



HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON 12TH MAY 2022

Present:

Nazir Afzal (Chair), Julia Heap (Principal / Chief Executive), Susan Ayres, Clive Reid, Steve Taylor, Helen Barton, Julie Burns, Jim Gallagher, Paul Dixon, Sarfaraz Akram, Martin Salins, Vanda Hagan

In Attendance:

Jo Bentley Executive Director of Finance, Estates & Risk Management
Andrea Murphy Deputy Principal
Caroline Street Executive Director Business & Student Support
Fatema Hussein Clerk to the Corporation

Meeting Commenced: 5.00pm

Meeting Ended: 6.30pm

Attendance: 60%

Quorum 8

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Gill Banks, Cathy Berry, Greg Walsh, Jennifer Worsdale and Rob Jones.

The Board was informed that the Staff Governor Andrew Baggaley had resigned with immediate effect, and a Staff Governor election would be held to fill the vacancy.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare any direct, indirect, personal, pecuniary or prejudicial interest on any item on the agenda.

The Deputy Principal and Executive Director of Finance & Estates declared an interest in Item 17.2

The Principal & CEO declared an interest in Item 17.3

3. Approval of the Minutes – 18th March 2022

Agreed that: the minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2022 are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Action Progress Log was reviewed and it was noted that there were no outstanding actions.

5. Committee Minutes

The Board received the minutes of the Committee meetings with the following points highlighted by the Committee Chairs:

Audit Committee 17th March 2022

- An update on the ESFA Funding audit had been provided to the Committee and it had been noted that the report had not yet been issued
- A Substantial assurance rating had been issued for the HR and Payroll audit
- College was making good progress with the audit recommendations with 20 out of 22 actions having been implemented

Standards Committee 5th April 2022

- Initial data on Apprenticeship achievement rates had been reviewed and the College rate was 3% above national benchmark
- College had also experienced a growth in Apprenticeship numbers and this was positive
- The Committee had received a presentation on the steps taken to improve the College's reputation including strengthening links with employers

Search & Governance Committee 5th April 2022

- In accordance with DfE requirements, an external review of Governance would need to be undertaken in the 2022/23 academic year and the Committee was proposing that the Spring term of 2023 would be the most appropriate time to do this
- A self-assessment checklist to demonstrate how the Board complied with the AOC Code of Good Governance had been considered and some further amendments had been suggested
- All current and new Board members would have access to the ETF Governance development modules from the end of May and details of how to access the training would be circulated to all Governors

6. Principal's Update

The Principal's report was presented and it was noted that

- College was currently in the process of commissioning a Culture Review/Audit
- As the key strategic intentions had now been fully launched, it would be timely to complete a culture review across the College to ascertain what was working and identify any cultural barriers that may impact on the delivery of the Strategic Intentions
- The Review would be carried out independently
- Efforts were continuing to raise the profile of the College locally; regionally and nationally including contributing to local, regional and national policy and strategy
- Since the last Board meeting, the Principal had attended the Institute of Apprentices and Technical Education Strategic Away Day as a guest speaker
- Hopwood Hall College had also won the Education North Award for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- The Skills White Paper had now received royal assent

- The Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) project had taken a step forward with a group of HE specialists across the Greater Manchester Colleges working together on the development of the HTQs

Governor Questions

Q. What was the cost for undertaking the culture audit?

ACTION:

Principal to clarify

Q. How did College measure/ assess the change in its profile/reputation?

A. The College had been confirmed as a key stakeholder by Rochdale Borough Council and AMPI (Advanced Manufacturing Productivity Institute). Hopwood Hall was the only College invited to present at the Institute of Apprentices and Technical Education Strategic away day. The recent visit by the Prime Minister and the growth in learner numbers were also examples of the College's raised profile

6.1 2022 Exam Arrangements

The Deputy Principal provided an overview of exam arrangements and the following points were noted:

- The GCSE English and Maths exams were due to take place shortly with over 700 students expected to sit the English paper next Wednesday
- Extensive arrangements had been put in place to support students
- All pastoral staff would be available on the morning of the exam to sign students in and identify any missing learners
- An App had also been developed to monitor students who had not turned up
- All Looked After Children had been individually contacted and offered support if needed
- A free breakfast would be available to all students and arrangements had been made to provide transport to ensure that students attended on time
- A minibus and taxis would be available to collect latecomers
- The curriculum would have to be suspended on the morning of the exams due to the ever-increasing number of learners who required access arrangements

Governor Questions

Q. Would College be complying with health and safety regulations if it used private transport to bring students to College?

