

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2024 IN THE EXCHANGE BOARD ROOM / VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Massoud Akbari	Student Governor (FE)
Ram Gupta	Member
Catherine Hill OBE*	Member
Michael Lee	Business Support Staff Governor
Nadeem Memon	Member
Ridwaan Omar	Member
Arif Patel	Member
Chelston Phillip	Student Governor (HE)
Darren Ratcliffe	Member
Clare Shaw	Academic Staff Governor
Taiyab Sufi	Member
Bryan Welch	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Nathan Rogan	Associate Board member
Jennifer Eastham	Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services
Rachel Tarplee	Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Nicola Clayton	Director of Business Development and External Engagement
Matthew Robinson	Director of Student Support and Experience
Sarah Horeesorun	Director of Governance

Annalee Hurley* Beaver and Struthers, External Audit service, for Agenda Item 7(i)

* indicates attendance via Microsoft Teams

The meeting started at 14:00 and was quorate.

1. WELCOME AND PRESENTATION ON WORK READY SKILLS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including those joining via Teams, and extended a special welcome to Chelston Phillip and Massoud Akbari, the Student Governors, as this was their first full face to face Board meeting.

The Chair reminded members that the Agenda items had been discussed and scrutinised by the relevant Committees or had been considered in draft at the last Board meeting with the final versions proposed for approval at this meeting.

The Chair had invited the Director of Business Development and Employer Engagement to deliver a presentation on Work Ready Skills

The Director of Business Development and External Engagement talked the Board through the presentation slides highlighting what the College already does to improve the knowledge, skills, and behaviours of students to support them in getting a job and keeping it.

The right attitude to work and strong work ethic was seen as more important than academic qualifications, technical skills, and previous experience.

The College continued to work closely with employers to ensure industry knowledge, skills and practices remained current. Through this collaborative working, employers were helping shape curriculum content and approach. Work related skills were part of the Careers Strategy and Tutorial programme.

The Board discussed the Top 10 Work Ready Skills identified by employers and the differences between personal character, attributes and values, and the specific skills needed for different jobs. The College had *Five to Thrive* which assessed the particular work ready skills needed for specific areas of the curriculum, related to the desired jobs at the end of the course. These skills were assessed at the beginning and throughout the course to demonstrate progress, and there followed discussion of how to award this with say, a certificate scheme or similar.

There was discussion of Industry Board, role models, Blackburn College Advance and maybe a Patron Scheme to mentor students.

The Board acknowledged that there were different terms being used to describe the same thing and were content to use the Lancashire Work Ready terminology – work ready skills.

The Chair remarked that this had been a useful discussion and would inform the development of the new College Strategy and Accountability Agreement. The Board thanked the Director of Business Development and External Engagement for the presentation.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Governors, Andrea Machell, Paul Morris, David Swift, and Steve Waggott.

The Chair advised those in attendance that should members of the Corporation Board become aware of any potential conflicts of interest, they should be disclosed at the earliest opportunity during the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETINGS HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2024

The Board agreed that the Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on 18 October 2024 were accurate.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no new matters arising, the Board having noted the status of actions from the previous meetings. The Director of Student Support and Experience confirmed that he had supplied the Personal Development Impact Report information with the Chair as requested.

5. CHAIR'S MATTERS

The Chair provided a verbal update and shared with members his thoughts on recent events and visits to the College.

Ofsted had visited and the Chair commented that he was proud, the whole College performed really well and gave thanks to all staff and Governors involved.

The Chair had completed the appraisals for both the Principal and Chief Executive and the Director of Governance and had interviewed two high quality candidates as potential new Governors.

The Chair was extremely impressed by the refurbished Scholars Restaurant and had attended the successful launch event. This was well supported, and guests included many external industry and community representatives who enjoyed wonderful food and a tour of the new facilities. The new Scholars was officially opened by Lisa Goodwin-Allen, and the evening supported by students who did incredibly well. The opening event was quite high-profile and featured on local radio and the BBC news.

