

Preston College

Redacted and Abridged¹ Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 14 March 2024 at 5.30pm, Boardroom

Present:

Mr John Boydell	Chair
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mr Steve Browne	
Mrs Isara Cotton	
Mrs Helen Curtis	
Mr Marcel Driver	
Mrs Georgia Dunn	
Mr Malcolm Goulding	From Minute 10
Mrs Jane Hilton	
Ms Joanne Jones	
Mrs Sally Little	From Minute 11
Mr Robert Marshall-Slater	From Minute 11
Mrs Laura Mason	
Mrs Lynda Mason	
Miss Amanda Morey	
Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	
Mrs Jen Walters	

Absent:

Miss Aoife Cullen	
Mrs Karen Dunmore	Vice Principal – Finance

In attendance:

Ms Marie Haworth	Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
Professor Ron Hill	External Consultant, Stone King
Mr Mick Noblett	Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning
Mrs Clare Rayner	Clerk to the Board
Mrs Rachel Robson	External Consultant, Stone King
Mr Iain Stott	Vice Principal - Resources
Ms Gill Thornton	Head of Human Resources

Part 1 (a)

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He welcomed:

- Mrs Helen Curtis to her first Board meeting since her appointment as independent governor and a member of Quality and Standards Committee;
- Professor Ron Hill and Mrs Rachel Robson, consultants from Stone King, who would observe the meeting as part of the College's external governance review.

The Board approved the appointment of Miss Amanda Morey as Staff Governor (Business Support). The Chair welcomed Miss Morey to the meeting.

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 Aoife Cullen.

The Clerk reported that Mrs Whittingham had resigned from the Board.

It was noted that a quorum was present.

The Chair recorded thanks to Mr Airey, Head of Finance, and Mr Stott, Vice Principal – Corporate Services, for delivering Continuing Professional Development sessions on Management Accounts and Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection before the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Board noted the interest of all staff present in Item 9 Employment Policy Review – Resolution of Grievance Policy and Resolution of Grievance Procedure.

FOR APPROVAL

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board meetings held on 14 December 2023 and the Notes/Minutes of the strategic planning meeting on 25 January 2024 as correct records.

Resolved: The Minutes of the Board meetings held on 14 December 2023 and the Notes/Minutes of the strategic planning meeting on 25 January 2024 were agreed and signed as correct records.

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. Report on Decisions Taken Between Meetings

The Clerk referred members to a report on Decisions Taken and Information Sent Between Meeting. She reported that the Board had approved the appointment of Mrs Curtis, independent governor, by written resolution between meetings.

The Clerk also referred to the information sent or added to the Governors' Portal between meetings. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the verbal report on information sent between meetings.

6. Fees Policy Update

The Chair referred members to the proposed changes to the Fees Policy which were shown in track changes at Appendix A. Mr Stott reported that the adult funding rules for 2024/25 were expected to be published by the end of March 2024.

The Board approved the proposed changes to the Fees Policy.

Resolved: The Board approved the proposed changes to the Fees Policy 2024/25.

7. Gender Pay Gap

The Chair referred members to the Gender Pay Gap report 2023/24 and reported that the Resources Committee had considered the Gender Pay Gap report at Appendix A at its meeting on 8 February 2024 and recommended to the Board for publication.

The Board approved the publication of the Gender Pay Gap report at Appendix A within the legislative timeframe. The Board noted the proposed actions arising from the Gender Pay Gap data contained within the Continuous Improvement Action Plan.

Resolved: The Board:

- approved the Gender Pay Gap Report contained as Appendix A for publication within the legislative timeframe;**
- noted the proposed actions arising from the Gender Pay Gap data contained within the Continuous Improvement Action Plan.**

8. Risk Management Register

The Board noted the Risk Management Register which had been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 6 March 2024.

The Clerk reported that, in light of governor resignations, the Audit and Risk Committee proposed that the risk of appointing new governors should return to the risk register and that the risk regarding 'Changes in Board membership/management team have adverse impact on College strategic direction and/or oversight' should be increased. She reported that these changes had been made to the Risk Register at Appendix A.

The Board noted the Risk Management Register, agreed the current risks, actions completed and further actions still to be completed and approved the proposed changes to the register.

