

MINUTES



BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

Minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 20 April 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
Ms Rebecca Davison
Mr Fardean Farooq
Mrs Kate Flood
Mr Dave Haslam
Professor George Holmes DL
Dr Sue Lomax
Mr Josue Losasa
Ms Stephanie Nixon
Mr Tony Unsworth
Dr Gill Waugh
Mr Bill Webster (Principal)

In Attendance:

Mr Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
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.

Mr Fardean Farooq was welcomed to his first meeting as a Student Governor.

1.2* APPOINTMENT OF BARONESS WARSI TO THE COLLEGE BOARD

Members had previously considered the appointment of Baroness Sayeeda Warsi to Board membership.

It was **RESOLVED** that the appointment of Baroness Sayeeda Warsi as a Member of the Board be ratified.

1.3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs Gulnaz Brennan, Dr Adrian Brooks and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi.

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 February 2021 – confidential and general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 9 February 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 most items were either completed, included on the agenda or carried forward to the next meeting.

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

1.8 MINUTES (SUB-COMMITTEES):

1.8 (i) Standards & Performance Committee of 16 March 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 16 March 2021.

It was noted that as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, low level entry learners (community learning and ESOL (English and Maths) in particular) were experiencing difficulty due to the lack of face to face learning.

The College was benefiting from trainee teachers provided on placement by the University on an ongoing basis (including support provided via the STRIVE Project). The University was happy to provide additional trainee teacher support over the summer period if required to assist with 'catch-up' sessions.

Governor Question:

- Were there any issues with Zoom 'ghosting', where students logged into a teaching session to receive an attendance mark but then turned off the camera? Staff had received training on how to address issues around student non-engagement. The problem appeared to be worse in the lower levels of learning and development.
- What marketing was underway to promote apprenticeships and available grants to employers?
The College's marketing of this was well underway and included direct emails to business owners.
- What arrangements were in place when an apprentice stopped working for an employer?
Attempts would be made to place the apprentice with another employer or to convert the apprentice to a full-time programme of learning. New employers had been found for the majority of apprentices who had lost their jobs during the pandemic.

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

1.8 (ii) Resources Committee of 23 March 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 23 March 2021.

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

1.8 (iii) Audit Committee of 25 March 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 25 March 2021.

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

- Compliance with the OfS General Ongoing Conditions of Registration (GOCOR) had been reviewed across the Group by the internal auditors and had concluded that the College was very well positioned in relation to this.
- An internal audit review into the management of sub-contracted arrangements had indicated a high level of confidence in those arrangements.
- The internal audit reviews had all resulted in very low level findings, and all were low-risk (particularly when compared to other institutions); this gave the Audit Committee a high level of assurance.

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

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS

2.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented the twelfth 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 had physically re-opened to staff and students on 8 March 2021 with blended delivery continuing where appropriate and with the majority of English and Maths remaining online. Where possible, staff were working on-campus on a rota basis. The College was offering asymptomatic testing (AST)

on-site and to date the facility had tested over 2000 people (all of whom had tested negative). In line with Government recommendations, from 12 April the College had scaled back the AST to make this available only for those students who were unable to self-test at home.

- Home testing (LFT) was being encouraged, with testing kits being issued to staff and students. It was noted that the ESFA had indicated it would be monitoring the statistics on LFT. Over the Easter period, only 2 positive cases had been reported and there were no positive cases in the College at the current time.
- Face to face teaching had resumed, with the exception of English and Maths.
- A key priority would be around 'catch-up' and assessments, and clarity was awaited from the awarding bodies with regard to assessments. Staff were making every effort to ensure that all students could complete in-year. GCSE exams would be teacher-assessed; however, there were several cohorts of English and Maths students who had fallen behind and work was underway to identify and provide additional support to those students. As well as providing extra support to assist with grades, extra support would also aid progression to more advanced level courses.

HR/Staffing

- The College had dealt with 207 positive COVID-19 cases since August 2020 (142 learners and 65 members of staff).

Safeguarding

- A full safeguarding service had continued to be provided during periods of lockdown, with students being supported in terms of their wellbeing, mental health and digital accessibility.

Adult Education Budget – GMCA Devolved Adult Funding

- The allocation letter for 2021/22 had been received and it appeared that the budget would be close to the current year's allocation with no clawback or significant reductions. Further detailed guidance was yet to be provided.

T Level Update

- The College's bid for additional capital funding for the construction of additional buildings had been rejected and the College had submitted a further bid, the outcome of which was awaited. The College had successfully applied to become a partner Centre for Professional & Teaching Excellence for the Education Training Foundation (ETF) and would work with partner colleges to develop CPD content for the T Levels in Health & Education. The College had also been successful in its application to lead a four College Teacher Resource Improvement Project (TRIP) for the T Level in Health.

Governor Question:

- What was driving the decision to keep the majority of English and Maths teaching online?
The decision was based on the fact that cohorts were streamed and mixed for English and Maths, and to avoid mixing learning 'bubbles' the safest option was to keep this online. It was worth noting that online learning, in some cases, had produced better results than face to face teaching.
- Could previous GCSE exam papers be provided to students to assist with English and Maths?
This had been the general practice and would be extended to English and Maths.

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 highlighted the following key points:-

- The College had received formal confirmation that there would be no clawback of funding for Adults in-year, despite there being a fall in recruitment. Indications were that Adult Education Funding devolved from GMCA would receive the original core funding, with scope for growth, and that certain Level 3 elements would be fully funded. However, further details were awaited.
- The in-year financial forecast was an operating surplus of £421k. The year-end cash position was strong at £2.68m and the College was forecast to pass the banking covenants as at 31 July 2021.
- Pay costs were slowing down with several vacancies being carried. The Executive Team continued to scrutinise each request for staffing on an individual basis.
- A review of non-pay costs had resulted in budgets being reduced by >£300k.
- The Chair referred to ADA and the potential for its commercialisation with JISC, noting that contract details were expected from JISC in the near future.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Financial Update including Loan Covenants be noted.