The Chair thanked the Governors who attended this event to support the College, and also those who enjoyed a wonderful Diwali celebration with local community and civic leaders.

6. PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Principal had provided a comprehensive Report for his Item and highlighted the following:

- The recent parents evening welcomed over 470 parents and compared to several years ago when the number of parents who attended was around 40 or 50. This was a great improvement and only served to demonstrate the crucial part that parents played working in partnership with the College, meeting Tutors, checking progress, and seeing for themselves that the College cared and provided students with the best experience.
- College continued to work with employers to develop the curriculum to ensure all of our students develop knowledge, skills, and behaviours to allow them to progress to the next level of study or secure employment to fulfil their career aspirations.
- Government undertaking Curriculum Review and announcements on the future of BTECs, and what this means for T levels before Christmas.
- College would support over 2000 Maths and English exam resits this year
- Apprenticeships continued to make progress.
- 141 HNS enrolled in 2024/25, 15 students more than in 2023/24
- Development of the new College Strategic Plan 2025-28 would commence on 9 December 2024 when the College Leadership Team would have the opportunity to discuss and influence the future Strategy. The outcomes of this would inform a similar event with Governors in January 2025.
- Staff and students were remarkable throughout the Ofsted visit and worked incredibly hard. This was reflected in the provisional outcome of four Outstanding grades, an improvement on the last inspection.
- Activities were underway to drive quality improvement with less measuring and more showing staff what good looks like.
- Employers had been in College speaking to students and advising on curriculum developments.
- Finances remained outstanding and thanks extended to the Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services and Team for managing the Colleges finances effectively.
- Capital, and the Victoria Building refurbishment project was continuing.
- Opportunities for staff and students to meet the Principal had been useful to identify areas of excellence and for improvement.

The Principal extended an invitation to all of the Governors to be part of the end of year staff events on Friday 20 December 2024.

7. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

7(i) Audit Management letter 2023/24 (Beever & Struthers)

The Chair invited Annalee Hurley, Beever and Struthers, to present this Item. Annalee Hurley explained that Beever and Struthers had been contracted by the College to provide an External Audit of the Colleges' Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023/24.

Beever and Struthers had undertaken planning, preparation, and a two-week audit in College, during which they reviewed and tested the accounts prepared by the College Finance Team.

Members were reassured by the external audit of the Financial Statements and that they were a true and fair view of the Colleges financial performance 2023/24.

The Board **APPROVED** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023/24 and would review these documents again, alongside the supporting documents, in Item 9(i) later on in the Agenda.

The Board thanked Annalee Hurley from Beever and Struthers for the work done on the External Audit and for the presentation.

The Board thanked the Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services for the good outcome and asked that their thanks be shared with the Finance Team.

Annalee Hurley left the meeting at 14.50pm.

7(ii) Risk Register 2024/25

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services talked the Board through the Report.

The Risk Register had been considered by the Audit Committee at its November meeting.

The Board **AGREED** the November 2024 Risk Management Report.

8. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

8.(i) Academic Board Annual Report 2023/24

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality reminded members that the Academic Board reported to the Learning and Quality Committee and informed the Board that the Academic Board would have two new members joining in the New Year, a representative from HE and the LA Director of Children's Services.

The Board **APPROVED** the Annual Report of the Academic Board for 2023/24.

8.(ii)a Quality Improvement Plan (FE) 2024/25

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality explained that the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) had been subject to scrutiny and inspection at the dedicated meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee on 28 November 2024. One of the recommendations from the Committee had been to include the T levels as these were new and would need additional support to succeed. The QIP had been updated to include T levels.

The Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee added that the QIP would be reviewed again in 2025 to ensure that any actions from the Ofsted visit were included.

The Board **APPROVED** the Quality Improvement Plan (FE) for 2024/25.

