

WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees of Woking College held on
Wednesday 22nd March 2023 at 6.00pm in the Study Area, New Teaching Block

Present:	Tim Stokes Erica Ehoró Alastair MacAulay Jonathan Miles Cullum Mitchell Rosh Sellahewa Ben Smith Andy Williams Brett Freeman	Chair Principal
In Attendance:	Fiona Chalk Laura Cook Barbara Maude	Governance 4FE External Advisor Assistant Principal Clerk to the Board of Trustee

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest Apologies had been received from Anne Middleton (daughter’s parents evening) and Mike Mulheron (last minute work commitment). The apologies were agreed.</p> <p>No Trustee, member of SLT or observer declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest in any item on the agenda.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed to the meeting Fiona Chalk, Governance4FE external advisor who was attending as an observer as part of the External Review of Governance (ERG) currently taking place.</p>	
2.	<p>Welcome to Erica Ehoró, Parent Trustee The Chair also welcomed Erica Ehoró, the new Parent Trustee who had been elected by the Parent Body with effect from 27th January 2023. The term of office was four years.</p> <p>Whilst Erica had already met with the Clerk to go through the various introductory papers required on appointment it was noted that a formal induction process would now take place.</p>	
3.	<p>Introduction to the Board Meeting The Chair outlined the strategic intent of the meeting noting that in considering the Principal’s Report, the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report provided the Board with a wealth of information from which Trustees could make valued comments and pose questions that would impact the learner’s experience.</p>	

4.	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th January 2023. Apart from one small typographical error noted before the meeting, the minutes were agreed and approved for signature by the Chair.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>On this occasion, it was noted that there were no substantive matters arising from the previous meeting.</p>	
6.	<p>Principal's Report</p> <p>The Board received the Principal's Termly Report. Before the Principal introduced his report, the Chair thanked him for the report which was extremely comprehensive and he especially welcomed the introductory section that helped put the educational landscape into context.</p> <p>The Principal thanked those Trustees who had submitted questions to him in advance, a process which he always greatly appreciated.</p> <p>In terms of KPIs, overall attendance was at 97% (compared to 97.3% last year). Retention was 97% which was 5% up on the same time last year. Acceptances had increased to 1,009 which was an increase from the time the report was written (901) and continued to be an increase on the number received at the same time last year (797).</p> <p>The number of applications received so far had surpassed the total number received by June last year but whilst the data was pleasing, Trustees were reminded that as students applied to and accepted offers from more than one institution, the College could never be certain as to how many acceptances would turn into actual enrolments.</p> <p>In respect of the national context, the Principal asked Laura Cook, Assistant Principal to give a summary of the proposed reform of Level 3 Applied General Qualifications (BTECs). The government had decided that more than half of the 134 reformed AGQs would be ineligible for reapproval. The advice was for Colleges to maintain their current offer but to be ready to 'flip' to T levels. It was seen within the sector to be a truly messy position with the government deciding not to fund academic qualifications in certain subjects from 2025 because there was an overlap with T levels. T levels remained the government's preferred choice of technical qualifications despite the lack of student take up within the sector. Anecdotally, SLT advised that a fellow S7 College had failed to successfully recruit to its T level provision.</p> <p>Post 2025 the academic landscape for 16-19 and for adults would comprise A/AS levels, a small AAQ (the equivalent of 1 A level) taken alongside A levels and a large AAQ (the equivalent of between 2-3 A levels) taken as an alternative to A levels. The Assistant Principal advised that what this meant for the College was that the current level of choice would disappear with the College no longer being able to offer courses such as the BTEC in Business, Childcare, Law or Travel and Tourism.</p> <p>No large AAQs would be available in IT, Health and Social Care or Applied Science. Many students who choose BTECs were often from a lower ability band and therefore may have to opt for A levels if they were not drawn to T levels which would have a knock-on effect on either overall numbers applying, or the level of support those learners would require.</p> <p>The current advice from the SFCA was effectively to do nothing as they continued to lobby that all AGQs should be removed from the scope of the Level 3 review and as a backstop to delay until September 2026.</p>	

The College were currently considering the offer of T levels in certain areas such as Management and Administration, Media & Broadcast Production and Childcare. SLT would review the support possible for lower qualified A level students and any capital implications. The College would also look to work with Esher and Godalming Colleges as a mini consortium should the roll out of T level provision continue.

