

**WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Company Number 10821223**

TELEPHONE CONFERENCE

Minutes of a meeting held by telephone conference on Wednesday 25th March 2020 starting at 6.30pm.

Present:	Gaynor Mather	Chair
	Tim Stokes	Vice Chair
	Liz Cussans	
	Yasmin Aslam	
	Jonathan Miles	
	Rob Kemp	
	Mike Mulheron	
	Ben Smith	
	John Moffat	
	Brett Freeman	Principal
 In Attendance:	Nuweed Rasaq	Deputy Principal
	Karen Foan	Assistant Principal
	Sangida Khan	Observer
	Barbara Maude	Clerk to the Board of Trustees

Item	Agenda Description	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting and Trustees and management in turn introduced themselves so that everyone knew who was present. The meeting was being held by telephone conference in light of the COVID 19 pandemic and the resultant closure of the College and social distancing provisions.</p> <p>It was also confirmed that in accordance with both the Articles of Association and the Board’s Standing Orders, the Board could hold a meeting by video, telephone conferencing or any other electronic means, provided that those participating in the meeting could hear and communicate with each other throughout the meeting.</p> <p>All present confirmed that they could hear and were able to communicate.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cullum Mitchell, and the apology was agreed.</p> <p>No member present declared an interest in any item on the agenda.</p>	

2.	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The Principal confirmed that the strategic intent of the meeting; the proposed implementation and intended impact were all dominated by COVID 19.</p>																					
3.	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th February 2020. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair.</p>																					
4.	<p>Matters arising</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="236 600 1230 786"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Matter</th> <th>By Whom</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Disaster Recovery Feedback</td> <td>BFR</td> <td>Item 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>IT System Overview</td> <td>BFR</td> <td>July 2020 meeting</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Revised Calendar of Meetings</td> <td>BMA</td> <td>July 2020 meeting</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Update on progress of Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator</td> <td>BFR</td> <td>December 2020 meeting</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Board reviewed those matters arising, and as noted in the table above, the Disaster Recovery Feedback formed a separate agenda item and the remaining three matters were proposed to be deferred to subsequent meetings. The Board were happy to defer items, 2,3 and 4 accordingly.</p>		Matter	By Whom	Status	1	Disaster Recovery Feedback	BFR	Item 5	2	IT System Overview	BFR	July 2020 meeting	3	Revised Calendar of Meetings	BMA	July 2020 meeting	4	Update on progress of Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator	BFR	December 2020 meeting	
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1	Disaster Recovery Feedback	BFR	Item 5																			
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	<p>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</p>																					
5.	<p>The Board received an oral update from the Principal which firstly summarised an update on College KPIs and provided an overview of College issues and secondly gave a detailed account of the College's response to COVID 19.</p> <p>In terms of the College's KPIs, it was noted that in terms of both attendance and retention then the data was in line with the same time last year. Applications were up (1396 compared to 1295 in 2019). This figure included 70 Level 2 students but did indicate that there were approximately 40 more applications received than at the same time last year. The College had interviewed over 1,100 students, with 838 acceptances, which again was an increase on the figure for 2019.</p> <p>In respect of College issues then the advice received to date was that funding and allocations would remain the same during the closure as if the College was still open. Liabilities to suppliers would continue to accrue. Pay negotiations had been ongoing and it appeared that a 2 year pay deal was close to being proposed, which would have been backdated to September and consisted of three small increments. However, those negotiations were now on hold.</p> <p>All S7 events had been postponed.</p> <p>The Principal had met with the Principals of Godalming and Esther to share ideas and practices in light of the pandemic and this had been a useful exercise.</p>																					

In terms of the 3G pitch then enough work had commenced to satisfy the planning requirements. Certain trees had been taken down but as there were signs of birds nesting in others then the work had had to stop in any event.

The Principal also reported that he had continued to have dialogue with the Old Woking Community Centre and relationships remained positive.

The results of the CIF bid were due at the end of March/beginning of April but in all likelihood, this would be delayed.

Turning to staff issues, the Principal first commended all staff who had all been magnificent and were fast adapting to a new “normal”.

In terms of staff changes, then four members of staff were leaving at the end of the academic year and one would be going on maternity leave. The College planned to use skype to interview all new applicants and whilst it would not be possible to observe potential staff teaching, if any applicant once appointed was not of a sufficiently high standard then the College were confident that it had robust probationary processes in place to respond to any such issue.

In respect of COVID 19, the Principal outlined some of the main challenges such as, ensuring the on-going well-being of students and supporting those weaker students who struggled with study skills to work remotely.

All teachers were teaching throughout the week in their usual teaching slots, to exactly the same timetable as if students were in College. Heads of Year and the Learning Support team had identified those more vulnerable students and they were already receiving Learning Support.

Management were confident that the channels of communication were exactly where they should be, and management had received lots of positive messages from parents for the support being provided to students.

Trustees questioned whether the College had any students who were the children of identified key workers.

Probably because College students are 16+ the Principal advised that no student or parent had as yet requested to use the College as such a facility but if a request was made then the College would of course be open to anyone that needed to use it.

The Chair then asked Trustees to identify any additional area of concern that they wanted the Principal to further address.

The main areas of concern that Trustees identified were:

- The support available for vulnerable students;

- Any information about the grading of exams;
- University Progression;
- Staff or Student Sickness/Welfare; and
- How to keep students motivated during the changes.

Support for Students

Those students identified as vulnerable had been identified by Heads of Year and Learning Support and were being fully supported. Counselling sessions were continuing.

Grading of Exams – Summer 2020

The Principal advised that unfortunately to date there was no great clarity with regard to the awarding of grades this summer. The College would be responsible for the awarding of student's grades and the grade was likely to compromise past assessments, performance, mock grades - traditionally all those elements that contribute to the College making a predicted grade for UCAS. It was acknowledged that teachers would have to submit their judgement on grades and there was discussion over how grades would be moderated. At the moment there was much speculation on how this would be achieved.

Exam Boards would no doubt look at an institution's previous exam results, Value Added data and then a process would be followed to verify the accuracy of the predicted grade.

There would be an appeal process and it may possibly require Trustee involvement.

It was confirmed that there would be no league tables undertaken for the academic year 2019/20.

The Principal also advised that there was no certainty that the work that the College were asking students to undertake now would count towards the predicted grade but they had to continue upon the basis that it would.

Officials were saying that they would like to award grades by the end of July.

University Progression

Trustees raised the issue of Universities making unconditional offers, sometimes upon the basis that they had little faith in the predicted grades system. Mike Mulheron, advised that Surrey University were considering their own position on this point and talking to other Universities about the approach to be taken. A consensus seemed to be forming that Universities may make low offers and then assess a student's performance at the end of the first year, possibly eliminating weaker students at that time.

The Principal asked whether it would be possible for Mike Mulheron to provide a form of wording that reflected that thinking as this would be beneficial for him to have.

The Deputy Principal also advised Trustees that the College would face a similar position insofar as they would have Year 11's coming into College with no formal GCSEs but only awarded grades and would likewise need to assess how they coped in the first year.

Staff & Student Sickness

The Principal reported that no member of the staff or student body had as yet tested positive for COVID 19. At the time the College closed, 22 staff were self-isolating as were 100 students. He had asked all staff to inform him if they became unwell and if so, when they had also fully recovered.

Motivation

Trustees challenged how management and staff would keep students motivated over the summer term as they worked remotely, The Principal stressed that all staff were reiterating that students needed to have the same level of experience as that gained by their peers in previous years. Therefore, they had to keep working and staff were doing their utmost to keep learning fun but challenging. The Principal praised staff who were both creative and imaginative at finding ways of achieving this. In addition, all parents had also been emailed reiterating the need for students to keep working.

Ongoing College Business

The Principal reported that he had been appointed as the liaison contact for all SFCs in Surrey and was therefore kept fully up to speed with developments across the county.

In terms of ongoing College business, all staff interviews would be conducted via skype. One member of the senior leadership team would be in College every day on a rotational basis. Management were currently reviewing the calendar for the rest of the academic year and may need to cancel or defer certain planned events.

The College had prepared its IT systems and they were robust enough to meet the challenges they now faced.

Management were working hard to maintain the sense of College community even if it was a virtual one at this time.

The College would look at how they could launch the UCAS process virtually and how best to support students through the process and in time it would also need to consider autumn term re-sits.

The Deputy Principal was already progressing the timetable for 2020/21; the Finance Director was progressing Capital Bids for the next academic year as well and so usual business was very much on-going.

The Principal then gave a summary of the feedback arising from the Disaster

	<p>Recovery Management exercise completed on the 7th February 2020. It was a positive exercise which proved to have been a good lead into the recent pandemic crisis. It would be repeated in June at a high level. Trustees asked if any of the exercises had exposed the College and the Principal felt that the only issue that had come to light was that the receptionist did not have a script and that could have led to a reputational issue. This would be reviewed but it was considered that the only issues to be tweaked related to communication. It was also suggested by Trustees that the feedback should be shared with other S7 Colleges as a way of sharing good practice and solutions.</p>	
	<p>TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) 2019</p> <p>The Assistant Principal presented the Inspection Data Summary Report for 2019. This report was produced by OfSTED based on the data from 2018/19. Whilst the College had anticipated an inspection early next academic year, that now seemed less likely. The document essentially identified the areas that OfSTED would be looking at during an inspection and those areas in particular where they would conduct a “deep dive”.</p> <p>The headline findings were very positive with the Value added data for A levels showing that the College remained significantly above the national average. The majority of vocational qualifications were not covered as they were defined as “old framework” qualifications and not eligible for data tables. The only Applied General Qualifications that were shown related to the Diploma in Criminology and BTEC Performing Arts.</p> <p>The report highlighted 6 areas of interest. Points 1 and 5 were interlinked as they both related to applied general reflecting the value added and the average point score per entry for applied general as being in the lowest 10%. However, this applied to only one course; namely Criminology which had previously been flagged up as an area of concern. This area would undoubtedly be the subject of a deep dive during an OfSTED inspection. The Assistant Principal confirmed that the College were establishing links with other Colleges to practice share with the intention to gain valuable insight and experience to help significantly improve this particular area.</p> <p>The remaining 4 points highlighted in the report were all positive, for example, the percentage of learners in maths who gained Grade 4 and above was significantly above the national rate and the proportion of learners who were in sustained education or employment/training was significantly higher than the national rate.</p> <p>The Board then received an update from Liz Cussans, the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding. The Safeguarding Report set out the Designated Trustee’s responsibilities and then outlined the main areas reviewed by her and the consequent findings. It was also confirmed that she had met with Laura Cook, the</p>	

	<p>Designated Safeguarding Lead in February 2020 and would be keeping in touch with her over the course of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Board noted that CPOMS (Child Protection on-line monitoring system) had now been in operation for about 2 years and was seen as a very efficient and effective system. There had been a significant increase in the number of students being monitored since May 2019 to February 2020 and the single biggest category was mental health. There were a number of measures in place but this did pose one of the biggest challenges for the safeguarding team.</p> <p>It was also noted that the biggest number of referrals happened in September when the handover of files from schools to Colleges took place as referrals were recorded for new students. The College were working with colleagues from across S7 to further develop the support for students and a new role of Head of Student Wellbeing was also being introduced.</p> <p>How the COVID 19 pandemic would affect students was also a significant cause for concern and the Safeguarding Trustee would be keeping in contact with the DSL and confirmed that anything she learnt she would pass on to update Trustees during this time.</p> <p>The Board thanked Liz Cussans, Trustee for Safeguarding for her report and oral update.</p>	
	<p>FINANCE</p>	
	<p>The Board received the draft minutes from the Finance and Audit Committee meeting held on 11th March 2020 and the Chair of the Committee gave an oral summary of the matters discussed by the Committee and the recommendations made to the Board.</p> <p>The Board discussed the possible financial impact of COVID 19. The Principal did not anticipate a material change to funding. The Committee had previously discussed how best the forecasted surplus could be utilised and this was particularly relevant now given the impact of the pandemic and the need to support learners.</p> <p>After discussion, the Board resolved to receive and approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2020 management accounts; • February 2020 accounts to be circulated electronically to all for information outside of the meeting; • Chair of Finance and Audit Committee be duly authorised to sign off both the Budget Forecast Return Outturn and the 3 Year Budget Forecast Return to ensure compliance with the prescribed filing deadlines which did not fit with the Board meeting dates, both documents then being ratified by the full Board at the next scheduled meeting. 	

	POLICY WATCH	
8.	<p>In addition, the Finance and Audit Committee had also reviewed the revised Financial Regulations which had now been amalgamated with all other relevant financial policies into one complete document.</p> <p>The Committee commended the revised Financial Regulations to the Board; together with the updated Whistleblowing Policy (which would form an additional appendix to the document); and the revised Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>The Board resolved to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Regulations & Supporting Policies (with the addition of the Whistleblowing Policy); and • Scheme of Delegation 	
	GOVERNANCE	
9.	<p>The Board noted, in terms of succession planning the terms of office of current Trustees.</p> <p>The Clerk asked that Trustees complete and return to her, before the Easter break, the skills audit proforma so that the annual skills audit could be undertaken. This would then be reviewed as part of the remit of the Succession Planning Working Group which was due to meet on 13th May 2020. The members of that group were confirmed.</p> <p>In light of the unusual circumstances of the meeting, the evaluation form was not completed but the consensus of the Board was that the telephone conference had worked well and that this format should be utilised again.</p>	
10.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Clerk had circulated a paper on governance arrangements in light of COVID 19 based on advice received from, amongst others, the National Governance Association.</p> <p>The Board were able to conduct meetings by telephone, video or other electronic means so no fundamental changes needed to be made to the Articles of Association or Standing Orders. In addition, if necessary, resolutions could also be undertaken in writing.</p> <p>The Standing Orders allowed for Chair's Action (or in her absence the Vice Chair) to take action between meetings when a delay in dealing with a matter would be seriously detrimental to the interests of the College, a student, his or her parent, or a member of staff; or a meeting could not be called in sufficient time to deal with</p>	

	<p>the matter.</p> <p>The Board resolved: To extend Chair’s Action to not just the Chair, Vice Chair but also the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee to ensure that there were 3 designated Trustees who had authority to take urgent action, should the need arise, between meetings.</p> <p>Reducing the quorum was discussed, but after consideration the Board felt that at this moment in time it did not consider it necessary to do so. If members started to fall ill, then the matter would be reviewed.</p> <p>The priorities for the Board were to consider business critical decisions and monitor how the College was continuing to care for vulnerable students; the support being given to students to help them study at home; monitoring the well-being and welfare of both students and staff and to consider any issue over the unused College site and working remotely arrangements.</p> <p>It was also agreed that there should be a monthly telephone conference briefing covering these key aspects during April and May.</p> <p>The one immediate area for Trustees was as soon as there had been a decision taken on how grades were to be awarded this summer, then they would wish to be updated with this information. The Clerk and the Principal agreed to liaise over suitable timings for these two meetings.</p> <p>If the Clerk became ill it was considered that help could be available through the Clerk’s network, other S7 Clerks or the Principal’s PA.</p> <p>The Clerk would be accessing webinars on governance arrangements in light of the pandemic and would disseminate any relevant updates to the Board.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Date & Time of Next Meetings</p> <p>It was agreed that the next meeting of the Succession Planning Working Group would continue and would take place on Wednesday 13th May 2020 and the next Trustees’ Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Development Meeting (2) would take place on Wednesday 10th June 2020 at 6.30pm.</p>	