

## Minutes of: Governing Board

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

Location: Ludlow College

Present	Attending
Alan Layng (Chair) Dave Williams (Principal & CEO) Jeremy Nichols Laura Johnston Julia Evans Ian Scott-Bell Toby Kinnaird Tony Bramley Gillian Herbert (not present for Workshop) Wioletta Sevry (not present for Workshop)	Debra Baldwin (Director of Personnel) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors) Ed Gwillim (Director of Finance) Jo Ricketts (Deputy Principal) Rob Lawson (AoC Governance Consultant, observing as part of HLNSC External Governance Review)
<b>Quoracy:</b> Meeting was quorate	

The meeting was preceded by a Governors' Workshop: Vice Principal John Gill presented the Governors' first formal Curriculum Review – the first in a new rolling programme received by Governors, as part of their duty to ensure the quality of provision meets the local skills need. The Governors heard an overview of the curriculum, pathways and progression routes, and the internal and external factors that influence continual curriculum development. The Governors posed a number of questions to Jon around a wide range of points, including funding, assessing demand, potential effect of government changes, and LSIP relationship with curriculum, and supporting the role of Governors within curriculum development. It was agreed that curriculum maps would be shared with Governors following the meeting.

**Action:** Deputy Principal/Clerk

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Ben Greenwood, Krista Price
2. **Declarations of Interest:** no new declarations
3. **Minutes of last meeting**
  - a. **Minutes of meetings held 12th Dec 2023 and 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023** – the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record
  - b. **Matters arising:**
    - **Managing Public Money** - Clerk to ensure reference to this is incorporated into Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference
    - **Student Governor recruitment** – ongoing, Clerk to progress
    - **Safeguarding policy to be sent out via Smartlog once filtering and monitoring incorporated** – ongoing - Director of Personnel to progress

#### **4. Report from Principal**

##### **a. Principal's Report**

The Principal summarised key meetings and events since the last Board meeting. Areas highlighted include the his role in the development of Herefordshire Economic Development Partnership meetings, and progress of the Herefordshire Skills Board, and his invitation received to join a Board looking at developing a rural West Midlands common system for engaging with providers on EHCPs.

The Principal summarised a journey taken since January 2024 when the management team took the decision to discontinue existing hire arrangements of Ludlow college building by community groups, due to the informality/loss-making of such non-educational use of the building, and concerns around the implications of out of hours safeguarding responsibilities of the college. The Board heard that, due to the lack of alternative provision for these community groups, this decision has since been rescinded (albeit with the intent to ensure that more acceptable financial and safety arrangements are developed) and the Principal highlighted to the Board the considerable community engagement both considered and undertaken as part of retracting the original decision. A Governor asked about the publicity around the Ludlow issue, another noted that the decision to continue may lead other groups to approach the college for similar hires, and the Board noted the positive and desired reputation that was upheld for the College by their understanding of community needs and retracting of the original decision.

A more general discussion around upholding and promoting the community/civic links of the college followed, which included questions around the possibilities of and barriers to HNSLC being as closely involved in neighbouring counties as they are in Herefordshire.

A letter from the regional DfE Education & Skills Funding Agency Post-16 was noted particularly as a reminder of the links that exist between government and provider, and the Board also noted the positive outcome ('good') following a no-notice Ofsted residential provision inspection of North Shropshire College. The Board noted their satisfaction, and asked the Deputy Principal to pass their appreciation on to the staff and teams involved in this achievement.

##### **b. Meeting Skills Needs and LSIP Stage 2**

The Principal presented this report, highlighting that revised requirements for the Annual Accountability Statement (due for submission July 2024) have simplified the process of incorporating the LSIP (the first draft of which has been recently published, which was shared with Governors for information). The benefits and challenges of working with the LSIP were shared by the Principal as part of discussion that followed. The Board agreed to delegate authority to the C&Q Committee (26<sup>th</sup> June 2024) to approve the 2024 Accountability Statement (due to it requiring submission on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024) and that the statement should be submitted to Board on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **5. Report and recommendations from Curriculum and Quality Committee**

##### **a. C&Q Committee Summary Report to Board**

The Acting Chair of C&Q presented this report, highlighting the challenge of the DfE increased hours requirement for FE Maths and English. The Deputy Principal added that requirements are likely to change again before this is formally monitored from 2025/26.

The Board heard the plans under discussion for meeting requirements from 2024/25, which will involve considering vocational training needs of staff as well as an expected challenge around staff hours, and a Governor asked a question about the support role of AoC in this issue.

