

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD

MINUTES

Matters deemed confidential on the grounds of commercial or personal sensitivity have been redacted from the published.

Date	Wednesday 18 December 2024
Time	17:00 to 19:15
Location	Low Carbon Centre, Weybridge
Present (Governors):	Professor Craig Mahoney (Chair) Rowen Baker (Student Governor) Fiona Capstick Mitchell Fletcher (Student Governor) Dr Andrew Gilchrist Mary Hughes James Measures Hilary Omissi Rebecca Page-Tickell Jackie Pearson Christine Ricketts (Principal and Chief Executive)
Officers and advisers In attendance	Sarah Clancey (Assistant Principal Education) - APE Lorne Richardson (Assistant Principal Curriculum) -APC Allan Tyrer (Chief Operating Officer) - COO Melissa Drayson (Director of Governance) - DG
Apologies for absence	Jesse Adekoya Lee Chantry (Staff Governor) Adam Herriott Maureen McDermott (Staff Governor) Paul Stedman Meyrick Vevers
Quorum (6)	The meeting was quorate throughout

Item	Action lead
1. Preliminary items	
1.1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence	

The Chair opened the meeting. All present were reminded that some items were highly sensitive and were strictly confidential. All matters

discussed should be considered confidential until the minutes were approved at the next meeting.

Apologies were as listed above. In addition, it was noted that representatives from the DfE had declined the standing invitation to attend.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no new declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda. Previously declared interests were carried forward.

1.3 Urgent other business notified in advance.

There were no requests to raise urgent items of other business.

2. Minutes

2.1 Minutes of the Corporation meeting on 23 October

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of 23 October 2024 be APPROVED as an accurate record, and confidential sections be confirmed.

2.2 Matters arising and actions carried forward.

Supporting paper by the Director of Governance

All actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were covered by items on the agenda.

3. Student Governors and Student Voice report

The Student Governors presented feedback from discussions at the first Student Council meeting on 13 November. The discussion fell into three categories: what was going well, what needed to improve, and reflections on the student survey.

1. What is going well

- Positive and welcoming College environment
- The hour-long lessons with breaks in between, especially for English and Maths.
- Flexibility in learning when undertaking practical lessons
- Enrichment activities including guest speakers, trips to contextualise learning, and sessions themed around creativity and sport. The recent presentation from Charlie's Promise had been particularly thought-provoking and had encouraged discussion among students on knife crime.
- IT equipment in digital areas.
- More structured and engaging personal development sessions.

2. Areas for improvement

These included:

- The need for more sheltered areas outside, taking congestion away from busier indoor areas. The student governors commented that the canteen and Hub were particularly noisy, and were not therefore well suited for lessons. Some students coped less well with noise, and there was currently a lack of quiet areas.

Governors were advised that the use of the back of the Hub for teaching should end in February when the Edge was reopened. Pressure on common space would also be alleviated with the opening of the Food Hub in Barnes Wallis. The estate redevelopment would also include exterior landscaping and more sheltered areas.

- Some students would prefer the same teachers for each subject, especially in maths, and suggested stronger collaboration between teachers
- Communication, with more consistent use of Google or Teams as a single messaging source. Google Classroom was the main method of communication and the new Purlos software also linked to WhatsApp. Email was generally considered to be less useful for students. Governors urged management to keep up to date with the technology most frequently used by students. (many universities were using Instagram and Snapchat as communication tools), and recommended that a student advisory group be set up.

Governors asked if students had sufficient opportunity to meet to discuss issues and raise areas of concern with management. The new Student Council was intended to be the main mechanism for this. All course reps and other interested students were encouraged to participate so it was hoped that attendance would increase over time.

The importance of hearing all students' voices was encouraged. The Student Governors confirmed that they were also course representatives and regularly picked up feedback through conversations with other students.

There was a discussion of the student feedback on teaching and learning. This provided a valuable, first-hand, student perspective on what good teaching looked like, although the suggestions made should not be interpreted as indicating poor teaching.

Management was asked how student concerns were picked up and dealt with. A 'You Said, We Did' approach was taken to provide students with assurance that their views were important and led to action.

Two governors had attended the Student Council and confirmed that it had been a positive meeting, with great engagement and ideas from

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students. Other governors were encouraged to attend the Student Conference on 22 January and Student Councils in March and June.

AGREED:

- (i) That key issues raised by the Student Council would be followed up at the Teaching and Learning Committee
- (ii) That the Student Voice structure diagram would be recirculated to governors.

4. Principal and Chief Executive's Report, including performance against KPIs

Supporting paper and presentation by the Principal and CEO

4.1 Main report

Governors received a presentation summarising headlines and recommendations from the detailed written report, including:

- The recommended self-assessment grade for 2023-24 for overall effectiveness was Good.
- Underneath this sat a set of goals and aspirations relating to college community culture, values, communication, reputation and developing a sense of belonging. The focus on 'Belonging at Brooklands' encompassed the launch of the Brooklands Aspire staff development programme on the Virtual College and the headway made with promoting and embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).
- The College had invested in specialist MIS support to develop the data dashboard further, resulting in significant improvement.
- There had also been investment in a new staff survey tool, resulting in twice the previous response rate.
- A progress update on the estate redevelopment was given, including a forward plan for Phases 2 and 3. In response to a question, it was noted that there had not been a lot of feedback from students about the impact of the work to date.
- Work was underway to develop a communications plan based on 'five key messages' arising from work between consultants and the leadership group to shape the vision for the future. The communications plan would go live in the Spring. Governors suggested that the five messages might be printed onto a small card for easy reference.
- Following consideration by the Finance and Resources Committee, a recommendation was made for a 2% staff pay award, backdated to August. In response to questions, governors were advised that many institutions would not be implementing the Association of Colleges (AoC) recommendation of 2.5% in the light of increased National Insurance costs and the uplift to the national minimum wage.

The College would review its position in the Spring once there was more certainty about the financial position.

AGREED:

- (i) **To explore governor access to the Virtual College for training.**
- (ii) **A demonstration of the updated data dashboard to be given to governors at a future meeting.**
- (iii) **The outcomes of the staff survey would be reported to the Finance and Resources committee.**

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the recommended Overall Effectiveness judgement of Good for the College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2023/24 be APPROVED.**
- (ii) **That, on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, a 2% staff pay award backdated to August 2024 be APPROVED.**

4.2 KPI Report for 2023-24

A final overview of 2023-24 performance against KPIs and targets was given. Some notable headlines were:

- 98 per cent of students reported feeling safe at College, hitting the target for this KPI
- Financial, resources, efficiency and progress targets had all been met.
- High grades for English had improved, but overall outcomes for English and maths remained stubbornly low. There would be a standing agenda item for English and maths at the Teaching and Learning Committee.
- Overall learner attendance still required improvement.
- Some staff survey metrics were slightly under target.

In response to a governor's question, it was confirmed that late students were marked as attending. There would be a focus in the Spring on ensuring consistency of practice with regard to taking registers.

The 2024-25 KPIs would be discussed at the Strategy Day in February. The Executive Group was in the process of redesigning the format to align it with the new risk register. Governors supported a fresh look at the KPIs for teaching and learning.

5. Curriculum, Quality and Learner Experience

5.1 College Improvement Plan 2024-25 (CIP)

Supporting paper presented by the Assistant Principal, Education.

The new CIP had been drafted to reflect the core strategic objectives specifically around the quality of education, financial resilience and investment in the workforce. Governors' attention was also drawn to the section on addressing the FE Commissioner's recommendations regarding monitoring the estate development, further refining the data dashboard, and proceeding with the SPA. In response to a question,

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management confirmed that the data dashboard would be functional by the next Stocktake visit on 23 January.

There was a discussion of how best to use the CIP as a dynamic monitoring tool. In previous years, reports came to the Teaching and Learning Committee. However, the broader coverage suggested direct reporting to the Corporation would be more appropriate,

A governor requested more information on the Teacher Toolkit. The presentation to the Teaching and Learning Committee would be shared and governor access to the module on Virtual College investigated.

AGREED:

- (i) **That termly exception reports on performance against the CIP would be brought to the Corporation**
- (ii) **That resources on the Teacher Toolkit would be shared.**

RESOLVED: that the College Improvement Plan 2024-25 be APPROVED.

5.2 Teaching and Learning Committee report and recommendations *Report and Minutes of the meeting on 6 November 2024*

The Chair of the T&L Committee summarised headlines from the report.

- The Committee was impressed to receive an analysis of pre-16 provision and the approach being taken to standardise provision
- The Corporation was alerted that T Level recruitment was below target. A watching brief was being kept on numbers, and entry requirements and pre-enrolment advice were being reviewed.
- Other priorities, including attendance and English and maths, had been covered in the Principal and CEO's report.

The Corporation discussed the levels of safeguarding in place for pre-16 students, especially those who were otherwise home-schooled. It was confirmed that home-schooling was not necessarily flagged as a safeguarding risk and an individual approach would be taken to meet any support needs, but that home-schooled students should have link support from the County Council should any concerns be identified. New government guidance was anticipated, and systems and processes would be reviewed in light of this.

Governors asked if data protection rules were different for under-16 students. It was confirmed that, in this respect, they were treated the same as 16-18 year old students.

6. Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023-24

6.1 External Audit Management Letter and letters of representation *Presented by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.*

The draft management letter was presented by the Auditors to a joint meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Finance and Resources Committee on 4 December. The report had given a clean

audit opinion with no significant adjustments, or internal controls issues identified.

The Letter of Representation needed to be approved and signed by the Chair to release the final audit report and opinion. This would then be submitted to the DfE (Department for Education) with the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

RESOLVED:

- i) **That the Financial Statements and Regularity Audit Management Letter be APPROVED.**
- ii) **That the Letter of Representation be APPROVED and signed by the Chair.**

6.2 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2023-24

Presented by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

The College was required to submit the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report with the approved Annual Report and Financial Statements. The Corporation noted that the report gave a comprehensive account of the Committee's activity during the year and the opinion that, based on this activity, the College had adequate systems of internal control, risk management and corporate governance.

