MINUTES

Barnet and Southgate College Corporation
Minutes of the Board Meeting
held on Thursday 19th December 2024
at 18:00

Governors Present:	Adam Goldstein, Chair Jenny Jarvis (via Teams) Neil Coker, CEO/Principal Diane Moore (via Teams) Mark Taylor Thomas Streater (via Teams) Adam Morley Dominic Abbot (via Teams) Phil Harding Tara Jayaratne (from 6.45pm) Tulay Rashid-Grant Chalene Scott Cait O'Riordan
In attendance:	Tracey McIntosh, Deputy Principal Victoria Cornwell-Lyon, Deputy Principal Simon Evans-Evans, COO Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance Ian Rule, Interim CFO Owen Dawson, Assistant Director – Barnet Campus (for agenda item 3)

Item	Description	Action
1	**Preliminary items** **1) Apologies for absence** Apologies for absence were received from Becky Willis, Hannah Sheath, Alex Middleton, Chaquelle Booth and Simran Vyas Macias. Chair informed governors that resignations had been received this month from Elita Eliades and Sue Baker, both of which are because of capacity challenges. Chair took the opportunity to put on record college appreciation to both. All agreed that Elita Eliades had played a pivotal role as the lead governor for safeguarding during her tenure. In relation to Sue Baker, it was acknowledged that her capacity challenges stem from her new role as a local councillor. All agreed that she had been an effective staff governor making strong contributions. Board asked that their well wishes be passed on for the future.	

	Chair then acknowledged that this was the first board meeting since the Ofsted inspection, and he therefore took the opportunity to express gratitude and appreciation to all staff teams. All agreed that it was a fantastic outcome and that everyone's effort should be acknowledged. **2) Declarations of interest** Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted. **3) Quorum** Director of Governance provided confirmation that the meeting was quorate.	
2	**Minutes of the previous meeting** 1) Minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2024 The minutes were reviewed, and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions. AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2024. 2) Matters arising and actions tracker There were no matters arising and board were happy to note the content of the action progress report provided.	
3	**Deep Dive – Attendance** Owen Dawson was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that he is the Assistant Director at Barnet Campus and has been in post for just over a year. The role involves improving behaviour and attendance at Barnet Campus. He explained that this involves helping staff to rigorously and consistently implement the attendance strategy which is in place. Deputy Principal expressed a view that he is working relentlessly, although acknowledged that the data does not yet show impact and therefore what is provided today is a candid report to allow for open discussion. Staff provided a slide presentation and explained that this sits alongside the attendance data snapshot and attendance strategy circulated in advance. Key matters highlighted were: 1) <u>Context</u> • Attendance in FE Colleges has been a persistent concern for many years. There is no one root cause for attendance being lower than desired but historically several factors have emerged as contributing to the issue, including: - ‘Culture shock’ in the transition from school to college	

	- Socio-economic reasons (finance, mental health, parental influence etc.). Parental engagement was described as 'not being what it used to be'. - Lack of disciplinary consequences - Lack of robust and clear strategies to improve and maintain attendance - Dissatisfaction with quality of education • 2024/25 sees the first comprehensive attempt to create and IMPLEMENT a college wide strategy to tackle this problem in BSC's recent history. Strategy implementation needs to improve. • Focus groups were held in September 2024 with all curriculum managers, centre directors and administrators to feed ideas and experiences into the new strategy. • Strategy was launched in late September 2024 • December 2024 is an opportunity to 'take the pulse of managers, administrators, teachers, PAC's and student surveys run and submitted'. Student voice has been informative and an example being that some lessons were described as boring. • As the strategy was only launched in late September 2024 it has not yet had very long to 'breath' • January 2025 sees working groups established looking at enrolment and timetabling. They will look at root causes for attendance issues and it believed that a lot do relate to enrolment and timetabling decisions. • Assistant Director attended the AOC attendance conference in October 2024 - 20 colleges represented from across England - BSC strategy was met with great interest and follow up suggesting the college is on the right path - Much of our strategy tallies with what others are doing, or we have generated ideas that others have latched on to. 2) <u>Attendance – the statistics</u> Key matters highlighted were: • 2023/24 - final year overall (excluding explained absences and including Maths and English) was 79.06% • 2023/24 September to December (excluding explained absences and including Maths and English) was 82% • 2024/25 September to December (excluding explained absences and including Maths and English) is 80% which means that the college is 2% down on the same point last year. • Where are we now? - Overall attendance statistics have remained notably consistent since the start of 2023/24 at around 80% on average. - English and Maths attendance has consistently dragged down the overall stats by around 7-9% over this period. - Absolute minimum acceptable attendance expectation at BSC is 90%	

