

Preston College

Redacted and Abridged¹ Minutes of the Board Meeting held 21 October 2021 at 5.30pm, Boardroom

Present:

Mr J Boydell	Chair
Mrs L Doswell	Principal and Chief Executive
Mr S Browne	
Mr M Collard	
Mr S Edwards	
Ms J Garcia	
Mr N Hunter	
Miss Gueye Seck	
Mr M Driver	
Mr R Marshall-Slater	
Mrs L Mason	
Mr D Patel	Until Minute 16
Mr T Readett	

In attendance:

Mr S Nixon	Executive Director Resources
Ms M Haworth	Vice Principal Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
Mr M Noblett	Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning
Mrs C Rayner	Clerk to the Board
Ms G Thornton	Head of Human Resources.

Apologies:

Miss J Hopwood
Ms J Jones
Mr J Jepson
Miss F Patel

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Board meeting on campus since the pandemic began. On behalf of the Board, the Chair welcomed Mr Hunter and Mr Marshall-Slater to the Board. It was noted that it was Mr Hunter's first meeting on campus and Mr Marshall-Slater's first Board meeting.

The Board appointed Miss Geuye Seck (Student Governor (16-18)) and Miss Hopwood (Student governor FE) to the Board.

The Chair welcomed Miss Geuye Seck, the new student governor (16-18) to the Board meeting.

The Chair welcomed all new governors and encouraged them to ask questions.

The Board noted that Mr Anyon (staff governor) had resigned from the Board due to other commitments. The Board recorded thanks to Mr Anyon for his contribution.

¹ Please note that any matters which the Corporation is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis have been removed from these minutes.

The Board noted that apologies had been received from Miss Hopwood, Ms Jones and Miss Patel and that Mr Jepson might join the meeting via Zoom, subject to work commitments.

It was noted that a quorum was present.

2. Declarations of Interest

It was noted that Miss Turner would leave the meeting during the Board's consideration of her induction review. No other interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

a) 8th July 2021

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board meeting held on 8th July 2021 as a correct record.

b) 22nd September 2021

The Clerk referred to Minute 5 and explained that, following a discussion with Mrs Mason, it was proposed that the minute was amended to reflect Mrs Mason's comment on the importance of all governors and staff completing Safeguarding and Prevent training to protect learners and staff in the first instance, followed by the importance of completion from a regulation and inspection perspective. The Board approved the amendment.

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board meeting held on 22nd September 2021 as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Minute 5.

Resolved: The Minutes of the Board meeting held on 8th July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 22nd September 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment agreed to Minute 5.

4. Matters arising

The Board noted the report on progress of actions from previous meetings.

Resolved: The Board noted the report on progress of actions from previous meetings.

5. Decisions Taken and Information Sent Between Meetings

The Clerk referred to her report on Board decisions taken between meetings and information sent between meetings.

The Board noted the following written resolutions had been approved between meetings:

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|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - July 2021 | Barclays Letter |
| - August 2021 | LIBOR Migration |
| - August 2021 | Approval of 1% Staff Pay Award |
| - September 2021 | Appointment of Mr Marshall-Slater and Miss Patel to the Board as independent governors and approval of changes to Committee membership. |

The Board noted the following items had been sent between meetings:

- inclusion of a sensitivity analysis to the 2021/22 budget report;
- a report from RSM on *Managing Sexual Harassment Risks in Higher Education*;
- the latest Government guidance on Covid in FE: *Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak*;
- invitation for governors to watch the Staff Awards virtually;
- the Staff Update presentation – an overview of College activities 2020/21;
- a summary of data requests;
- Association of Colleges (AoC) briefing emails.

The Board noted the report on Decisions Taken and Information Sent Between Meetings.

Resolved: The Board noted the report on Decisions Taken and Information Sent Between Meetings

6. Risk Management Register

Mr Nixon referred to his report on the Risk Management Register and referred members to the Risk Management Register, dated October 2021, at Appendix A.

Mr Nixon reported that:

- the Risk Register would be considered by the Audit Committee at its next meeting in November. He reported that the College would submit of a business case to the ESFA on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) which could mitigate some of the College's income loss if successful, however the 2020/21 accounts had been prepared with the assumption of an AEB clawback;
- positive enrolment start to the 2021/22 academic year reduced the risk of not recruiting from 'Moderate risk' to 'Low risk', and if these numbers were retained it would reduce risks relating to KPIs;
- continued impact of Covid on risks;
- plans to review existing estates strategy.

