

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 5 JULY 2024 IN THE EXCHANGE BOARD ROOM / VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Fran Crossland*	Member
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Chris Johnson*	Member
Paul Morris	Member
Ridwaan Omar	Member
Arif Patel	Member
Rohan Quinn	HE Student Governor
Darren Ratcliffe	Member
Clare Shaw	Academic Staff Governor
Taiyab Sufi*	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

* indicates attendance via Microsoft Teams

The meeting started at 14:00 and was quorate.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including those joining via Teams.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Governors Nadia Begum, Ram Gupta, Andrea Machell, Nadeem Memon and Steve Waggott.

2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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 15 MARCH 2024 AND 20 JUNE 2024

The Board agreed that the Minutes of the Corporation Board meetings held on 15 March 2024 and 20 June 2024 were accurate. The meeting Minutes would be signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no new matters arising, the Board having noted the status of actions from the previous meetings.

5. CHAIRS REPORT

The Chair provided a verbal report. This was the first meeting for the new Chair as Chair of the Corporation Board and a time to recognise the good work and achievements of the last year and an opportunity to look ahead on priorities and areas for improvement in the future.

The Chair commented that the College had greatly transformed and vastly improved in the time since he started as a Governor and remarked that the College was now far more engaged with the community and Local Authority which was a good thing and benefitted all.

Recognising that the College was in the inspection window for a visit from Ofsted, the College was understandably focused on preparing for the inspection and aspired to be 'Outstanding'. The College Finances were classed as being outstanding, and so were many aspects of the College campus and delivery, however, it was acknowledged that there was more to do to be outstanding beyond the Ofsted rating and to meet the future needs of the College and community it serves.

The Chair suggested that there be further discussion to determine what it means to be outstanding from say, a student's perspective, as a member of staff, a user of College services, or as an employer, for example, and that the outcome of this discussion, be it with individual Governors or as a group, would inform the next College Strategy to be discussed at the October Board Seminar. The Chair explained that he intended to meet with each Governor, as part of his induction and could explore this further in those conversations.

ACTION: Director of Governance

Since taking up the position of Chair on 1 April 2024, the Chair had participated in the DfE (ESFA) Financial Masterclass and had found this useful in aiding his understanding of complex FE funding and finances. The Chair had contributed to online meetings, participated in training, and attended the DfE/FEC Conference for new Chairs which was useful for networking and the FE Commissioner spoke well of Blackburn College which was very encouraging.

Looking ahead, the Chair listed the following as areas to focus on:

- summer exam results, student recruitment and enrolment
- welcoming new students, improving on retention and encouraging good attendance
- instilling skills, knowledge, and behaviours to ensure students are job ready, and have the personal attributes (soft skills) to succeed
- delivering effective careers advice from the outset, in classrooms and tutorial and to include HE
- making real the commitments within the Accountability Agreement
- build on great relationships with employers and establish new ones, inviting employers into the College, to influence curriculum delivery, bring latest industrial knowledge and as CPD for staff. Employers, opportunities, and careers on display in classrooms to inspire students.
- Apprenticeships, and building on the excellent work to increase numbers and opportunities
- Continue the great work on identifying and successfully bidding for grants, funding and Capital investments, and the Board would like to see a Masterplan of what the College plans to do to the campus to meet the needs of the future.
- increase the volume of, and make more effective, the marketing of the College. Again, this is something that the Board would like to hear more about and suggested using the many student/staff/college awards and achievements as opportunities for publicity.
- preparation for an Ofsted inspection and aspiring to be an outstanding College

The Chair said that the Corporation Board, the Governors, were stewards of the next phase for the College and said that he was looking forward to working with the Governor Team on shaping what that will be.

The Chair extended his gratitude to the Vice-Chair who had, in an Item later on the Agenda, agreed to be the new Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee, though he would remain a member for the time being, and thanked the Board for their continuing support. The Board joined the Chair in recognising the hard work and dedication of the Principal and Executive Team and thanked them for their tremendous efforts, wishing all a good summer. The Chair would share his thanks with all College staff at the end of year staff presentation the following week.

6. PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Principal and Chief Executive thanked the Chair for his Report and comments and praised the contribution of all staff at all levels who worked as a Team to provide students with the best learning experience. The annual staff presentation was on 9 July and the Principal extended an invitation to Governors to attend and celebrate the end of the academic year and staff achievements.

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

The Maths and English Success Centre had been well used in the run-up to the exams and was a valuable resource that would be promoted next year to support students to develop and achieve in these vital subjects.

Apprenticeships continue to perform well with a high number of Apprentices passing their EPA first time and securing full-time employment.

The College had a strong relationship with the LA, and its external partnership work was expanding which raised the profile of the College, encouraged collaboration and created opportunity, and benefited the College and its students through additional funding and grants, job and training opportunities, employer and industry influence on curriculum content and delivery, and staff CPD. The Principal thanked the Director of Business Development and External Engagement for leading on work with maintaining and establishing partnerships.

The Accountability Agreement and Local Needs Duty document approved by the Board at its meeting 20 June was submitted to the DfE (ESFA) portal by the deadline and would be on the College website from 1 December 2024.

Student recruitment figures were in line with Curriculum Planning expectations and the Principal reminded Governors of the importance of the 42-day attrition date (falling in the 3rd week in October).

The HE library refurbishment project had started and Principal and Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services would be meeting with BAM and DfE the next week for an update on the Victoria Building project.

There were many staff and student successes and awards. A member enquired if the College would be submitting entries for the AoC Beacon Awards and the Director of Student Support and Experience confirmed that the College would be entering and that the deadline for entries was 11 September 2024. The Vice-Chair of the Corporation Board offered to support the process and read the nominations. This offer was gratefully received.

The Chair thanked the Principal and Chief Executive for the comprehensive Report and update.

7. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNANCE PANEL

7(i) Board and Committee Appointments and Succession Planning

The Director of Governance introduced this report and reminded members of the Board and Committee vacancies:

- 2 External Board Member vacancies
- 1 Policy and Resources Committee vacancies
- 1 Audit Committee vacancy
- 1 Student Voice Committee vacancy
- 1 Governance Panel

The Governance Panel had discussed potential candidates to fill the vacancies at its June meeting and after consideration, proposed the appointment of Mr Bryan Welch and Mr David Swift as members of the Corporation Board.

The Chair of the Corporation Board had expressed his wish to step down as Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee. The Governance Panel requested that the Vice-Chair of the Corporation Board, Mrs Catherine Hill OBE, be approached about taking on the role of Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee. In the interests of fairness and transparency, members of the Learning and Quality Committee were canvassed to gauge interest in the role of Chair. No expressions of interest were received and at its June meeting, Committee members supported the proposal that Mrs Hill be the new Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee. The Chair of the Corporation Board added that he would remain as a member of the Learning and Quality Committee for the time being.

The Director of Governance informed the Board that Dr Zubair Iqbal had resigned from his position as Associate Board member and the Board asked that their gratitude for his time and support be recorded in the minutes.

The Vice-Chair of the Corporation Board congratulated the Director of Governance who had successfully completed the Governance Professional exam and qualification, sponsored by the DfE, and delivered by the Education Training Foundation and Institute of Directors. Board members also congratulated the Director of Governance on this achievement.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the following appointments:

- (i) Mr Bryan Welch as an independent Governor and member of the Corporation Board and member of the Policy and Resources Committee with effect from 5 July 2024 until 31 March 2027
- (ii) Mr David Swift as an independent Governor and member of the Corporation Board and member of the Audit Committee with effect from 5 July 2024 until 31 March 2027
- (iii) Mrs Catherine Hill OBE as Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee and member of the Governance Panel.

7(ii) Compliance/Progress Against:

a) RSM Turning Lights Green – A Best Practice Guide for Audit Committee:

The Director of Governance informed the Board that the Audit Committee had considered its compliance with the RSM Best Practice for Audit Committee Guide for Audit Committees and that it was compliant.

