

## Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 8 November 2023

Teams Meeting (online)

5.00pm – 7.00pm

### MINUTES

#### Attendees:

Governors	Role:	Other Attendees	Role
Phil Thompson	General - Chair of Corporation	Gary Dixon	Deputy Principal West Herts
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Cath Gunn	Principal of Barnfield College
Guy Ainsley	External Governor	Fiona Chalk	External Reviewer
Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor	Kylie White	HR Director (17:00-17:25)
Phil Berry	External Governor	Emma Doree	Director of Student Experience
Laura Dawson	External Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Clerk to Corporation
Richard Lewis	External Governor		
Shaun Merton	Staff Governor	Apologies	Role:
Chris Nicholls	External Governor	Irina Kendix	External Governor
Stuart Ord	External Governor		
Jason Smith	External Governor		
Paul Thompson	External Governor		
David York (17:00-17:44)	Staff Governor		
Aisha Yusuf	Student Governor		

#### Ref Agenda Item

#### 09/23 1. GENERAL BUSINESS

##### 1.1. Apologies for absence and quoracy

- Apologies were noted and accepted, and the meeting was quorate.
- All reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting for the Board's consideration
- The Board welcomed 2 new student governors and introductions were made around the table.
- The Board also welcomed Fiona Chalk (FC) to the meeting, FC is the external reviewer of Boards and was attending as an observer.
- The Chair highlighted that the meeting was taking place online as part of the feedback received from the Board at their last self-assessment. As such a trial run of 2 of the 8 scheduled Corporation meetings would be held online in 2023-24. The second online meeting would be in March 2024. Feedback from the Board on this arrangement was required so that an informed decision could be made going forward to 2024-25.

- A presentation from the Director of Human Resources (HR) was given at this point ahead of all other items to allow the Director of HR to leave the meeting afterwards.

The presentation was on the challenges of recruitment currently faced by the College and the actions taken to attract applicants, ensure the process is fair and ultimately to retain staff.

The DoHR said that recruiting teachers is an ongoing struggle across sector and explained the recruitment process and the use of various platforms for advertising.

The analysis of 'click throughs' on social media and its conversion rates were discussed in line with the length of the application process which is now being adapted to be shorter and quicker in an attempt to improve the conversion rate. The College's overall employment package is considered very good and includes competitive salaries, flexible leave and remote working.

The College is working with an external company to differentiate its brand to reflect its vision, mission and values.

The Board discussed in more detail, the retention and turnover of staff, the proposal of an Alumni programme and the impact of the pandemic.

It was noted that turnover statistics included all staff and not just teachers, it also included the Together Training staff.

**ACTION:** Statistics on retention of staff across different subject areas to be included in the HR Report.

The Board thanked KW for her presentation, and she left the meeting at 17.25.

**1.2. Declaration of pecuniary interests**

There were no additional declarations to declare

**1.3. Requests for urgent business**

There were no requests for urgent business.

**10/23 2. PREVIOUS MEETING**

**2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (11 October 2023)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record and approved for electronic signature.

**2.2. Action from previous Corporation meeting**

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
	There are no outstanding actions	n/a

**2.3. Matters Arising not on the agenda**

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

**11/23 3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

In summary, the report included confirmed targets for performance for this academic year, progress against these targets and indicators relating to in-year quality of education (student attendance and retention), and areas of work that have been identified as requiring improvement through the College's Annual Self-Assessment process.

The report also included details of proposals made by the Labour Party on a Specialist Technical Excellence Colleges and the Conservative Party on the Advanced British Standard; an update on the increase in resources to secure additional Supported Internships to help people with learning difficulties and disabilities gain employment and specific courses provided for refugees and asylum seekers of which the College provides information to the British Council.

Details were given in the report of a new partnership being established with trainers that specialise in working with challenging young people, 15 employees from various roles across the College will receive training as part of a pilot programme.

Plans are underway to enter students in UK World Skills competitions next year in Hairdressing; 3D Digital Game Art; Exercise and Fitness. Students from Barnfield College and West Herts College will join forces to represent the College Group in these subjects.

The Board discussed in more detail the 2 new KPI's for student behaviour and the use of catch-up funding. The data for behaviour was clarified, including the breakdown of data by specific groups and how the catch-up funding is being utilised. The targets for the new KPIs were reviewed by the Board. The College have put in place extra measures for moderating all exclusions and were confident that they passed all the tests for unconscious bias and the data would be used to steer work with external agencies to develop specialist support to specific groups.

The measures of impact for the KPI's were discussed and it was agreed that impact will be demonstrated as part of Quality Reports submitted to the Corporation throughout the year.

The Principal explained in more detail how the College prepared students with special educational needs and disabilities for their course and college life, including the support the College receives from Hertfordshire Council and the work the College is undertaking with MENCAP.

**ACTION:** Amend wording of KPI on Behaviour and review the need to identify specific groups.

*David York left the meeting at 17.44*

The report was noted.

