



**BRIDGWATER
& TAUNTON
COLLEGE**

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER 2017

MEETING COMMENCED: 5.05pm
MEETING ENDED: 7.15pm

PRESENT: Derek Randall (DR) (Chair), John Alvis (JA), Andy Berry (AB), Lyndon Brett (LB), Barry Brown (BB), Mervyn Brown (MB), Rebecca Coutts (RC), Matt Cox (MC), Charlie Grabham (CG), Gordon Fraser (GF), Andre Frullo (AF), Steve Hopper (SH), Alan Hunt (AH), Claire Pearce (CP), Louise Seymour (LS), Gill Slattery (GS), David Taylor (DT) and Lauren Usher (LU).

IN ATTENDANCE: Louise Rowley (LR), Mark Nettle (MN), Margaret Playle (MP), Marcus Holder (MH) and Ellie Phipps (note taker)

DR formally welcomed the new members to the meeting: Matt Cox and Louise Seymour as the new staff governors, Lauren Usher as the new student governor, Claire Pearce to her first meeting and Marcus Holder, new Director of Finance.

G.02.15.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Andrew Smith (AS) and Keith Stenning (KS).

Dawn Hill (DH) did not attend.

G.02.16.18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests relevant to the agenda of the meeting.

G.02.17.18 MINUTES OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2017

DR noted that the minutes from the 6 July Board meeting were not signed off at the self-assessment meeting on 11 October.

The minutes from both meetings on 6 July and 11 October 2017 were agreed as true record of the meeting.

G.02.18.18

MATTERS ARISING

G.01.03.18 MN confirmed he would be sorting out log-ins for governors to enable them to undertake health and safety training.

G01.05.18 All matters relating to self-assessment had been completed.

G.02.19.18

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

MN presented the Safeguarding report, the first for the merged Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC). There was a focus across the county on county lines, where children were being taken across the county for exploitation.

20 students were referred to Somerset Children's Services in 2016/17, which was fewer than the previous year. Issues mainly concerned neglect. There was one Prevent referral which was not taken any further by the Police.

71 managers across the College had completed the NSPCC training. The in-house training was altered so that new staff members can complete this and in subsequent years activity undertaken is checked during appraisals.

Student voice surveys highlighted a slight dip in how safe students feel at College, but reasons why included strangers being on site. As a consequence, student lanyards had been introduced which put all staff in a stronger position to challenge anyone not wearing a lanyard. AB highlighted that staff were reinforcing this in a positive way and next term the door to the smoking area would only be activated with an ID card. LR advised that ultimately it was hoped that registers would be linked to student ID cards.

MN noted that there were three Ofsted visits last year: Childcare Centre, residential accommodation and the Ofsted annual monitoring visit. Outcomes were extremely positive.

RC asked if there were any plans to do refresher training for governors. MN confirmed that a briefing will be developed and he would be happy to share that with governors or invite them in to a training session.

Action: MN

CP asked if the College planned to do anything relating to safety due to the Hinkley effect in the broader sense e.g. more cars on the road and more people in the town. MN confirmed he was meeting with a representative from Somerset County Council in the New Year to plan exactly that.

G.02.20.18

STUDENT UNION REPORT 2016/17

MN presented the Student Union report on LU's behalf with the main highlights noted. 2016/17 saw another successful year with £8k raised for Rag Day charities (not £10k as stated in the paper), Freshers' Fairs taking place across all campuses and the student rep system working

well. The SU had strong democratic instincts and voting to elect SU officers took place via VLE. Student voice was working well in the FE and HE parliament as one example and a number of new student activities had been introduced such as the colour run and new clubs and societies in both debating and sports.

NUS Officers attended the national conference and it was also noted that the former SU President (Amy Fisher) was now working for the College doing enrichment activity.

G.02.21.18

FINANCIAL OUTTURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2017

MP presented the finance report for the year ended 31 July 2017 with the following of particular note:

- The College delivered an operating surplus of £54k which was better than forecast, with a turnover of £54m
- The Financial Statements showed a deficit of £6.357m due to a large LGPS pension charge. This was a one off charge related to the former Cannington College from 12 years ago that the College had no prior knowledge of. DR said this was on the agenda for the next AoC meeting and the County Council should be challenged. The pension deficit needed to be raised at a national level. DR agreed to raise this with DH as she is a Trustee of the scheme.

