

**Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
Board of Governors**

**PART 1: Minutes of a meeting held virtually via Google Meet
Monday 30 March 2020 at 4.30pm**

Present: Julie Nerney (Chair), Nick Juba (CEO), Gary Anderson, Jim Hynes (Staff Governor), Claire Hopkins, David Russell, Natalie Brett, Scott Marshall, Maida Mofida Nasab (Student Governor)

In attendance: Helena Thomas (Principal), Jon Rollings (COO), Sarah Box (Governance Manager), Janine Farr-Bailey (Director of HE), Sue Berelowitz (Chair Designate/observer), Shirley Collier (observer)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

289. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and no apologies were noted.

290. Priority areas on the agenda were confirmed as:

- i. Impact of coronavirus and response (Strategic Item)
- ii. Progress against the College Improvement Plan (Strategic Item)
- iii. The mid year safeguarding and prevent review (Assurance Item)

The Chair advised that due to the immediate operational and financial impact it would be difficult to discuss the Covid-19 item without covering the detail in the CEO report. Therefore, in terms of managing the agenda, both items would be taken together and any non Covid-19 related points would be picked in the CEO report by exception.

i.

291. The Board were reminded of the evaluation questions to be considered at the end of the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 24 FEBRUARY 2020

292. The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2020, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Part 1 – Minutes of the meeting held 24 February 2020 – for public record

Part 2 – Minutes of the meeting held 24 February 2020 – confidential

293. The Chair confirmed that she had provided her consent for her electronic signature to be applied to the minutes in the absence of being able to sign them in person.

Approved:

The Board formally approved the minutes of the 24 February 2020 as a true and accurate record. The Chair of the Board signed the master copy.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

294. 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. The Chair noted that two of the actions listed were due to be addressed by the staff

coaching item which had been planned for today's meeting, but had been impacted by Covid-19. There were also several items due for the April meeting, and these would be reviewed by the Chair Designate, CEO and Governance Manager, but it was noted that there may be some slippage with dates depending on priorities required to respond to Covid-19.

COVID-19

- 295.** The Chair explained that the CEO would cover the operational impact of the situation initially, followed by the financial. It was clear that the public health crisis would impact on students and staff in ways which are as yet unquantified but would span outcomes, capability and capacity. She noted that it was only four weeks ago that the Board had discussed and agreed a medium term financial trajectory, which had already been superseded by the recent events.
- 296.** The CEO confirmed that while the initial assessment of the financial impact had been provided for Board members, it had not been possible to set out the operational information in a paper due to the fast paced environment, and as such the detail would be provided during the discussion.
- 297.** He paid testament to the incredible work by staff over the last few weeks, and their creativity and commitment to the College and students. In that time, staff had worked tirelessly to move all teaching and learning to an online provision and support staff had gone to extensive effort to enable their departments to operate remotely. The operational position as of Monday 30 March was detailed as follows:
- All sites would be closed until 20 April at the earliest. Supervisory provision for vulnerable students would also be postponed until that point on the basis of lack of (zero) demand, but this would be reassessed and reviewed on 14 April ahead of possible supervisory provision being available from 20 April. All three Local Authorities and the ESFA had been advised.
 - The situation with exams and assessments was still unknown at the current time and the Executive were awaiting confirmation of an approach from examining bodies. The CEO discussed the impact that cancellation of exams/assessments might have, explaining that teachers would face challenges with continuing to engage students with online delivery and motivate them in order to prepare them for the next stage of their studies. It was advised that the Principal was developing a revised version of KPIs to record, track and measure quality and outcomes in the new environment.
 - The CEO reported that during the period of transition from college to remote delivery the executive had deployed a traditional command and control approach to leadership. As a result, structures and meetings were flexed in order to make decisions efficiently and he commended the COO and Principal for their support in this approach.
 - The CEO described the concern he had regarding the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students. To address this, the Executive had been working to collate a number of resources which might assist staff with the challenges of operating in a difficult environment and more general wellbeing issues. Members advised that many of the EAPs were overwhelmed in the current situation, and the CEO explained that his work on the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust had helped inform the planning for other types of support to be provided to staff.
 - From a communications perspective, the CEO and Principal had posted daily vlogs to update staff on the rapidly changing environment. He noted the positive feedback received from staff on the information shared. Moving on from the immediate crisis, he explained that attention would now focus on the recruitment cycle for September, particularly on internal progression. He advised that this was a sensible planning assumption at the current time, but noted the potential for change.
 - In time, the CEO described how the college would need to respond to the reality of a large proportion of its surrounding community being out of work as a result of the

pandemic. Consideration would be given to the curriculum offer and how local residents could be supported to gain the required skills and access education.

298. The Chair echoed the CEO's sentiments on the work undertaken by staff as the crisis had intensified. She noted the national position and work that the AoC had been involved in to advise colleges on the latest information during the period. She advised the Board that the Executive had been sharing information with the AoC to inform their national negotiations, and extended her thanks to them for this.

299. The Board were similarly impressed with the staff and college response and the leadership shown by the senior team during the pandemic. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Staff Governor described how he had witnessed the creativity and adaptability of staff. He reported that the interdepartmental collaboration by both teaching and support teams had been outstanding, and a solid community spirit had emerged. Colleagues had advised him that management communications were well received and timely, and that they were keen to remain updated despite their new remote working environments.
- Members asked if there was a plan to stop online delivery over the Easter holiday. The CEO confirmed that as the teaching and learning was continuing with the same timetables as face to face delivery, the two week holiday period would be managed as normal, giving staff a well needed break. The Principal confirmed that despite this break in learning, two safeguarding officers would be on duty at all times.
- Natalie Brett offered to share some wellbeing support resources for staff and advised on planning contingencies for a late September start, along with a November and January start. She advised caution with allocating too much of the Executive's immediate time to planning, with such frequent changes occurring. The CEO confirmed that he would feed this into the college approach, along with consideration of a phased return to work should immunity testing become widely available.
- The Board discussed the quality of online delivery, particularly focusing on the vocational courses and how student feedback would be sought. The Principal advised that some students who had not previously engaged in face to face learning were now taking part in the online lessons. A short survey to determine whether the student experience was a positive one would be circulated shortly and Curriculum Managers and Heads of Departments would be joining lessons to advise on remote teaching techniques. Learning walks would continue albeit virtually. She acknowledged that the practical elements of some courses posed a particular set of challenges, as a result teachers were being creative and upskilling on other areas of the course such as English and maths. She advised members that the previous week's attendance had been 77%, with 19% of registers unmarked and staff were being supported with adapting to this process.
- An in depth discussion was held on how the college is discharging its safeguarding duties and the provision of pastoral support to ensure student wellbeing. The Principal gave assurance that all elements had been considered and the necessary support was in place for all students, particularly those with high needs. The Safeguarding Policy had been updated to include remote working. Prior to the transition to online learning, communication had taken place with all students who held EHCPs and their carers, or were vulnerable and required additional support. In addition, all students who had been supported by the pastoral mentors during the year had been contacted and a provision for continued support had been put in place. Any students who had not made contact with their teachers for 3 days were being referred to the pastoral team, and there was a requirement to report to the Local Authority if this absence extended to 5 days.
- In response to a question on the level of risk associated with the current site closures, the COO advised that the position was being reviewed on a weekly basis. If any were

re-opened, a process would be followed in order to prepare the buildings appropriately.

- The CEO confirmed that he would send a short weekly update to Board members each Friday (excluding Easter), along with details of deputising arrangements for operational, safeguarding and Accounting Officer roles. This would ensure good governance during the crisis and provide the Board with the appropriate assurance and information.

300. Confidential minutes were taken at this point.

Action:

- Circulate weekly Covid-19 update to Board members (CEO)***
- Provide details of deputising arrangements (CEO)***

Resolved:

It was resolved that future meetings of the Board and its committees will be held remotely until it is safe to do otherwise

It was resolved to make a temporary amendment to the quoracy provision set out in item 8 of the Instrument of Government. With effect from 1 April 2020, the quoracy requirement will be set at 30% of the total number of governors rounded up to the nearest whole number, including a minimum of two external members. A review of these arrangements will be considered and approved at the Board meeting on 29 June 2020.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS AND TENURES

