



**HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON
14TH DECEMBER 2021**

Present:

Nazir Afzal (Chair), Helen Barton, Julia Heap (Principal / Chief Executive), Susan Ayres, Clive Reid, Steve Taylor, Greg Walsh, Jennifer Worsdale, Julie Burns, Jim Gallagher, Sarfaraz Akram, Rob Jones, Vanda Hagan, Andrew Baggaley, Josephine Onwu, Jessica King

In Attendance:

Georgia Scholes (Student Observer)
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: 6.45pm

Attendance: 84.2%

Quorum 8

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cathy Berry, Paul Dixon and Martin Salins.

The newly elected Student Governors and Student Observer were welcomed and introduced to the meeting.

Andrew Baggaley was welcomed to his first meeting as Staff Governor.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

There were no declarations made.

3. Audit Findings Report (Management Letter) – External Auditor Presentation to Board

Rory McCall from Wylie & Bisset presented the report with the following points highlighted to Governors:

- After accounting for an actuarial gain of £546k in respect of the pension schemes, the College was reporting total comprehensive income of £2,570k
- The underlying operating position of the group (after pension costs and capital grants)

was a surplus of £1,716k

- The consolidated group balance sheet position at the year-end showed net assets of £17,552k
- The financial statements incorporated the results of Hopwood Hall College and Quest (Pennine) Limited
- There was nothing to bring to the Board's attention regarding the "Going Concern" opinion
- No weaknesses had been identified and an unmodified audit opinion had been issued
- The College was subject to an ESFA funding audit and reference had been made to this in the financial statements

The Chair of the Audit Committee stated that it was pleasing to note that no issues or concerns had arisen during the audit, and this was testament to the hard work of the Executive Director of Finance, Estates & Risk Management and the Finance Team.

Governors thanked Rory McCall who left the meeting at this point.

Change in order of agenda

7. Presentation of Marketing Strategy

Lisa Vincent (Head of Communications & Marketing) presented the Marketing strategy and explained that:

- The College Communications and Marketing strategy aligned itself with the College's four core strategic intentions
- The aim was to strengthen the power of the Hopwood Hall brand, locally, regionally and nationally
- This would be achieved by celebrating the College's achievements and distinctiveness
- College would be engaging and mobilising staff, students, alumni and key stakeholders to help build awareness of its learner-centred approach, which would aid student recruitment and thereby ensure that the College and its community continued to thrive

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and endorsed the marketing strategy

Governors thanked Lisa who left the meeting at this point.

15. EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) Policy

Nicole Harding, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager presented the EDI policy with the following points highlighted to the Committee:

- The policy had been re-written, and a different approach taken to the promotion and implementation of EDI
- The policy outlined the College's legal position and how it implemented the EDI agenda
- Details had been included of the ways in which the policy supported the Strategic Plan
- The policy explained the expectation of everyone to advance equality, increase diversity and foster inclusion, and what staff and students could do to achieve this
- Definitions of discrimination, harassment and victimisation had been included together with key EDI contacts within Hopwood Hall College

Governor Questions

Q. What was the definition of micro-aggression?

A. This was an act that was not overtly violent but made a person feel intimidated

A Governor suggested that further elaboration on the definition of this was needed.

Q. Where was the attainment data on students with protected characteristics and how was this considered by the College?

A. The SAR included data on this, and it had been identified as an area for improvement. The data would also be included in the EDI annual report with more extensive reporting than previously

ACTION:

Deputy Principal to send data to Governors

Governors discussed how the attainment gap for students with protected characteristics could be closed. The Chair stated that as part of the EDI approach, College needed to identify the barriers to attainment for certain groups of students and put actions in place to address them.

Governors were invited to have a one-to-one discussion with Nicole so that she could explain some of the definitions in the policy in more detail and provide further examples.

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the EDI policy

10. EDI Link Governor

Governors were invited to consider putting themselves forward for the EDI link Governor role and were requested to contact the Clerk with expressions of interest.

Governors thanked Nicole Harding who left the meeting at this point.

4. Approval of the Minutes – 14th October 2021

Agreed that: the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2021 are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Action Progress Log was reviewed and the Principal advised that College was in the process of formalising access to the Old Hall.

