



WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday 27th January 2021 at 6.30pm

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT MEETING
Via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Tim Stokes	Chair
	Rob Kemp	Vice Chair
	Jonathan Miles	
	Mike Mulheron	
	Cullum Mitchell	from 7.15pm
	Ben Smith	
	Yasmin Aslam	
	Rosh Sellahewa	
	Anne Middleton	
	Alastair Macaulay	
	Sangida Khan	Observer
	Brett Freeman	Principal
In Attendance:	Nuweed Rasaq	Deputy Principal
	Fiona Munday	Director of Finance
	Barbara Maude	Clerk to the Board

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended his best wishes to fellow Trustees for a Happy New Year. Cullum Mitchell had indicated that he would be joining the meeting a little later due to a work commitment. All other Trustees were present.</p> <p>The Chair declared that in accordance with his Register of Interests form he was employed by Woking Borough Council on a part time basis as an independent person and wished to re-state that declaration. This was in respect of the discussions that would be taking part later in the meeting with regard to potential capital development plans and ongoing negotiations with the Council over their possible involvement.</p> <p>No other Trustee or member of SLT declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest whether that interest has previously been registered and declared or not.</p>	
2.	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The Principal confirmed the strategic intent of the meeting which comprised two fundamental strategic elements – the discussion and approval of the new Strategic Plan and the consideration of site proposals which would enable growth to meet local demand and, following discussion and debate to approve the preferred site options.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Board received the open minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th December 2020. There was a one-word grammatical error on page 2, third paragraph under item 5. However, aside from the one amendment noted, the minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair. The set of confidential minutes would be circulated after the meeting. The Chair had not yet had the chance to review them and as they were for information and no action</p>	

	arose from them it was proposed that they would be approved formally at the next meeting.														
4.	<p>Matters arising To review any matters arising</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Matters arising 09.12.20</th> <th>By whom</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Lobbying progress- Re: College's capacity</td> <td>BFR/TST</td> <td>Ongoing and agenda item 6 below</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Capacity Options</td> <td>BFR</td> <td>Agenda item 6 below</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It was noted that both matters arising were due to be considered as part of the current meeting so no further follow up action was required.</p>				Matters arising 09.12.20	By whom	Status	1.	Lobbying progress- Re: College's capacity	BFR/TST	Ongoing and agenda item 6 below	2.	Capacity Options	BFR	Agenda item 6 below
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1.	Lobbying progress- Re: College's capacity	BFR/TST	Ongoing and agenda item 6 below												
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5.	<p>Principal's Update In a change to the sequencing of the agenda, it was agreed that the Finance Director would introduce item 7 before the Principal gave his oral update.</p> <p>The Finance Director advised that the College had been liaising with the newly appointed Internal Auditors, Wylie & Bisset over the audit areas that would be audited over the coming months. Wylie & Bisset had been appointed in December 2020 and in consultation with SLT, the Chair of the Board and the former Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee John Moffat they had been considering those three audit areas that would be reviewed over the balance of this academic year. The audit areas were driven by the College's Risk Register and the Finance Director confirmed that the three areas identified were business continuity and the impact of COVID 19; bursary funds; and free school meals.</p> <p>Whilst the full audit plan would go the March meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee, due to the timing of their appointment the internal auditors were keen to press on and commence the audits hence the proposal to audit the three identified areas was being relayed to the full Board for information purposes now.</p> <p>The Chair asked that the Principal relay to all College staff the Board's appreciation for their efforts and hard work during this lockdown. The Chair concurred with the Principal's view expressed in a recent all staff email that it was vital that staff remained collegiate. The concern for many was palpable as they juggled their College commitments with the needs and demands of their own children and families.</p> <p>The Principal then gave an oral update on College issues since the start of term and the 3rd national lockdown.</p> <p>As had just been noted, there was an immense amount of pressure on all staff particularly teaching staff as they balanced teaching via live or recorded options and the environment around grading had become very challenging. Ultimately teachers would be entirely responsible for grading students in the summer and therefore teachers were being encouraged not to give grades at this time but marks and diagnostic comments only. The uncertainty around whether elements of a course would be examined and if so, which element, was making matters stressful and hence the College's move to mostly diagnostic comments and marks only when required.</p> <p>During a general discussion, it was noted that some universities may move away from the reliance on graded examinations and for HE to undertake their own internal assessments, creating effectively entrance exams for universities or as an alternative simply throwing the doors open to all and allowing after the first year for a natural drop out to occur.</p> <p>Trustees asked about whether the current position was sustainable and the Principal advised that further clarification should be forthcoming after the February half term. Trustees also asked about staff sickness absence and the Principal reported that there had in fact been very little absence. Trustees also questioned about whether students had been challenged by IT</p>														

	<p>restrictions. The Principal reported that the College had given out approximately 50 of its own lap tops but under a government scheme to help students on bursaries the College had been allocated “zero” despite having almost 200 students on bursaries. The College were hopeful that another scheme recently launched would provide more resources but they were doing everything they could to meet the needs of those students who did require help with IT resources.</p> <p>In terms of other college activities, the S7 meetings were still going ahead on a virtual basis; as were extra-curricular activities such as the lunchtime lectures. There were a slightly lower number of students applying for UCAS but this was in line with the slightly smaller number of Upper Sixth Students compared to student numbers in the Lower Sixth. Both catering and cleaning contracts were out to tender, and the revised Condition Improvement Fund bid had been re-submitted. Applications for 2021/22 were currently standing at 1,400, an increase of 10% and the mid-year Self-Assessment Reviews were also taking place later in the week. Hence, management were maintaining as much normality of process as they were able.</p>	
6.	<p>Strategic Planning Draft Strategic Plan 2021</p> <p>The Principal introduced the draft Strategic Plan which had been delayed as a result of the pandemic and the resultant lockdowns but did encapsulate the guidance offered by Trustees, staff and students in various consultation meetings and workshops held over the previous months. It was also noted that the plan was a high-level strategy document and did not extend to management implementation which was set out in annual Quality Improvement Plans, Risk Management documents and Quality Assurance frameworks and processes.</p> <p>Whilst in essence broadly similar to the previous strategic plan, this document was different insofar as it reflected the growing confidence, reputation and skills of staff which now enabled the College to look to expand to meet the needs of a growing local population. The College’s aim was to grow to 1700 students by October 2025 provided appropriate accommodation could be financed.</p> <p>Arising from a general discussion, Trustees then specifically raised the following points for the Principal to consider and reflect upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position taken by the Government to attempt to roll out a system of 2 post 16 qualifications – A levels and T levels. As the College offer consisted of 40% of BTECs then the idea of those qualifications being lost was unconscionable. The College must offer courses that reflected the needs of the students and therefore Trustees felt that the College’s position should be more obviously drawn out in the new Strategic Plan; • Any practices or processes that had come out of the pandemic and would now be continued because of increased efficiency or productivity (such as the 4 academic tutoring days; S7 meetings etc which would now continue to be held online) should also be included; • The importance of ethical behaviour in corporate governance should be emphasised as it was vital that the Board communicated with the whole community with honesty, trust, transparency and fairness. • The distinction between whether the College was looking to sustain its quality or improve its quality – and whether in fact it was possible to separate the two; • Whilst the pillars of safeguarding, mental health, diversity were embedded within the Plan, whether these should be given more specific reference. • Growth – was it via natural demographic growth or was it via the College’s quality and which one was the College’s key focus. On this point the Principal said that his aim was that the College should be the institution of first choice, there was not a desire to grow for growth’s sake but to afford those that wanted to come to be able to do so. • Trustees also considered that as the College was performing so well was there actually enough aspirational challenge for SLT to be able to take it further? Was the challenge exciting enough for SLT? The Principal responded that they did not want to set targets that were so aspirational as to make them unachievable. 	

The Board agreed that in principle they approved the Strategic Plan 2021 as presented although the Principal would reflect upon the points raised and incorporate the suggestions as appropriate. Trustees in turn were asked that if they had any further comments on the draft after the meeting to simply email him and he would respond. The intention was to reach a point where the new Strategic Plan could be formally approved by the Board by June 2021 latest.

Options Paper

The Board reviewed the Options paper which set out a site update and three proposals.

The paper proposed that the College should grow in order to meet the current demand and the anticipated increase in local need over the next three to five years. Demographic trends indicated a c.30% growth in post 16 places over the next 5 years and c.40% over the next decade. This indicated the need for up to 400 additional places at the College over the next 5 years. Based on current numbers of students on roll, the College was already approximately 20 classrooms short of the required levels and therefore meeting any additional growth was clearly not going to be possible. Given the current limitations on space this was not going to be possible.

In terms of government funding possibilities there were just two options available from central government, either the Condition Improvement Fund which was largely utilised for maintenance projects; and the recently announced £83m fund for expansion funding to support providers of 16 to 19 education that are currently over-subscribed.

