

# Governing Board

Tue 22 March 2022, 17:00 - 19:00

Lecture Theatre 1&2 CATS Building, Parsons Walk, Wigan



## Attendees

### Board members

**PRESENT:** Ann Harrison (Chair), Kath Causey (Vice Chair), Jenny Bullen (Independent Governor), Andrea Ferguson (Independent Governor), Susan Spibey (Independent Governor), Anna Dawe (Principal), Jennifer Connor (Staff Governor), Rebecca Turley (Staff Governor), Andrei Gheorghita (Student Governor), Elizabeth MacKenzie (Student Governor)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Joanne Platt (Clerk to the Governing Body), Steve Scott (Finance Director – via MS Teams), Claire Foreman (Vice Principal – Curriculum), Alison Rushton (Vice Principal – Employment and Skills), Louise Brown (Vice Principal – Corporate Services), Dave Harrison (Assistant Principal – Data and Funding), Martin Hirst (for Item 15 only).

Governors' elect Susan Snape, Steven Tomlinson, Hayley Mercer, Tom Mooney and Alison McKenzie-Folan were also in attendance.

The Chair welcomed the Governors elect to the meeting and introductions were made.

The Chair advised Governors, that due to a further very recent Governor resignation, membership of the Governing Board was now only 11 members, which is below the minimum number of 12 set out in the Instrument and Articles of Government. Legal advice has been sought in relation to decisions to be made at this meeting and it has been confirmed that, as this was outside of the Governing Board's control and the fact that the Governing Board is expecting to make five new appointments at this meeting, the meeting can still go ahead and the decisions made will be valid, as the meeting is quorate.

Susan Spibey joined the meeting at 5.06pm.

## Meeting minutes

### 1. Apologies for absence

GB22-03-01

There were no apologies for absence.

### 2. Declarations of Interests

GB22-03-02

Susan Snape, Steven Tomlinson, Hayley Mercer, Tom Mooney and Alison McKenzie-Folan declared an interest in Item 4.

Jenny Bullen declared an interest in Item 4. All Governors declared an interest in Item 5.

### 3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

GB22-03-03

The Board agreed that the minutes of Part 1 of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 were an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

The Governing Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 for signature by the Chair.

### 4. Board appointments

GB22-03-04

Susan Snape, Steven Tomlinson, Hayley Mercer, Tom Mooney and Alison McKenzie-Folan left the meeting for this item.

The Board noted that the Search and Governance Committee had interviewed candidates for vacancies on the Governing Board and was recommending five new appointments. This left one vacancy on the Board, which the Search and Governance Committee will seek to fill with a qualified accountant. The Board also noted the resignation of Diane Brennan as a Governor, and noted that the Search and Governance Committee was proposing that the Governing Board appoints her as a Co-opted Governor for a two-year term of office as Chair of the Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED:** The Board appointed Hayley Mercer, as an Independent Governor for a term of four years from 22 March



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2022.

**RESOLVED:** The Board appointed Susan Snape, as an Independent Governor for a term of four years from 22 March 2022.

**RESOLVED:** The Board appointed Steven Tomlinson, as an Independent Governor for a term of four years from 22 March 2022

**RESOLVED:** The Board appointed Tom Mooney, as an Independent Governor for a term of four years from 22 March 2022.

**RESOLVED:** The Board appointed Alison McKenzie-Folan, as an Independent Governor for a term of four years from 22 March 2022

**RESOLVED:** The Board appointed Diane Brennan as a Co-opted Governor for a term of two-years from 22 March 2022.

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## 5. Committee memberships and Chairs

GB22-03-05

Susan Snape, Steven Tomlinson, Hayley Mercer, Tom Mooney and Alison McKenzie-Folan re-joined the meeting.

