



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 27 June 2023 – (PART A)

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Boardroom / Video Conference

Members present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Mr Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Mrs Kate Flood
Mrs Gulnaz Brennan
Dr Sue Lomax
Mr Tom Martin
Dr Tony Unsworth
Mr Michael Walker
Mr Chris Ball
Mrs Claire Garth
Dr Gill Smallwood
Dr Gill Waugh
Dr Bill Webster (Principal)

In Attendance:

Mr Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Ms Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)
Mr Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)
Mrs Jane Marsh (Executive Director of HR & Estates)
Mrs Karen Westsmith (Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality)
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 5.04pm. He confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Claire Garth was welcomed to her first meeting as Support Staff Governor.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Prof. George Holmes, Sharon White, Dr Adrian Brooks, Tracy Clarke and Catherine Langstreth.

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 potential conflict of interest/loyalty was identified under Item 4.1 (Board 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 2 May 2023 - general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 2 May 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 actions arising/outstanding from previous meetings, noting that all actions had been completed.

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

1.7 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

1.7 (i) Resources Committee of 6 June 23

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 6 June 2023.

The Resources Committee had comprehensively discussed the matters for consideration that would also be considered under the Board agenda. It was acknowledged that the reports were clear and detailed with appropriate challenge provided.

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

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS

2.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

Ofsted

- Ofsted had not inspected the College this this academic year with the expectation that they would visit during the Autumn term 2023/24.
- Ofsted inspection changes had been announced whereby colleges would receive a longer notice period as to which areas would receive a 'deep dive'.

External Environment

- Discussions had been held with trade unions, Senior Management Team and Heads of Department regarding plans for staff recruitment and retention.
- The Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) had been published with Chris Fletcher to attend the Bolton Skills Group for a local response to the wider skills plan.

Technical Education City

The College would continue to work closely with the Greater Manchester Principals in responding to the “Towards an Integrated Technical Education, Skills and Work City- Region: Starting the Conversation” document and to consider where future funding would be allocated.

Group Matters

Work continued with Alliance Learning, most recently to consider a joint approach on combined events and the promotion of course provision to schools. Alliance Learning provided short courses that the College could offer to its employers as an added value.

Capital Investment:

- The ESFA had supported capital expenditure with the provision of funding predominantly allocated on the basis of building condition.
- There were plans to replace all four lifts across the College campus.
- Badge entry barriers would be erected in A and B blocks that would increase site security.

(Sue Lomax joined the meeting at 5.22pm)

Governor Questions:

How big a risk is it to the College being part of the University Group in terms of the Greater Manchester plans?

Broadly it is positive with little risk. We are engaging fully with the College’s Group with Bolton College leading on health. Other colleges have differing levels of engagement with universities, our unique position gives us greater flexibility on collaborative bids both with other colleges and HE, as funding providers will not accept bids from single colleges.

How old are the lifts?

They are the original lifts that were installed around 12 years ago.

How far is the regional devolution going to go?

There isn’t a wealth of information included within the paper on this.

Should colleges be made aware of the local skills planning at an earlier stage?

This is a good point and will be brought up at the Team Bolton Aspirations Group meeting.

The Board noted that there was limited information in the LSIP that referenced ‘soft skills’ that employers needed. There was also limited attention given to employers being supported to ‘grow their own’ with more required in relation to employers recruiting apprentices. The LSIP had reported on the different areas within Greater Manchester and the health and social care provision, with the exclusion of the Bolton College of Medical Sciences.

The Board discussed those that may find it difficult in the region to access education and upskill. An observation had been made at the Resources Committee on the challenges around adult education with the suggestion that College needed to be more flexible and innovative in its provision, with a shortened version of the adult learning brochure to be circulated to employers that highlighted what the College could offer as additional courses.

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

(Sue Lomax left the meeting at 5.40pm)

2.2 ESFA FINANCIAL HEALTH, FINANCIAL UPDATE, LOAN COVENANTS AND 2023/24 BUDGET

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

- The College reported a deficit of circa. -£910k for 2022/23 that would not pass the operating leverage covenants. The College had sought a covenant waiver from the bank for the current financial year and awaited a response.
- A number of assumptions had been made in the 2023/24 budget that had included a reduction in utilities (circa. £575k) and would produce an operating surplus of £200k.
- The cash position had exceeded the forecast with £4.4m for 31 July 2023.
- The smaller loan facility had been repaid in December 2022 with the larger loan facility to be fully repaid by 2035.
- DfE had assured their intention of a July year end with HM Treasury to consider a March year end.

It was noted that the differing financial year ends would be an additional cost to the College that would have an impact on recruitment and learners. It was predicted that the financial year end would change and that it was worth noting the risk in the 2024/25 accounts, if the College had to report twice.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25 forecast - noting this would be the basis for the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) to be submitted to the ESFA before 31 July 2023.

(Gill Waugh joined the meeting at 5.46pm)

2.3 COLLEGE STRATEGIC AND OPERATING PLAN

The Principal presented the College Strategic and Operating Plan and outlined the following key points:

- The statement of focus had been previously approved and now included the operational plan.
- The strategic priorities formed the basis of the Strategic Plan 2023-28 and had received endorsement and input from the Board and Senior Management Team.

Governor Questions:

Is the 'outstanding' statement a realistic goal taking into account the external environment?

This terminology has been discussed at Senior Management Team meetings in terms of whether the word 'outstanding' should be used or whether this should be replaced with 'excellent'. In terms

of ambition, it sounds unambitious to 'continue to be good' and it has been clearly expressed that 'outstanding' is not solely about the Ofsted judgement.

Should the strategic and operating plan make reference to the LSIP?

This is included under section 3 of the Strategic Priorities 2023-28 document that we will capitalise and highlight.

The Board noted that the Strategic and Operating Plan be amended to articulate the College's ambition and areas of excellence without using an Ofsted judgement.

ACTION:

Strategic and Operating Plan to be revised and circulated to Board for further review/comment.

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

2.4 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. The following points were highlighted:

- The College had recruited newly qualified teachers and reduced its reliance on agency staff, which was a direct benefit of the merger.
- Discreet entry level functional skills were to be arranged for those learners that required more support.

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

2.5 SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

The Executive Director of HR & Estates presented the Safeguarding update highlighting the following key points:

- A new safeguarding manager had been appointed who was an internal candidate and previously a safeguarding officer.
- There had been 522 safeguarding cases. Reporting had changed to remove cases linked to bullying and harassment that were not strictly safeguarding matters.
- A termly safeguarding newsletter and staff drop-in sessions had been implemented.
- Key observations had shown that there were more referrals made by young people in comparison to adults that was a similar pattern to previous years.
- Safety support plans and multi-agency safety plans had been introduced for those learners at risk.
- An additional £15k of funding had been secured to support the development of a third on-line tutorial resource focused on self-harm.
- The College was to consider embedding CPOMs into the current safeguarding recording system in order to obtain safeguarding information for those learners transitioning from schools.

Governor Questions:

How do we support the wellbeing of staff who deal with safeguarding cases?

Through one-to-one meetings with the Safeguarding Manager and Executive Director of HR & Estates. We have a centralised safeguarding team that are very supportive of each other in terms of peer support. There is also access to counsellors and occupational health, if needed.

As safeguarding training is mandatory, are there any opportunities for economies of scale on training across Group?

Going forward there will be more time to consider and plan ahead from a Group perspective.

Is there a safeguarding audit planned?

The College will be looking to secure the kitemark 'Leaders in Safeguarding' which will bring that level of externality. The College already has links with external agencies and the local authority who we are meeting with in July.

It was noted that Alliance Learning used CPOMs and had found it helpful as it pulled through information from the school system. It was felt that the College handled more complex cases and that the University Group should consider external supervision on the most significant cases.

It was **RESOLVED** that the safeguarding update be noted.

(Gill Smallwood left the meeting at 6.26pm)

2.6 MATHS AND ENGLISH UPDATE

The Maths and English Update was presented with the following key points highlighted:

- There were over 1,000 learners that had attended each of the examinations with 40% that required access arrangements.
- The strong collaboration with UoB colleagues to 'grow your own' model had produced a full complement of maths teachers.
- Link teachers were working well within the vocational areas.
- Contextualisation was a key focus with the need to decontextualise in order to enable learners to pass the examinations and gain good grades.
- There was a demand from schools for maths sessions for parents/carers.

Governor Questions:

How will we retain the newly qualified teachers?

Through the Early Career Teachers strategy and an effective induction which nurtures new teachers.

Is there a family maths course in the adult education brochure?

Yes, there is an aspiration to increase the uptake in maths and English for parents in the UK with parents motivated to help their children to do well. Family learning traditionally looked at early years however, due to interest there will be movement into GCSE level.

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

2.7 CONTRIBUTION TO SKILLS NEEDS

The Board was updated on the progress made since the previous meeting with additions made to prompt further thinking and discussion. Work was underway to deliver the LSIP summary, reflect on schemes of work and look at how the College could achieve strong and robust targets in the quality improvement plan.

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

2.8(i) STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN FOR HE COURSES 2023/24

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality presented the Student Protection Plan for 2023/24. 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.

2.8(ii) ACCESS & PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality presented the Access and Participation Statement (APS) 2023/24.

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 2023/24 be approved.

2.9 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION REPORT 2021-22

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality presented the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion report highlighting the following key points:

- The report provided the demographics of College learners and staff.
- The College had received the 'Rainbow Flag' kitemark that would be celebrated at an unveiling event.
- Staff training continued including additional courses on trans awareness.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report be noted.

2.10 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

The Executive Director of Finance delivered the Financial Regulations review noting that the details had been discussed at Resources and Audit Committee. Following the ONS reclassification and 'Managing Public Money' guidance that superseded the financial regulations, the College would continue with the current regulations until the new financial handbook had been published.

PwC would undertake a review on the financial handbook and 'Managing Public Money' guidance.

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

2.11 SPEED GATES PURCHASE PROPOSAL

The Executive Director of HR & Estates presented the 'speed gates' purchase proposal and outlined the rationale for the re-design of the entrances in A and B blocks. The 'speed gates' would provide additional security and be beneficial in terms of students wearing their ID badges.

It was **RESOLVED** that the appointment of the shortlisted contractor be approved.

2.12 EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Clerk provided the Board with the external governance review proposal and contractor appointed to conduct the external governance review, as recommended and approved by the Search and Governance Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposal be noted.

2.13(i)* TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW

Members had received and reviewed the terms of reference for:

- Search and Governance Committee;
- Audit Committee; and
- Board

It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference be recommended to the University Board for approval.

2.13(ii)* STUDENT GOVERNOR ELECTION PROCEDURE

Members had received and reviewed the Student Governor election procedure, as presented to the Search and Governance Committee on 20 June 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Student Governor Election Procedure be approved.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

3.1* GROUP RISK REGISTER

Members had received and reviewed the Group Risk Register.

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

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP APPROVAL

The Chair thanked Michael Walker for his enthusiasm and contribution during his time as a Student Governor and wished him all the best for the future.

The Clerk presented the nomination of Dr Julian Coleman as a University nominated Board Member and Member of the Audit Committee, following the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 20 June 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Board and Committee membership proposal be recommended to the University Board for approval.

4.2 MEETING EVALUATION

Board Members confirmed that the meeting was informative, supportive and provided adequate challenge when needed. Board Members were confident that critical issues were sufficiently reported on.

(All Members and Officers save for Independent Members left the meeting at 6.32pm)

5. SECTION E – FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Board Meeting - Wednesday 13 December 2023 at 5.00pm

Committees -

Search & Governance - Wednesday 20 September 2023 at 3.00pm

Remuneration - Wednesday 20 September 2023 at 4.00pm

Resources – Tuesday 26 September 2023 at 5.00pm

Standards & Performance – Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 2.00pm

Audit - Thursday 30 November 2023 at 5.00pm

Chair's Signature:

Date: 13 December 2023