8.(iii) HE Self-Evaluation Document

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality explained that the College's Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document (SED) was produced, in the main, for Lancaster University partners and written in-line with QAA and OfS guidance. It focused on the current position and improvements made in the quality of education delivered, student experience and outcomes.

The Board noted the performance and trajectory of HE on page 11 of the SED Report and **APPROVED** the HE Self-evaluation Report 2023-24.

9. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.(i) Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/24

The Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced Item 9(i) and explained that what followed in this Item was a suite of documents that underpinned the Annual Report and Financial Statements and that it was important, in the interests of disclosure, for the Reports to be considered together and brought to the attention of the Board.

All of the following Reports had been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 25 November 2024.

The Vice-Principal explained that the documents would be submitted to the ESFA and made available to the public on the College website. The Annual Report included commentary on performance and developments during the year, plus risk and Corporate Governance. The Accounts delivered financial health that was 'Outstanding', as measured by the ESFA, and met the FE Commissioners measures. The Reports had been audited by Beever and Struthers who gave an 'unmodified' opinion.

The Board **APPROVED** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023/24.

That being the case, the Chair of the Corporation Board and the Principal and Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer, signed the requisite letters of Representation and Assurance and the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

9.(i)a ESFA Finance Record for Colleges

As part of the ESFA Accounts Direction, the College was required to submit the accounts to the ESFA in a special template to be uploaded, called the Finance Record Return. The key elements were included in Appendix 1 of the Report and the return is due for submission to the ESFA by 31 December 2024.

The Board **APPROVED** the submission of the Finance Record to the ESFA

9.(i)b Financial Objectives

To comply with ESFA guidance all Colleges must have clear Financial Objectives that support the achievement of their Strategic Objectives. The Financial Objectives and performance against these were reported in the Financial Statements and presented in the Report for Board approval.

The Board reviewed, noted the performance against the Financial Objectives for 2023/24, and **APPROVED** the Financial Objectives 2024/25.

9.(i)c Related Party Transactions

To ensure transparency, reporting standards dictate that any transactions between the College and a Governor or related organisation be disclosed in the Annual Report and Financial Statements. The detailed transactions were declared in Appendix One of this Report and **APPROVED** by the Board.

9.(i)d Annual Review of Accounting Policies

The College's accounting policies are the rules by which it does its finance and accounting. These policies had been used in the preparation of the accounts and as there had been no new accounting standards, only minimal changes were required to the policies, none of which would have an impact on the financial stability of the College.

The Board **APPROVED** the Accounting Policies for the 2023/24 Financial Statements as set out in Appendix 1.

9.(ii) Victoria Building Refurbishment – Accounting Treatment

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained that in auditing the Annual Report and Financial Statements the External Auditors (Beever & Struthers) required confirmation from the Board to the accounting treatment of the works and grant in respect of the Victoria Building refurbishment.

The two options were set out in the Report and had been thoroughly considered by the Audit Committee in its meeting 19 November 2024 and Policy and Resources Committee 25 November 2024 where the proposal for option 2 was recommended to the Board as this would keep the transactions simple and reflects the Colleges investment.

There followed discussion and exploration of the potential options. The Board **APPROVED** the preferred option, option 2, as the accounting treatment.

9.(iii)a Management Accounts – Year end position 2023/24

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that the College finances remained 'Outstanding' and cash balances were healthy. The Board had considered these Accounts in draft at the October Board meeting and the Policy and Resources Committee had discussed the final Accounts on 25 November 2024 and had recommended them to the Board for approval.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Management Accounts final to 31 July 2024 as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee.

9.(iii)b Management Accounts – period ending 30 September 2024

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services provide a verbal update to the Board. There were some challenges, as there always were at the start of the year as it takes time for the funding to flow, and the balance sheet remained strong. The Vice-Principal confirmed that the October Management Accounts would be shared with Governors when they were available but had been delayed due to the cyber related incident.

