WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of a Board Meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 6.00pm
in the Staff Room

Present:	**Gary Botha**	
	Erica Ehoro	
	Tim Stokes	**Chair**
	Alastair MacAulay	
	Anne Middleton	**From 6.19pm**
	Cullum Mitchell	
	Ben Smith	**via Teams from 6.15pm**
	Brett Freeman	**Principal**
In Attendance:	**Nuweed Razaq**	**Deputy Principal**
	Laura Cook	**Assistant Principal**
	Barbara Maude	**Clerk to the Board of Trustees**

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	**Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest** Apologies had been received from Rosh Sellahewa (who was on his honeymoon). The apology was agreed. The Chair advised that Andy Williams, who had been a parent Trustee had stepped down. This followed his attendance at the SAR meeting for Economics which was a subject his son had taken at A level. After the SAR meeting, and following a conversation with the Chair, Andy had tendered his resignation which had been accepted. No Trustee or member of SLT declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest in any item on the agenda.	
2.	**Introduction to the Board Meeting** In terms of the strategic intent for this meeting then the primary focus was a detailed review and challenge on the College's Self-Assessment Report for 2022/2023 and an examination of the Quality Improvement Plan for 2023/24.	
3.	**Minutes of the Previous Meetings** The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th September 2023. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair.	3
4.	**Matters arising** The only matter arising related to the parent survey feedback. The response rate was	

	good and in terms of all the statements posed there was only one that was below a 90% satisfaction rate and that related to careers advice. Management confirmed that they were looking to address this issue (or the perceived issue) with more communication directed to parents.	
	TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT	
5.	**College Self-Assessment Report 2022/23 & Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24** The Board reviewed the College's Self-Assessment Report for 2022/23 concentrating on the College's key strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, the Board also examined the College's QIP for 2023/24 which was the overarching management document that flowed into individual SLT operational QIPs. The QIP was colour coded to more easily identify where the areas for improvement had been drawn from. Prior to the meeting, Trustees have been tasked to review specific sections of the SAR & QIP and invited to pose questions to Laura Cook, Assistant Principal. The answers to those questions were then opened up for further discussion by the Board **Trustees queried what was a SOL and was it different from a SoL?** SoL stands for Scheme of Learning. This is sometimes referred to as a scheme of work in other settings. It is the document which maps out the curriculum in terms of what learners will cover week by week/lesson by lesson and how including skills such as employability, numeracy, literacy as well as EDI and other focus points throughout the year **Trustees also asked - what is SBP in relation to INSET?** SBP refers to Sharing Best Practice – this is a collaborative approach to CPD, most often peer led. **What does IAG stand for?** IAG refers to Information, Advice and Guidance. This is often done through the early stages of student application at interview, open events, enrolment etc. IAG is also a big part of careers advice once students are in College. **In terms of developing a partnership strategy and publicising this on the College website could management provide details of this? What kind of partnership strategy was this?** The partnership strategy refers to how the College is currently mapping out the partnerships with the wider community that the College already has and a mechanism to check for any gaps. The vision is that once complete there will be a page on the website which maps all of these out, with the ability to click through to see what work is done with that organisation. This is a marketing tool not only for prospective students but also for staff who want to work in an outward looking college with opportunities to	

build their reputation beyond the College walls.

Following the re-development of OWCC, ensure excellence management of the performing arts centre as a satellite building, including safeguarding. Trustees queried was this because the College would be using external staff (not WC employees)?

No, the College side will be managed by Woking College staff, however we want to ensure that there is no disconnect from the main college. Particularly as site staff and SLT are based on the main site (although a member of SLT was ordinarily there most days).

In the evidence columns for the SAR under quality of education, the evidence cited from lesson observations is often referred to – Trustees challenged on who conducts the lessons observations? In addition, Trustees asked what quality assurance is there to help ensure that there is common agreement amongst those taking part? What mechanisms did management use to capture the observation/ notes?

The Assistant Principal advised that there were three rounds of lesson observations. The first round was in respect of all new staff and these were completed within the first half term. These are conducted by the Assistant Principal and Terry Wilks (Director of Learning and Teaching Innovation).

