

WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees of Woking College held on
Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 6.00pm in the Study Area, New Teaching Block

Present:	Gary Botha Erica Ehoru Brett Freeman Alastair MacAulay Mike Mulheron Jonathan Miles Ben Smith Tim Stokes Andy Williams	Principal Chair
In Attendance:	Fiona Chalk Nuweed Razaq Laura Cook Barbara Maude	Governance 4FE Advisor Deputy Principal Assistant Principal Clerk to the Board of Trustee

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest Apologies had been received from Anne Middleton (her daughter was unwell), Rosh Sellahewa (unwell) and Cullum Mitchell (child-care commitments). The apologies were agreed.</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> <p>The Chair welcomed to the meeting Gary Botha. Although the recommendations from the Succession Planning Working Party were scheduled to be considered later in the meeting, the Chair proposed that the Board should consider Gary’s appointment as the first substantive item.</p> <p>It was confirmed that following interview, the Succession Planning Working Party proposed the appointment of Gary Botha as a co-opted Trustee for a term of four years with immediate effect. Gary’s CV had been shared with the Board prior to the meeting and given his experience in education and his current position as Head of Business and Operations at a similar sized educational institution, the working party were unanimous in their recommendation to appoint him.</p> <p>The Board resolved: To appoint Gary Botha as a co-opted Trustee for a term of four years with immediate effect.</p>	

	<p>The Chair also welcomed to the meeting, Fiona Chalk, Governance4FE external advisor who was attending to present the findings of the External Review of Governance (ERG) that she had completed.</p>	
EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE		
<p>2.</p>	<p>Governance4FE – External Review of Governance Report</p> <p>The Board reviewed the ERG Report prepared by Fiona Chalk of Governance4FE who facilitated a discussion on the findings with the aim to identify and agree which priorities should be implemented.</p> <p>Fiona Chalk introduced the session highlighting how organisations with strong governance were statistically more efficient at generating profits, more effective at delivering products, could also generate more cashflow and were twice as resilient to operational failure.</p> <p>The session would look at the existing governance framework, how to maximise meeting effectiveness, followed by group discussions to identify the top 3 priorities in the findings report and to conclude with a session for questions and answers.</p> <p>To maximise board meeting effectiveness one of the recommendations was that there should be an annual conversation, outside of a formal board setting, between the Board and SLT to discuss the expectations of the other. What exactly were the expectations of the Board and the expectations of management? For example, this could be for the Board to engage in a respectful manner and to be tough on the topic and not the person and similarly for management to not get defensive if a tough question is posed or a Trustee challenged the thinking – they were seeking information and not justification.</p> <p>Also, to recognise that behavioural governance is as important as structural governance and compliance when it comes to delivering good and effective governance. The focus should be on interpersonal and group dynamics not on processes or practices.</p> <p>Further suggestions included taking information out of meetings to enable key conversations to take place. It should be assumed that reports have been read and to keep questions at a strategic level. Fiona Chalk fully endorsed the use of asking questions of SLT before a meeting and suggested that GovernorHub could be used as the mechanism for posing questions as all Trustees would then be able to see the question asked. Ultimately, the aim was to move the meetings towards allowing time for more dialogue, more questions for clarification and greater opportunities for Trustees to add value.</p> <p>The report also recommended that at the end of the meeting there could be a short review of effectiveness – how well had the Board practiced the art of decision-making.</p> <p>One of the further recommendations was for executive reports to be written through the lens of ‘what input do I want from Trustees, so what conversation do I want this report to generate?’ SLT should be encouraged to ask questions - what did the Board think of our assumptions; is our thinking right; what does the Board think?</p> <p>The importance of making time for dialogue was discussed because what was potentially at risk if you didn’t make room for dialogue – the fact that you gain no value and reduce trust in the boardroom.</p>	

	<p>It was important to achieve good governance that the Board moved away from being an audience and towards more collaborative oversight.</p> <p>Fiona Chalk also highlighted the need to leverage the skills and knowledge across the Boardroom. The Trustees’ talents and resources could be used for the benefit of the College and in turn help to support the College wherever the Trustee went – for example externally in any engagement with stakeholders.</p> <p>Fiona Chalk then outlined three behavioural principles for the meeting to reflect on:</p> <p>INTENT – what do we want from the governance function, what is its purpose and what are the principles on which we are going to act that will drive positive behaviours; IMPLEMENTATION – how are we going to work together in a way that reflects the culture that we are trying to achieve? How are we going to develop a review culture where we constantly strive to do better? IMPACT – what will good and effective look like? How are we going to measure it as a group and individual contributions?</p> <p>The Board discussed the fact that SLT reports often highlight improved areas but the Board wanted to share the journey on how SLT were tackling areas that needed improvement – what was the thinking behind the plans, what was the rationale? This was an area where Trustees could add value and bring their own experiences from other sectors into play.</p> <p>After the discussion groups had looked at their chosen three priorities the feedback highlighted some common themes to take forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold an annual conversation; • To use templates that facilitate better governance; • Closer alignment with what is on the agenda and how that fits with the strategic plan – it was acknowledged that there was often little reference to the Strategic Plan in what is reported to the Board <p>A Trustee expressed an element of caution that whilst the Board would clearly want to improve the quality of outcomes this was a mature Board, a Board which had supported the Principal and the Executive through the previous OfSTED and therefore it might be better to take one or two elements and look to adapt but it wasn’t necessary to change everything.</p> <p>The Principal enquired whether Fiona Chalk would be prepared, should the Board agree, to help facilitate the annual conversation, which she confirmed that was happy to do. The Chair thanked Fiona Chalk, who then left the meeting.</p>	
STANDING ITEMS		
<p>3.</p>	<p>Introduction to the Board Meeting The Chair outlined the strategic intent of the meeting which was to review the ERG, and in terms of the curriculum to review and debate the EQR Report and IQR Reports.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd March 2023. The minutes were agreed and approved for signature by the Chair. It was noted that the minutes could now be recorded as signed via an option on GovernorHub and as such this removed the need for minutes to be physically signed by hand.</p>	

<p>5.</p>	<p>Matters arising</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Matters arising 22.03.23</th> <th>By whom</th> <th>By when</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Induction process for Erica Ehoró</td> <td>BMA/SLT</td> <td>10.05.23</td> <td>Ongoing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>SU Reps to be invited to attend Board meetings</td> <td>BMA</td> <td>28.06.23</td> <td>Ongoing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Delegated authority for Chair of Board & Chair of Finance & Audit to approve additional £50k towards OWCC project.</td> <td>TST/RSE/SLT</td> <td>ASAP</td> <td>Ongoing</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It was noted that Erica Ehoró had attended for a 1:1 session with the Deputy Principal and the Assistant Principal prior to the Board meeting so the induction process was in progress.</p> <p>Student Union representatives would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board, which would be the final one of the current academic year.</p> <p>In terms of item 3, the Chair reported no decision had yet been taken by the Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee to approve an additional spend of £50k towards the completion of the OWCC project. However, there was a meeting scheduled to take place within the next few days between Trustees, SLT and Ian Tomes, Strategic Asset Manager from Woking Borough Council to obtain the assurances that the Board had requested at the last meeting. The outcome of that meeting would be considered at the next Finance and Audit Committee meeting in June 2023.</p>		Matters arising 22.03.23	By whom	By when	Status	1.	Induction process for Erica Ehoró	BMA/SLT	10.05.23	Ongoing	2.	SU Reps to be invited to attend Board meetings	BMA	28.06.23	Ongoing	3.	Delegated authority for Chair of Board & Chair of Finance & Audit to approve additional £50k towards OWCC project.	TST/RSE/SLT	ASAP	Ongoing	
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<p>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</p>																						
<p>6.</p>	<p>The Board received an oral report from the Principal.</p> <p>The College was in the middle of exam season. Attendance was good overall at 95% and retention stood at 95% compared to 92% for the same period last year when there had been a higher dropout rate.</p> <p>To date, the College had received 1,685 applications with 1,145 acceptances received so far. This was a 20% increase on the number received at the same time last year. Whilst it was undoubtedly a healthy number of acceptances it was still too early to judge what the final enrolment figures would be.</p> <p>Potentially, the College could have 900 new students in 2023/23. The re-suiting of departments would mean that the College would have larger classrooms and would therefore be able to accommodate larger class sizes, although the intention was still not to exceed 20 students per class.</p> <p>If the College recruited approximately 900/1000 students in 2023/24 the problem came in the following year if a similar number of students were recruited. Over recruitment presented as many issues as under-recruitment – for example, reputational if larger class sizes meant that the enrichment offer had to be reduced and the present levels of service and support were affected. Over recruitment would necessitate strategic discussions - but discussions of a different nature than under recruitment. In that case, the focus would be on the viability of numbers and a discussion about culture.</p> <p>There were 60+ interviews left to complete by SLT and applications continued to come in every week at the rate of approximately 10 per week.</p>																					

	<p>In terms of the national picture, it looked like students' choice would be protected at least for the short term with a likely mix of A levels, BTECs and T levels remaining on the table.</p> <p>In terms of marketing, the Principal updated the Board on recent marketing activities, including the Summer Open Evening on Wednesday 14th June; Taster Days for 6/7 local feeder schools; Welcome Days for new students; Careers Day on 27th June and taster days at Oxford for lower sixth students.</p> <p>In respect of capital projects, the OWCC was due to complete in September, with the College's part of the building due for completion on 15th July 2023 with the College ready to be able to occupy from September 2023.</p> <p>Further updates on the OWCC and both ongoing and planned CIF bids would all be provided and considered in detail at the next Finance and Audit Committee meeting in June 2023.</p> <p>In terms of staffing, the College were currently looking to fill 3 teacher vacancies.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Principal for his oral update.</p>	
TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT		
7.	<p>The Assistant Principal presented the following reports:</p> <p>Overview of CTEC & BTEC results</p> <p>The Assistant Principal presented the report which outlined the results obtained in the Applied General courses during the winter external assessment series. In headline terms, Level 3 achievement had remained stable in the last two years and Level 2 achievement had improved. HoDs had been asked to consider the implementation of their courses and whether to continue with January assessments or to move the assessments to the summer.</p> <p>Externally assessed exams are taken in CTEC and BTEC Applied General qualifications alongside internally assessed coursework units.</p> <p>The Assistant Principal reported that there had been a slight downward turn in L2 and L3 in IT and in L3 in Law. In law, the College had decided to move the Year 12 assessments to the summer in the next academic year which would allow students to have longer to fully understand the subject in order to improve Year 12 results.</p> <p>The Board questioned why IT had not improved and it was reported that it was due to staffing and in particular getting the right management balance between challenge and support. An EQR would be undertaken across IT & Computing to help that process. The results were broadly in line with the previous year but as there had been a slight dip in the recent assessments, measures were being put in place now to address any issues.</p> <p>On a separate note, the Board asked management how the College were responding to ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot. Initially the College had attempted to block it but as it was integrated into Microsoft it had not been possible to do so. Hence, teachers had been asked to be vigilant and to be on the lookout for when student may have used ChatGPT.</p>	

Essentially both staff and students required training on the appropriate use of AI and the College would now be amending student declarations in terms of the student code of conduct, the student behaviour policy and plagiarism statements.

Whilst the plagiarism software checker had AI built in, it was acknowledged that the software was not always picking up when ChatGPT had been used.

The Board discussed the experience of universities who were similarly grappling with the increased use of AI and how this may impact upon the taking of exams in the future – possibly with a move back to a traditional exam being written and PCs no longer being allowed into examinations.

The Principal advised that the S7 network would be working collaboratively to address the impact of ChatGPT.

Excellence EQR

The Assistant Principal presented the EQR Report on the Excellence Programme which had been undertaken by colleagues from other sixth form colleges to identify good practice and areas for development and suggested strategies.

The report had identified that there would be benefit in expanding the programme to a wider range of students. The College responded that they were keen to broaden the scope of the programme to include other areas such as social sciences, humanities, psychology and criminology.

The report also recommended that work should be done to re-brand the programme as it was still perceived as an elitist, Oxbridge programme and there should be a move towards making it more accessible and inclusive.

Management advised that the branding of excellence meant different things to different students so for example, excellence in Performing Arts looked different to excellence in History. Management also reiterated that the College asked teachers to consider those students who were not initially perceived as highfliers but blossomed during their time in College and those students were also encouraged to apply for the excellence programme.

The programme also had reach into schools with high achieving students from local schools coming into College to undertake taster days or specific activities such as the recent event of Girls in STEM – (known as the STEMinists) for year 10 students which encouraged and supported them to take STEM subjects.

It was acknowledged that many students who took part in the excellence programme were those students who were also undertaking a lot of enrichment activities so attendance could become an issue. There was also the overlap between the EPQ and the excellence programme and it had been suggested, within the report, that some consideration should be given to the timing of the EPQ in relation to the excellence programme.

Sport IQR

The Board reviewed the IQR on Sport and Uniformed Services. The report had been prepared by Terry Wilkes, Director of Learning and Teaching Innovation and Arrim Rafiq, Head of Vocational Business. The IQR had been triggered by a drop in results and the purpose of the IQR was threefold: to address how the department could raise the aspirations of sports students (notably the pace and pitch of vocational lessons); how they could increase NCFE Level 3 student outcomes (with a focus on risk tracking and APPLE support so both staff and students know exactly where

	<p>they were at) and how they could increase the percentage of High Grade students (targeted M to D specific workshops).</p> <p>One of the additional recommendations was aimed at improving the management skills of the HoD including increased face-to-face communication with the team and a round up email sent on a Monday morning to ensure clear communication across the department. Management confirmed that support had been provided to the HoD who was fully aware that results needed to improve.</p> <p>Student Focus Group Feedback – oral summary</p> <p>The Assistant Principal gave an oral summary of the feedback from the first student focus group held in March which had centred on preparation for exams and revision skills.</p> <p>Students had praised the teaching staff, citing that there was a strong relationship between staff and students. They had also welcomed the advice on how to revise for specific subjects; the revision channel on Teams; 1:1 classroom feedback; and (surprisingly) students had also been considerably supportive of the use of surprise mini tests.</p> <p>The focus group had also discussed ethnic diversity and the feedback was that students from all backgrounds felt included and supported. However, they did respond that the Black History month should be reviewed and management advised that this would be looked at again. Students would also welcome a culture day.</p>	
FINANCE		
8.	<p>February 2023 and March 2023 Management Accounts</p> <p>The Board reviewed both the February and March Management Accounts. In the absence of the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee the Principal advised that he would take any questions.</p> <p>The Board concentrated primarily on the March 2023 Accounts which showed an operating surplus of £282k which was £101k ahead of budget. This was largely due to unbudgeted income in the form of an energy efficiency grant of £70k and an unexpected reimbursement of £14k from the insurance company in terms of the cyber-attack.</p> <p>In respect of the main variables then these were noted as energy costs; pay expenditure; technology costs (linked to licences) and re-suiting costs.</p> <p>Management also reported that the School Resource Management Adviser had completed her report which had been broadly positive and the report would be presented to the forthcoming Finance and Audit Committee. SRMA's were accredited sector experts that provided peer to peer advice on using revenue and capital resources to deliver the best possible educational outcomes.</p> <p>Whilst the College were currently looking financially secure, with increasing utility bills and if unfunded staff pay rises continued then the years ahead would be much more challenging.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee had asked the Chair of the Board to express, in his absence, his thanks to the Finance Director for her work in the monitoring of all the estates projects, her oversight and control of the College finances and her clarity of reporting.</p> <p>The Board resolved:</p>	

	To approve the February 2023 & March 2023 Management Accounts.	
	GOVERNANCE	
9.	<p>The Board received an oral summary of the items discussed by the Succession Planning Working Group meeting which had taken place before the main Board meeting.</p> <p>As already actioned earlier in the meeting, the Working Party had recommended the appointment of Gary Botha as a co-opted Trustee for a term of four years with immediate effect.</p> <p>The Working Party had also endorsed the re-appointment of Tim Stokes for a further period of two years with effect from 1st September 2023. Tim had originally been appointed by the Members and as such his re-appointment was technically a members' re-appointment and their approval via, a written resolution, would be sought.</p> <p>Sadly, both Jonathan Miles & Mike Mulheron were due to be stepping down as at 31.08.23 so the next meeting would be their last as Trustees of the College.</p> <p>In terms of the recently completed Skills Audit and looking ahead for 2023/24 and the recruitment of new Trustees the Working Party had agreed that the skills of new candidates should be aligned more closely with the Strategic Plan and to achieve that it would be preferable to consider targeting specifically educationalists – those candidates that had educational skills and experience that could help the College achieve its strategic aim of growing to a College of 1,600 students. It had been proposed that an exploration with local feeder schools would be a good first step.</p> <p>The ERG had also suggested that the Board should have a defined Succession Planning Template and so a model template had been shared with the Working Group. It had also been suggested that in light of Jonathan Miles stepping down the role of Vice Chair would be vacant and therefore expressions of interest should be sought from all Trustees as to whether they would wish to put themselves forward as VC and the template could then be completed.</p> <p>In terms of the Link Trustee Scheme, the Board considered that it should reflect on the scheme at the next meeting. There was not sufficient time to review the viability of the scheme now but there were several references to the scheme within the ERG, and it was agreed to include it as a separate agenda item at the next meeting to gauge how best to utilise the scheme going forward.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the Safeguarding Designated Trustee visit had been deferred so this had now been rescheduled and the Trustee Safeguarding Report would be presented at the next Board meeting. It was noted that no additional Link Trustee Visits had taken place since the last meeting.</p> <p>After review, the Board resolved: To approve the Calendar of Board & Committee Meetings for 2023/24.</p>	<p>BMA</p> <p>BMA</p>
10.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There were no other items of business.</p>	

11.	Date & Time of Next Meetings It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee Meeting would take place on Thursday 15 th June 2023. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 28 th June 2023 at 6pm.	
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