



CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2019

Present: Anna Barnish, Lucy Barrow, Joanne Finnerty, Sue Higginson (Principal), Sandra Johnson, Lorraine Jones, Tim Kelly (Chair), Joe McArdle, Paul Smith, Jayne Winders, Vix Wrigley

In attendance: Michael Norton, Deputy Principal
Christine Carter, Vice Principal – Curriculum
Phillip Jones, Vice Principal – Quality
Karen Christian, Assistant Principal – Professions and Visitor Economy (minutes 63 to 74)
Pooja Furniss, Director of People & Organisational Development
Will Jerram, Assistant Principal – MIS
Andrew King, Head of Finance
Lesley Venables, Clerk to the Governors
Louise Scott-Kelly, Administrator to Governors

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Macen Byatt, Gary Doyle, Richard Mawdsley and Phil McKeown.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. Joe McArdle declared an interest in any matters relating to the University of Chester and Sandra Johnson a standing interest in respect of relating to apprenticeships and traineeships for Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP).

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

3. Following the process outlined in the Board's Standing Orders, Tim Kelly and Jayne Winders had been nominated to serve as Chair and Vice Chair of the Board respectively. The Clerk advised that these appointments required ratification at this meeting and that both individuals would serve for a 2-year term of office.

4. **Resolved** That Tim Kelly and Jayne Winders be appointed as Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Governors respectively for a 2-year term of office.

APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL GOVERNOR

5. The Clerk reported that there were currently two vacancies for external governors. The Governance & Search Committee had met with a potential applicant who was employed as the Assistant Director: Culture & Visitor Economy at Wirral Borough Council. This individual had collaborated previously with the College on a variety of cultural projects in the Borough

involving students and was passionate about inclusivity and providing student opportunities within the community, which the Committee felt aligned with the College's vision. Furthermore, as a former student, the applicant was an enthusiastic advocate for the College.

6. The Committee had concluded that the candidate's skills would be a valuable addition to the Board's overall profile and, as an alumnus, would be an inspiration for students. The Committee had, therefore, recommended their appointment.

7. **Resolved** That Lucy Barrow be appointed as a governor in the external category for a 4-year term of office from 23rd October 2019 to 31st July 2023.

PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

8. The Principal provided a verbal top-level summary of Student Outcomes for 2018/2019 and explained that a detailed report including the underpinning data had been scrutinised by the Quality & Standards Scrutiny (QSS) Committee at its recent meeting.

9. The outcomes evidenced significant growth, particularly from students from areas of high deprivation. The Board agreed that performance levels reinforced the College's strategic vision of being an inclusive college.

10. The Principal also reported that 2019/2020 enrolments for 16-18 year olds had already exceeded the planned enrolment target.

11. Previously, the enrolment targets for higher education programmes had been too ambitious. However, as part of the 3-year HE Strategy requested by the Board, performance in this area was vigorously scrutinised and realistic enrolment targets had been set which related more closely to the HE sector. Also, new programmes, such as Sociology and Criminology, had been validated recently by partner universities and had recruited well in 2019/2020. Currently, HE enrolments were ahead of the identified target and the focus would now be on retaining these students.

12. Governors received an update on the College's non-levy apprenticeship subcontractor, JM Education, which had recently undergone a full Ofsted inspection under the new Education Inspection Framework. This had involved scrutiny of the College's processes by two inspectors. Feedback on this part of the inspection had been positive for teaching, learning and assessment and the overall apprentice experience.

13. JM Education had been graded as a '2 Good' and the full report would be available on the Ofsted website at the end of October. This also meant that the current embargo on engaging additional apprentices would be lifted by the ESFA.

14. The Principal provided an update on the two Test and Learn Pilot projects that the College was developing with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. One of these concerned ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and had been designed to develop a programme of cultural visits to improve English skills and awareness of local culture. The other was an English and Maths Pilot to help adult learners with foundation level English and maths skills as well as increasing their knowledge of cultural activities in the region.

SHARING RECENT SUCCESSES

15. The Board received the routine report on the College's recent successes. Governors commended the staff for the wide range of enrichment activities.

ESTATES UPDATE

16. The Deputy Principal presented a report on the College's estate, which continued to be graded positively. Governors received an update on progress of the 4 bids that had been submitted to the Combined Authority: Maintenance, Improved Facilities, Low Carbon Project and Motor Vehicle & Construction Equipment, all which had passed the first stage of the process.

17. Due to increases in 16-18 enrolments in the current year and a higher number of ESOL learners commuting from Liverpool, management felt that the College should review its space requirements and plan to raise the amount of accommodation from 2020/2021.

18. Further updates on the outcomes of the LCR bid process would be reported to the Board.

TERM 3 2018/2019 STRATEGIC UPDATE

19. Governors received a report on progress against each of the strategic objectives for Term 3 of the 2018/2019 academic year.

BALANCED SCORECARD 2018-2019 CLOSEDOWN

20. The Deputy Principal presented the final Balanced Scorecard for 2018/2019.

21. It was noted that the College's financial position at the end of the year was positive, with a surplus generated and an increased income for 2019/2020 due to growth in enrolments.

22. Although the majority of programmes had maintained a high level of quality, there were still a small number of issues relating to apprenticeships. These were being actioned urgently in 2019/2020 and progress would be monitored by the Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee.

23. A review and restructure of Employer Services had been undertaken in the latter half of 2018/2019, after which processes had been updated. Although apprenticeship outcomes were above the National Rate and had improved compared to the previous year, the Deputy Principal explained that the College had found it difficult to retain specialist staff, particularly in areas such as Construction, due to the College's current pay structure in comparison to the private sector. As a result, the department had relied upon agencies which were costly. The Deputy Principal would be working with the Director People and Organisational Development on developing a strategy to resolve these issues.

24. The Chair asked if there was a timeframe for migrating apprenticeship frameworks to standards. The Vice Principal – Quality explained that the national deadline for completion of

this transfer was 31st July 2020, however, the College was already developing a migration strategy which would ensure that this target was met.

25. The College had reviewed its apprenticeship offer and had determined to reduce its provision to programmes that were relevant and high quality. The initial focus was on levy-paying contracts and then non-levy contracts, with construction being a priority area due to the high volume of enrolments.

BALANCED SCORECARD 2019/2020

26. The Deputy Principal presented the 2019/2020 Balanced Scorecard. This indicated a positive start to the academic year with the exception of apprenticeships, which would continue to be a focus for the Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee.

COMPLAINTS 2018/2019

27. The Vice Principal – Quality reported on complaints received in 2018/2019. There had been a total of 22 complaints compared to the 18 in 2017/2018. However, as the student cohort had increased in 2018/2019 this amounted to less than 1% of the student population and was still within the target set out in the Balanced Scorecard.

28. Four complaints had been upheld and governors were assured that all complaints were fully reviewed and investigated to address any areas for improvement.

HR REVIEW

29. The Director of People and Organisational Development People provided a summary of human resources activities during 2018/2019. Governors also received an update on the implementation of the People Strategy that had been approved at the July 2019 Board meeting.

30. One of the Strategy's key performance indicators was to improve levels of Staff Health and Wellbeing. The College had promoted events and activities for staff, such as Mental Health Awareness Week.

31. To ensure a people-centred approach, the HR Business Partners were streamlining the College's processes and it was noted that case management levels for sickness absence had increased considerably. The robust approach to managing sickness absence had already proven to be effective as evidenced by the reduction in the absence rate from 4.21% in 2017/2018 to 3.92% at the end of 2018/2019.

32. A governor queried the quality of conversations held with staff particularly when discussing sensitive issues. The Director of People and Organisational Development explained that the new HR model coached and worked with managers to offer guidance and fully support them to undertake these duties.

33. The Board commended the work that had occurred to date and it was agreed that the Board would receive a termly update on progress against the People Strategy.

SEMINAR OUTCOMES

34. The Board received the positive feedback from both governors and managers who attended the Strategic Seminar on 11th October 2019.

HE QUALITY ASSURANCE

35. The Vice Principal – Quality presented the annual quality assurance report for Higher Education. Governors were advised that approval of the report was a requirement of the Office for Students (OfS) regime, with boards being asked to review and confirm that they continuously and robustly monitored HE quality and student outcomes.

