



MINUTES

BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 9 February 2021 – (PART A)

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Via Zoom Conference Call

Members present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Mr Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Dr Chris Ball
Mrs Gulnaz Brennan
Dr Adrian Brooks
Ms Rebecca Davison
Mrs Kate Flood
Mr Dave Haslam
Professor George Holmes DL
Dr Kondal Reddy Kandadi
Dr Sue Lomax
Ms Stephanie Nixon
Mr Tony Unsworth
Dr Gill Waugh
Mr Bill Webster (Principal)

In Attendance:

Mr Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Ms Joanne Green (Director of Quality)
Miss Deborah Bradburn (Group Governance Manager/Clerk)
Ms Jane Marsh (Director of HR)
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.

Dr Adrian Brooks was welcomed to his first meeting as a Board Member and introductions were made.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Mr Luke Jones.

An apology for absence from Mr Tim Openshaw (Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning & Student Experience) (UoB)) by way of illness was also noted and Members sent their best wishes to Mr Openshaw for a speedy recovery.

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.

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. However, it was proposed that Item 2.8* (iii) (HE Self-Evaluation Document) be removed from the Agenda and to be considered by the Standards & Performance Committee, with presentation to the Board thereafter.

ACTION: Item 2.8* (iii) (HE Self-Evaluation Document) to be removed from the Agenda, for consideration by the Standards & Performance Committee at its next meeting.

Clerk

1.5* MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

1.5* (i) Minutes of the Meeting held 10 November 2020 –general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 10 November 2020 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 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 19 January 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 19 January 2021.

The fall in staff sickness absence was highlighted which was possibly due to staff working from home during the pandemic and continuing to work rather than call in sick.

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

1.7 (ii) Standards & Performance Committee of 20 January 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 20 January 2021.

It was noted that overall achievement during 2019/20 was strong, taking into account the impact of the pandemic.

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

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS

2.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

- Conditions remained challenging due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the frequently changing guidance from DfE and other bodies. Educational settings had been instructed to remain closed (apart from essential staff access) until at least 8 March 2021 and the College continued to deliver remote learning.
- Under the current guidelines, Colleges were expected to provide lateral flow COVID-19 testing to all returning staff and students, with staff being tested twice weekly. The testing would be provided by an external organisation using the College's facilities. The College was also working closely with Bolton Council in respect of using Council community sites for the lateral flow testing of staff.
- Planning work with the curriculum areas was underway.
- The most recent move to online learning had received feedback from students with regard to digital access and a large number of laptops had been provided to students where required. The DfE had pledged to fund a further 258 laptops for student use.

Funding

- Funding for 16-18 year olds would be unaffected.
- The majority of funding for Adult Learning was received from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) who would provide an update by the end of March 2021. Indications were that GMCA would continue to support adult learners with in-year clawback of adult learning funding unlikely.

AoC Beacon Awards

- The College's joint submission with Hopwood Hall College in the Wellbeing/Mental Health category had finished in the top three. It was noted that the work in this area was having an extremely positive impact on staff and students and was seen as national best practice.

T Level Capital Funding

- The College's bid for additional capital funding for the construction of additional buildings had been rejected. A meeting had been scheduled with the ESFA to further understand the grounds for rejection, noting that there was still an option to participate in a further bidding round.

Governor Question:

- What was the potential impact of the rejection of T Level funding?

Although the rejection of funding was disappointing, the College would nevertheless find a way of delivering T Levels.

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

2.2 SKILLS FOR JOBS (FE WHITE PAPER)

The Principal presented the report on the FE White Paper launched on 21 January 2021 entitled 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Opportunities for Learning & Growth'.

The Chair stated that as this was a key document, it would be the substantive item on the agenda for the Governor Training Day on 20 April 2021 in order to discuss and fully understand the implications. Guest speakers would also be invited to attend the training session to help Members navigate their way through the detail of the White Paper.

The Paper had a focus on the pivotal role of further and technical education in helping people to achieve the skills required to secure good jobs. The following points were highlighted:

- The White Paper was the 'road map' for the sector which identified a number of areas which still required further consultation. It was not yet a definitive document.
- Key aspects of the White Paper included a review of funding and the funding system, and employer engagement. It was anticipated that the Paper would lead to more control, involvement and partnership working at local level. The College was already well positioned and connected in this respect.
- The White Paper also had a significant emphasis on higher technical education and partnerships with universities, colleges and schools. Again, the College was already ahead of the game. The Paper would provide opportunities to widen the College's collaboration with other organisations and to review its technical qualification offering with the University.
- The White Paper also emphasised the importance of governance (including the centrality of governance, governor training, and effectiveness/oversight of governance arrangements).
- There were references in the White Paper to a campaign to recruit more FE teachers. However, unless pay levels in the FE sector relatively to the schools sector could be significantly addressed, recruitment would remain a challenge.
- The Principal observed that Vice Chancellors in general had recently become more interested in exploring collaboration opportunities with colleges as pathways to progression. Although the College was already part of the University Group, it was important to maintain a focus on partnership opportunities in the region.
- A Member observed that the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce was well placed to pilot the local skills plan and that the College's numerous links in the Northwest could be used to its advantage.

Governor Questions:

- Were there any opportunities for a closer collaboration with Bolton 6th Form College?
Partnerships with 6th form colleges in general did not appear to feature prominently in the White Paper, despite the pilots with T Levels involving 6th form colleges in many cases. Bolton 6th Form College currently offered similar vocational qualifications to those offered by the College and the chance of a closer collaboration should not be ruled out.

- The White Paper presented many opportunities. Did the College have the necessary staff resources to follow up these opportunities?
The opportunities and the resource implications would be explored at the Governor Training Day on 20 April 2021.

ACTION: White Paper: Opportunities and the resource implications would be explored at the Governor Training Day on 20 April 2021.

Clerk

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on the Skills for Jobs White Paper be noted.

2.3 FINANCIAL UPDATE INCLUDING LOAN COVENANTS

The Executive Director of Finance presented a Financial Update, highlighting the following key points:

- The Resources Committee had, at its meeting held 19 January 2021, considered a detailed financial update which included consideration of LEO1 and cashflow. The budget had assumed an operating surplus of £420k. The Resources Committee had resolved to carry out further work and ensure covenant compliance. The covenant related to operating leverage (driven by income & expenditure performance) and the operating position was required to be improved by 31 July 2021.
- The budgeted operating surplus of £420k (before FRS changes) had been revised to an operating deficit of -£2k.
- Corrective action would include a granular review of non-pay costs, with any budget overspend requiring approval at Executive Board level.
- The EFSA had invited the College to bid for additional growth for 16-19 year old learners. The process of submitting business interruption claims for the impact of COVID-19 had also opened.
- There was scope for developments around apprenticeships and the ADA (artificial intelligence) initiative, as well as other projects such as auto marking. Members were interested in learning more about the commercialisation of ADA and it was proposed that a demonstration of ADA could be given at the Governor Training Day on 20 April 2021.
- The College's cash position was strong and did not require in-year loan support from the University. There was currently a bank balance of c. £4m at the end of January 2021 (albeit with commitments including the TPS grant and an extension on CapEx funding).
- A revised financial forecast would be produced and shared with the Board via the January Management Accounts, and would show a return to surplus with all three covenants met.
- The budget did not include any provision for a pay award. This would be considered as a priority in 2021/22 budgets.
- The ESFA had allowed some learners to be carried forward for funding into the current year, this would mean an additional £0.5m of revenue in the current year rather than as lagged funding.
- The Vice Chancellor (UoB) stated that he was extremely pleased with how the College's finances were operating, bearing in mind the significant expenditure on COVID-19 safety measures which had not been included in budget forecasts. Without these extra (but essential) costs, the budget may not have required revision. The Vice Chancellor also referred to the pension costs and back office arrangements which must be kept on the radar.

Governor Questions:

- What would the financial surplus look like, and what was the 'comfort level'?
The non-pay improvements would be c. £300-£330k and potential growth would be c. £120k. This should bring the budget back in line with the original forecast. There may also be a significant receipt from the business interruption grant. COVID-19 was likely to impact as much in 2020/21 as it had in 2019/20 and there was no rationale to spend more than in the previous year.
- Was there confidence that all the necessary controls were in place to address any 'surprise' factors?
Yes. Every purchase order over £5k required the approval of the Executive Director of Finance.
- What was the percentage of the non-pay cost savings (of c. £300-£330k) in relation to the annual non-pay costs?
This was around 10%.

ACTION: ADA demonstration to be included at the Governor Training Day on 20 April 2021 or at a future Special Meeting of the Board.

Clerk

It was **RESOLVED** that the Financial Update (including loan covenants) be noted.

2.4 COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2019/20

The Director of 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, 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 document 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.
- The grade profile showed that the College was self-assessing as grade 2, or 'good overall'. Three areas that had self-assessed as outstanding maintained the same grade, and three areas had improved from grade 2 to grade 1 (with all other areas, with one exception, maintain grade 2 level).
- Foundation Learning was the only area self-assessing at grade 3 ('requires improvement').
- It was noted that the College had continued to look after its vulnerable learners (of which there were 500+) despite the challenges of the pandemic, and to provide them with additional support.
- Members commented that the report provided a clear representation of the College's current position, presented in a clear and helpful style.
- The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to everyone, including Governors, who participated in the panels.

Governor Questions:

- The report did not appear to state the source and the date of the demographics. Would this information normally be included in the report?
Yes. This information was contained within the report but it would be made more prominent.

- Should the report include reference to the College's aim to become 'outstanding' in all areas (not just curriculum areas), and also business engagement?
It was agreed that these points would be included in the report.

ACTION: Report to be updated to make source and date of demographic more prominent within the report and to strengthen references to partnership and business engagement.

DIR Q

It was **RESOLVED** that the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2019/20 be further scrutinised by the Standards & Performance Committee.

2.5 SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The Director of HR & Student Services Manager presented the annual overview of safeguarding work during 2019/20 and planned developments for 2020/21.

