

## Preston College

### Redacted and Abridged<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 17 October 2024 at 5.30pm, Boardroom

#### Present:

Mr John Boydell	Chair
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mr Steve Browne	
Mrs Helen Curtis	
Mr Neil Fletcher	
Mr Malcolm Goulding	
Mrs Janet Harrison	
Mrs Jane Hilton	
Ms Joanne Jones	
Mrs Sally Little	
Miss Marya Momand	
Miss Amanda Morey	
Mrs Laura Mason	
Mrs Lynda Mason	Remote (Zoom)
Mrs Jen Walters	

#### Absent:

Mr Robert Marshall-Slater	
Mr Mick Noblett	Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning
Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	

#### In attendance:

Mr Mark Airey	Executive Director of Finance
Ms Marie Haworth	Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
Mrs Clare Rayner	Clerk to the Board
Mr Iain Stott	Vice Principal - Corporate Services

#### Part 1 (a)

##### 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair welcomed Mr Neil Fletcher and Mrs Janet Harrison to their first Board meeting in College and welcomed Mr Mark Airey to his first Board meeting since his appointment as Executive Director of Finance.

The Board noted that apologies had been received from Mr Robert Marshall-Slater, Mr Mick Noblett and Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez.

It was noted that a quorum was present.

The Clerk confirmed that there had been a contested election for the role of Student Governor (16-18) and Miss Marya Momand was the successful candidate. The Board

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

appointed Miss Momand as Student Governor (16-18) and the Chair welcomed her to the meeting.

The Chair encouraged all new members to ask questions at the meeting.

The Clerk reported that unfortunately no applications had been received for Student Governor HE or FE and these vacancies had been re-advertised.

The Chair recorded thanks to members of staff who had been involved in governor learning walks, the opening of the new Digital Suite and the management accounts training which had all taken place before the meeting.

The Clerk reported that a new Board agenda format would be trialled for this meeting and welcomed feedback.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

The Board noted the:

- inherent interest of all staff in part of item 9 – Report of the Acting Chair of the Resources Committee in relation to the proposed changes to the Pay Principles Policy;
- interest of Mrs Sally Little in part of Item 15 - Report of the Search and Governance Committee and she would leave the meeting for the Board's discussion on her Induction Review;
- the interest of Senior Post Holders in Item 16 - Board Appointments in relation to the appointment of the Chair of the Governing Body.

## **3. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board meetings held on 4 July 2024 and 18 September 2024 as correct records.

**Resolved: The minutes of the Board meetings held on 4 July 2024 and 18 September 2024 were agreed 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 Between Meetings**

The Clerk referred to her report on decisions taken and information sent between meetings. The Board noted the following Board decisions had been approved by written resolution since the last meeting:

- the appointment of Mr Neil Fletcher as an independent governor and a member of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Search and Governance Committee;

- the appointment of Mrs Janet Harrison as an independent governor and a member of the Resources Committee;
- to extend of the contract with the College's internal audit contract with Wbg Services (the new name of Wylie and Bisset) for the optional final year of 2024/25 and approval to commence the tender process for internal audit service for the next three to five years;
- to extend the College's Whistleblowing policy and Procedure for Speaking Out until December 2024.

**Resolved: The Board noted the report on decisions taken and information sent between meetings.**

## **6. Principal and Chief Executive's Report**

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

- that there had been a positive start to enrolment at the start to the year, with the College meeting all income targets, particularly 16-18 provision. The Principal and Chief Executive commended the hard work of staff;
- on the forecast budgeted surplus for 2023/24; subject to audit process and adjustments;
- that the surplus achieved meant that the College would safely move into Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) 'Good' financial health category;
- that the College had met all income targets which was a significant achievement;
- that College achievement rates had just been published and reported:
  - that the College's overall achievement rate of 90.8% for 2023/24 which was a 1% that increase on 2022/23;
  - that the achievement rate for high needs students was 95%;
  - that the achievement rate for looked after children was 92.8%
  - on narrow gaps in achievement rates for minority ethnicity students;
  - that apprenticeship achievement rates were 66% an increase of 8% on 2022/23 and above the national achievement rate of 54%;
  - on ongoing work to improve the achievement rates for GCSE maths and English and apprentices.
- on work to support students with mental health challenges and the legacy of Covid, including mental health first aiders. A dedicated room had been introduced which students could use if they needed some quiet time which was also used by staff in the evening;

