



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 1st NOVEMBER 2018**

Present: Anna Barnish, Joanne Finnerty, Sue Higginson (Principal), Sandra Johnson, Lorraine Jones, Tim Kelly, Richard Mawdsley, Joe McArdle, Phil McKeown, Paul Smyth (Chair), Vix Wrigley

In attendance: Michael Norton, Deputy Principal
Maura Cummins, Vice Principal – Curriculum & Quality
Ste Bailey, Assistant Principal – Student Support & Foundation Learning
Steve Cain, Assistant Principal – Financial Services
Will Jerram, Assistant Principal – MIS
Phil Jones, Assistant Principal – STEM, HE, Public Services & Sport
Lesley Venables, Clerk to the Governors
Louise Scott-Kelly, Administrator to the Governors

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from Gary Doyle, Somnath Saha and Jayne Winders.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. Joe McArdle declared an interest in any matters relating to the University of Chester.

PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

3. The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had published dashboard data to provide governors with a high level overview of the College's financial performance. In addition, the Principal presented governors with the College's headline performance data (copies attached to signed minutes).

4. The College had been graded as having a 'Good' financial health rating. The planned operating surplus of c£30k detailed in the 2017/18 mid-year update had now improved to £109k. The data also showed that the College had exceeded the planned target enrolments for 16-18 year olds of 1908.

5. The Principal explained that the 2017/18 Student Outcomes had been reviewed in detail by the Quality & Standards Scrutiny (QSS) Committee and would be scrutinised further again during the Self-Assessment Review process. The Board would receive a further detailed analysis in the College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) at the December meeting.

6. Governors recognised that the College had continued to improve its position and noted the performance results against a background of high number of learners from widening participation postcodes. The data showed significant improvement for vulnerable students

such as Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Board acknowledged that the results reinforced the College's vision of being an inclusive organisation.

RECENT SUCCESSES

7. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality presented a report on Recent Successes paper (copy attached to signed minutes). This set out a variety of activities and the Board noted, in particular, the meaningful letters sent to the College by parents.

8. Governors were also informed that the College's Alumnus, Chef Paul Askew, had now been appointed as the Chair of the Wirral Visitor Economy Board. The Principal, who was also a member of this body, hoped to build on enrichment activities for students with local employers within the industry. The Chair requested that an Alumni strategy be presented to governors at some point in the year.

TERM 3 2017/18 STRATEGIC UPDATE

9. The Principal updated the Board with a Term Three summary of progress against the College's 2015 - 2018 Strategic Plan and annual objectives (copy attached to signed minutes).

TARGETS 2018/19 – NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

10. The Principal presented a draft template for updates against the Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2021 to be reported to the Board and set the annual objectives for 2018/19 (copy attached to signed minutes). The template provided a qualitative context to the Balanced Scorecard.

11. A Governor enquired about the new Director of People and Organisational Development role. The Principal responded that the post was part of a restructuring of responsibilities following the forthcoming retirement of the Assistant Principal – Financial Services. To best utilise the skill sets of individual staff, it had been agreed that the Deputy Principal would take more of a focus on financial services and that this new post would provide him with more specialist resource linked to organisational development and people. The new post of Director of People and Organisational Development would focus on implementing an effective staff recruitment and retention strategy, as well as capacity building and supporting staff. The College's legal retainer agreement would continue to provide independent advice.

12. It was suggested by a Governor that the template should detail more specific contact with local employers. Another Governor recommended that the template should state that the College was working towards becoming 'Outstanding' rather than 'Good', to reinforce the College's mission. An objective that referred to increasing the College's reserves to improve financial resilience would also be added. The Principal gave an assurance that the College continued to develop direct relationships with employers to inform the shape of the curriculum and would update the template accordingly.

13. **Resolved** That, subject to the amendments above, the targets for 2018/19 be approved.

BALANCED SCORECARD 2017/18

14. The Deputy Principal presented the final report on the Balanced Scorecard for 2017/18 (copy attached to signed minutes). It was noted that there were 12 'red' rated items at the end of the academic year.

