



**HOPWOODHALL COLLEGE**

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING  
HELD ON 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

**Present:**

Nazir Afzal (Chair), Clive Reid, Julia Heap (Principal / Chief Executive), Susan Ayres, Helen Barton, Julie Burns, Martin Salins, Steve Taylor, Sarfaraz Akram, Leon Al Asade, Ricardo Pedrosa Taylor, Greg Walsh

**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: 9.00am

Meeting Ended:        10.00am

Attendance:            75%

Quorum 7

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Gill Banks, Cathy Berry, Paul Dixon, and Jennifer Worsdale.

**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 – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

Agreed that: the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication

**4. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**5. Committee Minutes**

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

## **Standards Committee 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 & 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

### 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 Meeting

- Large breaks in the timetable for some students was an issue and impacting on attendance rates
- The Committee had discussed the suggestions from the Student Governors on how the gaps in the timetable could be reduced
- College was in discussions with a large employer to provide training and apprenticeships across multiple disciplines to meet their business needs
- An update had been provided on the January exams and the large number of learners requiring exam access arrangements

### 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 Meeting

- The Level 3 qualification reforms and the implications of these for the College were discussed
- College had been successful in building contacts and obtaining work experience for learners with Zen, a major employer in Rochdale
- Discussions were ongoing with a range of employers to further develop the apprenticeship provision

## **5.1 Employment & Finance Committee 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- The Committee had reviewed the current financial position and considered the emerging budget for 2023/24 including the key budgetary pressures
- An update had been provided on the ONS re-classification of Colleges and the requirement to seek prior approval from the DfE for certain financial decisions
- The Employee survey report and the Equality & Diversity report had been presented and considered
- An update had been received on the current schedule of capital works and contracts to be tendered

## **5.2 Audit Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- The Committee had received an update on the ESFA funding audit
- ICCA had presented the outcome of the Business Continuity audit and it had been noted that a Substantial assurance opinion had been issued
- The Speaking out (Whistleblowing) policy and procedure had been considered and was being recommended to the Board for approval

## **5.3 Search & Governance Committee 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- A discussion had taken place concerning Board and Committee membership
- Lee Sugden was intending to resign as a Co-opted member of the Audit Committee and the Committee had agreed that a recruitment campaign was launched to replace Lee and recruit an additional member
- Gill Banks had been appointed as Principal of Wirral Metropolitan College and she had queried whether she would be able to continue as a Board member at Hopwood
- There were 2 potential candidates interested in joining the Board and it was felt that both would compliment the current skills set on the Board

Governors discussed whether it would be appropriate for Gill Banks to continue as a Governor in light of her recent appointment.

The Clerk advised that there was nothing in the regulations that prohibited this and there was no direct conflict of interest.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board agreed to Gill Banks continuing as a Governor (subject to her agreement)

**6. Principal's Update**

The Principal & Chief Executive presented an update with the following points highlighted to the Board:

- PWC would be re-commencing the funding assurance audit after the Easter break
- The annual strategic conversation had been held with the ESFA on 2<sup>nd</sup> March
- The F.E. Commissioner had been in attendance with the ESFA, and it had been a very positive meeting
- Rochdale Council had agreed to support the College with the financing of the additional H.E. floor as part of the B Block project
- There was no further update from the DfE on this at the moment
- Key College issues that Governors needed to be aware of included:
  - College was in scope for an Ofsted inspection
  - 2023/23 budget challenges
  - Staff recruitment and retention
  - Impact of qualification reforms
  - Student Safety
  - Pace of change and the range of opportunities that would need prioritisation
- The profile of the College continued to be raised
- The AMPI event that had recently been hosted by the College had been a great opportunity to showcase the College
- College had also been featured in a recent Sky News report
- Other highlights included winning the AOC Beacon award for widening participation and being shortlisted in 3 different categories for the Educate North Award

Governors acknowledged the work that had been undertaken by the Senior Leadership team in raising the profile of the College and stated this would hopefully help with staff recruitment and retention.

