Barnet and Southgate College Corporation
Board of Governors Meeting
23 January 2020

Minutes

Time	18.30 to 22.10	
Venue	Southgate, 008A/B (Dentistry)	
Governors present (Quorum: 6)	Mervin Archer	
	Nana Brew	
	Fiona Bulmer	
	Sheila Dawson	
	Graham Duncan	
	Imelda Galvin	
	Darren Mepham	CEO
	Christalla Tsattala	Staff Governor
	Ann Zinkin	Chair
In attendance	Neil Coker	Principal and Deputy CE (P/DCE)
	Tracy McIntosh	Executive Director Partnerships and Commercial (EDPC)
	Mark Sellis	Exec Director Corporate Services (EDCS)
	Melissa Drayson	Clerk to the Corporation
Apologies	Alessandra Almeida-Jones	
	Pooja Patel	

Governor briefing: tackling low attendance in Maths and English
Presentation by Neil Coker, Principal

Notes of the briefing and governor challenge discussion were provided separate to these minutes

MINUTES

PART A

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

Item		Action lead
1.	**Preliminary Items**	
1.1	**Chair's welcome**	

The Chair welcomed all present to the first meeting of 2020.

1.2 Apologies for absence
Apologies were received as listed above.

1.3 Confirmation of eligibility, quorum and declarations of interests
It was confirmed that all present were eligible to take part in the meeting, there were no new declarations of interests, and the meeting was quorate.

1.4 Notification of urgent items of other business
There were none

2. Minutes

2.1 Meeting on 19 December 2019

The minutes were **confirmed** as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters arising and any outstanding actions
Supporting paper by the Clerk

Actions completed and in progress from previous meetings were noted.

3. Chief Executive Report

Supporting paper by the CEO

The Board considered the update following the FEC monitoring visit in November. The final report had not yet been received, and it was not yet certain if there would be any follow up. In the meantime, staff briefings had been held to explain the financial situation and the proactive action being taken to manage this.

A further update was provided on the Borehamwood Partnership.

The Board was also asked to consider options for Hospitality House following the fire in April 2019. It would be some time before the full use of the facilities would be possible again and it was unlikely that a like-for-like replacement of the ground floor facility would be affordable. In the meantime, continuity of business with large employers had been possible by using the new classroom facilities at Southgate, an arrangement which had worked well and which could continue. Other large hirers had now found alternatives and would not be returning.

RESOLVED: that the College withdraw from Hospitality House

4. Principals report, including headline strengths and weaknesses 2018-19, and QIP
Presentation by the Principal

Barnet Southgate College

The Principal provided an overview of the emerging themes that would appear within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the current year. These would mirror the main sections of the Education Inspection Framework. The timeline for validation and approval of the QIP was proposed as follows:

- Early February: Post Inspection Action Group to meet to validate SAR and QIP
- Next Board meeting: Approval of QIP

Governors commented that the timing meant that the QIP was being signed off mid-year. The expectation was stated that future SARs/QIPs would be signed off as early as possible in the new academic year.

It was acknowledged, however, that the delay to signing off the QIP did not mean that significant quality improvement activity was not already underway.

Some of the key themes from the draft QIP were discussed:

- Ensuring well planned, sequential curriculum and delivery models in all areas. This would entail joining up elements of provision to ensure a seamless experience and building blocks for students. All learners were being provided with a learning plan that showed this sequential learning.
- High Needs learning would be separated out as a specific issue in its own right
- The plan to convert A Levels into linear provision was in progress
- The development of the current restorative justice approach to discipline and further embedding of practices that contributed toward the judgement of behaviour as good;

Governors asked for the careers strategy to be explicitly reflected within the personal development section.

Whilst recognising that Safeguarding was a strength, Governors considered that there should be explicit reference to safeguarding in the QIP, particularly in light of the high risk attached to any deficiencies in this area.

The QIP would be the main quality monitoring tool for the Board, and would be RAG rated on impact, rather than the completion of actions.

ACTIONS:

i)	**A governor validation panel to be convened in early February**	MD/NC TMc

ii) **A presentation on the Gatsby Benchmarks for careers guidance to be brought to the March Board meeting** NC/MD

iii) **That the Quality Cycle should accommodate Board approval of the SAR and QIP as early as possible in 2020-21 and beyond.**

5. KPI Report

Supporting paper presented by ELT

It was acknowledged that detailed reports on several of the red rated KPIs were provided for discussion under other substantive items. These included English and Maths Attendance (governor briefing), and finance income targets.

Student attainment was consistently lower than target. It was explained that this was partly due to the data collection methodology, which was based on the completion of full units. Governors asked management to consider whether there was a more accurate way to forecast and measure attainment.

The 'board effectiveness' grade, based on post-meeting feedback had dropped slightly to 'requires improvement' due mainly to meeting length and late papers.

6. Higher Education Self Evaluation Document (SED)

Supporting paper by Philippa O'Brien, Higher Level Skills Manager

The SED was due for annual Board approval once a year.
Six key strengths had been identified, with most data showing improvement compared to the previous year. Coursework completion (the number of students getting work in on time) and retention were particular strengths. Feedback to students was also a strength compared to much of the HE Sector. Links with employers, particularly in early years and childcare, were good.

Six areas for improvement had been identified, including:

- Continued improvement of continuation rates and data-collection/reporting
- Attendance rates: declined slightly year on year but were around the norm for London.
- Better analysis of data reporting by ethnicity;
- Library and library resources for HE.
- Progression to graduate level jobs aligned with the subject and sector area. This followed a clear policy remit from Government to the OFS.