The second round of observations involved all staff. These were conducted by the extended SLT Team. SLT discussed in meetings the approach to these observations, for example ensuring the write ups were not descriptive but rather evaluative with a focus on the impact on student progress. Joint observations followed by discussion take place regularly.

Observations were written up on a formal observation sheet which was shared with the member of staff and their line manager. A professional discussion took place between the observer and observed and as part of the process targets were then set.

The third round of observations were conducted by HoDs looking at progress toward those targets. HoDs receive yearly training on this including what to look for and how to write up the targets. All records were kept centrally.

Under 'implementation', departments review SoLs regularly and make changes to sequencing depending on learner needs. Trustees asked if this was ever done based on feedback from exam results or examiner reports? In terms of a well-sequenced curriculum plan, how much leeway do subjects actually have considering that there are certain AOs and exam content that must be covered?

The Assistant Principal confirmed that exam results and feedback did absolutely feed into sequencing. For example, some applied general subjects may change from a January exam to a summer exam (or vice versa). In sociology, the College had moved one of the units to the start of the year to give more time for them to consolidate their knowledge prior to the exam. In Sport and Uniformed Services units were changed to better meet student's needs, also taking into account the skills of the teacher, for example more

practical units were introduced which the learners engaged in more enthusiastically.

Whilst there was a need to cover all assessment objectives, there is some leeway in terms of how this can be ordered. If any unit or topic was changed then there would have been a robust discussion beforehand on the implications for learners, costs and resources.

In 'impact' and areas for development, certain subjects are referred to as needing to make extra progress, but Trustees challenged on how many students were actually enrolled on these courses as small numbers could make a big difference.

The Assistant Principal provided the following data:

- Philosophy – 27 year 12, 15 year 13
- Classical Civilisation – 16 yr 12, 12 year 13
- Film Studies – 38 yr 12, 23 yr 13
- 3D Design – 31 yr 12, 15 yr 13
- BTEC Business L3 – 131 yr 12, 107 yr 13
- BTEC IT L2 and L3 – 11 L2, 53 yr 12, 44 yr13
- CTEC Health and Social Care L3 – 65 Year 12, 34 Year 13

Management confirmed that the biggest impact was felt in terms of BTEC Business where the HoD had been on maternity leave for most of the last year but had now returned and had a very clear handle on what needed to be done to ensure progress was made.

Trustees sought clarification on the data around enrollments and numbers on roll as Page 7 of the SAR suggested there are 2612 students enrolled for 22/23 (not counting adults) yet the Principal's report states there are 1506 on roll. Whilst the SAR was looking at the last academic year and Principal's figure is the current number there seemed to be a discrepancy and Trustees asked if this could be clarified?

The Assistant Principal explained that the Principal's report refers to this year's number, the SAR is a reflection on last year's number of students. The number of enrolments is different to the number of students as it refers to each course a learner is enrolled on, entered and completed. For example, one student could in addition to their course be enrolled on enrichment activities or the EPQ.

On an operational level, Trustees queried whether the heating/aircon was now working in the new teaching block?

Management confirmed that this issue was still being worked on. The natural ventilation system was something that the College were working with and adapting to.

Trustees also queried whether the College would be looking to achieve Cyber Essentials Plus?

The Assistant Principal explained to the Board by way of background information that Cyber Essentials is a self-accreditation document to be passed as the first milestone.

Accreditation can be enhanced by adding Cyber Essentials Plus (being audited by a third-party company). If the College passed this it would then be able to display the accreditation on the College website. Management confirmed that whilst the intention was to work towards Cyber Essentials Plus due to staffing issues and other college priorities this was now an ongoing process over the course of this year.

Trustees enquired about the progress of the draft digital strategy and whether this was due to be discussed and agreed at the SLT away day next month?

Management confirmed that the away day would be totally focused on the direction and structure of the college in light of growing numbers, practicalities of pastoral support, number of teachers, and timetable structure etc. Management considered that everything was currently working well so there was no immediate urgency to review the digital strategy.

