

SANDWELL COLLEGE

**Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting
held on Monday 8 March 2021 at 4.00pm
Virtual meeting**

Present:	K Ellis	(Independent)	(Chair)
	I Ali	(Student Governor)	
	G Bassi	(Independent)	
	J Francis	(Independent)	
	N Grace	(Independent)	
	N Makin	(Independent)	
	A Miller	(Student Governor)	
	P Murphy	(Independent)	
	G Pennington	(Principal)	
	P Stanaway	(Independent)	
	A Taylor	(Independent)	
	J Tew	(Independent)	
	M J Uddin	(Independent)	
Apologies:	A Banford	(Staff Governor – Cadbury)	
	S Hackett	(Independent)	

Also in attendance:

J Bailey	Executive Director, Finance & Resources
B Beaty	Executive Director, HR and Organisational Development
N Bostan	Associate Principal
C Demetrios	Associate Principal
P Geary	Vice Principal
S Griffiths	Director of Strategy and Projects
D Holden	Vice Principal
S Hunt	Managing Director, Employers, Skills and Innovation
A Sheridan	Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Student Services
E Scotford	Clerk to the Corporation
J Stevens	Executive Director, Quality & Academic Standards, and Principal, Cadbury College

		Action
B21.16	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>	
16.1	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Amie Banford and Simon Hackett.	
16.2	RESOLVED THAT: apologies were approved by Governors.	
B21.17	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest beyond the standing register of interests.	
B21.18	<u>Minutes of previous meeting – 18 January 2021</u>	
	RESOLVED THAT: the minutes of the Board meeting held on 18 January 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record for signing by the Chair.	

B21.19	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
19.1	Minute No. B21.5.4 – update on Right Time Recruitment – agenda item 5.1 refers.	
19.2	Minute No. B21.5.7 – Risk Appetite Statement to be prepared – actioned, for consideration by the Audit Committee on 16 March 2021 and subsequent approval by the Board.	
B21.20	<u>Principal's Report including Covid 19 update</u>	
B21.20.1	Application numbers are very positive this year. Demographic changes are leading to more school leavers. Recent open days went very well.	
20.1.1	The return of students has been staggered over the coming weeks, with the priority being those with practical lessons. Blended learning will continue for the rest of this academic year focused on students making progress, particularly with outcomes of assessments.	
20.1.2	Lateral testing arrangements are in place. When testing has been completed, students can be brought back into college more quickly. Some construction and engineering students have already returned. Communication groups continue to meet and advisory groups are still in place.	
20.1.3	Governors asked for feedback on how the 1-1 sessions in place to support students' wellbeing were working. The College explained how the 1-1 sessions worked and how they could be tailored to where most support was needed. The College explained that, alongside pastoral support, financial need could also be identified from the 1-1s and financial bursaries be put in place in emergency situations. Some students had already benefited, examples given.	
20.1.4	The College continues to prepare for Ofsted and is working with 2 former HMIs leading to a strengthening of some preparation work. Work with students is underway.	
20.1.5	The Towns Funds bids had all been successful which would lead to a significant amount of capital investment for the new engineering centre, the innovative joint project with the health service, and the new skills training centre in Cradley Heath. This is on top of the £3 million investment at Cadbury for phase 1 of the Science City. The College has applied to reallocate some investment and development to the T level provision at Cadbury.	
20.1.6	Bids had also been submitted for funding for traineeships, which could lead to a further £300k funding being secured to support young adults.	
20.1.7	There is an opportunity to bid into the new Transformation Fund but this has a tight timeframe. It will allow more investment in the Cadbury infrastructure. Development at Sandwell may also feature in the bid, particularly around engineering.	
20.1.8	The College is in dialogue for West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) new funding for adults without a L3 qualification to enable them to achieve a free qualification. It has to be a defined qualification. This	

	will be a good opportunity for many adult students who may be challenged at the moment.	
20.1.9	The White Paper highlights that employability skills and employers will be at the centre of the future direction of colleges for T levels and post-16 education.	
20.1.10	Governors thanked the Principal and SLT for collating the Strategy document and were pleased to note news of the money secured from the Towns Fund bids which could be used to the benefit of the students and local communities. The Strategy document would be the focus of the Strategy session on Friday 14 May. It was proposed that the session take place on the afternoon of the 14 th . The Board would be required to approve the final document.	
20.1.11	The up to date College structure was outlined, including names, roles and responsibilities.	
20.1.12	Governors were pleased to note the College had combated the local area's trajectory for Covid infections which reflected its hard work.	
20.1.13	Governors noted the investment of £27 million from the Towns Fund bids and asked on whose accounts the capital investment would sit. The College advised this would be whoever the lead partner was for a particular project, e.g. the Cradley Heath grant would be passported to the College. The College confirmed it had a very good relationship with Sandwell LA. A draft timetable for the work had been published, with sequencing of some of the projects over a period of years. The earliest to be addressed would be Phoenix Street Engineering Centre. The Principal and Chair stated that the Finance and Strategy Committee will undertake a scrutiny of the projects and report back.	
20.1.14	The College has project management support from AA Projects and the Principal has considerable experience of capital projects. Projects will be managed using professional expertise.	
20.1.15	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Principal's report.	
B21.20.2	Projects update	
20.2.1	The Executive Director of Strategy and Projects gave an overview of developments since the last Board meeting.	
20.2.2	All contracts are now in place for the Cadbury Science City work.	
20.2.3	An application for a £3.2m of investment from the Department for Education with a 50% match contribution from the College was aimed at: the purchase of Terry Duffy House in West Bromwich – funded through College borrowing; adaptations to Central Campus – to redevelop student space into classrooms and to relocate refectory services into a single site within the building; initial condition improvement works at Cadbury centred around an enlarged refectory, student spaces and refurbishment of two science labs.	

	<p>The acquisition of Terry Duffy House was the major driver initially of developing the first phase of T levels in West Bromwich. However, since the initial submission of the applications, changes to leadership of the Labour Party, owner of Terry Duffy House, has led to a reassessment of its portfolio and the Party has advised it will not sell at the current time. Identifying an alternative site to Terry Duffy House and securing the necessary planning for any development in West Bromwich would be challenging in the timeframe. Consideration has therefore been given to an alternative option to move this phase of funding to Cadbury in line with the College's overall estates and investment strategy. The significant and compelling advantages were outlined.</p>	
20.2.4	<p>The DfE had been made aware of the College's intentions via its conversations with the College and AA projects and the DfE support the resubmission of the information to evaluate the changes. There is no indication at this stage that the changes would not be supported.</p>	
20.2.5	<p>The Finance & Strategy Committee had discussed this proposal in detail and recommended the relocation of this funding.</p>	
20.2.6	<p>Governors discussed the proposal in detail and considered all aspects, particularly the advantages this would bring.</p>	
20.2.7	<p>RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the proposal to relocate the T level Capital Funding (Wave 2) for use at Cadbury College.</p> <p>Governors approved the TLCF bid to be submitted which encompassed the following main aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Block/Science Department modernisation • A new build within the campus to provide new purpose-built classrooms for T level and other delivery which could also accommodate current and future student growth. <p>Total cost = £6.4m College contribution - £3.2m of which £1.446m is capital expenditure and £1.754m is Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP match.</p>	
20.2.8	<p>Governors also received an update on the Towns Fund Bids and future opportunities through the Further Education College Transformation Fund</p>	
B21.20.3	<p>Projects Item B</p>	
20.3.1	<p>The Director of Strategy and Projects gave an update on proposed capital-based project work and a summary of the current position the College has reached with the funding available for capital works.</p>	
20.3.2	<p>The Director of Strategy and Projects advised that a new fund, the FE College Transformation Fund, had been announced. A more detailed business case would be presented to Governors before the submission date of July.</p>	
20.3.3	<p>With respect to the Sandwell Engineering Centre, a similar process had taken place to the Towns Fund and has been communicated and match funded and approved. The College will commence contact with the landlord. Consideration has been given as to whether to move towards purchase of the property or other arrangements. There was 35 years left on the 40-year lease. There was potential to leverage in another £2 million without cost to the College. The College had been asked to submit a bid with some form of negotiations with the landlord on the next steps for the site.</p>	

20.3.4	<p>Greater explanation was sought of the proposal to secure the freehold of the Phoenix Street site at a cost of £500k.</p> <p>It was explained that Phase 1 included ballpark figures for the DfE but approval was needed to move on to more detailed negotiations. £500k was the upper price limit for similar properties. At Phase 2, the DfE will require a programme of works. This money does not have to be spent until March 2024 so offers a longer period of time to do this work.</p>	
20.3.5	<p>Explanation given of the site. A scrap yard is next door. The College has been in discussions to bring the land back into wider usage to make the site and surrounding area more attractive. Extending the space available would enable the College to do more with the site going forward.</p> <p>The College wanted to explore negotiating a long leasehold, e.g. 125-year lease which would bring it in scope for the extra funding. It sought the flexibility of freehold or a long leasehold on the property.</p>	
20.3.6	<p>Governors noted that capital investment was good but asked what was the impact on the annual finances and the College's income and expenditure (I&E) in the longer term in relation to depreciation.</p> <p>The College explained how this would be managed in the College accounts.</p>	
20.3.7	<p>Governors noted that asbestos was present on the site which could lead to expensive costs for demolition.</p>	
20.3.8	<p>RESOLVED THAT: Based on the recommendations of the Finance & Strategy Committee and detailed discussion by the Board, Governors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved the submission of this project which will be contained within a Stage 1 FECTF application and endorsed the strategy and approach being taken by the College to invest in its estate in this way. • Approved, in principle, the purchase of the freehold or long leasehold negotiation to be financed through the FECTF/Town Fund project for final approval at the July Board meeting. • Delegated authority to the Principal to seek opportunities to secure adjacent land, if possible, to the Phoenix Street site. • Delegated authority to the Principal to negotiate the financial arrangements, up to the indicative project total above, for approval at the July Board meeting. 	
B21.20.4	<p>Strategy update Presented by the Principal.</p> <p>It was noted that the strategy document was welcomed at the Finance and Strategy Committee for presentation to the full Board.</p> <p>The College has had the highest rate of growth in the Midlands.</p>	
20.4.1	<p>Many colleges have experienced a significant decline during the period 2013-14 to 2021/22 but the College has more than doubled in size and not just as a result of the Cadbury merger. There has been a continuous increase in student numbers since the merger which is a significant achievement and is a result of the hard work of all staff.</p>	
20.4.2	<p>The College's progress from its Financial Notice to Improve to its current Outstanding financial position was highlighted which resulted in it being a £42 million college today from £20 million.</p>	

20.4.3	Heat maps demonstrated that the College's extent of reach had increased. Cadbury was now starting to draw students from across Birmingham, helped by the significant improvement in its reputation since the merger.	
20.4.4	The College had received 2 Good Ofsted results and a positive monitoring visit. Ofsted had commented that the College had a relentless focus on quality and recognised it intended to benefit more students with its high-quality offer. Success and achievement rates are above National Average (NA) despite the Covid situation.	
20.4.5	Deprivation analysis was outlined which revealed there were more students in higher deprivation and fewer students in lowest deprivation.	
20.4.6	There would be more pressure on the College in future times because of the growth in population and school leavers. The local area has a younger population than the rest of the Black Country, which has led to more demand on college places. Many sixth form colleges will not be able to deliver T levels. The new facilities under development by the College will be filled by this increase in demand.	
20.4.7	There were 31% of students with 5 good GCSE grades including English and Maths which was well below NA which was a challenge for the College to address.	
20.4.8	The College has outstanding financial health, one of only three locally. The purchase of laptops has benefited students from the most challenged families.	
20.4.9	National strategies were discussed. There will be heavy investment in the STEM subjects, particularly digital and English.	
20.4.10	The Skills Plan released in January referred heavily to technical skills qualifications and lifelong learning. Employers will be more important to colleges than ever before as they are the cornerstone of the Government's plan. The College needs to be able to move its qualification base to where needed. The College is used to the issues of policy change and is working on its responses.	
20.4.11	Of the 11,000 employers contacted by the T level Implementation Group, only 700 were willing to commit to work placements, a key element of the qualification. There is no real plan for how to ensure employers offer placements on this scale. The College is continuing to work on this and the AoC is working hard with all relevant bodies to ensure T levels are successful.	
20.4.12	An update was given on changes within the HE sector, the College is seeking to work with key university partners to develop new approaches to offering high-quality provision to meet the needs of those who wish to study locally. This is critical alongside developing a non-proscribed HE offer for adults with greater links to professional standards and progression for those in employment. It is a challenge for universities moving forward.	
20.4.13	The White Paper centred on young adults and the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee. The College is in discussion with WMCA to allow adult learners to access these qualifications.	
		NB joined the meeting

