

WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees of Woking College held on Wednesday 28th June 2023 at 6.00pm in the Staffroom.

Present:	Tim Stokes Gary Botha Erica Ehoro Alastair MacAulay Anne Middleton Jonathan Miles Mike Mulheron Rosh Sellahewa Brett Freeman	Chair Principal
In Attendance:	Fiona Munday Laura Cook Helena Clarke Ashanti Kaylee Barbara Maude	Finance Director Assistant Principal Assistant Principal President - Student Union Learner Voice -Student Union Clerk to the Board of Trustees

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cullum Mitchell and Andy Williams both due to work commitments and Ben Smith due to international travel commitments.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal had also given his apologies as it was Eid.</p> <p>No Trustee or member of SLT declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest in any item on the agenda.</p>	
2.	<p>Welcome to Student Union Members</p> <p>The Chair welcomed to the meeting the SU President, Ashanti and the SU Learner Voice co-ordinator, Kaylee. The students introduced themselves explaining the courses they were taking and their motivation for standing for election to the SU. They explained what the focus of the SU would be over the coming months which included looking to improve student satisfaction and the environment. Recent activities included a Pride Party and Litter Pick. They would also be undertaking and analysing surveys; and a key highlight was the forthcoming Culture Week which would involve cultural dance workshops and cultural food. They were hoping that organisations and people would be prepared to donate their time rather than seek payment for participating.</p> <p>They were also keen to promote sustainability and had recently met with Will Forster of the Liberal Democrats to talk about some of the initiatives they could help to promote. They also said that within the SU they had their own sustainability champion who worked with the</p>	

	<p>College to help maintain the focus on sustainability.</p> <p>It was discussed that the SU met regularly with the Principal so they could discuss ideas, goals and targets and were therefore able to assess suggestions from both the student perspective and the College’s perspective. The Principal advised that whenever he undertook Open Events or assemblies he always took the SU members with him as they were really articulate and passionate about their time at College and their presentations were always well received by the audience. The Board asked if there was anything they would like to change about the College but the response was that there wasn’t as they loved the sense of community, and talked about the range of enrichments on offer, peer mentoring and students being encouraged to take the initiative.</p> <p>In terms of recruiting new members to the SU then they intended to promote the opportunity early in Year 12 and they had recently made a video for the new intake so that students knew exactly who the SU officers were from the moment they started at the College. In terms of how the SU could attract more students to come to the College then they were using Tik Tok as a platform for promotion but that overall students needed to do well and achieve great results and academic success. In their opinion, the responsibility of the SU was to show the passion they had for being part of the Woking College community.</p> <p>The Board thanked the SU representatives who then left the meeting.</p>																
3.	<p>Introduction to the Board Meeting</p> <p>The Chair outlined the strategic intent of the meeting which in light of the previous agenda item and the Principal’s report gave a very real sense of what was currently happening at the College.</p>																
4.	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th May 2023. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair. This process now involved marking the minutes as signed via the facility on GovernorHub.</p>																
5.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>To review any matters arising</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="209 1368 1342 1518"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Matters arising 10.05.23</th> <th>By whom</th> <th>By when</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Identify top 3 priorities from ERG Report</td> <td>Board</td> <td>28.06.23</td> <td>To be agreed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Reflect on Link Trustee Scheme</td> <td>Board</td> <td>28.06.23</td> <td>To be agreed</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It was noted that both matters arising were items on the agenda and would be picked up later in the meeting.</p>		Matters arising 10.05.23	By whom	By when	Status	1.	Identify top 3 priorities from ERG Report	Board	28.06.23	To be agreed	2.	Reflect on Link Trustee Scheme	Board	28.06.23	To be agreed	
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PRINCIPAL’S REPORT																	
6.	<p>The Board received the Principal’s termly report together with an oral summary of the main headlines.</p> <p>The Principal also thanked those Trustees who had submitted questions to him in advance of the meeting. One such question had related to the impact of strikes and whether the Principal had any sense of whether industrial action would scale up next year and whether contingency plans may be needed. The Principal updated the Board on the strikes planned for the following</p>																

week. The College had a taster day for Woking High students the following Friday which was on one of the planned strike days. At present, management considered that the Open Day would go ahead with contingency plans in place. The College couldn't ask staff if they were intending to strike beforehand but ordinarily staff would let them know in advance so that management could make alternative plans. If the College learnt that more staff were going to take industrial action then the Open Day would have to be cancelled.

In terms of members of staff who were leaving, whilst the figures were normal to low in comparison to previous years, Trustees asked if there were any common themes. The Principal advised that most leavers were moving to schools or Colleges closer to their own homes and reducing travel times or relocating seemed to be the only common theme. He also confirmed that at a basic level the College were fully staffed for the start of 2023/24.

