

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting Held on Tuesday 11 February 2025

Present: Damien Bourke, Amanda Bromley, Phill Brown, Malcolm Bruce, Kirk Cornwall, Jonathan Frankham, Michael Ginger, Nicky Littler, John Lyne (Chair), Jackie Moores, Jemma Newton, Mariam Rana, Remell Thompson-Bell, Atta Ul Rasool

Nils Elgar, Clerk to the Corporation

In Attendance: Dave Dobson (Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure), Leon Dowd (Deputy Principal Quality and People), Nicola Welland (Deputy Principal Curriculum)

ACTION

24/25.43 Apologies for Absence

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to accept the apologies of Subhaan Ali and Simon Boyle. **Accepted**

24/25.44 Declarations of Interest

Jonathan Frankham's standing declaration that he is an employee of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the College's principal funder and regulator was noted. **Noted**

24/25.45 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 10 December 2024

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024. **Approved**

24/25.46 Matters Arising

Jemma Newton joined the meeting during this item.

On minute 24/25.34 (Safeguarding Annual Report 2023/24 and Policy), Leon Dowd reported that SLT's consideration of whether to invest more resources into Student Support, had resulted in the recent appointment to the pastoral team. The Deputy Principal Quality and People responded that the College's entire staffing complement was held under constant review. A new appointment had been made to the pastoral team to ensure the workload of staff there remained manageable. **Noted**

24/25.47 Notes of the Self-Assessment Report Validation Meeting Held on 21 January 2025

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the notes of the Self-Assessment Report validation meeting held on 21 January 2025. **Noted**

24/25.48 Self-Assessment Report 2023/24 and Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25

Jackie Moores joined the meeting during this item.

The Deputy Principal Quality and People raised the following points:

- (i) curriculum and support area self-evaluations and the March 2024 Ofsted inspection outcomes informed the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2023/24 and subsequent Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024/25;
- (ii) the content of the SAR had been shared with Governors through various reports at several meetings and the SAR was validated by Governors at the meeting on 21 January;
- (iii) final judgements included:

Overall Effectiveness	2
Leadership and Management	2
Quality of Education	2
Behaviour and Attitudes	2
Personal Development	1
Safeguarding	Effective
Contribution to Meeting Skills Needs	Strong
Education Programmes for Young People	2
Adult Learning Programmes	2
Apprenticeships	2
Learners with High Needs	2
- (iv) since the SAR in 2022/23, the Apprenticeships grade had improved from a grade 3 to a grade 2, Personal Development had improved from a grade 2 to grade 1 and Contribution to Meeting Skills Needs had improved from 'reasonable' to 'strong';
- (v) the headline Qualification Achievement Rate (QAR) reports showed:
 - the overall class-based achievement rate was 85.9%, 0.1%-points above 2022/23 and 1.7%-points above national average (NA);
 - at 85.8%, the 16-18 achievement rate was 1.2%-points above 2022/23 and is 4.1%-points above NA;
 - at 86.2%, the 19+ achievement rate was 0.8%-points lower than 2022/23 and was 0.8%-points below the NA;
 - at 60.2%, the apprenticeship overall achievement rate was 11.5%-points above 2022/23 and 2.4%-points above NA;
- (vi) progress against the Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25:
 - the Attendance Strategy had been reviewed and implemented for 2024/25, with revised targets that focussed on known issues and impact. Targets had been set in curriculum evaluations and appraisals. Effective monitoring was in place. Overall attendance was 86.4% with attendance of A Level students 3%-points above that at the same time last year;
 - good progress had been made on the apprenticeships achievement rate. This currently stood at 45.1%, with a

target of 69% (compared with 60.2% achieved in 2023/24);

- good progress was being made to support a small minority of staff to improve aspects of their teaching to ensure learners were making at least the expected progress in their lessons;
- improvements had been made to the accessibility of resources in employability settings for students with complex needs. Progress was now clearly identified and milestones were tracked;
- Good progress was being made to improve outcomes in: ESOL, Health and Social Care, L2 and L3 Engineering, Catering and Hospitality, Business and Management, AAT, Apprenticeships and high grades in Construction, Health and Social Care, Childcare, Photography and Graphic Design;
- areas where progress was being closely monitored included: GCSE Maths and English, Childcare, Welding, Travel and Tourism, A Level (retention and progress) and high grades in Travel and Tourism;
- good progress was being made to ensure all students knew the viable apprenticeship options open to them, particularly the higher level apprenticeships;
- good progress was being made to further developing and promoting the College's wellbeing and support activities for students.