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

9. Employment Policy Review - Resolution of a Grievance Policy and Resolution of a Grievance Procedure

The Chair referred members to the Resolution of a Grievance Policy at Appendix A and Resolution of a Grievance Procedure at Appendix B and reported that the Resources Committee had considered the proposed changes and its meeting on 8 February 2024 and recommended the changes to the Board for approval.

The Board noted the recommendation of the Resources Committee and approved the revised Resolution of a Grievance Policy and Resolution of a Grievance Procedure.

Resolved: The Board approved the revised Resolution of a Grievance Policy and Resolution of a Grievance Procedure.

10. Tender Document Assessment: Remodelling of the Visual, Performing Arts and Digital Building

The Chair referred members to the Tender Document Assessment: Remodelling of the Visual, Performing Arts and Digital Building report and tender documentation and Social Value Assessment at Appendix A.

Mr Goulding joined the meeting.

Following discussion, the Board agreed to approve the award of the contract to the recommended supplier, Walter Carefoot & Sons,

Resolved: The Board agreed that to approve the award of the contract to the recommended supplier, Walter Carefoot & Sons.

FOR DISCUSSION

11. Principal and Chief Executive's Report

The Principal and Chief Executive presented his Principal and Chief Executive's Report and reported:

- that as the College had signed the Report and Financial Statements on 31 January 2024. He reported the outturn underlying surplus against a budget;
- that the College had received confirmation that learner number allocation for 2024/25 was 2,107 (16-18 learners) which meant the College would receive an additional c.£1 million of funding for 2024/25;
- that improving learner attendance remained a challenge and the College had appointed two Attendance Officers as a pilot;
- on the Chancellor's budget statement which included requirement to increase the study hours for maths and English GCSE in 2025/26 which the College would implement when required.

Mrs Sally Little joined the meeting.

In response to queries from members, the Board noted:

- that the age demographic increase in the area which the College currently benefited from was forecast to flatline in 2026. However, this did not take into account City Deal projects and additional housing. Also, the College had an improved quality and improved reputation and had received significant grant increases year on year;
- the College's current cash position.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee reported that at a recent Association of Colleges (AoC) Finance and Audit Committee Chairs' Network meeting it had been highlighted that colleges might be vulnerable to revenue surplus confiscation. It was noted that this was a potential risk since the reclassification of colleges.

Mr Robert Marshall-Slater joined the meeting.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred to underspend in the T Level Capital project the Board had approved under Item 10 and that, subject to Department for Education (DfE) and Board approval, management would investigate expansion of the project.

The Board noted the report.

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

12. Strategic Plan 2023/26

The Principal and Chief Executive referred members to a progress of the College's Strategic Plan at Appendix A.

In response to a query of whether there were any underlying curriculum issues for some actions being amber, Mr Noblett, Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning, confirmed that the amber actions were ongoing pieces of work which were on target but had not yet been fully completed. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted current progress on delivery of the first year's deliverables contained in our new Strategic Plan 2023/26.

13. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Board noted the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Learner Review 2022/23 at Appendix A and the DfE consultation document: Gender Questioning Children Non-Statutory Guidance at Appendix B.

The Principal and Chief Executive provided background information on the DfE consultation document "Gender Questioning Children Non-Statutory Guidance" at Appendix B.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the:

- **College's EDI Learner Review 2022/23;**
- **update on the development of a College EDI strategy;**
- **DfE consultation document: Gender Questioning Children Non- Statutory Guidance.**

14. Management Accounts

The Chair referred members to the Period 6 Management Accounts.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred to the year end forecast surplus and the risks and opportunities this presented.

In response to queries from members, the Board noted:

- that staffing issues had improved in 2023/4 and whilst a quality risk remained when using agency staff, the agency provision had improved;
- the College was currently recruiting for engineering teaching staff;
- the College was managing vacancies at student manager level;

- that whilst the College had lost some staff to industry roles, the position had stabilised in 2023/4.

The Chair asked members to contact the Clerk if they would like any CPD training on the Management Accounts. The Board noted the Period 6 Management Accounts.

Resolved: The Board noted the Period 6 Management Accounts.

15. Performance Against Key Performance Indicators

The Board noted the Performance against Key Performance Indicators at Period 6.

Resolved: The Board noted the performance against Key Performance Indicators Period 6.

16. Progress and Performance Against the Quality Improvement Plan

The Chair referred members to the Progress and Performance Against the Quality Improvement Plan. Ms Haworth, Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support, reported that the College had adequate staff resources which were utilised across College as effectively as possible.