A further question had related to mental health and wellbeing and whether the College were getting any useful feedback on what had helped students. The Principal confirmed that feedback was collated through surveys and the tutor programme but management accepted that there was scope for questions to be added to find out what exactly students had found useful and Helena Clarke, Assistant Principal would take this forward as a future action.

One final pre-meeting question related to whether the College had considered marketing to private or independent schools and the Principal advised that whilst they were getting an upturn from certain private schools it was a challenging marketing initiative and the best form of marketing, for these particular circumstances, was probably word of mouth.

Turning to the Principal's report, the KPIs were looking positive with overall attendance looking very similar to last year and retention, applications and acceptances all higher than the year before.

The national picture of T Levels remained confusing and the College would continue to keep a watching brief on developments. The DfE had published a second list of qualifications that it deemed to overlap with T levels and at present 68% of AGQ students were studying a qualification that would not be available in the future. This not only was the reason that the #ProtectStudentChoice Campaign needed to be supported but also strategically to keep T levels under close review. It was agreed that T levels should become a standing item on the Principal's report for the next year. Within 18 months there might be a change of government and under a possible Labour Government there was no clear certainty as to what would happen to T levels.

The Principal ran through some of the recent marketing activities, including the recent Open Evening and the Careers Fair which had seen over 450 people through the doors of the Sports Hall.

In terms of capital projects, the OWCC project was progressing with the College's part of the project due for completion in July 2023. Trustees asked if they might be able to see some photographs of the College areas within the project and it was agreed that management would offer Trustees a tour of the premises early in September.

Insofar as applications were concerned for September 2023, then management were considering if student numbers were high how they could continue to offer the full extent of the current enrichment programme which relied upon teachers being available to run the programmes. With potential increased student numbers this could prove challenging. In those circumstances it may be that the College would need to offer an overtime rate to staff to be able to maintain the extent of the current enrichment programme.

	The Board thanked the Principal for a comprehensive and detailed termly report.	
	SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT	
7.	<p>In an agreed change to the scheduling of the agenda, Helena Clarke, Assistant Principal would present the Safeguarding and Prevent item next.</p> <p>The Board received an end of year Safeguarding Report which highlighted staff training undertaken throughout the year, Trustees training and the first full year of the Progress Mentor programme, which had been piloted last summer, had been upscaled this year and was aimed at supporting those students who had a poor record of attendance.</p> <p>The report also highlighted how the College delivered Prevent training (with students understanding the concept of radicalisation much more readily than the terminology of Prevent). The Board were advised of the work that the College was undertaking in extending its work with external agencies such as East-to-West who now came into College one day a week to support targeted students with their transition to College.</p> <p>The detailed mental health summary of the level of concerns raised in 2022/23 was reviewed and the Board were further advised of the additional work being undertaken with the Surrey Educational Psychology Service to help develop support around anxiety and mental health.</p> <p>The Board also received the Designated Safeguarding Trustee's Annual Report and thanked her for her detailed review of the processes and initiatives in place.</p> <p>The Board reviewed the revised Prevent Strategy which had been updated to reflect the face to face Prevent training for College staff and to include the new ETF Prevent, radicalisation and online safety programme completed by Year 12 students from 2022 as part of the College's Prevent work.</p> <p>The Board resolved to approve the revised Prevent Strategy</p>	
	TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT	
8.	<p>The Board reviewed the Curriculum Intent proposal which outlined the overall strategic and cultural intent of the curriculum at the College. Laura Cook, Assistant Principal had, prior to the meeting, posed three questions namely did the CI document fully reflect the College aims with regard to learning, teaching and assessment; are the wider learning and pastoral aims of the College clear and comprehensive; and does the CI reflect the wider values of the College. Working around the table, the Board reflected on the three questions.</p> <p>It was suggested that one possible change in the format may be to state the aim and to then say how we will achieve this is by doing the following.</p> <p>It was suggested that the CI proposal did not touch specifically on sustainability and it was agreed that point 10 would be expanded to include this. Point 13 should be expanded to include increased reference to safety and students feeling safe and in terms of the learner voice then Trustees suggested that there should be greater reference to the learner voice and feedback from students.</p>	

