

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 15 MARCH 2024 IN THE EXCHANGE BOARD ROOM / VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS

PRESENT:

Lillian Croston	Chair
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Mark Allanson	Member
Nadia Begum	FE Student Governor
Fran Crossland*	Member
Ram Gupta	Member
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Chris Johnson*	Member
Michael Lee	Business Support Staff Governor
Andrea Machell	Member
Paul Morris	Member
Ridwaan Omar	Member
Darren Ratcliffe	Member
Clare Shaw	Academic Staff Governor
Steve Waggott	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 and for the benefit of those joining the meeting for the first time, as was the case for Darren Ratcliffe and Clare Shaw, and for those joining via Teams, there followed round-table introductions from all participants.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Governors Arif Patel, Taiyab Sufi, Rohan Quinn, and Associate Member, Dr Zubair Iqbal.

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 8 DECEMBER 2023 AND 15 JANUARY 2024

A Governor enquired if the SAR assessment of Behaviours and Attitudes had been updated and this was confirmed.

The Board agreed that the minutes of the Corporation Board meetings held on 8 December 2023 and 15 January 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.

The Chair reminded Board members that a large number of items on the agenda for this meeting were for approval and had been discussed in detail at the various Committee meetings, as indicated.

5. CHAIRS REPORT

The Chair had provided a written Report and, as this was her last Corporation Board meeting as Chair, committed to say a few words at the end of the meeting.

In summarising her activities, the Chair said that she had:

- completed two Learning Walks and, again, encouraged the Governors to commit to completing at least one this year.
- Chaired the Student Voice Committee. This had been well attended and demonstrated to the students that actions raised at those meetings were acted upon and feedback provided.
- participated in regional and national meetings online with the AoC to discuss sector concerns and developments.
- attended a College Open Evening. This had been an opportunity to showcase the College to students, parents and employers and having talked to attendees, the Chair recommended that Governors participate on such occasions when they can.
- enjoyed the One Voice Awards evening and the opportunity to celebrate the success of students and business in the local community.

A Governor suggested that, in addition to events and opportunities being promoted by the Director of Governance as they arise, that Governors have a forward look or calendar of the College's main events. It was agreed that this would be a good idea so that Governors could plan their diaries.

Action: Director of Governance

The Chair praised the work of the Remuneration Committee, supported by the Director of Governance, to ensure consistency and increase the evidence provided in the Senior Post Holder Appraisal Reports.

In summing up this Item, the Chair remarked that the College was in a good place, with its fine and successful reputation at the cutting edge of education growing both locally and regionally, and that all Governors should feel proud for their part in supporting that.

6. PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Principal and Chief Executive thanked the Chair for her Report and comments and extended his gratitude to all staff who were working hard to provide students with the best experience and support to achieve.

The Principal informed members that the results of the January exams would be released on 20 March, and that preparations were well underway to support the delivery of 1800 GCSE maths and English exam resits in May/June. This would be a huge operation, led by the Director of Student Support and Experience, with all staff supporting students to encourage exam attendance, and through the provision of exam invigilation.

In providing the narrative to support the Report, the Principal covered the following.

In year retention was at 97%, and the 'whole college' approach to improving attendance continued.

Higher Education, and the linear structure was working well. However, students leaving before completing the course continued to be a challenge. This was being closely monitored, and measures put in place to support and encourage course completion.

There was an increased Government emphasis on Apprenticeships and the College was working hard to improve on the 67% achieved last year and increase this to 70%.

The subcontract with BRFC was now in its second year and was working well. From next year the delivery of maths and English aspects of the learning would be done by the College.

Employers were working with the College on co-creation of the curriculum. The Director of Business Development and External Engagement had introduced employers to the College to work with staff and students on essential soft skills, as well as the professional and technical skills, to ensure that the curriculum had currency and that the students were job ready. Careers advice and wrap-around support were in place and accessible to all students.

