

WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES Minutes of a Board Meeting held on Wednesday 9th November 2022 at 6.00pm Staff Room

Present: Tim Stokes Chair

Jonathan Miles Rosh Sellahewa Alastair MacAulay Anne Middleton Mike Mulheron

Cullum Mitchell Ben Smith Andy Williams

Brett Freeman Principal

In Attendance: Nuweed Razaq Deputy Principal

Laura Cook Assistant Principal Barbara Maude Clerk to the Board

Vice Chair

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest No apologies had been received as all Trustees were present. 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 The Chair extended his congratulations to the Principal, SLT and all teaching and support staff on the recent OfSTED inspection which had seen the College graded Outstanding in every single category. It was a fantastic and well-deserved achievement. The Board looked forward to hearing further about how the College planned to use this achievement in future marketing plans.	
	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 2021/222 and an examination of the Quality Improvement Plan for 2022/23.	
3.	Minutes of the Previous Meetings The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 th September 2022. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair.	

4. Matters arising

There were no substantive matters arising from the previous meeting.

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

5. College Self-Assessment Report 2021/22 & Quality Improvement Plan 2022/23

The Board reviewed the College's Self-Assessment Report for 2021/22 concentrating on the College's key strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, the Board also examined the College's QIP for 2022/23 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 had 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?

A SOL is a scheme of learning, it is how teachers plan teaching for the year as a whole, including taught curriculum, assessment, incorporating skills such as employability, literacy and numeracy as well as British Values. They are generally reviewed annually, and it represented the what, when, how of teaching.

It had been noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of students taking up enrichments, which represented good news but did SLT know why?

Developing learners' cultural capital and wider learning beyond the curriculum has been a key strategic focus are for the College for the past few years. The increase in student engagement has been down to significant investment from the College. The appointment of Emma Hobbs into the role of Associate Director had been fantastic, and she has led on the development of enrichments, promoted them and developed the Woking Way programme which is now integral to the College. We have also invested in staffing as the College has grown to enable enrichments to be incorporated into staff directed time.

In terms of the Bereavement group, Trustees asked whether this could be expanded to include support for students experiencing parental relationship breakdown, which can also affect a student's mental health and wellbeing.

In response, the Assistant Principal advised that the bereavement group was specifically for students who had lost a loved one so it wouldn't be appropriate to include students with other mental health or family issues. However, the College did have an anxiety group for students suffering with anxiety and there were specific wellbeing activities aimed at these students such as the Student wellbeing week, My Wellbeing Matters for students exploring different monthly themes, monthly wellbeing newsletter, creativity competition, sunflower growing, lunchtime films, wellbeing videos, mindful stitching

and wellbeing pop-ups in the canteen. Counselling is available to students and Tess Ledingham, Head of Student Wellbeing also sees students for 1:1 support.

Trustees challenged on how the College would both ensure and evidence that staff wellbeing is considered during all large-scale College wide decision-making activities.

In decisions made by the Executive Team or the Curriculum Operations Group (COG), the College ensured that Helena Clarke, Assistant Principal attended both meetings as she had responsibility for staff wellbeing. Whenever the College made decisions, it always referred back to the impact on workload and how this could be minimised. Recently, the College had set up a staff wellbeing working party and had made both a physical suggestion box and an online suggestion box. Something management had realised they needed to develop was a greater level of communication with staff about the decisions they made that impacted on staff wellbeing. It was key that that staff knew and were aware of the rationale for such decisions. For example, management had scheduled all lesson observations into the second half term, reducing the time period to 7 weeks for teaching staff to aid their wellbeing but it was acknowledged that in hindsight this had perhaps not been appropriately conveyed at the time.

Following on from this point, Trustees had also queried whether there was any way of evidencing the regular review of staff workload to enhance wellbeing and promote work-life balance.

The Assistant Principal advised that this would come through the staff wellbeing working party. Upward feedback came through professional review, but management also considered that they had a very open relationship with staff who did come and speak to them about issues. Management had an open-door policy with staff and staff who felt overwhelmed would come and tell them.