## 12/23 4 RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

### 4.1 College Annual Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan

The Annual Self-Assessment Report 2022/23 takes account of all provision types delivered at Barnfield College and West Herts College (Further Education, Apprenticeships, High Needs; Higher Education; Community Learning).

Members of the Corporation are involved in the process to gain assurance about the robustness of the process and the accuracy of the quality judgements made.

Targets for improvement are developed on completion of the Self-Assessment and quality improvement action plans are put in place at departmental levels across the Group. Performance against the targets is shared with the Board at each meeting through the Key Performance Indicator Dashboard in the Principal's Report and also in other specific reports. The report included a list of strengths and areas for improvement which were discussed by the Board.

The Board commented that the report was interesting and well written and in response to Governors questions the following was noted.

Clarification was given on how areas were graded and what specific actions had been taken to address those subject areas that were graded lower.

National benchmarking data would be used in future reports to give the Board some context.

Aspirational challenge for English and Maths (E&M) to exceed the national average was considered as it is widely recognised that the national average for E&M is low. The national average figure included schools and sixth forms, there is no data for FE yet, this will be published later.

The new programme of support for teachers and students was noted, particularly in regard to preparing for exams and in the subject areas of Engineering and Health and Social Care.

Achievement rates for apprenticeships were discussed and it was acknowledged that they are higher than the national average. The Principal outlined the main reasons for apprentices leaving the programme. It was noted that the government plans to introduce a 'stretch target' of 68% achievement and the College will strive to achieve this.

The report was noted.

### 4.2 EDI Report and Policy

Inclusivity is critically important to local people and employers. Personal characteristics of all employees are collated, and positive actions are taken to support people from specific groups to enable them to fulfil their potential within the workplace.

Feedback from employers is sought and actively encouraged. Job applications are tracked by specific group to ensure the recruitment process is accessible and fair and the College is a Disability Confident employer.

The College supports students suffering financial hardship and with disabilities. Teaching and learning is inclusive and proactively promotes equality and diversity. Inappropriate attitudes and behaviours are challenged promptly, and the use of stereotypes is avoided in all situations.

The College works closely with key community partners to maintain awareness of local community issues and to contribute to solutions where possible.

Areas for improvement regarding student performance are captured within the Quality Improvement Action Plan and the Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs).

The Board discussed in more detail, the ethnicity pay gap; the progress against the EDI objectives and the projects and initiatives used to promote EDI.

The data was scrutinised by the Board and clarified where requested.

Work with external groups for support in specific areas was outlined including the access and use of funding to support students to stay in education.

The impact of the pandemic on specific groups was highlighted and the actions taken to support disadvantaged groups. The Governor for Safeguarding, EDI and inclusion reported on how proactive the College is in this area and that systems are robust and consistent.

The Board was assured that succession planning is in place and the challenges in recruitment provide a strong focus for staff development.

The report was noted.

4.3 **Finance Report** (part 2 – confidential item - *please see separate minutes*)

**13/23 5 COLLABORATION & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

**5.1 Student Voice Feedback Report**

The College carries out a First Impressions survey within the first 6 weeks of term. The First Impressions survey 2023 is very positive and achieves the College target of 90% positive. Support is provided by the Careers Education Programme for those students who are not clear about their next steps and the quality team is working with curriculum teams to ensure assessment schedules are in place and shared with students.

Three new questions were introduced this year to evaluate ‘behaviour and attitudes and awareness of the actions that can be taken to bring negative experiences to the College’s attention. The vast majority of students feel safe at College and actions have been taken to support students who feel unsafe. Most students knew the procedures on how to complain. Comments made by students related to a variety of matters and did not point to any specific issues at College, campus or curriculum levels.

The Board found the report interesting and noted the importance of first impressions. Further details on the actions taken since the report was published for those areas that scored less favourably were discussed.

The report was noted.

**14/23 6 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES & REVIEW**

**6.1 Chairs Action** – There were no chairs actions to report.

**6.2 Learning walks** – Laura Dawson, had visited the College in her designated role as Safeguarding, SEND and EDI Governor. She gave a positive report of her visit and noted the high levels of inclusivity within the College.

**6.3 Update on Corporation Membership**

The Board had no vacancies, and the membership was noted.

Following on from the meeting in an October it was confirmed an external recruitment company, Nurole had been engaged for the position of Chair of the Corporation and another external governor. The adverts will go out in the next 2 weeks.

**6.4 Annual Report from Search & Governance**

The report was noted.

**15/23 7 URGENT BUSINESS**

**16/23 8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – 6 December 2023, Watford, 5pm.

**8.1** The Board were asked to reflect on the online meeting. Feedback could be given anonymously to the Clerk or directly to the Chair via email.

Four of the 14 governor’s present expressed that they preferred face to face meetings.

**8.2** It was noted that FC would also attend the Corporation Meeting in December.

Meeting closed: 18.35.

**Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 6 December 2023**

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
9/23/1.1	Statistics on retention of staff across different subject areas to be included in the HR Report.	July 2024
11/23/3	Amend wording of KPI on Behaviour and review the need to identify specific group.	6 Dec 23

Ref	Summary of Decisions
	No decisions taken at this meeting.