In terms of Business and Community 'Groups' and the links that need improving, Trustees challenged on what were these groups – and for example what did the Business Group look like?

The Assistant Principal advised that the College had a business community group that had met semi-regularly for the last two years working with contacts from the Surrey Chamber of Commerce including the NHS, Invotra, Hilton, private medical facility etc. They have offered insight days, provided INSET session for staff and WEX placements. The work of this group needs development as it is difficult to get business professionals to commit to regular meetings.

The Chair advised that he had recently introduced one of his contacts to the College and they had attended to do a presentation on his particular line of work and he encouraged other Trustees to do similarly.

In terms of Leadership and Management, Trustees asked what did SLT think the impact would be of more students next September and potentially more again in the following year? Are the College's current processes adequate if we recruit more students, are we able to flex or will we need to make gradual changes as student numbers increase?

Management responded that they would be discussing this at the away day.

Management considered that the SLT structure worked well and would continue to work with greater student numbers as they were an established and experienced team. But, management also accepted that clearly this would need to be reviewed if the College grew bigger than expected.

Trustees asked about projected fluctuations in birth rates, locally and nationally and the availability of data also on the projected growth of Woking and the surrounding area. Management advised that these were all strategic matters that they would be considering as part of the away day and would feed back to Trustees as part of the Board's Annual Strategic Meeting.

Trustees posed the question that if the local labour market is not that much different to many areas in the South East and indeed, many of the College students take

apprenticeships or end up working in London or out of our area, how did the College compare in curriculum development in this context compared to other S7 colleges? Were management happy with what we do, if not, what did they think we could do to improve/change our offer?

The Assistant Principal agreed that the local labour market was very diverse and there were lots of opportunities in Woking, Guildford and London. Something the College needed to keep a close eye on was skills development and the incorporation of skills, both academic and employability, into the curriculum. From an academic perspective it is about ensuring the College was really clear on what they were already doing, from an employability perspective this is where lots of the other targets come in, for example staff work experience, increasing contacts with universities and employers, building our alumni etc.

Trustees supported the idea of getting teachers to spend some time in local business – how do the College think this might be made to happen?

The Assistant Principal confirmed that last year 6 staff took part in WEX including in law firms, with the Surrey Chamber of Commerce and the NHS for example. Next year, the College hoped these opportunities would grow and more staff would take part. All staff were made aware of the opportunity and those who were interested were supported to find placements, given contact details and allowed time to participate.

Trustees asked if members of the careers department ought to do the same – perhaps they could be charged with organising time for teachers to spend in local businesses?

Management advised that the College's careers department were usually extremely busy with students. They are very proactive in networking with a large range of businesses. They also attend insight days and advisors' days. One of the team had worked in industry for over 20 years before working at Surrey County Council and then joining the college, whilst the other was previously a mental health nurse before going into careers advice. Management advised that both members of the team had therefore had experience of industry and had not spent their time as lifetime careers advisors.

In terms of SEN student achievements, Trustees queried that there was reference to 94% of students completing some or all of their qualifications. Comment was made that this was a really big span from someone that may scrape through with 1 pass, versus someone who completes all their subjects and surpasses expectations. Is it important to be able to differentiate across that spectrum or were we talking such small numbers it's not appropriate?

Management explained that it was really difficult to quantify all SEN students as they are so diverse with a hugely varying range of needs. There is more information in the Impact section on this including:

Retention for the highest need LS students is good and broadly in line with their peers.
- EHCP 80% retention and 94% pass rate
- Low contact 100% retention and 95% pass rate
- High contact 95% retention 100% achievement

	Pass rate	High grade	Retention
High contact	100%	79%	95%
Low contact	95%	51%	100%
College	97.2%	50.5%	94.7%

92% of EHCP students successfully completed all their courses in 2022-23 or moved to the next year of study. The two students who did not, withdrew from all courses.

