

WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 8th May 2024
at 6.00pm in the Conference Room W09

Present:	<p>Tim Stokes Chair</p> <p>Rosh Sellahewa</p> <p>Cullum Mitchell</p> <p>Ben Smith</p> <p>Erica Ehoru</p> <p>Ben Ramdhony</p> <p>Anne Middleton</p> <p>Gary Botha (from 6.16pm)</p> <p>Tracy Hampton</p> <p>Brett Freeman Principal</p>
In Attendance:	<p>Nuweed Razaq Deputy Principal</p> <p>Fiona Munday Finance & Estates Director</p> <p>Laura Cook Assistant Principal</p> <p>Barbara Maude Governance Professional</p>

	AGENDA DESCRIPTION	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Alastair MacAulay, Cullum Mitchell and Ben Ramdhony. Gary Botha had advised that he was enroute but had been delayed due to traffic. The apologies were all agreed.</p> <p>No Trustee or member of the senior management team declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest in any item on the agenda.</p>	
2.	<p>Introduction to the Board Meeting</p> <p>The Chair outlined the strategic intent of the meeting, which was for the Board to continue to monitor College KPIs and to focus on governance by undertaking the annual skills audit and holding an annual conversation on improving governor effectiveness.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th March 2024. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair, via the marked as signed facility on GovernorHub.</p>	

4.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>In terms of matters arising from the previous meeting, it was noted that the ‘We are Woking’ video had been circulated to Trustees. The video featured students and endorsed College values and was being used for school assemblies, Open Evenings and was on the website. Trustees asked that management relay their appreciation of the quality and content to all the staff and students who had produced the video.</p> <p>The AI software discussion proposed around possible assistance with the Subject Access Request referred to in the previous meeting had not as yet taken place.</p> <p>It was noted that the new DfE Governance Guide formed a separate agenda item for consideration.</p>	
PRINCIPAL’S REPORT		
5.	<p>The Board received the Principal’s oral update.</p> <p>The Principal advised that all KPIs were currently similar to or slightly better than at the same time last year. There were approximately 100 more students on roll at this point in time as there had been compared to the same time last year.</p> <p>Over 1,500 interviews had been held and acceptances were standing at 1,308 compared to 1,072 at the same time last year.</p> <p>In terms of actual numbers for 2024/25, the Principal advised that his best ‘guestimate’ was between 1,740 and 1,780.</p> <p>3 separate videos had been sent out to prospective students and parents and carers earlier in the day and feedback had already been extremely positive.</p> <p>Looking at the national context, the sector were concentrating on the plans that a new Labour Government could put in place. The Labour Party had indicated that they would pause and review the defunding of AGQs and had also indicated that under a Labour Government they would end the single word OFSTED judgement and bring in a report card system. In addition, the DfE from September 2024 would be offering eligible teachers working in STEM subjects the opportunity to apply for a levelling up payment of up to £6000 in an attempt to recruit and retain teachers in these subjects.</p> <p>In terms of College events taking place in the next few weeks, the Principal advised that these included the 12th June Open Evening; taster days and Year 10 assemblies.</p> <p>In terms of Health & Safety issues, there was nothing to report although a new Health & Safety Policy together with the updated First Aid Policy was due for approval later in the agenda. Trevor Freeman, Assistant Caretaker (Security) would be reducing his fulltime role down to 3 days a week as he approached retirement and the College would therefore be looking to recruit an additional site team member.</p>	

The CIF bid fire compartmentation project was underway. The bid value was approximately £1m with the College contribution being c.£300k. The College did have asbestos in the building and this was only an issue if it was disturbed. Hence, when any work was undertaken which disturbed the asbestos it then had to be professionally extracted.

Overall, once the summer projects had been undertaken, and the CIF fire compartmentation completed it was estimated that the College would retain a cash balance of £1.204k at year end.

The Principal advised the Board that unfortunately the College had been unsuccessful in the CIF bid for the main roof. Whilst this was the second unsuccessful roof bid, the College would appeal and continue to resubmit bids for this project.

The Principal reported that negotiations with Surrey County Council regarding the College becoming a hub for a Visually Impaired Unit had proved both frustrating and ultimately unsuccessful and therefore the possible conversion of the Dance Studio to accommodate the hub would not be happening this year.

It was now likely that the hall in the OWCC would be best suited for conversion to a dance studio. This would have the benefit of ensuring the performing arts department where based in one place. This would make it easier to manage the department but would require negotiation with the OWCC Trustees over the terms of the lease.

In terms of social spaces within the main site and in light of greater student numbers anticipated from September, the Board reviewed a briefing paper prepared by the Finance & Estates Director on a proposal to renovate the canteen by way of a small extension. The extension would consist of a timber framed extension to the area that currently housed the waste bins which would accommodate the dry store, office, changing room, WC and storage. As the plans did not involve moving the gas outlets all the kitchen appliances would remain in place.

The extension and internal reconfiguration would increase the serving areas from the one original servery to three (which would increase the pay points from 1 to 3 as well). It was anticipated that not only would this increase overall capacity, but also flow for both students and staff.

It was noted that the seating arrangements had been in place for 20+ years and by the installation of new and more effective seating this would also help increase capacity.

The Board noted that the timelines were scheduled to ensure the project was completed by the end of August ready for the start of the new term for 2024/25.

Project costs were not yet known but would exceed the sum of £60k and therefore required Trustee approval. It was also reported that the College were in discussions with the caterers, Caterlink concerning a possible extension to their contract in

	<p>exchange for a capital investment from them. A possible £50k contribution had been discussed which equated to £10k per year over a 5-year contract term.</p> <p>The Board queried whether the issues raised by the Student Union in their discussions with the Chair and Vice Chair over inconsistencies in pricing within the canteen had been resolved. The Principal advised that the caterers worked well with the College and they had an effective working arrangement with them. The Principal had taken the inconsistency point up with the caterers following the SU Forum meeting. The Board also challenged on whether the College should commit to the project upon the basis that the College were satisfied that they would in fact be remaining on the present site for the longer term.</p> <p>The Board discussed whether Woking Borough Council were in a position to support a possible relocation of the College to a central Woking site. There was no sense that WBC were in a position to do so and therefore the Board’s consensus was that the extension of the canteen was a worthwhile longer-term initiative.</p> <p>The Board resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To endorse their approval of the canteen redevelopment project. 2. Whilst the exact costings for the project would be brought back to the next Finance and Audit Committee meeting on 19th June 2024 if timings required it, the Board delegated authority for the Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee to approve the final costings for the project in accordance with the College’s Financial Regulations. <p>In terms of staffing, the Principal provided an update on staff resignations and the progress in making new appointments. The Board were advised that whilst it was a career progression move, the College was disappointed to be losing Emma Hobbs, Director of Enrichment and Cultural Capital who had been offered an Assistant Principal position at Farnborough College. Also, the College would be having an entirely new MFL department as due to a number of different factors, they were appointing new teachers in German, Spanish and a new French teacher was also in the process of being appointed.</p> <p>As mentioned in the previous meeting, the Principal advised there was an ongoing employment issue with an outgoing member of staff and more recently there had also been a further HR issue with a current member of staff. It was unusual for the College to have HR issues of this nature and both continued to take up a lot of management time.</p> <p>On a more positive note, the Chair of the Board reported on a highly successful awards evening which had taken place the previous evening. Ashanti Carreon, SU President had received the Trustee Award for Student of the Year and she had also been recognised by Zonta, as winner of the London Young Women in Public Affairs Award.</p>	BFR
TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT		

6.	<p>The Board received and reviewed the External Quality Review of Geography. Whilst the review had been undertaken at the time of the last meeting, the report had not been available so the Assistant Principal had provided an oral summary at the previous meeting.</p> <p>In her absence, the Principal advised that the College were delighted that the executive summary of the EQR highlighted exemplary teaching and learning within the department. It was also noted that opportunities for non-exam assessments (NEAs) were effectively embedded in scheme of learning; staff demonstrated high expectations for student success and there was a genuine care for student well-being.</p> <p>Whilst the report set out a number of approaches and practices that the College may wish to consider there was only one area highlighted for development which related to opportunities for independent learning skills to be further developed by incorporating discreet homework assignments and extension tasks. This would allow students to apply their knowledge, build on their skills and do more outside of the classroom.</p> <p>The Board welcomed the Geography EQR, commended the department and commented that the format and language used within the report had been particularly clear.</p>	
FINANCE		
7.	<p>The Board received the February and March 2024 Management Accounts, and concentrated primarily on a review of the March 2024 Management Accounts which showed an operating deficit of £254k which was a positive variance of £13k ahead of budget.</p> <p>The forecast surplus had been updated in January 2024 and the year-end position was now estimated to be (£181k). An updated forecast would be provided in the April Management Accounts.</p> <p>In terms of variances, pay expenditure was over budget due primarily to the budget assuming a 4% pay increase for all staff but the actual pay award had been 6.5% backdated to September 2023.</p> <p>There were also some variances in non-pay expenditure which included repairs and maintenance being over budget due to IT and electrical works, RAAC survey, asbestos survey and anticipated works over the summer; examination fees being slightly over budget and bought in supply cover being over budget as a result of cover being needed in Criminology and German.</p> <p>The Board resolved to approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. February 2024 Management Accounts; and 2. March 2024 Management Accounts. 	

