



**BRIDGWATER
& TAUNTON
COLLEGE**

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22 MARCH 2018

MEETING COMMENCED: 5.00pm
MEETING ENDED: 7.15pm

PRESENT: Derek Randall (DR) (Chair), John Alvis (JA), Andy Berry (AB), Lyndon Brett (LB), Barry Brown (BB), Mervyn Brown (MB), Matt Cox (MC), Gordon Fraser (GF), Andre Frullo (AF), Steve Hopper (SH), Alan Hunt (AH), Gill Slattery (GS), Andrew Smith (AS), Keith Stenning (KS) and Lauren Usher (LU).

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

G.03.30.18 RATIFICATION OF MEMBERSHIP

DR confirmed that LB's term of office had come to an end, however, LB had indicated his wish to continue on the Board. AH proposed, GF seconded and all agreed unanimously to continuing his membership.

LB joined the meeting.

G.03.31.18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Rebecca Coutts (RC), Charlie Grabham (CG), Dawn Hill (DH), Claire Pearce (CP), Louise Seymour (LS) and David Taylor (DT).

G.03.32.18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

G.03.33.18 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2017

The minutes from the meeting held on 7 December 2017 were agreed as true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chair.

G.03.34.18 MATTERS ARISING

G.02.19.18 MN confirmed there was new 'County Lines' safeguarding training available which focused on regional prevent issues. MN agreed to circulate training dates to the Board.

Action: MN

G02.23.18 AB said it was a challenge to find out where students were going if they didn't enrol on courses with the

College. However, some data was available through the work being undertaken by Mike Robbins.

G.03.35.18

REPORT ON CHAIR'S ACTIONS

MN reported on the items that DR has signed on behalf of the Board. These mainly concerned warranties for new buildings. Examples were given as follows:

- 15 January – warranties relating to the Advanced Engineering Centre
- 19 February – letter to the IB confirming a change of delivery location from Bridgwater to Taunton
- 12 March – two deeds for funding from Sport England
- 12 March – warranties relating to the National College for Nuclear (NCfN) and the Quantock Restaurant

DR confirmed he only signed for items which had been previously approved by the Board.

G.03.36.18

OPERATING PLAN 2017/18 UPDATE

AB gave a progress update against actions in the College's Operating Plan for 2017/18, with items colour coded: red, amber or green. The items listed as 'red' were discussed as follows:

1.1.3 Attendance rate of 72% was a concern for English and maths (E&M). At this time of year the focus has turned to those who had been attending lessons to ensure they achieve rather than making sure all the students were in the classroom. A devolved model to areas had been adopted this year for E&M which had not been successful logistically in the first few weeks of the year, with some timetabling problems experienced. AB was more comfortable this would be remedied for next year but it was still high on the list of priorities. LR said that even though 72% attendance rate was a concern, this had improved 5% on last year. The challenge was those students who were on their third or fourth re-sit.

GS asked DR what the AoC approach was to how E&M motivates or demotivates students. There was a disconnect between what is needed and what is imposed. DR confirmed this was a point of discussion but with no solution. Functional E&M is more useful. DR agreed to share a copy of the latest report from the E&M focus group with the Board.

Action: DR

AB said that students had fed back via student forum meetings that they recognise they have to do it.

1.2.6 Nikki Sendell (Director of Staff and Quality Services) had just started and would be looking at the challenge of recruiting staff. Lots of work had already been done with agencies to negotiate reduced fees.

BB asked how we use agency staff. AB confirmed this was for both admin temporary staff and to recruit permanent staff for hard to fill posts. This has been effective but with high fees attached. SH commented that the budget spend was double that allocated. AB acknowledged this and confirmed it was a significant problem for the College. However, Wiltshire College were having some success in reducing their

agency costs and this would warrant a discussion with them. MB said that where this affects students items should be flagged as red.

AH asked if the College was satisfied that recruitment via agencies was the only option. AB said that agencies are sending high calibre people but they want high salaries and there must be other ways to recruit e.g. LinkedIn or Facebook. LR highlighted that the College had signed up to 'Pathways into FE' to grow trainee teachers. The first cohort of 15 are starting after Easter.

KS questioned the spend for 2016 (£404k spend against a budget of £227k), compared to 2017 (budget of £455k against a forecast spend of £822k) and the large variance. AB confirmed the staff budget is under control, it is skewed due to agency staff and fees.

AF commented that with a £32m pay budget, just 2% spend on agency fees might be good value for money.

3.3.1 AF commented that the text in the green box doesn't correlate with the success measure. Data on student retention should be included.

Action: AB

3.4.3 MH would be picking up issues with the College's Intranet. There was frustration with the current version of Sharepoint. MH would be setting up a steering group but this was not currently high on the list of priorities.

3.5.2 There was still work to do on progressing PDP records and industrial updating. Lots of CPD was taking place but this could be presented in a smarter way. Nikki Sendell would be addressing this.

