



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 25 June 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
Dr Tony Unsworth*
Dr Bill Webster (Principal)
Ms Sharon White
Mrs Kate Flood
Dr Gill Smallwood
Mr Ming Fong
Mrs Adeeba Gulzar

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 Catherine Langstreth (Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Stakeholder Engagement)
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.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Prof George Holmes, Dr Julian Coleman, Gulnaz Brennan, Chris Ball, Karen Westsmith and Tracy Clarke.

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.

A declaration of interest was noted for Tony Unsworth under Item 3.7 (Governing Documents Review).

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 23 April 2024 - general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 23 April 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 or were included on the agenda.

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

1.7 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

(i) Resources Committee of 4 June 2024

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 4 June 2024. The Chair noted the positive change in culture towards the use of agency staff that was more quality driven.

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

(ii) Audit Committee of 6 June 2024

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 6 June 2024. The Chair noted that minor changes had been made to the audit plan for 2024/25 that included a quality dimension added to the agency staff audit scope of work.

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 six times to date to review key areas of the PIAP with the College Senior Management Team (SMT). The most recent meeting reviewed the PIAP as a whole reviewing the actions that had been implemented and those that remained outstanding. Moving forward there would be more activity around supporting staff workloads and to transition agency staff into permanent staff members.

Governor Questions/Comments:

It is fair to comment that a lot of work has gone into the PIAP and scrutiny of the content. The Task and Finish Group members are confident in the priorities being given and the shift in mindset in these areas.

Is staff morale more positive now than it was?

There is still a mixed picture. The staff are aware of what is going on regarding the working groups and the 'deep dive' process with opportunities for staff to be involved in workload parties and provide feedback through the 'deep dives'. Staff on the whole can see all the actions that have been made to drive improvements and they can see the benefit of the work undertaken regarding agency staff. Work is ongoing to hear the staff voice of those that were unable to previously contribute. In the new academic year there is a priority on staff engagement and communication.

What has been the feedback from students around the consistency of teachers?

These discussions were held during the 'deep dives' that resulted in some areas of staff development or quality assurance. The decision has been taken to pause delivery on the construction T Level due to staffing instability.

Are learners concerned about the 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted outcome?

Students are satisfied with their experience and achievements and aren't really concerned about the Ofsted grade as it doesn't directly affect them or their learning.

What is the communication process for 'you said we did'?

This will be part of the teaching, learning and assessment conference which will be held in August and ongoing through the staff engagement and communication plans. There will also be a 'you said, we didn't' in order to address those questions raised that are not possible to action.

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

2.2 TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT & 'DEEP DIVE' REPORT

The Deputy Principal presented the Teaching, Learning and Assessment and 'Deep Dive' Report, the following key points were highlighted:

- The BLUE system, a coaching approach to developing staff, has been streamlined for the next academic year following issues raised and improvements identified through the 'deep dive' process.
- Through the BLUE system, teachers identify development points and 'steals' ie. areas of good practice they would like to use. English and maths were strong in the development points identified across all areas.

Governor Questions/Comments:

There is no real detail around the relevance of activity. The display of information throughout the report doesn't show how feedback is driving improvement.

Further contextualisation needs to be reflected in the report, which can be reviewed for the next Board meeting.

ACTION:

The format of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment & 'Deep Dive' Report to be reviewed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment & Deep Dive Report be noted.

2.3 MATHS AND ENGLISH UPDATE

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

- Work was ongoing on the quality and stability of staffing with the 'Grow Your Own' strategy still being taken forward.
- ESFA had amended the condition of funding in 2024/25, whereby students had to study an additional three hours per week for English and four hours per week for maths. The College would not implement the increase in maths delivery in 2024/25 in line with other Greater Manchester Colleges due to pressures on staffing and timetabling. Plans were underway for this to be implemented from 2025/26.

Governor Questions/Comments:

What more can we do in maths and English? Why didn't some learners turn up to complete the second exam paper?