6. Committee Minutes

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

Audit Committee 18th November 2021

- The Committee had received an update on enrolment numbers at the census date and it had been confirmed that 16-19 student numbers at 3160 learners, was above the ESFA contract target of 3010
- The Audit findings report had been considered and it had been noted that Wylie & Bissett had issued a clean audit opinion
- The Internal Audit annual report had been presented and the Auditors were able to provide the Audit Committee with Substantial assurance that progress with implementing previously agreed internal audit recommendations had been timely and effective
- 92% (11 out of 12) of the previously agreed recommendations were found to have been fully implemented by management

Employment & Finance Committee 25th November 2021

- The Committee had reviewed the Management accounts and the Financial statements which were being recommended to the Board for approval
- Management had provided an update on the chlorinated water incident and the Committee had been content with the actions that had been taken by College

8. Principal's Report

The Principal & Chief Executive presented her report with the following points highlighted to the Board:

- The College strategy had been formally launched during College's week
- An application had been submitted for inclusion on the register of Apprenticeship Training providers and the outcome was being awaited
- There had been delays with the completion of the ESFA funding audit and College was not expecting to receive feedback until after the Christmas break
- The annual strategic conversation with the ESFA was due to take place on 2nd February with the Principal, Chair and senior management team expected to be involved
- Good links had been made with the Institute of Apprenticeships & Technical Education and the Principal had been invited to attend their Board meeting to provide an overview of technical education in the Rochdale Borough
- Discussions were ongoing with GMCA on how College could collaborate further on Level 4 and 5 higher technical qualifications
- There had been 262 positive cases of Covid since the beginning of term, 50 of which were staff
- A lot of work was being done on Peer-on-Peer abuse and sexual harassment
- The ESFA allocations for 2021-22 had been confirmed and almost all Colleges in the region had experienced an increase in learner numbers
- Ofsted, ESFA and the F.E. Commissioner annual reports had been published and were available in the Convene document library

Governor Questions

- Q.** The Omicron variant was a cause of concern and could impact upon the operations of the College. Did College have a business continuity plan to address any further lockdowns and staff absence due to illness and self-isolation?
- A.** College was prepared to switch to online learning should there be another lockdown. Staff absence had been a challenge this term and, in some cases, staff had been able to deliver learning online from home. Sessions for vulnerable learners had continued in the majority of cases. Online delivery would be difficult for students studying practical

courses such as carpentry, hairdressing and motor vehicle courses

Q. Learner numbers at Bury College seem to have decreased and was there a specific reason for this?

A. Bury had one of the smallest populations of young people in the Greater Manchester area. Rochdale Sixth Form College had attracted a lot A Level students and this may have impacted on Bury

9. Hopwood Old Hall – Update from Working Group Meeting

Governors were referred to the minutes from the first working group meeting.

The Chair reported that:

- The meeting had been productive and provided all parties the opportunity to outline their position, and their key aims and objectives
- A number of actions had been agreed including drawing up some Terms of Reference for the working group
- A solution for short term access to the Old Hall had been agreed and this would be via a license/Memorandum of Understanding
- The Trustees had requested a tour of the College and this was to be arranged prior to the next meeting of the group in mid-January 2022

11. Governor Recruitment

The Chair and Clerk reported that:

- F.E. Associates had been appointed to help recruit Board and Co-opted members to replace Governors whose terms of office would end in August 2022
- The initial response had been encouraging with some good candidates having been identified
- The recruitment campaign would continue into the new year and the Board would be kept updated of progress

12. Audit Committee Annual Report

Members considered the report the purpose of which was to advise the Board on the effectiveness of the College's systems of internal control before the College's final accounts for the year were approved.

Based on the reports received from the Internal and External Audit Service providers, assurances provided by College Management and their positive response to any audit recommendations made, it was the opinion of the Audit Committee that the College had in place adequate and effective systems and arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes, throughout the year to 31 July 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and approved.

13. Letters of Representation

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and approved the letters of representation and agreed that they be

signed by the Chair and Principal.

14. Report & Financial Statements 2020/21 incorporating Quest (Pennine) Limited

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were presented. These had been considered by the Employment & Finance and Audit Committees, in line with their respective remits, and were recommended for approval.

It was confirmed that the Directors of Quest Pennine Ltd had also met to approve the accounts for submission to Companies House.

The Executive Director Finance, Estates & Risk Management explained that:

- There was no change to the final out-turn from the figures reported to the Board in July
- College had received a late notification from GMCA requesting evidence of earnings/expenditure for the £168,000 of the 2020/21 allocation*
- The external Auditors had been notified and had been content to sign off the accounts
- Confirmation had also been received from the external Auditors that electronic signatures were acceptable and could be applied to the accounts once approved by the Board

RESOLVED:

The Board endorsed the opinion of the Audit and Employment & Finance Committee that the College is, and continues to be, a 'going concern'. Members approved the Report and Financial Statements (incorporating Quest Pennine Ltd) for the year ended 31 July 2021 and authorised the Chairman and Principal to sign the relevant pages of the report.

Governors thanked and congratulated the Executive Director Finance, Estates & Risk Management and the Finance team for the clean audit report and the work undertaken on the financial statements.

