



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2019**

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

In attendance: Michael Norton, Deputy Principal
Will Jerram, Assistant Principal – MIS
Andy King, College Accountant
Alex Lang, Assistant Principal – Quality Assurance (minutes 166 – 170)
Lesley Venables, Clerk to the Governors
Louise Scott-Kelly, Administrator to Governors

APOLOGIES

138. Apologies for absence were received from Anna Barnish, Macen Byatt, Maura Cummins (Vice-Principal – Curriculum & Quality) and Somnath Saha.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

139. The following interests were declared:

- Gary Doyle declared an interest in any matters relating to Peel Holdings and Birkenhead Docks.
- Joanne Finnerty declared an interest in any matters relating to JM Education.
- Richard Mawdsley declared an interest in any matters relating to Peel Holdings.
- Joe McArdle declared an interest in any matters relating to the University of Chester.

PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

140. The Principal informed the Board that the new Director of People and Organisational Development would be starting at the College in March. The individual had been recruited from a college that was graded by Ofsted as 'Good with Outstanding features'

141. In line with other colleges in the further education sector, it had been difficult to recruit and retain specialist lecturers in areas such as construction, due to competitive salaries being offered to staff by training providers. One of the first priorities for the new Director of People & Organisational Development would be to formulate a strategy to address recruitment in areas of skill shortage.

142. The Principal informed the Board that both the College and its subcontractor, JM Education, had exceeded the original apprenticeship target. The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had now agreed to fund the full amount of growth for both organisations.

143. However, JM Education had recently received a monitoring visit from Ofsted and, as one of the elements reviewed (Leadership and Management) had been graded as 'not making significant progress', their recruitment of apprentices had been frozen until a further inspection had been undertaken, which could take at least 6 months.

144. The Board were also informed that we were in the process of recruiting an AP Quality because the Assistant Principal – Quality Assurance would be leaving the College later in year to become a full time HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector) for Ofsted. The Principal thanked her for her work at the College and wished her well in her new career.

SHARING RECENT SUCCESSES

145. The Principal presented the routine Sharing Recent Successes report, detailing a range of activities including several events with local schools. The Principal also informed the Board about an aviation student who had been successfully recruited on to a trainee pilot programme.

146. The Chair reminded governors of the College Fellowship art exhibition at the Williamson Art Gallery that was on display until 17th March 2019.

ESTATES STRATEGY

147. The Deputy Principal presented the Estates Strategy for 2019-2021. This was a working document and would continue to be developed to meet changing circumstances.

148. The Board received benchmarking data that compared the College's estates costs to those of other FE providers in the region. The College owned its campus buildings and there was little associated debt. Energy costs were low compared to other providers and the College had the highest level of space utilisation for the region.

149. A review of the entire estate had been undertaken, which had identified the following issues:

- The space available per student was the lowest for the region and was causing difficulties in areas such as motor vehicle, which was currently at full capacity.
- The windows at Conway Park and Twelve Quays had deteriorated and the windows at the Oval campus needed to be FENSA certified.
- The electrical wiring at Conway Park may require review in the near future to remain compliant with new regulations.

150. The Deputy Principal also presented information on potential future projects, such as providing additional space for High Needs provision, extended Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy facilities and collaborative opportunities with Peel Holdings.

151. Governors were reminded that, in the past, through a series of successful bids for capital funding, the College's fixed assets had increased vastly, including the purchase and development of both the Oval and Wirral Waters campuses.

152. The Combined Authority for the Liverpool City Region was in the process of creating its latest round of skills capital funding which may include an allocation for the maintenance of FE colleges. The Deputy Principal anticipated that bid would be invited in April 2019 and would subsequently update the Board at the next meeting.

153. Although the College had previously been successful in obtaining capital funding, a proportion of its funds may now need to be allocated for annual maintenance expenditure.

154. The Chair reminded governors of the requirement to pay due regard to the Further Education Commissioner's recommendation for the College to build financial reserves, particularly with the implementation of the new insolvency regime and the likely increases in contributions to reduce the deficit in the Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF).

155. A Governor suggested that priority should be given to investing in estates and equipment that support the College's curriculum plan, such as newer models of cars for the motor vehicle area. Another Governor recommended that compliance with health and safety regulations was imperative.

156. **Resolved** That an allocation of £50k be approved for the Assistant Principals of curriculum departments to spend on high priority maintenance equipment needs in their areas.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

157. The Principal presented the Term 1 update on the 2018-21 College Strategic Objectives.

158. A Governor enquired about the sickness absence level and associated staff wellbeing. The Principal explained that further analysis and development of this area would be a key responsibility for the new Director of People and Organisational Development. There was discussion about the current sickness pay arrangements, which was felt to be appropriate and supportive for the majority of staff who used this facility.

159. The Board requested some benchmarking data on sickness absence levels and that a strategy should be formulated as to how the College intended to reduce sickness absence in the future whilst ensuring staff wellbeing. The Principal agreed to provide a draft strategy for the July Board meeting.

160. **Resolved -** That benchmarking data and a draft sickness absence strategy be presented at the July Board meeting

BALANCED SCORECARD

161. The Deputy Principal presented the Balanced Scorecard for the end of January 2019. A total of six items had been graded as 'red': Apprenticeship Income, Adult Traineeships, HE Income, FE Fee Income, Sickness Absence and Income to Plan (which was a result of the other five red items).