We are looking at another exam board that has two exam papers but the duration of the exams is longer. Maybe a reduction in the number of exam papers may change the mindset of the learner that may assist with attendance and engagement. We will not change the exam board before the advantages and disadvantages have been fully assessed.

Do you look at the issues by section and department in order to see any patterns emerging?

This links back to attendance and stability of staffing. If we can get the stability the links will be consistent.

The take up of revision sessions is disappointing. What else can we do to improve attendance in both normal and revision classes?

We make it clear to students that if they don't attend their English and maths classes, they won't be able to complete their vocational studies. In addition to the teaching staff, we also have Attendance Officers who work closely with Heads to monitor and improve attendance.

Is it anyone with a Grade 3 or under who will be put in for a resit in November?

All 16–18-year-old students who are on a study programme with a Grade 3 or below in English and/or maths will be put in for a resit in November. Both new and current students will get the opportunity to resit in November. Previously students that would resit had to opt in to do the resit exam. It was noted that there were those students that wanted to resit and did not get the opportunity to, therefore the communication strategy will be clearer on this.

What was the success rate for the previous November resits?

57% for maths and 37% for English. The grade boundary increased by 25 marks which was a shock which caused an increase in exam failures.

Will the improvements identified through the PIAP have an impact on the English and maths results?

The main goal through the PIAP in relation to English and maths is to stabilise the staffing teams, this should in turn lead to better attendance and improved grades.

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

- There would be no immediate impact from the upcoming general election, the outcome would be clearer after the spending review and at the Autumn Statement.
- The GMCA 'single settlement' process would consolidate a range of budgets (adult skills, local transport, housing and local growth) which may provide opportunities for the College in adult and community delivery given the Bolton 'place' challenges and demographics.
- Phase 1 of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) had been completed and the College entered Phase 2 that concentrated on maximising the benefit of the investment and ensuring that Greater Manchester colleges harnessed the collaborative advantage of working together to maximise the impact of the capital investment. For example, there had been in excess of £370k of savings made as a result of the college group purchase of Anatomage.

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:

- There was a current academic year deficit of circa. £1m.
- With the income growth and impact of savings there would be a surplus of circa. £2.1m for 2024/25.
- The ESFA currently assessed the College financial health as 'Requires Improvement'. The aim was to ensure that the assessment for 2024/25 was a financial health grade of at least 'Good'.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Is the cash threshold reportable?

No, but we will report it as part of the normal reporting process.

Does the £550k reserve in the bank attract interest?

Yes, it does.

Has there been any update from the bank discussions regarding the covenants?

The discussions continue with the bank who are completing their due diligence and have requested additional information.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26 forecast - noting this would be the basis for the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) to be submitted to the ESFA before 31 July 2024.

3.3 COLLEGE KPI DASHBOARD

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

Governor Questions/Comments:

Is the new Principal recruitment a reportable event?

It is and will be reported through the appropriate channels nearer to the date of its occurrence.

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

3.4 CONTRIBUTION TO SKILLS NEEDS

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

- There would be an Employer Forum on 2 July 2024 with over 100 employers invited to the College for a 'Business Breakfast' followed by meetings with curriculum areas to review course design and to book masterclass sessions for the upcoming academic year.
- The Job Shop had been a strong promotional asset and had helped to build relationships with employers and partners.
- The College currently had apprentices with 501 different employers, 131 of these were new this academic year.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Do we match the business to a student?

Yes, and funding from Innovate UK is helping to spread the message that we have the talent pool that businesses need. The events that we are holding are focused strongly on showing what the College can do to help businesses.

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

3.7 HR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Executive Director of HR and Estates presented the report HR Equality & Diversity Annual Report 2023/24 highlighting the following key points:

- The College had invested in an employee assistance programme (EAP) that enabled staff to access free counselling on financial and debt advice 24/7.
- The College had also rolled out a financial wellbeing portal that provided all staff with access to free financial planning and 1:1 advice provided by qualified advisors.
- There had been an increase in social activities with 'Thrive Thursday' to take place on the 4 July 2024 with a range of staff wellbeing activities.