Issues discussed by Governors included:

- (i) that there were no worrying trends in the data;
- (ii) apprenticeships. It looked as if the improvement in the apprenticeship achievement rate would be continued in 2024/25. While the target of 69% for 2024/25 might seem low, this was well above national average. It was noted that the government had recently announced that businesses would now be able to decide whether adult learners (over the age of 19) when they start their apprenticeship course would need to complete a level 2 English and maths qualification (equivalent to at least a grade 4 in GCSE);
- (iii) a view that the College's teacher development programmes were very useful, particularly the 'Passport to Outstanding' session and industry days;
- (iv) that there had been a noticeable shift by students to the vocational subjects rather than A Levels and this had been attributed to a better knowledge of provision. Students did not necessarily want to go to university due to the cost involved, preferring high level apprenticeships that gave the opportunity to 'earn while you learn'. It was noted that at Alder Community High School there had been a greater emphasis on getting students to start thinking about their options after school.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Self-Assessment Report 2023/24.

Approved

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note progress against the Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25.

Noted

24/25.49 Principal's Report

Michael Ginger joined the meeting during this item.

Points raised by the Principal included:

- (i) in-year growth funding:
 - the College had recruited an additional 300 students above allocation. This would translate to £800k to £900k of in-year funding, but this was subject to available funds. The College had delivered £3.5m in unfunded provision over three years and this increased to £4.5m if 2024/25 was included;
- (ii) pay award and additional funding from Department for Education (DfE) to FE colleges – £50m:
 - the College's 6% pay award had been well received by staff and this placed the College well against its competitors in Greater Manchester;
 - the College's share of the £50m to be allocated to FE colleges and sixth form colleges that had not academized should be equivalent to 3.5% of the 16-18 budget for the four-month period April to July. This was for "staff recruitment, retention and other challenges" but was not consolidated;
 - the College would hold its Annual Strategic Conversation with the FE Commissioner and DfE on Tuesday 25 February. There were no concerns regarding College performance;
- (iii) GCSE November resits:
 - 48% who resat Maths and 39% who resat English achieved a grade 4. However, this was from a relatively small cohort of 69 learners – those who were 16-18 and within 10 UMS marks of a grade 4. Consideration was underway of widening the scope in 2025/26, to include adults and those recently arrived from school but still within 10 UMS marks of a grade 4;
- (iv) strategic planning timeline:
 - work was underway to develop a new Strategic Plan. A workshop had taken place with the College Management Group to look at the proposed new priorities and objectives; this would be presented to Governors at the Governor Development Session on Tuesday, 18 March. If agreed, this would then go for wider consultation with students, staff and external stakeholders and return to the Board before the year-end for signoff and launch for 2025/26;
- (v) sufficiency 2025/26 and onwards:
 - it was not feasible to submit a fully funded growth case which would be borough-wide and take 18 months;

- meetings had taken place with the local authority to discuss options on how they could support College growth;
- any building solutions would not be available until September 2026 at the earliest, when a significant increase in school leavers was expected;
- further capital funding from the DfE was expected, but not until after the Spending Review;
- unless there was an increase in accommodation at the College, then it was likely that NEET (those not in education, employment or training) numbers would rise in Tameside.

Issues considered by Governors included:

- (i) the costs of the various accommodation options (lease of TMBC space in Ashton town centre, conversion of the theatre in Clarendon Sixth Form and portacabins at Beaufort Road and the timing of any decisions. It was noted that the College's cost consultants had been engaged to cost the various options;
- (ii) timescale for any decision. It was noted that College management were due to meet again with the local authority on 7 March;
- (iii) that more recent data had become available on school leavers, as well as those that were on alternative provision or EHE. This showed an increase in numbers by more than 300 (in each year group) on the figures provided to Governors in November. The local authority recognised the issues of sufficiency for the College and was trying to help so as to avoid NEETs;
- (iv) a concern by a Student Governor on whether extracurricular activities for students might be cut if in-year funding was not received. It was noted that this was not the case.