In its June meeting the Audit Committee had considered the value of completing this annual review of compliance given that recent internal audits had confirmed compliance and effectiveness of Governance at the College and the independent External Governance Review

established that Governance was strong. The next Item on the Agenda (below) and the Audit Committee Annual Report also evaluated the compliance and effectiveness of Governance and the Audit Committee agreed that to prevent duplication and because the Best Practice Guide was not up to date and there were no firm plans to do so, plus this activity was voluntary, that this annual assessment would not be completed in the future. This was noted by the Board, who noted the excellent performance and content of the Report.

The Board supported the Audit Committees assessment and **APPROVED** the Report.

b) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges:

This Report had been considered by the both the Governance Panel and the Audit Committee who recommended it to the Corporation Board for approval. The Board noted the progress made since last reported and the Colleges full compliance with the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges as presented in the Annex and confirmed by a recent internal audit.

A member sought one small amends to read that the Safeguarding Lead Governor attends the Safeguarding Committee rather than Chairs it and similar for the EDI Lead Governor and the Single Equality Committee. On the understanding that these corrections would be made the Corporation Board **APPROVED** the assessment of the Colleges compliance with the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges for 2023/24

7(iii) Revised Code of Governance for Colleges from 1 August 2024

The Director of Governance introduced this Report and the Chair made clear the importance of effective governance as discussed in the previous Items and evidenced elsewhere on the Agenda. The revised Code streamlined the legal, regulatory, and statutory obligations and signposted to relevant information rather than duplicating it. A copy of the new Further Education Code of Good Governance was supplied at Annex A.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the adoption of the new Further Education Code of Good Governance from 1 August 2024 as recommended by the Audit Committee and Governance Panel.

8. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8.(i) Management Accounts to 31 May 2024 and Reforecast

The Vice-Principal explained that the reforecast was being closely scrutinised and carefully managed in the approach to year-end.

Income and expenditure were being closely monitored, and Higher Education, Apprenticeships, and Grant Income, areas of concern, were being closely managed with measures put in place to address income shortfalls.

The Principal and Chief Executive added that the levelling-up sum had been received.

The detail was supplied in the Appendix, and new to this was the Contribution Summary analysis and detail on Capital Expenditure.

Members liked the Capital Expenditure sheet as it showed the vast amount of work being undertaken and the spend on equipment in particular would add value to the learning experience for students and for staff.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services and her Team for their work on managing the College finances effectively.

The Board **APPROVED** the Report and Management Accounts.

8.(ii) College Budget 2024/25 and Financial Plan inc. CFFR

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained that the College was reaching the end of its business planning process, which included a review and plan of the curriculum offer 2024/25, a review of the business support areas and the associated staffing and resource implications.

The Board were reminded of the approved change in financial strategy last year and the reasons for doing so.

The Budget for 2024/25 was balanced, with some savings, modest growth, no speculative income and would deliver on ESFA Financial Health metrics, meeting all bar one of the FE Commissioner ratios, that one being Staff Costs as pay costs had increased faster than income.

The Board discussed the risks and sensitivities around financial management, sector-wide performance and meeting the metrics and ratios.

The College Budget and College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) had been discussed at the June Policy and Resources Committee meeting and recommended to the Board for approval.

The Board noted the content of the Report and that some minor changes may need to be made to the figures with any material changes discussed with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee ahead of submission to the ESFA.

The Board **APPROVED** the College Budget 2024/25 and CFFR.

8.(iii) Health and Safety (H&S) Policy Statement

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained that the College's H&S Policy Statement had been reviewed by the H&S Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee and was recommended to the Board for approval and signature.

The Board **APPROVED** the Health and Safety Policy Statement as being fit for purpose, and this would be signed by both the Chair of the Corporation Board and the Principal and Chief Executive.

9. CORPORATION BOARD/COMMITTEE MEETING DATES 2024-26, TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR 2024/25 AND CALENDARS OF BUSINESS 2024/25

The Director of Governance presented the Report which provided the:

- (i) previously agreed Board and Committee meeting dates for 2024/25, and those proposed for 2025/26
- (ii) Annual Calendars of Business for each of the Boards sub-committees
- (iii) Individual Reports from each of the Committees assessing performance against relevant Terms of Reference for 2023/24
- (iv) information on the proposed changes to Committee Terms of Reference for 2024/25 as considered by each of the relevant Committees

The Board **NOTED:**

- (i) That the meeting dates 2024-26 and Committee Calendars of Business for 2024/25 had all been reviewed and approved.

- (ii) The Annual Reports from each Committee assessing performance against the Terms of Reference

Having considered the summary of the amendments and the detail provided in the appendices, the Board **APPROVED**:

- (iii) The amendments to Committee Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee, Governance Panel, Learning and Quality Committee, Student Voice Committee and Policy and Resources Committee as detailed in the report and attached appendices

10. STAFF GOVERNOR'S REPORT

There was one Staff Governor (Academic) present at the meeting who had consulted with the absent Staff Governor (Business Support) before providing a verbal Report covering the following:

- The organisation around summer exams had been incredible, with the whole College coming together to support the students.
- Good attendance and engagement at the open event for employers in Construction.
- BAMs Social Responsibility Officer working with the College and students including site visits
- Introduction of a Progression Board as part of classroom revamps and will include employer branding in learning spaces.
- Festival of Making at the weekend will see a large College presence with many creative experiences to showcase the College and engage the community.

The Chair thanked the Staff Governor for the update, and the Staff Governor added that future Reports would be written rather than verbal.

11. STUDENT GOVERNOR'S REPORT

The Student Governor (HE) had provided a Report and talked this through, highlighting the following:

- His experience of Student Governor recruitment
- Great support from the Director of Governance
- Grateful for the opportunity to experience an alternative view of the College and the experience and expertise of Board members
- Suggestions to improve and increase Careers IAG, HE learning space and marketing of HE

The Chair thanked the Student Governor (HE) for his insight and sharing the important student perspective. The Board joined the Chair in wishing the Student Governor well with his course outcome, career, and future pursuits.

12. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2023/24 – TO 31 MAY 2024

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced the KPI Report for the period ending 31 May 2024 and explained that some of the KPIs were not yet reportable as it was too early, for example, the students had until the end of the year/after exams to achieve. The final Report would be tabled at the December meeting. The Vice-Principal highlighted that the Annex now included 'best case' estimates rather than say 'unknown'.

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

- 4 were on target

- 2 were on target in part
- 5 were under target
- 11 were not yet reportable.

The respective KPIs had been scrutinised previously at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 13 May and the Learning and Quality Committee 13 June 2024.

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

13. STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025 – ANNUAL OPERATING STATEMENT – PROGRESS UPDATE AS AT 31 MAY 2024

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this Report which provided an update on progress to 31 May 2024.

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

- 6 were on target to achieve
- 6.5 were on target in part
- 0.5 was under target
- 10 were not yet reportable

The detail was supplied in Annex A and the Board noted the progress made, and that 'best case' predictions were included. A member highlighted that the positive destinations data on the table at Annex A needed updating.

ACTION: Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services

The Board **APPROVED** the Strategic Plan Operating Statement Report.

14. STRATEGIC PLAN – ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COLLEGE MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained that the Board's annual review of the College's Mission, Vision and Values was due and proposed that these remain unchanged for the year 2024/25 and the remainder of the current Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The new Strategic Plan would be discussed at the Board Seminar in October 2024.

The Board **AGREED** with the proposal and **APPROVED** the continuing use of the current Mission, Vision, and Values for 2024/25.

15. RISK MANAGEMENT – RISK REGISTER 2023/24

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality talked the Board through the Report informing them that no new risks had been identified and three risks rated as being 'Red'. The Risk Register had been considered by the Audit Committee at its June meeting where it was agreed that the risk related to Governance be removed as the risk was low given strong assurances received from the independent External Governance Review and two Internal Audits.

The Board noted that there were no new risks identified.

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

16. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS) B3 OUTCOME

Verbal update.

17. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS (QIP) 2023/24 PROGRESS UPDATE

(i) FE and WBL

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality provided an update on activities and progress within the FE QIP. The Report had been discussed at the Learning and Quality Committee meeting on 12 June 2024. A few of the members had participated in the Quality Summits and remarked upon the positive progress demonstrated in these conversations.

A member commented that there was a lot of detail and data in the Report. The Vice-Principal said that they were introducing a summary page to highlight movement and performance, in addition to the detail for those who wish to see it. This proposal was welcomed by members.

The Report was **AGREED** by the Corporation Board.

(ii) HE

Members had received this Report in advance of the meeting.

HE had been discussed within other Agenda Items so questions by exception were invited and it was agreed that the new Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee would meet with the Principal and Chief Executive, Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality and Director of Governance to discuss the timing of Reports and timeliness of data.

ACTION: Director of Governance

18. CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services reported that the Victoria Building project was progressing well and that the massive operation to erect the scaffolding was in quite advanced stages. The building strip-out was going well. A 'topping out' ceremony would be arranged for the end of September 2024.

Consultants were working with colleagues on the Campus Masterplan and the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee added that, ideally, discussion of the Masterplan should be included when the Board discusses the Strategic Plan 2025-28 at the October Board Seminar.

ACTION: Director of Governance

The Report contained further detail on planned summer works and the Chair invited comments by exception. No comments were made.

The Board thanked the Vice-Principal for the update.

19. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

- i. Audit – 4 June 2024
- ii. Governance Panel – 22 April 2024 and 17 June 2024
- iii. Learning and Quality – 13 June 2024
- iv. Policy and Resources – 13 May 2024, and 17 June 2024
- v. Student Voice Committee – 8 May 2024
- vi. Academic Board – 21 May 2024

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

20. ANNUAL SKILLS AUDIT FOR GOVERNORS AND CHAIR'S APPRAISAL

The Director of Governance informed members that the Governance Panel had approved the Governor Self-Assessment questions and that the survey would be shared with Governors to complete over the summer, in parallel to the routine annual declaration of Register of Interest.

It was understood that there would be no Chair's Appraisal this year given the Chair being new to the role. The Chair extended an invitation to meet with each of the Governors by way of an informal meeting to get to know each other better and explore thoughts around the College being 'outstanding' in all areas of its operations and delivery, and what this might look and feel like.

ACTION: Director of Governance

Board members noted the content of the Report and acknowledged the summer activities.

The Board received this Report for information.

21. HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) UPDATE

This Report provided a summary of the core HR data for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2024 with detailed data to be found in the Appendix. The Report had been discussed extensively at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 13 May 2024 and was provided to the Board for information.

The Board noted the content of the Report and Appendix.

22. BEEVER AND STRUTHERS EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023/24 – AS APPROVED BY AUDIT COMMITTEE ON 4 JUNE 2024

The External Audit Plan for 2023/24 was approved under delegated authority by the Audit Committee and provided to the Corporation Board for information.

The Board noted the content of the Report.

23. ESFA FINANCIAL STATEMENTS LETTER/DASHBOARD

The Report informed members that the ESFA College Financial Health letter had been received, and that the College had maintained its financial health grade of 'Outstanding'.

The Board noted the content of the Report, the letter at Appendix One and the example of the ESFA Colleges Financial Dashboard provided.

The Board noted the content of the Report.

24. NET CARBON ZERO – UPDATE

The Report provided Board members with information on progress against the 31-step FE Climate Change Road Map, a copy of progress against the Action Plan included in the papers.

The Board received this Report for information.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair canvassed members for any other business, of which there was none, before adding some thoughts on how the Board meetings might be managed in the future. The Audit Committee and Policy and Resources Committee had introduced focused presentation on topical themes, and the Board would like to do similar and cover, for example, Careers, growth of the College and business, the student experience, Local Authority Town Plan. The Chair would explore this further in individual meetings with the Governors.

26. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

The Chair thanked all attendees in person and on MS Teams for their valuable contributions to the meeting and wished everyone a great summer.

27. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 18 October 2024 Board Seminar in the morning followed by the Corporation Board meeting at 2pm.

Signed: Date: