

MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

5.00PM ON TUESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2021

AT GATEWAY CONFERENCE CENTRE (ROOM A), PARSON'S WALK

PRESENT:

Ann Harrison (Chair) Governor
Kath Causey Governor
Andrea Ferguson Governor
Susan Louden Governor
Diane Brennan Governor
Jenny Bullen Governor

Rebecca Turley Staff Governor Jennifer Cockram Staff Governor

Anna Dawe Principal

IN ATTENDANCE:

Joanne Platt Clerk to the Governing Body Claire Foreman Vice Principal, Curriculum:

Louise Brown Vice Principal, Corporate Services:
Alison Rushton Vice Principal, Employment & Skills

Steve Scott Finance Director:

Dave Harrison Assistant Principal, IT, MIS and Subcontracting

Tony Costello Guest Harinder Dhaliwal Guest Andrei Gheorghita Guest

The meeting was quorate.

Item	Minute No.	Minutes
1	GB21-10-001	APOLOGIES Apologies for absence had been received from Alison Chambers, David McDonald and Susan Spibey.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		The Chair welcomed Tony Costello, Harinder Dhaliwal and Andrei Gheorghita to the meeting as guests and Joanne Platt in her first official meeting as Clerk to the Governing Body.
2	GB21-10-002	DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS There were no declarations of interests.
3	GB21-10-003	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 06 JULY 2021 The minutes of the meeting held on the 06 July 2021 were approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.
4	GB21-10-004	MATTERS ARISING: The Board reviewed the action sheet and noted that with the exception of Action GB20-006, all actions have been completed. In relation to Action GB20-006, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Board would take place at Leigh College with another meeting taking place in the Rushton Building. Action: Clerk to arrange meetings of the Board at Leigh College and the Rushton Building.
		Tony Costello, Harinder Dhaliwal and Andrei Gheorghita left the meeting.
5	GB21-10-005	BOARD APPOINTMENTS The Board considered a report on the outcome of three interviews held for the appointment of new Governors by the Search and Governance Committee on 29 September 2021 and the outcome of the election of Student Governors. It was noted that the Committee had agreed before the interviews commenced to make only two Independent Governor appointments, in order to leave a vacancy on the Board for the appointment of a new Governor with an accountancy background, as part of the Board's succession planning arrangements.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		It was also noted that one of the proposed Student Governors has since withdrawn her interest and that further applications will be sought with a view to making another Student Governor appointment at the December meeting of the Board.
		The Board also noted that support had been received from amongst Board members to the permanent appointment of David McDonald as Lead Governor for Careers and Destinations, with no other Governors expressing an interest in this role.
		RESOLVED: That the Board approves the appointment of Harinder Dhaliwal and Tony Costello as Independent Governors for a term of four years from 12 October 2021.
		RESOLVED: That the Board approves the appointment of Andrei Gheorghita as a Student Governor for a term of two years from 12 October 2021.
		RESOLVED: That the Board appoints Harinder Dhaliwal to be a member of the Resources Committee
		RESOLVED: That the Board appoints Tony Costello to be a member of the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee
		RESOLVED: That the Board appoints Andrei Gheorghita to be a member of the Curriculum and Student Matters Committee
		RESOLVED: That the Board appoints David McDonald as Lead Governor for Careers and Destinations
	Tony	Costello, Harinder Dhaliwal and Andrei Gheorghita re-joined the meeting.
6	GB21-10-006	PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE The Board received a presentation on key strategic issues, noting the recent ministerial changes and that the Skills & Post-16 Education Bill had now completed its passage through the House of Lords with issues remaining in relation to adult funding / loans and access to lower level courses. Local Skills Improvement Plans are still being looked at with questions about how local as opposed to regional / sub-regional areas can input into these.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		It was noted that GM Colleges have responded collectively to the DFE Consultation on a new FE funding and accountability system and that there are risks in relation to judgements being made without context e.g. destinations and meeting skills needs and financial risks in relation to the configuration of the adult education budget.
		The new Code of Good Governance has now been published and the Board will consider the impact of this and the proposed changes in the FE funding and accountability system at the Strategic Day in January 2022.
		The College's new Strategic Plan (considered under Item 8 below) includes revised ambitions that are more responsive to local need, focusing on working more closely with stakeholders, to prepare the College for the future. It also responds to new policy and government direction.
		Increased capacity and a revised focus of the senior team and wider college management team will enable the College to engage more widely with national initiatives and to sustain improvement post-COVID.
		In terms of the Quality ambition, performance monitoring will use 2018-19 as the baseline, to ensure that comparisons are like for like.
		Programme design and delivery will reflect the lessons learnt during COVID. Teaching, learning and assessment models have changed and the College will still have to respond further to examination adaptations
		It was noted that c£200k has been secured from FE Professional Development for staff development and training (Vocational updating and NQT support) and that the College is the lead for one consortium.
		In relation to the Place and Productivity ambition, it was noted that the new Centre for Advanced Technical Studies has received excellent feedback from students and visitors, that T-level enrolment has been strong with 99 students on programmes, and the adult education offer is undergoing significant change, with a project with Wigan Council launching in January.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		It was also noted that following an evaluation, it had been decided that bids for ESF funding for skills for growth and NEETs presented significant challenges in relation to viability and achievability and it was therefore not appropriate to pursue these projects. The decision in relation to the institute of Technology has also fallen behind and will place pressure on a September 2022 start as planned.