- on the ongoing challenge to improve attendance with incremental improvements with initiatives such as the 5As Every Lesson Matters. The Principal and Chief Executive had visited several classes which had achieved high attendance to celebrate their achievement;
- that T Level provision had not recruited as well as other provision in 2024/25 to date and this had been reflected within the sector. However, teachers, students and parents were showing more interest in the qualification;
- on uncertainties in relation to the forthcoming budget, including the possibility of National Insurance increases;
- on welcome comments from government regarding the importance of the skills sector as the FE sector continued to lobby government to narrow the pay gap between school and FE teaching staff. The Principal and Chief Executive reported that along with other principals, he had co-signed a letter coordinated by the Association of Colleges, at Appendix A, to the Chancellor or the Exchequer which outlined the challenges of the FE sector and changes which could benefit colleges such as VAT reimbursement;
- that the AoC had recommended a pay award of 2.5% or £750, whichever was the greater, and an update on local negotiations would be considered further at the Board deep dive session on 30 October 2024;
- an update on the government's curriculum reform;
- the increase in the number of higher needs and Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) students at the College and how the College has addressed this.

The Board discussed the report with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). In response to queries and comments from members, the Board noted:

- the perception of T Levels within universities which was currently a mixed picture, with some universities accepting the qualification whilst others did not;
- that the local birth rate was expected to flatten from 2026. However, the College aimed to continue increasing its market share;
- the student governor provided some feedback on possible reasons for punctuality and attendance issues. She commented that the bus service and traffic caused some students to be late and that attendance could also be affected if students had assignments to complete.

The Board noted the report.

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

## **7. Strategic Plan Progress**

The Principal and Chief Executive presented his Strategic Plan Progress report. He reported:

- that following the external governance review, a narrative strategic plan report had been produced rather than a detailed deliverables report;
- that many of the items highlighted in the report had been discussed during Item 6;
- that ELT would develop a draft balanced scorecard at its Away Day in December 2024.

The Board noted the report.

**Resolved: The Board noted the Strategic Plan Progress.**

## **8. Risk Register**

Mr Stott, Vice Principal – Corporate Services, presented the Risk Register report, which would be discussed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its next meeting on 20 November 2024. Mr Stott reported:

- several of the risks had decreased due to the College's draft 2023/24 financial performance;
- that an additional risk of 'Internal threats to normal continued operations at College' had been added to the Risk Register at the end 2023/24 and related to risks from students. It was noted that was in response to the increase in incidents that had taken place at colleges nationally.

In response to a query on the risks related to the increase in high needs students, it was noted that a cross college approach had been taken and the College was currently in discussion with Lancashire County Council to plan for 2025/26. The Board noted that considering progress made, the risk was not as significant as first anticipated.

The Board noted the report.

**Resolved: The Board noted the Risk Management Register.**

## **9. Report of the Chair of the Resources Committee**

Mr Steve Browne, Acting Chair of the Resources Committee, gave a verbal report on the Resources Committee meeting held on 3 October 2024.

Mr Browne reported that the Committee had agreed to highlight to the Board the excellent financial performance of the College during 2023/24 which should be celebrated and would provide the basis for further progress in 2024/25.

Mr Browne reported that the Committee had agreed to recommend to the Board:

- changes to the Data Protection Policy (Appendix B);
- changes to Subcontracting Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy (Appendix C);

- the introduction of a new Job Family Group (JFG) for the role(s) of Executive Director to the Pay Principles Policy from 1 October 2024 which would be JFG Spinal Column Point (SCP) 57 to SCP 61.

The Board noted the report of the Acting Chair of Resources Committee and the draft minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 3 October 2024 at Appendix A. The Board approved the changes to the Data Protection Policy and Subcontracting Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy and the introduction of a new JFG for the role(s) of Executive Director to the Pay Principles Policy from 1 October 2024 which would be JFG SCP 57 to SCP 61.

**Resolved: The Board approved the:**

- **changes to the Data Protection Policy (Appendix B),**
- **changes to Subcontracting Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy (Appendix C);**
- **introduction of a new JFG for the role(s) of Executive Director to the Pay Principles Policy from 1 October 2024 which would be JFG SCP 57 to SCP 61.**

#### **10. Procurement Agency Contract**

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Procurement Agency Contract report. He reported on the procurement process undertaken and outlined the recommendation.

The Board reviewed the tender evaluation report and approved the recommendation that Axis Recruitment Limited, Dovetail, Slate Limited and Eden Brown Limited were appointed.

**Resolved: The Board reviewed the Tender Evaluation Report and approved that the following agencies are awarded contracts across the five Lots of the Framework:**

**Axis Recruitment Limited**

**Dovetail and Slate Limited**

**Eden Brown Limited**

**Lot 1 – Science, Engineering and Automotive Technologies Teaching Staff**

**Lot 2 – Construction Teaching Staff**

**Lot 3 – Accountancy Teaching Staff**

**Lot 4 – Clinical, Early Years, Health and Public Services Teaching Staff**

**Lot 5 – Business Support Staff (non teaching roles)**

#### **11. Draft Outturn Position and Capital Outturn Position for 2023/24**

Mr Airey, Executive Director Finance, presented the draft outturn position 2023/24 and capital position for 2023/24 report which had been considered at Resources Committee on 3 October 2024. Mr Airey reported that, subject to audit and adjustments, the College would have a surplus that would be categorised as 'Good' in the ESFA's financial category; the draft outturn for 2023/24 moved the College towards outstanding financial category. The reported on the achievement of the College meeting all income targets.

The Board discussed the report with ELT. In response to queries from members, the Board noted:

- the College's approach to achieving EBITDA targets and the impact of debt repayments on the College's surplus;

- the College's accounting process in relation to reserves. It was noted that the College's reserves were included on the College's balance sheet. However, external restrictions applied to some reserves. In response to a comment that it would be helpful if the College's reserves could be more transparent to the Board it was noted that management were currently developing a Reserves Policy which would address this;
- the advantages and disadvantages of colleges holding reserves.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair recorded congratulations to all management on the Outturn Position and Capital position for 2023/24.

The Board noted the report and the Management Accounts 2023/24 at Appendix A.

**Resolved: The Board noted the Draft Outturn Position and Capital Outturn Position for 2023/24.**

## **12. Key Performance Indicators Report 2023/24**

Mr Airey and Mr Stott presented the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Report. Mr Stott reported that, apart from adult apprenticeship income, all other KPIs were rag rated as green.

Following discussion, Mr Airey suggested it would be helpful to add a financial health section to the KPIs.

Following a query, it was noted that the balanced scorecard would include much of the financial data the Board already received such as performance against KPIs for finance and quality, alongside other new metrics.

The Board noted the KPIs report for 2023/24 at Appendix A and the funding dashboard at Appendix B.

**Resolved: The Board noted the KPIs report for 2023/24.**

**Action: To add a financial health section to the Management Accounts.**

## **13. Report of the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee**

Mrs Laura Mason, Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee, gave a verbal report on the meeting held on 10 October 2024. Mrs Mason reported that the Committee had:

- discussed the increased number of Level 1 and Level 2 students enrolled at the College in 2024/25 and considered whether this might impact the strategic direction of the College. The Committee also noted that Level 3 had also recruited well;
- reviewed the first draft of the College's Self Assessment Report (SAR) 2023/24. The Committee was of the view that the College sometimes underplayed its achievements and encouraged management to review the language in the SAR to better highlight the College's strengths and achievements;
- been pleased to note that Lancashire colleges were now receiving base line student data from feeder schools. The Committee had noted that this data would assist the College when assessing and managing student attendance;
- considered proposals for changes to student governor roles at the College and made recommendations to the Search and Governance Committee;

- recognition from the Committee that the College was performing very well, particularly when benchmarked to similar colleges.

Mrs Mason reported that the Committee agreed to recommend to the Board:

- changes to the Safeguarding, Child Protection and Prevent Policy (Appendix A). It was noted that the Committee had commended the high quality of the policy and that management had been proactive in ensuring it was up to date;
- changes to Access and Participation Statement (Appendix B);
- the draft Curriculum and Skills Link Governor protocol and proforma (Appendices C & D).

The Board discussed the report with ELT. In response to queries and comments from members, the Board noted:

- that some feeder schools now provided base line data to colleges and some students themselves were also providing data, including attendance data. This information had helped College staff when working with students and would be used to develop bespoke student attendance targets;
- reporting on student attendance to the Board would be revised to reflect the baseline data and students would be risk rated. However, caution was required when setting targets as school and college definitions of attendance differed and the DfE had published new guidance for schools on recording of attendance;
- the number of students joining the College following home schooling, had increased;
- the importance of supporting those students who would not be working or in training if they were not in college;
- the importance of colleges, particularly those in the Lancashire area, publicising the work they do for students.

The Board noted the report of the Chair of Quality and Standards Committee. The Board approved the changes to the Safeguarding, Child Protection and Prevent Policy and the Access and Participation Statement.

A Curriculum and Skills link governor welcomed the introduction of the Curriculum and Skills Link Governor protocol and proforma which would be helpful for link governors and Directors of Schools. The Board approved the Curriculum and Skills Link Governor protocol and proforma.

**Resolved The Board approved:**

- **changes to the Safeguarding Child Protection and Prevent Policy 2024/25 (Appendix A):**
- **changes to the Access and Participation Statement 2024/25 (Appendix B);**
- **the draft Curriculum and Skills Link Governor protocol and proforma (Appendices C and D).**

#### **14. Any other business - Valediction**

As this was the Chair of the Governing Body's last meeting before his retirement, the Principal and Chief Executive recorded thanks to the Chair on behalf of the Governing Body

and the College for his valuable contribution to the College as a governor and for eight years of his term as Chair of the Governing Body. He also recorded his thanks to the Chair for the support and guidance the Chair had given to him during his time as Principal and Chief Executive.

