



## **HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE**

### **MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023**

#### **Present:**

Nazir Afzal (Chair), Julia Heap, Cathy Berry, Paul Dixon, Clive Reid, Susan Ayres, Julie Burns, Steve Taylor, Sarfaraz Akram, Helen Barton, Matthew Burdaky, Greg Walsh, Jenny Worsdale

#### **In Attendance:**

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

Meeting Commenced: 5.00pm

Meeting Ended: 6.15pm

Attendance: 76%

Quorum 7

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Gill Banks, Martin Salins, Leon Al Asade and Ricardo Pedrosa Taylor.

The new Staff Governor Matthew Burdaky was welcomed and introduced to the meeting.

#### **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.

#### **3. Approval of the Minutes – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Agreed that: the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 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 all actions had been completed with one ongoing action which would be completed once the LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan) had been approved by the DfE.

## 5. Committee Minutes

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

### Search & Governance Committee 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023

- The Committee had reviewed the Board membership and agreed that a Board member with digital/IT background and or experience was recruited when there was another Governor vacancy
- The application from Jordan Beard had been considered and a recommendation was to be made to the Board
- Proposals received for the external review of governance had been reviewed and the Committee had chosen a reviewer to recommend to the Board

### Employment & Finance Committee 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023

- The budget and financial plan for 2023/24 had been considered and was being recommended to the Board
- The proposed pay award had been discussed and negotiations with UCU colleagues would commence from the end of August onwards
- The enrolment and funding data had been presented and it was noted that growth was forecast in all areas of the College for next year

### Audit Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

- Members had met with the internal and external Auditors without the presence of management to provide an opportunity for the Auditors to directly highlight any issues to the Committee, and to receive feedback on management's response to audit reports and recommendations
- An update had been received of the recent Pearson inspection of the GCSE Maths exam, with no issues or concerns having been raised by Pearson
- The internal audit reports had been presented and reviewed

### Standards Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

- The Committee had received feedback from the Student Governor which had confirmed that College had implemented suggestions from the Learner Representatives
- The Ofsted report had been reviewed and management had started work on implementing the recommendations
- Members had received an update on best- and worst-case Apprenticeship achievement rate predictions

## 6. Principal's Report

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

### Strategic Intentions

The Board had already received an update in March on the progress made to date and future plans for the next academic year and beyond.

### Ofsted Inspection

Management had been very pleased with the outcome of the inspection which was a

real testament to the whole team at Hopwood Hall College.

#### Educate North Awards

The College had won the Education North Award for Social Mobility, as well as the Sustainable Green Initiative Award.

#### LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan)

GMCC had submitted the final LSIP to the DfE for approval.

#### LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund)

- The Department for Education had launched the local skills improvement fund (LSIF) which was designed to enable further education (FE) providers across a geographic area to respond collectively to the priorities in the local skills improvement plans (LSIPs)
- GMColleges would be leading on a collaborative LSIF application with Wigan and Leigh College being the project lead
- College had shared with GMColleges its preferred project for Hopwood Hall

#### Governor Questions

**Q.** What were the other GFE Colleges in Greater Manchester graded as?

**A.** Those that had been inspected had all been judged as Good

**Q.** How was the College planning to communicate the inspection outcome to stakeholders and the wider community?

**A.** The outcome would be celebrated in line with the College vision and values. A copy of the report had been sent to all key stakeholders and extracts from the report were being included within wider communications from the College

### **6.1 Exams and Teaching & Learning Update**

The following update was provided by the Deputy Principal:

- The majority of examinations were now complete but there would be a very small amount of resits over the summer period where learners still had to complete their studies
- GCSE English and Maths exams continued to be a challenge for the College and staff had worked extremely hard to ensure learners turned up for their papers
- All papers had an increase in attendance from the previous academic year
- College attendance was currently 86% for all courses and all ages as of 12.06.23

#### Predicted Retention and Achievement Rates

- Retention was currently 93% overall, and at 92% for 16-18 and 95% for 19+
- This was unlikely to change significantly at this point of the academic year and should be a slight improvement on the overall retention from last year which was 92%
- The best-case achievement rate for Education and Training for 2022/23 was currently 87.2% and the worst case was 82.3%
- If achieved, it would exceed last academic year's achievement rates
- For apprenticeships, the best-case prediction for 2022/23 was 58% and the worst case was 55.4%

## **6.2 Ofsted Inspection Report**

Discussed as part of Item 6.