		In terms of the Investment for the Future ambition, significant investment has been made in the College's estate and learning environments and there is more planned, the digital infrastructure has undergone rapid improvement and upgrade and there is a commitment to maintain this to support innovation.
		Financial health is outstanding but the College needs to prepare for changes in its income mix and for investment in other growth areas.
		In terms of enrolment, 16-18 has grown again and the ESFA target is expected to be met, which will deliver further growth next year. However, the adult education budget will be a challenge. Although the GM AEB will be utilised, other funding lines will not fully utilise allocation. It was noted that HE and Advanced Learner Loans will meet budget and that Apprenticeships are on track to exceed the budget target with bounce back post-COVID evident.
		The Board noted that satisfaction with HE provision at the College was high with some excellent media coverage in relation to this and a number of apprentices receiving awards. A-level results in 2021 were outstanding and the College had received the Pearson National Teaching Award for sports and is now shortlisted for the Gold Award.
		The Chair thanked the Principal for a very comprehensive and encouraging presentation, noting the excellent achievements referred to in the presentation.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		In response to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that T-levels are being offered in digital with a specialism in design and development, in construction with a specialism in civil engineering, in education with two specialisms in early year's education and childcare and assisting teaching and in health with three specialisms in adult nursing, mental health and health professional.
		Governors noted the above national average A-Level success rate for a third year and that vocational qualification achievement also continues to improve and remains well above benchmark.
		The Board gave credit to the Executive Team for such a positive update in very challenging times, recognising that growth cannot be sustained long term, and that focus will be on quality over quantity and engaging with local communities to meet needs in future years.
		The Board noted the update.
7	GB21-10-007	STRATEGIC REPORTING The Board considered the KPI dashboards for the 2020-21 out-turn position for each strategic ambition, noting that performance was positive for each dashboard. Although the 20-21 position has been affected by COVID and some strategic targets have been missed as a direct result of COVID with some not making the progress expected, it was noted that core business activity has remained strong and performed well during the Pandemic. Governors noted that out-turn data is in most cases final, although achievement rates may change up to the final funding return. Dashboards showing the starting position for 2021-22 were also reviewed, with new strategic ambition chapters developed to reflect the new three-year Strategic Plan.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		The Board noted that the new dashboards will be presented to the relevant committees in the next cycle of meetings and that the structure of the dashboards has been changed to provide more in-depth information relating to different parts of curriculum activity. For example, the dashboards for the Quality ambition provide data for each area of curriculum activity (16-18, 19+, HE, Apprentices), and the dashboards for 'Investment for the Future' remain focused on estates, HR and finance and have been updated to include new KPIs where relevant.
		It was noted that benchmark data is for 2018-19 as this was the last year of non-COVID activity and that 2019-20 and 2020-21 performance data is not as reliable due to the impact of COVID.
		The Chair congratulated the Executive Team for strong performance in 2020-21 despite the challenges arising from the Pandemic In response to questions from Governors, it was confirmed that most provision is now on-site although some remains on line. Every L3 programme has been challenged to make some online provision available, as evidence during the Pandemic showed some improvement with online learning.
		Governors asked if the growth in apprenticeship numbers reflected new starts or delayed completions and it was confirmed that new starts has grown despite an overall drop nationally. Dips in achievements are attributable to delays in end-point assessments and breaks in learning arising from the Pandemic.
		The Chair noted some excellent achievements in relation to sustainability arising from developments to the College estate and also congratulated the Vice Principal Corporate Services for a number of HR related awards during 2020-21.
		The Board noted the report.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
8	GB21-10-008	STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24 The Board reviewed the final draft of the College's Strategic Plan for 2021-24, which had been developed following the Governor's Strategic Day in January 2021 and noting that changes requested by Governors at the meeting on 6 July had been made.
		The Board thanked the Executive Team for its hard work in developing the plan, noting that the final version will now be shared with all staff and external stakeholders, including education partners and the Association of Colleges. A summary version has also been developed for sharing with students and parents.
		In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that a report on the outturn in relation to the previous Strategic Plan will be made available to stakeholders in December. However it is noted that there are no plans to do an annual review of the new plan for external stakeholders as this will be done at the end of the three-year period.
		RESOLVED: That the Board approves the Strategic Plan for 2021-24.
