



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 23 April 2024 – (PART A)

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Boardroom / Video Conference

Members present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Mr Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Dr Sue Lomax
Dr Adrian Brooks
Mr Tom Martin
Mrs Claire Garth
Mr Chris Ball
Dr Tony Unsworth
Dr Bill Webster (Principal)
Prof George Holmes
Ms Sharon White
Dr Julian Coleman
Mrs Gulnaz Brennan

In Attendance:

Mr Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Ms Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)
Mr Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)
Ms Jane Marsh (Executive Director of HR & Estates)
Mrs Karen Westsmith (Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality)
Mrs Catherine Langstreth (Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Stakeholder Engagement)
Mrs Tracy Clarke (Assistant Principal of Curriculum Design, Information & Technical Services)
Mr Tim Openshaw (Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience) (UOB))
Miss Jill Hebden (Minute Taker)

1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS

1.1 WELCOME TO MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which commenced at 5.03pm and he confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

The Chair welcomed Fiona Chalk who was in attendance at the meeting as part of the external governance review.

The Chair informed Members that Dr Gill Waugh had resigned from her role as a University nominated Board Member as she was no longer at the University. The Board thanked Dr Waugh for support over the years and her contribution to the role.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Gill Smallwood, Kate Flood, Ming Fong and Adeel Gulzar.

1.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. Standing declarations were noted particularly in relation to the University of Bolton reciprocal governance arrangements and also paid positions.

Declarations of interest were noted for the Clerk to the Board (Item 3.8(ii) – Conflict of Interest Policy) and for the Principal (Item 5.3 – Appointment of College Principal/Chief Executive)

A potential conflict of interest/loyalty was identified under Item 5.1 (Committee Membership Proposal) with the Board content for all Members to participate in the discussions and decision.

1.4 REQUEST FOR AN ITEM TO BE UNSTARRED

Members were reminded that starred items on the agenda would be taken as read rather than being presented. However, Members could ask questions of the report author, or ask for any item to be unstarred for full discussion.

There were no requests for items to be unstarred for discussion.

1.5* MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

Minutes of the Meeting held 6 February 2024 - general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 6 February 2024 had been previously circulated to Members for consideration.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record and authorised for publication (Part A).

1.6 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Members had received a summary of action(s) arising/outstanding from previous meetings, noting that all action(s) had been completed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the matters arising be noted.

1.7 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

(i) Standards & Quality Committee of 13 March 2024

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 13 March 2024.

The main focus of the meeting had been on the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) and the progress made on improvements.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be received as detailed.

(ii) Resources Committee of 19 March 2024

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 19 March 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be received as detailed.

(iii) Audit Committee of 21 March 2024

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 21 March 2024.

Members took the opportunity to closely review the risk register and identified some areas around agency staff that would be considered through an internal audit review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be received as detailed.

2. SECTION B – ACADEMIC TEACHING & LEARNING MATTERS

2.1 POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN (PIAP)

The Deputy Principal presented the PIAP, noting the progress made from the previous Board meeting that had been identified through the use of tracked changes.

The PIAP Task and Finish Group had met three times and were scheduled to meet again on 22 April 2024 to review key areas of the PIAP with the College Senior Management Team (SMT).

The PIAP had been audited by the University of Bolton with the following findings:

- The PIAP demonstrated areas of good practice with the clarity of structure and an appropriate level of detail.
- Progress updates in the PIAP could be relied upon as accurate and provided the appropriate level of assurance.
- The arrangements for assurances by the College improvement plans were robust within the post inspection context.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Could the issues around feedback and staff engagement be picked up through the action plan?

Yes.

When do we expect the monitoring visit?

At some point during the Autumn term, thirteen months from the date of the Ofsted report.

The Board noted the approach taken by the Task and Finish Group members to look at the PIAP holistically and to 'deep dive' into each of the sections. Thanks were given by the Board to all staff that had been involved in the PIAP and had progressed it at pace.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Post Inspection Action Plan be noted.

2.2 MATHS AND ENGLISH UPDATE

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality presented the Maths and English update, noting the following key points:

- Implementation of key strategies had been hampered by staff turnover and staffing gaps, that were often covered by agency staff. Key support teachers and maths and English teachers had supported additional classes in addition to their own timetable of lessons. There had been some mitigation in the English and Maths teams through the conversion of agency staff to permanent staff.
- At the start of the next academic year a new communication strategy would be in place to notify new starters, that had a Grade 3 or less in English or maths, would be automatically submitted for a November examination resit.

