Student Services and Recruitment) was received and considered.  Definitions of the following categories were noted: |

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|  | **.** | **Work Experience (WEX) Placements** - students based off-site with an external employer for at least five working days, engaged in work relevant to their pathway, study programme or career aspirations. |
|  | **.** | **Industry Placements** - vocational students based off-site with an external employer for at least forty-five days, engaged in work relevant to their pathway, study programme or career aspirations. |
|  | **.** | **Work Experience (WEX) Projects** - students have exposure to the workplace or experience of work with an employer, in most instances delivered in partnership with the curriculum (i.e. students are involved as part of their course). |
|  | **.** | ***Talks and Workshops*** - one off talks/workshops from employers about their industry/careers/etc. |

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|  | It was reported that the projected 56% of all students completing a work experience project during the year will be close to the final reported KPI for the previous year. However, data cleaning still needs to be completed, the effect of which normally leads to a slight increase in numbers. The College intends to provide a more detailed annual report to governors towards the end of the academic year. The overall figures for the year are still anticipated to show improvement on the previous year despite the impact of Covid-19.  Industry placements had not been able to be completed (or new ones sourced) because of the pandemic. However, the College had received confirmation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) that the target has been removed for this academic year, and that the funding may be used for associated purposes. To this end, an action plan had been agreed to continue to build relationships with new and existing employers, recruit an additional team member to source industry placements and develop a model/timetable for next year.  The following comments were made by members: |

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|  | **.** | the College’s achievement in the “short” 2019-20 year had been highly commendable; |
|  | **.** | the anticipated continuing need for “social distancing” measures is likely to act strongly as a brake on industry placements in the outlook period; |
|  | **.** | online industry placements are being developed by some employers, and the College should look to encourage and benefit from them; *and* |
|  | **.** | the College’s positive initiatives in the above regard should be communicated effectively to students, both actual and prospective. |

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|  | It was agreed that work experience targets (and the criteria informing their definition) for 2020-21 will be discussed at the Committee’s next meeting. |

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| **8** | **Key Performance Indicators 2019-20**  Where there are valid projections measures at this point of the year, the following were reported and noted: |

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|  | **Performance Indicators** | **Measure** | **2018-19**  **Outcome** | **2019-20 Target**  **%** | **May 20**  **Update** |
|  | Work experience | % of L2 & L3 Voc. students undertaking work experience. | 56% | 80% | 56% |
|  | Student feedback | % of students who would recommend SGMC to a friend (QDP) | 82% | 85% | 90% (pre-Covid 19), a survey is planned for w/c 1st June. |
|  | Student feedback | % of students who feel safe at College | 88% | 95% | 94% (pre-Covid 19), a survey is planned for w/c 1st June. |
|  | Recruitment | No. of EFA funded learners enrolled  at census dates. *Note:* the target for funding purposes is lower than 1820, but 1820 is used as a basis for planning purposes. | 1711 | 1820 | 1820 (medium range and ‘best guess’) |
|  | Recruitment | Application to offer conversion rate. | 75% | 75% | 57% |
|  | **Performance Indicators** | **Measure** | **2018-19**  **Outcome** | **2019-20 Target**  **%** | **May 20**  **Update** |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from vocational L2 –L3. | 79% | 80% | Estimate as at 29 June |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A level year 1 to A-level year 2 | 86% | 90% | Estimate as at 29 June |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A Level Year 1 in total | 93% | 94% | Estimate as at 29 June |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A Level Year 1 in total | 93% | 94% | Estimate as at 29 June |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A Level Year 1 in total | 93% | 94% | Estimate as at 29 June |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from L3 BTEC Y1 to Y2 | 96% | 95% | Estimate as at 29 June |
|  | Internal Progression | % of all students who could return to the college in the college in 18/19 who do | 90% | 90% | Estimate as at 29 June |

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|  | It was reported that a further student survey, examining *inter alia* feedback on the online learning experience and perceptions of wellness during “lockdown” will be conducted during the week beginning 15 June. |

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| **9** | **Safeguarding**  A schedule of risks, their rationales and the control measures implemented in their regard, prepared by the Vice-Principal (Student Services and Recruitment), who had also circulated a video Loom to members in advance of the meeting, was received and considered.  Members asked how the College compares to other providers in relation to safeguarding under the present emergency. In response the Principal stated that he did not believe that any other provider had done more, drawing particular attention to the weekly telephone calls made to students by a College contact. Very few students had attended the College, and none after the first few days of “lockdown”. Those deemed vulnerable had been given the explicit opportunity to come into College, but none had done so, citing concerns over the safety of public transport or health issues affecting themselves or their families. Where social workers had been involved, they had been supportive of the College’s actions. In addition, laptops and data loans had been prioritised for vulnerable students to ensure they could participate in online lessons - and these students had received more regular engagement through the calling service.  In response to a specific question concerning the possibility of a confirmed coronavirus case on site in September, it was stated that an appropriate contingency plan had been prepared for such an eventuality.  Necessary changes to the College’s Safeguarding Policy consequent on the pandemic will be circulated to Committee members for information, and submitted for approval by the Corporation at the meeting being held on 7 July 2020.  In relation to the plan, and associated risk plan (which have received approval under Chair’s Action for report to the Corporation meeting to be held on 7 July 2020), for increased numbers of learners attending the College resulting from the inception of the Accelerated Learning Academy with effect from 1 September 2020, it was reported that learner numbers will be very small in the first year (though with funding guaranteed for 50 places), and staff transferred under TUPE arrangements will therefore have some availability to assume other roles within the College.  It was emphasised by the Committee that safeguarding training in relation to the Academy must be extended to all College staff, not just those directly engaged with its operation. |

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| **10** | **External Corporate Hospitality**  There were no matters to report. |
| **11** | **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checking of Governors**  The Clerk to the Corporation confirmed that all governors possess current clearances. |
| **12** | **Proposed Dates and Times of Meetings 2019-20**  The following proposed dates and times were approved:  ***Monday 19 October 2020 (5.30pm)***  ***Monday 1 February 2021 (5.30pm)***  ***Monday 7 June 2021 (5.30pm)*** |
| **13** | **Any Other Competent Business**  None. |

**List of Actions Arising from the Minutes**

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| *Minute No.* | *Person Responsible* | *Action Required* |
| **5** | Clerk to the Corporation (agenda)  Principal (paper) | Provide for consideration by the Audit Committee of Risk Assessment attending the student entry 2020-21, especially the size of the cohort and resultant financial impact on the 2021-22 financial year, as well as issues attending the safe operation of the College. |
| **7** | Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment | Provide a more detailed annual report to governors on work experience towards the end of the academic year. |
| **8** | Clerk to the Corporation | Student Survey report on next agenda. |
| **9** | Clerk to the Corporation (agenda)  Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment  (circulation and submission of paper) | Circulate necessary changes to the College’s Safeguarding Policy consequent on the pandemic will be to Committee members for information, and submit them for approval by the Corporation at the meeting being held on 7 July 2020. |