

CORPORATION BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 10 October 2024
Abingdon Campus at 5pm

Present

Nick Handy (Chair)
Alan Bark
Jacqui Canton (Principal)
Ben Haxton
Adam Mumford
Kathryn Schutterlin
David Walker
Abigail Kyei
Sam Wolfe
Amanda Tilley

In attendance

Jo Milsom, Deputy Principal
Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal
Scott Gray, Vice Principal
Jack Price, Vice Principal
Mark Lay, Finance Director
Howard Stamp, Clerk & Governance Advisor (Minutes)

1. Apologies and items to be raised under AOB

1.2 Declarations of interest

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming and introducing the new Student Governor, Abigail Kyei. Kathryn Schutterlin's final Board attendance as Staff Governor was noted, with the Chair and members offering kind words of thanks for her service on the Board. The Chair briefly mentioned upcoming processes for electing a new Chair by July 2025 and encouraged interested members to approach the NRG Committee.

Apologies were received from Lucy Butler, Ed Collett, Carole Kitching, Nicolas Pages, Astrid Schloerscheidt, and Mackenzie Nordal Howe. No declarations of interest were made.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2024

2.1 Public Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points

The matters arising were discussed, with the majority completed. One item remains in progress regarding the skills audit, which is underway and will be circulated to members in due course.

4. Funding Update & Training

The Vice Principal delivered an in-depth presentation on the college's funding structure and income sources, providing clarity on the complexities and strategic impacts of the funding methodologies. A number of key items were presented and shared with the Board members present.

Key Points:

- **Funding Sources and Distribution:** It was explained that 16-19 Study Programmes account for approximately two-thirds of total income. This is supplemented by other streams, including Apprenticeships, the Adult Education Budget (AEB), and tailored learning for adult learners. Each funding source comes with specific compliance requirements and operational constraints.

- **Funding for Disadvantaged Students:** The mechanisms by which the college receives funding to support disadvantaged students were explained. This includes additional allocations for students who require extra resources, as well as programme weighting for courses that are considered high-cost or high-need.
- **16-19 Study Programme:** It was explained that this funding stream is calculated based on student numbers and retention rates, using a census method known as the “42-day rule,” where funding for a student is secured only after they remain enrolled for at least 42 days. Retention rates impact the funding allocation throughout the year, with withdrawal rates after this period reducing the funding incrementally.
- **Programme Weighting and Course Funding:** For specific high-cost courses, such as those with practical components or requiring specialised equipment, funding is weighted to provide extra support. The Board explored how these weightings directly influence curriculum planning and resource allocation, especially for technical and vocational subjects, using the example of the animal and equine provision at Common Leys as a highly weighted programme.
- **In-Year Growth and Adjustments:** The presentation covered recent increases in 16-19 student recruitment, which led to the activation of in-year growth funding. This was explained as a critical mechanism that allows the college to receive additional funds when enrolment growth exceeds projections, providing essential flexibility to meet increased demand.
- **Apprenticeship Funding:** The structure of apprenticeship funding was discussed, which varies from £1,500 to £27,000 depending on the programme’s level and duration. It was emphasised that achieving completion rates is crucial, as 20% of the apprenticeship funding is withheld until a student completes their end-point assessment. Board members noted the need for a robust support system for apprenticeship students to maximise achievement rates.
- **Funding for High-Needs Students:** High-needs funding involves a three-part structure, starting with standard per-student funding, an additional £6,000 for assessed high-needs requirements, and further resources based on each student’s specific needs. It was explained how this funding supports the college’s capacity to provide tailored services to students with significant learning or support requirements, often requiring collaboration with local authorities.

The Board welcomed the presentation and information shared. There was a discussion on how much time and resource is devoted to each funding stream relative to its share of total income, noting that some programmes, such as apprenticeships, require disproportionate administrative support based on their delivery model.

The Board thanked the SMT members for the valuable insight into the college’s funding streams and methodologies.

