Barnet and Southgate College Corporation
Board of Governors Meeting
20th May 2021

MINUTES

PART A: NON-CONFIDENTIAL

Time	18.00: Pre-Board briefing on T-Levels 18.30: Board of Governors meeting	
Venue	By videoconferencing and in Wood Street	
Governors present (Quorum: 6) ***attended by Zoom**	Adam Goldstein* Mervin Archer* Sue Baldwin* Nana Brew* Fiona Bulmer Sheila Dawson Graham Duncan* Imelda Galvin* Jenny Jarvis Darren Mepham Sakina Quettawala* Cait O'Riordan* Mark Sweeny*	Chair Vice Chair Chief Executive Student Governor Staff Governor
In attendance	Neil Coker Tracey MacIntosh* Mark Sellis* Melissa Drayson	Principal and Assistant CE (P/DCE) Exec Director Commercial (EDC) Exec Director Corp Services (EDCS) Clerk to the Corporation
Apologies	Alessandra Almeida-Jones Ann Zinkin Christalla Tsatalla Ezgi Yaman Ozturk	

Some items have been redacted in the published version on the grounds of commercial and personal sensitivity

PART A:

Item		**Action lead**
0.	**Pre-board briefing – T Levels** *Presentation by the Principal*	

A summary of the presentation and governor Q&A is provided as an appendix to the Minutes. The presentation slides were circulated to governors after the meeting.

Following discussion it was **AGREED: that an update on College plans to deliver T Levels would be brought to the July Board**

1. Preliminary Items

Consent was granted for the meeting to be recorded to assist with the minutes.

1.1 Chair's welcome, apologies and quorum

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were as listed above. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate

1.2 Confirmation of eligibility and declarations of interests

It was confirmed that all present were eligible to take part in the meeting. Imelda Galvin reported on a potential conflict relating to her role at Milton Keynes College.

1.3 Notification of urgent items of other business

There had been no advance requests to raise any other business.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

i. Meeting on 25th March 2021

There was one correction to the attendance. Subject to this amendment, **the minutes of the Board meetings on 25 March were APPROVED as a correct record. Confidential sections were confirmed.**

ii. **Matters arising and outstanding actions**

Supporting paper by Melissa Drayson, Clerk

Progress against and completion of actions was noted, including those covered on the agenda. A further update was provided:

- The current People Strategy had been circulated by email. The impending review would need to be factored into the 2021-22 cycle of business. The best place for this within the governance structure needed to be decided.
- Staff sickness was currently averaging at 3%. This was considerably lower than benchmark, possibly due to the effect of staff working from home.
- Staff turnover was averaging at 11.9% against a target of 11-13%. Management turnover was lower than teaching. This would be monitored carefully for trends and fluctuations.
- The Chair had circulated annual objectives for the Chief Executive and other senior postholders to all governors.
- In respect of the long-standing action to develop a sustainability strategy with students, the Clerk reported that the update AOC

Code of FE Governance would have a new section specifically relating to the Board's responsibilities in this area.

3. Chief Executive's Report

Supporting paper by Darren Mepham, CE

The Board noted the paper, which focussed on the College's response to the changes in lockdown rules, the Skills and post 16 Education Bill, Trailblazer funding bids, a summary of growth opportunities and the monthly KPI report.

In response to governor questions, it was confirmed that the corporate risk register would appear as a standing item with future reports.

College response to changing national lockdown position.

An update was provided. The consensus of the Health and Safety Committee and teaching unions was that it was too soon to move from mandatory face coverings and social distancing measures in class due to concerns about variants and limited capacity to bubble. The impact on learning had been fully considered as part of the decision.

Skills and Post 16 Education Bill.

Governors questioned the current capacity or ability of employers to lead on local skills plans. It was reported that the Mayor of London's position had become clearer in the last week, with a reaffirmation that the skills agenda was top priority. Sub-regional rather than London wide bids would be encouraged

Trailblazer funding bids

The deadline for bids was the following week. Governors asked about the likelihood of success. The college had been involved in two sub-regional bids, West and East London, which had taken different approaches. It was considered more likely that bids from outside London would be successful.

Exploration of growth opportunities

Governors were pleased that 16-18 applications had increased for the second year running and asked how this had been achieved. The improved reputation of A Levels and targeted marketing, particularly using social media, were believed to be factors.