15. One of the items graded as 'red' was the level of adult retention. Management felt that the target of 94% retention had probably been too ambitious at this point.

16. The Board discussed the end of year work experience rate, Governors asked for more information on work experience to be provided to a future meeting, given the importance of the introduction of the new Technical (or T) Level framework. This should identify students where work experience is a mandatory element of their programme separate for those when it may be added value.

17. The Vice Principal explained that several factors had impacted on the final outcome. On study programmes where work experience was a mandatory requirement, all students had completed this element of their programme. However, for some individual Level 1 and Level 2 students the focus was on re-engagement with learning and a decision had been taken that the individual student was not yet ready to embark on external work experience. As an alternative, these students either attended a masterclass presented by an external organisation, engaged in work related enrichment activity or did vocational work within the College.

18. The Principal assured governors that work experience processes would continue to be scrutinised in detail during the SAR process and would be monitored further by the QSS Committee.

19. The Chair suggested that an additional category should be added to the Balanced Scorecard to measure the College's performance as a subcontractor. It was agreed that the Board needed to monitor the College's performance to ensure that the College was meeting the relevant KPIs set by an external partnership provider.

BALANCED SCORECARD 2018/19

20. The Deputy Principal presented the Balanced Scorecard for 2018/19 (copy attached to signed minutes). There was one 'red' rated item regarding HE Income and an exception report was supplied on this. Governors were informed that HE enrolments were lower than anticipated and, although there would be a further cohort of learners enrolling in January 2019, the College was taking a prudent approach to forecasting.

21. A Governor enquired if there was any particular factor that had impacted on the decrease in HE enrolments. The Principal responded that Brexit had already resulted in fewer enrolments from overseas students that were working in the UK. Furthermore, universities had increasingly started to offer unconditional offers. Moreover, the national apprenticeship reforms had impacted negatively in the number of learners enrolling on HNC and HND courses. As a result of all these factors, the College would be reviewing its HE Strategy.

22. The Deputy Principal also presented a report on staff absence levels for 2017/18 and the current year to date was 4.1% against the College's targeted annual sickness level of 3%.

23. The report analysed sickness by type. Board members enquired about the quality of return-to-work conversations and whether managers identified issues early enough. The Deputy Principal responded that, previously, return-to-work assessments had not been sufficiently thorough. However, in consultation with the College's retained solicitors, a full review had been undertaken and the process had now improved significantly.

24. A Governor enquired whether there was a Staff Wellbeing Policy in place and was advised that there were a range of activities and support in place for staff, these include sessions delivered on mindfulness and wellbeing alongside specific and targeted development linked to managing student behaviours. In addition to this, a number of activities had been organised to include health checks and screening onsite and number of staff had taken this opportunity up. This area would be a key priority for the new Director of People and Organisational Development.

COMPLAINTS

25. Governors received a report on complaints in 2017/18 (copy attached to signed minutes). There had been a total of 18 official complaints (compared to 25 in 2016/2017), 4 of which were upheld. Of these, 3 referred to the lack of specialist tutors and it was noted that appropriate staff had since been recruited in all three curriculum areas.

HR REVIEW

26. The Deputy Principal reported on the College's HR activity for 2017-18 (copy attached to signed minutes). The Director of People and Organisational Development would continue to review HR procedures, assist with the active management of cases and develop an effective HR Strategy.

FEEDBACK FROM STRATEGIC SEMINAR

27. The Board received feedback from both governors and the Senior Leadership Team on the Strategic Seminar on 12th October (copies attached to signed minutes). All participants had found the event to be informative, successful and a useful opportunity to communicate.

ANNUAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

28. The Assistant Principal – STEM, HE, Public Services & Sport presented the annual quality assurance report for Higher Education (copy attached to signed minutes). Governors were advised that, under the new Office for Students (OFS) regime, there was now an annual requirement for the College to review and confirm that its continuous monitoring of HE quality, academic experience, student outcomes and the reliability of degree standards, was robust and appropriate.

29. The Board was advised of changes to the HE quality cycle, the most significant of which was that the HE Student Liaison Committee would now be an online process to improve levels of student attendance at committee meetings.

30. HE programmes had been RAG-rated on the quality of academic standards. At the time the report was written one programme had been graded as 'red'. The Assistant Principal

reported that this course had previously been delivered as part of a consortium, however; from now it would be solely managed by the College. The grading had subsequently improved to 'amber'.

31. On the basis of the annual report, the Board was content that suitable quality assurance arrangements and methodologies were in place and were operating effectively.

32. **Resolved** That the Annual Statement on Quality Assurance be approved and submitted to the Office for Students.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

33. The Deputy Principal presented the Management Accounts to 30th September 2018 (copy attached to signed minutes). The Accounts showed an operating surplus of £420k against a planned surplus of £297k. As HE recruitment was lower than planned, a prudent approach had been taken and the forecast for 2018/2019 had been reduced. Governors noted that the cost of a potential 1% pay award had now been incorporated and, that the surplus had been revised to £86k.

34. The Clerk to the Governors reported that a draft training programme was being developed, which would include a session on finance and funding for governors.

ANNUAL STUDENT SUPPORT RETURNS 2017-18

16-19 Bursary Fund

35. The Deputy Principal presented a report on the use of the 16-19 Bursary Fund in 2017/18 (copy attached to the signed minutes). The allocation methodology for 2018/19 would follow the same as the previous year, with students only being able to claim assistance if they achieved the expected 90% attendance level.

36. The Board was informed that all 16-19 students living more than two miles away from their campus of study would receive 100% of their travel costs and this appeared to have made a positive impact on enrolments.

37. A Governor enquired about the take-up rate of the Further Education Free Meals (FEFM) allocation. The Staff Governor explained that a cohort of students did not fully utilise their FEFM as unfortunately, they felt there was a stigma to using a free meal card. In addition, some more vulnerable students felt the cafeteria experience heightened their anxiousness.

38. The Board discussed several strategies such as issuing all students with a meal card so that it was difficult to distinguish those receiving Free School Meals and enabling students to pre-order lunch and eat in a 'Chill Zone'. The Principal agreed to review possible alternatives and would report back to the Board later in the year.

39. **Resolved** That the Policy and Procedure for the 2018/19 Bursary Fund be approved.

Learner Support Funds (LSF) and Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) Bursary

40. The Deputy Principal provided a report that reviewed the operation of the Learner Support Funds (LSF) and Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) in 2017/18. Governors received the

proposed updated policy and procedures for distribution of the Funds for 2018/19 (copy attached to the signed minutes).

41. **Resolved** That the Policy and Procedures for the allocation of the LSF and ALL Bursary for 2018/19, including the proposed appeals mechanism, be approved.

COMPLIANCE WITH FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

42. The Assistant Principal – Financial Services delivered a paper explaining changes made by the ESFA in respect of the monitoring of financial solvency by the Board of Governors (copy attached to signed minutes).

43. All colleges had been provided with a checklist for governors to use when reviewing the Financial Plan Commentary. The checklist had been completed by the Deputy Principal for the Board's consideration and assurance. The FE Commissioner's office had also reviewed the College's finances in detail and no issues had been identified from the information that had been submitted.

44. The checklist had stated that a commentary of any loans and income from franchise provision on the Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statement was not applicable. However, the Board agreed that the Management Accounts did provide a commentary on loans, bank covenant and sources of income from franchising provision and requested that the checklist be amended.

RISK REGISTER

45. The Deputy Principal presented the latest version of the Risk Register (copy attached to signed minutes), which had been reviewed by the Audit Committee at its September meeting. One change had been made to the Risk Register since September on sub-contracting provision, increasing the level of risk to medium. This followed an internal audit report that highlighted a number of control issues, but governors were assured that the relevant risk had now been quantified.

REVIEW OF CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES FROM 2017/18

46. The Governance & Search Committee had undertaken a review of the confidential business considered by the Board in 2017/2018 (copy attached to signed minutes).