302. The Governance Manager advised that since the last meeting, recruitment processes had been underway for the role of Chair of Audit, Board Member and Co-opted Audit Committee member. In response to the social distancing guidelines, interviews had been held virtually for all candidates. Two appointments had been set out in the paper provided, and the panel had recommended Steve Bassam for the position of Vice-Chair and Martin Colyer for the position of Audit Chair. In an update to the paper, the Board member recruitment had now been finalised and two positions had been offered to Sean Jacob and Duncan Adams. It was confirmed a summary of Sean and Duncan's experience had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.
303. A confidential minute was taken at this point.
304. The Board were advised that while the tenures had been set for an initial 3 year period, these would be reviewed as part of the summer appraisals to ensure they were staggered accordingly. In addition, further information would be circulated on committee membership in due course as this was likely to be informed by the governance review.
305. The CEO extended his thanks to all panel members for their work on the recruitment. He was delighted with the new additions to the Board and noted the calibre of individuals appointed and extent of candidate reach as a result of engaging Peridot Partners.
306. The Vice-Chair noted that the panel had been mindful of Equality and Diversity throughout the recruitment process and explained that the appointments were made specifically to address the skills and experience gaps on the Board.
307. The Chair extended her grateful thanks to Natalie Brett and Kathleen Downes on their re-appointments, and to Scott Marshall for the extension to his tenure to April 2020.

Resolved:

The Board approved the appointments of Steve Bassam, Martin Colyer, Sean Jacob and Duncan Adams.

The Board approved the re-appointment of Natalie Brett and Kathleen Downes for a further 3 years.

The Board approved the extension to Scott Marshall's tenure to 30 April 2020.

PROGRESS AGAINST CIP

308. The Chair introduced the item. This was the mid-year review of the impact of the CIP, which targeted priority areas. The detail in the report was designed to provide assurance that the actions taken are having a sufficient impact on the outcomes the Board were seeking.
309. The Principal confirmed that there was mixed progress but highlighted progress at the mid-year point. It was anticipated that many of the actions marked amber would progress to a green rating by the end of the academic year. She noted the impact that Covid-19 would have on much of the work, although a few areas were behind schedule prior to this. She highlighted the following:
- Good progress had been achieved with the apprenticeship Quality Assurance infrastructure, improvement of staff morale and an improving picture seen in the Quality of Education. However, there is still further work to do due to the high volume of legacy apprenticeships.
 - Members queried how the public health crisis is likely to affect the work of the plan, and the Principal confirmed it might be affected by the removal of examinations and assessments. CPD for teachers will also change, as support with remote delivery would now be required. She assured the Board that CPD would continue to be a major feature for staff, but it would not be provided in traditional face to face format.
 - She confirmed that the digital team had created an ILT survey prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, which assessed staff and signposted any needing further assistance. Most courses were already using Google classroom, and the digital team had worked hard to collate resources for teaching staff and set up a virtual community to discuss issues and provide peer support. The Staff Governor confirmed that many of his colleagues were signing up for the short courses provided and were very engaged in the process.
 - She highlighted concern that progress was slow in relation to Behaviours and Attitudes - particularly work placements. However, it was reported that the recent Matrix inspection of the college's IAG had been extremely positive, but the final report had not yet been received.
 - With regards to apprenticeships, predicted outcomes were showing an improvement on last year's outturn but they were under college targets.
 - Members queried how apprenticeships are continuing during the crisis. The Principal explained that those students who would normally be in college are learning online and assessor meetings will continue as planned. She confirmed that work placements have currently ceased.

The Chair stressed that despite the current challenges it would be important to maintain the improvements to quality for students, and that the learning achieved in the first half of the year should not be not lost in the midst of the crisis.

CEO REPORT

Executive Summary

310. The Chair reminded members that ordinarily the sections in the CEO report were discussed separately but due to the operational detail provided in the Covid-19 item only the outstanding items would be covered

- 311. A confidential minute was taken at this point.
- 312. A confidential minute was taken at this point.
- 313. It was confirmed that work on the wider assurance framework was underway in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. Whereby Quality and standard KPIs will be adjusted. Consideration would be given to how this new set of KPIs would feed into the appraisal process.

Quality

- 314. The Principal reported on the recent visit to a local college in the region to understand their apprenticeship provision. She explained that they had a smaller cohort of apprentices and fewer frameworks of standards, but that the visit had helped focus on the models of delivery by assessors and ensuring they are effectively deployed.

Funding and Finance

- 315. In response to a query, the COO confirmed that the college were aware of their corporate and social responsibility with regards to supporting suppliers and that payments would be paid as due and contracts maintained where possible.
- 316. Members queried if there were any cost savings while the sites were closed. The COO advised that all non-pay items were being considered.

HR

- 317. The COO confirmed that the sickness rate in the report only included early self-isolation data due to the timing of the report. Detailed records had been kept and would feed in to the April report for Board review.