## **6.3 Deputy Principal Vacancy Update**

Governors were informed that the selection panel had shortlisted 3 candidates for interviews which would be taking place on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

## **7. Safeguarding Update**

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

- The Safeguarding link Governor meeting for this half term had taken place on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- All current Governors had now completed the knowledge check on the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Safeguarding was being factored into the internal audit plan for 2023/24 to provide further assurance of safer recruitment practices
- Prevent training was to be provided by the GM Counter Terrorism Policing Team during the training and Administration weeks for all staff
- The College had seen a further increase in the number of Safeguarded and Child Protection learners this year
- A breakout session was delivered at the recent AoC Mental Health conference to share the College's work on social prescribing with others
- An awareness and support campaign was being planned for students around local risks
- Since the last report learner awareness sessions on Drowning prevention (dangers of cold water) and Keeping safe at Festivals had been delivered
- A new Instagram account, HopwoodXtra had been launched and included safety, and wellbeing information
- A new full-time Counsellor had been appointed and was undertaking a review of the counselling offer
- A new case of allegations management had arisen and College was working with the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) to progress through to investigation
- The lead Safeguarding Governor was aware of the case and had suggested that the Speaking out policy (Whistleblowing) was reviewed in light of this

## **8. Governance**

### **8.1 Governor Self-Assessment Results**

Governors reviewed the results from the self-assessment survey and the Clerk advised that suggestions made in relation to the start time and location of meetings as well as further Governor involvement in College activities would be considered and implemented in the next academic year

### **8.2 Chair Evaluation Results**



Members discussed the results of the Chair evaluation survey. The results were overwhelmingly positive, and the Clerk advised that any feedback and suggestions would be discussed with the Chair and implemented where appropriate.

The Chair thanked members for their support and informed the meeting that he was intending step down in July 2024. He stated that it had been his absolute privilege to serve as Chair since 2018 and to see the College, its staff and students flourish over the past few years.

It was noted that Clive Reid Vice – Chair and Chair of Audit would also be stepping down in July 2024 as his term of office would come to an end.

It was agreed that the Search & Governance Committee would lead on the succession planning process and would begin the process to appoint a new Chair and Vice-Chair from September 2023.

### **8.3 Appointment of Jordan Beard to the Corporation Board**

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board considered the recommendation from the Search & Governance Committee and approved the appointment of Jordan Beard as a member of the Board.

### **8.4 Appointment of Jason Lancaster to the Corporation Board**

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board considered the recommendation from the Search & Governance Committee and approved the appointment of Jason Lancaster as a member of the Board.

## **9. External Review of Governance - Appointment of Reviewer**

The Chair reported that:

- Proposals had been obtained from three companies to undertake the external review
- The Search & Governance Committee had considered all three proposals at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June, taking into account the guidance from the DfE
- All members of the Committee had agreed that the proposal from Governance4FE covered all of the DfE criteria for the review and would best meet the Board's requirements

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the recommendation of the Search & Governance Committee to appoint Governance4FE to undertake the external review in the Spring term of 2024

## **10. Approval of Committee Terms of Reference – ONS Reclassification Changes**

The Clerk advised that

- Following the ONS reclassification of Colleges, the Committee Terms of Reference had been reviewed and updated to ensure that they aligned with the

new requirements

- The following Committees had required an update to their Terms of Reference; Appraisal & Remuneration, Employment & Finance and Audit
- All proposed changes had been considered by the relevant Committees at the June meetings

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the updates to the Committee Terms of Reference

