

Corporation Board

Minutes of the Board meeting held on Tuesday 11 October 2022 at 5pm
Board Room, Abingdon Campus



Board members:

Gavin Maitland-Smith (Chair)
Jacqui Canton (Principal)
Adam Mumford - online
Alan Bark
David Walker
Edward Collett
Kathryn Schutterlin
Nick Handy
Robert Weavers
Sean Wellington
Victoria Field - online

In attendance:

Jack Price (Vice Principal)
Laura Grainger (Clerk)
Mark Lay (Finance Director)
Olivier Cognard (Vice Principal)
Simon Kibble (Vice Principal)

Apologies:

Howard Dodd
Sam Wolfe
Nicolas Pages
Joanne Milsom (Deputy Principal)

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are in italics.

1 – Opening comments

Apologies were received from Howard Dodd, Sam Wolfe Nicolas Pages, and Jo Milsom. Adam Mumford and Victoria Field joined the meeting online. The Board thanked Sean Wellington for the time and expertise he had given to the College. No new declarations of interest were received, and no items raised for any other business.

2 – Minutes of previous meetings

Members approved the public minutes of the previous Board meeting held on Tuesday 5 July 2022 as accurate and appropriate for signature.

3 – Matters arising, written resolutions and action points

The Board reviewed the paper and noted many listed actions will be completed at this meeting.

- Can you update us on the sustainability committee?
The College has set up a working group which will report back to the December Board, with the plan to have the inaugural Committee in the following term.

The Board noted the paper.

4 – Strategic overview

4.1 – Principal's update

The Board reviewed the paper and noted that student recruitment is still slightly higher than expected at 1,720.

- What is the position with the apprenticeship income target and staff recruitment?
Whilst we are ahead of previous years' apprenticeship income, we are still tracking behind the target. Issues remain with construction recruitment with two vacancies in plumbing. This has been raised with the LEP, and we are already offering a technical allowance in addition to the teaching salary. There is a large pay gap between what the College can offer and what they might earn in industry. This is a national issue and so a national solution will be required.
- Given the College's participation is voluntary, has the College made a decision on making a submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)? Do prospective students look at the TEF rating?
Our Head of Higher Education is looking at the Office for Students guidance and at our data to inform a decision. We believe that prospective students do look at the TEF rating and colleges who have received a 'gold' rating advertise this.
- As the Kidlington Adult Learning centre is now closed, are we still delivering courses to this part of Oxfordshire?
Our website shows the different sites we use, and we are now using other venues in Kidlington.

The Board noted the paper.

4.1.1 – Meeting local needs

JCa introduced the paper and gave an overview of the new statutory guidance. Alongside these changes, the Education White Paper set out that Chambers of Commerce should have more involvement with colleges and for Abingdon & Witney College this is Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce. There will be accountability agreements with measures against delivery of these.

- When will the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce produce the LSIP?
They have already drafted timescales this and sent through to the College to review.
- The LEP are recruiting at the moment, but what will their future involvement be?
They are looking at ways to be involved in this process such as being a delivery arm and/or managing projects on behalf of the Chambers of Commerce or Councils.

The Board noted the paper and approved the recommendations from the NRG committee relating to Meeting Local Needs and accountability reform.

4.2 – Strategic plan approval

The Board had approved the overall strategic direction at the July 2022 meeting and were now presented with the final Strategic Plan for approval. This will be an iterative document with a 2-year operational plan, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

- What do we know about students who would have come to our College but didn't due to transport issues or poor transport connections?
Our operational plan includes actions on transport. We would need to put a business case together for new proposals if there was an appetite for this, for example with Faringdon.
- Do we want to forecast up to 2027 figures in the Finance section, or could we reduce to a 3-year plan?
The financial plan we have presented is reasonable and doesn't show a significant shift. It's fairly conservative and presents a broad picture of where the College is going. It shows that we are planning ahead, and we are stable and secure. But we can include a caveat that this is subject to change and scrutinised by F&GP, Board and SMT.
- Is there a reason for including the full 'SWOT' analysis and the full list of KPIs in this public document?
We can agree the plan subject to having a version without the KPIs and SWOT analysis.

The Board approved the Strategic Plan subject to the changes below.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Review the use of the terms 'BME' and 'BAME' in the document	JCa	Immediate
Include Chamber of Commerce in the stakeholder section	JCa	Immediate
Include wording in the Finance section on scrutiny and review of figures	JCa	Immediate
Remove KPI page but add information on how performance is monitored	JCa	Immediate
Keep Strengths and Opportunities, remove threats and weaknesses	JCa	Immediate
Circulate revised document to Governors	JCa	ASAP

5 – Curriculum, Quality and Students

5.1 – Update from SAR workshop

The Board received an update on the SAR workshop held on 6 October 2022. Governors noted that the new format of the SAR was easier to understand and engage with. The SAR and QIP had been interrogated by the Governors at the workshop and they recommend the documents to the Board for approval.

5.1.1 – SAR and QIP

The Board received an update on changes made to the documents since the SAR workshop. Governors noted that a lot of the data reflects the work of OC and his team, which had made information more accessible.