	- Excluding Pathways Centre, only Business (Barnet), and UPS (Colindale) has regularly hit 90%+. 3) <u>Feedback on the strategy – key findings based on staff and student impact surveys</u> • Strong agreement that incentivisation/recognition is a key motivator of attendance • Strong agreement that timetabling is crucial, especially English and Maths scheduling • Good consistency and knowledge of register attendance protocol. Needless attendance marks were being lost because of hasty register submissions. • Good range of measures to combat poor attendance being used by curriculum areas both positively motivational and 'disciplinarian'. • Some linkage by students of attendance to future success/earnings • Inconsistent knowledge of attendance strategy and where to find it (some staff did not know there was a new strategy, many staff unaware of where it is located) • Some inconsistency from curriculum managers in how well they discuss attendance with directors (ranging from every meeting to never) • Significant inconsistency when absent students should be contacted (ranges from same day to same week) • Significant inconsistency in who is 'first responder' to student absence (ranges from curriculum manager to personal tutor/PAC to class teacher to administrator) • Significant inconsistency in who is primarily responsible for English and Maths attendance management • Anecdotal evidence that students with mental health issues (not necessarily those with EHCP's) are attending less than other students. 4) <u>Recommendations</u> • Strongly expressed view that attendance monitoring and actioning create a heavy workload on staff and therefore college might wish to consider a distinct 'student achievement unit' with dedicated monitors at each campus (or some version of this). • Timetabling in general but especially English and Maths requires an overhaul in approach. English and Maths attendance is having an excessively negative impact in most areas. • Treat term one as a 'soft opening' for the attendance strategy and conduct a major relaunch in January 2025 – Principal video message would improve reach of strategy and refresh/reinforce expectations. • Communication campaign with parents/carers for all students with under 80% attendance • Separate exercise specifically related to English and Maths under 80% One governor asked whether timetabling can be made to work. Staff expressed a view that it can if everyone pulls together and	

	there is interlocking between departments. This would need a whole college team effort. Anticipation is that the working groups looking at this will really start to make a difference. One governor asked how the college will measure impact. It was explained that this is in several ways including: • Attendance data • Listening to students • Checking timetables before they are rolled out • Compliance with protocols Challenge from the board was that both leading and lagging indicators need to be established and monitored/measured. One governor expressed a view that there are likely to be some winners and then also some losers when reviewing timetables and they asked where this will be reconciled. Staff provided assurance that the working groups will look at this and that different centralised timetable models are being reviewed. College needs to ensure better compliance, and the timetabling process needs to start earlier. Staff explained that there are some issues post timetable creation that arise e.g. more students requiring Maths and English teaching than anticipated, staff working hours, staff specialisms etc. One governor asked whether any nuances are factored in, and an example given were postcodes, areas of deprivation etc. Staff advised that sometimes they are, and an example given was that in Sports timetabling is only at off peak travel times. One governor asked whether timetabling is a straightforward activity. Staff indicated that it is not and that there are many complex component parts that need to be fitted together. (Tara Jayaratne joined the meeting at 6.45pm) Challenge from governors was that the strategy does not seem to be having an impact as the attendance percentage is 2% lower than the same point in the prior year, and they therefore asked whether it is 'too woolly'. Governors expressed the view that if the college is not firm in its expectations in the first term, then it just gets harder and harder as the year progresses to recover. Challenge from the board was to look at attendance by individual teachers and then track and triangulate using this information. Deputy Principal advised that attendance for functional skills lessons is low across the board and more so in Maths and English and that, by comparison, vocational areas have much more variations. One governor asked where the bursary cut off is. It was explained that this is 80% attendance. Staff expressed a view that it is now important to keep doing what is being done and build upon it and then the college will be in a stronger position for autumn term 2025. Staff noted a 59% reduction in behaviour and disciplinary instances when compared	

	to the prior year which shows that the positive behaviour model introduced has had an impact. Staff expressed a view that impact following changes to strategy take time and that this will also be the case for attendance. Request from governors was that in the next attendance report weekly data figures are provided and not just the averages (Exec, 2025). Challenge from the board was that changing culture is important although they acknowledged that this was often hard to do and takes time. One governor asked whether there are any colleges who are 'bucking the trend' that BSC can learn from. Staff advised that there are none in FE with BSC being comparable in terms of the vocational versus Maths and English differentials. Staff expressed a view that there are no 'easy wins' as context has to be taken into account. Request from governors was to hear from the subject areas where attendance is high i.e. what can others then learn from them. Staff expressed the view that initiatives are not always transferable from one area to another however there are some universal actions that can be taken. Governors then referred to the earlier 'meet the student' session where attendance was the topic for discussion. Feedback from students does align in several areas including: • Timetabling • Incentives, specifically how well publicised they are if they are offered • Lessons and/or slides being available on teams – whilst a good communication platform, does this motivate attendance? Request from the board was to have a scheduled report on behaviour with the executive to decide whether this goes to QTSE or directly to full board at the next meeting (The Executive, 2025). AGREED: a) To note the content of the presentation provided b) Build upon discussions at the meeting today and with students c) Continue to have a governor focus on this via QTSE committee.	 * *
4	**Ofsted Outcomes – Headlines** Report provided by the Deputy Principal's was considered with key matters highlighted including: • Feedback is very factual and therefore 'it is what it is' • Team have been able to differentiate between the 'some' and 'most' comments • Retention is improving • There are pockets of outcomes that do need to improve, and the college is aware of these • College not yet had the full report	

	One governor asked whether the feedback provided by inspectors has been useful. Staff indicated that the daily feedback they provided was useful and expressed a view that the team were a good set of inspectors. Nothing during the inspection came as a surprise which is a positive. Attendance did come up as an issue which was expected. Staff described it as a generally positive inspection experience. One governor noted the reference to 'some middle managers lack effective skills and knowledge' and they asked for more information in relation to this. Deputy Principals acknowledged that the middle layer of management is critical to college success and that the reference to 'some' is because there is a mix of very experienced but also new staff. Assurance was given that a lot has been done to support middle management however there are some staff who are less experienced and therefore less confident and that this came out in front of inspectors. For some it is personal confidence and is not to do with competency. • Very good leadership and management feedback regarding governance • Excellent outcome for apprenticeship provision which is 'outstanding' • In relation to skills, the college self-assessed as making a 'strong contribution' however knew this was a risk as there is some inconsistency of implementation across the curriculum. There was really positive feedback from external stakeholders and Ofsted acknowledged that there were good relationships in place. Curriculum does align with need, and it is possible to build upon this. Board again took the opportunity to congratulate all staff and to particularly thank the two Ofsted nominees. AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.	
5	**Sustainability Report** COO presented his written report circulated in advance and confirmed that a significant amount of work has already been done at college including aspects of: • Decarbonisation • Energy efficiency • Establishing a sustainability working group which has now met for the first time • Harnessing enthusiasm of student ambassadors He described the college as having an opportunity to take advantage of several quick wins and also updated on a Salix bid which has been submitted. He confirmed that a revised road map is now in place which includes a list of new tasks. College is now following this and is making use of the monitoring tool included. College has also established several sustainability pledges.	

