



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING**

HELD IN PERSON ON THURSDAY 19th OCTOBER 2023

Present: Gary Baines, Gill Banks (Principal), Tim Kelly (Chair), Richard Mawdsley, Jayne Winders, Simon Wrigley (staff governor), Lucky Ali, Paul Smith

In attendance: Ste Bailey, Executive Assistant Principal – Student Services
Christine Carter, Vice Principal – Curriculum
Nikki Leising, Financial Controller
Ryan Morris, Administrator to the Governors
Lesley Venables, Clerk to the Governors
Philippa Dickinson, Director of Student Services (minutes 1 – 11)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Ian Evans (staff governor).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. The following standing interests were declared:
 - Tim Kelly - any matters relating to the Merseyside Pension Fund
 - Richard Mawdsley – Director of Development at Peel Land & Property (Peel L&P) and involved with the Wirral Waters regeneration project
 - Paul Smith – employed by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and spouse is a member of staff at the College.

BOARD MINUTES

3. **Resolved** That the minutes of the meetings held on 12th July 2023 (parts 1 and 2) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
4. Governors received a progress report on the actions identified at the previous meeting and noted that all of these had been completed or were in progress.

16-19 BURSARY FUND

5. The Director of Student Services presented a report on the use of 16-19 Bursary Funds for 2022/2023 and sought approval of the proposed funding allocation for 2023/2024.
6. In 2021/2022 there has been a carried forward amount of £230,194, which allowed the College to increase the amount that students could spend on food and beverages from £5 to £7, as well as reducing the bursary eligibility threshold. This increase in spending had reduced the balance to carry forward into 2023/2024 to £50,615.

7. Governors were also informed that the meal cards were no longer separated from student ID badges and that parents could put funds into the student's account via an online web portal. This was to improve anonymity on the receipt of free meals, to reduce any associated stigma and to give students a more positive College experience. This is also enhanced the number of people applying for bursary as they received their ID badges from the bursary team when they enrolled.

8. **Resolved** That the allocation of bursary funds for 2023/2024 be approved.

19+ LEARNER SUPPORT FUND (LSF) & ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN BURSARY (ALL)

9. The Director of Student Services presented a report on the LSF and ALL Bursary operations for 2022/2023, together with planned activities for 2023/2024. The purpose of these funds was to provide financial support to students to enable them to overcome financial barriers to studying at the College.

10. A governor enquired if there was an underspend for the 19+ LSF and was advised that this was not the case in 2022/2023 and that the College has been able to loan laptops to students who would otherwise have been digitally excluded.

11. **Resolved** That the Policy and Procedures for the allocation of the LSF and ALL Bursary for 2023/2024 be approved.

Philippa Dickinson left the meeting at this point.

PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

12. The Principal provided an update on recent College activities.

13. Enrolment numbers for 16-19 and apprenticeship recruitment had increased compared to the same point in the previous year. Adult enrolment numbers are in line with plans and, whilst HE numbers are lower than their target, this is being seen nationally and was partly due to the cost of living crisis.

14. The Principal advised that the recent Ofsted inspection remained confidential and provisional until the report is moderated and would be received in early November.

15. The new Vice Principal – Finance & Resources, Kevin Williams, was due to start at the College on the 6th November.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

16. The Board received for information a report on the Chair's activities since the July 2023 meeting.

2022/2023 OUTCOMES TO INFORM SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

17. The Principal reported that this information had formed part of the agenda for the seminar held earlier in the day and would be monitored throughout the year by the Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

18. The Interim Finance Director advised that, due to the timing of this meeting, the management accounts up to 30th September 2023 would be circulated to governors at the end of October.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY 2023/2024

19. The Vice Principal – Curriculum presented an updated Health & Safety Policy for 2023/2024.

20. A governor enquired about the process through which the policy is scrutinised before it is approved at Board and was advised that it is reviewed at a meeting of the Senior Leadership Team and amended (if necessary) by the Health & Safety Manager.

