



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 14th DECEMBER 2017**

Present: David Clark (Chair), Joanne Finnerty, Lorraine Jones, Sue Higginson (Principal), Tim Kelly, Joe McArdle, Paul Smyth, Jayne Winders

In attendance: Michael Norton, Deputy Principal
Maura Cummins, Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality
Steve Cain, Director of Financial Services
Will Jerram, Director of MIS
Lynn Adam, College Manager for HE, Arts and Access
Ste Bailey, Assistant Principal Student Support and Foundation Learning
Jill Collins, Student Engagement Manager
Ian James, Clerk to the Governors
Louise Kelly, Administrator to the Governors

APOLOGIES

82. Apologies were received by Anna Barnish, Andrew Davies, Gary Doyle, James King and Richard Mawdsley.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

83. Tim Kelly and the Principal declared an interest in the Local Government Pension scheme.

SHARING RECENT SUCCESSES

84. The Board received the routine Sharing Recent Success report (copy attached to signed minutes) and noted its content.

FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY GROUP

85. The Principal provided feedback from the Scrutiny Group meeting held on 4th December 2017. The Group had originally been established as a Task and Finish group with the objective of moving the College forward from “Requires Improvement” to “Good.” Now that had been achieved, the Group felt that the next objective was to drive the improvements needed to make the College ‘outstanding’. They had therefore suggested that the Scrutiny Group be established as a standing committee that reviewed quality and standards.

86. The proposed establishment of a Quality and Standards Scrutiny Committee would be referred to a meeting of the Governance & Search Committee in January 2018.

COLLEGE SARIP 2016/17

87. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality presented the College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) (copies attached to signed minutes). The Vice Principal explained that prior to the inspection a draft version of the SAR had been produced. As part of the Ofsted inspection, the SAR had been reviewed and found to be accurate. At the time of inspection it was too early for the Quality Improvement Plan to be finalised and this was now provided.

88. The QIP incorporated all the areas for improvement emerging from the Ofsted inspection together with actions from the performance review of each curriculum area in relation to in year performance. The QIP showed progress made with each action and would be reviewed regularly by the Scrutiny Group or Committee that replaces it.

89. **Resolved** that the College SAR for 2016/17 be approved

BALANCED SCORECARD

90. The Deputy Principal presented the Balanced Scorecard (copy attached to signed minutes) highlighting that there were two key issues assessed as 'red'; Apprenticeship Reforms and Sickness Absence.

91. Apprenticeship reforms had led to a collapse nationally in apprenticeship starts. Although the College was below target, recruitment was progressing well in comparison to the rest of the region.

92. There had been a 50% increase in sickness levels compared to the same point last year, with the majority of sicknesses absence lasting over a week. The Deputy Principal felt that the increase was largely attributable to the staff restructuring exercise, the increased concentration on performance and there was a local epidemic of both flu and Noro Virus.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Equality & Diversity Policy

93. The Assistant Principal Student Support and Foundation Learning presented the updated Equality and Diversity Policy for the Board's approval (copy attached to signed minutes). He advised that there had been no substantial changes made since the last review, only updated job titles.

94. The Board supported a suggestion that, although 'Deprivation' was not a protected characteristic, the policy should refer to this together with the 'Disability Confident' scheme. The governors also noted and briefly discussed the impact of a significant increase in mental health issues presented by learners.

95. **Resolved** that the Equality and Diversity policy be approved, subject to the amendments agreed in minute 94 above

Equality & Diversity 2016/17 Close Down

96. The Assistant Principal also provided the 2016/17 Equality & Diversity Close Down report (copy attached to signed minutes). Governors enquired about two actions that were RAG rated amber.

97. The first related to young parents' achievement rates. For 2017-18, there would be improvements to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to make it easier for students to access learning resources at home.

98. The second issue rated amber was concerned with adult learning support. There were cases where adult learners with learning difficulties did not want Additional Learning Support. The College had promoted the benefits of ALS to those students but ultimately, it was their choice as to whether they wished to accept support. The focus for 2017/18 was to make sure that, in these cases, tutors were made fully aware of any specific needs or learning difficulties learners may have so that they could be aware of the potential for support being required at a later point in their programme.

Equality & Diversity 2017/18 Action Plan

99. The Assistant Principal felt that the action plan for 2016/17 had been effective and this had been reflected in the proposed plan for 2017/18. The mentor team had been expanded and rebranded as they had proved to be a positive influence on retention. Additional mentor support was included in response to a 32% increase in mental health cases. Moreover, the College intended to build on the partnerships with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the Early Intervention Team that worked with schools. Some staff had also received mental health first aid training.

100. A governor enquired how the action plan assured the Board that learners fully utilised their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). The Vice Principal responded that Learning Talks were conducted throughout the year, which alerted staff of any issues. Consequently, concerns or issues raised triggered Learning Walks and they could also lead to lesson observations. The 2017/18 Action Plan would be monitored termly at the E&D steering group.