	<p>The Board noted that the only curriculum change for 2023/24 related to the offer of both an A level and a BTEC in Music Technology from 2023/24. Numbers permitting the College would be opening an A level Music Technology group as this was considered a better option for those students wishing to progress to University but maintaining both courses continued to appeal to a wider spectrum of students.</p>	
FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE		
<p>9.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee took Trustees through the matters discussed by the Committee at its meeting on 15th June and the various reports and documents considered at that time.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Committee had held a closed session with Scott McCready, Lead Audit Manager from Wylie & Bisset who had joined the meeting remotely. This was a practice that the Committee were utilising before each meeting and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding the working relationship between auditors and management, most notably with the Finance Director.</p> <p>The Committee had asked what were the potential risks facing the sector in the months ahead and Scott McCready advised, that in their opinion, the top three risks related to cyber security, which remained a very real threat, staff recruitment and retention and the increased funding pressures, particularly in respect of achieving a balanced budget.</p> <p>The Committee had then considered the latest audit report which was on Financial Controls. The audit had considered the financial controls in place to ensure that the controls were adequate, performed as expected and were being adhered to by staff. The review looked at the processes for purchasing, income, cash and banking, credit cards, payroll and fixed assets.</p> <p>The audit had concluded that there was a strong level of assurance over the financial controls in place at the College, which was further highlighted by 6 areas of good practice and there were no recommendations made for improvement. The benchmarking data demonstrated that ordinarily the average number of recommendations in similar audits would be 3.</p> <p>The Committee had spent some time reviewing the Risk Register noting the disappearance of vocational qualifications; the possible over-recruitment of new students and the increased commitment to sustainability.</p> <p>Trustees highlighted the reference within the minutes of the consideration of latent building defects and asked if this had been further considered outside of the Committee by the Deputy Principal. Management confirmed that having reviewed this point separately the Deputy Principal considered that as all building projects had their own separate Risk Register there was no need to include this element in the main Risk Register.</p> <p>The Committee had received the April and May 2023 Management Accounts, focusing primarily on May 2023. The results for May 2023 year to date showed an operating surplus of £227k which was £39k ahead of budget. The year-end forecast now predicted a surplus of £396k.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that the Committee had looked at the 3 different contracts the College had with WBC in terms of ESOL provision which related primarily to classes for refugees. It was confirmed that this funding came direct from government allaying the Committee's concerns regarding the solvency of WBC.</p>	

Management had also advised the Committee that cost savings had been made by the fact that when needed, SLT had undertaken teaching responsibilities to cover for teachers that had left in-year.

In terms of the budget, the Chair advised that the Budget for 2023/24 and 3 Year Financial Forecast had not been approved by the Committee and had been withdrawn for approval at this meeting. The reason being that management had submitted a business case to the ESFA in April 2023 based on exceptional case criteria to challenge the current 2023/24 ESFA 16-19 funding allocation. The grounds of the challenge related to the impact on the College's data of the cyber-attack that the College had suffered in June 2020.

The College had built the exceptional case around the various implications of the cyber-attack. As part of the business case, the College have also asked for two years of non-lagged funding, on the assumption the growth in student numbers exceeds ESFA expectations, as the College believe the cyber-attack impacted on recruitment in 22/23.

It was confirmed that it was possible to ask for additional funding if significant growth was experienced (which was now classified as 15%).

Just this afternoon the College had received notification that they would receive an additional £53k to the funding allocation. Whilst management would continue to appeal that decision, it was now proposed to re-work the draft Budget and it would be necessary to hold a separate, remote meeting of the Board to approve the budget by the end of term.

Based on the current figures, and allowing for the modest increase, the College would be putting forward a deficit budget. The original budget indicated an operating deficit of (£313,546) reducing to (£291,654) in 2024/25 and to (£104,429) by 2025/26. The Chair also highlighted that based on those forecasts, the College would drop below the agreed £600k reserves position by 2025/26.

The Committee had looked carefully at the sensitivity analysis provided by the Finance Director. The Committee had also reflected on the drop-in student numbers experienced this year; increase in energy costs and general inflationary pressures.

Whilst the Academy Trust Handbook explicitly states that the Board must approve a balanced budget, the Principal advised that this was simply not possible and the message the College was communicating was clear and transparent. It would be wrong and disingenuous to include a notional 1% or 2% pay award as the ESFA needed to see the effect upon Colleges' of continued unfunded pay increases and inflationary increases. The recent SRMA visit had agreed with the College's response and had confirmed that at her own school they had no alternative but to set a deficit budget.

Management also confirmed that in terms of capital expenditure, all the main planned works had completed or were due to complete and there was no major works anticipated in the years ahead. The College had completed the build of the new teaching block, the OWCC project was nearing completion and the re-suiting of departments had seen a major refurbishment process undertaken.

It was also mentioned that monies currently placed on deposit would be reviewed and possibly placed on a 6-month fixed higher rate account.

The Board reiterated concerns over WBC as it was currently undergoing an assets disposal strategy as part of its recovery plan and Trustees asked if the OWCC might be affected.