20.4.14	There was some overlap in the priority sectors for both LAs: Sandwell and Birmingham. The current projects would support the following sectors:	
20.4.15	Health – there will be opportunities and challenges regarding Brexit and its impact on the workforce. Therefore, matching capital investment is a sensible approach.	
20.4.16	Engineering – the area has many small engineering companies. Manufacturing remains very important for employment opportunities – the Phoenix Street development will address this priority sector.	
20.4.17	The Adult Skills Centre Cradley Heath demonstrates a greater commitment to Post-18 education than in many years. The new Lifetime Skills Guarantee means it will be important to provide opportunities to upskill and reskill adults.	
20.4.18	The current and future landscape was outlined. The College has been ambitious over recent years. It is in a strong financial position and understands the critical role of employers going forward. The College is well placed but recognises there are big challenges ahead. The College is committed to the priority areas of employment and upskilling the workforce. The College's strategy is built on growth.	
20.4.19	The previous version of the Strategy was for the College to be an inclusive college that reached out to its communities and benefited as many students as possible. This remained valid but some changes were needed. Growth would continue to be a priority whilst appreciating the need for diversification, given the impact on the core business due to curriculum change and Covid which could slow the growth rates of recent years. The drive for improvement should continue but with a focus on Employment as an increasingly important measure and the College's Inspection and progress against the SAR. Solvency is important but there is a need to invest in people and facilities and seek out funding that is available to support this. There is a need to recognise talent within the organisation.	
20.4.20	Governors were reminded of the College's core values, current mission and vision and were asked to consider if they were still relevant or needed to change.	
20.4.21	The current organisation chart was presented and an explanation given of the work of each division: Young People 16-18; Student Support, Skills and Employment; Quality, and Corporate Services. Shaun Hunt, the new Managing Director of the Skills and Employment Division was welcomed and his background, skills and experience explained.	
20.4.22	The structure will help to futureproof the College, with some overlap between divisions, particularly between Skills and Young People 16-18. The overlap relates to work placements and employer engagement. Work placements are key moving forwards e.g. T level.	
20.4.23	Strengths, areas for further development, new opportunities and risks were detailed, particularly the need to ensure the College was focused on reform, e.g. T levels.	
20.4.24	Covid recovery will be important and needs to be well designed. The College's catch-up approach was explained. The College needs to	

	ensure it is supporting students and they need to feature more prominently. Staff also need to be well trained and well equipped to deliver appropriately. Remote teaching has been challenging. Growth will require more diversification moving forwards. Governors noted the capital assets and resources the College was investing in.	
20.4.25	The College had translated the Strategy into metrics where possible.	
20.4.26	<p>Governors pointed out that, historically, there had been a lack of understanding between further education and business as to their expectations of each other, so given the Government's increased role for employers in education, would business and employers be able and prepared to engage sufficiently to explain their needs and requirements.</p> <p>The College agreed that this remained a national issue and engagement with employers and business was vital. Recent surveys revealed a lack of understanding: with local business and employers not understanding the young people market available to them; and young people not understanding the opportunities available to them. The College had been successful in its work with disadvantaged students, in Sandwell and Birmingham, to address unemployment in the city. It had good levels of engagement with local businesses.</p>	
20.4.27	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received and thanked the Principal and team for the detailed Strategy update which would be discussed further at the Annual Strategy Forum on Friday 14 May 2021.	
B21.21	Teaching & Learning Report Presented by the VP, Curriculum	
21.1	An update was given on the GCSE English and Maths November resit results. 240 students had now secured a grade 4 GCSE who had not been considered capable of doing so at secondary level. This had been enabled by a significant resit revision programme. This will greatly enhance their employment prospects where this qualification level is a pre-requisite.	
21.2	The Government has now informed schools and colleges how grades for students will be awarded for this academic year. Most will be teacher assessed grades. The volume of work it creates for Quality Departments and teachers was not mentioned. To give context, the College has to submit between 50k-70k grades.	
21.3	Safeguarding update – see the LQCC minutes from 20 January 2021, Minute No. B21.29.2. The College was proud of its Safeguarding team who continued their outstanding work.	
21.4	Employability and focus of adult funding was being addressed by the setting up of a professional academy to delivery professional management courses in finance, marketing, and HR. Bridget Bennet had been employed to set up the Academy. There would be associated funding. The academy will be an important element of the College's future strategy.	
21.5	In answer to a Governor's query, the College explained the Academy was largely aimed at adults already in work who were looking to progress their careers and would also include some 16-18-year olds. This was one strand of the strategy to increase adult provision in the curriculum and support career progression.	

	AM left the meeting	
21.6	The Academy would help fill a gap but would also add to the College's portfolio of provision and enable it to meet future needs.	
21.7	Governors asked how the College would attract students to these courses. The College explained it had a dedicated marketing programme. It also had direct contact with employers. There had already been huge demand for the 3 courses launched so the College was confident this would make a significant contribution to its curriculum offer.	
21.8	RESOLVED THAT: To thank the Vice Principal and Governors received the Teaching & Learning Report.	
B21.22	<u>College SAR and QIP</u> Presented by the VP, Quality	
22.1	Governors supported the more robust wording in the documents.	
22.2	Governors asked if there was any more data now available on students in Hair & Beauty not meeting their achievements. The VP, Quality, advised that curriculum areas had submitted data in January which had been shared with the Ofsted consultant working with the College. Programmes below NA did not fall into the key areas for improvement.	
22.3	It was made clear that the College was judged against EIF which is not the same as the curriculum changes planned in the next few years, the outstanding status makes the changes possible.	
	JF left the meeting	
22.4	The Red RAG ratings on the QIP were not able to be progressed at present because of Covid restrictions. Employers were not willing to commit at the moment.	
22.5	Governors noted that the increase in known destinations from 63% to 93% in one year was very good.	
22.6	The issue of employer engagement was raised and the College explained that existing placements were not T level placements. Levels should be judged against the current position not the T level position which would need a different style of engagement. The outstanding levels make the changes possible.	
22.7	Governors noted that the report to the LQCC from the team who deliver work placements showed an impressive number of students received work experience.	
22.8	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received and approved the College SAR and QIP.	
B21.23	<u>Learner Destinations</u> Presented by the VP, Quality	

23.1	There has been an improvement in the gathering of 16-18 destinations, and the percentage of known destinations was above DfE expectations.	
23.2	The College acknowledged there was more work to do around apprenticeships.	
23.3	Adult known destinations was 72% which was good in comparison to other colleges and the aim was to achieve a similar or higher percentage for 16-18 year olds. Paid employment was the largest destination.	
23.4	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Learner Destinations Report and noted this was a standing item at LQCC.	
B21.24	<u>Policies</u>	
	There were no policies to note or approve.	
	IA left the meeting	
	CONFIDENTIAL SESSION	
B21.25 NFP		
B21.26 NFP		
B21.27 NFP		
B21.28 NFP		
B21.29 NFP		
B21.30 NFP		
B21.31 NFP		
B21.32 NFP		
B21.33	<u>Any Other Business</u>	
	There was no other business.	
B21.34	<u>Confidential items</u>	
	Confidential session – Minute Nos. B21.25, B21.26, B21.27, B21.28, B21.29, B21.30, B21.32, B21.32	
B21.35	<u>Date and time of next meeting</u> Monday 5 July 2021, 4.00pm	

Meeting ended at 6.20pm

Signed: (Chair)

Date: 13 May 2021