The Assistant Principal provided a handout on Applied General Reform for Trustees information which they could review outside of the meeting.

The Principal then highlighted certain key areas within his report. Martyn's Law would extend to the College to ensure preparations were in place in the event of a violent attack. This would form part of the disaster recovery exercise that would take place later in the year.

In terms of teacher's pay, the NJC were recommending that in the absence of formal agreement with the Secretary of State that colleges increase teachers' pay with immediate effect and backdated to 1st September 2022. The rate was a 5% to 8.9% pay increase to teachers on the main pay scale; a 5% across the board increase for all other teachers, including those on the leadership scale and a 5% increase to NJC allowances.

Even with these increases, the Principal reported that the College would still be behind schoolteachers' pay and the further it fell behind the more difficult it made to recruit new staff.

Pay negotiations for 2023/24 were due to start shortly.

The recent industrial action had seen more staff than before go out on strike which was due to the increasing strength of feeling over the way the education sector was funded.

The Principal highlighted some of the marketing activities that had taken place including social media activity and encouraged all Trustees, if they had not done so already, to follow the College on their preferred social media platform. Also mentioned were the four mini Open Evenings which were being held for schools with sixth forms to help persuade them that the College offered a better alternative. Trustees queried how the College had targeted those students and were advised that the College had contacted every applicant.

In terms of the estates update, the Principal focussed on the CIF bids submitted for 2023/24 which related to the replacement of the roof on the main block and the upgrade of the fire suppression systems and the replacements of all fire doors. Trustees queried whether this meant that the College's fire doors were not currently compliant and were advised that the doors were compliant and they had passed all necessary fire regulations but the College could not effectively install those same doors now into a new building. The result of the CIF bids were expected in June 2023.

In respect of summer projects, an extensive refurbishment project was planned which would start in the Health and Social block and then progress via a rolling programme of refurbishment, decoration and upgrades across that building, the main block and the top block to be completed by September 2023.

Whilst discussing the refurbishment programme and in particular the installation of new TVs and monitors, the Board raised the issue as to whether leasing could be a more cost-effective way as opposed to purchasing outright. Given the current economic climate and the wish not to tie up capital then leasing might well be a better option. SLT agreed to run the numbers and see how the respective costs compared.

	<p>On staff wellbeing, the Board considered the various activities that had taken place across the term and the fact that this week was in fact the second staff wellbeing week which had been chosen in recognition of the fact that as the Easter break approached, staff were tired.</p> <p>Student careers and progression were discussed, with Trustees having also received a copy of the latest careers bulletin prior to the meeting which showcased the many career opportunities available. 370 applications had been submitted by the UCAS deadline of 26th January 2023. A HE evening had been held online run over 2 sessions with between 55-65 attendees in each session. The first of two careers mornings had also taken place with 105 universities and employers booked to exhibit at the next event to be held in June 2023.</p> <p>There was then a brief summary provided on INSET days, Sharing Best Practice (SBP) and S7. In terms of pastoral provision, the Principal highlighted the Papyrus Suicide Prevention session held for Years 12-13 and the parent/carer presentation which provided tips for parents on looking after their child's mental wellbeing.</p> <p>This year the College had also run the assessment and processing of access arrangements in-house which had gone smoothly and EHCP numbers provisionally for next year were between 37 and 42 students.</p> <p>Reviewing staffing levels then the College were losing a small number of teachers primarily to private schools. Staffing levels looked stable but it was acknowledged that the key time for resignations was approaching. Trustees asked about the process for exit interviews and it was confirmed that the exit questions were standard and followed the College's recommended HR protocols but as a general rule 90% of leavers tended to be very positive with a small minority being negative. The main reasons for leaving had been linked to working closer to home, career progression and retirement.</p> <p>Trustees asked if SLT tracked leavers in terms of ethnicity and if not, how quickly did they think they would pick up on any trend. The Principal advised that as an SLT they spent a considerable amount of time every week reviewing staff and staffing related issues. SLT considered that they would soon be aware of any such trend but as this was an informal measurement then it was agreed that they could look at this at the end of the current academic year and review patterns over the last 3 years.</p> <p>In terms of collaboration, the Chair asked if the College had attempted to work with the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts based in Woking. SLT advised that they had attempted to have discussions with them but without any real success. The Assistant Principal advised that the difference between the two was that our students undertook dance/performing arts alongside other subjects.</p>	
	<p>TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Quality Improvement Plan Progress Update</p> <p>The Board reviewed the QIP 2022/23 noting the colour rating in terms of areas for development in the Self-Assessment Report; those from the 2021/22 QIP target that had not been fully achieved; those areas requiring further development from a 2021/22 QIP target that was achieved and finally other College priorities.</p> <p>In headline terms, SLT reported that the College was on target and invited questions.</p>	