24/25.50 December Finance Report

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following:

- (i) the Corporation had set a budget in 2024/25 for an operating deficit of £352k, before pension costs (FRS102);
- (ii) as at 31 December 2024 there was:
 - no concern over any issues and budget variances on income resulted in an expected reduction of the deficit;
 - uncertainty remained on a number of areas of funding: in-year growth funding (£800k to £900k), the College's share of an additional £50m allocated to further education (estimated at £254k as an unconsolidated amount), and the value of support to the Employer National Insurance (in-year cost estimated at £192k). The worst-case scenario was for an outturn of the current approved budget deficit;
 - the staffing ratio (73%) was high due to the decision to recruit additional staff to manage the increased number of

- students. However, if in-year funding was received, then this ratio should decrease to a more appropriate level;
- management accounts showed an operating surplus of £579k, a favourable variance of £275k to the approved year-to-date budget;
- (iii) the overall financial health grade of the College was planned to be outstanding for 2024/25. The level of cash was expected to remain strong to the end of the year;
- (iv) a mid-year review that was currently being undertaken would be presented to the Board at its meeting on 1 April;
- (v) an update on the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF) project:
- the overall cost estimate for the project was £11.740m, some £86k above the DfE assessed cost of £11.654m and within the budget agreed by Governors. A £35k contingency remained in the budget.

Governors queried whether there was any snagging on the Motor Vehicle project. It was noted that this was ongoing. The College's professional team would monitor this and release funds as appropriate.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the December Finance Report. **Noted**

24/25.51 FE Code of Good Governance Assurance Template

Governors were content that the completed Assurance Template accurately reflected the Corporation's position and that it would form part of the Self-Assessment of Governance for 2024/25.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the FE Code of Good Governance Assurance Template. **Noted**

24/25.52 Update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities

The following Governor development and/or engagement activities that had taken place since the last Board meeting were reported:

- (i) 14 January – Governor Learning Visit to Automotive – Phill Brown, Jonathan Frankham, Michael Ginger, Remell Thompson-Bell, and Atta UI Rasool;
- (ii) 14 January – Governors' Dinner – Subhaan Ali, Kirk Cornwall, Jonathan Frankham, Nicky Littler, Jemma Newton, Mariam Rana, Remell Thompson-Bell, Atta UI Rasool;
- (iii) 21 January – AoC New Governor Induction – Amanda Bromley;
- (iv) 21 January – Self Assessment Report (SAR) Validation – Subhaan Ali, Damien Bourke, Amanda Bromley, Malcolm Bruce, Jonathan Frankham, Michael Ginger, Nicky Littler, John Lyne, Jackie Moores, Jemma Newton, Mariam Rana, and Atta UI Rasool;
- (v) 16 January – College Apprenticeships Awards – Nicky Littler.

The Governor visit to Automotive was discussed. This was felt to be a good example of active learning. The facility was considered an excellent resource for students with industry standard equipment. It was noted that this facility was already at capacity and the College was looking to see if external works would allow for more teaching area under a canopy outside to the north-west of the building.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities. **Noted**

24/25.53 **Items to Note**

(i) **Chair's Action**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note that no Chair's Actions had been taken since the date of the last meeting. **Noted**

(ii) **Use of the Seal of the Corporation**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note that there had been no use of the Seal of the Corporation since the date of the last meeting. **Noted**

(iii) **Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2024/25**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2024/25 (79%). **Noted**

24/25.54 **Review of Effectiveness of Meeting and Any Emerging Risks**

The effectiveness of hybrid meetings was considered. It was noted that the use of hybrid meetings was greatly appreciated by Governors as it facilitated the attendance of Governors who would otherwise be unable to attend. Indeed, one of the Governors was joining the current meeting from Spain and another was frequently overseas for work. The functionality of the Boardroom camera was raised as an issue and it was acknowledged that this had been an identified problem. It was noted that a new supplier had been brought in as the previous one had not been responsive to the needs of the College.

24/25.55 **Time and Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 1 April 2024**

The Chair reported the next Board meeting would be on Tuesday, 1 April (to be held in the Boardroom). Before then there was a Governor Development Session scheduled for Tuesday, 18 March.

Minutes formally approved by the Corporation:

Chair

Date