

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD

MINUTES

Some minutes have been redacted from the published version on the grounds of commercial, strategic or personal sensitivity.

Date	Wednesday 10 July 2024
Time	18:00 to 19:55
Location	The Hub, Weybridge Campus
Present (Governors):	Professor Craig Mahoney (Chair) Daniela Clarkson (Student Governor) Dr Andrew Gilchrist Mary Hughes Hilary Omissi Jackie Pearson Christine Ricketts (Principal and Chief Executive) Paul Stedman
Officers and advisers In attendance	Allan Tyrer – Chief Operating Officer Lorne Richardson (Assistant Principal Curriculum) Melissa Drayson - Director of Governance (DG) Rob Lawson (External Governance Reviewer) via Teams – Item 4 only
Observers	Meyrick Vevers - governor appointee
Apologies for absence	Jesse Adekoya Tarcha Choony Adam Herriott James Measures Louise Salmon Sarah Clancey: Assistant Principal Education & Personal Development
Quorum (8)	The meeting was quorate throughout

Item	Action lead
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1. Preliminary items

1.1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies, as listed above, were received.

Meyrick Vevers was welcomed as an observer at the meeting, pending his formal appointment under Part 2 of the meeting.

The Director of Governance reported that there were now vacancies for both staff governor positions. The election notice had gone out that day,

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with a deadline at the end of August. A recruitment process was also underway for two student governors.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no new declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda. Previously declared interests were carried forward.

1.3 Urgent other business notified in advance

No urgent items of other business had been requested.

2. Minutes

2.1 Minutes of the Corporation meeting on 27 March 2024

The Director of Governance had been notified of some small amendments before the meeting and confirmed that these did not change the substance of the minutes. Subject to these, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Part One Minutes of 27 March be APPROVED as an accurate record, and confidential sections confirmed.

2.2 Decisions made via Written Resolution since 27 March 2024

Supporting paper by the Director of Governance

The Corporation noted and ratified the following written resolutions that had been approved since the previous meeting.

21 May 2024. Appointment of a new governor

The Corporation approved the appointment of Tarcha Choony as an 'external' governor for a four-year term of office, subject to references, DBS clearance and eligibility checks.

28 June 2024. Accountability Statement 2024-25

Following several discussions, governor involvement in regional joint college events, and discussion at the Teaching and Learning Committee on 19 June, the Corporation approved the Accountability Statement 2024-25 to meet the Department for Education submission deadline of 30 June.

3. Matters arising and actions carried forward

Supporting paper by the Director of Governance

Two actions from the March meeting were reported. One had been completed. An update was provided on the development of the Learner Voice Committee. This had been paused as new student voice arrangements were being introduced in September. These would include a termly Student Council which all governors would be invited to attend.

4. External Governance Review Feedback

Supporting paper by Rob Lawson, Association of Colleges

Mr Lawson thanked the Board and Director of Governance for their support and contributions to the review. He outlined the process, overall conclusion, and key strengths and areas for development.

Outcomes were presented under three main headings:

- Board composition
- Board structure
- Board interaction

Overall, the number of strengths (14) outweighed the areas for development (9). The reviewer commented that the number of recommendations was below the average.

The AoC used three different summary gradings for its overall conclusions and awarded Brooklands the top grading:

The Board consistently impacts positively on college outcomes and there is strong evidence that it is highly proficient in most or all of the Board outcomes

Governors expressed that they were happy with the process and outcome of the review and that it contained no surprises. The report provided evidence of the recent development of the College, which had been duly recognised by the ESFA and Department for Education. Next steps would include:

- The agreement of an executive summary to be published on the website
- The development of an action plan to address the areas for development. This would be integrated into the current Governance Improvement Plan and monitored by the GNR Committee.

AGREED: That an executive summary of the EGR report would be agreed upon by the Director of Governance, Principal and CEO and Chair and shared with the reviewer prior to publication. DG

5. Principal and CEO Report, including performance against KPIs Supporting paper and presentation by the Principal and CEO

The PCEO stated that 2023-24 had been a year of transformation for Brooklands College. The progress made had been recognised by Ofsted in December and by the FE Commissioner team in their most recent visit.