Curriculum Development and Employer Engagement would be amongst the topics covered in the Annual Strategic Conversation with the Department for Education (ESFA) who were to visit the following week. Other features of those discussions would be the Accountability Agreement, skills, quality, investment, and governance.

An example of external engagement with local employers and the community included the inaugural Alumni event on 29 February. This occasion was to launch the Alumni network to celebrate the role that the College has had in shaping the lives of students who had studied at the College in the past. Those present were encouraged to become ambassadors of the College, to engage in curriculum development, and amongst other mutual benefits of such a relationship, offer work experience and access the Colleges' talented pool of students. The event had been a warm and wonderful occasion, well compered, and alumni shared their stories and successes. The Principal thanked the Director of Business Development and External Engagement for her part in making the event a success and said that the follow up event was already in the planning for next year.

The Principal had spoken at the Regional Partnership Conference and at a Blackburn Youth Zone event about his plans for a dedicated Blackburn Learning Quarter. This would complement the Cultural Quarter, and the Local Authority were enthused by the prospect. The plans were in development and would feature in the future Strategic Plan. Annex A to the Report provided a top-level overview of the Learning Quarter and the Principal committed to bring the rationale, focus, development, and branding to a future Board meeting.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

In another example of working in partnership, the College had hosted a maths and English conference attended by local schools with the aim of sharing best practice. Plans were shaping up for a follow-up conference after the exam season.

The T levels were doing well and the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality and staff were eager to introduce the next round of subjects in September 2024.

Finance and Estate development were covered by Items later on the Agenda.

Another member was interested to hear more about the Alumni Event remarking that Alumni were powerful advocates. The Principal agreed, adding that since the event many staff and students who had worked and studied at the College previously, had approached him at events expressing their interest to support the College through the Alumni network. The Director of Business Development and External Engagement explained that attendees at the event were invited to join the Alumni LinkedIn group and complete a form as to the level of involvement with College and where they could add value and provide opportunity. This data was being gathered and a Governor who had attended the event spoke highly of its success, saying that the stories shared were heartfelt, genuine and people spoke with such passion for the College and how their time here benefited them through their learning, friendships, support, and experiences. He thanked all involved in making it a success. It was agreed that it would be useful to have an item on Marketing at a future meeting.

Action: Director of Governance

7. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

7(i) Appointment of Internal Audit Service

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained the need for the College to appoint Internal Auditors for the period 2024/25 – 2027/28. Following a three-year contract, with one-year extension, the current provider, RSM, would reach the end of their contract on 31 July 2024. The decision to formally retender for Internal Audit services was made by the Audit Committee in November 2023.

The tender exercise concluded with those who had submitted a tender presenting to a panel in January 2024. The Panel included the Vice-Principal, Chair of the Audit Committee, Audit Committee members and the Director of Governance.

The Report set out the Panel feedback, preferred supplier, and rationale. The feedback was discussed.

The Board **APPROVED** the recommendation of the Panel to appoint RSM as Internal Auditors for the College for a further three years (with an option to extend for a further 1 + 1), subject to annual review, effective from 1 August 2024.

7(ii) Appointment of External Audit Service

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this Item seeking approval for the appointment of Beever and Struthers as the External Auditors of the College's Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2024.

Based on the experience for 2022/23, content of the accompanying Report and recommendation from the Audit Committee, the Board **APPROVED** the appointment of Beever and Struthers as the regularity auditors to undertake the Financial Statements Audit for the 2023/24 year-end.

7(iii) Risk Register 2023/24

The Risk Register, Appendix One, had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 20 February 2024. The Board noted that there were no new risks identified and that Student Recruitment, B3 metrics and Cost Savings were currently RAG rated as red.

There was some discussion of whether the Risk Register could be more dynamic, include all risks and detail on the impact of the mitigating actions. However, the Vice-Principal explained that an RSM exercise to benchmark risks identified across the sector, reinforced that the top-line risks identified in this Risk Register were very much the same as those for colleges of a similar size and income.

