



WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of a meeting of the Woking College Board of Trustees held on
Wednesday 29th January 2025 at 2pm in W09 Conference Room

Present:

Katherine Dunleavy	
Erica Ehoró	
Charlotte Eker	
Helen Flower	
Brett Freeman	Principal
Tracy Hampton	
Anne Middleton	
Nawal Raza-Malik	
Rosh Sellahewa	Vice Chair
Tim Stokes	Chair

In Attendance: Barbara Maude Clerk to the Board of Trustees

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was confirmed the meeting was quorate. Apologies had been received from Ben Ramdhony who was unwell and Gary Botha who had prior work commitments. The apologies were agreed. No Trustee or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest in any item on the agenda.	
2.	Introduction to the Board Meeting The Chair outlined the strategic intent of the meeting, which together with the sessions held in the morning as part of the first Trustee Day, was for the Board to strategically lead on the development of the new strategic plan.	
3.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 th December 2024. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair via the 'marked as signed' facility on GovernorHub.	

4.

Matters arising

The Board noted the matters arising from the previous meeting as set out below:

Item	Action	By whom	By when	Status
4.	All remaining Trustees to complete Safeguarding training	AMI; RSE and THA	ASAP	TBC
8.	Trustee training options to be costed	Clerk	ASAP	TBC
8.	Trustees to identify their top 3 choices for SLT/Link scheme	Trustees	ASAP	Completed
8.	Link Trustee Protocol to be shared	Clerk	ASAP	Completed
10.	Access via Smart TVs	BFR	ASAP	Completed

In terms of matters still outstanding, the three remaining Trustees who had not yet completed their Safeguarding Training for the academic year 2024/25 were encouraged to do so as soon as possible.

The Clerk was currently compiling details of the various training options available in order to be able to offer a greater variety of sector specific training options in an accessible format for Trustees.

The remaining matters arising were noted as having been completed.

One discussion that had taken place at the last meeting and was reflected in the minutes centred on the number of administrative and reading days allocated last term. There remained some residual concern that the number of days could be an issue for those Year 12 students who were not ‘self-starters’ and could struggle with such a break in their timetable. The Principal advised that the LRC had remained open on the administrative days so students could come into College, if studying at home was not a viable option. However, he advised that he had heard Trustees’ comments and would take this matter back to SLT for further consideration and they would reflect on the allocation of future administrative days accordingly.

Principal’s Update

5.

The Board received an oral update from the Principal on the start of the new term.

In terms of attendance, the Principal reported that overall attendance was up at 97.1% compared to 96.6% (2024) and 97.9% (2023).

Student numbers were 1,707 and again this compared favourably to 1473 and 1371 respectively in the last two years. Retention was at 99.6% and again slightly higher than in the previous two years which had seen it at 98.5% and 98.6%.

Applications stood at 1645 which was an increase on the same time for last year; with 460 interviews completed and currently 270 acceptances received. Applications were up by over 100 compared to last year and over 400 from the year before.

In terms of acceptances, the acceptance rate was 89% and this compared well against 73% in 2023/24 and 60% in 2022/23 and appeared to be representative of a very positive attitude being exhibited towards the College.