As well as the successful planning outcome, positive developments included

- Investment in the professional development of staff, including a successful middle leadership programme.
- Joint organisation of a Surrey FE Teaching and Learning conference the previous week, attended by over 200 delegates from each of the four colleges.
- The development of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

However, some stubborn areas for improvement remained, including student attendance, the gap between English and Maths and overall attendance, and achieving the adult budget. Actions to address these included:

- Restructuring of English and Maths staffing to align with curriculum areas.
- The development of a new Adult Strategy with the support and expertise of an external consultant.
- Modifications to timetabling to restrict all sessions to one hour, and to remove long gaps between lessons. Wednesday afternoons would now have no timetabled lessons and would focus on staff CPD and enrichment.

Governors discussed English and Maths attendance and asked how Brooklands compared with others. It was reported that it was broadly similar to other Colleges with similar student profiles at the point of entry. Governors also asked if English and Maths attendance was better in some curriculum areas than others. Management confirmed that those faculties which delivered English and Maths themselves rather than through the central team, such as SEND and ESOL, tended to have better attendance. It was stressed that it was important to focus on student improvement at an individual level. For some students, achieving Grade 4 would be too high a target, but improving by a grade would be achievable.

The importance of contextualising English and Maths within the main course was recognised, as well as pedagogical development to make teaching more engaging.

Governors suggested that it would be helpful to look in more depth at English and Maths as a deep dive to gain a full understanding of why attendance and achievement had not shifted despite the efforts made to improve it.

It was noted that the Teaching and Learning Committee had discussed and endorsed the draft Adult Strategy, key elements of which were:

- The identification of areas where smaller (short module quals) for adults could be offered.
- Manager training to support the expansion of the adult curriculum
- Robust monitoring of performance against the adult income budget.
- The specialist consultant would be retained on contract until December

Governors noted and supported the following learner-focussed strategic priorities for 2024-25:

- Curriculum Design, Delivery & Innovation: Continue to be responsive to curriculum reform, national, regional and local skills needs.
- Implement the revised adult strategy in response to funding changes.

- Increase participation of young people and adults in L3 and L4 technical education
- Cross-Cutting Skills: Embed high-quality English and maths digital skills and employability into all programmes.
- Provide a distinctive learner engagement programme to include, enrichment, social inclusion and volunteering
- Advice, Information & Guidance: Strengthen information, advice and guidance and map career sector pathways for all learners
- Surrey FE: Work with Surrey County Council to collectively address barriers to participation re: Bootcamps, programmes with Job Centre Plus and the voluntary and community sectors

These sat alongside the four strands of the FE Commissioner-driven 'strategic project' of a) improving quality, b) using data robustly and proactively, c) financial stability through further efficiencies and d) achieving the ambition of the estates strategy.

Governors reflected on the positive feedback from the most recent FE Commissioner stocktake visit, particularly the positive shift in energy in the College. There was, however, no room for complacency and the FE Commissioner would be looking for evidence that the College was meeting its student number targets and budget.

Following a period of consultation with staff, students and governors, the new branding visuals were unveiled. As part of the process, a decision had been made not to use the acronym BTC. The brand was based on creating a visual identity for each curriculum family, and could be used across campuses. Feature walls would be created within the refurbished buildings.

In response to questions, it was confirmed options were being explored for additional marketing material to be utilised to promote the Ashford campus, potentially signposting from Ashford High Street. In addition, there would potentially be posters at Weybridge station.

The launch timing would be just after enrolment in September. Governors commended the amount of work that had gone into the rebrand and thanked colleagues who had contributed to the consultation.

Progress against 2023-24 KPIs

- Achievement rates for young people were forecast to improve by c1.5% compared to 2022-23 to just below the 82% target.
- Adult achievement rates were forecast to be above the 89.9% target
- Overall Apprenticeship continued to see an upward trend (above 69% compared to 67.9% in 2022-23)
- Four of the five 'high risk' curriculum areas were forecasting an improvement in performance.