47. **Resolved** That proposals on the reclassification of confidential minutes for 2017/2018 be approved.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MINUTES

Board Meeting

48. **Resolved** That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Governance & Search

49. The Board received the minutes of the Governance & Search Committee meeting held on 1st October 2018 (copy attached to signed minutes). It was noted that the Clerk had reviewed the Board's Standing Orders, Constitutions and Terms of Reference for each Committee, with recommendations agreed by the Governance & Search Committee.

50. The Committee had also made a recommendation to increase the term of office for the Chair and Vice-Chair to 2 years. This was discussed by the Board and the Clerk was asked to review the proposal to ensure that the Board's processes were in full alignment.

51. Currently, there was one vacancy for an external governor. The Governance & Search Committee had met with a prospective candidate with a background in town planning and economic regeneration, who also had previous experience of being a governor in a further education college. The Committee felt that the individual possessed the appropriate skills and experience to strengthen the Board's overall profile and had recommended their appointment.

52. **Resolved**
- 1 That the Board of Governors approve:
 - the revised Standing Orders for the Conduct of Business
 - the revised Committee Constitutions
 - the revised Committee Terms of Reference
 - 2 That Brian Bailey be appointed as an external governor for a 4 year term of office

Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee

53. The Board received for information the QSS Committee minutes from the meeting held on 17th October 2018 (copy attached to signed minutes).

54. The Principal had presented the outcomes for 2017/2018 in detail, which had enabled the Committee to monitor performance and to discuss any areas of concern. The Committee Chair confirmed that Apprenticeships, English and Maths would be standing items on future agendas.

Audit Committee

55. Governors received for information the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 5th September 2018 (copy attached to signed minutes).

56. The Chair of the Audit Committee advised that there was one 'medium' rated internal audit recommendation outstanding from 2017/2018 that would be addressed in the current academic year. The Manager originally assigned to the action had since left the College. Their successor had been allocated to the action and a new timescale for implementation had been agreed.

SAFEGUARDING REPORT AND POLICY REVIEW

57. The Assistant Principal – Student Support & Foundation Learning presented the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2017/2018 and the Policy/Procedure on Safeguarding, Protection and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Adults at Risk for 2018/2019 (copy attached to

signed minutes). The Policy had been updated in response to national guidance issued recently by the Department for Education.

58. The Policy incorporated a standardised template issued by the Local Authority, which referred to the potential 'restraint' of learners. In response to a question from a Governor, the Assistant Principal reported that the College did not use restraint nor isolation as a disciplinary measure. The Assistant Principal agreed to amend this paragraph to reflect the College's practice in this area.

59. The Board recognised the extensive and increasingly complex needs of learners that had been highlighted in the Annual Report and thanked the Safeguarding Team for their continuing work in supporting students.

60. **Resolved** That, subject to the amendments above, the Safeguarding, Protection and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedure for 2018/2019 be approved.

SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2018/2019

61. The Assistant Principal – Student Support & Foundation Learning presented the Safeguarding Action Plan for 2018/2019 (copy attached to signed minutes).

62. The Board was informed that the Safeguarding Steering Group monitored progress against the Safeguarding Action Plan each term to ensure that effective processes were in place. All staff had received safeguarding training in 2017/2018 academic year and in the current year 95.6% had undertaken safeguarding training. This figure was expected to increase following the induction of a new cohort of staff.

63. The Chair enquired about the progress of Safeguarding training with subcontractors. The Safeguarding Manager responded that the College was in the process of finalising training on working practices. The Assistant Principal confirmed that clear responsibilities were set out for subcontractors to ensure that their processes mirrored those of the College.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

64. The Vice Principal presented the revised Quality Framework for 2018/2019 (copy attached to signed minutes). The Framework had been reviewed by the QSS Committee, which had suggested a number of amendments that were now incorporated into the Policy.

65. **Resolved** That the Quality Assurance Framework for 2018/2019 be approved.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 12th December 2018