



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 29 June 2021 – (PART A)

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Via Zoom Conference Call

Members present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Mr Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Dr Adrian Brooks
Ms Rebecca Davison
Mrs Kate Flood
Mr Dave Haslam
Professor George Holmes DL
Dr Sue Lomax
Mr Josue Losasa
Mr Tony Unsworth
Baroness Sayeeda Warsi
Dr Gill Waugh
Mr Bill Webster (Principal)

In Attendance:

Mr Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Miss Deborah Bradburn (Assistant Registrar/Clerk)
Ms Jane Marsh (Director of HR)
Mr Tim Openshaw (Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience)) (University of Bolton)
Mr Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)
Mrs Patricia Foster (Secretary)

1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS

1.1 WELCOME TO MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which commenced at 5.00pm. He confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Chris Ball, Mrs Gulnaz Brennan, Mr Fardean Farooq and Ms Stephanie Nixon.

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.

The Clerk declared an interest in item 2.7 (ii) of the Agenda: Conflicts of Interest Policy.

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 20 April 2021 – confidential and general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 20 April 2021 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).

1.5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Members had received a summary of actions arising/outstanding from previous meetings, noting that most items were either completed or carried forward to the next meeting.

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

1.7 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

1.7 (i) Resources Committee of 8 June 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 8 June 2021.

The Chair highlighted the announcement from the ESFA that the College's financial health for 2020/21 was classed as 'Outstanding'. It was noted that this was an excellent achievement by the whole of the Senior Management Team.

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

1.7 (ii) Audit Committee of 10 June 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 10 June 2021.

The Chair of the Audit Committee highlighted the following key points:-

- The internal audits were progressing well.
- The Audit Committee had discussed whether it would be beneficial (in order to ensure compliance with conditions of funding) to ask that PwC undertake a review of the College's governance arrangements and systems following recent guidance and increased expectations. The Search and Governance Committee had also

agreed that this would be useful. A similar review had recently been undertaken at the University.

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

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS

2.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Impact

- The College continued to adhere to the latest and changing guidance for the sector and learners had returned to campus. However, the majority of English and maths remained online. Where possible, staff were working on-campus on a rota basis. The College continued to offer asymptomatic testing (AST) on-site and had actively supported the local authority/NHS in hosting an on-site PCR testing facility for two weeks in May 2021, in response to the rising number of cases locally. Around 200 people attended the testing facility and no positive cases had been detected. Home testing kits (LFT) remained available to staff and students.
- The College had seen a fall in the number of positive cases, with numbers currently at the lowest point since the College reopened in March 2021. The College would continue to follow Government guidance, including the anticipated announcement regarding the way in which students would be advised to isolate (with a focus on on-site daily testing rather than isolation). The College's existing precautionary measures would remain in place until at least the Government's expected announcement on 19 July 2021 regarding the easing of restrictions.
- The GMCA had confirmed that the devolved adult funding would have no in-year clawback applied to it and work was underway to maximise adult recruitment in the new academic year (with a focus on 'over-delivery').

HR/Staffing

- The College had dealt with 304 positive Covid-19 cases since August 2020 (221 learners and 83 members of staff) and continued to record and report cases.

T Level Update

- The College had agreed to participate in a case study with SQW who had been commissioned by the Department of Education to produce an impact report on the Education and Training Foundation T Level Professional Development Offer (TDLB).
- Good progress was being made in procuring equipment and refurbishing rooms in readiness for the 2021 T Level delivery.

Awards:

- The College had been awarded first place in the e-Assessment Association of National Awards for its 'Innovation in Technology', and had also achieved the new quality mark from the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers.

Bolton College of Medical Science (BCMS)

- A bid had been submitted for funding from the 'Levelling Up Fund' with the outcome awaited. The bid had the support of Bolton Council and Bolton's local Member of Parliament.

Recruitment

- Applications for 2021/22 were currently 9% ahead when compared to the same period in the previous year with offers up by 18%. Apprenticeship achievement overall was likely to reach 70% with 'timely' overall achievement likely to be down due to the impact of the pandemic.

Governor Questions and Comments:

- 'Timely achievement' was a difficult area to be measuring at the current time and these difficulties were not necessarily recognised by the funding bodies. A number of apprentices had exceeded their allocated time and were therefore still on the College's books, but unfunded. The College had, nevertheless, performed brilliantly under the circumstances and the Principal paid tribute to the monumental efforts of the staff.
- Could Members be given a brief summary of the T Level case study?
The College had been working with ESFA and had identified a model for use as a case study.

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

2.2 BANK LOAN AGREEMENT

The Executive Director of Finance presented a report on the Barclays Bank Loan Agreement (LIBOR Transition Variation), highlighting the following key points:-

- The cessation of LIBOR had required an amendment by way of a variation to the loan agreement between the College and Barclays Bank.
- The loan facility had a margin of 1.5% and a floating three-month LIBOR interest rate and was, therefore, affected by the cessation of LIBOR. The bank had issued a variation to this element of the loan and a detailed letter from Barclays Bank had been provided for review by Members.
- There was limited risk and exposure due to the duration of the loan facility that was scheduled for repayment by 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on the Bank Loan Agreement be noted and approval given to the signing of the variation.

2.3 COLLEGE STRATEGIC AND OPERATING PLAN 2021/22

The Principal presented the College's Strategic & Operating Plan for 2021/22 and outlined the following key points:-

- The College had outlined the key objectives for the coming academic year (2021/22) which was developed towards achieving the overall strategic objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan. This reflected the statement of focus for 2021/22 issued by the University to the College with the objectives converted into the College Operating Plan. The 2021/22 Operating Plan, whilst based on 'business as usual', had also specific objectives given the unique circumstances arising from the pandemic.
- The Statement of Focus 2021/22 was based around three key themes – financial, quality, and benefits from the merger, that were all linked to strategic priorities featured within the College Strategic Plan.

It was **RESOLVED** that the College Strategic & Operating Plan 2021/22 be approved for submission to the University Board.

2.4 COVID-19 AND HR ISSUES

The Director of HR presented an overview of the impact of Covid-19 on staffing and safeguarding matters during 2020/21, highlighting the following key points:-

- Every positive Covid-19 case had been handled centrally by the Director of HR to ensure consistency of advice and approach. Since the report, this stood at 322 cases (both staff and learners).
- Overall, there had been no evidence of a concerning rise in sickness absence as a result of the pandemic. Staff affected by the virus had been impacted in different ways, with some colleagues able to continue working; some having short periods of sickness; and a very small number who had required longer periods of absence. A number of staff who were clinically vulnerable/shielding/pregnant were continuing to follow the appropriate guidance, noting that the current Government guidance indicated that shielding staff could return to working on campus in the new academic year.
- Employee relations work had been paused during the pandemic with work continuing on cases which had required investigation or conclusion.
- Recruitment to essential key roles had continued, balancing the need to appoint with the College financial position.
- Staff mental health and wellbeing had remained a key focus throughout the pandemic and a range of different measures were in place.
- The results of a recent anonymised staff survey on the impact of Covid-19 on staff wellbeing had indicated that staff felt supported and had adapted well to working from home. The result showed that 96% of staff felt they had adapted 'very well'; 99% had felt that they had been kept up to date with the College's response to Covid-19; and 90% had felt they had received the right level of contact from their Line Manager during lockdown. Around 80% of staff had indicated that some element of continued remote working would be beneficial, whilst at the same time recognising the benefits to students of having staff on-campus.
- Staff CPD opportunities had continued to be delivered remotely, with high levels of engagement. A psychologist had been engaged to provide one-to-one sessions with colleagues who may be experiencing anxiety returning to work on-campus.
- The College had retained a key focus on safeguarding issues throughout the pandemic. An additional safeguarding officer had been appointed to commence in September 2021.
- The College was planning for a full return to work for all staff in the new academic year (subject to ongoing Government guidance), retaining any Covid-secure measures as deemed necessary and appropriate.
- The Chair referred to a difficulty in recruiting staff in construction, engineering and IT roles, highlighting that a focus should be kept on this area and noted it was a concern throughout the Greater Manchester region. A number of appointments into these areas had recently been made, though a number of shortages remained.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on Covid-19 and HR issues be noted.

2.5 COLLEGE KPI DASHBOARD

The Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience) (University of Bolton) presented the College KPI Dashboard, which detailed the key sustainability indicators and a range of other indicators, based on the areas to be monitored by the ESFA. The report also included benchmark data.

The financial data reflected the budget and forecasts for 2020/21, noting that the College had been advised by the EFSA that its financial health rating was to be upgraded to 'Outstanding'.

