

## Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 13 March 2024

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	Emma Doree	Director of Student Experience
Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor	Eamonn McCarroll	Director of Finance
Phil Berry	External Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Clerk to Corporation
Laura Dawson	External Governor		
Irina Kendix	External Governor	Apologies	Role:
Richard Lewis	External Governor	Paul Thompson	External Governor
Chris Nicholls	External Governor	Shaun Merton	Staff Governor
Stuart Ord	External Governor		
Jason Smith	External Governor		
David York	Staff Governor		

#### Ref Agenda Item

#### 34/23 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

Update on incident at the Watford Campus.

#### 35/23 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

##### 2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (14 February 2024)

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

###### 2.2.1.

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.	Agenda 7.4

###### 2.2.2. On Recommendation from the Audit Committee:

The Chair of the Audit Committee gave a brief summary of the meeting and the audits that had been undertaken since its last meeting and the decision to continue using Buzzacot as the College's External Auditor for 2024-25. The Audit Committee scrutinised the following documents and recommended them for approval by the Corporation.

- Financial Regulations
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

**DECISION:** The Board approved the Financial Regulations

**DECISION:** The Board approved the Anti-Bribery Policy

**DECISION:** The Board approved the Whistleblowing Policy

### 2.3. Matters Arising not on the agenda

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

## 36/23 3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The report outlined the College's progress against its key performance indicators, including student attendance, retention, progress in English and Maths, student behaviour and cyber security. It highlighted the financial pressures that would result from a recent policy change to the delivery of English and Maths; the low uplifts in funding for the next academic year and its impact on potential pay increases, the increase in funding for Apprenticeship and the effective use of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) to support the implementation of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), in particular the College's partnership with the NHS. It was also noted that the College has signed a new Mental Health Charter launched by the Association of Colleges (AoC).

The Principal gave a brief summary of the key challenges facing further education colleges in general. The Principal put these issues into context for West Herts College.

The Board discussed in more detail the significant impact on the College, of the policy changes in English and Maths. Concerns were raised over the recruitment of English and Maths teachers, and the impact of this on quality of education, student retention and the substantial financial burden. The Board noted that the complexities of these changes are far reaching and appreciated the work already carried out by the College to try deal with r them. The College would keep the Board updated.

The report was noted.

## 37/23 4 STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

### 4.1 Barnfield College Capital Project

The project is currently on track for budget and build programme. No concerns were reported by the College's structural engineers and the Building control officers are satisfied with progress and the quality of work carried out to date. Risks are being managed effectively and movement within the project budget is being monitored closely to maximise value for money and to remain within agreed spending limits. The College is actively involved in decisions about the remaining outstanding design matters.

It was noted that the construction of the Barnfield College Phase 2 building illustrates good progress against 2 of the College's key strategic aims: reducing carbon emissions and meeting employer skills requirements.

In response to questions from the Board, it was reported that the College had a fixed price contract with the construction company and due diligence carried out by the College had shown that the company has good financial health. These factors provide important cost-certainty.

The savings from VAT exemptions had been reinvested in specific areas of the build to improve the environmental performance of the building the quality of finishes. The Barnfield College Phase 2 building is currently on track to achieve 'Excellent' status in the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) award. BREEAM is one of the global leading green building rating systems that is used to measure the environmental performance of new and existing buildings and is the benchmark for best practice in environmental design and management.

The report was noted.

## 38/23 5 RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

### 5.1 Quality of Provision & Student Progress Report

The report provided the Board with details of student performance, expected outcomes and how student progress is monitored. In summary, the vast majority of students enrolled onto vocational qualifications are being retained and making good progress. Intervention plans are in place for those students who require additional support to catch-up on their progress. The majority of students are engaging in English and Maths lessons, and it is anticipated that the number of students predicted to achieve grades 9-4 will exceed national averages.

It was noted that the College is performing well against its strategic priority to provide students with skills they need to maximise opportunities in life and work, the report highlighted the high proportion of students accessing industry-specific skills development opportunities.

The Board were assured of the actions taken by the College to manage risks such as shortages of specialist teachers and employer industry-specific skills development opportunities. . The College has significantly reduced the number of teacher vacancies and has the specialist resources needed to deliver the curriculum and qualifications. Links with

employers are continually developing and the College currently has good levels of coverage across its curriculum employment sectors.

It was also noted that students must pass external examinations in order to pass the full qualification and as such the College would provide additional opportunities for re-sits if required.

The Board discussed the measures in place to identify trends in underperforming students and the provision of appropriate support measures to specific groups, in particular looked after children. Intervention procedures and additional support mechanisms for these groups were clarified.