The Board asked about the number of laptops provided to students and the process whereby this assistance was identified. The Assistant Principal advised that a new enrolment form helped identify any barriers to access home IT and from that the College would, where necessary, provide a laptop.

Trustees also asked what the biggest challenges were within the QIP. SLT advised that some of the areas would be their very nature, roll over such as continuing the consistency of quality of teaching, learning and assessment, staff wellbeing and student wellbeing. Areas such as IT would continue to evolve and as new systems became embedded then this may well be an area that would reduce. As too, would the re-suiting of College departments once the new builds/OWCC project had been completed.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Feedback

The Board considered the EDI feedback report which set out details of the work of the EDI champions and the training that staff had received so far this academic year.

It was noted that each department had a nominated EDI Champion who attended cross-college meetings and met with students in their department areas. They would also raise any ED&I matter through departmental meetings. Student tutorials had included sessions on the Respect Charter, Black History Month, respect within relationships and LGBTQ+.

During discussion, Trustees asked about the involvement of the police in College life. The Principal advised that whilst the local police did come into College they tended to be for subject specific reasons such as discussions with the Criminology students. Trustees encouraged SLT to support students in their understanding of the police in the community especially given the current climate. The Principal considered that local community policing tended to vary subject to funding constraints but SLT would take note of this recommendation.

Trustees also asked about the impact of Ramadan and any arrangements that were in place to support students who would be fasting over the coming month. The Principal advised that the Deputy Principal ordinarily took a lead on this and the general view was that as the College was secular in nature there was no specific attention given to faiths of any nature. However, students were ordinarily very careful not to overexert themselves during Ramadan and it was more manageable at this time of the year when warm weather was not a factor.

EQR Report on Maths

The Board reviewed the External Quality Review (EQR) on Level 2 Maths provision. The EQR looked specifically at a number of questions including how students who arrived with a Grade 2 or below were supported in achieving a Grade 4 at GCSE.

The Assistant Principal advised that those students who came to the College with a Grade 3 did well with over 50% obtaining a Grade 4 which compared positively to the national average of 14%. However, those that came with a Grade 1 or 2 did not tend to make as much progress and the EQR had looked specifically at what the College could do to improve what went on in the classroom for those students. It was acknowledged that whilst some of the strategies suggested had been tried before and found to be unsuccessful others would be utilised. The Maths department would reflect on the recommendations and would make an action plan which in turn would be added to their QIP.

SLT felt that the report was useful and accepted that whilst there was always work to do the report did not fully reflect how good the Maths department were at getting students to a Grade 4. In response to a question, it was confirmed that it was a condition of funding that students were expected to progress on their journey to a Grade 4 in Maths.