EHCP below college level

	Pass Rate	High Grade
EHCP Students (18)	94%	44%
College	97.2%	50.5%

The Chair thanked those Trustees who had submitted questions prior to the meeting and also thanked Laura Cook, Assistant Principal for her detailed responses.

The Board **resolved:**
To approve the College Self-Assessment Report 2022/23 and the Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24.

6.	**Destination Data 2022/23** The Board received a further report from Laura Cook, Assistant Principal on the destination data for learners from 2022/23. In headline terms the data was broadly in line with previous years although more students were taking a gap year which appeared to follow a national trend linked in part to the cost of living crisis. The Board discussed negative publicity concerning universities and the cost of tuition versus the quality of the learning experience. This year 309 learners applied to University compared to 344 last year and of the 309, 84% gained their first choice and 9% gained their insurance choice 67 students gained places at Russell Group Universities (up from 61 in 2022) and the top 3 universities within a 100-mile radius that took the most students were noted as being Kingston University (29); University of Portsmouth (25) and University of Surrey (16). The Board noted that 4 students had secured a place at Cambridge University and 4 had obtained places at Oxford University. There was an increase in students choosing more local Universities so that they could remain at home and reduce accommodation costs. In terms of 2022/23 gender and ethnicity data, males were more likely to apply for an apprenticeship (14%) than females (5%) although males and females were both equal on 25% for the choice of a gap year.	

	For those choosing University, in terms of gender 56% of females choose University compared to 46% of males. In terms of choosing to go to University by ethnicity, white students were 48%; black students 55% and Asian students 63% with mixed/multiple ethnicity at 54%. The Board thanked the Assistant Principal for her report and presentation.	
7.	**Principal's Termly Report** The Board received the first report from the Principal for the academic year 2023/24. In terms of KPIs, the Principal reported that they were all looking good with overall attendance at 97.1% and retention at 100%. Enrolment at the start of term had been extremely positive with the total number of students on roll at 1,506 compared to 1385 at the same time last year. Applications for 2024/25 were currently standing at 1,353 which was a 40% increase on the same time last year. 350 interviews had already been booked as at today's date. There was approximately a 10% no show rate which was lower than in previous years. The Principal advised that it was possible that the College could apply for in-growth funding. Under last year's methodology, Colleges could be awarded in-year funding if they could evidence growth of over 7.5%. Currently the College had submitted a census number which equated to 7.5% so it was possible that in-year funding may be received but this was 'subject to (government) affordability'. Within the Principal's report, details were set out on the agreement reached by the National Joint Council for both Teachers' and Support Staff for 2023/24 which would be backdated to 1st September 2023. In terms of teachers an increase had been agreed between 6.5% and 8.44% on all main scale pay points. A similar award had been agreed for support staff. It was to be noted that there was currently only 3% government funding available for the teaching staff increase only. In terms of marketing, of particular note was the success of the recent Open Evening when over 1,500 people had attended which was a 30% increase on last year and 313 applications had been received after the event. The Chair congratulated management on the success of the event and in particular the Principal who had delivered three packed out presentations to attendees. Over 800 cars had been parked on the College's sports pitches and it had proved to be an immense logistical undertaking. The other marketing initiative highlighted related to the alumni programme and there was currently a big push on setting up an alumni section on the website to attract past students for promotional and careers purposes. In terms of capital initiatives, the Principal updated the Board on discussions with Surrey County Council concerning the possibility of having a visually impaired centre on site. Currently the feasibility of converting the dance studio into a block of 8 classrooms	