The Risk Register was **AGREED** by the Board.

8. ITEM PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8.(i) Management Accounts to 31 January 2024

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services informed members that the Balance Sheet remained strong. The detail was supplied in the attached Appendix. Income and expenditure were being closely monitored and measures put in place to address income shortfalls.

The Board acknowledged this approach and **APPROVED** the Report.

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

8.(ii) College Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2023/24

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this Report with progress on the KPIs to January 2024. This had been scrutinised at the Learning and Quality Committee on 8 February 2024 and the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 26 February 2024. The position on the KPIs was:

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

The Board noted the performance and **APPROVED** the KPI Report for the period ending 31 January 2024.

8.(iii) Strategic Plan Operating Statement – progress to 31 January 2024

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this Report which enabled the Board to monitor the College's progress on delivering the Strategic Plan.

The detail was supplied in Annex A and the Board noted the progress made on investment in facilities, Gatsby Benchmarks, and the increase in Stakeholder initiatives.

The Chair enquired as to the performance of the new T levels introduced in September 2023. The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality confirmed that the T Level students were doing well. A T Level event had been held the week before and was well attended. Plans were in place for the introduction of additional T Levels in September 2024. Staff were working to secure the work placements and were enthused at the prospect of the new T Level subject areas.

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

8.(iv) Financial Regulations 2023/24

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained that the Financial Regulations set the control environment under which the College's finances were operated and how they were

governed. Normally, the Financial Regulations were reviewed biennially. However, following changes by the ONS, a mid-term review had been necessary to include the updates. These were detailed in Appendix A with all of the changes marked up using tracked changes. The majority of the changes were minor.

The Policy and Resources Committee had prior consideration of this Report and recommended it to the Corporation Board for approval.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations.

9. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNANCE PANEL

(i) Update on Succession Planning and appointment of the new Chair of the Corporation Board

The Director of Governance provide an update on the current Board and Committee vacancies.

The Governance Panel had met on 29 January and proposed that Nathan Rogan (Associate member) move from the Policy and Resources Committee to the Learning and Quality Committee.

Members were reminded that at the Corporation Board meeting 7 July 2023, it was agreed that Mark Allanson become Chair Designate for the period 1 September 2023 – 31 March 2024. The term of office for the departing Chair ended on 31 March 2024 and the Instruments and Articles state that members should re-approve the appointment of the replacement at the meeting prior to the end of term of office. As this was that meeting, members were asked to formally approve the appointment of Mark Allanson as the new Chair of the Corporation Board.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** that:

- (i) Nathan Rogan be Associate member of the Learning and Quality Committee.
- (ii) Mark Allanson be the Chair of the Corporation Board with effect from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026.

10. STAFF GOVERNOR'S REPORTS

The Staff Governor's provided verbal Reports. The Staff Governor (Business Support) enquired if the College could do more to increase the number of Apprentices it supported in areas of work around the College. The Principal confirmed that Apprentices were integrated and trained through the Apprenticeships Programme, upskilled, and guaranteed a job at the end of their training.

An enquiry was made about training for exam invigilation and the Principal confirmed that extensive training would be given to refresh those that had prior experience and for those new to invigilation. Training would be delivered online and through several face-to-face training sessions. Plenty of opportunity would be available to complete the training.

The new Staff Governor (Academic) reported that staff were pleased with the pay rise awarded at the start of the year. The Staff Governor reported that the College was an exciting place to be and included mention of the:

- Futurebid conference in London
- Bespoke Construction and Careers Fairs in April
- Use of Teacheratic AI tool to plan lessons
- Bricklaying students using the maths and English Success Zone
- Upcoming Skills competitions
- Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services working with managers around the college to increase their understanding of finance and decision making. This was welcomed by staff.

Members were interested to know more about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Staff Governor explained that it was a great time saving tool helping to develop lesson plans and activities. A member suggested that AI be a potential meeting Agenda Item in the future.

Action: Director of Governance

The Chair thanked the Staff Governors for their Reports.