Action: Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services

9(iv) College Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

- (i) 2023/24 –finalised
- (ii) 2024/25 – period ending 31 October 2024

- (i) 2023/24

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced the KPI Report for the period ending 31 July 2024. The Board had discussed a draft version of this Report at its October meeting, and this was the final Report.

The detailed performance information was provided in Annex A, and summarising the KPI performance, the Board noted that:

- 10 were on target
- 1 was on target in part
- 8 were under target
- 3 were not yet reportable.

The respective KPIs had been scrutinised previously at the Learning and Quality Committee on 7 November 2024 and the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 25 November 2024 .

The Board **APPROVED** the Key Performance Indicator Report for the period ending 31 July 2024.

ii) 2024/25

The Vice-Principal Finance and Corporate Services explained that the proposed KPI targets for 2024/25 were based on those within the Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, and that it was too soon to report on progress so far on many of the KPIs.

A member suggested that the Marketing Team may be able to produce some infographics to demonstrate progress on the KPIs and another requested a prioritised list of the KPIs with the fundamentals that need to be in place at the top.

Action: Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services

The Chair summarised the discussions and the Board agreed that the KPIs were reasonable and could be **APPROVED**, with the caveat that some may change slightly.

9(v) Strategic Plan Operating Statement

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced the Reports a) the finalised progress update on the Annual Operating Statement as at 31 July 2024 and b) the proposed targets and actions for 2024/25.

a) 2023/24 Finalised

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this finalised Report which provided an update on progress to 31 July 2024. The Board had considered a draft version of this Report at its October 2024 meeting.

The Report enabled the Board to monitor the College's progress to delivering the Strategic Plan.

The Board noted that of the 23 targets for 2023/24

- 13.17 were on target to achieve
- 6.33 were on target in part
- 0.5 was under target
- 3 were not yet reportable

The detail was supplied in Annex A and the Board noted the progress made.

The Board **APPROVED** the Final Strategic Plan Operating Statement Report for 2023/24.

b) 2024/25 – update as at November 2024

The Board noted the targets for the Annual Operating Statement 2024/25 and performance on these so far as set out in the Report and attached Appendix.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the proposed targets as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee.

10. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNANCE PANEL

The Director of Governance introduced this Report before handing over to the Chair and the Principal and Chief Executive to provide feedback on their introductory meetings with prospective Governors.

The Board was impressed by the CVs supplied and the experience and skills that the potential new Governors would bring to the Board and agreed that their values and ethos would be a good fit and complement the existing membership.

The appointment of the following was **APPROVED** by the Corporation Board and that the new members would be very welcome:

- Mr Asif Ali to join the Corporation Board and be a member of the Policy and Resources Committee and Student Voice Committee for the period of office 6 December 2024 to 31 March 2027.
- Mr Ojan Rohani to join the Corporation Board and be a member of the Audit Committee for the period of office starting 6 December 2024 to 31 March 2027.

11. STAFF GOVERNOR'S REPORT

The Staff Governors highlighted the main points of their Report including mention of the newly refurbished Scholars restaurant looking amazing, the successful collaboration with a local Nursery Group leading to volunteering opportunities, and the Joinery Department and Foundation Learning students designing, building and painting a Sleigh to be enjoyed in the community.

There was recognition of the efforts from all staff to demonstrate to Ofsted the College at its very best, and a request to know more about the outcomes from the Staff Survey. The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that more details on the outcomes of the Staff Survey would be shared in the New Year and some of the key findings included that staff were aware of targets and felt safe in College and there was a need to improve staff communications within Teams.

The Chair thanked the Staff Governors for the update.

12. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services provided additional detail to that contained within the Report, including the:

- Scaffolding surrounding the Victoria Building was near completion, wrapped in plastic sheeting and the roof would soon be removed as part of the planned refurbishment works.
- Construction Barn had been delivered and erected. The electricians were due to commence, and the cladding had arrived earlier in the day.
- Partial Renewal of the heating system pipework in the Beacon Centre would be completed by 31 March 2025.
- Campus Masterplan, and the College was working towards engaging consultants to undertake a feasibility study. The Chair reminded the Board and Executive that the Masterplan must relate to the new Strategic Plan.

The Board noted the content of the Report and thanked the Vice-Principal for the update.

13. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Chair approved Minutes from the following Committees were received for information:

- (i) Student Voice Committee 6 November 2024
- (ii) Learning & Quality Committee 7 November 2024
- (iii) Audit Committee 19 November 2024
- (iv) Policy & Resources Committee 25 November 2024
- (v) Learning & Quality Committee 28 November 2024
- (vi) Governance Panel 29 November 2024

The Chair canvassed the members for any additional comments on the meeting Minutes supplied for information. No comments were made.

14. ESFA FINANCIAL HEALTH LETTER

The letter was shared for information and provided the Board with assurance regarding the College's Financial Health. Based on the forecasts, the College Financial Forecasting Return generated an autoscore of 'Outstanding' financial health, and this was concurred by the ESFA.

The Board noted the content of the Report and said well done to the Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services and her Team.

15. SUBCONTRACTING ACTIVITIES

This Report provided the Board with an update on Subcontracting Activities and reminded Governors of their responsibilities, including having oversight of Subcontracting activity.

The College was in the third year of subcontracting out 16-18 funding for the delivery of 16-18 BTEC Sports provision with Blackburn Rovers Community Trust.

The College continued to closely manage the subcontract to the subcontracting standard requirements as required, reporting to Governors through the Learning and Quality Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and the Audit Committee.

The Board noted the content of the Report provided for information.

16. HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) UPDATE AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2024

This Report provided a summary of core HR data for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 October 2024 with the detailed data to be found in the Appendix.

The Board noted the content of the Report and Appendix.

17. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT

The Report provided Board members with information on safeguarding arrangements across all aspects of the College provision and provided assurance that effective structures and processes were in place.

The Chair stressed the importance of reading this Report, the Safeguarding Policy and other Appendices as the Board and its members had responsibilities to ensure Safeguarding was effective.

The Board received this Report for information.

18. STUDENTS' UNION ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 INCLUDING ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

This Report had been considered by the Learning and Quality Committee on 7 November 2024.

The Board received this Report for information and commented that it was a good Report. Members enjoyed reading about the enrichment activities, structured and personal development activities available throughout the College and remarked upon the success of Wobble Wise as an award-winning initiative, and the positive student engagement.

19. ANTI-BRIBERY POLICY ANNUAL REVIEW

This Report and attached Policy had been reviewed by the Policy and Resources Committee in its 25 November meeting where it was agreed that the policy remains fit for purpose, making clear the Colleges' ethical and proper stance on the prevention of bribery.

The Board received this Report for information.

20. GOVERNORS' EXPENSES POLICY 2024/25 AND ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Report had previously been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 25 November 2024 and provided a summary of Governor expenses for 2023/24 and the Governor Expenses Policy for 2024/25. The Board noted that the Report and Policy had been approved by the Committee.

The Board received this Report for information.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair canvassed members for any other business and a member enquired if there were any plans to mark the positive Ofsted outcome. The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that there would be something to mark the outcome and celebrate the end of year for staff in July 2025. The Leadership Team were thinking about what this might be. Plans would be shared nearer the time and the Governors would be invited.

22. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

The Chair canvassed members for feedback on the meeting and all agreed that it had been a good meeting, covered everything on the Agenda and dealt with the right issues at a suitable level.

One of the Governors was stepping down and this was his last meeting. The Chair and Governor Team wished Nadeem Memon all the best and thanked him for his valuable support.

The Chair thanked all attendees in person and on MS Teams for their contributions to the meeting.

23. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 14 March 2025 at 2pm.

Signed: Date: