



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 8 February 2022 – (PART A)

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Boardroom / Video Conference

Members present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Mr Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Miss Rameen Ambar
Mrs Gulnaz Brennan
Dr Adrian Brooks
Mrs Kate Flood
Dr Sue Lomax
Mrs Sharon Martin
Mr Tom Martin
Ms Stephanie Nixon
Mr Tony Unsworth
Baroness Sayeeda Warsi
Dr Gill Waugh
Mr Bill Webster (Principal)

In Attendance:

Mr Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Miss Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)
Mr Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)
Ms Jane Marsh (Executive Director of HR)
Mrs Karen Westsmith (Director of Curriculum and Quality)
Mrs Kate Wallace (Director of Curriculum, Employer and Student Services)
Mr Tim Openshaw (Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience) (UOB)
Miss Jill Hebden (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.

Miss Rameen Ambar was welcomed to her first Board meeting as a Student Governor.

1.2* APPOINTMENT OF SHARON MARTIN TO THE COLLEGE BOARD

Members had previously considered the appointment of Mrs Sharon Martin to Board membership.

It was **RESOLVED** that the appointment of Mrs Sharon Martin as a Member of the Board be ratified.

Mrs Sharon Martin was welcomed to her first Board meeting as an Independent Governor.

1.3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Professor George Holmes, Chris Ball and Fardean Farooq.

1.4 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.

1.5 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.

1.6* MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

Minutes of the Meeting held 9 November 2021 - general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 9 November 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).

1.7 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.

1.8 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

1.8 (i) Resources Committee of 18 January 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 18 January 2022

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

1.8 (ii) Standards & Performance Committee of 19 January 22

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 19 January 2022

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

The Chair of the Board noted the discussions around English and maths that had taken place at both the Resources and Standards and Performance Committees and invited Board members to raise any questions.

The Chair of the Standards and Performance Committee noted the disappointing English and maths results, that had been discussed at length during the recent Committee meeting, and acknowledged that a large number of learners arrived at the College without English and maths GCSE's which reflected a wider issue of concern.

The Director of Curriculum, Employer & Student Services provided the following update on English and maths:

- The position required contextualising with Bolton being under lockdown/local restrictions more than others within Greater Manchester.
- Following the MIDES report it was recognised that improvements were needed. English and maths self-assessed as Grade 3 and the process of intensive support had commenced.
- Strategic planning of the curriculum and delivery model were to take place and would include how attendance could be improved with the increase in delivery hours supporting that improvement.

Governor Questions:

- How receptive would the local authority and schools be to discuss and work together to address the matter?
The College was proud to be an inclusive education provider and would welcome working with schools and others in order to provide a complete 'wrap around' learning provision. Support for this can also be provided by the University.
- Would Ofsted see COVID-19 restrictions and safeguarding learning as a valid reason for the results?
The data may be a reason and driver for Ofsted to conduct a 'deep dive' into the results and they would look at what the position is now.
- The College's added value had been in line with similar colleges, why has there been a sudden move backwards?
The lockdown has had a heavy part to play in this including the decision made to keep English and maths delivery online in order to maintain 'bubbles' and safeguard learners.

Plans have already been put in place to make changes e.g. increasing the delivery hours and delivering to tutor groups as opposed to attainment level. These plans have been included in the Quality Improvement Plans for both English and maths.

- Do the KPI's not give an early warning signal in order for the College to have acted sooner?

The overarching focus was to ensure the safety of staff and students and the College made a calculated decision to move to online provision with the likely result of a deterioration in outcomes. The College knew the result would not be good and it is worse than expected but we stand by the decision for English and maths delivery to remain online. It was a decision that was supported by the Board but is not the outcome that the College wanted.

This had been raised at the University via the KPI dashboard with a view to looking at support options available from the University in reviewing the data and to be included in the intensive support provision.

The Principal noted that English and maths attainment continued to be a concern that would improve but would not be fully resolved this academic year.

The Board acknowledged the seriousness of the English and maths position and one that would continue to be monitored. It was a fundamental issue across the borough that warranted cross agency action.

ACTION:

- Production of an English and maths action plan.
- English and maths update to be included as a Board standing agenda item.
- Consider a borough wide workshop, facilitated by colleagues at the UoB to address the core problems.

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS

2.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Impact:

- Although the number of positive cases remained high in Bolton it was in a better position as numbers continued to decrease.
- The College had not yet seen the longer term impact on learners although there had been an increase in mental health referrals.
- Learner enrichment events and activities had resumed with over 600 learners having attended the Anderton Centre and taken part in outdoor pursuit and team building activities.

Section 28 Designation Review:

The ESFA and FE Commissioner's Office had made a review visit one year into the merger. The College had received notification of the 3 year review that would take place on 22 and 23 March. It was envisaged that the Chair of the Board and Committee Chairs would be invited to take part in the review.

Staffing, Recruitment & Pay:

The College faced the challenge of recruiting to key areas due to higher wages being offered within industry. Although the College had experienced challenges it had still made good quality recruitments. The long term concern was T-Level staffing for next year.

Governor Questions:

- Why has the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary been reduced to £67k?
The bursary is an allocation given to the College and the reduction was put in place by the funding body. The College has put in a growth bid for an additional £20k.
- Is the reduced period to self-isolate helping?
There has been no marked difference noted yet, with the majority of cases still testing positive past day 5-6. There has been no significant delivery loss or impact due to isolation since the return in September.

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

2.2 FINANCIAL UPDATE INCLUDING LOAN COVENANTS

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

- The College had received confirmation that there would be no funding clawback or need to over deliver for the 2020/21 AEB contract and that there would also be no clawback on the T-Level under recruitment.
- Following the conclusion of the LEO1 forecast update, the operating surplus had increased to £799k from £762k.
- The funding rate increase in real terms was 3% on half of the College's provision with no increase to the apprenticeship or adult funding rates.

Pay Award Proposal:

The College had seen an increased risk to staff recruitment and retention due to a deferred pay award and proposed the following:

- The current minimum wage to increase on the 1 April to £9.50. This increment would impact on the lowest paid staff and would mean that they joined the next level of the pay scale.
- To have a tapered pay award ensuring the lowest paid members of staff were provided with a higher percentage increase. The majority of staff would see a pay increase of 2% with the proposal to be effective from 1 April 2022.

- The proposal included a similar pay deal in April 2023. The proposal from April 2023 would be to increase the lowest paid staff to £10 an hour and include another tapered pay award.

The pay award for this year had been budgeted for in the forecast whilst the College retained a strong cash position. A revised forecast would be shared with the Resources Committee and Board following LEO2.

Governor Questions:

- What is the view from Union representatives on the proposed pay award?
The headline thoughts on the pay award have been shared with Union representatives who were receptive and understood the context that the College was operating in.
- Has there been any news on the impact the increase in utility bills will have on colleges?
The AoC were lobbying the government with benchmark information provided by colleges, which may be part of the reason behind the increase in funding rates.

It was **RESOLVED** that the:

- Positive outcome regarding AEB funding/clawback for 2020/21 be noted.
- Maintenance of the Operating Surplus of £799k in 2021/22 be noted.
- April 2022 pay award to staff be approved.
- Potential permanent change to the Operating Leverage banking covenant be noted.
- Potential new increase to funding for 16-19 for 2022/23 be noted.

2.3 COLLEGE SELF ASSESSMEN REPORT (SAR) 2020/21

The Chair expressed his thanks to the Board Members who took part in the Self Assessments noting that there was a Board Member present at each panel.

The Director of Curriculum and Quality presented the College Self-Assessment Report and outlined the following key points:

- The purpose of the SAR was to identify the College's key strengths and areas for improvement that were aligned to Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF).
- The process of producing the SAR involved staff at all levels, with curriculum SARs informing the overall College SAR.
- The SAR detailed information about the College and the learner profile, overall grades, quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and provision for learners with high needs.
- There had been a merged process for the College and Community Learning SARs to allow the departments to evaluate the whole provision and shared planning in readiness of the integration of both contracts.
- The College continued to self-assess as Grade 2 overall. There were four departments self-assessing as Grade 1, nine areas at Grade 2 and three at Grade 3.

Governor Questions:

- How was the College further enhancing the pedagogy of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring teaching staff skills are at the cutting edge of their vocational area?

This is something that the College can do by linking further with the University pedagogy events and strategies. The College has access to University events and communication has been circulated with College staff attending. The University will note the College academic calendar and look to schedule events to increase College attendance. After half term, the industry placements for staff will resume.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2020/21 be approved.

(Karen Westsmith left the meeting at 6.30pm)

2.4 SAFEGUARDING REPORT AND ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Director Executive Director of HR presented the annual overview of safeguarding work during 2020/21 and planned developments for 2021/22. The following key points were highlighted:

- The safeguarding team had two additional safeguarding officers.
- The key safeguarding policies had been reviewed by the Board in November 2021 and the College continued to take direction from Bolton Local Authority for the structure of its policies and procedures.
- During 2020/21, 471 safeguarding cases had been recorded compared to 397 in the previous year.
- Mental health cases had risen to 166 that ranged from self-harm, anxiety and depression.
- External to the College there had been a rise in young people being involved in criminal exploitation and carrying weapons.
- Achievement rates remained high across all safeguarding cases, 88% in 2020/21 compared to 86.5% in 2019/20.
- There had been a significant amount of multi-agency work including the Encompass Initiative where the Greater Manchester Police made the College aware of any domestic violence incidents that affected learners who attended the College.
- The College had secured funding working with a Greater Manchester trauma group of ten clinical psychologists, one of which would support and work with College learners and help with more complex cases.

Governor Questions:

- Should the College as a whole start to look at post pandemic strategies?
Yes, this can be picked up through the learning assessment strategies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the:

- i) Safeguarding Report is noted and the actions endorsed.
- ii) Annual Safeguarding Assurance Statement for the University is signed.

2.5 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. The main areas of risk related to English and maths had previously been discussed at length.

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

2.6* STARRED ITEMS

(i) 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 endorsed.

(ii) MID-YEAR HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

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, mental health first-aid training and COVID-19 implications.

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

(iii) 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 HE programme for students who completed their courses in 2020/21. Programme Plans for the College Non-Prescribed HE provision were included for the first time for 2020/21 and were evaluated the same as those for the University.

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

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

3.1 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2022/23

Members had received and reviewed the draft College calendar of meetings for 2022/23.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Calendar of Meetings 2022/23 be approved.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked Sharon Martin and Rameen Ambar for attending the Board meeting.

(All Members and Officers save for Independent Members left the meeting at 6.45pm)

5. SECTION E – FUTURE MEETINGS

5.1 Governors' Meetings

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

Board Meeting - Tuesday 5 April 2022 at 5.00pm

Committees -

Resources Committee – Tuesday 22 March 2022 at 5.00pm

Standards & Performance Committee – Wednesday 16 March 2022 at 2.00pm

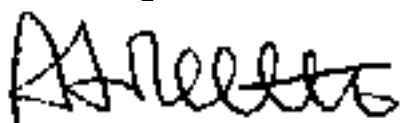
Audit Committee – Thursday 24 March 2022 at 5.00pm

Search & Governance – Tuesday 21 June 2022 at 5.00pm

Remuneration Committee – Wednesday 21 September 2022 at 4.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 6.58pm

Chair's Signature:



Date: 5 April 2022