

**Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
Board of Governors**

**PART 1: Minutes of a meeting held virtually via Google Meet
Wednesday 21 July at 10am**

Present: Duncan Adams, Tosin Adebisi, Steve Bassam (Vice-Chair), Sue Berelowitz (Chair), Frances Duncan, Phil Frier, Andrew Green (Interim CEO), Claire Hopkins (Vice-Chair), Paul Lansdowne (Staff Governor), Robert McCloskey (FE Student Governor), David Russell, Allyshia Vallier (HE Student Governor)

In attendance: Jon Rollings (COO), Helena Thomas (Principal), Melissa Drayson (Governance Consultant), Sarah Box (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Anne Ackord, Kirstin Baker, Martin Colyer (Vice-Chair), Sean Jacob

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all present to the last Board meeting of the academic year.

This was Claire Hopkins' last meeting as governor before the end of her term of office. Sincere thanks were conveyed to Claire for her sterling contribution to the work of the Board - as Safeguarding Governor, Vice Chair and Chair of Remuneration Committee - along with good wishes for the future.

It was also Andy Green's last Board meeting as interim Chief Executive before his return to CCG on 1st September to take up the position of Chief Executive from 1st October. Andy's positive leadership and impact in terms of stabilising the college and driving the recovery plan and SPA was commended.

Apologies were as listed above.

It was noted that Claire Hopkins and Steve Bassam would be leaving the meeting at 11.30am, and Frances Duncan would be leaving at 12.00.

2- 4. CONFIDENTIAL STAFFING ITEMS

Items 2-4 were recorded in Part 2 and Part 3 minutes on the grounds of commercial and personal sensitivity. Staff in attendance, staff and student governors withdrew for some of these discussions.

5. MINUTES

5.1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 30 MARCH 2021

The Part 1 (non-confidential) and Part 2 minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2021 were APPROVED as a true record and the Chair's electronic signature would be applied.

5.2 MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING OF 15 JUNE 2021

The minutes of the Special Board meeting held on 15 June 2021 were APPROVED as a true record and the Chair's electronic signature would be applied.

5.3 MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SUB-GROUP MEETING (FINANCIAL STATEMENTS) OF 9 JUNE 2021

The minutes of the Special Board meeting held on 9 June 2021 were APPROVED as a true record and the Chair's electronic signature would be applied.

5.4 WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS DATED 22 APRIL 2021 AND 6 MAY 2021

The Board noted that Written Resolutions had been passed by a majority of governors, in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government relating to the following:

- 22nd April 2021: The appointment of Mark Crowter as governor and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
- 6th May 2021: The appointment of Frances Duncan as governor and Safeguarding link governor, following the departure of Claire Hopkins.

6. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Board received and noted a schedule outlining the progress of actions from the minutes of the last meeting. These were all complete or due for report at a later date.

7. CEO REPORT

Presented by the Interim CEO

The presentation outlined key areas of focus, including the Skills Bill, AEB reconciliation, COVID third wave update and Teacher Assessed Grades. The pressure on the recruitment team as a result of the Phase 3 restructure was explained and the risk of unfilled vacancies was highlighted. In response to governor questions, it was confirmed that some of these posts were critical to teaching and learning. Agencies would be used as a back-up but this in itself was a further financial risk. The extended recruitment campaign had been a success, reaching more potential candidates than in the past. Nonetheless, governors noted that staff vacancies were a critical risk.

Apprenticeships were discussed, both in terms of the quality of provision and the accuracy of forecasting. Governors challenged the drift from the figure presented at the previous meeting and asked for assurance that steps had been taken to ensure that there would not be another year of over prediction of achievement. Management explained the rigorous and granular level of analysis that took place at the Apprenticeship Board. A 2% variance might be expected but there was confidence in the accuracy of the predictions.

Employer satisfaction and staff feedback were discussed as areas of risk. The staff voice was an area for further development from September. The staff survey response rate had been low and it was therefore difficult to form clear conclusions from the data. The Interim CEO explained that the staff survey only provided one point of reference, with the Culture Club meetings and Employee Forums also providing opportunities to collect staff feedback. The Staff Governor reported that lockdown and Phase 3 had been a period of uncertainty for staff but there was a feeling that a new culture had now been instilled and staff were feeling much more positive. The key point was that staff needed to see that their feedback was being acted upon.