Governor Questions/Comments:

It would be helpful to see the EAP uptake of staff as a split across seniority and grades.

We can see the headline data ie. how many have registered on the EAP but we are not able to see what assistance staff are accessing. The service provider does not give us this information.

Does the EAP come under employee value rather than staff well-being?

We do promote this as a staff attraction in relation to the shopping discounts etc.

It would also be useful to see the diversity data in relation to the Board.

This data is provided in the Annual Equality and Diversity Report provided by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Quality at the first Board meeting in the new academic year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the HR Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2023/24 be noted.

(Andrew Fawcett left the meeting at 6.37pm)

3.6 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

The Executive Director of Finance stated that the review of the College financial regulations had been discussed at the Resources Committee and Audit Committee meetings noting that they would not be reviewed and updated until after the College internal auditors (PwC) had completed their review of the 'Managing Public Money' guidance, following the ONS reclassification.

The PwC recommendations would inform the financial regulations review and be implemented to ensure compliance. The financial regulations would be presented at the next Board meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Financial Regulations review be noted.

(Mr Tony Unsworth left the meeting during consideration of the following item)

3.7 GOVERNING DOCUMENTS REVIEW

The Clerk provided the Board with a review of the Governance Agreement, Board Standing Orders and Board Terms of Reference.

The Clerk noted that in order to ensure consistency and continuity of College and Group financial governance, the College's governance model must ensure effective financial scrutiny and oversight. It was proposed that the position of Group Chief Finance Officer be made an ex officio member of the Board.

The Search and Governance Committee had considered the proposal and governing documentation at its meeting on 18 June 2024 with a recommendation to the Board for approval.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Governing Documents be approved and that the Group Chief Finance Officer be made an ex officio member of the Board with a recommendation to the University Board for approval.

(Mr Tony Unsworth re-joined the meeting)

3.8 *Starred Items

i) EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members had received and reviewed the External Governance Review Report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the External Governance Review Report be noted.

ii) COLLEGE STRATEGIC & OPERATING PLAN 2024/25

Members had received and reviewed the College Strategic and Operating Plan which required annual review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Strategic Operating Plan 2023/24 be approved.

iii) STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN 2024/25

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Quality presented the Student Protection Plan for 2024/25. The plan was only pertinent for the HE provision for College students.

It was an OfS condition of registration that HE registered providers published an annual Student Protection Plan on their website. The purpose of the Plan was to ensure that students could continue and complete their studies, or could be compensated if this was not possible.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Student Protection Plan be approved with a recommendation to the University Board for approval.

(iv) ACCESS & PARTICIPATION STATEMENT 2024/25

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality presented the Access and Participation Statement (APS) 2024/25.

The OfS required HE providers to have an approved Access & Participation Plan (APP) if they were registered in the 'Approved' (fee cap) category of the register and wished to charge above the basic tuition fee cap for 'qualifying persons' on 'qualifying courses'.

As the College was not registered in the 'Approved' category, it was not required to produce an APP; it was instead required to produce a Statement as a condition of registration.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Access & Participation Statement 2024/25 be approved with a recommendation to the University Board for approval.

4. SECTION D - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

4.1 *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 to the Board to approve the re-appointment of a co-opted Audit Committee Member, following the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 18 June 2024.

It was **RESOLVED** that the re-appointment of Mr Farhad Ahmad as a co-opted member of the Audit Committee be approved with a recommendation to the University Board for approval.

5.2 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 6.49pm)

6. SECTION F – FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Board Meeting - Tuesday 12 November 2024 at 5.00pm

Committees:

Search & Governance – Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 3pm

Remuneration - Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 4pm

Resources – Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 5pm

Standards & Quality – Tuesday 22 October 2024 at 2pm

Audit – Tuesday 5 November 2024 at 5pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 6.49pm

Chair's Signature:

Date: 12 November 2024