	Governors asked for a little more information in relation to the Salix bid. He indicated that the total bid submitted is for £4.3 million with the college's contribution being £1.5 million over 3 years. He described the bid process as much more structured this year rather than a 'first come first served' which is what has happened in the past. Governors asked when the outcome of the bid submission will be known. It was explained that this is in the early part of 2025. A challenge from one governor was to ensure that QTSE talks about how the college is building sustainability into the curriculum and, linked to this, how staff are being trained and supported. One governor asked what the position is regarding college supply chain i.e. is it net zero and if not is there a target in relation to this. COO advised that limited work on this has taken place to date but that currently being reviewed is how procurement bids are scored going forward. This is work being done with Tenet. There are some contracts where it is easier to track sustainability elements when compared to others and an example given was the contract with Churchills who provide cleaning and waste management. Governors asked what student numbers are for the green skills offered. Staff advised that numbers are not as high as the college would like and that this is in the main because they are small qualifications only so far, rather than training them to get jobs. Assurance was given that the college is looking to invest to expand the offer however there is currently very limited demand. Challenge from one governor was to reach out to the North London waste authority as they are completing a lot of projects in the area. AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.	
6	**2023/24 SAR** Deputy Principal introduced this item and reminded that the QTSE committee reviewed the draft document in detail on 11th November 2024. All governors were invited to this meeting to contribute, and feedback was taken with changes incorporated. This meeting therefore is to formally sign off the document. One governor asked when the areas of underperformance will be considered in more detail. Deputy Principal advised that this will be through QIP reporting and headline AFI's to QTSE Committee. Challenge from the board was to be clear where BSC is in terms of comparisons with national and what our targets and aspirations are in terms of timescales for getting to at least national average. One governor asked whether English and Maths, if improved, would have brought up the overall achievement rates. Deputy Principal confirmed that they would particularly for ESOL and functional skills. Both of these areas are going into performance clinics and due diligence is planned by QTSE at the January	

	meeting. Challenge from the board was to focus efforts on key areas. AGREED: a) To approve the 2023/24 SAR as presented, and b) Note the content of the QTSE meeting minutes 11th November 2024 part 1.	
7	**CEO's Report** Governors were happy to take the report as read. Key matters highlighted by the CEO were: • Areas for scrutiny in future reports • Industrial Strategy emerging in several areas • Trade union relations/negotiations - both have now submitted the same letter and are therefore taking a collective approach. They are asking for a 10% increase. College has already awarded 2% and is currently modelling whether a further 0.5% is affordable. If 16-18 growth in year funding is received, then potentially the college can afford a further 1.5%. Workload dialogue with unions is still progressing. • Studio launch on 12th February. Key figures attending are Lord Levy, Sadiq Khan and Pete Waterman. • Open day numbers were above prior year in all areas and all campuses • Good discussions continuing with the local authorities, particularly Enfield A challenge from one governor was to be aware and take advantage of money that will be invested in Skills, Skills Academies etc. AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.	
8	**2024/25 KPI progress** Board was happy to note the content of the report provided. CEO confirmed that issues to flag include: • Attendance • Student reviews, although it is believed that this is a reporting issue, and the position is not as poor as it would seem from the information provided. AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.	
9	**Skills Report** Board was happy to note the content and agreed, given the Ofsted outcome, that this was no longer required as a standing agenda item. Ofsted judgement has given confidence that the college is moving in the right direction on this.	
10	**Report from the Property Strategy Steering Group**	

	Committee Chair presented the summary note and the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2024. He confirmed that there were several approvals required and outlined these in detail. In relation to the sale of Tudor Hall he explained that the aim is to exchange quickly but delay completion so that the college has use of the building for the remainder of this academic year. COO advised that as requested by PSSG the Abbey Trust donation to Barnet Museum, which will fund the sale has been confirmed in writing. AGREED: a) To approve the sale of Tudor Hall to Barnet Museum for £1 million b) Delegate authority to the CEO & Principal and the Chair to sign and seal Tudor Hall documents when required c) Approve, sign and seal the Colindale Campus licence to underlet. Committee Chair confirmed that master planning continues with the college looking at broader strategy to see if it can maximise opportunities. In relation to Edmonton Green, staff are still looking at an alternative site but there are arrangements in place to remain in current premises until another option is identified. In relation to the sale of Tudor Hall board, were reminded that the bank expectation is that they take 60% of sale proceeds.	
11	**Audit & Risk Committee report** Committee Chair referred to the summary and the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2024. Key matters highlighted were: • College continues to search to recruit a permanent CFO • Report on bank reconciliation provided. This was described as an 'own goal' during the year and governors will need assurance through robust monitoring that the situation doesn't happen again. • Useful updates provided by Costas Calcanas on IT and Cyber Security. Briefing materials and/or a training session to be made available to governors in the new year. Governors are considered to be likely phishing attack targets given access to sensitive information. • Good session with internal auditors with positive reports and assurances • External audit is proving to be more challenging • It is likely within the external audit opinion and/or management letter that an MPM reference will be made in relation to one PILON payment. • College has obtained ESFA approval to delay submission of the 2023/24 yearend accounts • 2023/24 Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire recommended for board approval	