6 Curriculum, Quality and the Learner Experience

6.1 Outgoing Student Governor Report

Verbal report by Daniela Clarkson

The Student Governor updated the Board on her activities and achievements over the summer term. These included:

- Attendance, on behalf of the College at a careers fair at Hoe Valley School. The level of interest in Brooklands had been high.
- Personal experience of using the wellbeing and safeguarding services. The open door policy and level of support were the best experienced anywhere.
- With the support of the College, she had achieved a 2:1 for her degree, and was taking up a place at Southampton University to study a Masters in Mechanical Engineering. She would completely support any student wishing to student Higher Education at Brooklands.

The Student Governor also expressed pride that her suggestions at the December Board meeting on student enrichment had been followed through. She had also been delighted to receive an award for Engineering, and the Governors' Student of the Year award.

6.2 Teaching and Learning Committee report

Supporting papers presented by the Chair of TLC

The Chair of T&L Committee reported on headlines from the meeting.

- The positive progress achieved in the past year highlighted the importance of high-quality professional development to enhancing teaching and learning.
- The development of a strategic partnership with London South Bank University to include pathways into HE, was an exciting development
- Management staff were praised for the enthusiasm with which they have adapted to the new structure, and the energy with which they were addressing their new roles. A special mention was given to the staff member who had organised a successful careers event at short notice.
- A new messaging tool, Purlos, was being used to communicate with applicants ahead of enrolment, as part of the drive to ensure that student number targets were met.

6.3 Curriculum Plan 2024-25

Supporting paper and presentation by the Assistant Principal curriculum

An overview of the 2024-25 curriculum was given against the backdrop of an update on the government's curriculum reform plans. The intentions of the new government with regard to implementing the reforms were not yet known. It was believed that the T Level roll out would continue, but there might be a pause on the defunding of Level 2 and 3 courses. The recent requirement to deliver an extra hour of Maths might also be reviewed. The Association of Colleges predicted that there would be unlikely to be any change before March 2025.

Brooklands' courses for September 2024 were largely unchanged from the published prospectus although some Level 3 qualifications had been moved to T-Levels, including Manufacturing and Electrical. Application levels for these courses were strong. Whilst T Levels were good courses, it was concerning that they were currently not funding for 19+ learners.

Level 2 and below qualifications and courses had been provisionally agreed internally for 2025, awaiting further guidance from DfE on the final list of approved qualifications. Level 3 Motor Vehicle might be defunded from September 2025, in which case work would be needed to find an alternative.

RESOLVED: That the Curriculum Plan 2024-25 be endorsed.

7. Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

7.1 EDI Annual Report 2023-24

The Corporation received the final version of the Annual Report. This was agreed to be a comprehensive overview of the make-up of the college community, student achievement by protected characteristic, and priorities and recommendations for the next year.

7.2 EDI Objectives and Action Plan 2024-25

The EDI Committee had developed these over several meetings and met the previous day to set up workstreams and reporting schedules. The objectives would be published on the website with the EDI Policy and Annual Report.

7.3 EDI Policy 2024 -27

The Policy had been reviewed by the EDI Committee and had been through a full internal process including all-staff consultation.

RESOLVED: That the following be approved:

- **The EDI Annual Report 2023-24**
- **The EDI Objectives and Action Plan 2024-25**
- **The EDI Policy 2024-27**

8. Finance and Resources

8.1 Finance and Resources Committee meetings on 8 May and 26 June *Supporting paper presented by the COO and Interim Committee Chair*

Headlines from the report were:

- The management accounts had shown consistently that the predicted surplus of over £400k would be delivered. Governors commented that turning around a deficit by £1m in a year had been a major achievement.
- The Financial Regulations had been reviewed, and included minor updates to job titles and a new financial scheme of delegation with uplifts to procurement approval thresholds

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- Updates on the Estates project had been provided at both meetings. The COO would be reviewing the estates cashflow again with Fusion the following week, but was believed to be positive for the duration of the project.
- The cleaning contract had been retendered and a recommendation was brought to the Corporation for approval.
- The Fire Chief Inspector visit had gone well. A revisit would be taking place shortly to check on progress.
- A report had been provided by the Head of IT, which had highlighted the challenges in staying ahead of the cyber threat. A costed proposal would be brought to the Committee for investing further in cyber security.