9	GB21-10-009	MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS (JULY / YEAR END) The Board considered the Management Accounts to the end of July 2021, noting that these had previously been circulated to all Governors via email in September. It was noted that this set of accounts will form the basis for the year-end financial report and that there are no significant variances forecast from this position. The accounts show a year to date operating surplus (before FRS102 adjustments) of £1.32m against a re-forecast £1.27m which is a
		positive variance of £23k.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		It was noted that the total ESFA funding budget allocation has been agreed in advance and is therefore guaranteed income for 2020-21. Cash balances at the end of the period were £10.15m (109 days). This is higher than the originally budgeted £6.6m (72 days) and remains within the 30 day threshold adopted by the College and reported in the annual financial statements.
		ESFA key performance indicators showed the College's financial health will remain outstanding at year-end and all bank covenants are compliant with the terms of the facility agreements.
		In response to questions from Governors, it was confirmed that whilst cash balances will remain high, some of this will be offset by creditor payments in 2021-22. It was also noted that cash balances in the early months of a new academic year are normally higher as a result of the profile of ESFA funding allocations being received in the first quarter of the year.
		RESOLVED: The Board approves the Management Accounts at year end 2020-21.
10	GB21-10-010	BUDGET 2021/22 The Board considered the revised budget for 2021-22, noting that when the budget was presented to Resources Committee on the 10 June 2021 and approved by Governing Board on the 6 July 2021, there was an element of uncertainty surrounding some of the assumptions included in the forecasts. It was recognised at the time that a number of income and expenditure lines would need to be re-visited as new information came to light in respect of funding allocations and increases in certain cost areas.
		Changes made in the budget resented for approval include changes in income, including Core Programme Funding in 2021-22 (a reduction on the core 16-19 programme funding of £3,480 as a result of the ESFA reducing numbers by 3 learners on T Levels); an increase in the Tuition Fund in 2021-22 of £30k, and a reduction of £29k in the OfS Direct Funding allocation. The total net result of these changes is £2k for 2021-22 and £29k for 2022-23.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		It was also noted that the recently announced social care levy will cost the College a further 1.25% on its salary bill which is in addition to the original budget. The tax begins in April 2022 therefore the College will incur additional costs for four months in 2021-22 and for 12 months in subsequent years. For 2021-22 this amounts to an additional £65k and for 2022-23 onwards an additional £196k. This levy is proportional to the salary bill and will increase as we apply any pay rises and also with any growth in staff numbers. It is not yet clear if funding will be provided for this in the Comprehensive Spending Review.
		In relation to non-pay costs, the capitalisation of costs in the year to 31 July 2021 will result in an increase in the depreciation charge for subsequent years as the College writes down the value over the expected useful life of the assets. This will add an additional c.£50k into the depreciation charge from 2021-22. The charge is a non-cash movement in the accounts and is not included by the ESFA when calculating financial health or the banks covenants.
		The pension valuation prepared by the College's Actuaries in August includes an estimate for the 2021-22 financial year that suggests the charge will be £2.387m (£2.064m in service costs and £323k interest), which is an increase of £512k against budget. This cost is a valuation adjustment to the College's pension reserve and does not form part of the ESFA calculations of financial health and is also not relevant for the banking covenants.
		In summary, it was noted that there is a total increase in expenditure of £627k for 2021-22 and £759k for 2022-23.
		Cash balances at the end of the year are forecast to be £9.4m. The Financial objectives agreed by the Governing Board have tasked management with maintaining a minimum cash balance equivalent to 30 days cover and it was noted that the College will not fall below the required KPI level for the whole of the year.
		The College's balance sheet remains fairly stable and the key ESFA performance ratios indicate that the College will continue to operate within the terms of the regulations surrounding financial health.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		RESOLVED: that the Board approves the revised budget for 2021-22.
11	GB21-10-011	ANNUAL REPORT ON DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION The Board considered the annual report on Data Protection and Freedom of Information requests in 2020-21, noting that as a result of staff changing their working arrangements during the Pandemic, the College had reviewed its processes to ensure that cyber security was maintained. It was noted that the College had received 14 Freedom of Information Requests and 329 Data and Subject Access requests during 2020-21, which was a slight increase from the previous year. All Data and Subject Access requests had been responded to within the statutory period and there had not been any reportable data breaches in the year. RESOLVED: that the Board approves the Annual Report on Data Protection and Freedom of Information.
12	GB21-10-012	CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE The Board considered the Capital Updates report, noting that the Centre for Advanced Technical Studies (Rushton Building) refurbishment had been completed on time and within budget but that the decision on the Greater Manchester Institute of Technology was still awaited. The 16-19 capital expansion fund if approved, will fund expansion of the Pagefield Centre and a decision on this is now expected in the autumn. It is not clear if projects will need to be operational for September 2022. An application for Office for Students HE capital funding was submitted in September which, if successful will find the refurbishment / new equipment for two specialist laboratories at the Pagefield Centre. The decision is awaited and if approved, the grant will have to be spent by the end of March 2022.



