

MINUTES



BOLTON COLLEGE BOARD

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

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Boardroom / Video Conference

Members present:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Chair)
Mr Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Dr Chris Ball
Mrs Gulnaz Brennan
Ms Rebecca Davison
Mr Fardean Farooq
Mrs Kate Flood
Dr Sue Lomax
Mr Tom Martin
Mrs Sharon Martin
Dr Tony Unsworth
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)
Ms Jane Marsh (Executive Director of HR and Estates)
Mrs Karen Westsmith (Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality)
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 5.12pm. He confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Sayeeda Warsi, Kate Wallace, Adrian Brooks and Tim Openshaw.

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.

Declarations of interest were made under items 4.4 and 4.5.

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 28 June 2022 - general publication

The minutes of the meeting held 28 June 2022 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) Search & Governance Committee of 17 October 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 17 October 2022.

The Clerk noted that recruitment would commence this month for a new Student Governor.

The Chair informed Members that Stephanie Nixon had resigned from the Board. The Board thanked Stephanie for her dedication and invaluable input to the role. Recruitment to the new vacancy had been discussed at the Search and Governance Committee.

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

1.7 (ii) Remuneration Committee of 17 October 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 17 October 2022.

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

1.7 (iii) Resources Committee of 17 October 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 17 October 2022.

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

Additional Item: Standards and Performance Committee of 1 November 2022

The Chair of the Standards and Performance Committee informed the Board that the Committee had completed a lengthy and robust review of the achievement and performance targets and was satisfied with the detailed information provided.

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS

2.1 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

External Environment:

- There had been an extended period of uncertainty and change within the political arena and a new Skills Minister had been appointed.
- A new Chief Executive had been appointed at Bolton Council.

Office for National Statistics (ONS):

- The ONS re-classification review outcome was delayed until the end of November; the delay was attributed to the changes in DfE leadership.

(Professor George Holmes joined the meeting at 5.28pm)

Financial Update:

- The annual review with Barclays bank took place with the potential for further discussions once the 2022/23 financial position, and any potential consequential pressure on covenants became clearer, given the increased costs faced through energy prices and other inflationary pressures.

Wellbeing & Mental Health Support:

- Work continued on the 'trauma informed' approach to mental health. The College project was supported by GM NHS Mental Health Services funding, via the GM Colleges Group and included the development of tutorial materials on gun and knife crime and sexual exploitation, which had attracted the attention of the DfE.
- There had been a growth in mental health support referrals as a consequence of COVID-19.

Staffing:

- Inflation and staffing shortages continued to have an impact on the FE sector.
- College recruitment had improved but remained fragile with 'pinch points' such as construction, health and IT that remained a challenge. The cost of agency staff remained an issue with the retention of full-time staff prioritised.

Environmental Sustainability:

- The College and Bolton Council were committed to support the Greater Manchester plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2038, although the national target was to reach net zero emission by 2050.

Governor Questions:

- Have staffing levels improved?
Yes, although in some area's agency staff are still required. Job security will continue to be highlighted to staff, particularly on the occasions when staff have been recruited by other colleges or returned to vocational sectors.
- Is there an issue with adult provision?
The numbers are slightly lower than this time last year for community learning with a national picture of more adults going into employment rather than education. However, recruitment for community learning continued throughout the year.
Current attendance is at 85% and a 'data cleansing' exercise is underway on English and maths registers to ensure the information is accurate. The College continues to work to its funding requirements.
- Is staff sickness at an acceptable level?
Staff sickness is related to more long-term sickness matters rather than short term and are not work related.
- Is there an update on the approach to clawback of the adult budget?
The College is working closely on its recruitment and will review if ESOL can be delivered. Adult English and maths recruitment have declined as the employment market is more buoyant with employers not requiring these qualifications for the roles provided. The College continues to work with stakeholders, Bolton CVS, Job Centre Plus and other partners who advise on adult learner engagement.
- Is there a deficit of need for ESOL?
ESOL is the largest portion of the adult education provision however, as ESOL may not address stakeholder requirements, the budget is proportioned across all College adult education programmes to ensure that it meets local stakeholder needs.
- How is the College looking to meet the 2038 net zero target?
Sustainability is built into the College and University curriculum with further work to be done on the Group strategy.

ACTION:

Previous year recruitment figures to be included in future reporting as a comparison profile.

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

2.2 ACHIEVEMENT RATES 2021/22 & PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2022/23

The Deputy Principal presented the report on performance targets for 2022/23 and provided an overview of achievement rates for the College across different funding categories for 2021/22. Information on previous years was provided for comparison.

The Chair noted that discussions under this item had been covered extensively by the Standards and Performance Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on Achievement Rates 2021/22 and Performance Targets for 2022/23 be approved.

2.3 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2021/22 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION

The Executive Director of Finance presented the Financial Statements for 2021/22 and Letter of Representation.

The Statements had been scrutinised by the Audit Committee at its meeting held 31 October 2022.

The following key points were highlighted:

- The external auditors gave an unqualified audit report and confirmed that the College was regarded as a going concern.
- The College had complied with its banking covenants (noting the variation to the operating leverage) and had a recorded operating surplus of £1.06m for 2021/22.
- The College anticipated some claw back due to T Level under delivery.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the Financial Statements for 2021/22, Letter of Representation and Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire be approved; and
- (ii) the Audit Management Report and the College's financial health/bank covenants be noted.

2.4 ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT 2021/22

The Executive Director of HR & Estates presented the Annual Health & Safety Report which provided a summary of health and safety activities during the academic year 2021/22. The following points were highlighted:

- The Executive Director of HR & Estates had strategic oversight of health and safety with Kate Flood as the health and safety link governor.
- Risk assessment audits were underway across all areas.
- A comprehensive proforma for parental consent for field trips, access arrangements etc were in place with a similar approach used for those learners on work placement.
- The PwC advisory review audit and fire risk assessment reports were positive with recommendations actioned or in progress.
- There were 54 accidents in 2021/22 with the most common incidents being contact injuries.
- There had been an increase in first aider calls with a number of these related to learner mental health matters.

Governor Questions:

- Where there any training needs associated with the additional responsibilities of health and safety?

This would be addressed in the Executive Director of HR and Estates' appraisal.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Health and Safety Report 2021/22 be noted and the Health and Safety Policy be approved.

2.5 COLLEGE KPI DASHBOARD

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

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

2.6 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Executive Director of Finance presented the Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22 which provided the Audit Committee's annual assessment of the control systems in operation at the College, based on the reports received from the Internal and Financial Statements & Regularity Auditors and other sources.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Audit Committee Annual Report be approved.

2.7 DfE LOCAL NEEDS / LOCAL EMPLOYMENT REVIEW

The Principal presented the DfE Local Needs / Local Employment Review Report which highlighted the Board's duty under the statutory guidance on the new section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, where governing bodies must undertake regular reviews of how well the education and training provided by the College meets local needs.

It was noted that the report followed on from the governor training and development event that focussed on the Greater Manchester, Bolton Council and College skills strategic priorities and planning.

It was **RESOLVED** that the DfE Local Needs / Local Employment Review Report be noted.

2.8 SAFEGUARDING REPORT AND ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Executive Director of HR and Estates presented the Safeguarding Report and Assurance Statement, noting the following key points:

- There were no significant changes in the way that the College approached safeguarding with Sue Lomax as the link governor for safeguarding.
- There had been a restructure of roles and responsibilities with the Executive Director of HR and Estates as the designated safeguarding lead.
- The College had seen an increase in safeguarding referrals. One area that had increased were 'issues within the family' at 14% of all referrals, compared to 4% this time last year that was likely due to the COVID-19 lockdown.
- A termly staff newsletter on safeguarding matters was being considered.
- Guidance on recruitment had been released around social media checks on job applicants.

Governor Questions:

- What does the College have in place in response to learner homelessness?

The College works with local charities and the local authority that have support mechanisms in place. The College has personal resources ie. toiletries, free breakfast and student finance that can help towards lunches. There are also discretionary bursaries which can help provide learner resources.

- Is there an opportunity to promote English and maths through the 'warm space and drop in' message?

This is mainly used within the learner hubs. The College also works in partnership with Bolton Council and local cost of living events.

ACTION:

- Provide a breakdown of College student population and representation of homeless learners.
- Explore recruitment/applicant software utilised at Quest MAT.

It was **RESOLVED** that the:

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

2.9 MATHS & ENGLISH UPDATE

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Quality presented the Maths and English update noting the following key points:

- English and maths self-assessed as 'required improvement' in 2021/22 and was placed into the intensive support process. The support plan had been signed off and a strong focus would be maintained throughout performance enhancement reviews.
- Classes had increased to twice a week per subject and were taught in vocational groups to ensure contextualised learning.
- Learners were registered for English and maths exams regardless of attendance throughout the year with improved results anticipated at the end of 2022/23.
- Attendance for English was 77% and maths 81%, which had increased but had not yet achieved the 90% target.
- The College had developed discussion routes with other colleges to share support and advice.

Governor Questions:

- Are English and maths improving?

Yes, the structure of lessons is better this year. The College is awaiting the MIDES report that would reflect an improvement.

It was noted that some learners had found the increase in hours overwhelming due to the extended days in College. Learners were timetabled to be in the College for three days, allowing them to continue to have part time jobs at the same time. In some instances, this had meant that the three days were slightly longer than previously.

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

2.10* STARRED ITEMS:-

(i) SAFEGUARDING POLICIES 2022/23 UPDATE

Members had received and reviewed the Safeguarding Policies 2022/23 Update.

The College's Safeguarding Policies were updated on an annual basis, with the review process incorporating any legislative changes, alterations to local safeguarding processes, best practice, and lessons learnt.

The College had five key policies and procedures:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Children (0-18) Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- Abuse of Trust Policy
- Personal and Professional Relationships at Work Policy
- Early Years & Pre-School Centre Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy

The policies had been updated with minor changes to terminology and regulations.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Safeguarding Policies 2022/23 updates be approved.

(ii) ANNUAL RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2021/22

Members had received and reviewed the Annual Risk Management Report 2021/22.

The report enabled the Audit Committee to review and subsequently advise the Board on the progress being made with regard to Risk Management to assure the Board that risks were being managed effectively.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Risk Management Report 2021/22 be noted.

(iii) ANNUAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT 2021/22

Members had received and reviewed the Annual Capital Expenditure Report 2021/22.

Capital spend for 2021/22 was £1.306M (£1,419k in 2020/21) that included an addition to the intangible asset for the potential commercialisation of College intellectual property. This asset would be depreciated over three years unless commercialised or otherwise impaired.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Capital Expenditure Report 2021/22 be noted.

(iv) DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Members had received and reviewed the Data Protection Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Data Protection Policy be approved.

(v) ANNUAL REPORT ON SENIOR POST HOLDERS' REMUNERATION

Members had received and reviewed the Annual Report on Senior Post Holders' Remuneration for 2021/22 as considered by the Remuneration Committee at its meeting held 31 October 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Report on Senior Post Holders' Remuneration be approved.

(vi) USE OF COLLEGE SEAL 2021/22

Members had received and reviewed the report on the use of the College Seal as provided by the Clerk.

It was **RESOLVED** that the use of the College Seal report be noted.

(vii) ANNUAL REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Members had received and reviewed the Annual Report on Development and Fundraising as provided by the Principal.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Report on Development and Fundraising be noted.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS

3.1 Starred Item:

3.1 (i)* GROUP RISK REGISTER

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

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

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 MEETING EVALUATION

The Chair noted that it was important that Members continued to have the opportunity to join both Board and Committee meetings.

The Board reported that the meeting was constructive, that all Members had an opportunity to contribute and noted the excellent local skills needs training session that had taken place earlier that day. An evaluation feedback form would be circulated to Members.

(All Members and Officers save for Independent Members left the meeting at 7.07pm)

4.2 RESERVED BUSINESS MATTERS

5. SECTION E – FUTURE MEETINGS

5.1 Governors' Meetings

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

Board Meeting - Tuesday 7 February 2023 at 5.00pm

Committees -

Resources Committee – Tuesday 17 January 2023 at 5.00pm

Standards & Performance Committee – Wednesday 18 January 2023 at 2.00pm

Audit Committee – Thursday 23 March 2023 at 5.00pm

Search & Governance – Tuesday 20 June 2023 at 5.00pm

Remuneration Committee – Wednesday 20 September 2023 at 4.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 7.34pm

Chair's Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Neel', enclosed within a rectangular box.

Date: 7 February 2023