It was asked if preparations were in place for a worst-case scenario of a further lockdown in September. It was confirmed that preparations had been made for different scenarios. The latest guidance would be reviewed in advance of the start of term.

8. COLLEGE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Presented by the Principal

Headlines were:

- Application data for student recruitment remained strong across all ages. The focus over the summer would be on conversion of applications to enrolments. There was confidence that, this year, student application targets were robust, risks had been identified and mitigations in place. However, it was noted that the position could not be predicted with complete accuracy, and particularly that historical trends may change due to the impact of the pandemic.
- Attendance was higher than the previous year in all cohorts except English and Maths, which had levelled off
- Retention measured below target in all ages and levels except HE. Some withdrawals were a direct consequence of Covid, especially Adult Learners affected by school closures.
- Overall, predicted achievement rates were at a similar level to 2019-20. The increase at Level 1 reflected the focus on this area during the year. Governors sought detail around the predicted drop in Level 2 achievement. This was mainly due to three Trades areas at Broadwater that had been affected by staff shortages, particularly at management level, and the impact of the pandemic on practical learning and assessment. The problem was particularly acute of L1 learners progressing into L2 and experiencing learning gaps due to college closure. L4 achievement was also predicted to have dropped because of the higher numbers of adult learners whose lives had been affected by the successive lockdowns.
- The expected achievement figure of 63% for apprenticeships had been arrived at through rigorous due diligence and scrutiny by the Apprenticeships Board. The new management structure for apprenticeships was, so far, proving effective.

Governors commented that they were pleased to see that management and teaching staff had an in-depth knowledge of the reasons behind the data, and awareness of key risks and a range of mitigating actions in place.

9. 2021/22 BUDGET AND FINANCIAL FORECAST

Presented by the Chief Operating Officer

The Board noted that the overall headline position in the financial plan remained largely unchanged from the previous version presented. The plan had been shared with the ESFA's Provider Management Oversight (PMO) team

The budget had been scrutinised in depth at the recent Finance Committee meeting and now needed Board approval ahead of the 31st July submission deadline . A robust and challenging discussion had taken place. Key discussion points and any ensuing actions included:

- The latest management accounts indicated that the forecast year-end out-turn for 20-21 was likely to be slightly better than forecast, with cash ahead of profile.
- The draft budget had been the substantive discussion item. The key areas of risk were Adult Education Budget funding, international income and Covid uncertainty.
- In respect of international recruitment, the situation remained volatile as it was so closely linked to the pandemic. Following FC discussion, the budget had been revised down by 10%. The assumption for 2021-22 was that the external environment would return to the pre-Covid position, but this would be kept under continuous review and further adjustments made accordingly. It was noted that the risk level was continuously fluctuating and had probably increased since the FC review, but also that there was scope to offset reduced income with cost savings.
- Delivery against the AEB contract value would be a key area with additional provision currently required above the current curriculum plan to achieve the allocation. Following FC discussion, the budget income had been revised down by 10% by

allocation of part of the contingency. It was noted that delivery of AEB contract values was a national issue and that a plan to respond to this was being developed, which would consider opportunities to work collaboratively across the region.

In response to questions, management confirmed that the budget now reflected the assessment of the most likely scenarios, and that key risks and mitigations had been identified. It was also noted, however, that a large amount of uncertainty remained in the external environment, particularly due to the pandemic but also the emerging impact of Brexit. The position had been consistently and transparently reported to the ESFA, including cash risks in 2021-22. Members of the Finance Committee confirmed that any concerns about over-optimistic forecasting had been allayed at the meeting during a very robust discussion.

In response to governor challenge, management gave more detail about the plan to address the cash risk in March 2022. Comment was made that it would be useful to track any changes in risks and opportunities and the impact of mitigating actions.

The question was raised about how the budgeting risks for the college compared with other colleges. It was reported that most colleges were experiencing similar budgetary pressures, especially in respect of AEB and International, where this was delivered.

There was discussion of pay costs. It was confirmed that a general increase in wage prices would not apply to the FE sector during 21-22. However, it remained a long-term objective to align with the AoC pay structure and there continued to remain some challenges recruiting to specialist curriculum areas. The college would be protected from some inflationary increases, including to the cost of utilities, by the terms of its contracts with suppliers. The recommendations relating to the cost of living pay award for staff were supported.