	<p>In terms of the national picture, the Principal reported that there remained uncertainty over the Labour Government's plans regarding Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) which had been proposed to be scrapped under the previous government. Without the option of AGQs many students would be left without suitable options to gain qualifications for their future careers. The defunding of AGQs (BTECs and similar) had been paused.</p> <p>There had also been some development with regard to negotiations over pay. Strike action had taken place in some sixth form colleges (but not in academies like the College) due to the government's decision to exclude them from the £1.2 billion funding which had been made available to schools and academies to make a 5.5% pay award. A pay deal was proposed but the College could not enact that until all negotiations for teaching and support staff had been completed. The proposal was a 5.5% pay rise backdated to September 2024 which would be paid in one lump sum.</p> <p>In terms of the College's financial overview, the Management Accounts for December 2024 were available on GovernorHub and reflected a predicted deficit of (£245k).</p> <p>Looking at marketing activities, the Principal updated the Board on recent marketing activities including school liaison, College events and ongoing social media initiatives.</p> <p>In respect of the work being undertaken by the IT and Digital Strategy Team there was considerable work taking place around AI and the College was working collaboratively with other S7 Colleges over the use and range of AI.</p> <p>In terms of site and Health and Safety issues, there had been no reportable incidents. The Principal confirmed that as highlighted at the previous meeting, management had now undertaken a review of their reporting processes to ensure that his report aligned fully with any reported accidents or site issues.</p> <p>In light of the expected number of students enrolling in 2025/26 (anticipated at approximately 1,800 to 1,850) the College were in the process of submitting a bid to the ESFA for a six-classroom modular teaching block to accommodate increased numbers and help alleviate some of the pressure on space across the existing site. The costs (of approximately £750k) outlined in the bid related to refurbished units. The business case for capital support submitted to the ESFA had been included in the meeting folder for the Board meeting for Trustees information.</p> <p>Management were also looking at other options such as moving ESOL off site (as it had previously been) and reviewing how the OWCC was used to ensure maximum space utilisation.</p> <p>Trustees did discuss, whether in light of the anticipated pressure on space for the next academic year, the College could adopt an approach that students that applied from a school that had an existing sixth form may be placed lower down the criteria for acceptance. The rationale was that those students would not face losing a place in education and it may be necessary to put into place an additional filtering mechanism.</p>	
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	<p>The Principal advised that he was confident that SLT would be able to manage the situation. The College was already taking clear steps to manage student expectations and were setting out a consistent and clear message at interview. SLT monitored the situation carefully, reviewing applications and acceptances every week and analysing data by feeder schools.</p> <p>In terms of careers, of the current 700 Year 13's, 440 had applied for University. There was considerable time and energy being expended in looking at routes other than University such as apprenticeships although the one thing that held this back was the lack of availability of good quality apprenticeships. As mentioned previously, Trustees were encouraged to view the new Careers Padlet which showed the extensive variety of advice on offer, beyond just university events and information but also industry events, apprenticeships, work experience, labour market information and job opportunities.</p> <p>In respect of staffing, the Principal summarised some key staffing changes. One member of staff had been placed on the College's support process and was being monitored carefully. In terms of pastoral provision, the College were currently looking for a new SENDCo. There had been a successful recruitment of an Economics teacher. Economics teachers nationally were proving very difficult to recruit so the College were pleased with this appointment. One trainee teacher had been offered a fulltime post and there would be a new Site Manager in the form of Chris Draper who was the current Head of Learning Support. Chris was stepping down from that role to work alongside Fiona Munday, Finance Director and he would take up his new post as soon as the College had recruited a new Head of Learning Support. The College were also looking to recruit a HR Officer.</p> <p>In terms of other highlights, the Principal reported that the College had enjoyed a very successful sports year so far.</p> <p>In addition, the decision had been taken to expand the Excellence Programme and a recent focus group with some of the excellence students had seen them rate the College 8.7/10 for how well supported they felt. Feedback was that Oxbridge and Medical students would like support earlier with their statements and so this would be taken forward.</p>	
	Policy Approvals	
6.	<p>In terms of the policy review schedule then there were a number of statutory policies that required annual approval by the Board.</p> <p>Grievance Policy</p> <p>The Principal advised that the review of the Grievance Policy had been deferred until such time as a HR officer had been appointed as it would need to be restructured to take into account that appointment. As such, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to wait until an appointment had been made and the policy reviewed at that time.</p> <p>The SEND Policy, the Public Sector Equality Report and the Careers Guidance Policy had all been reviewed with only minor changes proposed.</p>	

	<p>After consideration, the Board resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the SEND Policy; 2. To approve the Public Sector Equality Duty Report (Equality Information & Objectives Statement 2024-27) 3. To approve the Careers Guidance - Progression, Careers & Work-Related Policy 	
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair advised that a complaint had been received and in these particular circumstances he had agreed with the complainant that an appeal against the outcome of the stage 2 investigation conducted by the Principal could be made to a panel of three Trustees. It was proposed that the panel of three would consist of one independent member drawn from outside the College community. None of the Trustees selected could have any prior knowledge of the complaint. As such, the Chair himself could no longer be involved. The Clerk would liaise with the remaining Trustees outside of the meeting to assess their availability to attend a Complaints Appeal Meeting.</p>	
8.	<p>Date & Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 19th March 2025 at 6pm.</p>	