



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 6 February 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 Gill Smallwood
Dr Adrian Brooks
Mrs Kate Flood
Mr Tom Martin
Dr Tony Unsworth
Dr Gill Waugh
Dr Bill Webster (Principal)
Ms Sharon White
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 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 5.05pm. He confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Julian Coleman, Gulnaz Brennan, Chris Ball, Professor George Holmes, Claire Garth and Adeeba 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 made under Items 5.4 and 5.5.

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 13 December 2023 - general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 13 December 2023 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.

(S Lomax joined the meeting at 5.17pm)

1.7 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

(i) Resources Committee of 16 January 2024

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 16 January 2024.

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 following key points:

- The PIAP focused on the six areas for improvement identified within the Ofsted inspection report.
- Each element identified had been assigned to a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) to lead on and who would provide regular updates.
- The PIAP would be reviewed at weekly SMT meetings, the Standards and Quality Committee and presented to the Board.
- There would be the formation of a Task and Finish Group to monitor the progress of the PIAP that would report into the Standards and Quality Committee and Board.

Governor Questions/Comments:

When will the Task and Finish Group convene?

The aim is to convene the first meeting after February half term once the PIAP has been shared with wider College staff. A number of the Standards and Quality Committee Members and Board Members have volunteered to be part of the Group.

Will updates be brought to the Board?

Yes, regular updates will be made to the PIAP with progress updates shared with the Board.

There was criticism from Ofsted that the College is too metrics focused, how do we make sure we do not have that criticism again?

Learner attendance and engagement is difficult to prove without metrics. Data will continue to be reported as it provides important detail. However, the richness will come through in reports by providing more description to back up the quantitative data, such as themes from the students and the questions asked in lessons.

There is nothing in the PIAP that mentions what Governors need to do.

This can be included in the PIAP, it might be appropriate to consider this inclusion for Governors through the Standards & Quality Committee and in setting up the Task and Finish Group.

Are we fully aware and do we understand the quality of provision and what the College is doing about it?

A greater understanding will come from the 'deep dives' planned for this term. The framework will come to the first Task and Finish Group with Governors having an opportunity to be involved in the 'deep dives'.

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

2.2 COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2022/23

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality presented the Self-Assessment Report, noting the following key points:

- The SAR was based on 2022/23 academic year.
- The main rationale for moving English and maths from Grade 2 to 3 was related to attendance and not progression.
- Those departments highlighted 'green' within the SAR were those that had remained a Grade 2 but were very close to a Grade 1.
- There were lots of good teaching, learning and assessment but the College needed to stabilise teaching teams and improve attendance.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Does this suggest that our reporting process is not sufficient?

During each panel, which were attended by Board Members, patterns around attendance were looked at critically. The panels also looked at qualitative data like the Learner Voice and walkthroughs.

The Board met on 13 December 2023, could the senior management team have provided an early indication given the SAR outcome?

The SAR was not finalised at that point due to the delay to some of the area panels, as a result of the Ofsted inspection. Any feedback at that point would have been more of a signpost.

An indication would be appreciated from a Governors perspective. Could this be looked at on a six-monthly basis and for the Board to have that assurance more regularly?

This could be looked at.

The Board noted an omission within the Ofsted report on the progress learners had made in English and maths and the starting points of the College's learners.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Self-Assessment Report be approved.

2.3 ACHIEVEMENT 2022/23 AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2023/24

The Deputy Principal presented the report on performance targets for 2023/24 and provided an overview of achievement rates for the College across different funding categories for 2022/23. Information on previous years was provided for comparison.

Discussions under this item had been covered extensively by the Standards and Quality Committee with a recommendation for approval.

Governor Questions/Comments:

The influence of retention on achievement is clear, how do we make it a core priority?

Within our Performance Enhancement Reviews that each curriculum engages with where in-year retention is scrutinised heavily. This process also looks at 'Keep them Keen' which looks at the range of additional activities each area proposes for learner enrichment. There are a number of reports which identify those learners who are considered 'at risk' due to their attendance which then prompts further engagement with parents/carers. There are multiple layers of staff that are involved in learner attendance. For example, attendance officers.

Do we have data that informs us on what those learners who leave are doing?

Yes, this is collated at the end of the course. However, it is extremely difficult to gain this information from those who have withdrawn.

Do we know the 'drivers' of young people and why they have chosen a programme?

We ask on recruitment, some say to socialise and have friends and that is why they stay on programme given that they have to stay in education until they are eighteen years.

There was a report in The Guardian that over 20% of young people attending school are not attending on a regular basis. Bolton College is one such college that engages with those learners who haven't attended school.

This comes back down to our cohort of learners. However, it doesn't apply to all with the College recently holding the '100% Attendance Awards' and this term there was a higher number than the first term of last year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on Achievement Rates 2022/23 and Performance Targets for 2023/24 be approved.

2.4 MATHS AND ENGLISH UPDATE

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

- The strategies put in place through the Quality Improvement Plan were restrained by the lack of staffing stability in the area. There was now a full complement of management staff within the English and maths team.
- There would be additional narrative to provide within reporting following recent walkthroughs. There had been sessions delivered where learners could scaffold new knowledge and make good progress.
- Through the recent Learner Voice survey 88% of learners felt well supported in English and/or maths. Learners had identified a lack of rapport with teachers, due to a lack of staffing consistency that had resulted in reduced learner participation.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Are curriculum leaders as well as teachers held responsible for encouraging learners to attend?

