

**Greater Brighton Metropolitan College  
Board of Governors**

**PART 1: Minutes of a meeting held virtually via Google Meet  
Tuesday 30 March 2021 at 15.30**

- Present:** Anne Ackord, Duncan Adams, Tosin Adebisi, Kirstin Baker, Steve Bassam (Vice-Chair), Sue Berelowitz (Chair), Natalie Brett, Martin Colyer, Phil Frier, Andrew Green (Interim CEO), Chris Hill (Staff Governor), Claire Hopkins (Vice-Chair), Sean Jacob, Paul Lansdowne (Staff Governor), Robert McCloskey (Student Governor), David Russell
- In attendance:** Jon Rollings (COO), Helena Thomas (Principal), Melissa Drayson (Governance Consultant), Sarah Box (Governance Officer)
- Apologies:** None

**1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed members. Natalie Brett was attending her final meeting as a governor and she was thanked for everything she had done to support the college in her time on the Board.

A revised running order for the meeting was outlined, to allow maximum time for discussion of key strategic items. Staff in attendance and staff and student governors would be asked to withdraw from the meeting for part of item 8 and items 17 and 18.

Anne Ackord and David Russell had advised that they would need to leave the meeting early although would stay for as much of Item 8 as possible.

**2.**

**i. PART 1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 21 DECEMBER 2020**

The Part 1 minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2020 were APPROVED as a true record and the Chair's electronic signature would be applied.

**ii. PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 21 DECEMBER 2020**

The Part 2 minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2020 were APPROVED as a true record and the Chair's electronic signature would be applied.

**iii. MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING OF 10 MARCH 2021**

The minutes of the Special Board meeting held on 10 March 2021 were APPROVED as a true record and the Chair's electronic signature would be applied.

**iv. SOLAR PANEL WRITTEN RESOLUTION DATED 26 FEBRUARY 2021**

The Board noted the written resolution approving the lease agreement to install solar PV panels at the Pelham site.

The Governance Consultant reported that an additional written resolution to approve the vision statement had been agreed. This had been circulated and approved by the Board on 20 March.

### **3. ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

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

### **4. CEO REPORT**

The Interim CEO presented the slides included in the board papers.

#### **Policy update**

Government policy headlines, and the impact on the College, were noted:

- Further detail on most aspects of the White Paper was still awaited. In addition, there was a significant number of submission and bid deadlines for capital bids, financial returns and the Skills Development Fund
- The new annual strategic conversations would be led by the ESFA, with the Interim CEO and Chair. They would focus on successful initiatives and risks.
- Funding allocations for the new Level 3 adult offer were yet to be confirmed.
- The AEB reconciliation level had been announced on 22 March at 90%, it was noted that, in common with many colleges, GB MET would struggle to achieve this level of delivery.
- Full graded Ofsted inspections would not return until the new academic year. A monitoring visit at GB MET would take place prior to a full inspection and would be risk based.
- Assessments for 2021 were complex as different guidance had been received by each of the 15 awarding bodies.
- The fourth round of the Taking Teaching Further programme had been announced in March, further detail was awaited.
- Succession planning was underway along with a strategy to address curriculum areas that are difficult to recruit to and reduce agency costs.

#### **KPI update**

Members noted that the KPIs were at the expected level given the mid year point. It was noted that a new staff survey had recently been launched which would provide an update to the current position. Results would be reported to governors at the appropriate time.

#### **Securing our future**

- Bi-weekly webinars had been hosted by the Interim CEO, with special staff guests attending.
- A stakeholder newsletter had been circulated to update on the latest College news.
- A culture club had been set up to understand the impact of changes and actions taken, and the themes were reviewed at SLT each week. In response to a governor query, the Interim CEO advised that some of the cultural challenges highlighted by staff would be addressed by the restructure, although some would take longer to work through.
- Addressing reward and recognition in the College the the IT department had been awarded the first Team of the Month title.

- The AoC Mental Health Charter was due for launch early in the summer term.
- The upcoming reviews as part of phase 2 were outlined.

Governors were also provided with a COVID update and noted that c7000 tests had been completed. The impact of the pandemic on learners was highlighted, and the catch up fund would be utilised accordingly. The changing pedagogy was also noted with a move to some digital tutorials, which could be recorded for students to access the information as required.

## **5. COLLEGE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

*Presented by the Principal*

The latest recruitment data was presented showing an overall increase to the figures at the same point in 2020. There had been a dip in Worthing applications, although this had reduced since the report had been produced. 19+ applicants were now at the same level compared to last year and HE applicants had increased by 128. Apprenticeship new starts had been negatively impacted by COVID and the decline was noted in the figures. However it was advised that 44 applicants were in the pipeline and were currently being processed.