RESOLVED: that the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2023-24 be APPROVED.

6.3 Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023-24

Supporting paper presented by the Chief Operating Officer.

The draft document was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and Finance and Resources Committee on 4 December. Some changes had been made subsequently, but these were presentational and did not affect the bottom line. Key headlines were:

- Income for the year was up by £1m and costs down by £100k, resulting in an underlying surplus of over £500k.
- The land sale had necessitated some complicated accounting treatment. The sale proceeds were being paid in instalments. When added together the proceeds amounted to £54m, reflected as a £39m surplus at year end. The full amount was committed to the estate redevelopment project and would be converted into the value of the buildings as the project proceeded.
- The balance sheet showed assets of just under £50m at the year-end.
- Solvency ratios were very strong, and all FE Commissioner financial benchmarks were met. The DfE's Financial Health tool calculated a score of 210 points, which was just short of outstanding.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023-24 be APPROVED, signed and submitted to the Department for Education by the 31 December deadline.

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7. Finance and Resources

7.1 F&R Committee report and recommendations

Supporting paper and minutes of the meeting on 4 December.

The Corporation noted the Committee report and minutes. In the absence of the Chair, the Director of Governance reported on matters not covered in other agenda items.

The October Management Accounts had been made available to all governors and showed that the College was currently on track to achieve its annual income and expenditure targets. The Chief Operating Officer updated the Corporation that Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) contributions had been reduced from 31% to 17% from April 25, saving £300k a year.

7.2 10-year financial plan

Supporting paper by the Chief Operating Officer

Governors noted that the five-year plan had been updated and extended beyond 2031 when the repayment period of the DfE debt started. Three versions had been prepared to reflect planned, minimal and worst-case growth scenarios, along with increased pay-cost ratios. Even the worst-case scenario produced a surplus in ten years, indicating that the College could afford to meet its commitments and invest further in teaching and learning.

The figures were caveated by the external risk of economic or political change during the lifespan of the plan.

The draft figures and underlying assumptions had yet to be aligned with the curriculum plan and also required stress testing by an independent external expert. The FE Commissioner would also stress test the figures as part of their oversight.

7.3 Estates project update

Verbal update by the Chief Operating Officer

The Corporation noted that the Finance and Resources Committee had received a detailed report and that no further updates were due. The project was currently on course and within budget.

7.4 IT procurement

Supporting paper by the Chief Operating Officer

Tenders had been obtained for two IT infrastructure projects with values each of over £100k, therefore requiring governor approval.

- Immersive technology for Barnes Wallis. The programme would allow linking with the other Surrey Colleges who were already using the same technology. Governors commented that, in their experience, the college had negotiated a good price. A single supplier exemption had been applied due to the need to use the same product as the other Surrey colleges.

- New IT server infrastructure to replace the current server which was becoming out of date. This was essential work to ensure continued cyber compliance.

It was confirmed that both projects would be funded from capital grant money that had already been received.

RESOLVED: That the following IT procurement be APPROVED:

1. I-Immersive at a cost of []
2. Softcat at a cost of []

8. Audit and Risk

8.1 Audit and Risk Committee report and recommendations

Supporting paper and Minutes of the meeting on 4 December presented by the Chair of the A&R Committee

The Corporation noted the summary report and Minutes. Headlines were:

- The final Learner Numbers audit for 2023-24 resulted in an opinion of reasonable assurance.
- The Value for Money annual report demonstrated that, in the Committee's opinion, the College had taken appropriate actions to achieve value for money during the year,
- There had been no incidents of fraud, whistleblowing, significant data breaches or cyber security events during the year.

RESOLVED: that the following be APPROVED at the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee:

- i) The Internal Audit Annual Report 2023-24
- ii) The Risk Management Strategy 2024-25

8.2 Risk Register

Supporting paper presented by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and Chief Operating Officer.

The updated corporate risk register was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee on 4 December. Key changes were that the net (of mitigation) scores for both finance risks had reduced.

RESOLVED: That the risk register be endorsed as a fair reflection of current strategic risk.

9. Policies for approval

RESOLVED that the following policies be APPROVED.

- i. The Prevent and Counter-Terrorism Strategy
- ii. The Staff Disciplinary Procedures (F&R Committee recommendation)
- iii. The Complaints Policy and Procedures (T&L Committee recommendation)

10. Governance and Compliance

10.1 “Project Ethel” Group (PEG) Terms of Reference
Supporting paper presented by the Director of Governance

RESOLVED: that the PEG Terms of Reference be APPROVED.

10.2 Register of Sealings – standard termly report to note

This was a standing item required under the Instrument and Articles of Government and was duly noted.

11. Urgent Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Dates of Spring-Term all -governor meetings and events

22 January: Student Conference (11:00 to 15:00.

5 February: Strategy Session. (12-5.30 pm)

12 March: Teaching and Learning Day (9:00 to 13:00)

26 March: Corporation Board (17:00)

13. Confidential item

Students and all staff, except the Director of Governance, withdrew for a confidential item. A separate minute was taken.

Approved as a correct record by the Corporation on 26 March 2025