A member suggested that it would be helpful for the Quality and Standards Committee and the Board to have an additional Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TL) report in year which included more detailed performance metrics on the outcomes of learning walks earlier in the academic year. Ms Haworth reported that the Quality and Standards Committee currently received an interim TLA report and more detail could be included.

The Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee reported that the Committee had discussed this suggestion at its meeting on 29 February 2024 and had agreed to include a more detailed report on the outcomes of learning walks at its next meetings and to include two reports each year on the outcomes of learner walks going forward to the Committee's forward work programme. The Clerk reported that all committees would consider forward work programmes for 2024/25 at the next round of meetings.

The Chair of Quality and Standards Committee recommended that all governors also complete a learning walk to aid understanding of the process. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Progress and Performance Against the Quality Improvement Plan report.

17. Higher Education Update

The Chair referred members to the Higher Education Update report which had been considered by Quality and Standards Committee at its meeting on 29 February 2024. Ms Haworth reported that the report had been updated in response to feedback at Quality and Standards Committee. She reported that the number of starters had been added to the table of recruitment numbers and more detail had been provided on HE Learner Voice.

In response to queries from members, the Board noted:

- that whilst all College courses were externally advertised, the majority of learners on the College's PGCE course were College staff for which the College received the revenue. Ms Thornton highlighted that the numbers of staff completing this qualification reflected the College's success in recruiting tutors from industry;
- that the College had exceeded its targets for year 1 of the Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology delivery.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Higher Education Update.

18. Workforce Profile Data 2022/23

The Chair referred members to the Workforce Profile Data 2022/23 report which had been considered by Resources Committee on 8 February 2024. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Workforce Profile Data 2022/23 report.

19. Roof Survey and Estates Update

The Chair referred to the Roof Survey and Estates Update report which had been considered by Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 February 2024. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Roof Survey and Estates Update.

20. Curriculum and Strategy Update

The Chair referred members to the Curriculum and Strategy Update report which had been considered by Quality and Standards Committee at its meeting on 29 February 2024.

Mr Noblett provided further information on the plan to divest the College's Aeronautical Engineering programme and the rationale for this. He referred to understaffing in this provision and associated challenges with quality. He explained that the College's engineering provision would be contextualised to reflect that BAE was local employer.

In a response to a query on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the future job market, Mr Noblett reported that whilst this represented a risk, the College continued to work with employers to ensure the College's curriculum met local skills needs and reflected the changing job market, including new jobs.

The Board discussed the opportunities and risks from AI and the likely need for the introduction of a new layer of governance going forward to check the decisions that AI made.

In response to queries, the Committee noted that:

- End Point Assessments (EPAs) continued to impact on overall achievement rates nationally. She reported that the College had recently worked with Ofsted inspectors to explain the impact of EPA;
- the reasons a number of qualifications had been dualled badged as HTQs.

The Board discussed the Market Share Snapshot report at Appendix A with management. In response to a query on why it appeared the College's adult learning market share had fallen whilst the market appeared to grow, it was noted that adult learning was a complex and challenging market which had been impacted by pandemic and cost of living crisis. The Board also noted that mandatory training from Job Centre +, which the College had previously benefited from, had ended post Covid. It was suggested that this could be discussed in more detail at Resources Committee.

Following discussion, the Board agreed that it would be helpful to hold a deep dive on curriculum plan validation including detailed information on the College's market share, particularly the adult education market.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Curriculum and Strategy Update.

Action: To add curriculum plan validation/ College's market share to the list of deep dives.

21. Funding Audit Report

The Chair referred members to the Funding Audit Report which had been completed by Mazars on behalf of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The Board discussed and noted the report the Funding Audit report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Funding Audit report.

22. People Strategy Update

The Chair referred members to the People Strategy Update.

In response to a question from a member, Ms Thornton, Head of HR, provided an overview of the operation of the College's Hybrid Working Policy and Flexible Working Policy and that the policy provided opportunities for parents, and other staff, to request flexible working and how this could benefit the College's Gender Pay Gap in the longer term.

Ms Thornton also referred to the changing expectations of younger workers in the UK which would impact on recruitment and retention.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred to the benefits of flexible working opportunities to help staff balance workload issues.