The Options paper sent out 4 options – the use of porta-cabins; expanding capacity through a successful bid to the Conditional Improvement Fund; the Old Woking Community Centre; and a fall-back position.

Porta-cabins

The porta cabin option was not a preferred option but it would provide 4 additional temporary classrooms and accommodate between 80 – 100 extra students. Planning permission was already in place. The Board had previously agreed to spend £260,000 on this proposal and the Board were now asked to agree a spend of up to £300,000 on this option, if required, to cover any additional costs necessary since the previous proposal was agreed in February 2019.

For clarity, it was confirmed that the area upon which they would be placed was between the top block and the social science block on an area of grass not currently used for anything.

The Board resolved:

To agree a revised College spend of £300,000 on the purchase of four porta-cabins, if this option was required.

Condition Improvement Fund

The CIF bid, submitted last year for an eight classroom block, had been re-submitted, with a lower contribution from the College from 25% to 10% plus costs already incurred which meant that in real terms the College's spend was c.17% of the total project costs.


The Board had previously agreed in December 2019 the College's contribution of 25% of the total construction costs of the project equivalent to £740k. SLT now asked that the Board agree to a spend of £650,000 on this project, with this figure incorporating the £173,152 of costs already incurred as part of the previous and now current bid.

The Board resolved:

To agree a revised College spend of £650,000 on the CIF bid for an eight classroom block, if the bid was successful.

Old Woking Community Centre

The College had very successfully utilised the OWCC over the autumn term as a social, canteen, independent study and lesson space. The College also enjoyed a very positive relationship with the OWCC Trustees. There was much support on all sides for a collaborative project and

	<p>strengthening a community asset with investment from both WBC and the College. However, the College could not apply for central government support for the development of a site that it did not own so the situation was more complicated as it would require a change in legal tenure of the building.</p> <p>Whilst, the College could simply continue to use the facilities from next September as the rooms were empty during the day, the aim was to move to a position where the OWCC was brought up to the same standard of accommodation and facilities as the College site offered. To achieve this would require significant investment hence the legal position over tenure needed to be clarified as soon as possible.</p> <p>Whilst overall costs for a partial renovation were discussed, the College's contribution was estimated to be approximately £750,000.</p> <p>The Principal confirmed that the OWCC gave the College between 4 to 6 extra classrooms but in addition also gave the option of 3 to 4 extra office spaces plus in addition, communal, canteen, performance and exam space.</p> <p>Insofar as space utilisation was concerned, Trustees questioned what in real terms it meant that the College were deemed by DfE standards to be 20 classrooms short. It was confirmed that this arose from a basic calculation of space per student and being able to viably meet the needs of students at all times. Whilst the College had increased its space utilisation from 70% to over 90% and made very good use of available space it did mean that currently for certain events such as examinations, areas of the College had to close. The College had, for example, 50 students that needed 1:1 support for exams and this placed additional pressure on available space.</p> <p>Whilst the Board were very supportive of the OWCC project and would in due course be prepared to agree a spend of the amount proposed on the project, the Board of Trustees felt that they would like to see some further and additional information on what the project would yield for the College in terms of the internal space. This would help contextualise the proposed costings. It was agreed that the provisional plans would be shared with both the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board in the first instance and then circulated to all Trustees.</p> <p>Trustees also posed the question as to should the College be successful in securing tenure of the OWCC on acceptable terms would the 8 classroom block CIF bid be dropped. The Principal confirmed that no, the CIF bid would not be dropped as the College needed to be functional and if it was to grow to between 1,500- 1,700 students the College needed to pursue both options.</p> <p>In addition, the Principal would also keep Trustees updated as to the timelines and process for submitting bid to the recently announced £83m capital expansion pot.</p>	
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The proposed areas to be audited by the new Internal Auditors, Wylie & Bisset had already been duly noted at the start of the meeting.</p> <p>There were no additional items of business. The meeting closed at 8.24pm.</p>	
8.	<p>Date & Time of Future Meetings:</p> <p>The following dates were duly noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 28th & Friday 29th January 2021 – Mid Year SARs • Wednesday 24th February 2021 at 6.30pm – OfSTED training • Wednesday 10th March 2021 at 6.30pm – Finance & Audit Committee Meeting • Wednesday 24th March 2021 at 6.30pm – Board Meeting 	
	<p>Signed:  Chair of the Board Dated: 25.3.21</p>	