36. The Vice Principal – Quality reported that HE continued to be scrutinised through a variety of forums and academic panels. The Board acknowledged and also thanked the Manager for HE & Access to HE for their continued work.

37. **Resolved** That the Annual Statement on Quality Assurance be approved and submitted to the Office for Students.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

38. The Head of Finance presented the Management Accounts as at 30th September 2019. The College continued to be in a positive financial position and had exceeded its planned surplus level.

39. The financial health rating remained as 'Outstanding', however, the Head of Finance reminded that the College's actual performance fell within the lowest part of the ratio boundary.

ANNUAL STUDENT SUPPORT RETURNS 2018/19

16-19 Bursary

40. The Deputy Principal presented a report on the 16-19 Bursary fund 2018/2019.

41. Governors noted that the cost of free travel passes had resulted in an overspend of the 16-19 Bursary fund. However, this was offset against the underspend of the Further Education Free Meals (FEFM) and unspent monies carried forward from 2017/2018.

42. For 2019/2020 travel passes would now only cover bus travel. Train passes would only be issued in exceptional circumstances, such as for medical or safeguarding reasons.

43. **Resolved** That the Policy and Procedure for the 2019/2020 Bursary Fund be approved.

Learner Support Funds (LSF) and Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) Bursary

44. The Deputy Principal presented a report on the LSF and ALL Bursary operations for 2018/2019, together with planned activities for 2019/2020. The purpose of the funds was to

provide financial support to enable students to overcome financial barriers to studying at the College.

45. **Resolved** That the Policy and Procedures for the allocation of the LSF and ALL Bursary for 2019/2020, including the proposed appeals mechanism, be approved.

COMPLIANCE WITH FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

46. The Deputy Principal explained that, previously, the Financial Memorandum was a key element of the ESFA's monitoring of financial solvency of FE colleges. However, for 2019/2020 the Memorandum has been replaced with a Funding Contract and an 'Oversight' document which set out the process that occurred when colleges were in financial difficulty.

47. Governors received the new financial return checklist and were advised that, in this instance, the Oversight document was not applicable to the College as it was not in financial difficulty.

48. The Board of Governors noted the new requirements of the ESFA and were assured that the College met each of the items on the financial return checklist.

RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER

49. The Deputy Principal presented an update on the College's Risk Register. There had been one internal audit since the last update, but overall there had been no changes to the levels of risk in the Risk Register.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MINUTES

BOARD MINUTES – 17th JULY 2019

50. **Resolved** That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

51. Governors received a progress report on the actions identified at the previous meeting and noted that all actions had been completed.

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 4th SEPTEMBER 2019

52. The Board received for information the minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held on 4th September 2019. The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that the Committee had received the Internal Auditor's Annual Report which highlighted no concerns and received a thorough Anti-Fraud and Irregularity Assessment, which also raised no issues.

53. The Committee had recommended the approval of the Regularity Self-Assessment questionnaire which was issued by the ESFA and was used as part of the External Auditor's work on the Regularity Audit.

54. **Resolved** That the Regularity Audit Self-Assessment questionnaire be approved and signed by the Principal and the Chair of the Board.

GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE – 18th SEPTEMBER 2019

55. The Board received for information the minutes from the Governance & Search Committee meeting held on 18th September 2019.

56. The Chair of the Board reported that the Performance Reviews with individual governors were almost complete. The Clerk would produce a summary report on the outcomes, which would be presented at the next meeting and would inform the training plan for governors for 2019/2020.

57. The Committee had reviewed the confidential minutes considered by the Board in 2018/2019 and made recommendations about their re-classification.

58. A revised schedule of committee memberships had been recommended for approval.

59. **Resolved** 1 That proposals on the reclassification of confidential minutes for 2018/2019 be approved.

2 That the revised schedule of committee memberships be approved

QUALITY & STANDARDS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

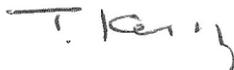
60. The Board received for information the minutes from the Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16th October 2019.

61. The Committee had recommended that the Board approve the Quality Framework for 2019/2020 and the Annual Quality Assurance Report for HE (minute 37 refers).

62. **Resolved** That the Quality Assurance Framework for 2019/2020 be approved.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 11th December 2019

Signed:



Date: 11th December 2019

Chair