The Executive Team were thanked for the work undertaken to present a robust budget.

RESOLVED:

That, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Budget 2021-22 was APPROVED.

10. RECOVERY PLAN STEERING GROUP UPDATE

The minutes of the Recovery Plan steering group (RPSG) were noted, along with the progress report provided as part of the Chief Executive report. All milestones within the Plan were currently on-track. It had been agreed that, as long as progress against milestones remained on track, and no new significant risks to the achievement of the recovery plan emerged, the RPSG would meet less frequently. Members would continue to receive the High-Level report by email and the Chair would have regular contact with the Programme Manager.

11. TEACHING AND LEARNING

11.1 STUDENT VOICE/STUDENT GOVERNOR REPORT

The FE Student Governor reported that the new Class Rep and Student Executive structure was working well, although attendance was sometimes patchy. Moving forward, the focus would be on ensuring that all courses were equally represented and all students had an opportunity to participate in Student Voice.

The HE Student Governor considered that HE student voice mechanisms were less well developed, and that HE students felt less well heard. Greater connection with cross-college

Student Voice was needed. It was acknowledged that the HE students had previously been linked to the University of Brighton Student Union, so an effective in-house alternative was needed.

The Link Governor for Student Voice supported the need to build on existing good practice and drive collaboration between FE and HE, strengthen staff and student communications and focus on social issues. There was scope to build links with both universities.

Governors reflected that developing the learner voice should continue to be a priority for the new Interim Chief Executive, and SLT. Management confirmed that planning to integrate HE and FE Student Voice was already underway.

ACTION: Meeting in September to discuss options to encourage better student attendance at Student Voice activities (Student Governors, TA, HT)

11.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary of the meeting and draft minutes of the meeting on 28th June were noted. Management had presented a 'deep dive' report on educational catch-up following lockdown, along with the social and emotional impact of lockdown, which had led to a thorough discussion. A further report had been requested on the impact of the pandemic on staff

The Board noted the recommendations and further actions from the meeting.

The approval of the FE and HE Admissions Policies was noted and ratified.

RESOLVED:

That the Board approved the T&L Committee ToR.

12. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary of the meeting on 13th July was noted. Most of the business had been covered by the Board under item 9. The items recommended for approval were considered

RESOLVED:

i. That the Subcontracting and Supply Chain Fees Policy be APPROVED

ii. That the Annual Subcontracting Controls Certificate be APPROVED

iii. That the updated Finance Committee Terms of Reference be APPROVED

13. AUDIT AND RISK

13.1 Risk Register

The Board noted the key risk register, and that this had been discussed at length at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting. The main underlying risks to the achievement of the strategy were the volatility of the post-pandemic situation and cash risk.

13.2 Audit and Risk Committee Report and Recommendations

The summary of the meeting on 12th July was noted. Key matters discussed were:

- The Financial Statements and Regularity Audit Plan had been presented. Planning work was now underway
- The Internal Audit report on Risk Management had provided reasonable assurance. The Committee had identified the need for an assurance map linked to the key risk register
- The Whistleblowing Policy was recommended for approval. The question was raised about whether para 8.4 could act as a deterrent from whistleblowing. The policy was based on the AOC template, so this would be checked.
- It was agreed that both the Chair of the Board and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee should be informed of any Whistleblowing disclosures at the point that they were received.
- A draft Counter Fraud Strategy had been brought to the Committee. The Internal Auditors had offered to advise on this.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Whistleblowing Policy be **APPROVED**
- ii) That, with the inclusion of a reference to the Vice Chair, the updated Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference be **APPROVED**.

14. GAS SUPPLY STATION AT WEST DURRINGTON

RESOLVED: That the proposal to transfer a small area of land on the North-East boarder of the West Durrington Campus on which is located the Gas Supply Station (Gas Governor Site) to Indigo Pipelines Ltd be **APPROVED**.

15. GOVERNANCE

15.1 PLAN FOR BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

The proposals for the annual governance self-assessment were noted.

15.2 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIRS 2021-22

RESOLVED: That the membership of the Committees in 2021-22 be **APPROVED**.

15.3 SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Scheme of Delegation of Board responsibilities was **APPROVED**

15.4 SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS

The schedule of business for 2021-22 was noted.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 20 October at 3.30pm

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked all present for their contributions during the year and wished everyone a good summer.

Signature of Chair..... Date.....