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

2.6

2.6 (i) STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

The Deputy Principal presented the Student Protection Plan for 2021/22 which contained minor updates from the previous version in order to ensure that the scope of provision was accurate and inclusive in respect of Non-Prescribed HE. A further change related to the risk status of 'Major accidents and incidents causing disruption to Teaching & Learning' which had moved from low risk to medium risk to reflect any disruption to course delivery as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

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.

2.6 (ii) ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT 2021/22

The Deputy Principal presented the Access & Participation Statement (APS) 2021/22.

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.

The 2021/22 APS contained minor updates to ensure that the scope of provision was accurate and inclusive of Non-Prescribed HE, and with details of the priority given to employability opportunities during the pandemic restrictions.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Access & Participation Statement 2021/22 be approved.

2.7* STARRED ITEMS:-

(i) FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Members had received and reviewed the Financial Regulations, as presented to the Resources Committee on 8 June 2021. The Resources Committee had proposed two revisions related to the OfS Account Direction and Reportable Events.

The Terms of Reference for the Board and its sub-committees had also been updated.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Financial Regulations be approved.

(ii) CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS POLICY

Members had received and reviewed the Conflict of Interests Policy, which required annual review. The Policy had been reviewed by the University.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Conflicts of Interests Policy be approved.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

3.1 Starred Item:

3.1 (i)* GROUP RISK REGISTER

Members had received and reviewed that Risk Management/Risk Register at University and Group level.

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

3.2 GROUP ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Deputy Principal presented the Group Academic Governance Report which included the Group Improvement and Enhancement Plan.

Members were reminded that one of the ways in which the University received assurance from the College with regard to the means and quality of its delivery was through the mechanism of an audit process, overseen by the University's Assistant Vice Chancellor (OfS).

The report highlighted the continued progress being made on the Group academic audit schedule since May 2021, noting that audits at the College had been completed. Overall, the assessments indicated that the progress reports on the Improvement Plans or equivalent could be relied upon.

It was **RESOLVED** that the progress on the schedule of the roll-out of the academic audit activity across the University Group for 2020/21 be noted.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Death of a Member of Staff

The Principal, with regret, formally informed Members of the death of Mr Graham Walmsley. Mr Walmsley was an extremely well-respected member of the College's staff for over 35 years and would be greatly missed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the death of Mr Graham Walmsley be noted and that condolences had been sent by the College to his family and colleagues.

(ii) Retirement of a Member of Staff

The College's Director of Quality, Ms Joanne Green, would shortly retire from the College. The Board expressed its gratitude to Ms Green for her lasting contribution, particularly in the area of wellbeing and mental health.

(iii) Co-opted Member of the Audit Committee

The 12-month probationary period of office of the co-opted Member of the Audit Committee had elapsed. On the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee, it was **RESOLVED** that his appointment to the Audit Committee continue.

(iv) University Graduation 2021

Members viewed the Alternative University Graduation video which had been produced to inform students of the arrangements for the Alternative University Graduation 2021.

4.1 MEETING EVALUATION

The Chair asked Members if they were content that all Members had been given the opportunity to contribute and ask questions during the meeting. Members confirmed that this was the case.

Members observed that the reports provided to the Board were extremely accessible and well-presented. The Committee structure and cycle of reporting was working extremely well and helped to expedite Board meetings in an efficient manner.

Members noted that Student Governor, Mr Josue Losasa, would shortly be leaving College to take up a place at university. Mr Losasa was thanked for his contribution to the Board during his period of office and for representing the student voice.

(All Members and Officers save for Independent Members left the meeting at 5.45pm)

4.2 Reserved Business Minutes

4.3 Financial Update – Budget 2021/22 and Forecast 2022/23

5. SECTION E – FUTURE MEETINGS

5.1 Governors’ Meetings

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

Board Meeting - Tuesday 9 November 2021 at 5.00pm

Committees -

Remuneration Committee – Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 4.00pm

Search & Governance – Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 5.00pm

Resources Committee – Tuesday 28 September 2021 at 5.00pm

Audit Committee – Thursday 14 October 2021 at 5.00pm

Standards & Performance Committee – Tuesday 2 November 2021 at 2.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 6.05pm

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| <p>Chair’s Signature:</p>  <p>Date: 9 November 2021</p> |
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