In respect of working towards ISO27001 Compliance, Trustees queried whether all of the investments associated with these actions were included in the budget and what were the consequences of not achieving this standard.

The Board were advised that ISO27001 was an international Information Security Standard which provided a framework for implementing an information security management system (ISMS). It helped address the three dimensions of information security – confidentiality, integrity and availability.

Following both the cyber incident and significant staffing issues in the IT Support Team, the College's priorities last year were to keep the department functioning and to rebuild the network to the required level. The College was now starting to move to development stage and will be launching a new Digital Strategy with SLT at the December away day. This will incorporate the plan for the next few years and will include Cyber Essentials and ISO27001.

Trustees questioned on the College's plans to further reduce use of paper for administrative tasks where possible. Did the College have the optimum balance of paper/non paper in student work?

The Assistant Principal advised that this really depended on the nature of the course. Some courses are already primarily delivered paperless with all resources online and work completed and submitted online. Others, in particular A Levels courses, still required students to handwrite their exams. As a result, students needed to be working on paper as fast handwriting was a skill they needed to develop. The College had moved to online textbooks in some courses and the use of Teams has enabled more resources to be moved online. The College would not be able to move fully online until the exam boards moved to that format.

However, there were a lot of College activities that had moved fully online and where no longer paper based such as the organisation of trips and excursions.

In terms of the range of activities and events available, Trustees challenged on whether there was evidence to show what percentage of students took up these opportunities.

The Assistant Principal advised that that the College could confirm that 100% of students took part in enrichments throughout the year. 73% of Year 12 students last year took part in enrichment afternoon. Some students would have taken part in more than one enrichment or event throughout the year. Greater detail could be found at department level. Management considered that in comparison to other colleges, Woking College students undertook much more in the way of enrichment opportunities.

Trustees had asked whether the small percentage of parents who were not satisfied with the College's support for their child's safety and wellbeing or access to extracurricular activities gave any reasons or comments which should be a cause for concern?

The Assistant Principal advised that unfortunately they did not leave a comment to say why they were not satisfied. Parent surveys were completed anonymously so there was no mechanism for being able to ask parents for further clarification.

While the previous section on Strengths noted the excellent engagement in enrichment activities, it does not mention any participation in Sport related enrichment activities. Trustees asked if this was an area for development with the Link Trustee for PE saying that this did not tally with his understanding of the offer.

The Assistant Principal acknowledged that on reflection whilst there were a considerable number of sport enrichments available including football, basketball, badminton, gym sessions as well as the inaugural S7 Olympics that took place last year the section did not accurately reflect this. It was agreed she would amend the section to reflect the strength of sport enrichment.

In terms of Leadership and Management, Trustees posed the question whether the 13% of staff who felt that best practice was not effectively shared among colleagues have any suggestions or comments that would improve the situation?

The Assistant Principal advised that 2 comments had come back from staff on this point.

As a result, there would be more of a focus on Walk-thrus, perhaps with staff choosing fewer of them but focusing much more on the one they chose (and tying SBP even more closely to it). This has been actioned this year.

Also, comments had reflected that staff needed more time dedicated to sharing best practice (SBP) within departments. College wide SBP was not always effective. More time needs to be given to department meetings so that pedagogy can be discussed at length. This had also been actioned this year.

"To what extent do leaders and managers have high ambitions for all learners (including those who are difficult to engage") and Trustees asked where this was addressed?

The Assistant Principal advised that high ambitions would be reflected through the quality assurance, professional review, performance management processes and evidenced in the results. However, it was accepted that this could be more explicit so she would add in additional information.

Looking at the Quality Improvement Plan, the following questions had been asked:

Item 6.4 addresses the bereavement service. Has consideration been given to other events arising out of the economic situation where students may need support, such as where parents lose their jobs or otherwise become financially challenged?