Property

- 318. A confidential minute was taken at this point.

Risk Management

- 319. The Board received the update on Risk Management as detailed in the CEO's report. All risks had been discussed under relevant items.

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT MID-YEAR REVIEW

- 320. The Chair explained the importance of this item, which provides assurance on the Board's statutory duties and responsibilities to keep students safe.
- 321. The CEO explained that the report had been reviewed in detail by the Safeguarding Board. He informed the Board that the college had actively set out to increase its numbers of 14-16 students and therefore the safeguarding arrangements for this group had been developed as a result. Members queried how the 14-16 cohort were managed in the current situation and it was confirmed that the duty for remote working was with schools and Local Authorities. Communications had therefore been maintained with both.
- 322. The Vice-Chair and Lead Governor for Safeguarding was invited to give her view on the report and she confirmed that the college was discharging its duties effectively. She reported that an action from the Safeguarding Board had been to ensure that the Safeguarding Assurance Framework and associated Risk Register was continuously reviewed so that it did not become a static document. The CEO confirmed that the risk register for Prevent and Safeguarding would be subject to their full termly review

shortly after the Easter break. Safeguarding control would continue to be reviewed monthly at Executive.

323. A confidential minute was taken at this point.
324. The Chair noted the significant increase in numbers supported by the pastoral mentors and asked if this was manageable with current capacity constraints. The CEO confirmed that the service is a great provision for students, but one that is very expensive and there is no further resource to increase the size.
325. The Vice-Chair and Lead Governor for Safeguarding confirmed that, in her view, the College continued to deliver safeguarding and Prevent in line with all government and other requirements.
326. The Board thanked the Vice-Chair and Lead Governor for Safeguarding for her assurance to the Board, and for her work and effort on safeguarding at the College.

The Director of Higher Education joined the meeting.

INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC HEALTH REPORT MID-YEAR REVIEW

327. The Director of HE explained that the report provided mid-year progress on the HE provision. She flagged the attendance gap between BME and white students and the attendance issues with the Music course, although she expressed confidence that the challenges would be resolved and that teams had the right approach to deal with the challenges. Members were advised that longer term, there was a requirement to work with staff and students from the point of induction onwards regarding the expectations around attendance.
328. It was confirmed that, due to the low numbers in question, improvements to attendance gaps could be targeted successfully. Alongside that it was recommended that the college should consider how it progresses students from levels 4 to 5 and 5 to 6. Progression based on a pass mark rather than grades would likely reduce gaps.

OfS REGULATION: CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

329. The CEO reported that the item had been included on the agenda to both ensure that the Board understood their responsibilities in relation to Ofs regulation, and to provide assurance around compliance with the regulations at the GB MET. It was recognised that OfS regulations are designed for HEIs and this presented some challenges for all those providing HE in an FE environment.
330. The Director of HE gave assurance to the Board around GB MET's compliance with the regulations.

The Director of Higher Education left the meeting.

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

331. The Vice Chair/SID and Chair of Audit confirmed that the Budgetary and Financial Planning Audit process had been robust. It had been debated thoroughly and honestly by the Audit Committee as the minutes detailed. The Vice Chair asked if the nuance of the Audit Committee and the nature and strength of the challenge would be discussed with the new Chair of Audit. It was confirmed that a handover would take place.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION POLICY

332. The policy was removed from the agenda while further advice was taken from legal advisers on the use of the policy template.

Action:

Confirm amendments to template with legal advisor and resubmit the policy to May/June Board for approval. (GM)

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

333. The Board approved the Freedom of Information policy

MONEY LAUNDERING PREVENTION POLICY

334. The Board approved the Money Laundering Prevention policy.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

335. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 27 April 2020 to take place virtually.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

336. After 7 years on the Board of GB MET and one of its predecessors, the Chair announced that her last meeting was drawing to a close. She described her passion for education and how it had fuelled her to join the Board and contribute to the college in her hometown. She vowed to stay in touch via her role as Chair of the AoC and wished the new Chair and Board the best of luck.

337. The CEO thanked the Chair formally for her dedication to the organisation, and for being a joy to work with. He described her professional, organised and conscientious approach. Along with her ability to think and process quickly and navigate the work of the Board with such agility.

MEETING EVALUATION

338. Board members provided feedback which was provided separately.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

Signature of Chair.....*Sue Berelant*..... Date.....27 April 2020.....