The Board noted that the Search and Governance Committee has reviewed Committee memberships and Lead Governor roles, following a number of Governor resignations and subsequent new Governor appointments considered under Item 4 above. The Committee is also proposing to appoint Vice Chairs for each Committee as part of the Board's Succession Plan.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Jenny Bullen as Lead Governor for Safeguarding

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Harinder Dhaliwal as Lead Governor for Careers and Destinations.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Hayley Mercer to the Audit Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Susan Snape to the Audit Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Steven Tomlinson to the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Tom Mooney to the Resources Committee and the Remuneration Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Alison McKenzie-Folan to the Resources Committee and the Search and Governance Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Kath Causey as Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To remove Ann Harrison from the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee and appoint her to the Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To remove Harinder Dhaliwal as a member of the Resources Committee and appoint him to the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Ann Harrison as Vice Chair of the Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Susan Snape as Vice Chair of the Audit Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Rebecca Turley as Vice Chair of the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Andrea Ferguson as Vice Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Andrea Ferguson as Vice Chair of the Search and Governance Committee.



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The Board received a presentation on key issues from the Principal. The Board noted that the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill was awaiting Royal assent. This includes Local Skills Improvement Plans (which local authorities and combined authorities will now be involved in developing for their areas), Associated consultations for Level 2 and 3, new performance metrics linked to outcomes (destinations) and changes to funding.

There is to be a increase to 16-18 base rate funding and 16-19 allocation, linked to the delivery of 40-hours additional guided learning and it was noted that the College's position in relation to this is strong.

In relation to 19+, it was noted that the GMCA has confirmed the same allocation for AEB but there will be a reduction in the national AEB allocation. The National Skills Fund (GM and National) is yet to be confirmed.

In terms of enrolments, it was noted that teacher assessed grades and COVID have impacted adversely on technical education with enrolments nationally in general FE colleges reducing alongside an increase in enrolments at 6th Form colleges. Although the College has met its allocation for 16-18 year olds, this has impacted on learner numbers.

In terms of the pandemic, it was noted that there are currently no COVID restrictions in place but the College has a poster campaign to 'stay aware' and that masks / sanitising / testing / isolation if required are available and / or still in place.

The College is prepared for another year of teacher assessed grades but is expecting full exam sessions to take place instead. It was noted that January examinations took place.

Working from home and flexible working continues for non-student facing roles and it was noted that challenges around mental health, behaviour, resilience and missed learning remain.

Governors considered the impact of external factors on retention, progression and apprenticeships and the actions being taken to address this.

It was noted that Ofsted inspections have recommenced nationally, with a focus on those who were previously outstanding. Feedback from the sector points to apprenticeships being a weak point in colleges already inspected to date. All colleges regardless of grade will now be inspected every 5 years. Governors considered the areas of possible focus in the College's next inspection, which is expected to take place in the next academic year.

In relation to the College's strategic priorities (Place), the Institute of Technology, the Centre for Advanced Technical Studies, the commencement of the EHU Primary Teaching Degree, official launch of the Skills Partnership in June and an increase in engagement with employers, stakeholders and the wider community were noted. Governors also noted some planned changes in local schools which may affect the secondary / post-16 landscape.

In terms of Investment for the Future, staff development is strong, with a focus on delivering the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, the Post-FE Professional Development Grant project and planning to secure the FE workforce of the future. A discussion in relation to the Transformation Fund Project took place later in the meeting under Item 15.

It was noted that applications are higher this year than at the same time last year but there is some uncertainty about whether a return to examinations will result in a return to expected patterns of recruitment.

Governors also noted that trips and external visits have now resumed and that college was now feeling more like college for both staff and students.

The Board noted the update.

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## 7. Strategic Plan: Mid-Year Chapter Updates

### 7.1. Quality

GB22-03-07

The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had reviewed progress against actions in the Strategic Plan relating to Quality, noting that most actions are on track. It was noted that further action is planned to increase the number of students progressing to university, and a campaign is underway to give parents confidence in addressing issues such as accessing student accommodation, bursaries and to restore the confidence in universities that was damaged during the COVID pandemic.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that students have missed out on more than just knowledge during the pandemic and it will therefore take time for students to return to a pre-COVID level of confidence.