Attendance data was discussed as a key quality indicator. The picture overall for FE, HE and Apprenticeships was strong and the increases from last year's figures were noted. English and maths continued to be impacted by COVID and it was reported that the E&M and Curriculum teams had introduced an attendance strategy to identify students missing one session. The catch up fund was being utilised for small group English and maths tuition.

Retention was above target at all levels. There had been a dip in 19+ retention as some access learners had withdrawn due to the impact of COVID and an increase in commitments outside of their study programme. This was also reflected in ESOL courses, although the rolling programme would enable the College to re engage with these learners.

Governors noted the breakdown of Apprenticeship achievement data, the Principal explained that although it was unlikely that the best case achievement target would be achieved, the expected result was expected to be somewhere in the region of c64-67%.

Management were asked what the conversion ratio from application to enrolment was expected to be and the Principal shared a trajectory for 16-18 conversions. It was explained that the Board would receive a report on offers made and accepted at the next Board meeting. The normal recent conversion ratio was c65%, so although numbers were expected to dip, the baseline was higher than last year so the overall impact would be reduced.

***Action: Update formatting of retention data and KPI traffic lights.***

## **6. FINANCE UPDATE**

*Presented by the Chief Operating Office*

The key points to date were summarised:

- The 2019/20 Financial Statements remained outstanding pending SPA completion. A formal extension had been agreed with the ESFA until 31 March, and after that an extension would be agreed on a monthly basis.
- An updated Financial Plan had been produced and scrutinised by the Finance Committee, with updated key assumptions including the impact of the third lockdown.

This would provide a GB MET baseline for the post SPA financial review process as required by the ESFA PMO.

- The February management accounts showed income behind the phased budget, impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, particularly lockdown 3. The reduction to pay and non-pay costs reflected the lower levels of activity in relation to the reduced income and management action taken in response to lockdown 3.
- EBITDA was reported to be broadly in line with phased budget and cash was slightly ahead of profile
- The AEB risk impact had been assessed, based on an anticipated relaxation of tolerance to 90% contract level.
- The rolling cash flow projection still showed a borrowing requirement in March 2022 and this would require discussions with the PMO upon finalisation of the Financial Statements.

## **7. RECOVERY PLAN STEERING GROUP UPDATE**

The minutes of the Recovery Plan steering group were noted, along with the progress report provided as part of the Chief Executive report. All milestones within the Plan were currently on-track.

The Chair of the Steering Group expressed his thanks to Phil Frier who had attended his last meeting of the group in January. A replacement for Phil would be required and Governors were asked to email if they wished to be a member.

***Action: Appoint a replacement Governor for the RPSG (Chair of RPSG/Chair of Board/Governance team)***

## **8. STRUCTURE AND PROSPECTS APPRAISAL**

*Confidential item recorded in Part 2 and Part 3 minutes*

## **9. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **a) STUDENT VOICE/STUDENT GOVERNOR REPORT**

The Student Governor reported the student executive had made progress with the offer of extra-curricular activities made available to learners, including clubs such as a debating society. In addition, the canteens now offered a wider range of vegan options as a result of student feedback. He summarised his experience of studying at the college to date explaining that he was constantly encouraged to achieve his best, was aware of progression routes within the college and opportunity beyond his studies. He noted the impact of covid on the community feel at campus and governors discussed the importance of the college, and education generally, within the context of the wider community.

The Chair thanked the Student Governor for his rich insight and noted that Tosin Adebisi had been appointed as Student Voice Lead Governor.

A panel of Governors had interviewed earlier in the day for an HE Student Governor and it was confirmed that Allyshia Vallier had subsequently been appointed subject to Board approval.

***RESOLVED:***

***That Allyshia Vallier be appointed as HE Student Governor.***

### **b) TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Chair reported that the Committee had held its third meeting on 15 March 2021. The value of the Committee was evident as the meeting had provided an opportunity for members to scrutinise in depth, particularly on safeguarding, apprenticeships, the draft curriculum strategy and student voice.

The minutes of the November and March meetings were noted, including confirmation of compliance with the OfS requirement relating to consumer law in the provision of online tuition and support during the pandemic. Due to the Chair of the Committee's resignation the Board approved David Russell as the new Chair of the Committee and thanks were expressed to both.