21. The Principal commented that there needed to be greater detail regarding fire safety, which would be included in the next draft of the Policy. The Assistant Principal - Student Support and Foundation Learning advised that fire warden training from the Health & Safety department would be offered to all staff in November 2023.

22. **Resolved** That the Health & Safety Policy for 2023/2024 be approved

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 9TH OCTOBER 2023

23. The Chair of the Audit Committee presented a verbal update on the Audit Committee meeting held on 9th October 2023.

24. For 2022/2023 the Internal Auditor had concluded that the College had an 'adequate and effective' framework for risk management, governance and internal control.

25. The Committee had received a report on Risk Management which identified that staffing costs continue to remain a high risk. Staff utilisation is to be closely monitored alongside future recruitment and there may be areas which require some restructuring and transfer of resources between departments.

26. Two further risks were highlighted to the Board. There is pressure from unions to harmonise the College's pay scales and review increments to enable staff to progress to the top of the scale within a shorter timeframe. Financial modelling was being undertaken, but it was noted that was likely to incur additional costs and would further increase the pay to income ratio (for which the recommended sector benchmark was 70%).

27. A further risk for the College was the cohort of students enrolled on maths and English programmes who had not achieved within the academic year and had had their end dates extended into the next academic year by way of a default setting. This had impacted on achievement rates for 2022/2023 and the Principal reported that this practice would cease with effect from 2023/2024.

28. Governors had recommended for approval the College's submission in response to the ESFA's Self-Assessment Regularity Questionnaire and Annexes.

29. **Resolved** That the Regularity Audit Self-Assessment questionnaire for 2022/2023 be approved and signed by the Principal and the Chair of the Board.

GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE – 4TH OCTOBER 2023

30. The Chair of the Governance & Search Committee summarised the main points of the meeting held on 4th October 2023.

31. The Board received a summary of the outcomes of the governor review process for 2022/2023, which had been undertaken by the Chair of the Board and the Clerk. It was noted that they would be working with the Principal to address any actions resulting from these discussions. One suggestion had been that the content of the strategic plan needed to be more prominent in each report submitted to the Board and its committees, which has now been implemented on the cover pages.

32. The Annual Report on Governance for 2022/2023 and a report on current and future membership issues had been discussed by the Committee. The current recruitment process to fill the existing vacancies presented an opportunity to refresh the Board's composition and skills (in areas such as finance and audit) and to improve its diversity. The Clerk advised that Gary Doyle (external governor) had recently tendered his resignation, which created another potential vacancy to be filled.

33. The Board was advised that the term of office of Paul Smith (external governor) had expired at the end of July 2023. The Committee had considered his contribution, skills and attendance and had recommended Paul's reappointment having received confirmation that he was willing to serve for a second 4 year term of office.

34. The Committee had also received recommendations on the reclassification of confidential minutes.

35. **Resolved**
1. That the action plan resulting from the governor review process for 2022/2023 be approved.
 2. That proposals on the reclassification of confidential minutes for 2022/2023 be approved.
 3. That Paul Smith be re-appointed for a second 4-year term as an external governor

QUALITY AND STANDARDS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

36. The Chair of the Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee summarised the main points of the meeting which had been held earlier in the day.

37. The Committee had received a detailed report and presentation on the Annual Quality Assurance of the College's higher education provision. The Board of Governors was required by the Office for Students (OfS) to annually consider and confirm that the continuous monitoring of Higher Education compliance, quality, improvement of academic experience and student outcomes.

38. A report on performance against key indicators from the Balanced Scorecard had been scrutinised by the Committee, together with an analysis of complaints received in 2022/2023.

39. It had been agreed that further work was required on the Quality Assurance Framework and, therefore, this item would be deferred to the Committee's January meeting.

40. **Resolved** – That the Annual Quality Assurance for HE be approve

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 14th December 2023

Signed: T. Keen Date: 14.12.23

Chair