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The Board noted the report

## 7.2. Place and Productivity

GB22-03-08

The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had reviewed progress against actions in the Strategic Plan relating to Place and Productivity. It was noted that everything was on track although further work is needed to establish the sub-groups on the partnership with Edgehill University and Wigan Borough Council.

Governors noted the success of the employer apprenticeship events and work being done with parents in schools which is also encouraging adults back into adult education.

The Board noted the report

## 7.3. Investment for the Future

GB22-03-09

The Board noted that the Resources Committee had considered the Strategic Plan update, with a focus on the actions in the Investment for the Future chapter. It was noted that all actions are currently on track. More details will be discussed under Item 15 below.

Governors were pleased to see that the new financial system was now live and that the College was planning to adopt the Climate Change Roadmap.

The Board noted the report

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## 8. Spring Term Updates

### 8.1. Careers and Destinations

GB22-03-10

There was no update due to the resignation of the Lead Governor for Careers and Destinations. However, as new Lead Governor appointments have been made under Item 5 above, the Board noted that a full update will be available at the next meeting of the Board.

### 8.2. Safeguarding

GB22-03-11

There was no update due to the resignation of the Lead Governor for Safeguarding. However, as new Lead Governor appointments have been made under Item 5 above, the Board noted that a full update will be available at the next meeting of the Board.

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The Board considered a report on the outcome of the last round of Link Visits, which had taken place in two curriculum departments (Foundation Studies and Animal Management) and a Sub-contracting visit to Wigan Warriors which delivers 16-18 Sport qualifications in Wigan. It was noted that ten Governors had participated in the Link visits and that the feedback received indicated a high level of staff dedication and student centred approaches, resulting in a positive atmosphere of inclusive learning and happy students growing in confidence. The dedicated recently refurbished space within Foundation Studies was seen as a positive improvement.

Governors also found the students in Animal management demonstrated a real passion for their subject and it was noted that students had behaved respectfully and with maturity. Contemporary topics such as ecology and sustainability are being incorporated into the curriculum and students spoken to were able to articulate their destination goals.

It was noted that mental health, general wellbeing and academic gaps in learning have been significant issues this year but the staff were able to articulate a comprehensive response in terms of additional learning opportunities and support.

Governors visiting Wigan Warriors found the provision to be of very high quality and the students confident and capable. The facilities were excellent and students were all wearing Wigan & Leigh College lanyards.

Governors noted that monitoring should take place with a view to encourage male uptake in animal management and to develop the curriculum in response to student need and current practices.

Governors supported the Link Visits which are considered to be very beneficial and an excellent way to provide additional assurance.

Governors considered ways to enhance the visits to provide additional assurance and agreed that Link Visits should take place more frequently as agreed at the Strategic Workshop on 11 March and that the outcomes of Link Visits should be reported to the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee before being report to the Governing Board.

Prevent

**RESOLVED:** That Link Governor visits take place once each term.

**RESOLVED:** That Link Governor reports be considered by the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee before being reported to the Governing Board.

**RESOLVED:** That specifically tailored questions be prepared for each visit based on known issues, as a prompt for each visit.

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## 10. Policies

### 10.1. Safeguarding and Prevent Policies

GB22-03-13

The Board noted that the Safeguarding Child Protection and Early Help Policy, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and the Prevent Strategy have been reviewed in line with the changes to any legislation within this area. The revised policies had been considered in detail by the Curriculum and Students Matters Committee at its meeting on 8 March 2022 and were now recommended for approval.

**RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Safeguarding Child Protection and Early Help Policy.

**RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

**RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Safeguarding and Prevent Strategy.

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## 11. Resources Committee Reports

### 11.1. Fees Policy

GB22-03-14

The Board noted that the Fees Policy for 2022-23 had been reviewed by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 3 March.

**RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Fees Policy for 2022-23



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## 11.2. Management Accounts

GB22-03-15

The Board noted that the Resources Committee had considered and approved the Management Accounts to the end of January 2022, noting a year to date operating surplus (before FRS102 adjustments) of £1.136m against a budget £666k which is a positive variance of £470k.