**ACTION:** College to report back on the actual versus the predicted pass rates when they arrive.

The report was noted.

5.2 **Finance Report** (confidential item – part 2) *Please see separate minutes –*

## 6 **REGULARITY & COMPLIANCE**

### 6.1 **Corporate Risk Register**

The report contains the latest version of the College's High-Level Risk Register. The Audit Committee reviewed the College's risk register at its meeting on 28 February 2024. Since the Audit Committee, risk 6.6 (the college becoming insolvent) has been removed from the High-Level risk register. All updates and a summary of the number of risks on the High-Level Risk Register were highlighted in the report (Appendix 1).

In summary, since the last report to Corporation in December 2023, no risks have been added to the High-Level Risk Register and the risks relating to the closure of Watford UTC and the College becoming insolvent were removed from the high-risk register. There are now 4 High-Level risks.

The Board discussed the risk related to qualification reform, in the light of the English and Maths policy changes and the T-levels. It was noted that the Risk Register is a live document and is updated on a regular basis.

The Board congratulated the College on its re-accreditation for Cyber-Essentials and it was noted that following a restructure in IT, the newly appointed Head of IT Governance will be looking to recruit a Cyber Security Officer shortly.

The report was noted.

## 39/23 7 **BOARD & ORGANISATIONL EFFECTIVENESS**

### 7.1 **Learning walks**

Two learning walks have been arranged for the 17/19 April in Watford and Hemel Hempstead for PT & RL. All other governors were encouraged to either join these walks or make arrangements with the clerk for alternative dates.

### 7.2 **Update on Corporation Membership**

7.2.1 **Phil Berry** – Term of Office ends of 16 April 2024

**DECISION:** PB was reappointed for a 4th term of office which will commence from the 16 April 2024 for 2 years.

It was noted that 3 new governors would start their term of office at the next meeting on the 8 May, including the successor to the Chair of Governors, who will take up his post as Chair in July, when Phil Thompson's terms of office ends.

### 7.3 **Amendment to Corporation Standing Orders**

The Corporation's Standing Orders have been updated in line with current practices for the recruitment and appointment of the Chair of Governor position.

**DECISION:** The Board approved the amendment to the standing order 19 in the Standing orders.

### 7.4 **Corporation External Review Action Plan**

Following the external review of College governance, conducted by Fiona Chalk, Members of the Corporation and the College Executive were asked to prioritise the top three recommendations for improvement and further development. The Board discussed and agreed the priorities that should form the action plan, it was noted that the Board's views were

aligned with the external reviewer. Cost implications and additional time required by the College Leadership Group to deliver some of the priorities were considered and it was agreed that this should be reflected in the final action plan. All other recommendations were discussed, and it was agreed that some recommendations in part only will be included in the final action plan. we

**ACTION:** The Clerk to develop an action plan that will deliver improvements on the agreed priorities with realistic timescales. To come to the next Corporation meeting on the 8 May 2024, for agreement.

#### 40/23 8 URGENT BUSINESS

##### 8.1 Incident at Watford Campus

The Principal updated the Board about a security incident at the Watford campus on the 12 March 2024. The College received a telephone call claiming that an explosive device was on site. The situation was managed well by College staff and the police. The building was evacuated while a thorough search of the building took place. No device was found, and it was considered to be a hoax call. The police will continue their investigations to identify the caller.

##### 8.2 Reflections on online meetings

The Board were asked for their opinion on holding online meetings. Most governors selected to give feedback via email to the clerk. Two governors reported that there was a balance of advantages and disadvantages to both meeting types and suggested online meetings should remain in the minority in terms of frequency.

**ACTION:** Board member to feedback to the Clerk on the use on online meetings in the yearly calendar of meetings.

#### 41/23 9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 8 May 2024, 5pm, Barnfield College

Meeting closed: 18.30

#### Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 8 May 2024

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
38/23/5.1	College to report back on the actual versus the predicted pass rates when they arrive.	
39/23/7.4	he Clerk to develop an action plan that will deliver improvements on the agreed priorities with realistic timescales. To come to the next Corporation meeting on the 8 May 2024, for agreement.	8 May 2024
40/23/8.2	Board member to feedback to the Clerk on the sue on online meetings in the yearly calendar of meetings.	8 May 2024

Ref	Summary of Decisions
35/23/2.2.2	The Board approved the Financial Regulations
35/23/2.2.2	The Board approved the Anti-Bribery Policy
35/23/2.2.2	The Board approved the Whistleblowing Policy
39/23/7.2.1	Phil Berry was reappointed for a 4th term of office which will commence from the 16 April 2024 for 2 years.
39/23/7.3	The Board approved the amendment to standing order 19 in the Standing orders.