5. Principal’s report

The Principal presented a summary of the report, highlighting significant progress in student recruitment, with 16-18 enrolments exceeding last year's numbers and marking the third consecutive year of growth. This trend is attributed to both demographic shifts and the college's strong reputation. The Principal acknowledged the collective efforts of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and staff in accommodating this growth, and the Board expressed support for the SMT's focus on sustaining quality education amidst increasing enrolments.

To optimise capacity, the Principal detailed recent reorganisation efforts at the Abingdon campus, where a new "zoning" system for rooms has helped achieve increased utilisation from Monday to Friday. This strategy, implemented over the summer, is designed to enhance timetabling flexibility and support future growth.

An update was provided to the Board on the recent government review delaying the defunding of certain qualifications. While the pause doesn't affect current offerings, the SMT is monitoring developments closely to adapt the curriculum as needed.

The Principal also highlighted the appointment of Kash Barlow as the new Vice Principal for People and Culture. This role aims to strengthen the college's HR service and workplace culture, with a focus on recruitment and retention. It was further explained that a number of appointments have been made for the start of the new academic year, including new Heads of Faculty for Construction and Public & Professional Services. The Board welcomed these appointments and the progress made in recruitment, acknowledging ongoing challenges in staff recruitment.

The Board noted the Principal's report and expressed their support for the SMT's ongoing strategic initiatives and management of growth challenges.

- **Given the strong student numbers and space capacity, are there any adjustments that will need to be made to support future growth?**
 - *We are carrying out some early data analysis and testing to help us understand more about any need for expansion, particularly in identifying specific curriculum areas and locations.*
- **Have the OxLEP Skills Bootcamps run yet?**
 - *These are due to start very shortly.*
- **With the Qualification Reform, is BTEC under threat?**
 - *Yes, some BTECs are at risk, as the reform operates in cycles aligned with the T Level roll-out. As more T Levels become available, we expect more Level 3 courses to lose funding.*

The Board approved the report.

6. Finance & General Purposes

6.1 F&GP Committee update

The F&GP Committee Chair provided an update following the recent meeting, noting key points. Significant progress had been made in staff recruitment timelines, now averaging six weeks. Recruitment and retention remain challenging, particularly in trades such as plumbing and electrical.

Updates on Estate Projects included the completion of the T Level project at Abingdon. There was ongoing discussion regarding fire hydrants at Abingdon, as well as RAAC remediation works, with surveys in progress and discussions with the DfE concerning suitable funding options.

Health & Safety information was shared with the committee, recognising improvements in incident reporting and the use of safety software, which has contributed to a reduction in reported incidents and reflects proactive safety measures.

The committee also reviewed the management accounts included within this meeting's agenda, agreeing that the college continues to present a positive financial position.

- **Do staffing gaps pose a risk to service levels in specific departments?**
 - *Currently, the college is managing staffing gaps to ensure there is no disruption to students and teaching.*

The Board noted the verbal update.

6.2 Annual Committee Report

The annual report for the F&GP Committee was presented to the Board as a matter of best practice, reflecting on the activities undertaken throughout the past year.

The Board approved the Annual F&GP Committee Report.

6.2 Management accounts and draft outturn 2023/24

The Finance Director summarised the 2023/24 management accounts, noting a strong year-end position with positive projections for EBITDA and cash holdings. Key points from the accounts were explained to the Board. Operating surplus projections show a surplus of £800k compared to a budget of £125k, with increased income offset in part by additional labour and operating costs.

Provisions for staffing were included in the 2024/25 budget, incorporating funding for 50 additional full-time positions, largely for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) to meet the needs of growing enrolments. There was also an increase to the Minor Capital Budget, with an additional £250,000 to support new projects and essential upgrades, aligning with strategic growth plans.

It was noted that there had been a thorough discussion at the recent F&GP Committee meeting, which had recommended the management accounts to the Board.