Cash balances at the end of the period were £10m (111 days) and ESFA key performance indicators showed the College's financial health will maintain a minimum of good at year-end and all bank covenants are compliant with the terms of the facility agreements.

The Board also noted that the Resources Committee had considered the budget reforecast for the current year, noting that a review of the original assumptions based on the current FE environment together with some clarification on previous expectations, has resulted in a forecasted improved position with a predicted deficit of £275k, and a predicted minimum ESFA financial health grading of "good" whilst also allowing the College to operate within the terms of its banking covenants.

The Board noted the report

## 11.3. Finance KPI Dashboard

GB22-03-16

The Board noted that the Resources Committee had reviewed the Finance KPI dashboard at its meeting on 3 March 2022. Q2 showed an improved position with only three amber KPIs compared to seven in Q1. Governors were pleased to see the College was in a good state financially.

The Board noted the report

## 11.4. HR KPI Dashboard

GB22-03-17

The Board noted that the Resources Committee had reviewed the HR KPI dashboard at its meeting on 3 March 2022, noting that absence rates had increased since Q1 as a result of the Omicron variant of COVID, which was now starting to settle. Staff turnover has also increased and analysis of this is underway. However, it was noted that this is a general trend as a result of the economy starting to recover post COVID and higher salaries and career opportunities being offered. Newly appointed staff are however being retained as a result of a variety of support measures in place.

It was noted that the College's pay is comparable with other colleges but can't compete with salaries offered by universities and the private sector. However, it offers incentives through salary sacrifice schemes, hybrid working and other staff benefits and evidence shows that these are valued by staff. Governors noted that the College's approach to hybrid working post COVID was positive. They also commended the 'bite sized' training offered, noting that this was well received by staff and well attended.

Governors were impressed with the work the College is doing on staff engagement and thanked the Team for their efforts to support staff.

The Board noted the report

## 11.5. Resources Committee Minutes

GB22-03-18

The Board noted the draft minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 3 March 2022.

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## 12. Curriculum and Student Matters Committee Reports



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The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had reviewed the Equality and Diversity Annual Report and Objectives at its meeting on 8 March 2022.

It was noted that 16-18 participation now exceeds adults but the pandemic has impacted on adult learners in relation to achievement on lower level courses with female adult learners particularly affected. There has also been a decline in achievement rates for adults with a disability or learning difficulty (particularly mental health). However, participation rates for ethnically diverse learners exceed local demographic data as evidenced by the last census and these learners continue to achieve well.

In terms of HE, achievement rates have improved for younger learners (those under 21), narrowing the gap in performance with mature learners. There has been a trend of increasing numbers of learners identifying with a disability or learning difficulty, although this appears to have peaked in 2019-20 with a slight decline in numbers in 2020-21.

Female participation in HE remains lower than male participation rates. Male achievement has improved, narrowing the gap with female learners. It was also noted that female apprentices and those with a disability or learning difficulty (dyslexia) have been more adversely affected by the pandemic. Apprenticeship participation rates for ethnically diverse learners is particularly low, in line with the national picture.

In terms of staff, the College demographic remains similar to last year. The disclosure of protected characteristics remains a challenge, whilst staff feedback is positive in relation to feeling valued. The three year trend for the gender pay gap is lower than national and sector rates.

**RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Equality and Diversity Annual Report and Objectives

## 12.2. Curriculum KPI Dashboards

### 12.2.1. Study Programmes and Dashboard

GB22-03-20

The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had reviewed the Study Programmes KPI dashboard at its meeting on 8 March, noting that attendance is high for vocational subjects and that the gap between this and Maths and English attendance has narrowed.

T levels are progressing well, with the majority of placements already started and the remainder planned. Staff development has been significant throughout the year for both vocational updating and pedagogy.

There are new initiatives for the remainder of the year on HE progression for Level 3 leavers and internal progression particularly for Level 1 and Level 2 students, as this declined during the pandemic.