RESOLVED: That the following be APPROVED at the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee:

- **The revised Financial Regulations including the uplifted procurement approval thresholds**
- **The award of the contract for cleaning services to Hayward Services**

8.2 Budget 2024-25 and Financial Plan

Supporting papers by the Chief Operating Officer

The proposed budget and financial plan had been discussed in depth at the June Finance and Resources Committee meeting. The assumptions of marginal growth in income, further efficiencies, a level of contingencies and a 2% pay award were consistent with previous models that had been brought to the Corporation. The budget and plan would return an EBITDA of 13% each year. The FE Commissioner had initially expressed scepticism about these predictions but had discussed the figures in depth and now had a clearer understanding of them. There had, however, been challenge about whether the expenditure budget was too lean, and whether more investment in staffing to support teaching, learning and the student experience was needed.

RESOLVED: That the budget 2024-25 and the financial plan 2025-26 be APPROVED

8.4 Estates project update

It was noted that final completion of the sale had been achieved in early July. Tenders were being sought for phase 1 demolition and refurbishment, including Edge, Barnes Wallis and the Tower. Following a detailed and rigorous process, the Finance and Resources Committee had considered the proposal to award the contract for the Edge and now recommended this to the Corporation.

RESOLVED: To APPROVE the award of the contract for the refurbishment of the Edge to GTCI for the sum of [redacted]

9. Audit and Risk

9.1 Audit and Risk Committee report and recommendations

Supporting paper presented by the Chair of the A&R Committee

The Committee Chair reported on headlines from the meeting:

- The cyber security audit report had identified several actions around penetration testing and password changes.
- The Financial Statements and Regularity Audit Plan was recommended for approval. The Internal Audit Plan was currently being agreed with the College and would be brought to the Committee in September.
- A tendering exercise for both sets of auditors would take place early in 2024-25
- The final Counter Fraud strategy was recommended for approval, having been through the internal policy review process.

RESOLVED: That the following be APPROVED on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee:

- **The Financial Statements and Regularity Audit Plan**
- **The Counter Fraud Strategy**

9.2 Corporate risk register

The most recent risk register was noted. This had been reviewed in more detail by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Chief Operating Officer would be leading a further review, and would add in the risk appetites agreed by the Corporation at its strategy day in April

10. Governance and nominations

10.1 Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee report and recommendations (non-confidential)

Supporting papers presented by the GNR Chair

The areas covered at the GNR committee meeting were noted, many of which had been superseded. There were no recommendations for approval.

10.2 Governance meetings calendar 2024-25

It was agreed that governors not present at the meeting would be asked to confirm that they were content with the proposed dates. Subject to this, electronic calendar invites would be sent out.

10.3 Governor appointments

Observers and staff in attendance withdrew for this item.

Following a successful recruitment campaign by Peridot Partners via the DfE-funded service, the Governance and Nominations Committee had shortlisted five candidates for interview and met four on 28 June. The interview panel selected two of the four interviewees to be recommended for appointment:

- Fiona Capstick, IT and digital expert, former CIO of the Government of Jersey

- Meyrick Vevers, former CFO and NED of Ashford and St Peter's Hospital

A further date would be set to interview the final candidate and, possibly, one other. Once all interviews have taken place, conversations would be held about filling the Vice Chair and Chair of F&R roles.

RESOLVED: That Fiona Capstick and Meyrick Vevers be appointed as independent governors for a four-year term of office with effect from 1 August 2024, subject to satisfactory references, eligibility checks and DBS clearance.

11 Urgent Other Business

There was no other business. The Chair expressed the thanks of the Board to the Student Governor for a fantastic contribution to the Corporation and College in general. Daniela was given a small token of thanks.

Thanks and congratulations were shared with all colleagues for a challenging but successful and rewarding year.

Approved as a correct record by the Corporation on 23 October 2024