A. No member of staff would transport a student on their own and would be accompanied by another member of the Safeguarding team. Staff at the taxi company had all been DBS checked

Q. What impact would the planned strike action have on exams?

A. Strike action was planned on the day of the GCSE English exam, and contingencies had been put in place to address this

7. Hopwood Old Hall

The Principal & CEO reported that:

- Following the strategy day meeting, she had met with Nick Barton and Hopwood De

Free to discuss next steps

- The Board's position and requirements had once again been outlined to them
- It had been proposed and agreed that all 3 parties would commission a review of the estate to establish if there were any synergies and how the issue of access to the Old Hall could be progressed further
- The review would be undertaken by an independent consultant/ company in order to provide an objective assessment and recommendation
- The College needed to safeguard its assets and provision and Governors needed to be mindful of their responsibilities as Trustees

Governor Questions

Q. How would the reviewer be selected?

A. A consultant / company would be secured via the Council's tendering process

Q. What was the timescale for the review?

A. Work was being undertaken on the scoping document and a timescale had not yet been confirmed

Q. Would the outcome of the review be shared with the Board?

A. It was confirmed that it would

A Governor suggested that College needed to ensure that whoever was appointed to undertake the review had some knowledge/ experience of the education sector.

ACTION:

Principal to confirm with Council

8. Prevent Strategy / Policy

The Prevent strategy and associated action plan was presented and reviewed.

Governor Questions

Q. Why were filters only reviewed annually and did this need to happen more frequently?

ACTION:

SLT to check

Post Meeting Note:

It has since been confirmed that the College has three main ways of filtering / reporting:

- Impero has key word reporting, and this filtering was as up to date as it possibly could be. It was continually updated on a daily basis based on new threats and sites. Websites can be blocked by category or URL.
- Sophos XG was the name firewall that was used. This included Web filtering and logging of user activity (websites visited). Websites could be blocked here by category, url and IP address.
- Sophos Central, the Anti-Virus solution, had the ability to block websites and basic reporting, works on and off site as it was cloud based.

Q. Was the review of policies and procedures still ongoing?

A. The review of the External Speakers and Events policy was now complete. The new Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager was reviewing the Equality Impact Assessment process and Managers' training and would build in the Prevent Duty to complete this action fully.

Q. Did the Student Leaders have an awareness of Prevent and were they aware of the risks?

A. There is still a requirement to identify an opportunity to involve student leaders in the work around Prevent to complete this action

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Prevent Strategy and requested that the risk assessment and action plan were updated to reflect the current position

9. Approval of Financial Regulations

The Board was informed that:

- A review of the regulations had been carried out in March 2022 and changes presented to the Audit Committee members.
- The key change being proposed was that arrangements for travel/ petty cash by the Principal or members of the Governing Body could be approved by the Chair of the Governing body OR Director of Finance & Estates (for operational reasons if the Chair of Governors was not instantly available.)
- The Audit Committee had requested that this was limited to no more than £300 to minimise any potential exposure to financial risks

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Financial regulations

10. To Approve the Re-Appointment of Lee Sugden as a Co-opted Member of the Audit Committee

RESOLVED:

The Board considered and approved the recommendation of the Search & Governance Committee to re-appoint Lee Sugden as a Co-opted member of the Audit Committee

11. Health & Safety Governor Role

The Board considered a suggestion to create a link Governor role for health and safety and how it could add value. Governors agreed that the overview and monitoring of health and safety was adequately covered within the remit of the Employment & Finance Committee who received an annual report on health and safety in addition to regular updates at each Committee meeting.

12. Board and Committee Meetings Schedule 2022-2023

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and approved the meetings schedule for 2022/23

13. Safeguarding Update

The Safeguarding report was presented and discussed. It was noted that:

- The six risks on the Safeguarding Risk Register had been reviewed and at this stage there was one minor risk, three moderate risks and one major risk
- The risks were all being mitigated through action including the resourcing of a new role thus relieving some of the pressures on the Designated Safeguarding Officers
- So far this academic year, 1,435 safeguarding contacts and interventions had been logged. The main contacts were in relation to students' subject to the Child Protection, Child in Need plans, Looked After Children, home and parental issues, mental health, offending and incidents
- One of College's Designated Safeguarding Officers, Sadia Khan was nominated for the Rochdale Woman of the Year Award, due to her commitment over and above her role at the College, and impact on the community of Rochdale
- 314 Mental Health concerns/support interventions for 398 students had been recorded to date
- The main issues were Anxiety/Depression/stress, Suicidal ideation/attempt, self-harm, anger issues, self-esteem and body issues
- The introduction of the Social Prescriber has had a positive and beneficial impact on the counselling service, which had seen an increased demand, especially at the Rochdale campus

The lead Safeguarding Governor reported that College was very transparent and open in its approach to safeguarding and he was receiving the necessary assurance that policies and procedures were being adhered to. He had also received positive comments from external colleagues about the College's trauma informed work and this was encouraging.