Governor Questions/Comments:

It would be useful if we could put the number of students in each subject area.

This will be amended for the next Board meeting.

ACTION:

Student numbers for each subject area to be represented in future reporting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Maths and English update be noted.

3. SECTION C - COLLEGE MATTERS

3.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented the twenty-fourth report under the 'Designated Institution' Bolton College, which provided an overview of key issues. The following points were highlighted:

- There had been a strong focus on the PIAP and the required improvements identified by Ofsted.
- The increase in maths and English learner numbers reflected the increasing numbers anticipated over the coming years. There were four Greater Manchester colleges that had been in discussions with their local authorities regarding a learner capacity warning.
- The work on the capital build continued to remain on schedule and to budget. The aim was to provide Board Members with a tour prior to the Board training on 25 June 2024.
- The Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and FE Innovation Fund had brought significant investment to the College for the health and digital projects.
- The under 18s women's football team had won the under 18s North of England League.
- The under 18s men's team was in the final of the youth cup against Liverpool.

Governor Questions/Comments:

What strategies are we putting in place with regards to staff sickness?

There are some of those on long term sickness that have now left the College which will affect the overall sickness statistics. We have interventions in place that are in line with sector best practice. We have not seen any link between sickness and the current consultation process.

Any sickness linked to the Ofsted visit?

Not Ofsted but the general staff workload.

Do you have a feel for the proportion of sickness that is physical and that which is stress/anxiety related?

Around a third is mental health related and two thirds are something else.

Can we see a growth trajectory in terms of the continued population growth and migration into the area?

Not specifically, it is more of a guesstimate when looking at figures relating to this. We have a good understanding of the baseline demographic as to current numbers. It is the unknown that we need to monitor carefully.

How much growth is local and how much is North West?

This is for the Bolton area only.

Could public health do some work in pulling information together on this?

Yes, that is something that we can explore.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Principal's Report be noted.

3.2 FINANCIAL UPDATE - LEO 2 UPDATE 2023/24, 2024/25 BUDGET & 2025/26 FORECAST

The Executive Director of Finance presented the Financial Update and Loan Covenants report, the following key points were highlighted:

- LEO2 had been completed and the College had forecast a £699k deficit that included any severance costs.
- Adult learner numbers would be nearer pre-COVID levels with apprenticeship recruitment ahead of target.
- The teachers' pension scheme contributions would increase with additional DfE grants available for the current year and next year.
- The banking covenants 2023/24 would not be met; the budget and forecast would be shared with the bank.
- Savings would be made to reduce College costs by £1.65m, this would be a reduction of circa. 5% of turnover.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Should we be looking to sell the funded courses ie. promoting them differently so they can be fee paying?

The courses in foundation learning tend to be starter courses aimed at engaging and opening accessibility to certain social groups. This is a council priority and as such they are fully funded.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following be noted:

- (i) the forecast of an operating deficit; and
- (ii) the progress on the covenant waiver
- (iii) the improved budget and forecast positions for 2024/25 and 2025/26

3.3 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF FOCUS TO INFORM COLLEGE PLANNING

The Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience) (UoB) presented the Annual Statement of Focus which had been endorsed by College and University Resources Committees.

The Annual Statement of Focus reflected the overall strategic direction of the College.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Statement of Focus be approved.

3.4 ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Stakeholder Engagement presented the Accountability Statement and outlined the following key points:

- The Annual Accountability Statement was introduced in 2023/24 with this year focused on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).
- The local needs had been included within the statement and would continue to be.
- The Annual Accountability Statement had been discussed by the Standards and Quality Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2024 with a recommendation for approval.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Accountability Statement be approved.

3.5 COLLEGE KPI DASHBOARD

The Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience) (UoB) presented the College KPI Dashboard, which detailed the key sustainability indicators and those indicators on areas monitored by the ESFA.

It was **RESOLVED** that the College KPI Dashboard be noted.

3.6 CONTRIBUTION TO SKILLS NEEDS

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Stakeholder Engagement presented the Contribution to Skills Needs noting the following key points:

Health

- The College was the lead on the health project across Greater Manchester.
- The digital assessment tool would be ready following staff training.
- The anatomage table would be delivered mid-May with training developed for staff at bronze, silver and gold levels.
- Work was underway with OCN to create micro-credentials in anatomy at Levels 3 and 4.

Digital

- The Cisco Academy project would provide added value to T Level students as an 'add on' to their curriculum. Training would be delivered post May 2024 after the Year 2 T Level learners had completed their examinations.