### **11. Budget and Financial Plan 2023-2024**

The Executive Director of Finance & Estates presented the budget and financial plan and explained that:

- The budget had been reviewed in detail at the Employment & Finance Committee meeting on 13 June
- A break-even budget was being proposed for 2023/ 24 excluding FRS102 pension costs & capital grant receipts
- Pay costs would remain at 65% of income, with an EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Amortisation & Depreciation) of 11% and an adjusted current ratio of 1.8
- A pay award of 2.5% plus 1% for contingency had been allowed for in Year 1 of the Financial Plan
- 'Outstanding' financial health would be maintained throughout the period of the Financial plan
- A capital budget of £4.378m ( before capital receipts of £1.89m) had been included in 2023/24 & £10.317m in 2024/25 ( before capital receipts of £6.9m)
- Cash days would remain well within the 30-day target throughout the life of the plan
- 'Going concern' and liquidity would be strong and not require intervention from the funding agency or bank
- Conditions of bank loan covenants would be met
- The budget had been set on the 'Medium' case scenario which had already built into the financial plans a level of risk mitigation based on achievable and realistic assumptions and a number of contingencies

#### **Governor Questions**

**Q.** Had the impact of increasing interest rates been taken into consideration?

**A.** The College had fixed interest rate loans so would not be negatively impacted by this, but would benefit from interest receivable from cash in the bank

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board:

- Reviewed and approved the 2-year financial plan and associated planning assumptions for 2023/24 – 2024/25 including the Revenue and Capital Budget for 2023/24
- Acknowledged that the College was a 'Going Concern' based on the budget and financial plans presented

### **12. Internal Audit Plan 2023/24**

The Internal Audit plan was presented and it was noted that an audit of Safer Recruitment practices had been included as requested by Governors at the last meeting. The plan had been reviewed by the Audit Committee and the Chair of Audit had met with the Internal Auditor to discuss key risks and priorities.

The Chair of the Audit Committee advised that Patrick Clark at ICCA was leaving the firm and his line Manager would be the key contact for management and the Audit Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board reviewed and approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24

## **12.1 External Audit Memorandum**

**RESOLVED:**

The planning memorandum was received and noted.

## **13. Fees Policy**

The meeting was informed that minor changes were being proposed and the current level of fees would remain the same.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the Fees Policy.

### **13.1. Approval of Commercial Fees**

The Executive Director of Finance & Estates advised that:

- College was proposing to increase prices in some areas of the College as a result of inflationary pressures
- Whilst the College could not pass on all inflationary increases to learners, prices had been set at the sector averages
- It was proposed that price increases were implemented for 2023/24 in the following areas:
  - Riverside Salon – a proposed price increase of 20% on all services rounded up to the nearest pound
  - Sports Arena and 3G pitches lettings – an increase in the letting's charges
  - Uniforms/kit sold to students in the kit shop – average 13-15% markup but this was still a significantly good price for learners
  - Bistro prices - The proposed price increases have been kept to a minimum, in most cases an additional 10p on items.
- Discretionary allowances would be increased in 2023/24 to ensure the most vulnerable learners were not disadvantaged by these increases

**RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the proposal to increase commercial fees for 2023/24

## **14. Update to Financial Regulations**

Governors were provided with a summary of the proposed changes to the financial regulations which had been updated to incorporate the new requirements following the ONS reclassification.

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the update to the financial regulations

### **15. Financial Update incl Capital Projects**

The following update was provided by the Executive Director of Finance & Estates:

- The full year forecast was showing a net surplus of £238k compared to a break-even budget, a favourable variance of £238k
- This revised forecast position reflected a total increase to income of £822k
- Some of this increase had been offset by increased delivery costs and in particular food costs and examination fees
- The College remained in 'Outstanding' financial health and complied with all bank loan covenants for the year
- Cash reserves and liquidity were both strong
- A non-consolidated pay award had been budgeted for subject to the College meeting enrolment targets by the 43<sup>rd</sup> day

#### Rochdale B Block

College had confirmed with DfE the commitment to increase the contribution to both FE & HE elements of the build and was awaiting a meeting or further update from the DfE Project Director on next steps.