14. Financial Update incl Capital Projects

The Executive Director of Finance & Estates reported that:

- The College's financial position was strong and all financial KPI's were expected to be met
- Management were proposing that forecast for both Consumables(+£200k) and Capital less than £1,000 was increased by £200k and £100k in order to (+£100k) in 2021/22 to manage and mitigate the significantly increased inflationary costs on consumables and extended lead time on equipment and materials for both this year and next financial year
- The additional costs had been included with the full year forecast surplus of £626k

Governor Questions

Q. Which were the biggest areas of concern in relation to costs at the moment?

A. The cost of paper, copper piping for plumbing courses and food costs were of concern. College did not want to pass all of the increased food costs to students

Q. Why was paper usage so high?

A. College was trying to reduce this, but a lot of this related to printing practice exam papers for students

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the increase to the forecast for both Consumables(+£200k) and Capital less than £1,000 (+£100k) in 2021/22

Rochdale B Block

The Director of Finance & Estates explained that:

- A key component of the College's strategic intentions was to grow H.E. provision within the Rochdale Borough
- Governors had previously endorsed the proposal to explore further the addition of an extra floor for H.E. to the Rochdale B Block project
- It was felt that in doing this, economies of scale could be achieved by making the most efficient use of capital and resources
- Whilst DfE were funding most of the cost for B block, the College would have to pay for the additional floor
- Match funding for the F.E. element of B Block was £900,000
- The additional floor would cost £3.8million plus VAT and a payment plan was being discussed with DfE
- This was affordable and a business case had also been submitted to the Council for funding to support the project
- The costs had also been factored into the budget for next year and other capital projects would have to be re-prioritised
- It was felt that the proposal would meet the College's ambitions for the provision of H.E. within the Borough as well meeting OfS requirements
- There was a risk that the cost could be higher than the estimate of £3.8million that had been provided by the DfE as College would not be managing the contract
- College was however confident that this risk could be managed
- The other risk was related to the possibility of a property charge on the loans it had and this had not yet been resolved
- College may have to renegotiate these loans and pay additional interest
- An extra-ordinary Board meeting to discuss the proposal would not be required due to the timing of the May Board meeting

Governor Questions

Q. Could the VAT on the F.E. part of the build be claimed back?

A. College had not yet received a definitive answer on this

Governors discussed the proposal having regard to the College's strategic aims, the affordability of the project, financial risks and the impact it would have on the College's financial health rating. The Board agreed that in order to achieve value for money it would be prudent to undertake the H.E. build at the same time as the B Block project. A separate stand-alone project would incur more costs and these could be as much as 25% higher.

RESOLVED:

In line with the strategy to grow H.E provision in the Rochdale Borough, the Board approved the proposal to build an additional floor as part of the Rochdale B Block building project. This would be funded by the College at a cost of £3.8 million plus VAT

14.1 Financial Dashboard and Financial Health Letter

The letter and Dashboard from the ESFA was received and it was noted that the College

had continued to maintain its Outstanding financial health rating.

14.2 Budget Update 2022/23

The Executive Director of Finance & Estates reported that:

- Work was ongoing to finalise the draft budget for 2022/23
- College had originally budgeted for energy costs to increase by 100% but this was now likely to be 203%
- The intention was to enter into a fixed one-year energy contract from October 2022
- The Estates team were investigating other measures to reduce energy costs including the closure of buildings during holiday periods
- Bringing forward some spending would also ease the pressure on next year's budget
- The draft budget would be considered by the Employment & Finance Committee before it was submitted to the Board at the end of June

Governor Questions

Q. Had College considered how it could support students facing food poverty?

A. College provided bursary funds to students and it was recognised that the amount may need to increase next year. It also supported students via informal initiatives such as food banks

A Governor suggested that a more formal approach may be needed in light of the financial pressures being experienced by students as a result of the cost of living increase.

ACTION:

- Director of Business & Student Support to prepare a paper for the next Board meeting
- Clerk / June Board meeting agenda

15. Risk Register – Top 10 Risks

The Board reviewed the key risks and it was noted that there had been no significant movement or changes. The register would be updated and reviewed by the Audit Committee in June.

16. * College KPI's 2021/22 Update

An update on KPI's had been included in the reports to the Board.

17. Convene Document Library

The Clerk confirmed that the following documents had been uploaded to the Convene document library:

- Letter from F.E. Commissioner
- DfE Report - Rochdale B Block Project
- H.E. in Rochdale Business case

18. Reserved Business

18.1 Appraisal & Remuneration Committee Minutes – 5th April 2022

Agreed: that the minutes are approved as a correct record.

18.2 Deputy Principal and Executive Director of Finance & Estates – Mid -year Appraisal Update

18.3 Principal & Chief Executive Mid-year Appraisal Update

Discussed under Reserved Business

19. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 30th June 2022 at 5.00pm