**7. Deputy Principal Vacancy**

Board members were informed that no appointment had been made following the first round of the recruitment campaign. The recommendation was to pause the process and review again in June as College was expecting an Ofsted inspection imminently, and wanted to finalise the draft budget for 2023/24

**RESOLVED:**

The Board agreed that the recruitment process was paused until June

**8. Draft Accountability Agreement**

A working draft of the agreement was presented to the Board.

Governors were informed that the accountability agreement had to be submitted to the ESFA by the end of May. The statement needed to be linked to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and required Board approval.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board agreed that a final draft was submitted for approval at the May Board meeting

**9. Speaking Out (Whistleblowing) Policy**

The policy had been updated and been reviewed by the Audit Committee prior to submission to the Board.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board considered and approved the Speaking Out (Whistleblowing) Policy.

**10. EDI Annual Report**

Governors were informed that:

- A new EDI Manager was now in post
- The EDI report provided an overview of key developments and activities in 2021/22
- The College's EDI objectives had been included in the report
- Further EDI training was to be provided and events were to be held to celebrate diversity
- Jenny Worsdale was the link Governor for EDI and attended the steering group meetings

**RESOLVED:**

The Board approved the EDI annual report

**11. Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy**

The Executive Director of Business & Student Support reported that:

- This Strategy formed part of the College's overall Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- It built on the work achieved in the previous mental health strategy (2019-2022) which had the key aim of becoming a trauma informed College
- The aim of this strategy was to support the achievement of the College's vision; "Bringing out the best in you".

**RESOLVED:**

The Mental Health & Well-Being strategy was approved

**12. Board and Committee Meetings Schedule 2023-2024**



The draft schedule of Board and Committee meetings for next year was presented to Governors.

Governors were requested to review the proposed dates and inform the Clerk if any of those dates clashed with other commitments. It was hoped that the schedule could be finalised in time for the May Board meeting.

#### **ACTION:**

Clerk to re - circulate meeting dates to Governors

### **13. Safeguarding Update**

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

- The risks on the Risk Register had been reviewed and at this stage there was one minor risk, five moderate risks and one major risk
- All the risks were being mitigated through action including the resourcing of new roles relieving some of the pressures on the team
- 27 training sessions for single agency safeguarding training had been delivered to 318 staff so far this academic year, and the current completion rate was 96%
- A training session on domestic abuse had also been introduced at the Staff Development Day in January, and feedback from this had resulted in further sessions being added
- Two male members of the Senior Leadership team had become White Ribbon Ambassadors and were sharing knowledge and encouraging other males within the College community to take up this opportunity
- There was one student in the Channel process at present following an incident in the Skills for Life study area involving breaches of the IT Acceptable usage Policy
- The half termly review of the Prevent Action Plan would take place at the end of March, however all actions were progressing
- A working group had been developing updated plans for major incidents in College including emergency lockdown
- The College had seen a further increase in the number of Safeguarded and Child Protection learners this year:
- A new category of Financial Concerns/Cost of Living had been added this year and 137 safeguarding contacts had been recorded for 88 students
- Learners have also been made aware of what the local risks are via tutorial sessions
- To address the increasing numbers of learners an additional DSO was appointed in January with responsibility for Apprentices in regard to Safeguarding and Wellbeing
- A Safeguarding Newsletter for Employers had been developed and would be distributed monthly to all employers.
- Apprentices would also be receiving a Support Pack with a reminder of support available both in College and externally
- Support for the Social prescribing groups had continued on a temporary basis until the new Social Prescribing Link worker took up the post on 6<sup>th</sup> March
- The new role of Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator had been very successful so far this year, increasing the number of activities, events and the number of students engaging
- The Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team had increased the cost of living support

to try and address some of the issues facing students and their families in the current climate

Governors stated that it was useful for them to see the outcomes for safeguarded learners and College needed to ensure that support for safeguarded learners continued to be maintained.