#### TEC Centre Development & Refectory

This was now nearing completion and costs remained within the budget approved by the Board.

#### Planning Matters update

Following discussions with Rochdale planners, the College had been advised not to pursue a planning application to retain a temporary structure on land opposite the 3G pitches (Alkington Building).

College was still awaiting an update from planners in relation to the Zoo licence application for the extended use of Smallbridge.

#### Post 16 Capital Bids

College had been successful with the two Wave 5 T level bids and would receive £2.8 million for the conversion of the Chapel (5% contribution from the College), and £905,000 for Animal Management (15% contribution from the College).

#### Governor Questions

**Q.** Was there a proposed plan for use of the Chapel?

**A.** The proposal was to have 4 classrooms and a virtual reality room within the Chapel



**Q.** Was there a risk that the contribution from the Council would be withdrawn if the B Block project did not go ahead?

**A.** The Council had not expressed any concern about the delay to the project

**RESOLVED:**

The Board:

- Considered and accepted the finance update including the improved full year forecast position for 2022/23
- Noted the update on current major capital projects
- Approved the proposal to bring forward non-pay spend from 2023/24 of £213k to be spent in 2022/23 due to an improved forecast year end position
- Approved the proposal for a non-consolidated pay award up to 3% for 2022/23 be provided for, subject to affordability at the year end

**16. Risk Register – Top 10 Risks**

The meeting was informed that:

- There were now 26 Corporate risks on the register
- 1 Risk has been removed (Risk to recruitment due to implementation of the new website)
- 4 new risks had been added to the register since the last meeting as follows:
  - Risk 23 – Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on coursework and use in teaching & learning
  - Risk 24 – Significant growth in Apprenticeship programme in 2023/24
  - Risk 25 – Risk of non-compliance with Examining bodies due to significant expansion of exam numbers
  - Risk 26 – Rochdale B block Capital Project does not go ahead or is significantly delayed

**17. \* College KPI's 2022/23 Update**

The KPI's were reviewed and noted.

**18. Any Other Urgent Business**

**Staff Hearings and Dismissals- Interim Arrangements**

The Principal explained that:

- Employment hearings that had the potential to lead to dismissal were currently chaired and heard by a Senior Post Holder (SPH)
- With the imminent retirement of the current Deputy Principal, there would only be one SPH who would be able to dismiss within the current policy
- If this SPH was the investigating officer or cited in the case(s) then College would have no SPH to be able to hear the case and dismiss
- It was proposed that the policy was amended so that any member of the Senior Leadership Team could act as the Hearing and Dismissal Officer
- This would be on a temporary basis until a new Deputy Principal was in post

**RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the proposal that any member of the Senior Leadership Team was able to act as the Hearing and Dismissal Officer for employment matters until a new Deputy Principal was in post

## **19. Items for Information – In Convene Document Library**

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

- LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan) Final Submission
- LSIP Rochdale Profile May 2023
- GM LSIP Skills Matrix
- GM - Towards an Integrated Technical Education, Skills and Work City-Region: Starting the Conversation
- LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund – Stage 1 Funding Guidance
- Ofsted Report

## **20. Reserved Business**

### **20.1 Board Reserved Business Minutes – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

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

### **20.2 Appraisal & Remuneration Committee Meeting Minutes (13<sup>th</sup> June 2023)**


Members received and noted the minutes of the Committee meeting.

## **21. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 5.00pm

It was noted that this was Helen Barton and Greg Walsh's last meeting as Board members. Governors led by the Chair thanked Helen and Greg for their service and valued contribution to the work of the Board and wished them well for the future.

Governors also thanked the Deputy Principal Andrea Murphy for her service and contribution to the College and wished her a long and happy retirement.

Chair's Signature:  Date: 12.10.2023
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