Engineering

- There had been significant investment made in electric vehicles and staff training.

GM Innovative Fund

- Three business development officer positions had been funded to focus on growing innovation within local small businesses. There had been a strong field of applications with eleven candidates shortlisted.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Is e-Sports being used at the moment?

It is being used for enrichment activities at this point. There will also be some taster sessions and launch events with schools too.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Contribution to Skills Needs update be noted.

3.7 INSURANCE PROVIDER REVIEW

The Executive Director of Finance presented the Insurance Provider Review report noting that the College was unable to secure cybersecurity cover through UMAL and had therefore moved to FE Protect that had resulted in a reduction in insurance premiums.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Do we have provider 'run off' insurance cover?

Yes, we have 'run off' cover in place.

Are we keeping an eye on the level of insurance cover that we have?

We are required to complete and return an annual questionnaire to the insurance company that provides them with information to assess the insurance cover required. We will need to include the new building and property.

ACTION:

Appropriate insurance cover assurance to be provided to the Chief Finance Officer (UoB) prior to University Board approval.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Insurance Provider Review be approved for recommendation to the University Board.

3.8 *Starred Items

i) COMMONALITY OF INTERESTS POLICY

Members had received and reviewed the Commonality of Interests Policy which required annual review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Commonality of Interests Policy be noted.

ii) CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Members had received and reviewed the Conflict-of-Interest Policy which required annual review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Conflict-of-Interest Policy be approved.

iii) TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW

Members had received and reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Standards and Quality Committee with a recommendation for approval from the Standards and Quality Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference be approved for recommendation to the University Board.

iv) ANTI-BRIBERY POLICY

Members had received and reviewed the Anti-Bribery Policy which required annual review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Anti-Bribery Policy be approved.

v) GENDER PAY ANNUAL REPORT

Members had received and reviewed the Gender Pay Annual Report.

The report provided the following key information:

The College pay gap for 2023 is 8.67% (mean) and 7.94% (median), this was a positive improvement from the previous year (10.04% mean and 11.73% median), and remained significantly below the national average for the same period which is 14.3%.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Gender Pay Annual Report be noted.

4. SECTION D - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

4.1 OFS UNIVERSITY NAME CHANGE CONSULTATION

The Vice Chancellor informed Board Members that the public consultation for the University name change was underway with a response deadline of 2 May 2024.

The University of Bolton operated across at least four of the Greater Manchester Combined Authorities and was expanding into other Greater Manchester regions.

It was noted that there were other Universities with regional names ie. Northumbria, Sussex, Cumbria, including a range of Universities in London with London in their titles.

The consultation information had been circulated to Board Members, staff and students for their input into the process.

It was **RESOLVED** that the OfS University name change consultation be noted.

4.2 *STARRED ITEMS

i) GROUP RISK REGISTER

Members had received and reviewed the Group Risk Register.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Group Risk Register be noted.

5. SECTION E - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL

The Clerk presented a report on an expression of interest received following the request to seek a co-opted member for the Standards and Quality Committee.

The expression of interest was considered by the Search and Governance Committee with a recommendation to appoint Ms Debra Woodruff. Ms Woodruff had extensive experience in the FE education and training sector, working with colleges and independent training providers on skills policy implementation, curriculum design, qualification reform and quality improvement.

It was **RESOLVED** on the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee that approval be given to the appointment of Ms Debra Woodruff as a co-opted member of the Standards and Quality Committee with a recommendation to the University Board for approval.

5.2 CYBER ESSENTIALS

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum Design, Information and Technical Services presented the Cyber Essentials report. The College was currently Cyber Essentials Certified, which was a requirement of a number of funding contracts. Cyber Essentials was required to be renewed annually and was scheduled for renewal.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Cyber Essentials Documentation be approved

5.3 MEETING EVALUATION

Members felt that the information provided was clear and concise. The meeting provided the opportunity to give positive feedback regarding the movement made in making improvements.

(All Members and Officers save for Independent Members left the meeting at 7pm)

6. SECTION F – FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates and times of future meetings were noted as follows:

Board Meeting - Tuesday 25 June 2024 at 5.00pm

Committees:

Resources – Tuesday 4 June 2024 at 5.00pm

Audit – Tuesday 6 June 2024 at 5.00pm

Standards & Quality – Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 2.00pm

Search & Governance – Tuesday 18 June at 5.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 7.00pm

Chair's Signature:

Date: 25 June 2024