



**Confidential Minutes of the Corporation's
strategy meeting
held remotely on Tuesday 8 February 2022**

Present: - Igor Andronov (Chair)
Tony Bramley
James Caird
Julia Cotton
Laura Johnston
Debbie Lambert
Alan Layng
Liz Quinn
David Williams (Principal)

In attendance: - Jo Ricketts (Deputy Principal)
Edward Gwillim (Director of Finance)
Debra Baldwin (Director of Personnel)
Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Corporation)
Jon Gill (Assistant Principal)
Melanie Taylor (Assistant Principal)
Carl Morris (Assistant Principal)

1. **Apologies for absence:** Tony Ford, Adam Matthews, Jeremy Nicholls and Ben Whiteley.

2. **Welcome and Introductions**
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly new Governors and Robert Elliott from HWChamber; introductions followed. The Chair updated Governors that Julia Evans had requested deferring her term of office as a Governor to commence from 1 September 2022 due to diary commitments.

The Board agreed: -
 - Julia Evans would join the Board effective from 1 September 2022

3. **Role of the Chamber, its support for the College and Employment (Robert Elliott)**
 - Chamber has a representative role for its members
 - Works in partnership with Shropshire Chamber
 - 13000 members across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 700 in Shropshire
 - 98% of businesses employ less than 50 people, many with only 1-5 employees

Action

- Businesses include advanced manufacturing, health and social care, business professional services, food and drink sector
- Regular surveys to members identify their current needs
- Core business to build relationships locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- Develops partnerships through regional, local and national organisations e.g. Local Authority, NHS, LEPs, business boards, Digital Skills Network, IOD and Federation of Small Businesses
- Works with the Department for International Trade
- Kick start programme to get people into employment – links with careers partnership, contribute to skills advice programme. Involved in enterprise boards.
- The Chamber will work with the College to connect, communicate, collaborate and prepare students to inspire to develop

Questions

- Q. What does the Chamber do to identify skills gaps forecasting to assist schools and colleges to prepare young people?
- A. Conducts research to identify industry skills gaps. British Chamber of Commerce provides data on national skills gaps. The local need is to engage and listen to employers/members. Regular communications to identify gaps and request contribution. Businesses need to be linked with colleges and students.
- Q. Skills gaps are fluid and subject to change which needs to be balanced against the time to put students through courses. Does the Chamber have any plans to address future skills needs?
- A. Industry trends are used to identify skills gaps. Lobbying the British Chamber and Skills Boards are useful mechanisms.
- Q. The T Level curriculum requires students to complete 315 hours work placements; how could the College engage with the Chamber to find mutual benefits.
- A. The Chamber could actively facilitate by targeting companies to provide placements in the relevant industry sectors.
- Q. There was a question if the Chamber thought employers understood T Levels and employers' role to facilitate work placements.
- A. Employers' knowledge about T Levels was limited, the Chamber could publicise the opportunity, requirements and outcomes to its members and put them in contact with the College. The College has a role to support businesses to understand T Levels and offered to host or participate in employer engagement or networking events facilitated by the Chamber.

The College could also provide courses, wellbeing days or be used as a venue for working lunches. The Chamber could publicise College offers and opportunities to its members as good news stories, articles and offers.

- Q. How do we monitor engagement and collaboration with the Chamber?
- A. It was agreed to review annually to ensure it is beneficial to both parties. The Chamber's CRM membership system records all activities with each member. The membership team will be the point of contact with the College. The Chamber's marketing and events team will be encouraged to look at links.

From the College's perspective, employer engagement is part of the strategic plan and will be reported in the Annual Operating Plan (AOP). The Board will be regularly updated on work with the Chamber and employers.

- Q. What is the relationship between the Chamber and LEPs, particularly regarding the discretionary funding and the Chamber's role in this.
- A. The LEP structure is currently being changed with a possibility that LEPs in non-urban areas may continue. The CEO at the Chamber works with LEPs.

The Chair thanked Robert Elliott for his useful presentation which had identified mechanisms for the College to work with employers which will support students into employment and employers. It was agreed that periodic dialogue with the Chamber is crucial.

4. **Summary feedback from breakout groups**

The Principal specifically referred to the following commitments in the strategic plan: -

- Deliver high quality teaching and learning leading to excellent student outcomes and positive destinations
- Ensure that provision fully supports the needs of our students and local economies
- Employer engagement - apprenticeships, work placements, Strategic Development Fund, Adult Education Budget. Full cost recovery courses, curriculum design, visiting lecturers/visits to employers, staff development – professional updating, engage with representative groups.

Feedback from Breakout Groups

- Collaborate with the Chamber to facilitate and increase engagement with employers and target appropriate companies and networks
- Explicitly address ignorance of employers' understanding about FE
- Attract employers to College premises and use facilities and assets more effectively e.g. farms, farriery, beauty salon and art facilities, University Centre to host events for employers and at different campuses. (Use as a tool and not to attract income)
- Become more forward thinking in our course and qualification offer e.g. electric vehicle mechanics
- Consider using Adult Education Budget (which offers free courses to businesses currently) to upskill workforce and offer CPD. The Chamber could publicise courses in addition to the College's own targeted marketing

- Develop a centralised employer database collating staffs' knowledge from all areas in College as a resource for apprenticeships and work placements. Need to be savvy in using the information.
- Find mechanism to continue to engage with alumni
- Consider methods to directly engage with apprentices and employers e.g. arranging for alumni to talk to students
- Virtual meetings with employers and use Microsoft Teams to bring together employers and students once relationships established (reduces time and provides a safe space for students)
- Provision of a 'one stop shop' for employers
- Collaborate with other providers to provide the best offer
- Competitive market – less competition for some areas compared to others
- Seek ways to work with SMEs to address the impact of the pandemic in appropriate areas
- Ensure employers have a good experience engaging with the College
- Impact analysis required to identify successful engagement with employers which could be disseminated in College
- Identify gaps in delivery and if the College can address these
- Use curriculum intent statements
- Time restraints for both College and employers; need to support employers to identify their training needs analysis
- Build on model with County Training who have relationships with employers – invest in staff to have transactional conversations with employers to forge relationships as a long-term strategy
- Hoople could afford opportunities following the appointment of new CEO at Herefordshire Council and apprenticeship programme
- Quality and not quantity important to build relationships

6. Conclusion

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation acknowledging that engagement with the Chamber and LEPs will continue. Herefordshire and Worcestershire are in lowest priority group in the White Paper. A Governor referred to an article in The Times about Blacksmithing apprenticeships delivered by HLNSC which would be shared. Thanks was also recorded to all staff and students for their hard work.

“The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave, is not training them, and having them stay”. Henry Ford

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 May 2022: Governors' Workshop at 2.30 pm followed by the Board meeting at 4.00 pm.

Signed as a true record of proceedings

Chair: **Date:**