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
		Governors considered the plans being developed by the DfE under the Capital Transformation Fund project, noting that a feasibility study will be presented to the Governing Board at its December meeting. Indicative timescales are for a summer 2022 start on site.
		Governors noted that almost all of the College had been or would be rebuilt and / or refurbished over recent / coming years which was very positive for both the College and the town. Estate improvements also contribute positively to staff engagement and motivation and it was noted that students had commented on many of the changes which are providing enhanced learning environments.
		It was noted that the plans being developed under the Capital Transformation Fund include additional development space for future growth.
		The Board noted the report.
13	GB21-10-013	USE OF THE COLLEGE SEAL The Board noted that the College Seal had been used on eight occasions during the 2020-21 academic year to execute legal documents in relation to decisions made by the Board.
		The Board noted the report
14.1	GB21-10-014	SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT The Board considered the annual report of the Search & Governance Committee during 2020-21, noting that the Committee's expected functions have been discharged, that the skills and expertise required by the Board are in place, and that actions are being taken to address skills shortfalls.
		The Board noted the report.



Item Minute No.	Minutes		
14.2 GB21-10-015	BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT AND KPIs / QIP The Board considered its Self-Assessment for 2020-21 which had been reviewed by the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 29 September. It was noted that the self-assessment was very positive and includes a review of areas for improvement identified in 2019-20 and a list of further improvement actions for 2021-22. The Self-Assessment also includes a Business Checklist detailing all the required annual Board business and confirming how each part of the checklist has been discharged and it was noted that all expected actions and matters of business have been completed as required or are in progress and will be completed in the course of the next month. The Board noted that a summary of Governor responses to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire for 2020-21 shows an improved position from the previous year in all areas except Governors' contribution to discussion and debate at Board meetings and the Chair of the Board's effectiveness at managing the time required for discussion and encouragement of all members to be involved in discussions. However, this wasn't considered a major concern but were the two areas where the overall score from all Governors was slightly lower than in the previous year. It was thought that this was likely to have arisen as a result of the Pandemic. Actions to address attendance, timeliness of meetings and the engagement of all members (and in particular the engagement on Student Governors) are included within the action plan for 2021-22. The Chair asked all Governors to note the quotes from Ofsted in relation to good practice contained in the report and for all Committee Chairs to take account of these in their respective committees. RESOLVED: that the Board approves the Board Self-Assessment for 2020-21.		