**RESOLVED:**

***That David Russell be appointed as the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee.***

## **10. FINANCE AND RESOURCES**

### **a) Finance Committee Report**

The Chair of the Finance Committee provided a report on the meetings held on 20 January and 9 March 2021. The first meeting had focused on the forecast and impact of the covid restrictions, to understand the increased risks as a result of lockdown 3 and the associated reduced income. There was also an update on the Financial Statements and Going Concern. The March meeting had allowed for a full review of the management accounts and the Committee had requested further detail on costs and pay levels to inform the salary to pay ratio. The updated Financial Plan had been scrutinised, with discussions on the assumptions contained within the plan. The latest student recruitment data was discussed and financial policies were approved and had been circulated to the Board for information. The Committee recommended the Financial Regulations to the Board for approval.

**RESOLVED:**

***That the Board approved the Financial Regulations.***

## **11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT**

The 2019/20 Equality Report and associated action plan for 2020/21 were received by the Board. The Principal explained that although the report is published mid way through the year, actions are put into place as soon as the outturn data becomes available at the end of the previous academic year.

The Board noted the achievement gaps and the actions in place to reduce these. Functional Skills achievement impacted on widening the gaps for certain demographic groups for 16-18 year olds such as black and ethnic minority students and care experienced students.

In 2019/20, 57% of all 16-18 enrolments had declared a learning difficulty or disability compared with a national figure of 29% and the inclusive culture of the College was celebrated. The high level of self reporting was considered to be due to the identification of learning difficulties earlier and stronger links with schools. Students were also able to self declare throughout the academic year. In addition to additional academic support from teachers, students in this group also receive assistance from the ALS and Pastoral teams.

The report does not currently single out the data on refugees and asylum seekers as these students are incorporated within the existing data categories and the Principal confirmed that this would be incorporated in future. The funding from the Fonthill Foundation for supporting asylum seekers would be coming to an end and so further support would need to be put in place for these students. The Board was advised that there was a reluctance by apprentices to seek additional support.

The low level of staff with a disability or religious belief was discussed, and Governors considered whether staff felt confident enough to declare these. Assistance was offered to staff with dyslexia but more work was required to give assurance that support would be provided if a declaration was made.

The Interim CEO confirmed the College's commitment to Equality and Diversity and advised that he had met with the founder of the Black FE Leadership Group to discuss anti-racism in FE and the race and diversity narrative locally. It was confirmed that an invitation would be extended to him to attend the June Board awayday.

Management were asked about the number of cases of any racially, gender based or homophobic violence, aggression and abuse. The Principal confirmed there were very few, which were escalated if there was a safeguarding risk. It was agreed that the Board should have sight of this information in future and requested detail on the number of incidents and outcomes.

Now the Committee Structure was fully embedded, it was agreed that future E&D reports would be scrutinised at T&L Committee, with headline data presented to Board. In addition, the BAME abbreviation would no longer be used.

**Action:**

- ***Incorporate data on refugee and asylum seekers in future reports (Principal)***
- ***Report the number of incidents of racially, gender based and homophobic violence and aggression (Principal)***
- ***Future E&D reports would be scrutinised at T&L Committee, with headline data presented to Board. (Governance Team)***
- ***Presentation on E&D from the founder of the BFELG at the June Board Away Day (Governance Team/Interim CEO)***

**12. AUDIT AND RISK**

**a) Risk Register**

The Board noted the risk register.

**b) Audit and Risk Committee Report and Recommendations**

The Board noted the summary report and recommendations and minutes of the Special Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 February. The meeting had been convened to approve the new Internal Audit Plan under the delegated authority granted by the Board in December..

### **13. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR APPROVAL**

#### **a) DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**The Board *approved* the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.**

#### **b) GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

***The Board approved the Grievance Policy and Procedure.***

#### **c) FREEDOM OF SPEECH POLICY**

***The Board approved the Freedom of Speech Policy.***

### **14. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CONFIRMATION**

The Chair explained that two further members were being recruited. A safeguarding governor to replace Claire Hopkins once her tenure had ended in July 21, and a governor who would also become Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee.

In line with due process, interviews for these positions were due to be held in late April and early May, and approval of appointments would be sought by written resolution.

#### ***RESOLVED:***

***The Board approved the committee membership***

### **15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the April Board meeting would be cancelled, and an extra hour added to the awayday to discuss an SPA related business and leadership items. The Chair also proposed that the July Board meeting would be rescheduled to 21 July subject to governor availability.

### **16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

### **17. PART 3: CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 21 DECEMBER 2020**

*Confidential item recorded in Part 3 minutes*

### **18. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Confidential item recorded in Part 3 minutes*

Sue Berelwitz

Signature of Chair.....

Date...30/03/21.....