The Deputy Principal and Acting Chair of C&Q confirmed that applications are up on last year, but that (as across the sector) mental health/anxiety issues in young people continue to rise. The Director of Personnel described the additional support already in place (including an increase of trained mental health first aiders and an external 24/7 Student Assistance programme). The Acting Chair of C&Q noted that the Board remains impressed by the provision made by college in this area, which was reflected in the recent Residential Ofsted inspection's recognition of the high level of student wellbeing provision. The costs involved in achieving this standard was acknowledged and the Principal asked the Director of Finance for figures to illustrate this.

**Action:** Director of Finance

**b. C&Q Committee 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 draft minutes** – The Board noted the draft minutes

**6. Report and recommendations from Finance and Employment Committee**

- a. The Chair of the F&E Committee presented this report, noting that the February Management Accounts are slightly improved on the January accounts reviewed at F&E, and that the pay increase agreed by Board has had a positive effect on recruitment and retention, particularly for lower paid staff.

Other finance highlights included that while the cash levels and balance sheet remains healthy, there are various challenges meaning that the forecast deficit for the year is above the planned level. However, the expectation is that things will continue to improve as they are currently. The Director of Finance confirmed the aim to achieve an operational cash surplus of £500k next year, in order to be able to match fund successful bids after current capital funding has been used.

Board Members asked about the deferral of the animal care centre estates work (confirmed as indefinite until a successful bid is in place) and the environmental sustainability approach of estates works planned, highlighting flat roof space and fields across the sites that could be potentially used for solar generation of electricity and related potential generation of funds. The Director of Finance confirmed sites where solar was already installed, the infrastructure challenges of these works were discussed by the Board, and the Principal agreed that survey of land potential for solar energy production would be useful.

**b. Tuition Fee and Remission Policy 2024/25**

This Policy recommended by the F&E Committee for Board approval.

**Decision:** the Board agreed to approve the policy

- c. **Annual Operating Plan** – this report was noted by the Board

- d. **ESFA correspondence: College's financial statements year ended July 2023 and dashboard** - the ESFA dashboard was noted and accepted by the Board
- e. **Subcontractor Value for Money Evaluation** - this report was noted and accepted by Board
- f. **February 2024 Management Accounts** – the management accounts for February 2024 were noted by Board
- g. **F&E Committee 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 draft minutes** - the Board noted the draft minutes

#### **7. Report and recommendations from Audit Committee**

- a. The Chair of the Audit Committee presented this report to Board. Highlights were made around the delay in the Estates Strategy, imminent changes (and future need for policy and procedure) around OfS Freedom of Speech requirements, positive progress report from Internal Auditors, and an increased risk level around student retention rate. The draft Board Assurance Framework (BAF) was presented to the Board in a simpler format, but was noted to need a more curriculum-driven style. The Principal confirmed that the BAF would be taken to CMT for further development.

The Board noted a need to more clearly define the aim/format of an 'Estates Strategy' and the Principal asked the Board for a dedicated discussion to produce this definition, and the Board asked for a number of options to be produced for them to consider as part of this at a future Away Day. The Board agreed with the Principal's view that the Estates Strategy should be curriculum-driven, and noted also the key relationship of the Estates Strategy with the college Strategy (due to be developed during 2024/25).

- b. **Board Assurance Framework** – this report was noted by the Board
- c. **Risk Register** - this report was noted by the Board
- d. **Audit Committee 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 draft minutes** - the Board noted the draft minutes

#### **8. Report and recommendations from Search and Governance Committee**

- a. The Chair of the S&G Committee presented this report to Board, highlighting that the C&Q Committee membership is seen as needing strengthening, and noting the recommended adoption of AoC Code of Good Governance (against which Board self-assessment will be undertaken, following the outcome of the current External Governance Review which will also inform this)
- b. **AoC Code of Good Governance 2023** – The Board agreed to adopt the AoC Code of Good Governance 2023

- c. **S&G Committee Terms of Reference** – The Board agreed to approve the Terms of Reference
- d. **HLNSC Scheme of Delegation** – several amendments needed were highlighted by the Director of Personnel, which don't now apply due to the OfS requirements of the college. The Board asked the Director of Personnel and the Clerk to work to adjust the document as needed, noting that an action (from S&G) is already in place for the Clerk to simplify this document.

**Action: Clerk**

- e. **S&G Committee 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 draft minutes** - the Board noted the draft minutes

**9. Chair's Activity update** – this report was welcomed and noted by Board

**10. Any Other Business**

- a. The Principal updated the Board that recruitment to the Director of Personnel has been undertaken, and described the recruitment process detail. The applicant appointed currently works for a national clothing warehouse company. The Principal confirmed that opportunities would be sought for her to meet the Board as soon as possible.
- b. The Director of Personnel confirmed that Vice Principal Ian Higgins has now commenced in post at Ludlow College.

**11. Date and time of next meeting:** 4pm 4<sup>th</sup> July at Holme Lacy Campus

**12. Confidential items** – see confidential minutes

Minutes approved: ..... Date: .....