Action: DR

MP confirmed that additional pension contributions were being made and these were increasing year-on-year. LR commented that this was a national problem and reference had been made to this in the AoC Briefings this week.

DR asked that this be on the agenda at the next Full Board meeting.

Action: MN

- The apprenticeship budget had been exceeded by £406k
- The adult education budget (AEB) fell short by £360k due to ambitious targets set for the Distance Learning team (in the context of a £5.8m budget). The ESFA had advised that this was the sector norm.

RC asked if the target set was too high. AB confirmed it was, but had been set with the team. Activity had not come in at the pace they wanted or expected it to. MP explained there was a buffer in the curriculum plan but lots of teams had experienced difficulties.

- The contract value for 16-18 year olds was £20.1m with £19.2m delivered. This would affect future years due to the lagged funding methodology.
- The Colleges Partnership have not yet signed off their accounts. MP requested a Chair's action once approval has been received by their board. This was agreed. MP commented that BTC should not rely on the College's Partnership income to prop the College up. There was a need to be cautious.
- Financial Statements (page 26) included additional information by the auditors which was identifiable as being those in boxes.

BB asked if the bottom figure could include the FRS figure to push this down even further. MP confirmed it couldn't.

- The financial health for 2016/17 was expected to be satisfactory and was in fact good.
- The cash position was £8.1m at year-end however this was now much lower due to the AEC and the bureaucratic apprenticeship funding methodology. The whole College was focused on ensuring that invoices are sent out in a timely way.

DR commended the College on behalf of the Board on the financial outturn. The document was approved by the Board.

G.02.22.18

APPROVAL OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

a) Annual Report from the Audit Committee 2016/17

MP remarked that the Board should receive assurance from the Audit Committee that the accounts are correct. MP referred to three documents: annual report of the Audit Committee, internal audit report and the external audit completion report. It was noted that both the Audit Committee and FP&GP Committee had been through the detail of these reports.

The conclusions drawn in the reports were endorsed by the Board.

b) Adoption of Draft 2016/17 Financial Statements

The draft Financial Statements were approved by the Board.

c) Letter of Representation to External Auditor

The letter of representation to the External Auditor was agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Charlie Grabham joined the meeting.

MP requested one additional agenda item. The Colleges Partnership were seeking Board assurance to ongoing financial support to the joint venture company (JVC) by way of a signed letter. This letter limited the College's financial liability to £250k. AB confirmed that the company has had some turbulence but there is lots of activity being undertaken. It was always a risk. Last year the JVC brought in £671k of fees.

RC asked about governance of the JVC. AB confirmed that both he and Matt Tudor are on the Board. The quality of data reporting by Wiltshire College was very good. A new Chief Executive had just been appointed and AB was getting much closer to the project, especially in the last month. The College's Partnership was in a strong place in terms of tendering and Matt was supporting that process.

RC commented that the College should be marketing this better.

A report on the College's Partnership activity should be submitted to FP&GP, along with a copy of their Financial Statements.

Action: MN to agenda

The Board agreed to sign the letter of intent as presented.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST KPIS FOR 2016/17

AB presented the College's performance against the KPI element of the Operating Plan for 2016/17. The KPIs were set 18 months previously and had been difficult in the context of a newly merged college.

Strategic Aim 1

- Achievement rates had improved but were not yet where the College would want them to be for FE activity.
- Apprenticeship achievement rates were below target but the target had been ambitious. LR commented that due to the 90 day claim period for R04, the achievement rate had since increased to 64.9%.
- There was a retention issue in HE. JA asked if there was a national rate. LR confirmed that HE does not measure retention so the College measures it in an FE way. AH confirmed there was no national benchmark.
- Overall subject attendance at 83.2% was adversely affected by attendance at English and maths lessons
- RC felt the lesson observation target should be coloured red as only 343 were undertaken (target 500). AB explained that more lessons were observed but only 343 were graded.
- SH felt that there should be separate targets for both study programmes and adults. The overall figure was not specific enough.
- 81% HE satisfaction rate was an improvement on the previous year but not near enough to the target of 90%

Strategic Aim 2

- Only 64% of Haygrove pupils progressed to the College.
- Lots of work was being undertaken at Castle School with IB being delivered jointly with their staff. RC commented there was a need for data to show where students went if they didn't come to the College. AB stated he would try to get this information.

Action: AB

- Enrolments were down this year but currently applications are up on the same time last year. LR said that lots of young people apply late or just turn up in September.
- Fall of 9.5% recruitment to HE programmes. LR said there was focus on applications and not historical conversion rates. There was no national data for conversion. There is also a national decline of students applying to study HE at FE Colleges due to the removal of the cap on university numbers.

David Taylor joined the meeting.

- The FE Choices survey was not managed adequately in-house last year and this will be addressed. JA asked if there was any common theme in concerns. AB had not seen the survey but was happy to look into it. LR said that our own internal survey was much better with student satisfaction in the 90%s. BB asked if we define what 'satisfactory' means. AB commented that the College was struggling to grow the right staff to meet employer demand. DR noted that the Business Development team had won the Beacon Award for Employer Engagement and the College had won the Queen's Award. The report did not reflect

employer feeling. It was agreed this would be brought back to Standards Committee for further scrutiny.

Action: MN

- Only 64% had indicated they were happy at work in the staff survey. Out of 1500 staff, only 100 had completed it and was sent out just after merger. The HR team were holding focus groups to address issues. RC asked what the figures were for the previous year. LR confirmed that there wasn't any figures available for Taunton, only Bridgwater staff. DR said that this year's survey will provide a true comparison. MB asked if some staff who weren't happy could be based at Cannington as they haven't had the capital investment this year. AB said that had not come across in staff forum meetings with the Principalship. In fact only 11 staff had attended over the three campuses with nothing extraordinary raised. LU asked if the survey was before or after merger. AB confirmed it was after, but only just after. MC said it was very different now. Staff at Taunton were much happier and confident about the merged college.

AF expressed disappointment that this report had not been presented at FP&GP. He felt the response rate should be increased, not the target in the first instance. MN to agenda for future meetings.

Action: MN

CG said there had been some reshuffling of staff in HE which could have impacted.

AB commented that the KPIs for 17/18 would be strengthened further and gave assurance to the Board that data measurements would improve.

G.02.24.18

DRAFT COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2016/17

LR gave a verbal update to the Board on the 16/17 SAR, which was ahead of schedule. Final evaluations with staff would take place next week and the final document would be brought back to governors once completed.

Highlights were noted as follows:

- Achievement rates for all types of provision have improved, but questioned whether they had improved enough to rate the College as 'outstanding'.
- Significant improvement on adult programmes
- 16-18 provision is 'good', the College is at national rate compared with 15/16 data. It would be good for Governors to understand the individual departments
- Adult learners graded as 'outstanding'
- Apprenticeships were not as good as they should be in terms of timely. The issue was retention.
- High needs student provision was 'outstanding'
- There was a change in Ofsted's perception of data and outcomes
- Outcomes for learners overall was 'good'
- Leadership and management was 'outstanding'

- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment was 'good' (90% of classes graded were outstanding)
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare was 'outstanding'. The College was very confident about wraparound services and the experience students receive.

AB felt this was a fair assessment of 2016/17. He also questioned what we would grade ourselves as now if Ofsted came in tomorrow.

RC felt there should be a specific KPI related to governance that is trackable throughout the year. LR reiterated that Ofsted are very interested in governors' challenge and robustness.

BB requested more information on the logic behind setting the KPIs. LR assured the Board that last year KPIs were set on two sources of data which was not the case this year.

AH asked that SMT think about how data comes through the Committee structure. The document flow needs to improve through meetings. Ideally the SAR should go to Standards Committee before going to Full Board. AB said he was looking at bringing departments together to improve the data flow.

Action: AB

G.02.25.18

STRATEGIC PLAN – FINAL VERSION/OPERATING PLAN 2017/18

DR said that the strategic planning process would begin again at the residential in January.

AB said that the Strategic Plan was the final version and an update would be brought to the next meeting on progress against the Operating Plan. RC asked if national benchmarks and last year's KPIs could be added.

Action: AB

The final Strategic Plan 17-20 was approved by the Board.

G.02.26.18

a) MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THREE MONTHS ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2017

MP presented the management accounts for the three months ended 31 October 2017. This had already been considered by FP&GP. Highlights were noted as follows:

- Apprenticeship funding was challenging and the bureaucratic process was affecting cash flow
- Variances against budget had been amended following updated allocations
- Pay costs were a concern
- Overall the budget was on track

AF highlighted the typo at the top of page 1 – says Bridgwater only. MP would change this.

Action: MP

The Board noted the accounts as presented.

b) UPDATED BUDGET FOR 2017/18

MP distributed the paper which had not been circulated prior to the meeting. A number of changes were highlighted:

- Apprenticeship income updated to correct an error in the previous budget
- ALS element 3 income
- FE fee income
- HE funding adjusted
- Non-pay budget adjusted

A £254k deficit was anticipated. MP requested the Board approve the updated budget, which was agreed.

MP said that the Financial Regulations had been omitted from the agenda and final copies were distributed. The main change was the adjustment of approval limits.

As this had been looked at by the FP&GP Committee, the Board approved the Financial Regulations as presented.

G.02.27.18

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

MN presented the updated Equality and Diversity Policy. The only changes of note were the inclusion of the role of the Students' Union on page 6, and the under 8.3, inclusion of the newly named Disability Confidence Standard.

AF questioned 5.2 on page 6 – how would be governors ensure the College meets the requirements of the equality act. MN agreed to re-word this.

Action: MN

The Board approved the policy subject to amendment of 5.2.

G.02.28.18

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT 2017/18

MN presented the Health and Safety Policy Statement, which had not been to Health and Safety Committee due to timing. The aim was to make this document more aspirational. It was noted that all Heads and SMT had undertaken the IOSH Managing Safely qualification. Section 5 onwards aimed to state what the College is striving to do.

MB asked that Health and Safety documents have a review date clearly marked on them to ensure they are up to date.

Action: MN

The Board approved the document as presented.

G.02.29.18

MARKETING UPDATE

DR advised the Board that due to the breadth of activity undertaken by the College, Mike Robbins was undertaking a full appraisal review of marketing to assess the best structure to help the College achieve its goals. His first report would be presented at the residential.

In the meantime, AB gave highlights of current activity:

- Launch of a new website – LU asked if this might confuse students with the UCAS deadline being so close. AB confirmed the core website was changing, the HE element would be updated at a later time
- Successful open events – applications were 106 up on the same point last year
- Business to business market were using lots of creative social media marketing for the distance learning programmes
- A successful Plant Show Expo at CSIC with £25m of equipment on site. BAM Nuttall had indicated they wanted to do this again
- Lots of effort into marketing NCfN
- HE Progression day held at Taunton with 600 students attending.

G.02.30.18

ESTATES UPDATE

The report was noted as read.

SH asked for an update on the link from the railway station. MP confirmed a recent meeting had been cancelled but was re-scheduled for the New Year.

LB asked if NCfN was on track and if the next Board meeting could be held there. AB reiterated the challenge of needing accommodation for NCfN.

G.02.31.18

MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING SUB-COMMITTEES

a) Health, Safety & Environmental Committee – 4 October 2017

b) Standards Committee – 13 November 2017

AH asked if the HEFCE Annual Provider sign-off had been actioned (as noted on page 4). AB confirmed it had.

AH also asked that complaints be a standing agenda item on Standards Committee.

Action: MN

c) Building Projects Committee – 16 November 2017

d) Audit Committee – 21 November 2017

e) Finance, Personnel & General Purposes Committee – 27 November 2017

The minutes of the sub-committees were noted as read.

G.02.32.18

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

G.02.29.18

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Thursday 18 and Friday 19 January 2018 – Residential

Thursday 22 March 2018 – Regular

Thursday 5 July 2018 - Regular