- Was there a reason for removing the tables that had a rank status on them, as they were useful?
The benchmarking data is from 2018/19 so it's out of date and so using it for comparison is not relevant.
- The learner feedback slide was useful - why is this not included in the newer version?
When the full document was reviewed this level of detail did not fit overall. Overall comments and feedback are reflected in the green bars on the graphs.
- What would you highlight as the key areas of work or concern?
Making sure we are being as ambitious and challenging of ourselves and our learners as we can possibly be and moving more towards quality improvement rather than quality assurance.

Governors acknowledged and thanked JP for this work in producing the documents and the Board approved the SAR and QIP.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Add a summary of acronyms to the document(s)	JP	asap

5.2 – Safeguarding update

The Board received an update on the College's position of conducting social media checks for job applicants as part of the shortlisting process. Based on current research, the College does not intend to integrate online searches as part of the staff selection process but will review this decision regularly.

- Do we know how many colleges are doing this?
Most colleges are not doing this. The College has other checks in place and continues to ask do safeguarding questions at interview.
- Do we have a social media policy?
Yes, we do for staff.
- Are we happy with the safeguarding arrangements in place?
Yes, and staff have recently completed KCSIE training. We can bring an update on this to December Board meeting.
- Could we reinstate key speakers at the start of each board meeting? And have the first speaker to be on safeguarding.
Yes, we can arrange this.

The Board noted the paper but asked to keep it under review.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Circulate KCSIE safeguarding training to Governors	LG/JM	Immediate
Reinstate key speakers at the start of Board meetings	LG	December
Safeguarding formal training update to December Board	JM	December
Update in 9-12 months on what the rest of the sector is doing with online checks	JM	December

6 – Finance & General Purposes

6.1 – Finance & General Purposes committee update

The Board received a verbal update on the work of the F&GP committee. The staff turnover figure of 27% had been highlighted as a concern. The committee debated financial continuity planning and the risk associated with inflation, as well as an alternative to the Local Government Pension Scheme. The Board noted the verbal update.

6.2 – Staff turnover update

The Board was referred to the paper requested by the F&GP committee to update on the high staff turnover rate. The Board noted the paper.

6.3 – Management accounts and draft outturn 2021/22

The Board reviewed the management accounts and were informed that they do not yet reflect the change in the £22m pension liability from the previous year. The final accounts will reflect this and so the balance sheet will be different. The Board approved the management accounts and draft outturn subject to the updated balance sheet.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Update the balance sheet to reflect the change in pension liability	ML	Immediate

6.4 – Bank loans

The F&GP committee had discussed the College's bank loans and associated interest costs but did not approve a course of action as more information was needed. This item will be carried forward so that the Board can receive a full update when the information is available.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Add Bank Loans to the December 2022 board agenda	LG	December

7 – Audit

7.1 – High level risk register

The high-level risk register was presented to the Board. Whilst this has not yet been reviewed at an Audit Committee, it has been reviewed by SMT. The Board approved the paper subject to the update below.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Review risk 3.1 on the calibre of governors and recruitment issues	ML	Immediate

8 – Nominations, Remuneration & Governance

8.1 – Nominations, Remuneration & Governance committee update

The Board received a verbal update including the Committee's review of the Link Governor policy, the Sustainability working group and Governor recruitment issues. The Committee had agreed that the Strategic Plan would be monitored via the NRG committee, but then discussed fully at Board.

- Could we have sight of the current skillset of our Governors and where gaps might be?
Yes, we can add that information to our Governor spreadsheet and share and also look at the diversity of Governors.

The Board noted the verbal update.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Review and share the Governor information table to include skillset	LG	November
Add monitoring of Strategic Plan to NRG and Board agendas	LG	Immediate

8.2 – Annual NRG report to the Board

The Board approved the paper.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Review if this report is to note or to approve at Board	LG	December

9 – Policies

9.1 – Tuition fees

The Board approved the Tuition Fee policy.

9.2 – Link Governor policy

The updated Link Governor policy was presented to the Board and reflected the requested changes from the NRG Committee.

- Why did Designated Governors for sustainability and mental health get removed?
Mental health is seen as part of Health & Safety, and sustainability as part of the new working group.

The Board approved the policy.

10 – Minutes

10.1 – Audit committee

The Board noted the minutes.

10.2 – Finance & General Purpose committee - public

The Board noted the minutes.

10.3 – Finance & General Purpose committee - confidential

The Board noted the minutes.

10.4 – CQS committee

The Board noted the minutes.

11 – Any other Business

The Board discussed the decision taken by the F&GP Committee to reduce the catering provided at their evening meetings. Committee chairs could make decision about catering for their meetings, but it would remain for Board meetings and kept under review.

12 – Future business and reflection


The Board noted that the meeting had been shorter than previous which reflected the hard work carried out by staff and Governors outside of the meeting. Given this, it was agreed that future Boards would include an update from other areas of the College and an opportunity to talk strategically.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Update from other areas of the College to be added to the Board	LG	December
Add strategic discussion to Board agenda	LG	December

13 - Date of next meeting – Tuesday 6 December 2022

The meeting closed at 19.25

Approved for signature.....

Signature.....

Date.....