Yes, they are held accountable but there wasn't a curriculum leader in some areas. There is consideration taking place for changing attendance responsibility to Heads of Area.

It is a positive outcome that 37% of those who took the November resit gained a Level 4, 5 or 6.

It is and this will be a focus for next academic year though it does come at a cost.

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

3. SECTION C - COLLEGE MATTERS

3.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

- The Senior Management Team met with the DfE and a representative from the FE Commissioner's Office (FEC) as part of the College Annual Strategic Conversation, the FEC remained supportive of the College with offers of assistance were required.
- The Office for Students (OfS) would visit the College on 29 April 2024. The agenda for the visit had yet to be shared but the OfS wanted to engage with stakeholders and FE providers and were especially interested in the Group structure.
- The capital build remained on schedule in terms of timeline and budget.

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

3.2 FINANCIAL UPDATE INCLUDING LOAN COVENANTS

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

- The financial statements had been signed off and published on the College website.
- The College had self-assessed as 'Good' for financial year 2022/23 whereas the ESFA assessment was 'Requires Improvement'.
- LEO 1 was complete with a break-even position. A meeting had been scheduled with the bank where the College would seek a waiver of the covenant.
- There remained two areas of concern; the T Level claw back and community learning recruitment.

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

- (i) the forecast of an operating deficit; and
- (ii) the potential impact of a deficit on bank covenants/cash forecast.

3.3 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.

3.4 CONTRIBUTION TO SKILLS NEEDS

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

- Focus for the College was the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum development and design. The College would work with managers in providing evidence of stakeholder engagement at the implementation stage of curriculum design that had not been evident in all curriculum areas.
- The College would update on how it responded to the LSIP in terms of changes in the curriculum or focus of delivery.
- The College would become a Cisco Academy, this would be offered to T Level digital learners as a programme addition.
- There had been investment in electronic vehicles with the development of short courses as additions to current qualifications.
- The College was not involved in the LSIF for construction but it had been involved in the development of the heat pump standard.
- The College was the lead on the health LSIF and had developed a digital assessment tool for Bolton NHS and Christies NHS Foundation Trust to help with identifying the digital training needs of the workforce, more specifically the electronic patient record system. The project was also leading on the development of microcredential courses for training in anatomage tables, with the aim to introduce accredited courses to enhance the skills of students.
- The Job Shop had been a successful platform to advertise the opportunities on offer at the College. Links had been made with local businesses, Connexions and the National Careers Service.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Do we do too much? Is there anything we should work collaboratively on with others colleges?

The answer to collaboration with other colleges is via the Greater Manchester Colleges Group. Although everyone within the group agrees on the benefits there is a lack of willingness to share resources. The delivery would also need to continue to meet local skills needs.

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

3.5 NURSERY START WELL REPORT

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Stakeholder Engagement presented the Nursery Start Well report. This was a voluntary service provided by Bolton Council and would be used to continue to develop the College nursery.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Nursery Start Well Report be noted.

3.6 *Starred Items

i) HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSURANCE STATEMENT

Members had received and reviewed the annual Health and Safety Assurance Statement as requested by all Group members in relation to the effective implementation of health and safety and health and safety responsibilities.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety Assurance Statement be approved.

ii) ANNUAL MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

Members had received and reviewed the Annual Modern Slavery Statement for publication on the College's website.

The College was not required under Section 54 (Transparency in Supply Chains) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to publish an annual statement setting out the steps the organisation would take to prevent modern slavery in its business and in its supply chain as its annual turnover was below £36m. However, it had produced a statement in order to demonstrate its commitment to eradicating modern slavery.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Modern Slavery Statement (to be signed by the Chair) be approved.

iii) MID YEAR HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Members had received and reviewed the Mid-Year Human Resources Report.

The report provided an update on key areas of HR activity, including data on disciplinary and grievance cases, performance management and mental health first-aid training.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Mid-Year Human Resources Update be noted.

iv) HE SELF EVALUATION DOCUMENT

Members had received and reviewed the HE Self Evaluation document.

The document provided an update on the College's submission to the University of Bolton programme plans to evaluate each Higher Education programme for students who completed their courses in 2022/23.

It was **RESOLVED** that the HE Self Evaluation Document be noted.

4. SECTION D - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

4.1 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25

Members had received and reviewed the draft College calendar of meetings for 2024/25.

Members were advised that from January 2025 there was a recommendation that the College move to a model of three cycles per academic year, in line with the University. The Standards and Quality Committee would remain at meeting four times per academic year give the focus required in this area.

The Clerk had reviewed the College governing documents to ensure compliance and noted an alteration to the Audit Committee meeting.

Governor Questions/Comments:

Why are we changing to three cycles per academic year?

This will not have a detrimental effect on the Board and will reduce the administrative burden on the team by having fewer meetings and save resources. This did not prevent the Board or Committees calling additional meetings if required.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 be approved.

5. SECTION E - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 MEETING EVALUATION

Members confirmed that they felt that the SMT had provided thorough detail through the reports and discussions. All Members were able to ask questions, contribute and were overall content with the meeting.

(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 23 April 2024 at 5.00pm

Committees:

Standards & Quality – Wednesday 13 March 2024 at 2.00pm

Resources – Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 5.00pm

Audit - Thursday 21 March 2024 at 5.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 7.33pm

Chair's Signature:

Date: 23 April 2024