

Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 14 February 2024

Hemel Hempstead – HCLG 06/07

17.00 – 19.00

MINUTES

Attendees:

Governors	Role:	Other Attendees	Role
Phil Thompson	Chair	Gary Dixon	Deputy Principal West Herts
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Emma Doree	Director of Student Experience
Guy Ainsley (L – 17.06)	External Governor	Cath Gunn	Principal of Barnfield College
Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor	Sarah Knowles	Deputy Principal
Phil Berry (L– 17.05)	External Governor	Eamonn McCarroll	Director of Finance
Laura Dawson	External Governor	Tammy Nuthall	Deputy Principle Barnfield
Irina Kendix (L – 17.12)	External Governor	Amanda Westbrook	Deputy Principal
Richard Lewis	External Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Clerk to Corporation
Chris Nicholls	External Governor	Justin Richardson (17.00-17.30)	CEO Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce
Stuart Ord	External Governor	Fiona Chalk (18.45 – 19.10)	External Board Reviewer
Jason Smith	External Governor	Apologies	Role:
Paul Thompson	External Governor	Aisha Yusuf	Student Governor
		David York	Staff Governor
		Shaun Merton	Staff Governor

Ref Agenda Item

- 0 Presentation by the CEO of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce**
- Justin Richardson gave a presentation to the Board on the work of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. The presentation highlighted a number of interesting points, updating the Board on the difficulties faced by employers to recruit people with the ‘employability / soft’ skills needed in the workplace. Employers are placing significant emphasis on the wider employability skills and consider them as important / if not more important than technical skills gained through qualifications. The College is addressing this by providing additional skills development opportunities to students via the Bravura Project and extracurricular activities in an attempt to ensure College leavers are work ready.
- The Board thanked JR for his presentation which they found very informative.
- IK/GA and PB arrived during the early stages of the presentation.*
- 25/23 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.
- 1.2. Declaration of pecuniary interests**
- There were no additional declarations.
- 1.3. Requests for urgent business**
- There were no requests for urgent business.
- 26/23 2. PREVIOUS MEETING**
- 2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (6 December 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 were no outstanding actions.	

2.3. Matters Arising not on the agenda.

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

27/23 3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Student attendance and retention is on track. GCSE results from the November resits in English and Maths are better than the national averages. The Board discussed the national averages which were considered low and reinforced that achievements in English and Maths post-16 is a national issue. In comparison to peer colleges and the low starting points for many College students in the subjects, the College is performing well.

It was noted that the increase in student hours for English and Maths could have a serious impact on finance and resources and the potential for low attendance by students. The delivery of these hours has to be standalone and could not be embedded into the overall qualification. The AoC will represent colleges in this matter in attempt to find appropriate mitigations against these risks that will be a consideration for the vast majority of colleges.

The report was noted.

28/23 4 RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1 Student Destinations

Following a survey of all students who completed their qualification in the Summer of 2023, the College had collated the destinations of 2639 leavers (81%). 97% of College leavers either returned to the College to continue their studies at the next level, progressed to higher education institutions, or entered employment. The majority of leavers progressing to higher-level qualifications gained their first-choice places and most of the leavers who entered employment are working in businesses across the College's strategic areas.

The College highlighted the range of activities undertaken to ensure students reach their desired destinations. The College has achieved the ESFA target of 97% positive outcomes and continues to support those students who are unemployed or not in education.

The Board considered the 81% response rate as good. Further development of the survey to gather more specific information on student destinations, such as areas of employment in relation to the skills gained at College, was discussed. It was agreed that if the survey were too in depth the response rate might be lower, but this would be worth looking into. Outsourcing the survey had been used in the past and it was found that in-house contact with students is more effective in getting responses.

The report was noted.

4.2 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

The Board were asked to consider the current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Policy for approval. The designated governor for EDI (LD) would arrange to meet with the College to discuss some minor amendments to the policy. It was noted that a good practice template from the AoC had been used to develop the policy.

DECISION: The Board approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Policy pending a review with the LD.

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

29/23 5 COLLABORATION & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Community Engagement Strategy & Annual Report

In April 2022, the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 introduced a statutory duty for colleges to respond to Local Skills Improvement Plans and an additional Ofsted judgement on contribution to skills needs. The College published its first Accountability Statement in May 2023 which outlined how the College is responding to Local Skills Improvement Plans

(LSIPs). Work continues with the designated regional employer representative bodies (EBR's) to monitor and update these Plans and as a result the College's relationships with stakeholders has been strengthened and extended.

Following the presentation at the start of the meeting the Board noted again the mismatch between employer expectations and the qualifications offered. The Bravura Project is proving very effective in addressing employer's needs, and is now a routine part of the qualifications, the cost of which is met by the College.

The Board commended the College for taking on this extra burden of work and recognised that colleges' now need to be at the centre of the skills agenda.

Apprenticeships delivered by the College were outlined and the potential for an increase in apprenticeships when T-Levels are introduced.

Details of the programme for Industry upskilling of staff was discussed and clarified.

The report was noted.

30/23 6 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES & REVIEW

6.1 Learning Walks

There had been no learning walks since the last meeting. The Chair had attended the College's Graduation Ceremony.

ACTION: Clerk to send out invitation Board members to undertake a learning walk.

6.2 Corporation membership Update

It was noted that David York was re-elected as staff governor for Business Support for another 2 years.

6.3 Progress Update on Recruitment of new Chair of Governors

Interviews were held in January for the posts, Chair of Governors, and an External Governor with Finance expertise. The interview panel members are recommending the following candidates for appointment. The CV's and Personal Statements were circulated to the Board for their consideration.

The Chairs of the interview panels gave a brief update on the interview process and the rationale behind the recommendations made.

The interview panel members also asked the Board to consider Tony Breslin for the position of Chair of Governors when Phil Thompson's term of office ended in July 2024.

Tony Breslin – Governor and potential successor to Chair of Governors

Martin Sidder – Governor (Finance)

Wendy Donovan – Governor (Finance)

The Board and the College expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the Board members who assisted with the interviews. A considerable amount of time and effort had been spent on the recruitment process.

DECISION: The Board voted unanimously in favour of appointing Tony Breslin, Martin Sidders, and Wendy Donovan as external governors on the West Herts Corporation. Their term of office will commence from their first meeting on the 8 May 2024.

DECISION: The Board voted unanimously in favour of Tony Breslin succeeding the current Chair of Governors (PT) when PT's term of office ends in July 2024.

31/23 7 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

32/23 8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wednesday 13 March 2023 – Online

33/23 9 Presentation of Final Report of External Review

The External Reviewer had completed a review of West Herts Corporation and presented their recommendations to the Board.

The External Reviewer, Fiona Chalk (FC) thanked the Board and the Clerk for their time and commitment to the process.

She highlighted that the purpose of the review was to build on already established good practices. FC reported that Governance at West Herts College is highly effective with good decision making and active participation in an open, transparent, and inclusive environment. The recommendations were ways in which the Governance at West Herts College could excel.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to hold the small breakout sessions to discuss and prioritise the recommendations, so this was tabled for a future meeting.

The Board thanked FC for the report.

The report was noted.

ACTION: Discuss, prioritise, and agree a plan of action to take place at the Corporation meeting on the 8 May 2024.

External Governors were asked to remain after the meeting closed for the Remuneration Meeting.
(Please see separate minutes)

Meeting closed: 7.10pm

Minutes approved by the Corporation on 13 March 2024

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
33/23/9	Discuss, prioritise, and agree a plan of action to take place at the Corporation meeting on the 8 May 2024.	8 May 2024

Ref	Summary of Decisions
28/23/4.2	The Board approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Policy pending a review with the LD.
30/23/6.3	The Board voted unanimously in favour of appointing Tony Breslin, Martin Sidders, and Wendy Donovan as external governors on the West Herts Corporation. Their term of office will commence from their first meeting on the 8 May 2024.
30/23/6.3	The Board voted unanimously in favour of Tony Breslin succeeding the current Chair of Governors (PT) when PT's term of office ends in July 2024.