PREMISES		
8.	<p>As this item had already been discussed as part of the Principal's report the Board reiterated their support for the canteen renovation proposal.</p> <p>Further details would come back to the next Board meeting for the Board's information so they could be kept apprised of developments.</p>	
POLICY APPROVAL		
9.	<p>Policy Review Schedule</p> <p>In accordance with the policy review schedule for the current year, the Board reviewed both the new Health & Safety Policy and the updated First Aid Policy.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Policy had been adapted using the template from the Key, which was the leading sector resource the College would be utilising from now on. In terms of the annual statistical reports that the policy outlined that should come to Trustees, it was agreed that the most appropriate timing for this would be at the last meeting of the academic year so that the reports could provide a summary of all H & S issues and events that had taken place over the course of the academic year.</p> <p>In terms of the First Aid Policy it was noted that there was one outstanding item on page 3 relating to the frequency of the student meeting their mentor which had still to be clarified. However, subject to that point, the policy was approved.</p> <p>The Chair raised the issue of the College's safety procedures and in particular lockdown following the recent incident at a school in Wales where a student and teachers had been stabbed. The Principal advised that the College followed the national recommended principles of Run, Hide and Tell. The College completed a test twice a year (usually in tutor group) so that staff and students were fully aware of the different sounding alarm that was used if there was a lockdown alert.</p> <p>As the Board were aware, management also completed disaster management exercises to effectively rehearse the College's response to a serious incident or event. Another disaster management exercise was planned for the summer term.</p> <p>The Board resolved to approve:</p> <p>1. Health & Safety Policy; and 2. First Aid Policy</p>	
GOVERNANCE		
10.	<p>Trustees had been asked prior to the meeting to complete the NGA Skills Audit for 2024/25. The NGA skills audit had been selected following consultation with the Chair of the Board and the Principal. Spare copies of the skills audit were available at the meeting. The responses would be collated and the results would be considered by the Succession Planning Working Party at its meeting in July.</p>	ALL

<p>Trustees were also reminded that Safeguarding training was required to be undertaken annually, with Prevent Training recommended to be completed every 3 years. Those Trustees who had either not completed their training or had not yet supplied evidence of having completed appropriate Safeguarding training via their employment would be contacted by the Clerk.</p> <p>The Chair introduced the subject of the current Link Trustee scheme as part of an annual conversation on the effectiveness of the Board’s governance processes. Management indicated their support for the Link Trustee Scheme as a means for Trustees to gain a greater understanding of a particular curriculum area but some Trustees felt that their visits were an additional burden on Heads of Department and queried whether the visits were adding value to their Trustee role. It was suggested that possibly Trustees would feel they could add greater value if they were linked to college departments that were more closely aligned to their particular skills set. For example, Ben Ramdhony had been linked to quality assurance as this was an area in which he considered he could share his experience and in turn learn from the College’s practices. It was therefore mutually beneficial. It was also recognised that the Link Trustee Scheme was an opportunity for Trustees to feed into the development of the new Strategic Plan. Arising from a discussion on the best way to invigorate the scheme the suggestion was made that as 4 members of SLT line managed both curriculum areas and departments that Trustees should, in pairs, be linked to either the Principal, the Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal (Curriculum & Quality) or Assistant Principal, (Support for Learning & Wellbeing). This would give Trustees a member of SLT as the direct point of contact and would also give them the opportunity to be linked to either a curriculum area or a department of their choosing. It would also enable Trustees, in consultation with the 4 members of SLT to focus on the Strategic Plan development.</p>	<p>BMA</p>
<p>A list of SLT’s responsibilities was currently being reviewed and once completed this would be circulated to Trustees so that in pairs they could be linked to a member of SLT and their respective line management responsibilities.</p> <p>The Board also discussed the appetite for holding a Trustee Day, which would be an opportunity for Trustees to come into College during a working day and the event could involve holding a Board or Strategy meeting; undertaking link visits, meeting staff informally and generally being visible to both staff and students. The current calendar of meetings included a date in January 2025 and it was proposed that this date should be the Trustee Day for 2025.</p> <p>The Clerk had prepared a summary of the changes introduced by the DfE New Governance Guide which had come into effect in March 2024. Although there were no major governance changes there were a few nuanced changes such as the recommendation that at least one Trustee on the Board should undertake cyber security training and there should be a greater focus on staff wellbeing so these were potential areas that Trustees may wish to focus on under the new Link Trustee arrangements.</p> <p>It was noted that there were no new Link Trustee Reports to receive.</p>	<p>BMA</p>

	<p>The Board reviewed the calendar of Board & Committee meetings 2024/25.</p> <p>It was noted that the Deputy Principal was in the process of finalising the College wide dates for 2024/25 and when these had been confirmed and cross referenced with the proposed Board and Committee dates they would be confirmed by the Clerk, who with Trustees agreement, would then send out calendar notifications for all of the meetings for 2024/25.</p>	BMA
11.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Board were advised that the scheduled meeting between the Chair and the Student Union had been moved to Friday 10th May at 12.40pm. This was to accommodate the Student Union who had moved their weekly meeting date to a Friday. Rosh Sellahewa, the Vice Chair was now unable to make the rescheduled date. The Chair opened the invitation to the Board to join him and Tracy Hampton confirmed that she would like to attend.</p>	
12.	<p>Date & Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>The Board noted that the next meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee Meeting would be on Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 6.00pm.</p> <p>It was further noted that the Succession Planning Group meeting had been deferred until Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 5.00pm, just before the final Board Meeting of this academic year on Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 6.00pm.</p>	