An update was also provided on how the College complied with safer recruitment practices

A Governor suggested that the Board needed to have an independent assessment of how it was complying with the safer recruitment practices, and it was agreed that this would be included in the internal audit plan

#### **ACTION:**

Director of Finance & Estates

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

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

- The financial position was strong and ahead of budget
- A surplus of £515,000 was forecast for the financial year end
- This was as a result of increases in grant income and funding
- Cash reserves had been decreasing as work on the TEC Centre was coming to an end
- All financial KPI's were being met
- Funding for next year had only increased by 2.2% and there were some key financial challenges to face
- Exam costs were expected to be £1.2 million
- The number of students requiring access arrangements had also increased and the College did not receive any additional funding for this
- The Employment & Finance Committee had questioned whether the College should aim to retain its Outstanding Financial health rating in view of the budget pressures next year

Governors discussed whether to change the Outstanding financial health rating and concluded that it would be in the College's interests to maintain it as it enabled the College to have the flexibility to provide additional resources to enhance the learner experience.

#### **14.1 Rochdale B Block**

Discussions were ongoing with the DfE regarding the costs for Rochdale B Block and there was no further update at this stage.

#### **14.2 TEC Centre**

- Work on the TEC Centre was nearing completion
- A number of capital bids had been submitted and College was awaiting the outcome of these
- If the College was successful in obtaining Salix funding, it would support the strategic intention to reduce the carbon footprint

It was proposed that monies from the energy efficiency grant were vired to the TEC Centre project to cover additional costs that had not been previously anticipated. This was for essential work for the gas assessment bays.

**RESOLVED:**

- The Board approved the proposal to vire up to an additional £165k from the Energy Efficiency Grant to fund the increased budget to complete the TEC centre development.
- The Board also approved that any unspent carry forward capital from 2021/22 could be used towards the TEC Centre costs

Internal and External Audit Contracts

The Audit Committee was recommending that both internal and external audit contracts were extended for a further twelve months, given the ONS reclassification and the uncertainties surrounding this.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board agreed that the Internal and External audit contracts were extended by 12 months

**15. Risk Register – Top 10 Risks**

The meeting was informed that the top 10 risks had also been reviewed by the Audit Committee and no new risks had been added since November 2021.

A Governor suggested that the Board should be reviewing and discussing any risk with a score above a certain threshold.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that if the scoring on a particular risk remained at 25, the Audit Committee would bring this to the attention of the Board.

It was also agreed that the severe risks and the scoring of them was discussed further at the May Board meeting

**ACTION:**

- Audit Committee
- Clerk / May Board agenda

**16. Use of College Seal**

The Clerk reported that the seal had been used for the signing of the following documents:

- 17.01.2023 - Variation to Contract Form – GMCA Grant funding agreement for devolved Adult Education Budget
- 22.01.2023 - Deed of Warranty – Goodson Associates Ltd re TEC Centre
- 22.01.2023 - Deed of Warranty – Caddick Construction re TEC Centre

All documents were signed by the Chair and Principal / CEO

**RESOLVED:**



The Board noted the use of the College seal

## **17. Items in Convene Document Library**

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

- Ofsted Annual Report
- Further Education Commissioner Annual Report
- Letter to Minister Halfon re Qualification Reforms
- Response from Minister Halfon re Qualification Reforms
- Developing Industry Expert Teaching for Higher Skills
- Rochdale Sixth Form College Consultation Response
- Thank you, Email from F.E. Commissioner

## **18. \* College KPI's 2022/23 Update**

The meeting was informed that these would be added to the Convene document library

### **ACTION:**

**Principal / Clerk**

## **19. Reserved Business**

### **19.1 Appraisal & Remuneration Committee Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

Members received the minutes of the meeting and it was noted that the Chair would be meeting with the Principal shortly to undertake her mid-year review.

### **RESOLVED:**


It was agreed that an update would be provided at the May Board meeting

### **ACTION:**

**Clerk / Agenda**

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

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 5.00pm

Chair's Signature: 
Date: 15.5.2023