	• Gifts and Hospitality and Anti-Bribery policies updated and presented for board approval AGREED: a) To note the content of the update provided b) Approve the content of the 2023/24 Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire, this then to be signed by the Chair, CEO and Principal. c) Approve updated Gifts & Hospitality and Anti-bribery Policies as presented.	
12	**QTSE Committee Report** Committee Chair referred to the summary note and the detailed minutes of the meeting which took place on 11th November 2024. Key matters highlighted were: • A two part meeting with the first part entirely focusing on the 2023/24 SAR which has been discussed earlier in the meeting • Date of the meeting was very timely as the college had just received notification of intended Ofsted inspection. • HE report provided with two documents recommended for board approval, these are: a) 2023/24 Self-Evaluation Document (SED) b) Updated HE Information Policy Committee Chair reminded that all governors are welcome to join QTSE meetings for the deep dive subjects and it was agreed that subjects would be circulated in advance. AGREED: a) To note the content of the update provided b) Approve the content of the 2023/24 HE SED as presented c) Approve the updated HE Information Policy as presented.	
13	**Finance Committee Report** Committee Chair referred to the summary report provided and the detailed minutes of the meeting which took place on 12th February 2024. (Jenny Jarvis left the meeting at 8pm) Key matters highlighted were: • Two updated policies requiring board approval, these are: a) Data Protection b) Record Management • There have been some 'lessons learned' from 2023/24 and committee has asked for improved tracking in relation to these aspects. • One off payment proposed to staff was approved by committee. Committee was able to consider all feedback provided by governors over email correspondence in advance of the meeting. CEO confirmed that the announcement to staff on this today was very well	

	received. All staff are appreciative, and he acknowledged that it was not an easy decision for the board given financial variables. • Bank covenant breach regarding EBITDA now not expected. AGREED: a) To note the content of the update provided, and b) Approve updated Data Protection and Records Management Policies as presented.	
14	**Feedback from the Search and Governance/Remuneration Committee meeting held on 17th December 2024** Meeting Chair provided a verbal summary including: • Two governor vacancies on the board now following resignation received from Elita Eliades and Sue Baker this month • Committee discussed potential recruitment approaches for the new year • Board needs to find a replacement safeguarding lead governor. In the interim Adam Goldstein to discuss any safeguarding issues with the CEO and Principal at his weekly catch up meetings. DSL to continue with her regular reports to QTSE which are then shared with all governors. • Staff governor vacancy will be advertised in January • Committee recommendation is to extend current term of office for Cait O'Riordan to 10th December 2025 • Membership for each of the subcommittees considered • Two governor vacancies mean that QTSE and People Committee will be a person down and therefore other governors may be asked to support. • Committee discussed subcommittee meeting frequency and whether there is an opportunity reduce Governor and senior staff workload. It was agreed to review structure annually. • Regular governor training and development taking place • Governor engagement – group agreed the merit of opening up less formal 'links'. It was agreed that the Director of Governance and the CEO would put a list of opportunities/value added options together. They will not necessarily be the same format for each. AGREED: a) To note the content of the update provided b) To approve term of office extension for Cait O'Riordan to 10th December 2025.	
15	**AOB** As a matter of additional business Chair invited governors to identify potential discussion topics for the next 'meet the students' session in February 2025. Open invitation was given to governors to email the Director of Governance with suggestions. During	

	discussion it was agreed that topics for February would be ESOL and Maths and English. This would then sit alongside deep dives planned at the January QTSE meeting. Staff suggested that discussion on Functional Skills would also be useful at some point in the year. (Staff left the meeting at 8.10pm)	
16	**Confidential items** It was agreed that confidential items would be recorded on a separate basis. Meeting closed at 8.15pm.	