	<p>Student Focus Group Feedback</p> <p>The Chair gave an oral summary of his meeting with the Student Union accompanied by the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. Notes of the session had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair spoke of how inspiring the session had been and of the eloquence of the SU members. Discussions had centred on the different career progression routes of university versus apprenticeships; the issue of space and a possible SU bank account and balance to help fund SU activities.</p> <p>The issues raised by the SU in the meeting had been discussed by the Chair of the Board and the Principal and many of the items had already been addressed or where in the process of being addressed.</p> <p>The Chair encouraged other Trustees to join him when he met the new SU representatives at their next meeting. The Clerk noted that the new SU President had indicated that she would like to attend a Board meeting and so would be invited to attend future meetings.</p>	
	<p>FINANCE</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee gave an oral summary of those matters considered by the Committee at its meeting on 8th March 2023.</p> <p>Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee held on 8th March 2023</p> <p>In terms of the minutes of the meeting, the Chair ran through the salient points noting that one item remained outstanding under matters arising, which related to the review of the definition of terms within the Risk Register. This was due to be considered when the Risk Register was substantially reviewed in May 2023 by SLT as part of the Risk Management and Board Assurance Framework.</p> <p>The Committee had reviewed the January 2022 Management Accounts which showed an operating surplus of £383k which was a positive variance ahead of budget. The forecast at year end was estimated to be £319k.</p> <p>The Committee had spent some time reviewing the Budget and Forecast assumptions for the 2023/24 Budget and in particular budget sensitivities which had been identified as staff costs but predominantly student numbers. The Finance Director was currently looking at case scenarios and these would be further considered by the Committee at its next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair also highlighted that the College were currently disputing the funding allocation for 2023/24 which was due to the implications of the cyber-attack. When systems had been restored, data relating to 102 students had not been properly included which meant that those students were showing as not meeting the condition of funding. There was also the possibility that the College may be able to achieve growth funding in-year. Hence, if the College grew, funding could be forthcoming in-year rather than by way of lagged funding. A business case was currently being prepared and would be submitted to the ESFA.</p> <p>Trustees questioned as to how confident the Finance Director was in securing a revised funding allocation. SLT responded that they were as confident as they could be that the appeal would be successful.</p>	

In terms of expenditure, a cost of living allowance had been assumed of 5% for both teaching and support staff and a 5% increase across all non-pay expenditure.

CIF bids assumed a contribution of 50% towards the main block and the fire suppression systems which were £115k and £299k respectively.

Future bids may centre on energy sources and looking particularly at more sustainable energy sources.

The College had also met with a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMS) who had been very supportive and would be reviewing 12 generic metrics and would then compile a report setting out her recommendations. It was noted that the College were not bound to accept the recommendations. The process so far had been very collaborative and the SRMS consultant had commented that the data she had received from the College was some of the best she had seen.

The Chair also advised that in terms of internal audit, the Committee had agreed to defer the audit on Corporate Governance due to the ERG currently being undertaken by Fiona Chalk and it had been agreed by the Committee that a further funding audit would be undertaken in its place.

In terms of capital projects, the teaching block was just going through the final snagging process. The OWCC was currently 3/4 weeks behind schedule but any slippage, as agreed with the contractors would take place in the community areas and not in College areas. The Committee had also asked about the payment schedule and it was confirmed that the College was paying 1/3 of the invoices as and when they fell due. The Chair reminded the Board that the agreed contribution towards the College from the College was £700k but the Principal would be bringing a matter to the Board's attention later in the meeting.

The Committee had received an update on the Risk Register and the Chair had asked that subsequently the Risk Register should be re-circulated to Committee members outside of the meeting.

The Committee had also reviewed the Financial Regulations and the Scheme of Delegation. The only change proposed in terms of the Financial Regulations related to an increase in the limit of £50k to £60k in the event of unbudgeted capital works and the purpose of the change was solely in the context of inflationary pressures.

Having reviewed the Scheme of Delegation, the Committee were not proposing any significant changes.