The possibility had not been ruled out that increased applications were a consequence of fewer work opportunities due to Covid rather than a desire to study. There was no evidence, however, of a decline in the current year's predicted achievement.

Internal progression had been encouraged early in the year and was looking promising.

Governors noted that there was one digital growth opportunity listed, and commented on the potential to develop more widely given the careers opportunities in this industry. Further discussions on this would take place outside of the meeting (CO'd/ELT)

A gradual revival of Apprenticeships was beginning, with employers starting to express interest and new business opportunities coming on stream, eg in aerospace. Management was confident that levels of delivery would be back on track in 2021-22, assuming no further lockdowns.

April KPIs

The Board noted the commentary accompanying the KPIs. The position had not shifted significantly since the April KPIs that had been shared by email: Green flagged KPIs for quality were being maintained, and financial KPIs had shifted from red to amber. In-year growth, apprenticeships and student numbers in ESOL continued to be adversely affected by Covid-19 restrictions.

4. Quality, Teaching and the Student Experience

4.1 Principal's Report

Presented by the Principal

Governors noted and welcomed the Principal's report on Quality improvement and the Learning Organisation. This outlined the College's ambitions to be a leader and college of choice for current and future staff and students, offering meaningful staff development opportunities and a curriculum with unique offerings.

In response to governor questions, it was clarified that Lifetime Skills Guarantee courses were being offered in existing, rather than new, curriculum areas to widen participation.

It was suggested that an indication of the relative priority of different curriculum development opportunities would be helpful, including an impact assessment and resourcing implications.

The question was raised again of the most appropriate forum within the governance structure for discussion around curriculum planning and growth.

AGREED: Governors with specialist expertise, contacts or further ideas for curriculum development and growth opportunities invited to raise these with ELT.

4.2 QTSEG Report and recommendations

Report by the Chair of the QTSEG of meeting on 13th May

Governors were referred to the Minutes of the meeting that had been sent out by email the previous day. Key headlines were:

- The briefing on Ofsted had provided significant assurance that preparation was underway for a possible full inspection in Autumn 2021. It was agreed that all governors would benefit from the briefing. In response to governors' questions, it was reported that external training would be provided to staff to ensure a high quality response to meetings with inspectors.
- There had been significant progress with implementing the Quality Improvement Plan despite Covid restrictions.
- An early indication of curriculum self-assessment grades for 2020-21 showed overall improvement to good or outstanding, except for two areas which remained as requires improvement. The Group had challenged management on the process by which improved grades had been awarded and had been assured that it was robust.
- Quality KPI data had been interrogated. There had been a lot of progress in the quality of data presented, but there was still work to do to triangulate data with the self-assessment grades. The fundamental challenge remained that impact could not be measured until student achievement outcomes were confirmed. This was further complicated this year by the use of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG)

Governors were informed that an 'immersion visit' was planned for 21st or 22nd June at Southgate Campus. This would include guided conversations with the Head of Centre, Curriculum Managers and students. Numbers would be limited due to distancing requirements, so new governors would be prioritised

AGREED:

i)	**Ofsted briefing for all governors at July Board**	NC
ii)	**Governors to sign up for immersion visit**	MD

4.3 Student Governor report

Presentation by the Sakina Quettawala

Governors were given an overview of a female only forum that had been organised to explore issues of women's safety in the wake of the Sarah Everard case. Management was asked how far the feedback had been shared internally. It was confirmed that the Principal and Head of Student Services were now following up on the recommendations. Governors urged management to show a strong 'you said, we did' approach.

The Student Governor was asked about the extent to which students were aware of how to report concerns and seek support, and how confident they were that concerns would be dealt with appropriately? It was thought that awareness of student support services was strong, but this was not necessarily the first port of call. This would be a topic to pick up at the next forum.

Governors supported the establishment of the female student forum. Several suggestions were made to develop the discussion:

- Including the issues in the college's overall approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Exploring the extent to which staff are challenging examples of inappropriate comments and behaviour, and any staff training needs to facilitate this.
- Activities to engage with male students, to educate and raise awareness of the impact of certain behaviours and to ensure that men assumed responsibility for female safety. It was confirmed that a range of tutorial materials had been developed to focus on the responsibilities of male students. On a case-by-case basis, strong proactive measures had been taken to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including suspension.

A request was made for the Safeguarding Link Governor to attend the next female student forum. The student governor would check this with colleagues.

AGREED: Update to Board on 15th July to provide assurance on management response to issues raised by students. NC

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report
Supporting paper presented by Chief Executive

The report was noted, including that this was shorter and more focussed than previous years. The ED link governor had been consulted on the report in advance and provided feedback. There followed detailed discussion and questions on the following:

- Governors were keen that personal objectives for members of ELT should reflect a commitment to implementing EDI objectives. The Chair confirmed that the Chief Executive's objectives included targets for EDI as a reflection of the commitment to strong leadership of the issue.
- More information would be valuable on measures to communicate and engage with other parties on building an EDI culture. What initiatives, training and development were in place to ensure that staff were well prepared to deal with all aspects of EDI? Management reported on
    - Manager training, including on ED Impact assessment of policies, plans and practices.

- The college calendar would reflect key points in cultural calendars – eg LBTQI month, Black History month, linking in with local community events;
- External community figures to be invited to attend student and staff events
- Ensuring the college environment, and all imagery used, was reflective of the diversity of the college community.

- Governors asked for more detail about measures in place to improve progress on addressing gaps in student achievement. This might be a possible topic at the QTSEG
- There was exploration of why the gender pay gap gone up Management responded that the gender pay gap was due to the profile of the workforce. This was being addressed by recruiting more men in lower paid roles.   The goal to bring in a gender balance at senior levels was taking longer to achieve.   The mean gender pay gap was skewed by 75% of ELT being male. A key priority was to identify and address any structural barriers to staff progression within college;
- The question was raised of how the college was dealing with the digital poverty that had been exposed by Covid. Management responded that a lot of work had been undertaken in this area, including the provision of laptops and other resources to all students who had requested assistance.

RESOLVED: That the Annual EDI report and Equality Statement be ratified

AGREED:

i)	**That the matter of EDI oversight in the board structure be addressed as part of the review of governance arrangements;**	Clerk/ Chair/ CE
ii)	**That a successor for the E&D link governor be appointed for 2021-22**	

6. Finance and Audit

6.1 Finance Scrutiny Group Report

Minutes of the meeting of the 29th April presented by the FSG Chair

Governors noted the summary report of the FSG meeting that provided headlines from the minutes. The Chair drew attention to the following:

- Increased confidence in the financial position and the underlying management processes supporting the figures
- The improvement to the forecast year end position in the Period 7 management accounts, with the year-end deficit closing the gap on the budgeted figure. This was due mainly to the receipt of additional income, albeit partly offset by further reductions in apprenticeship and advanced learner loan income;

- The improvement of the financial health score to the budgeted position at the top of the requires improvement range. This was predicted to stand until the year end. The improvement in the score since earlier this year had come from improved current ratio (+30 points) and EBITDA to income measures (+20 points), reflecting both the stronger balance sheet and I&E account positions
- Ensuring greater timeliness in the preparation of the management accounts
- The FSG had discussed budget 2021-22 early assumptions and stressed the importance of not only reducing the forecast deficit further, but reinvestment in strategic growth
- The bank loan working party had met on 23 April to approve the final paperwork under the authority delegated by the Board on 27 January
- The Business Improvement Plan remained work in progress but continued to be supported as a robust plan.

The EDCS provided an update on the Period 8 management accounts, provided to governors by email under separate cover. Key points to note were:

- The year end forecast outturn remained at the same level as P7,
- Items (tuition fund and lifetime skills income offset by increased construction staff costs) had been identified and were likely to be released into the P9 accounts. This would improve the year end position to within £89k of the original budget

In response to the request to ensure greater timeliness of the management accounts, it was confirmed that p9 would be completed the following week and would be circulated by email to governors shortly afterwards.

Management reported on the courses that were being delivered under the Lifetime Skills Guarantee from half term. These had achieved a good level of interest from potential students.

An update was also provided on the decision to reconfigure the CETEC (Centre of Excellence for Technology Enhanced Care) in the light of the lack of success in developing this area of provision. A number of the responsibilities would be devolved to other curriculum and business areas of the college.

In response to further questions, it was confirmed that, as long as the Covid roadmap continued to be on course, ESOL provision was expected to be restored to 60% of budgeted levels by the year end, with full delivery anticipated in 2021-22.

6.2 Appointment of internal auditors
Verbal update by the EDCS/ Chair of Audit

A tender process, implemented through the Crescent Purchasing Consortium had resulted in five bids. These were in the process of being scored prior to interview by a panel of Audit Committee members. A final proposal would come back to the Board via the Audit Committee on 17th June.

7. Governance and Policy

7.1 Search Committee report

Verbal update by the Chair

Interviews were underway to fill further governor vacancies that were being created by the retirement of several long-standing governors in July. One promising candidate had been interviewed with further interviews lined up for the next two weeks, including for potential Audit Committee co-optees.

AGREED: that proposals to appoint further governors and co-opted committee members would be brought to the Board via written resolution.

7.2 Governance arrangements 2021-22

Supporting paper presented by the Chair

Questions and comments were invited on the proposal to formalise the current arrangements as a Board and committee structure. There was general support for the proposal, with feedback including:

- A need to clearly define where the oversight of growth and innovation would sit within the proposed structure;
- The proposed remit for a Finance and Resources Committee was too broad.
- Should the existing Finance Scrutiny Group be converted into a Finance Committee alone, the need remained to ensure that oversight of other resources areas (Human Resources, IT Strategy, Capital and Estates) were given proper space for discussion
- Ensuring that the respective role of committees and the Board, and any delegation of decision-making authority at committee level was clearly articulated
- Clarity over how link governors fit into the structure
- The need to retain flexibility to ensure that our governance arrangements reflect the needs of the college.
- Protocols to avert the risk of knowledge silos forming, including mechanisms to ensure that all board members have a clear understanding of the high level position in terms of finance, quality and other key strategic and statutory areas.
- A longer-term focus on board development, to strengthen the way in which governors add value to the executive, and to set out expectations around governance behaviours, contributions at board meetings, and executive reports to the board.

Governors were invited to submit further comments by email

AGREED: to develop the draft proposals into a new framework and set of governance policies, for approval at the July Board meeting. Clerk/ Chair

7.3 Vice Chair election
Supporting paper presented by the Clerk

It was noted that a vacancy for Vice Chair would arise following Graham Duncan's departure. Governors were invited to contact the Chair and Clerk and express and interest by 30th June.

7.4 Head of Governance recruitment update
Verbal update by the Chief Executive

The deadline for applications was 28th May. Interviews would take place in mid-June with a proposal to the Board to follow.

7.5 Timeline for return to onsite meetings
General discussion

The preference to return to face-to-face meetings was recognised, although the convenience of virtual meetings was also acknowledged. Hybrid meetings were considered to have significant limitations. Assuming that Covid restrictions and government policy would allow, a full face to face Board meeting would be planned in July.
Governors were invited to contact the chair by email with any further comments.

8. Other urgent business

There were no items of urgent other business

9. Dates of forthcoming meetings

15 July 2021 followed by a social to mark the departure of five governors and the Clerk.

The meeting closed at 21.15

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

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APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF PRE-BOARD BRIEFING 20 MARCH 2021
T-LEVELS

The Principal presented the features of the T Level programme to governors. The slides from his presentation were made available to governors.

It was particularly noted that the roll-out programme meant that all colleges were eligible to apply to deliver from 2023 regardless of their Ofsted grade. The closing date for 2023 delivery was the end of July. The roll-out would coincide by the wider qualifications review by Government, which would result in other qualifications beginning to be withdrawn from the funding framework. Where no T Level existed a high quality alternative, that was well understood by employers or which provided strong progression to HE, would be retained. Examples of this were Sport and Art and Design.

Risks to the implementation of T Levels included that vocational qualifications currently had low currency among parents of 16-18s. Enrolments might, therefore be low with students opting to take A Levels instead. A national campaign was needed to raise awareness and understanding of the new offer (it was reported that this was planned). The delivery of T Levels would also require staff with up to date industry knowledge. The ETF provided a staff training programme that was customised to meet individual college need. The arrangement of industry placements was widely accepted across the sector to be a significant challenge, along with the engagement of employers in determining need. The College was planning a partnership approach to this.

Governors recognised that this development represented an area where investment might be needed, and recommended that it should be approached on a project basis, with clearly defined actions, milestones and outcomes