Post Meeting Note:

*College had received confirmation in January 2022 that GMCA was content with the information provided and no further evidence was required

16. Remuneration Committee Annual Report 2020-2021

The Clerk presented the report and explained that this was a requirement as part of the AoC Senior Postholder Remuneration code. The key changes were highlighted to members.

RESOLVED:

The Board reviewed and approved the report for publication on the College website.

17. Health & Safety Policy

The Health & Safety annual report was reviewed and the Executive Director Finance, Estates & Risk Management advised that minor amendments were proposed to the Health, Safety and Welfare at work policy.

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Health, Safety and Welfare at work policy.

18. Memorandum of Understanding – Rochdale Sixth Form College

The Principal advised that the Memorandum was reviewed annually and no changes were being proposed. Hopwood Hall and Rochdale Sixth Form College were separate institutions, but the memorandum confirmed / detailed how both Colleges worked together in areas of beneficial interest.

RESOLVED:

The Board approved the Memorandum of Understanding

19. Safeguarding Update

The Executive Director of Business and Student Support presented the report with the following points highlighted to Governors:

- A new Safeguarding Risk Register was in place and identified mitigating actions for the top five key risks
- A Safeguarding internal review had taken place and concluded that Safeguarding was “Effective”
- The forthcoming staff conference would be focussing on safety and inclusivity
- The Prevent Strategy and Action Plan has been reviewed and updated
- An action plan had been created to address issues related to Peer on Peer abuse and sexual harassment

Governors were invited to attend the staff conference on 4th January and the Vice-Chair confirmed that he would like to attend the Prevent session.

Governor Questions

Q. Of the 562 safeguarding concerns highlighted in the report, how many incidents had occurred inside College?

A. The 562 concerns included notes by staff where they were concerned about a learner. Data on safeguarding incidents that had occurred in College was recorded separately.

The Principal stated that College was concerned about safeguarding in the community as a whole and was currently facing some real challenges with low level behaviour and other issues resulting from the impact of Covid.

A Governor suggested that there may be increasing demands on the Safeguarding team due to population changes in the Borough, with more asylum seekers moving into the area. It was suggested that the safeguarding resource and capacity may need to be reviewed in light of this.

The Clerk advised that the Prevent strategy would need to be reviewed and approved by the Board.

ACTION:

Include Prevent Strategy on March Board agenda / Clerk

20. Financial Update incl Capital Projects & Bids

The following update was provided by the Executive Director Finance, Estates & Risk Management:

- The income and expenditure account showed an operating YTD surplus (before FRS102) of £188k for the 3-month period, compared to a budgeted deficit of £32k, a positive variance of £220k
- The full year forecast was showing a net surplus of £208k compared to a Budgeted deficit of £218k, a favourable variance of £426k
- The College remained in 'Outstanding' financial health and complied with all bank loan covenants for the year
- Changes had been made to the capital budget as the Post 16 Capacity Fund and T Level Engineering bids had not been successful
- As previously approved by Governors, the budget for the Advanced Technology Centre, Refectory and T level Extension projects had been increased by £2.3m due to build cost inflation
- The Capital Budget for 2021/22 (£11.972m) had been adjusted to reflect the known changes
- An exercise was currently underway to freeze all non-essential capital spend in 2021/22 in order to recover some of the loss of T level capital funding and the increased inflationary costs of the Advanced Technology Centre
- However, as some projects had already started, the amount of capital savings was limited
- Next year's capital allocation would therefore be significantly reduced and only include essential IT, building condition and essential equipment spend
- Work on the refectory extension was due to start at the end of January and be completed by the end August 2022

RESOLVED:

The Board accepted the October management accounts and approved the revised capital budget for 2021/22 of £11.972m (originally £11.673m)

21. Risk Register – Top 11 Risks

The Board was informed that 2 new risks had been added to the register and these were; student behaviour and energy price increases. The risk of the GMAP portal had been removed as this had now been resolved.

Governor Questions

- Q.** Had College considered forward purchasing energy as costs were not likely to reduce in the near future?
- A.** The College was currently on a fixed price contract and may consider fixing prices over a longer term when the existing contract ended
- Q.** Did College have a sustainability plan and had any consideration been given to generating green electricity through solar panels for example?
- A.** College was committed to the sustainability agenda and a sustainability plan had been developed. Working groups had been set up to consider how this could be implemented. Any new buildings would have energy efficient measures incorporated into them

22. *College KPI's 2021/22 Update

An update on the 2021/22 Key Performance Indicators had been included in the reports to the Board.

23. Items for Information

Governors were made aware of the following documents that had been placed in the Convene document library:

- Ofsted Annual Report 2020-21
- ESFA Annual Report & Accounts 2020-21
- Letter from F.E. Commissioner
- Annual Report from the F.E. Commissioner

24. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 18th March 2022(Full Day to include Strategy Meeting)