- **Have there been any clawbacks on the ESFA grant?**
 - *There have been no clawbacks incurred this year.*
- **What is included within the £196,000 figure for RAAC at Witney?**
 - *This includes a number of items, such as the rental of a temporary teaching building, professional fees for surveys, and preparation for a capital bid.*
- **Regarding the capital expenditure on the T Level project at Common Leys, what will be the impact of the disruption?**
 - *We have a lower spend to date due to slower progress following the identification of bats on site. However, we now expect the project will be overspent given the information we currently have.*

The Board approved the management accounts.

7. Audit

7.1 High Level risk register

The Finance Director presented the High-Level Risk Register for approval by the Board, explaining that there were no significant changes. However, minor adjustments had been

made to some of the scoring, including risks related to Ofsted, inflation costs, and the impact of a pandemic, which had been reduced.

The Board discussed the potential impact of future government policy changes on college operations and agreed to monitor these developments.

The Board approved the risk register.

8. Nominations, Remuneration & Governance

8.1 NRG Committee update

The NRG Committee Chair provided an update following the recent meeting. The committee discussed governor recruitment and the recent changes to staff and student governor appointments, noting the ongoing need for external governor recruitment to maintain the skills balance. The committee also undertook an annual review of the Board's committee structure and agreed that it remained fit for purpose. There had been a change in SMT attendance for each of the committees, which the NRG Committee supported.

The remuneration of the Principal and the Clerk was reviewed and compared against national benchmarks provided by the AoC. The Principal's pay award was also discussed, with the outcome noted confidentially.

The strategic plan, along with a SWOT analysis, was reviewed by the committee and found to remain relevant and robust, with no major changes recommended at this time. The Accountability Statement 2024 was also reviewed and subsequently recommended by the committee for approval by written resolution.

The committee held discussions on the review of governance documents, including the terms of reference for committees, standing orders, supporting documents, and the Declaration of Interest form for 2024. These documents were recommended by the committee to the Board.

The Board noted the verbal update.

8.2 Annual NRG Committee Report

The annual report for the NRG Committee was presented to the Board as a matter of best practice, reflecting on the activities undertaken throughout the past year.

The Board approved the Annual NRG Committee Report.

8.3 Annual Board Self-assessments outcome

The Chair led a discussion on the outcomes of the Board self-assessment undertaken during the summer period. It was explained that this was an annual mechanism to identify any areas for development within the Board and mirrored the line of questioning that would be used in an external Board review. The Board discussed the two items with lower scores, which included understanding of sustainability and governors' awareness of local skills needs.

SMT members highlighted that there is a sustainability committee within the college making positive progress, and this committee has an open invitation for governors who wish to join. It was recognised that there is a need to ensure governors are informed of local skills needs in alignment with the college strategy, and it was suggested that this could form part of the Governor Strategy Day.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
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Principal and Chair to consider how to share more information on the local skills need.	JC/NH	December 2024
Clerk to add the Local skills need to draft strategy day agenda.	Clerk	October 2024

The Board noted the assessment outcomes

9. Policies

The Board reviewed the Tuition Fee Policy, which had been recommended by the F&GP Committee. It was explained that no significant changes had been made to the policy.

The Board approved the Tuition Fee Policy.

10. Confidential Item

[Staff and Student members present with the exception of SMT left the meeting at 18:15]

This item was discussed separately having also been discussed and recommended by the F&GP committee and will be recorded in confidential minutes.

The Board agreed to approve the proposal.

14. Any Other Business

Appraisal of the Chair to the Corporation

The Vice Chair of the Board provided a verbal update on the recent appraisal carried out for the Chair of the Corporation, thanking the members for their contributions and the Clerk for administrative support. The Vice Chair reported that a positive appraisal had been undertaken and discussed the outcome with the Chair.

The Chair thanked the members for their feedback and looked forward to working with them for the remainder of the academic year.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for Thursday 12th December 2024 at 5pm.

N Handy
03/Mar/2025 10:09:56

Signature *Nick Handy*



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