STUDENTS' UNION ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

101. The Student Engagement Manager presented the Students' Union Annual Report and Accounts for information (copy attached to signed minutes). She explained how the Students' Union continued to make a significant contribution to the student community and to run effectively. The Board noted the content.

TERM 1 – STUDENT FEEDBACK

102. The Student Engagement Manager provided the Term 1 Student Feedback (copy attached to signed minutes). A governor queried whether the feedback should use more open-ended questions to leave room for comments from students. The Vice Principal assured the Board that this was just one mechanism for student feedback and comments and face to

face meetings also provided an opportunity for a range of information to be collated throughout the year and that the Quality team followed up any issues. The Board noted the feedback and thanked the Students' Union team for their efforts.

ANNUAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

103. The College Manager for HE, Arts and Access provided the annual quality assurance report for Higher Education (copy attached to signed minutes). She advised the governors that they were now required by HEFCE to consider and confirm annually that the continuous monitoring of HE quality, academic experience and student outcomes, as well as the reliability of degree standards, was robust and appropriate.

104. The Board was advised that HE quality and performance is continuously monitored throughout the academic year by committees, forums and academic panels. The report provided RAG ratings for HE courses, and governors enquired about the amber and red rated courses. They asked that these areas be reviewed by the Scrutiny Group.

105. The governors were advised that the Principal was required to sign a statement for HEFCE confirming that the Board had undertaken an annual review of quality assurance for HE. The timing of this requirement had changed and was now required prior to 1 December and the Board's review would need to be carried out earlier in future years in order to comply with this change and meet this deadline.

106. On the basis of the annual report, the Board was content that suitable quality assurance arrangements were in place.

107. **Resolved** that the statement to HEFCE be endorsed

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

108. The Director of Financial Services presented the Management Accounts (copy attached to signed minutes). The Management Accounts for November 2017 showed an operating surplus of £729k against a planned surplus of £766k. A key risk this year was the income from apprenticeships, linked to a national decline following the implementation of reforms, although the higher 16-18 student numbers in November 2017 would increase the 16-18 income for next year.

109. The Director of Financial Services advised that a formal mid-year forecast would be presented at the February 2018 Board meeting, but that the College was currently on course for the planned surplus of £40k for the year.

INTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

110. The Board received the Internal Audit Annual Report noting a positive outcome to the year's work (copy attached to signed minutes).

EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT AND LETTERS OF REPRESENTATION

111. The Board received the External Auditor's Report on the financial statements and regularity audits together with the Letters of Representation that the College was required to provide (copies attached to signed minutes). The governors were advised that discussions were taking place with the ESFA who were proposing to place an unexpected limit on the 'community' line of the Adult Education Budget which could result in a clawback of funding. The External Auditor was content that the College had reflected the potential loss of income in the accounts.

112. **Resolved** that the Chair be authorised to sign the Letters of Representation

AUDIT COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT

113. The Board received the Audit Committee's Annual Report for the financial year 2016/17 (copy attached to signed minutes) noting that the Committee had provided a positive opinion on the College's internal control, governance and risk management processes.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

114. The Deputy Principal presented the Financial Statements for 2016/17 for approval by the Board (copy attached to signed minutes).

115. **Resolved** that the 2016/17 Financial Statements, including the accounting policies, be approved and that the Chair and Principal be authorised to sign the Financial Statements

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

116. The Deputy Principal provided the Risk Management Update (copy attached to signed minutes). Following the 'Good' outcome of the Ofsted inspection, risks concerned with quality and teaching had reduced. An additional risk for 2018 was Apprenticeship Reform and the potential impact on recruitment.

ESFA CEO'S LETTER TO THE FE SECTOR

117. The retiring Chief Executive of the ESFA had written to all FE colleges drawing attention to a number of areas relating to college governance that had been identified from the agency's work in supporting colleges in difficulty. The Board agreed that letter be referred to the Governance & Search Committee for detailed consideration.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

118. The Clerk reminded the Board of the outcome of the recent selection process for the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

119. **Resolved** that Paul Smyth and Tim Kelly be appointed as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively with effect from the end of this meeting

RETIREMENT OF DAVID CLARK

120. David Clark had previously announced his retirement as Chair and as a governor with effect from the end of this meeting. The Principal paid tribute to the immense contribution made by David over the course of the last 12 years, eight of which he had been Chair. The Principal and governors thanked David for his outstanding leadership which had contributed immeasurably to the success of the College. Although his valuable advice and guidance would be missed, he would always remain a friend of the College.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MINUTES

Board Meeting

121. **Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

Audit Committee

122. The Board received the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 28th November 2017 (copy attached to signed minutes).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 28th February 2018