Governors commented that, although the SED gave a positive picture, the quality of teaching and learning did not come across strongly. The good QAA outcome was not reflected in the SED, and there was little to demonstrate what students think about standard of teaching or facilities.

The reasons why two courses were behind in terms of completion were queried. Management responded that the Engineering outcomes were unusual as this was run with the University of Hertfordshire and had achieved 100% completion the previous year. Business had the largest cohort of HE students. Both areas were being reviewed with teaching staff to identify the issues.

In response to further questions, it was confirmed that entrepreneurship /setting up one's own business did not count as a relevant graduate level job. Progression activities included careers events. All HE students recorded their aspirations on Promonitor, which would allow for better targeted activity.

Governors also asked for more detail about how library resources would be improved. A visit was planned to other HE institutions, and research was being undertaken into developing the use of e-books. It was suggested that local authority funding for school libraries should be investigated.

Governors asked about current growth plans for HE, as they had previously been very ambitious plans. Numbers currently stood at 300, which was a slight increase from the previous year. A realistic growth plan for future years was being put together, with a target increase of a further 100 students next year. LMI data hasuggested that Digital and Health were potential growth areas. Management was looking to create a Hub at Southgate to bring health care, digital, and assistive technologies provision together.

In terms of internal progression, it was reported that there was some progression overall from Level 3, which was highest in Early Years. It was recognised, however, that many Level 3 students aspired to move away to study at universities elsewhere.

There was a strong marketing campaign to attract students onto HE courses. Many students were attracted by the good local reputation of the College.

It was confirmed that there was no strong case for the College to develop its own degree awarding powers.

The need for a HE link governor was repeated and Nana Brew volunteered for the role.

RESOLVED:

- **i) That the Higher Education College Self-Evaluation Document 2018-19 be APPROVED**
- **ii) That Nana Brew be appointed HE link governor.**

Barnet Southgate College

11. **FINANCE**
A confidential minute of parts of the discussion was taken on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.

11.1 **Report from the Finance Scrutiny Group meeting on 9 January**
Supporting paper by the Chair of FSG, Graham Duncan

The Minutes of the FSG were noted as a background document

11.2 **Management accounts – November 2019 (period 4)**
Supporting paper presented by the CEO and EDCS

The CEO provided the Board with an overview of factors that had led to the current financial position.

[redacted section]

The new ESFA Integrated Finance Model for Colleges must be approved by the Board and submitted by 28th February. It was vital that the mid-year forecast within this document must be accurate, honest and balanced. The commentary would be key in terms of providing the context for the figures. The proposed timescale was as follows:

- Currently curriculum planning
- First draft by 14 Feb
- 17 – 21 Feb, review and final figures
- 27 Feb – Special Board meeting
- From end of Feb start business planning.

[redacted section]

The movement from the budget to the reforecast, as set out in an appendix to the report, was explained.

With future budgets, Governors asserted that they needed to understand how the budget was built, based on contributions from curriculum areas. The detail should be scrutinised by the Finance Scrutiny Group. The Board would not approve any growth projections unless accompanied by a robust business case and sensitivity analysis.

Management gave assurances that budget setting processes would be rigorous and transparent, and that the majority of budget holders now understood and owned their budgets. Any risk to the budget would be flagged to the Board as it was identified, so the Board had the opportunity to understand and accept the risk or otherwise. The Chair stated that governors must have timely papers to give sufficient scrutiny.

Governors explored in more detail the extent to which budget holders were accountable for their budgets. Management responded that for 2020/21, each budget holder would be issued with a four-page 'contract' with ELT, with reminders about financial policies, procurement regulations and other responsibilities.

A range of other comments and concerns were expressed [redacted]:

To ensure that all governors were kept up to date with the position, it was proposed that a weekly update should be emailed by the EDCS.

ACTIONS: That a weekly email should be sent to all governors showing movement against the reforecast figures, any mitigating actions being taken and the outcomes of any discussions with the bank and funders. MS

7. Finance Policies

Supporting papers presented by the EDCS

7.1 Treasury Management Policy

7.2 Debt Management and Bad Debt Write Off Policy

Due to shortage of time, governors were invited to submit any minor comments on both policies to the EDCS by email. Subject to no significant concerns being raised, it was then

AGREED: that both policies be approved by written resolution

8. Governance and policy

8.1 **External Governance Review**

Oral report by the Clerk and Board meeting evaluations

The draft report from the external consultant was expected that week. This would be reviewed in the first instance by the CE, Chair and Clerk for accuracy and would then be shared with the Board with suggested next steps.

Governors were provided with the more detailed post meeting evaluation feedback report. The target was a score of 'good' or better for all areas of performance but there had been a slight dip in satisfaction as reported in the KPI report.

8.2 Chair's Recruitment

Oral report and recommendations by Mervin Archer

A panel, comprising Mervin Archer, Alessandra Almeida-Jones, Darren Mepham and Melissa Drayson had interviewed three agencies on 17th January. From these interviews, a proposal was made to appoint

Peridot Partners on the grounds of track record and experience, price and value added.

RESOLVED: that Peridot be appointed to lead the recruitment campaign for an external Chair.

8.3 Policy Review Schedule

Supporting paper by the Clerk

The Board noted that those policies due to come for Board approval in 2019 were up to date. Review dates in 2020 had been scheduled into the Board business workplan.

8.4 Corporation Seal Register

Supporting paper by the Clerk – noted without discussion.

9. Urgent items of other business

There were none

10. Dates of future meetings

Special Board meeting: 27th February
5 March 2020 at 18.30
9 April 2020 at 18.30 (alternative date to be explored)
14 May 2020 (including development day). All day
18 June 2020 at 18.30
16 July 2020 at 18.30

The meeting closed at 21.45

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………..(Chair)

5 March 2020