Management responded that this is something at the forefront of their minds. Financial assistance is given through the College bursary, which learners are encouraged to apply for. Even when they do not meet the criteria for the bursary financial support is often provided – it is the College's intention that no learner should miss out on anything due to lack of finances. The College provide learners who are struggling with wellbeing packages, including basic toiletries and stationery as well as FSM, occasionally the College would even provide learners with sandwiches to take home for the weekend.

Item 11. There are a couple of items here which had a target completion date of September 22. Could you explain what this means – has the target been missed and if so what happens next?

The QIP is always drafted in the summer term, ready to hit the ground running in September. It is updated after results come in. Management confirmed that the College didn't wait until after the SAR is submitted to get to work on targets. Therefore, the September targets will have already been achieved, indeed management had already had the first review of the QIP and lots of progress has been made across the board to achieving all targets already.

As there has not been an over-recruitment of students this year, is item (12.2 to develop contingency plans for the over recruitment of students) now otiose, or is it a recurrent item each year?

The College never knew how many students would walk through the door in

September. Whilst the College had not over recruited this year, the target was now not relevant, but the planning was in place. It will remain on the QIP as applications are looking very healthy and planning may be needed for next September.

Item 13. If ISO27001 compliance is an important metric, should it not have a target date to be achieved? Many of the other items have missed their targets or are described as ongoing. What reporting is there to ensure that appropriate progress is being made towards the various objectives?

As mentioned earlier our cyber incident and significant staffing issues in the IT Support Team, our priorities last year were to keep the department functioning and to rebuild the network to the required level. The College was now starting to move to development stage and will be launching our new Digital Strategy with SLT in our December away day. This will incorporate the plan for the next few years and will include Cyber Essentials and ISO27001.

The Assistant Principal advised that the copy of the QIP in front of the Board was as it will be sent to Ofsted in December. The College did not supply Ofsted with a review, this is for the College's purposes. As mentioned, much work has gone into meeting each of the QIP targets and SLT meet to discuss progress. The Assistant Principal had an updated QIP with review that she was happy to share if Trustees were interested but the main QIP review for Trustees came later in the academic year.

Item 14. The College aims to be net zero by 2030. How will we know when we have achieved this and how do we identify what further measures could be taken to get there?

The target is to explore cost effective ways to become net zero by 2030. In relation to knowing how the College would have achieved this, this comes under the cost-effective umbrella because it is actually very costly to commission a report to find out (BHASVIC spent £30000 on their report) and management would rather invest that money into measures to reduce the carbon output. Much of this is around our buildings e.g. window replacement, solar panels, LED lights but they were also looking at carbon offsetting for residential trips and reducing paper. Helena Clarke and Terry Wilks had both joined an S7 group looking at sustainability.

In discussions on this objective, the Board considered that the College should strive to be "as close to net zero by 2030". Whilst the College needed to be aspirational it also had to be realistic and it was felt that the language should be tempered.

In terms of L3 applied and L2, ESOL etc – did we or do we ever make changes to our A Level provision – subjects, boards, specs – if so why? Why not?

The Assistant Principal confirmed that this year A Level Art changed from Edexcel to AQA. Whilst the boards are very similar the grades are less determined by the essay for AQA than Edexcel and also that Pearson as an exam board can be difficult to work with.

Other courses change units within specifications for example Sociology are no longer

delivering the family unit because it's uninspiring and have replaced it with the culture and identity unit which is more synoptic and easier to embed into the second year in terms of revision alongside the crime and beliefs units.

The College were no longer offering Italian and Latin as these subjects became too small to be viable. No applications to study Italian had been received at all.

Topics for WE18YOSK – how do we decide on the content of this? How regularly is this reviewed? Is it flexible enough to encapsulate current trends or needs in the community?

This is reviewed annually and is very flexible. Topics can be added in as and when they occur. For example, last year Level 2 looked at COP26, the year before was black lives matters.

Impact – there were three vocational courses listed as having students not making enough progress – were there specific reasons for this?