Finally, in respect of the Academies Planning Calendar (APC), the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool had to be completed and approved by the Board, either prior to submission or at the earliest opportunity after submission. Hence, the SRMSA had been submitted on 15th March 2023 and was on the agenda for the Board's retrospective approval at this meeting. Also, the APC required the BFR3Y to be submitted in June 2023 and as this fell between Board meetings it was proposed, as per usual, to authorise the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee to sign off the BRF3Y by the June 2023 deadline.

The Board **resolved:**

- 1. To receive the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting held on 8th March 2023;**
- 2. To approve the January 2022 Management Accounts;**
- 3. To approve the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool; and**
- 4. To approve the Financial Regulations & Scheme of Delegation**
- 5. To authorise the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee to sign off the BFR3Y in June 2023.**

	<p>The Principal advised that in terms of the OWCC project he had met with the Quantity Surveyor today and whilst everyone was confident that the College would be moving into the space by mid-July for a September start there were some inflationary pressures that were becoming evident.</p> <p>It was anticipated that the project may be approximately £50k short. There remained a contingency within the Your Surrey Fund monies which might be available but the Principal wanted to alert the Board that the project may need some additional monies in order to complete. Both WBC and SCC were not able or willing to contribute any further funds. Whilst it was not a College project, the College were effectively the only party out of the collective stakeholders involved that could potentially afford to contribute towards the £50k estimated excess.</p> <p>The Principal advised that the additional monies were not required because anything had gone wrong it was solely down to inflationary increases. The amount could be £20k but it was likely to be closer to the £50k mark.</p> <p>The Board discussed the request for additional monies, recognising on the one hand the maximum amount that had been originally agreed set against potential reputational issues as a community partner if the project was not completed.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee advised that he had met with the Chair of the Board and the Principal prior to the meeting to discuss the current scenario and repeated to the Board that from his perspective he would need to see a transparent paper on exactly where the project currently was as he would need to be convinced of the merits of advancing any further monies. He would also require some form of guarantee as to exactly what the College would receive in exchange for any further monies. The Board had been very clear that the maximum amount it was prepared to commit was £700k and he was reluctant to move from that position. The Board discussed whether the additional monies could be advanced possibly as a loan or recouped through rental payments. It was agreed that all options would be considered.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that this update had just been brought to the attention of the Board and that in the context of good governance, Trustees should have been made aware of the development sooner. The Principal advised that the meeting with the QS had taken place earlier in the day and so this was the first opportunity he had to alert the Board to the development. The Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee had been advised of increased costs position prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The Board resolved: To delegate authority to the Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee to review the OWCC project in greater detail and to decide whether to extend the College’s contribution by a further £50k. It was also further agreed that the Board would of course be kept fully informed.</p>	
	<p>GOVERNANCE</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>The Board reviewed the updated Standing Orders, noting the minor changes proposed in the executive summary. In addition, they also reviewed the proposed new Code of Conduct which was based on the NGA template.</p> <p>After consideration, the Board resolved: 1. To approve the revised Standing Orders of the Board of Trustees of Woking College; and 2. To approve the new Trustee Code of Conduct.</p>	

	The Clerk advised Trustees that she had prepared a Skills Audit for 2023/24 using Microsoft Forms and the link had been circulated prior to the meeting. This was a slight change from previous years and the use of this format would enable the results to be collated more efficiently. Trustees were asked to complete the form by the start of term after the Easter break.	
10.	Any Other Business Fiona Chalk, who was undertaking the ERG, encouraged those Trustees that had not yet completed the questionnaire to do so by the end of the week. If Trustees preferred, they were very welcome to ring her for a chat rather than complete the questionnaire. Either option was fine, it would just be good to ensure everyone's feedback was captured.	
11.	Date & Time of Next Meeting It was noted that the Succession Planning Working Group would meet on Wednesday 10 th May 2023 at 5.00pm and then the Board meeting would follow on the same day at 6.00pm.	