Members and management discussed the importance of policies and procedures which supported staff whilst also ensuring that support for learners did not decrease as a result. Management provided assurance on how the policies were implemented in College to achieve this important balance. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the People Strategy Update.

Ms Jones left the meeting.

23. Safeguarding and Prevent Update

The Chair referred members to the Safeguarding and Prevent Update.

Mrs Lynda Mason, Safeguarding and Prevent Link Governor, gave a verbal report on her meeting with Ms Haworth this term. She reported that she was impressed with the safeguarding framework place.

Members discussed the number of looked after children at the College, many were unaccompanied asylum seekers, which had increased in recent years and was forecast to further increase in 2024/25. Management highlighted some of the challenges this presented.

Ms Haworth reported that as a College of Sanctuary the College was supporting other colleges that were considering becoming a College of Sanctuary. The College had also been invited by the College of Sanctuary to become involved in its review process. The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Safeguarding and Prevent Update.

24. Health and Safety Update

Mr Stott reported that the College had appointed a new Health and Safety Officer who had started at the College the previous week.

Resolved: The Bord noted the verbal Health and Safety.

25. Any other business

The Chair thanked Ms Haworth, Mr Noblett and Ms Thornton for their contribution to the meeting.

Resolved: Mrs Haworth, Mr Noblett and Ms Thornton left the meeting.

Part 1 (b)

26. Governance Matters

The Clerk referred members to her Governance Matters report. The Clerk reported that the Board had one independent governor vacancy with an expected three or four retirements in 2024. She reported that the Search and Governance Committee had been due to discuss proposals for recruitment at its meeting in February. However, the meeting had not gone ahead as it would have been inquorate. The Clerk reported that another meeting would be arranged and proposals would be presented to the Board on recruitment plans. The Clerk reported that options under consideration included re-applying to the DfE Governor Recruitment Service or considering other options to search for potential governors in the local community.

The Clerk reported that, following the resignation of Mrs Whittingham, the Search and Governance Committee had a membership of three. She explained that, as the Committee required at least three members to be quorate, it would be helpful to temporarily appoint another member. The Clerk reported that as outlined in her report, following a request to the Board, Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez had volunteered. The Board appointed Mr Sedano-Martinez to the Search and Governance Committee.

The Clerk reported that, following the Board's strategic planning meeting on 25 January 2024 she had written to all independent governors to ask for any expressions of interest in the role of Chair of the Governing Body. She reported that she had not received any expressions of interest to date. She referred to a proposal in her report that the Board considered succession planning options going forward at the Deep Dive session on 25 April 2024 following the External Governance Review report. The Board agreed to hold a further succession planning meeting on 25 April 2024.

The Clerk referred to the timetable for the external governance review including interviews with the Clerk and a number of other governors on 18 March 2024.

The Clerk reported on the forthcoming Deep Dive sessions:

- a Stakeholder Engagement Deep Dive session on 21 March 2024;
- an External Governance Review Deep Dive session on 25 April 2024;
- the next governor and staff lunch would take place on 14 May 2024.

The Clerk also referred to other CPD opportunities for governors which had been added to the Governor CPD and Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities Newsletter - Issue 5 Winter/Spring 2024 including the AoC Governor Summit on 21 and 23 May 2024 and AoC Finance Masterclass session between 4 June and 9 July.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted:

- **the Board membership and succession planning update;**
- **a report on Board and Committee attendance 2023/24 for the autumn term;**
- **an update on governor training and development, forthcoming deep dive sessions and stakeholder engagement opportunities.**

The Board approved the:

- **appointment of Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez to the Search and Governance Committee;**
- **proposal to hold a succession planning meeting on 25 April 2024 as part of the Deep Dive evening.**

27. Committee Minutes

The Board noted the draft minutes from the following Committee meetings:

- Resources Committee - 8 February 2024
- Quality and Standards Committee - 29 February 2024.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee gave a brief verbal report on the meeting on 6 March 2024. He reported that most items covered at the Committee had been discussed during the Board meeting including a detailed discussion on the Funding Audit. He reported that the Committee had considered two Internal Audit reports, including an internal audit on Apprenticeships which had been rated strong. He reported that the importance of record keeping had been discussed with the internal auditors and management.

Resolved: The Board noted the minutes from Committee meetings.

28. Date of next meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting would be a Deep Dive session which would take place on 21 March 2024.