4.4.1 Concern was expressed about the demographic decline of 16 year olds. Apprenticeship provision and income was up £600k on last year but it was hoped this would be better. The delay in Hinkley C had delayed apprenticeships. HE recruitment had also been disappointing. One possible lesson was for some of the capital to be taken as revenue to make employers take more of the risk.

4.1.7 Still identifying non-pay savings.

4.6.1 There were delays in launching the new website. Difficulties had arisen in connecting the Pro software into the new website.

KS asked that the colour coding be toned down to more pastel shades as the document was quite difficult to read. This was agreed.

Action: AB

AF welcomed the report and its development over the last two years. He asked to what extent is it used by teams across the College. LR expressed confidence that it was used very well.

G.03.37.18

FINANCE

MH presented the following finance reports to the Board:

a) Finance Report and Management Accounts for the six months ended 31 January 2018

The key highlights from the table on page 1 were identified:

- Left hand figures are year to date. This is a flat phased budget but will be more accurate going forwards.
- Exceptional income and expenditure includes merger costs and other one off costs.
- Full year forecast budget of £255k deficit has been revised to £356k deficit, but this includes £500k contingency. DR commented that this contingency had been built in for a long time but was rarely used. The College wasn't guaranteed to make a surplus due to merger.
- Substantial savings targets have been built in for pay/non-pay. KS asked about £1m savings identified. MH confirmed that a member of staff had been seconded to work with budget holders on this. Every vacancy was being scrutinised and good progress was being made.
- KS commented that a three year financial plan was essential. MH said that he was already working on this and would be presented to the Board in July. AB highlighted a number of opportunities coming up with EDF and the NHS.
- KS asked if the reduction in HE recruitment was due to the cap on HE places at universities being lifted. AB agreed and said that the College would be focusing on degree apprenticeships as an area of growth moving forwards.

b) ESFA Provider Management Team Report on Financial Position

MH gave a verbal update as the report was still awaited from the ESFA. The report submitted to them indicated a financial health rating as good, compared to an anticipated satisfactory rating in July 2017.

AB commented that the ESFA have held regular meetings with the College for updates and we remain in an early intervention phase (this is automatic after a merger). They have indicated they will be lifting the early intervention tag in June.

KS asked about the assets listed on page 4 as the numbers don't add up. MH confirmed there was a comma in the wrong place and this would be corrected.

Action: MH

KS also commented that the McMillan Theatre was £76k excess of income over expenditure and the Childcare Centre was £371k over expenditure which was very encouraging. AB said that the Childcare Centre breaks even and MH will adjust the accounts to make it clear this is non-pay.

Action: MH

c) Colleges' Partnership Limited – Financial Statement for 31 July 2017

This was a joint venture between Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC) and Wiltshire College. The following was noted:

- Surplus of £25k for the year

- They have low overheads – no buildings, delivered off premises, no IT infrastructure and there was lots we could learn from them
- Income for educational support services we provide was highlighted. AS asked if this appeared in the administration line. MH confirmed it did
- AB would take up the position of chair for the next academic year and agreed to bring back a report on activity for the year

Action: AB

AF asked if BTC had any governance over The Colleges' Partnership. AB said that himself and Matt Tudor are on the Board.

BB asked about assets listed as £0.75m. AB was unsure but probably amounted to the lease of office space, furniture, IT equipment and possibly leased vehicles.

G.03.38.18

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR) UPDATE

MH gave reassurance to the Board on the actions being taken to prepare for the new GDPR regulations which come into force on 25 May 2018. This will give individuals more rights and heavy fines will be imposed on companies who fail to comply. Obsolete data must be deleted. The following actions had been taken by the College to date and overall good progress was being made.

- Internal audit undertaken which has formed the basis of a project plan
- Project team formed
- Looking at all data held in the College
- Meetings with Heads of Departments
- Creation of a data map and looking at each strand to check compliance
- Briefings for SMT, training of the primary data owners plus online training for all staff planned
- There are issues with CCTV which are still to be resolved
- Looking at a possible Data Protection Officer role

MC asked if this would affect how the Board papers are distributed, although the use of the Trust Governor website helps with this. AF said that the new regulations affect personal identifiable data and Board papers are commercial sensitive so are out of scope. MB highlighted that accident reports in Health and Safety papers sometimes identify individuals which would need to stop in the future.

BB asked if we need to re-check if it is OK for the College to retain student records and asked if there is a possible six month rule.

G.03.39.18

BUILDINGS AND ESTATES UPDATE

MH presented the paper which had already been seen by the both the Buildings and FP&GP Committees.

Discussion took place around the proposed accommodation for NCfN. There are 28 learners to be accommodated from September 2018. The proposal for this and going forwards was to use Bunkerbins. These are portable temporary units that are leased for between £100 - £120 a week to include set up costs. Other Colleges such as Reeseheath are using them successfully and have a village feel. AB felt these should

only be used for over 19 year old students due to care standards regulations. AS asked if they could be stacked. AB said no.

AS asked if these could be a longer term solution for student accommodation. AB said yes, rather than build a 100 bed facility, it was proposed to look at a 50 bed facility with borrowing from the Local Authority and have the rest as flexible Bunkerbins. MB asked if these would be leased or purchased. AB confirmed they would be leased.

LB commented that where they are situated is very important due to the infrastructure needed – plumbing, electric etc. AB said the ideal solution would be during the construction phase of the permanent build, to put in the infrastructure for the Bunkerbins. The Estates team had identified an idea by the tractor rink which already had drainage and electricity, however, this is away from the accommodation team. One option would be to put in a crossing or speed humps on Rodway Hill, but this would still mean lots of students crossing the road which was not ideal.

LU said she has stayed in the accommodation at both Cannington and Taunton. Cannington had a very homely feel, whereas Taunton accommodation wasn't as nice.

MN highlighted that there was also a need to upgrade our existing accommodation and these could be used as bridging accommodation. KS agreed.

AB said that with Board approval, the College was looking at what had been promised in terms of match funding for accommodation and a report would be brought back to the Board with the possible options.

Action: AB

MH confirmed the loan needed for a permanent facility was between £3.4m - £7m. A meeting had taken place with Sedgemoor District Council to lend the College the funds for 25 years. They had given an initial rate of 5.1% but when challenged had reduced this to 4.6%. The finance team were working through the business case and investigating this alongside a revolving credit facility with the bank in order to assess all the options. DR commented that the SDC loan is at a fixed rate for 25 years so is a serious option.

G.03.40.18

UPDATE FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

AB gave a verbal update on actions taken since the last Strategic Planning Event in January.

- First draft of the Strategic Planning Framework Document has been produced
- This would be shared with the Heads' team at the residential in April for comments and begin to draw out priorities for action
- Final version will be submitted to the Board in July.

AB reassured the Board that work is continuing.

G.03.41.18

MARKETING UPDATE

AB presented the Marketing update as per the comprehensive report. Items of note included:

- A decline in applications from 16 year olds, yet the number of 17 and 18 year olds was increasing
- A fall in the number of students attending open evenings due to the demographic decline
- Lots of work on branding
- Events team now located in Business Development – coordinated the openings of the NCfN and the Quantock restaurant
- Fantastic team of student Ambassadors
- Flourishing Distance Learning team approaching £2m of activity
- Challenges with FE Week (sector publication) and their coverage of the College

DR commented on the quality of attendees at the NCfN opening, and requested that Governors receive a tour. MN to look at whether the next meeting could be at Cannington to facilitate this.

Action: MN

SH asked about open events and whether prospective students were doing their ‘shopping’ in a different way. LU asked if there was a virtual walkthrough on the website. AB confirmed there was but stressed the need for the College to make more of this virtual reality technology. There were lots of possibilities, including replacing the school leaver’s prospectus with an App. There was a need to challenge the way we work with young people. LB felt that parents are very technology savvy and questioned whether the old website was having a negative impact on applications.

AH asked what the College was doing to push out good news about our work with the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) to the wider mainstream media and celebrate their achievements. AB said that the MAT is much more successful than ever before in terms of student performance but is still under as much financial pressure as other schools. There are lots of sensitivities and the College is in the background. It was a fine balancing act.

One spelling mistake was highlighted by LB “Lucky Buckingham” instead of Luke.

G.03.42.18

POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

a) Fees Policy 2018/19

LR referred to the highlighted changes to the Fees Policy, much of which related to the terminology for apprenticeships.

MB asked if the overall package was competitive. LR confirmed that most decisions were part of the funding guidelines and therefore out of the College’s control. However, for HE provision, the College does have a comparison, but flexibility has been written in to the policy.

The Board approved the document as presented.

G.03.43.18

MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING SUB-COMMITTEES

a) Building Projects Committee – 19 February 2018

b) Health and Safety Committee – 26 February 2018

AF asked about the RIDDOR incident and the response that was minuted. He requested reassurance that any errors have been reassessed and safe working practices are followed. The Board were reassured that reasonable steps have been taken. MH agreed to look at this further and revise the minutes to explain what further steps have been taken.

Action: MH

c) Standards Committee – 5 March 2018

AH noted that additional SAR meetings had been held and extended his thanks to Wendy Dick/LR for briefing governors about E&M and Value Added. This was very much appreciated.

d) Audit Committee – 13 March 2018

e) Finance, Personnel & General Purposes Committee – 15 March 2018

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

G.03.44.18

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Governors' Meeting Calendar 2018/19

MN distributed two versions of the calendar. SH requested that the meeting planned for 4 March 2019 (the same week as open evenings) to be moved to allow staff governors to attend.

Action: MN

G.03.45.18

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 5 July 2018 - Regular