The Assistant Principal confirmed the following:

- Sociology, the Head of Department (HoD)/teacher had been on long term sick, and whilst stable cover had been sourced, they were not unfortunately up to College standards. This had really shown the impact and importance of good leadership at middle manager level;
- Philosophy this had proved a challenge but new staff were in place;
- L3 CTEC Diploma Health and Social Care HoD/teacher had been on long term sick, plus another teacher left in November, there had been difficulties in finding supply staff and the team had felt overwhelmed; and
- L3 NCFE Diploma and Certificate Sport new HoD in place, lack of challenge/aspiration in the department.

In terms of L3 NCFE Sport, the Board discussed this in detail. There had been a lack of challenge in lessons and following a robust SAR meeting, there would be an IQR undertaken after the February half term. The Link Trustee for PE asked if there was anything specific he should be doing and was advised by management that he should continue to look for aspiration and challenge.

It was noted that A Level PE was strong, taught by 2 specific members of staff and it was just L3 NCFE Diploma and Certificate in Sport that was a concern.

Interested to know more about transferability of skills – is this a major focus? And is it possible to get a more diverse range of employers?

Transferable soft skill development is embedded into all SOLs across the curriculum. It's slightly different in each course, due to the nature of what they might be doing, for example, teamwork might look different in sport compared to maths, but it is evidenced in lesson observations and learning walks. This is just an example of some of the employers we work with: Thorpe Park, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Sky, Environmental Health Agency, Invotra, Gordon Ramsey, Waterbear Studios, Ultimate

Coaching, Global Pharmaceutical, Google, Dreaming Fish, NEP, British Transport Police, Team Medic, Surrey FA, Dentist, DJ, Paramedic, ceramics artist and we have close links with the CEO of the Surrey Chamber of Commerce.

The Board also discussed the importance of teachers experiencing the world of work outside of the classroom. It was not a criticism, but management advised that some business teachers had never worked in business and teachers needed to talk to employers about the skills they needed to teach students. The College were aware of this and were attempting to address it.

Criteria for SLT observing 98% as good/ excellent

All teaching staff are observed by SLT in the first term and again by their HoD in the spring term. Observations are unannounced and ungraded. Following the observations feedback is given to the teacher and developmental targets set. There are two routes, continuous development (for good/excellent lessons) and support (where issue have been identified). Observations consider progress of learners in the lesson and observers will consider the following: Management of Learning, Strategies and Resources, Engagement and Motivation, Meeting Individual Needs, Assessment for Learning, Development of skills, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Welfare. All observers have received training in lesson observation and joint lesson observations are carried out for quality control. The standard of teaching and learning at the college is exemplary across the board.

The Board also discussed that if you were at the top of your game in terms of educational teaching, should the College look at other sectors and whether non-educational teaching/coaching could push performance even higher? The possibility of the College and Chelsea FC (via Trustee, Ben Smith) learning from each other was discussed and it was agreed to further explore this suggestion outside of the meeting.

What was the participation rate of the parent survey?

The parent survey is sent to second year leavers in September. We received almost 100 responses, which is not as high as we would like. It was sent twice.

Why is the needs improvement section so short here as the expectation is the focus would be on highlighting the weaknesses as the vehicle for improvement?

Whilst the Assistant Principal agreed that considering weakness was the way to improve, it was important to remember that this was a document produced primarily to send to Ofsted. The 12-page quality improvement plan demonstrated that the College was not complacent and was continually striving for improvement. The recent Ofsted feedback was that they could not find any threads to pull – they could not find areas of weakness.

Could these numbers be explained in relation to previous years/ benchmark?

There is a reading guide on page 5 where data and 3-year trends are identified in evidence 21/22 data will be the final figure and denoted in bold. National average figures are shown in brackets. GCSE English High Grades: 48%, 54%, 57% (NA 32% sixth form colleges). For destinations data the previous year's data was in brackets.

Column heading 'area needing improvement': point 1 to 'remain at the forefront of innovative organisation of......'. As actions we are going to 'continue', 'further develop' etc, if we are not innovative in this area, then the theme for this section might have been 'how to become innovative, why and what this means' How does the College identify innovation in education generally?

The wording here is carefully chosen to reflect that the College is innovative despite the themes being similar to the previous year. For example, with CPD we are now in the second year of Walkthrus, other schools and Colleges are only just investigating the concept and are a long way from having it embedded as CPD. Our business development group is now two years old, other College's don't even have this on their radar (despite the skills agenda for non-academies).

The College should explore how to exploit its charitable status and proactively seek to raise funds through Trusts, Grants and Foundations – there are many in the field of education. As funding comes under pressure, we should look at this area.

This is something that the Principal and the Finance Director keep a close eye on. There are actually very few that the College can apply for when they come up, due to the stringent application criteria, for example, extremely high levels of deprivation.

The Board thanked the Assistant Principal for her detailed responses to the questions posed before the meeting. The format enabled the Board, both individually and collectively to challenge, test and understand the SAR and QIP in much greater detail.

The Board **approved**:

The College's Self-Assessment Report 2021/22 and the Quality Improvement Plan 2022/23.

6. Destination Data 2021/22

The Board received a report from Laura Cook, Assistant Principal on the destination data for learners from 2021/22. In headline terms the data was broadly in line with previous years. In addition, following analysis, student destination by protected groups was also similar to previous years.

Of those students applying for HE courses, 84% gained their first choice (86% in 2021) and 4% gained their insurance choice (4% in 2021).

61 students gained places at Russell Group Universities (up from 53 in 2021) and the top 3 universities within a 100-mile radius that took the most students were noted as being University of Surrey (26), Kingston University (24), and the University of Portsmouth (20). The Board noted that 8 students had secured a place at Cambridge University and 2 had obtained places at Oxford University.

In terms of gender, males were more likely to apply for an apprenticeship, whilst females were more likely to take a gap year.

The gap had widened between those students whose parents had been to University

compared to those students whose parents had not been to University. However, this could well revert next year. It was acknowledged that many students didn't actually know if their parents had been to University.

The Board again thanked the Assistant Principal for her report and presentation.

7. College Briefing Update

The Board received an oral cross-College update from Brett Freeman, Principal.

In terms of KPIs, the Principal reported that they were all looking good with attendance at 95%, known attendance at 99% and retention at 99%.

To date, the College had received 1,010 applications which was 30% up on the same time last year. 250 interviews had been completed with three more interview evenings scheduled. There had been 60+ acceptances for 2023/24 already received.

Enrolment at the start of term had been disappointing. The total students enrolled last year were 1,460 and this year there were 1,414 which represented approximately £380k less funding than last year.

Whilst this had been an initial cause for concern, the Principal advised that following conversations with the ESFA, the recent OfSTED inspection, the new teaching block and OWCC projects, strong summer examination results and the level of interest of applications for next year he felt that the College was in a strong position.

Trustees asked if he had any sense of why a number of students hadn't come and he felt that some had stayed at schools that had their own Sixth Form. This was possibly due to post Covid trepidation.

The Principal also reported that energy costs were increasing with costs expected to go from £150k to £345k. There had been a productive meeting with the ESFA with himself, the Finance Director, the Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee.

In terms of the Management Accounts, accounts for August, September and October would be reviewed at the next Finance & Audit Committee meeting.

Next year the College would receive less funding due to the lower student numbers but may in fact get more students in through the door. It would be a challenge, but SLT considered that they could cope with one fallow year.

In terms of the recent OfSTED inspection, as Board members already knew, the College had been graded Outstanding in every single category with feedback that it was the most secure Grade 1 the inspection team had ever given. This was from a team that had inspected other S7 Colleges, some of whom had been downgraded from Outstanding to Grade 2. The final OfSTED report should be available in approximately 2 weeks and it would then be in the public domain.

It was considered that the Outstanding grade would impact positively on the College's conversion rate and the Board discussed how this could be used in media and publicity campaigns.

The Principal commended the work of the Deputy Principal, who had been the College's nominee throughout the inspection. The Deputy Principal had set the scene for a positive inspection by the provision and availability of clear data which the inspectors themselves had commended.

On other matters, the Principal advised that the College had approximately 2,500 people attend the recent Open Evening. Industrial action could well be on the way although the College was not unionised. Staff had received a 3% pay award backdated to September 2022. There were no reportable health and safety issues and in his termly report, which would be presented at the December Board meeting, he would be giving full details of all the trips and events that had taken place in the first term.

Mike Mulheron left the meeting at 7.30pm.

8. Financial & Capital Projects Update

The Principal gave a summary of the ongoing capital projects.

In terms of the new teaching block the works were progressing in accordance with the contract programme and the project completion date of 4th December 2022 remained on target. There was a low-key opening event planned for 5th December and a tour was on offer for those Trustees attending the Finance and Audit Committee meeting on 23rd November.

Additional works which would be undertaken as part of the project included the resurfacing of certain areas within the College site, adding a new tennis/netball court, a half-size basketball court and a linked intruder alarm system.

The overall spend was as anticipated, although it had crept up slightly due to professional fees incurred prior to May 2021 which had been subsequently excluded by the ESFA. However, monies spent elsewhere had enabled 84% of the spend to be recovered. This had already been well documented in both Board and Finance & Audit Committee minutes.

The OWCC project had started and was being managed by WBC. The Trustees of the OWCC had been successful in obtaining a £900k award of additional funding from Your Fund Surrey for environmentally sustainable initiatives. This meant that the OWCC building would now benefit from all the doors and windows being replaced, improved drainage, air source heat pumps and an enhanced exterior.

In terms of CIF bids, then the windows project had been completed with MCS having completed the full window replacement on the Main Block, Health and Social Block.

In respect of the heating and ventilation CIF bid new radiators had been installed in those rooms where windows had been replaced as part of the Window CIF bid. The

tender package for the upgrade of the pipework and remaining radiators was currently being finalised and will be issued for tender in November 2022.

In terms of CIF bids for 2023/24 the deadline was noon on 7th December 2022. The College had engaged a building design consultancy on a no-win no-fee basis to assess the viability of two CIF bids to replace the roof on the Main Block and the upgrade of the College's fire suppression system and to replace all fire doors to ensure they meet current regulations.

GOVERNANCE

9. Governance Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

The Board reviewed the draft Governance Self-Assessment Report for 2021/22 and the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2022/23.

The Clerk thanked those Trustees who had completed and returned the responses to the RAG rated NGA Self-Assessment proforma. Feedback would be collated and a summary provided. However, pleasingly it didn't appear from the responses received so far as if there were many governance areas identified as requiring improvement. So, taking a slightly different approach, it was proposed that the Trustee QIP should be aligned with the College's QIP for Leadership and Management. This would ensure that as a Board, Trustees would be more closely monitoring the areas already identified by management as requiring improvement.

In terms of the self-assessment this was included in the Trustee SAR for 2021/22 which had been prepared and already shared with Trustees. In addition, the Clerk had prepared a Board Performance Review for 2021/22. 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.

The Clerk also advised that the College had commissioned a full external review of governance undertaken by Fiona Chalk of Governance4FE. She will be attending the March 2023 Board meeting to observe and will then speak to each Trustee individually. She will also complete the equivalent of an audit of governance processes and then present her findings to the May 2023 Board meeting.

The Board approved:

The Trustee Self-Assessment Report 2021/22, the Quality Improvement Plan 2022/23 and the Board Performance Review 2021/22.

10. Any Other Business

The Chair of the Board reiterated his congratulations to all College staff on the recent Outstanding OfSTED inspection.

	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 7 th December 2022 at 5.15pm – this was an earlier start time due to the College's Christmas production taking place later in the evening.	