Management responded to a query on how the AEB clawback would impact learners. Mr Noblett explained that for adult education provision at present there was a waiting list for ESOL places. He explained that the College would mitigate this by operating rolling starts throughout the 2021/22 academic year and offering daytime and evening programmes.

Mrs Mason, as Safeguarding and Prevent Link Governor, provided assurance of safeguarding provision at the College following her termly meeting with the safeguarding leads in October 2021.

The Board noted the Risk Management Register.

Resolved: The Board noted the Risk Management Register and agreed the current risks, actions completed and further actions still to be completed.

7. Governance Matters

The Clerk presented her report on Governance Matters.

a) Board and Committee Membership

The Board considered and noted the Board and Committee Membership summary. The Board noted that at the end of October 2021, not including the student governor (HE) vacancy, the Board would have three independent governor vacancies and one staff governor vacancy.

The Board noted that an additional meeting of the Search and Governance Committee would be arranged for governor interviews and agreed that the Board could approve the appointment of new governors by written resolution if required.

Miss Turner left the meeting

b) Induction Review

The Clerk explained that the Search and Governance Committee reviewed the performance and contribution of members throughout their Induction Year and made recommendations to the Board. Se reported that the Committee had completed Miss Turner's Induction Review at its last meeting. The Chair gave feedback on the Committee's discussion. .

The Clerk referred to a report provided at Appendix B to support this discussion.

The Board noted that the Search and Governance Committee could not make a formal recommendation to the Board as the meeting was inquorate at this juncture. The Board considered Miss Turner's review and agreed with the view of the Search and Governance Committee. The Board approved Miss Turner's induction review.

Miss Turner rejoined the meeting.

c) Governance Handbook

The Clerk outlined proposed changes to the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members related to:

- updates from Eversheds to their Code of Conduct template;
- changes to reflect the use of video conferencing for governance meetings;
- the proposal to add the Public Interest Governance Principles used by the Office for Students to the Code of Conduct.

The Clerk reported that the Search and Governance Committee recommended that the governor expenses policy was extended to allow governors to be reimbursed for childcare costs, or costs relating to care for other dependents, when attending Board meetings, training or activities. The Clerk that this change was proposed to make it more inclusive for current and potential governors. It was noted that governors would be asked to provide appropriate receipts when making any claims.

The Board agreed the recommendation that the governor expenses policy should be extended to allow governors to be reimbursed for childcare costs, or costs relating to care for other dependents, when attending Board meetings, training or activities.

d) Correspondence ESFA

The Board noted correspondence to governing bodies from Mr Edwards, Interim Chief Executive, Education and Skills Funding Agency, dated 22nd September 2021, at Appendix D.

e) Code of Good Governance of English Colleges

The Clerk reported that the AoC had published a revised Code of Good Governance of English Colleges on 30th September 2021. The Board noted that the Search and Governance Committee would conduct an initial review of the revised Code at its next meeting.

Resolved: The Board:

- **noted the current Board membership, Term of Office and committees membership;**
- **approved the appointment of new governors by written resolution if required;**
- **noted the governor recruitment update and succession planning update;**
- **approved Miss Turner's Induction Review;**
- **noted an update on the publication of the revised Code of Good Governance for English Colleges;**
- **approved the changes to the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members;**
- **approved proposed changes to the Governors' expenses policy to allow governors to be reimbursed for childcare costs, or costs relating to care for other dependents, when attending Board meetings, training or activities.**

8. Board Forward Work Programme

The Clerk outlined the draft Board Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) 2021/22, at Appendix A, which detailed the anticipated business of the Board in 2021/22. The Clerk highlighted:

- the FWP was not a static document and could be subject to change as new issues arose during the year;
- the FWP would be kept under review by the Chair, the Chief Executive and Principal and the Clerk and the Board would be informed of any substantive changes.

The Board discussed the draft forward work programme and requested:

- that a Safeguarding and Prevent report be included as a standing item on Board agendas. It was noted that an update was scheduled for the next Board meeting;
- further to the Board's discussion at the Board Effectiveness Review, the balance of the volume of Quality and Standards and Resources content should be reviewed to ensure the Board had oversight on the College's quality strategy and implementation alongside review of Resources;

- deep dive sessions on key themes.

Subject to these amendments, the Board approved the draft Forward Work Programme.

Resolved: The Board approved the Draft Board forward work programme 2021/22, subject to the amendments agreed.