The Clerk read an email of thanks to the Chair from Mr Sedano-Martinez, Chair Designate of the Governing Body, as he was unable to attend the meeting.

The Clerk recorded her thanks to the Chair for his contribution and his guidance and support to her as Clerk to the Board.

The Chair of the Governing Body recorded his thanks the Principal and Chief Executive, Chair Designate of the Governing Body and the Clerk for their comments and recorded his thanks for their support to him in his role of Chair.

The Chair of the Governing Body recorded thanks to governors, the Executive Leadership Team, staff and students and recorded that he had enjoyed working with everybody and that it had been his privilege to serve as Chair of the Governing Body at Preston College, a role which had hugely enriched his life.

The Board noted that the Chair's retirement dinner would be held on 30 October 2024.

*Mr Airey, Ms Haworth and Mr Stott left the meeting.*

## **Part 1 B**

### **15. Report of the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee**

Mrs Lynda Mason, Acting Chair of the Search and Governance Committee, gave a verbal report on the meeting held on 26 September 2024.

Mrs Mason reported that the Committee had agreed to highlight to the Board the importance of taking steps to improve the diversity of the Board, particularly the ethnicity of the Board and the importance of governors completing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year.

Mrs Mason reported that the Committee had recommended to the Board:

- approval of the induction review for Mrs Sally Little, at Appendix B,
- to set a Board/committee attendance KPI of 80%;
- on the report on the College's compliance with the Association of Colleges FE Code of Good Governance at Appendix C;
- proposed changes to the Schedule of Delegation at Appendix D; the Chair and Committee chairs' role descriptions and person specifications at Appendices E to K; the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members and Co-opted Members at Appendix L and the Governor Induction Plan at Appendix M;
- that separate governance deliverables were not set for 2024/25 to enable focus on the implementation of the External Governance Review Action Plan.

*Mrs Sally Little left the meeting.*

The Board noted that the Search and Governance Committee had completed an induction year review for Mrs Sally Little. The Clerk reported that the Search and Governance Committee had recommended to the Board that Mrs Little's induction year review should be approved.

The Board approved Mrs Little's induction year review.

*Mrs Little re-joined the meeting.*

The Board approved all other recommendations of the Search and Governance Committee.

**Resolved: The Board:**

- approved Mrs Sally Little's induction year review,
- agreed to set a Board/committee attendance KPI of 80%;
- approved the report on the College's compliance with the Association of Colleges FE Code of Good Governance at Appendix C;
- approved the changes to the Schedule of Delegation at Appendix D; the Chair and Committee chairs' role descriptions and person specifications – Appendices E to K; the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members and Co-opted Members at Appendix L and the Governor Induction Plan at Appendix M;
- agreed that separate governance deliverables were not set for 2024/25 to enable focus on the implementation of the External Governance Review Action Plan.

## **16. Board Appointments**

The Clerk referred members to her report on Board Appointments. The Clerk explained that the College's Instrument and Articles stated that a replacement Chair shall be appointed at the last meeting before the end of the term of office of the Chair, or at the first meeting following the Chair's resignation or removal from office. The Board approved the appointment of Mr Sedano-Martinez as Chair of the Governing Body from 18 October 2024.

The Clerk reported that:

- Miss Marya Momand, had been appointed as Student Governor 16-18 at the start of the meeting;
- the Search and Governance Committee had interviewed two candidates at its meeting on 26 September 2024 and recommend to the Board the appointment of Mrs Andrea Willimott to the Board and the Resources Committee, subject to compliance checks. The Clerk referred members to Mrs Willimott's CV and application at Appendix B.

The Board approved the appointment of Mrs Willimott to the Board and the Resources Committee, subject to compliance checks.

**Resolved: The Board approved the appointment of:**

- **Mr Sedano-Martinez as Chair of the Governing Body from 18 October 2024;**
- **Mrs Willimott to the Board and the Resources Committee, subject to compliance checks.**

## **17. Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedure**

The Clerk referred members to the draft Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedure. The Clerk reported that:

- this was new policy and procedure which brought together key principles and procedures for staff and governors in relation to managing conflicts of interest in one document;
- in some areas the procedure for staff and governors had been standardised e.g. where appropriate, the same questions were included in the declaration forms completed by staff and governors;
- the draft had been reviewed by the Resources Committee and the Search and Governance Committee.

The Board approved the draft Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedure.

**Resolved: The Board approved the draft Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedure.**

## **18. Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 12 December 2024.