	<p>Management responded that they did not suspect the OWCC would fall within possible assets to sell off, but they would be keeping a close watching brief on developments.</p> <p>In terms of the approval of the budget, it was agreed that the Finance Director and the Clerk would liaise outside of the meeting to set up a single agenda remote meeting to formally approve the 2023/24 Budget & Three-Year Financial Forecast.</p> <p>In terms of other matters discussed by the Committee, the Chair highlighted the SRMA follow up report which would be available shortly; the external auditor’s letter of engagement and Audit Plan for 2023/24 (noting an increase in fees due to a new accounting standard and the audit work involved in the OWCC).</p> <p>Based on the Committee’s recommendations, the Board resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive the Minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting held on 15th June 2023; • Approve April & May 2023 Management Accounts; • Approve the External Audit Plan fye 31.08.23 & External Auditor’s Letter of Engagement; and • Approve the Risk Register 2023/24 	
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	GOVERNANCE	
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10.	<p>The Board reviewed the suggested top 3 priorities from the External Review of Governance and their implementation.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Board would, in partnership with the executive, adopted the 3 suggested recommendations which were set out under the categories of alignment, governance practice and relationships and enabling.</p> <p>The Board also reflected on the existing Link Trustee Scheme for 2023/24. There was general support for the scheme which did enable Trustees to develop a greater understanding of a department or area that they were particularly interested in. The depth of that understanding and the nature of the relationship between Trustee and HoD could be fluid. The Chair reported, for example, that whilst unfortunately this year he had not been able to make a formal visit to his link area he had been able to provide support to the department through his attendance at the Dragons Den Business event, through attending their SAR and mid-year reviews and signposting business contacts to approach.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Clerk should re-circulate the list of departments and Trustees would be invited to link to an area of their choice, or remain with their existing link, if this was preferred from September 2023.</p> <p>To approve: The Clerk advised that she had received a nomination for the post of Chair, from the existing Chair, Tim Stokes and from Rosh Sellahewa for the post of Vice Chair. The post of Vice Chair would be vacant from the end of the current academic year with the retirement of Jonathan Miles. No other nominations or expressions of interest had been received prior to the meeting. No other Trustee declared a wish to put themselves forward at the meeting.</p> <p>Therefore, both Tim Stokes and Rosh Sellahewa were seconded and unanimously elected as Chair & Vice Chair of the Board for 2023/24.</p>	
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	<p>The Board approved: The appointment of Tim Stokes as Chair of the Board, and Rosh Sellahewa as Vice Chair for the academic year 2023/24, commencing on 1st September 2023 and concluding on 31st August 2024.</p> <p>In terms of re-appointments, the Clerk advised that the Members had passed a Special Resolution on 8th June 2023 appointing Tim Stokes for a final term of office of 2 years with effect from 1st September 2023.</p> <p>The Board duly endorsed: The members’ re-appointment of Tim Stokes for a term of two years with effect from 1st September 2023</p> <p>The Board noted the proposed Committee membership for 2023/24. The only changes reflected that Mike Mulheron and Jonathan Miles would no longer be members of the Finance and Audit Committee. Gary Botha was proposed as a new member to that Committee and Erica Ehoru was proposed as a new member to the Succession Planning Working Group.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Committee membership list should be amended to reflect that the Estates Working Party also met on a routine basis and comprised himself and Rosh Sellahewa as the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee.</p> <p>Save for that change, the Board approved: Committee Membership for 2023/24</p> <p>For information: The Board received and duly noted the minutes of the Succession Planning Working Party held on 10th May 2023 together with the latest Trustee Link Visit Report on Sport & PE completed by Alastair MacAulay.</p> <p>For completion: The Clerk reminded Trustees that the annual Declaration of Gifts & Hospitality for 2022/23 was now on GovernorHub under confirmations within their own personal profile. The confirmation stated that Trustees had not received any gifts or hospitality during the current academic year. If any Trustee (or member of SLT) had received a gift or accepted hospitality then this should be declared under the declarations tab alongside their register of interests.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Any other Business There were no other formal items of business.</p> <p>On a personal matter, the Chair extended his sincere thanks, on behalf of the Board, to both Mike Mulheron and Jonathan Miles who were stepping down having completed their final terms of office. Both Mike and Jonathan had been long standing and highly valued members of the Board. Mike had joined the Board prior to academisation and Jonathan had joined originally as a parent Trustee and then as a co-opted Trustee. Both had brought their respective skills to the Board and would be hugely missed. The Chair recounted the experience of the recent OfSTED inspection and was immensely grateful for their shared experiences, support and guidance over the years. The Chair hoped that they might consider becoming Members in due course and this could no doubt be discussed at a later date.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Date & Time of Next Meetings It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 13th September 2023 at 4.15pm which was the Trustees Conference with Heads of Department,</p>	

	followed by a Board meeting.	
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