162. Governors were informed that the Assistant Principal – Employer Services had recently left the College and that two Curriculum APs (Assistant Principal – Professions and Visitor Economy and Assistant Principal – STEM, HE & PSS) were currently managing that area. A review of Employer Services department was underway to ensure that delivery was consistent across the College.

163. Significant intervention had taken place and consequently the number of OOFs and Timely Achievement of Apprenticeships had improved considerably since the Curriculum APs had taken ownership of the department. The MIS and Finance departments had also improved the existing monitoring systems to continually track performance.

164. The Principal explained that recruitment and performance levels for traineeships had not met the target. Furthermore, the College's subcontractor had been impacted by the apprenticeship reforms, resulting in the number of Teaching Assistant traineeships being heavily reduced.

165. The College's commercial income was currently below the identified budget. There had been a number of recent funding changes, most notably for students who earn less than the household income threshold who now receive 100% funding, whereas previously it was 50%. Consequently, the College was dealing with the impact on students who had previously been required to obtain a loan to cover their remaining tuition fees (50%) because they would now receive 100% AEB funding. Since the AEB budget was already less than required this left a gap.

166. The Board also reviewed the quarterly reputation survey report. The report referred to a complimentary letter the College had received from a parent thanking a tutor for their outstanding support. The Board acknowledged and commended the efforts of the tutor and the ongoing efforts of all staff.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

167. The Assistant Principal – Quality Assurance presented a report on staff development activities for 2017/2018. In response to questions from a governor, the Assistant Principal – Quality Assurance explained that there was an expectation for all staff to undertake at least 30 hours of continuing professional development each academic year.

168. Training that related directly to legislative changes such as Safeguarding, Health and Safety and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was mandatory and 100% compliance was required.

169. The level of compliance on safeguarding training was recorded on a monthly basis in the Balanced Scorecard and was currently 94.70%. Governors were advised that the gap was due to recently recruited staff who had not yet undertaken the training, but that the figure would be 100% by the end of the academic year.

170. The Chair enquired about the training concerning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), radicalisation and forced marriage for students and questioned if the training would be beneficial for all staff to undertake. The Assistant Principal – Quality Assurance explained that

all staff did receive safeguarding training which incorporated this and more specialist training had been provided for staff who are dealing directly with the support needs of students who have experienced associated issues and are at high risk.

171. The Board was informed that the College had successfully renewed its Investors in People kite mark.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS & MID-YEAR UPDATE

172. The Deputy Principal presented the Management Accounts to January 2019 and the figures to be used in the mid-year return to the ESFA.

173. A prudent approach had been taken to the College surplus and the pay to income ratio had been reduced. A governor enquired whether staff would be made aware of the aspects of finances that linked to the ability to make pay increases. . The Principal responded that there was complete transparency with the trade unions and that staff would be informed of any rationale for any decisions by the Board on pay awards.

MEETING DATES

174. The Clerk to Governors presented the draft 2019/20 Board and Committee meeting dates. Governors were asked to notify the Clerk of any individual issues with the schedule.

175. **Resolved** That the 2019/20 Meeting Dates were approved.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS – 12th DECEMBER 2018

176. **Resolved** That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

177. Governors received a progress report on the actions identified at the previous meeting and noted that these were either completed or featured on the agenda.

GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE – 27th FEBRUARY 2019

178. The Chair provided a verbal report on the Governance & Search Committee that had taken place immediately prior to this meeting.

179. The Board was informed that Brian Bailey had resigned from his role as an external governor due to leaving his post. A further candidate for governorship had been identified, who was employed as a Senior Manager Learning, Skills and Employment at Wirral Council. The applicant had had a positive working relationship with the College for many years and previous experience as a school governor.

180. The individual had met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board, who had recommended his appointment. The Governance & Search Committee had reviewed his

application form and agreed with this recommendation. Two conflicts of interest were noted in relation to the individual: his partner is employed by the College and he is responsible for administering some of the grants allocated to the College. These aspects would be declared in the usual way should there be any business that impacts these elements, to ensure business was conducted in accordance with due process.

181. **Resolved** That Paul Smith be appointed as a governor in the external category for a 4 year term of office from 27th February 2019 to 31st July 2023.

182. The Board was reminded that a target level of attendance of 75% had been set for all Board and committee meetings in 2018/2019. The Governance & Search Committee had received a report on attendance and the overall rate for Term 1 was 78% and thanked the governors for their continued commitment.

183. A governor had recently changed job to an international director role and although the governor's knowledge and experience were invaluable, concerns had been raised by the Committee that his work commitments had impacted on his attendance at Board and Committee meetings. It was imperative that a governor with a financial background was actively participating to ensure that the College's financial information was rigorously scrutinised and challenged. As a result, the Principal had agreed to contact the governor to see if he was still able to serve as a governor.

184. The Committee had reviewed the AoC Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code and guidance on the new Insolvency Regime for FE colleges. Members had been satisfied that the Board's existing practice aligned with the guidance.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 1st May 2019