2.3 ACHIEVEMENT RATES 2019/20 & PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2020/21

The Deputy Principal presented the report on Achievement Rates 2019/20 & Performance Targets 2020/21 which was presented annually to the Board and which outlined the following key points:-

- Class-based Adults and Young People – the overall achievement rate for 2019/20 was 88.86%.
- Apprenticeships – the overall achievement rate for 2019/20 was 69.7%.
- It was noted that the results were largely teacher-assessed, observed through external methods of quality assurance.
- It was important to bear in mind the large numbers of low level learners who achieved lower rates than those on Levels 3 and 4.
- Last year, a cohort of students was unable to achieve for a variety of reasons and these had been rolled into the current year. Efforts were underway to ensure their achievements were fulfilled and would be undertaken in conjunction with the awarding bodies to ensure that quality of standards and provision was maintained.
- The Chair asked that the Board's appreciation be noted for the hard work of all staff and the dedication of all students in their achievements during a particularly difficult and challenging year.
-

Governor Questions:

- Was there anything further that could be done with regards to Levels 1 and 2 to support low level learners, using additional resources if necessary?
Work was underway. The College had access to a 'catch-up' fund to support learners at all levels.

ACTION: The Standards & Performance Committee to be provided with a bullet point list of actions/initiatives implemented to support low level learners.

(Deputy Principal)

It was **RESOLVED** that the Report on Achievement Rates 2019/20 & Performance Targets 2020/21 be noted.

2.4 COLLEGE KPI DASHBOARD

The Executive Director of Finance presented the College KPI Dashboard, which detailed the key sustainability indicators and a range of other indicators, selected based on the areas to be monitored by the ESFA.

The financial benchmarks mirrored LEO2 and these would be amended to incorporate the FE Commissioner's recommended benchmarks for the next KPI report.

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

2.5* STARRED ITEMS:-

(i) 2020/21 FUNDING ALLOCATION

Members had received and reviewed the report on the 2020/21 Funding Allocation.

The College had an increase in net baseline funding of £416,984 in respect of ESFA 16-19 funding, in anticipation of growth in learner numbers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2020/21 Funding Allocation be noted.

(ii) STANDARDS & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members had received and reviewed Standards & Performance Committee Terms of Reference.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Standards & Performance Committee Terms of Reference be approved and recommended to the University Board of Governors for approval at its meeting to be held 11 May 2021.

(iii) COMMONALITY OF INTERESTS POLICY

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the Commonality of Interests Policy be noted.

(iv) HE SELF-EVALUATION DOCUMENT

Members had received and reviewed the report on HE Self-Evaluation which provided an update on the College's submission to the University of Programme Plans to evaluate each HE programme for students who had completed their courses in 2019/20.

The following Programme Plans had been completed:

- HNC Construction and the Built Environment – Civil Engineering
- HNC Construction and the Built Environment – Construction
- HND Computing
- HNC General Engineering
- HND Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- HND Public Services

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

(v) OfS PUBLIC INTEREST PRINCIPLES

Members had received and reviewed the report on OfS Public Interest Principles - Value for Money which provided assurance that the College was taking all appropriate steps to comply with the Office for Students (OfS) Ongoing Conditions of Registration, specifically with regard to ensuring College HE students received value for money.

Members noted the statement attached to the report which gave this assurance.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on OfS Public Interest Principles be noted.

(vi) GENDER PAY REPORT

Members had received and reviewed the Gender Pay Report.

The College was required to publish a report on the gender pay gap. The College pay gap for 2020 was 9.66% (mean) which was significantly below the national average of 15.5% for the same period. The College median figure had also improved from 15.34% to 11.71%.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Gender Pay Report be noted.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

3.1 COLLEGE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF FOCUS

The Principal presented the College Annual Statement of Focus for 2021/2022, which identified the priorities which would inform the College's Strategic Plan for 2021/2022 as agreed by the Executive Board and the Resources Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the College Annual Statement of Focus be noted.

3.2 SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Director of Human Resources presented the Safeguarding Assurance Statement.

The College, along with the wider Group subsidiaries, was required to submit a data return to the University on an annual basis in order that the University could be assured with regard to the effective implementation of safeguarding and safeguarding responsibilities.

This would be included in the annual safeguarding report going forward.

The report contained data for the period from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020 on safeguarding incidents; staff training; policies and procedures and escalations of significant incidents.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Safeguarding Assurance Statement for the period 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020 be approved for signature by the Chair prior to being submitted to the University.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) At the Governor Training session prior to the meeting, Members had agreed to support the Rainbow Flag Award. The Award was a national quality assurance framework for schools and colleges which focused on a whole organisation approach to LGBT+ inclusion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the College support the Rainbow Flag Award initiative.

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.

(All Members and Officers save for Independent Members left the meeting at 5.55pm)

4.2 RESERVED BUSINESS MINUTES:

5. SECTION E – FUTURE MEETINGS

5.1 Governors' Meetings

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

Board Meeting - Tuesday 29 June 2021 at 5.00pm

Committees -

Resources – Tuesday 8 June 2021 at 5.00pm

Audit - Thursday 10 June 2021 at 5.00pm

Standards & Performance – Tuesday 22 June 2021 at 2.00pm

Search & Governance – Tuesday 22 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 6.02pm

Chair's Signature:



Date: 29 June 2021