	for that purpose was being considered. The Board asked how new staff had been settling in and whether there were any staffing changes. The Principal advised that they had made a positive recruitment in IT/Computer Science st start in January 2024 to replace the HoD IT/Computer Science who was leaving at Christmas. As usual, the report also contained all the enrichment activities that had taken place (78 activities per week) together with the departmental, College and student successes, trips and visits. The Board thanked the Principal for his comprehensive termly report.	
8.	**Financial & Capital Projects Update** The Principal gave an oral summary on the College's current financials and ongoing capital projects. The CIF bid project for the heating and ventilation works had been completed over the October half term. The second project in relation to the fire suppression systems would see all the old fire doors being replaced which would have the additional further benefit of cosmetically enhancing the College. The Principal commended the work of the Finance & Estates Director for overseeing the re-suiting of all departments which had been an extremely challenging logistical exercise. New signage had also been installed throughout the College. In terms of CIF bids for 2024/25 then all bids had to be submitted by 15th December 2023 and the College were currently working with a building design consultancy (on a no-win no-fee basis) to assess the viability of two CIF bids for the replacement of the first-floor roof of W building and drainage. Management Accounts for August 2023 reflected an operating surplus of £353k which was £26k ahead of the budgeted operating surplus of £327k. September Management Accounts would be presented to the Finance & Audit Committee in a few weeks' time. The one point of note was that whilst cash flow appeared, in the first instance to be lower than anticipated, this was due to timing differences on the reimbursement of VAT by HMRC and additional funding on capital projects and building refurbishments and the timing gap between the receipt of DfE funding. Furthermore, whilst the College may not achieve a surplus position by the year end, it was anticipated that it would be closer to break even than originally forecasted.	
	GOVERNANCE	

9.	**Governance Self-Assessment Report 2021/22**	
	The Board reviewed the draft Governance Self-Assessment Report for 2022/23 and the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24.	
	In terms of the self-assessment this was included in the Trustee SAR for 2022/23 which had been prepared and already shared with Trustees. In addition, the Clerk had prepared a Board Performance Review for 2022/23. This provided a summary of the work of the Board, including some comparative data were available and set out the focus for the year ahead. It also satisfied a requirement under the Academy Trust Handbook that established trusts should include an annual assessment, including a review of the Board's composition in terms of skills, effectiveness, leadership and impact.	
	In respect of the QIP for 2023/24 as the Board had engaged an independent facilitator to complete an External Review of Governance the agreed three top recommendations flowing from the ERG effectively formed the areas for development in 2023/24.	
	As the Board had completed an ERG the self-assessment process this year was, in accordance with government guidelines, appropriate to be on a 'light touch basis'.	
	The Board welcomed the inclusion of the modes of governance document, noting that the ERG had recommended that the Board should focus on striving towards a 'generative' mode of governance.	
	The Board **approved:** **The Trustee Self-Assessment Report 2022/23, the Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24 and the Board Performance Review 2022/23.**	
10.	**Any Other Business**	
	It was noted that a link visit had been undertaken by Alastair MacAulay to Sports & Uniformed Services and his report would be circulated separately. The visit had been very insightful and it was evident that through a change in the HoD there was now a very positive and different culture within the department. There had been a development of enrichment opportunities and the formation of a rugby team which attracted a different socio-demographic.	
	Anne Middleton also confirmed that as the designated Safeguarding Trustee she had also been into College to meet with the College DSL.	
	Management left the meeting and briefly Trustees touched on the need to attract and recruit some new Trustees as following the retirement of Jonathan Miles and Mike Mulheron and the recent resignation of Andy Williams, numbers had been depleted.	
	The Chair reported that the Principal had suggested a possible new candidate who was the Deputy Head at Woking High School which could help further cement the College's links with one of its key feeder schools. Rosh Sellahewa had also proposed a contact that worked in the DfE.	
	Whilst Board members welcomed the suggestions they did urge that they wanted the	

	Board to consist of a broad cross section of Trustees and ideally the ethnicity of the Board should seek to reflect the ethnicity of both the students and the community which the College served. The Clerk advised that she would place an advert on the Inspiring Governance website and a Parent Trustee election was also being held as there was currently a vacancy for an additional Parent Trustee. To help inform the search for new candidates it was agreed that a light touch skills audit should be undertaken to ensure there was an up to date matrix of the current Trustees' skills. There were no other items of business.	
11.	**Date & Time of Next Meeting** It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 5.30pm. This was an earlier start time due to the College's Christmas production taking place later in the evening. This year's production was 'Cry-Baby' and tickets could be purchased via the College website. The meeting closed at 7.25pm.	