The College had special responsibility for safeguarding children and adults at risk and had four key policies in place to protect these groups:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Children (0-18)
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk
- Abuse of Trust
- Personal & Professional Relationships at Work

The following key points were highlighted:

- The College had a Safeguarding Team led by the Deputy Principal and included Governor representation.
- Staff training continued to be available to all staff and volunteers, notwithstanding the pandemic.
- The College's approach to safeguarding mirrored that of the local authority (as required).
- During 2019/20, 397 safeguarding cases had been recorded compared to 300 in 2018/19.
- Mental health cases had risen by 82 in 2019/20 – a significant increase linked in part to the pandemic.
- The College worked with perpetrators/alleged perpetrators of sexual, domestic and IT abuse (mainly adults).
- Achievement rates remained high across all safeguarding cases (86.5% in 2019/20 compared to 85% in 2018/19).
- The College continued to work with multiple agencies across the borough.
- The report highlighted actions for development throughout 2020/21 including the continued development of Mental Health First Aider Training, Trauma Informed work and the Knife Crime Project.
- The report included two learner case studies to help Members understand the unique nature and complexities of safeguarding work and how interventions could impact on the lives of an individual.
- The report detailed the high level of support being provided to the safeguarding mentors, which Governors found reassuring.

Governor Questions:

- Could Mental Health First Aider training (currently delivered in-house) be embedded into the curriculum?
The College had obtained funding via the STRIVE bid to train a staff member to deliver Mental Health First Aider training and 25 members of staff had completed

their training, with a further 25 staff members to be trained. The potential to roll this out into the curriculum as an income generating initiative would be further explored.

- Was there any particular reason why there were clusters of safeguarding cases amongst Asian/Pakistani students?
This was largely a result of cultural issues and the College worked closely with students and their parents to mediate any issues.
- What percentage of the College's students were from a BAME background?
It was confirmed that around 52% of students were in this category.

ACTION: Further consideration to be given to embedding Mental Health First Aider Training into the curriculum as an income generating initiative, ensuring there was no conflict with Alliance Learning in terms of the delivery.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Safeguarding Report be noted and the actions therein endorsed.

**DIR HR/
DP**

2.6 COLLEGE KPI DASHBOARD

Members received for information the College KPI Dashboard, which detailed the key sustainability indicators and a range of other indicators, which had been selected based on the areas to be monitored by the ESFA.

The financial elements reflected the original budget and showed an improvement on income from the apprenticeship budget, noting however that this increase compensated for losses in other areas where income had been affected by the pandemic.

The cash balance as at January 2021 was healthy at just over £4m although the stress on agency payments and pay costs remained.

The report had been updated with the most recently available benchmark data.

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

2.7 GOVERNOR TRAINING (verbal update)

The Clerk provided a verbal update with regard to Governor Training, highlighting the following key points:

- The Board Member Training day on 20 April 2021 would include a session by the AoC on the White Paper.
- The Education & Training Foundation offered training online via podcasts and webinars; further details would be provided to Governors in due course.
- AoC were also offering a Governance Masterclass on 23 February 2021 on the topic of preparing for the Education Inspection Framework and the key Ofsted governance requirements. Further details would be circulated to Governors.
- Members were reminded to notify the Clerk of any training they had found beneficial and this would be added to the register of training.

ACTION: Details of Governor Training as outline above to be circulated to Members.

Clerk

It was **RESOLVED** that the verbal update on Governor Training be noted.

2.8* 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

This item was removed from the agenda, for consideration by the Standards & Performance Committee at its next meeting and for presentation to the Board thereafter.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

3.1 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Members had received and reviewed the draft College calendar of meetings for 2021/2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Calendar of Meetings 2021/2022 be approved.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Meeting Evaluation Questionnaire

It was proposed that going forward, rather than asking Members to complete a questionnaire they could be asked to give brief verbal feedback. Members agreed that they were content with this approach, commenting that the meetings were open, inclusive, efficient clearly structured, and with an agenda emphasis on financial performance, maintenance of standards, and providing pastoral care. Members felt they were encouraged to participate and to question and challenge where necessary.

(ii) Student Members

It was noted that this was the last meeting of the current Student Member, Mr Luke Jones, and Members asked that their thanks be passed to Luke. The Clerk would look at ways in which the Student Members could be encouraged to attend and participate fully in Board meetings.

(iii) Deputy Vice Chancellor (UoB)

Members were informed that the University's Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr Kondal Kandadi, would shortly be leaving the University to take up a new opportunity overseas. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, sincerely thanked Dr Kandadi for his valuable contribution to the College.

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

4.1 RESERVED BUSINESS MINUTES:

(i) Board (Part B)

Agreed that: the minutes are approved as a correct record.

(ii) Resources (Part B)

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 19 January 2021 were received and noted.

5. SECTION E – FUTURE MEETINGS

5.1 Governors' Meetings

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

Board Meeting - Tuesday 20 April 2021 at 5.00pm

Committees -

Standards & Performance – Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 2.00pm

Resources – Thursday 23 March 2021 at 5.00pm

Audit - Thursday 25 March 2021 at 5.00pm

Search & Governance – Wednesday 2 June 2021 at 3.00pm

Remuneration – Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 4.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 6.48pm

Chair's Signature:



Date: 20 April 2021