The Board noted the report

### 12.2.2. Adult Provision and Dashboard

GB22-03-21

The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had reviewed the Adult Programmes KPI dashboard at its meeting on 8 March, noting that attendance and retention are both currently just below target, with ESOL and Access programmes the worse affected. A number of strategies have been adopted to improve performance to the end of the year.

A key focus on Staff development has generated high levels of engagement across the College. Curriculum transformation across adult programmes has continued in line with the college's strategic intent.

The Board noted that the College has successfully delivered high levels of professional updating through the DfE's FE Professional Development Grant (FEPDG) pilot programme which is a collaboration with colleges from across England.

The Board noted the report



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The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had received a detailed presentation on Apprenticeship provision and reviewed the Apprenticeship KPI dashboard at its meeting on 8 March 2022, noting that there is a strong focus on driving standards and expectations of Trainer Assessors post-Covid, which has included workplace reviews and administrative compliance. Attendance is strong and achievement is above year to date comparisons for pre-Covid year 2018-19. Predicted end of year achievement is in line with targets.

It was also noted that achievement rates in 2022-23 are predicted to be a further improvement from previous years.

The Board noted the report

#### 12.2.4. HE Provision and Dashboard

GB22-03-23

The Board noted that the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee had reviewed the HE KPI dashboard, noting that attendance is high, albeit slightly below target. Retention is also close to the end of year target and may therefore be missed, whilst still remaining above the 2021 out-turn.

It was noted that student satisfaction is high from SPOC 1 and the NSS and internal NSS surveys are currently underway.

The Board noted the report

#### 12.3. Curriculum and Student Matters Committee Minutes

GB22-03-24

The Board noted the draft minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee held on 8 March 2022.

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### 13. Search and Governance Committee Minutes

GB22-03-25

The Board noted the draft minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held on 1 March 2022.

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### 14. Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference

GB22-03-26

The Board noted that the Remuneration Committee had undertaken a review of its Terms of Reference to comply with the requirements of the Association of Colleges' Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code, which states that Remuneration Committees should not be chaired by the Chair of the Governing Body.

**RESOLVED:** The Board approved revised Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee

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### 15. Capital Projects Update

GB22-03-27

Martin Hirst joined the meeting at 7.05pm.

The Board received a presentation on Capital Projects. It was noted that the Transformation project funded by the DfE was awaiting confirmation of the match funding required and ministerial approval of the revised control option. Indicative timescales are to commence the tendering process in early May with commencement on site anticipated in January 2023. Phase 1 (School for the Arts) is expected to be completed by December 2023 with other buildings expected to be ready for occupation by July 2025, demolition of old buildings to be completed by January 2026 and other external works by April 2026.

The key benefits are the provision of a high quality learning / work environment, significant extension of the lifespan of the buildings, elimination of significant maintenance liabilities, rationalisation of floor space and improved room utilisation, significant reduction in premises running costs, a net zero carbon solution and enhanced external environment providing more social facilities.



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Governors discussed match funding requirements and risks associated with the project and it was agreed that a small group of Governors (consisting of the Committee Chairs) would meet separately to consider the risks and that authority to take the next steps be delegated to the Chair of the Governing Board, once the College had some clarity in relation to the level of match funding required from the College.

The Board also considered an update in relation to other ongoing capital projects, which are proceeding on target.

The Board noted the update and:

**RESOLVED:** to arrange a meeting between Committee Chairs with the Principal, Finance Director and Vice Principal Corporate Services to agree the next steps when the match funding requirements are confirmed.

**RESOLVED:** To delegate the decision on how to proceed to the Chair of the Governing Board following discussion with Committee Chairs.

Martin Hirst left the meeting at 7.35pm.

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## 16. Any other business

GB22-03-28

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting for the Vice Principal - Curriculum, thanked her for her commitment and professionalism and all she had done for the College. Governors joined the Chair in wishing her well in her retirement.

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## 17. Date and time of next meeting: Tuesday 5 July 2022 at 5.00pm

GB22-03-29

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## 18. Part 1 of the meeting ended at 7.32pm



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