9. HE Update Report

Ms Haworth, Vice Principal Quality, Teaching, Learning & Learner Support, presented her HE Update report, Ms Haworth reported:

- on the successful competition of the transfer from University of Derby to University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) for validation of the majority of the College's HE provision. Ms Haworth reported that the College were now having monthly partnership meetings with UCLan;
- management's proposal to enhance and re-brand the College's dedicated HE space as *Preston College University Centre*. The Board noted that the Quality and Standards Committee had considered the proposal at its meeting on 14th October 2021 and recommended it to the Board for approval.

The Board approved the proposal to brand the Higher Education Centre: *Preston College University Centre*.

The Board discussed with management the collaboration with UCLan and the learner pathways for provision available from Preston College and UCLan.

Ms Haworth reported that the Office for Students (OfS) had asked all universities and colleges to undertake a review of their compliance with consumer law and also to provide assurance to their governing bodies of ongoing compliance with condition C1 (guidance on consumer protection law). Ms Haworth referred members to the Student Protection Plan, at Appendix A, which had been reviewed and updated to include the changes to the College's partnership arrangements with the University of Derby and the Covid 19 Risk Assessment – Addendum. Ms Haworth highlighted the proposed amendments which were shown as track changes in Appendix A. The Board noted that the Student Protection Plan had been considered by the Quality and Standard Committee at its meeting on 14th October 2021 and the Committee recommended the proposed amendments to the Board for approval. The Board approved the updated Student Protection Plan.

The Board:

- **noted the report;**
- **approved the updated Student Protection Plan**
- **approved the proposal to brand the Higher Education Centre: *Preston College University Centre*.**

10. Principal and Chief Executive's Report

The Principal and Chief Executive presented her report. She reported:

- challenges with learner attendance and the College's interventions to improve this, with a focus on wellbeing initiatives. It was noted that many learners across the sector were finding full time campus learning more challenging post lockdown;
- whilst the College continued to have learner and staff Covid cases, numbers were low compared to the secondary education sector. The College had reintroduced wearing of face masks in public areas and learners had responded positively;
- an update on the Conservative Party Conference, with the Prime Minister making frequent references to skills and levelling up;
- the DfE and Ofqual had published the outcomes of the consultation on proposed adaptations for GCSE, AS and A-Level examinations in summer 2022 and November 2022;
- progress of the Preston Youth Zone Board in the development of Preston Youth Zone. The Board noted that the Principal and Chief Executive had agreed to join the Preston Youth Zone Board, taking the place of the previous Principal and Chief Executive.

Management responded to a question on staff absence and noted that common colds and flu currently had a greater impact on staff absence than Covid.

Members requested a report on the College market share and the changing demographic of Preston to ensure the Board understood the drivers for the College's increased learner numbers.

The Board noted the Principal and Chief Executive's Report.

- 11. Resolved: The Board noted the Principal and Chief Executive's Report.**
Action: To provide a report which included data on the College's market share.

12. Five Year Strategic Plan Update

The Chair referred to the session the Board had held during its strategic planning afternoon to review the College's strategic objectives. He explained whilst the strategic objectives would be adjusted the College's ambition to become outstanding remained. The Board discussed that the feedback on the objectives would be reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team and proposed changes would be considered by the Board at a future meeting. It was noted that the Five Year Strategic Plan, and associated actions, would also be reviewed again to reflect the impact of Covid on strategic planning.

Resolved: The Board noted the verbal update on the Five Year Strategic Plan and actions from the strategic planning meeting.

13. Draft Outturn Position 2020/21

Mr Nixon presented his report on the Draft Outturn Position 2020/21 at Appendix A. Mr Nixon reported:

- on the draft surplus subject to final checking and external audit,;
- pensions adjustments
- the draft outturn was based on Adult Education Budget (AEB) delivery .

The Board discussed the report and commended management and staff at the College for the financial performance during 2020/21 considering the significant challenges it faced. Management commended the hard work of staff throughout the College to minimise income losses and make cost savings. During discussion it was noted that there would be a note to the accounts to explain the impact of the pension deficient on the College's outturn position.

In response to queries from members, the Board noted:

- ongoing discussions with the bank;
- cash days in hand;
- the College had been unsuccessful in its bid to the Capital Investment Fund and the feedback received from the ESFA was that the fund had been oversubscribed.

The Board noted the forecast outturn position 2020/21.

Resolved: The Board noted the forecast outturn position 2020/21.

14. Performance Against KPIs Update

Mr Nixon presented the Performance Against KPIs Update. Mr Nixon reported:

- a number of KPIs were now rag rated green due to the draft outturn position;
- the pay as a percentage of income ratio;
- the importance of the College working on attendance issues to ensure that 2021/22 learners were retained.

The Chair of Resources Committee commented that the performance against KPIs had been considered at Resources Committee and assurance had been provided that the savings made had not unduly affected learners or staffing levels.

Resolved: The Board noted the current performance against Key Performance Indicators.

15. Curriculum Update

Mr Noblett, Vice Principal Curriculum Delivery and Planning, presented his Curriculum Update report which summarised the developments in curriculum for 2021/22 and. He reported:

- the ongoing impact of Covid on curriculum planning;
- the transition from Apprenticeship Frameworks to Standards had been achieved, and whilst the sector and employers continue to be challenged by some of the changes, the changes were now understood and were being implemented to good effect;

- the College had introduced its first three T Level subjects in 2021-22: Professional Construction, Health (Adult Nursing) and Science;
- the challenges of the entry requirement of English and maths GCSE for T Levels and the potential impact for learners and potential learners;
- existing staff would deliver T Levels.

Members discussed with management how the English and maths GCSE entry requirements for T Levels, as a Level 3 qualification, would restrict opportunities for technical learners when other qualification options were discontinued in c. 2024-25. Management highlighted the risks to learner outcomes and College achievement rates if learners started a T Level qualification but did not pass their Maths and English GCSEs during their studies. It was noted that the matter was being debated in the sector. Members discussed the previous option of functional skills as an alternative to GCSEs for technical qualifications.

Mr Noblett reported that the Lancashire Colleges had been successful in achieving stage one validation to deliver provision under the banner of the 'Skills Development Fund' (SDF), a new technical education budget targeted at enhancing employer engagement and creating provision to meet future skills demands. Mr Noblett reported that Preston College were leading on a project relating to the Greener Homes agenda, and had submitted a bid directed towards low carbon technologies. Members noted that if successful, the College would benefit from a capital investment, which would need to be delivered by March 2022.

The Board noted the Curriculum Update report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Curriculum Update report.

16. People Strategy Action Plan

Ms Thornton, Head of Human Resources, presented her report on the People Strategy Action Plan 2020/21. She reported:

- whilst Covid had impacted completion of some activities, 11 of 14 actions had been completed;
- changes had been made to Resources Committee reporting following an internal audit of the People Strategy Implementation Framework in May 2021 and the Resources Committee would receive two additional mid year reports to facilitate the monitoring of activities and implementation of learning. Also, an additional column had been added to Appendix A to capture any lessons learned through the development and implementation of the projects and support the delivery of future Action Plans;
- a key learning for 2020/21 was the development of the Remote Working Policy which had been well received by staff. Management were currently developing the next phase which would allow staff to request regular remote working patterns.

Members discussed with management the importance of a balanced Remote Working Policy which provided flexibility and wellbeing benefits for staff whilst ensuring learners were not

adversely impacted. Members also noted that, whilst there was less flexibility for teaching staff, some homeworking could still be possible when teaching staff were completing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or lesson preparation.

The Board noted the report and the People Strategy Action Plan 2020/21 at Appendix A.

In response to a comments from a staff governor, . Ms Thornton reported that a Human Resources Manager Dashboard which was under development and undertook to explore sharing further data with governors to provide information on staff CPD and wellbeing support alongside an overview of workforce data.

Resolved: The Board noted the report and the People Strategy Action Plan 2020/21 at Appendix A

Action: To explore the development of a Board HR dashboard which could be shared with the Board.

17. Committee Minutes

The Board noted the minutes of the Audit Committee dated 6th July 2021 (draft) and the Notes of the Quality and Standards engagement event dated 24th June 2021.

Resolved: The Board noted the minutes of the Audit Committee dated 6th July 2021 (draft) and the Notes of the Quality and Standards engagement event dated 24th June 2021.

18. Any Other Business

The Chair reported that this would be Mr Readett's final Board meeting as he retired from the Board at the meeting after serving two terms. The Chair thanked Mr Readett on behalf of the Board for his contribution to the Board and the College as a member of the Board, the Quality and Standards Committee and the Audit Committee. Mr Readett recorded that it had been a pleasure to serve on the Board and to see during his terms of office the progression and development of the College, overseen by the management team. He wished everyone at the College well for the future.

The Chair reported that this would be Mr Jepson's final Board meeting as he confirmed that he would resign from the Board at the end of October due to work commitments. The Chair thanked Mr Jepson on behalf of the Board for his contribution to the Board and the College, as a member of the Board and the Quality and Standards Committee. The Clerk undertook to forward the Committee's thanks to Mr Jepson.

19. Date of Next Meeting – 9th December 2021

The Board noted that the next meeting would be held on 9th December 2021.