Item	Minute No.	Minutes		
14.3	GB21-10-016	POLICY REVIEWS: The Board considered a revised Member Expenses Policy which has been updated to bring it in line with that applicable to staff. It was noted that the revised Policy had been considered by the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 29 September and was recommended to the Board for approval. RESOLVED: that the Board approves the revised Member Expenses Policy		
14.4	GB21-10-017	INSTRUMENT AND ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT The Board considered revised Instruments and Articles of Government which proposed the removal of the requirement to have a Parent Governor on the Board and noting that the Board has previously chosen not to appoint a Parent Governor in the past. The Board also discussed the temporary changes made to the Instruments and Articles of Government made last year to make provision for online meetings during the Pandemic in exceptional circumstances, and agreed that the Instrument and Articles of Government should be amended to confirm the option to make use of virtual meetings as and when required, rather than just in exceptional circumstances. The Board agreed that face to face meetings is the preferred option for all meetings of the Board and for meetings of the Curriculum and Student Matters and Remuneration Committees but that meetings of the Resources and Audit Committee will continue online as this can remove barriers to attendance for some members who are working. It was noted that the College is trialling new software to enable meetings to operate a hybrid model with some members on site and others online and the Board asked for a demonstration of this when available.		



Item	Minute No.	Minutes		
		The Board also noted the lack of a maximum number of terms of office for members of the Board in the Instrument and Articles of Government, contrary to the Association of College's Code of Good Governance for English Colleges (the Code) which says that Governors should not normally serve for more than two terms of four years or three terms of three years (or a maximum of nine years). Proposals to strengthen transparency and accountability in governance currently out for consultation may also have an impact and it was noted that the ESFA has introduced new Governor data return requirements this year, which includes data on length of service of Governors, which may suggest that maximum terms of office may become mandatory and / or a condition of funding in the future.		
		However, the Board noted that if the College was to change its Instruments and Articles of Government to introduce a maximum number of terms of office in accordance with the Code, five very experienced Governors would be required to leave the College Board at the end of their current term, which will have a detrimental impact on the Board's effectiveness.		
		It was therefore agreed to develop an approach to succession planning for all Governors in leadership roles, so that the College is best placed to respond in the event that revised guidance and / or statute makes maximum terms of office mandatory in the future.		
		If available, further information in relation to revised transparency and accountability requirements will be provided at the December meeting of the Board, with a view to discussing the approach to succession planning and any proposals to introduce a maximum term of office into the Instrument and Articles of Government at the January 2022 strategic workshop.		
		RESOLVED: That the Instruments and Articles of Government be amended to remove the requirement for a Parent Governor and to allow the option for online meetings as and when required.		



Item	Minute No.	Minutes		
		RESOLVED: That an update be provided to the Board at the December meeting on any changes in relation to transparency, accountability and governance arising from the DfE consultation on a new FE Funding Accountability System.		
		RESOLVED: To discuss succession planning and any changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government in relation to maximum terms of office at the January 2021 strategic workshop.		
14.5	GB21-10-018	MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF 29 SEPTEMBER 2021 The Board noted the draft minutes of the 29 September meeting of the Search and Governance Committee, noting that many items discussed were on the agenda for this meeting for approval.		
		The Chair advised Governors that although attendance during 2020-21 had improved from the previous year, that it still fell short of the average and asked Governors to make every effort to attend meetings.		
		The Board noted the draft minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee.		
15	GB21-10-019	LETTER FROM INTERIM CEO OF THE ESFA The Board considered a letter received from the Interim CEO of the ESFA, outlining the expectations of colleges, and a summary of the College's position in relation to those expectations. It was noted that the College is compliant in every respect and that there are no concerns.		
		The Board noted the report.		
16	GB21-10-020	ANY OTHER BUSINESS The Chair reminded Governors about the Governors' Christmas meal on 30 November 2021.		



Item	Minute No.	Minutes
17	GB21-10-021	DATE OF NEXT MEETING:
		Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 5pm

The meeting closed at 7.15pm

ACTION LIST

Date of meeting	Minute No.	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
12-10-21	GB21-10-004	Arrange December Board meeting to take place at Leigh College and another Board meeting in the Rushton Building.	Clerk	7 December 2021
12-10-21	GB21-10-017	Provide an update to the Board at the December meeting on any changes in relation to transparency, accountability and governance arising from the DfE consultation on a new FE funding accountability system.	Clerk	7 December 2021
12-10-21	GB21-10-017	Discuss succession planning and any changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government in relation to maximum terms of office at the January 2022 strategic workshop.	Clerk	January 2022