11. FE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (FE QIP) - UPDATE

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 8 February 2024, and the Chair of that Committee commented that the QIP supported a real drive towards outstanding with the detail demonstrating impact.

It was thought useful to clarify in the QIP what was considered a high-grade in the various courses/exams.

The Chair enquired if the target for Apprenticeships was overly ambitious, and the Director of Business Development and External Engagement responded that this was an achievable target and realistic given that the College knows its Apprentices' starting points, progress, and capabilities.

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

12. HE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (HE QIP) - UPDATE

Continuing, this time with the HE QIP, the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality confirmed that the big focus of the College was on driving improvements within HE and in particular, continuation of first year students and completion for those students in their final year. The Vice-Principal was managing all withdrawal requests and recommending additional support and guidance where it would benefit the student to continue or complete their learning.

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

13. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services reported that the Victoria Building project was progressing well.

The Vice-Principal said that the visual designs for the refresh of the HE library were inspiring, work was in the early stages for extensions to the Elizabeth Building and Construction facility, and the improvements to the hospitality refurbishments really exciting.

The Board thanked the Vice-Principal for the update.

14. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

- i. Learning and Quality Committee – 30 November 2023 & 8 February 2024
- ii. Governance Panel – 29 January 2024
- iii. Student Voice Committee – 31 January 2024
- iv. Audit Committee – 20 February 2024
- v. Policy and Resources Committee – 27 November 2023 & 26 February 2024

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

15. SUBCONTRACTING ACTIVITIES

This Report was supplied for information and provided an overview of the Subcontracting arrangements. The College continues to monitor the performance and quality of the provision and ensure compliance with the Subcontracting Standard.

The Board noted the content of the Report.

16. HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE AS AT 31 JANUARY 2024

This Report provided a summary of the core HR data for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 January 2024 with detailed data to be found in the Appendix. The Report had been discussed extensively at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 26 February 2024 and was provided to the Board for information.

The Chair remarked that it was pleasing to see that staff turnover and staff sickness absence were in decline and that exit interviews were continuing.

The Board noted the content of the Report and Appendix.

17. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT

This Report was supplied for information having been considered at both the Safeguarding Committee on 22 January 2024 and the Learning and Quality Committee on 8 February 2024. The Board noted its content and were assured that the College had strong safeguarding measures and robust systems and processes in place to safeguard students across all aspects of its provision.

18. HE SELF-EVALUATION DOCUMENT (SED) 2022/23

This Report had been considered by the Academic Board on 23 January 2024 and the Learning and Quality Committee on 8 February 2024 who had suggested a few editorial changes. These were addressed and the SED was approved in correspondence by the Learning and Quality Committee.

The SED was shared with the Board for information.

19. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT – MID-YEAR POINT

The Report provided a summary of the Organisational Development Activity for the period September 2023 - January 2024. The key data sets were included in Appendix 1. The Report highlighted significant staff development activity and increased Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The Board were pleased to learn that staff satisfaction of staff development was 99%.

The Board received this Report for information.

20. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE

The Report, which had been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 26 February 2024, provided information on the key health and safety activities during the year to date, including incident statistics, risk assessments and legislative changes.

The Board received this Report for information.

21. NET ZERO CARBON 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 Report had been presented to the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 26 February 2024, and highlights included the steady progress along the FE Climate Change Road Map and partnership with the Green Shield Group Consultants to improve and accelerate progress.

The Board received this Report for information.

22. LANCASHIRE COLLEGES HEADLINE BENCHMARKING 2022/23

The Report provided the Board with an update on the headline financial position of the Lancashire Colleges. The analysis attached to the Report showed comparison figures for the last three years.

The Board received this Report for information.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair canvassed members for any other business, of which there was none, before adding her reflections on her time as Chair of the Corporation Board. These comments were of a personal nature and are recorded separately.

24. REVIEW OF MEETING

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

25. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 5 July 2024 at 2pm.

Signed: Date: