

SANDWELL COLLEGE

Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Monday 13 March 2023 at 4.00pm Cadbury College

Present:	K Ellis	(Independent) (Chair)
	N Anhu	(Staff Governor – Sandwell)
	A Khodavardar	(Student Governor, Sandwell)
	N Makin	(Independent)
	A Mohammed	(Student Governor, Cadbury)
	S Powell	(Staff Governor, Cadbury)
	G Pennington	(Principal)
	T Sharma	(Independent)
	P Stanaway	(Independent)
	J Tew	(Independent)
	M J Uddin	(Independent)
Apologies:	A Taylor	(Independent)
	R Barrett-Price	Director of Estates Development and Capital Projects

Also in attendance:

M Ashford	Prospective Governor
J Bailey	Executive Director, Finance & Resources
B Beaty	Executive Director, HR and Organisational Development
S Griffiths	Director of Strategy and Projects
D Holden	Vice Principal
E Scotford	Clerk to the Corporation
J Stevens	Executive Director, Quality & Academic Standards, and Principal, Cadbury College

		Action
B23.1	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>	
23.1.1	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Alan Taylor. Apologies were also received from Roland Barrett-Price.	
	The Chair explained the new format Board reports which summarised the scrutiny of the sub-committees, supported by the committees' minutes which summarised discussions, and their recommendations for Board approval. The intention was to focus and streamline Board meetings.	
23.1.2	RESOLVED THAT: apologies were approved by Governors .	
B23.2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest beyond the standing register of interests.	
B23.3	<u>Board membership</u>	
23.3.1	Governor reappointment – Alan Taylor	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the reappointment of Alan Taylor for a new 3-year term of office w.e.f. 14 March 2022.	

23.3.2	Governor appointment – Mark Ashford	
	The Corporation Chair, Chair of Search & Governance Committee and Principal had met with Mr Ashford and explained his background and the skills and experience he would bring to the Board.	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the appointment on a 3-year term of office of Mark Ashford as Independent Governor and member of the Audit Committee.	
23.3.2	Prospective Governor – Alex Aitken	
	The Corporation Chair, Chair of Search & Governance Committee and Principal were due to meet with Mr Aitken to discuss his interest in joining the Board. Further update to follow.	
B23.4	<u>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2022</u>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2022 which were signed by the Chair.	
B23.5	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
23.5.1	B22.83.4.3 – Governors' suggestions for potential candidates for Board vacancies were welcomed – the Chair outlined the extensive work which was underway to fill existing vacancies according to the Board's skills need at this time being also mindful of its EDI responsibilities.	
23.5.2	B22.88.9 – Governors asked that their congratulations be passed on to students – actioned.	
23.5.3	B22.88.13 – Governors asked for a detailed breakdown of each department's result from the Ofsted inspection so that LQCC could monitor progress – actioned.	
23.5.4	B22.22.103 – March Board meeting to be held at Cadbury – actioned.	
B23.6	<u>Principal's Report</u>	
23.6.1	Student numbers were noted. 16-18 student numbers were 140-150 higher than last year. In-year funding would not be received for them however the College would receive the full benefit of those learners next year because of lagged funding.	
23.6.2	Applicant numbers were similar to last year. The quality of vocational applications had improved this year with the move away from TAGs back to exam results and acceptances were much higher than last year. Schools were more realistic in their exam predictions and the College would undertake further work to ensure profiling was correct.	
23.6.3	The College's financial position remained outstanding. The budget had been confirmed. There had been an increase in apprenticeships funding compared to last year due to the increase in apprenticeships this year. A revised management structure had been put in place for apprenticeships led by Julia Stevens to reflect this was an Ofsted area of focus.	
23.6.4	Governors noted the current position of the College's capital projects which were all progressing well. The West Bromwich project progress was helped by its modular building design. The new Cadbury facilities were due to open in the autumn term, with launch events planned. Governors were reminded that the NHS was the lead partner in the	

	<p>Smethwick project which had been subject to some redesign and a resulting knock-on effect on the programme. The partnership agreement would be signed in due course. Cradley Heath was least developed of the projects. The College wanted to take stock before committing to it to ensure it was still confident in its purpose.</p>	
23.6.5	<p>Progress had been made with Nova Training. Meetings had taken place. Nova's market differed to the College's and served vulnerable students. Some of their central functions could be consolidated into the College's. Their audit issues had been resolved but the business value had dropped so would be renegotiated. The proposal would be brought back to the Board when the price was known.</p>	
23.6.6	<p>Terry Duffy House had been discussed extensively by the Finance & Strategy Committee. See also agenda item 15.</p>	
23.6.7	<p>Meetings of the Principal were listed. The Principal had been invited to speak at Westminster Forum about T levels. Local Principals had agreed to form a 3-college consortium in the West Midlands whose remit would cover quality and development of the curriculum. The single biggest strategic issue facing the College was curriculum reform. It was an existential issue so would be the main topic at Governors Annual Strategy Day.</p>	
23.6.8	<p>Governors noted that safeguarding, specifically relating to mental health issues, had risen as a result of the pandemic and 28% of all incidents related to a broad spectrum of mental health issues, Governors asked if this was an increasing problem.</p> <p>The College advised it was high and continued to increase for reasons including: the stigma around mental health problems had reduced which led to increased reporting; much was linked to anxiety and depression; the Covid legacy of student anxiety around taking external exams. Many of the adjustments were being removed so there would be a return to some grade boundaries. This year would be much more like a normal year so there would be an impact on achievement rates with the return to unadjusted grades. Achievement rates in the sector would also drop significantly with T levels and pass rates and retention would most likely be very low. This would make historic comparisons very difficult. Achievement percentage rates would be more in the range of apprenticeships in the low 60s.</p> <p>Students were being educated to understand the symptoms of mental health issues. The College was in an area of high deprivation and students often experienced difficulties at home. Staff were working tirelessly to signpost students to the right sources of support but the scale was becoming overwhelming.</p> <p>Governors were pleased to note the support available was having a positive impact on students.</p>	
23.6.9	<p>Governor asked if there were any concerns regarding staff mental health.</p> <p>The College advised that counselling support was in place for staff. A decline in mental health was sometimes given as the reason for sickness absence but much related to the pandemic itself.</p>	
23.6.10	<p>Governors were pleased that staff were more aware of mental health and wellbeing because this was increasing and could affect the College and students' results. Governors noted that the stigma related to mental health problems was reducing but was still an issue for some and asked if there were any plans for extra support to reduce that further.</p>	

	The College advised that it had increased the number of safeguarding staff as well as training 15-16 students to be Safeguarding Champions. They would help support those students who might prefer to approach fellow students in the first instance rather than staff. This was currently a Sandwell College initiative but would be rolled out to Cadbury too.	
23.6.11	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Principal's report.	
23.6.12	Annual Accountability Statement	
	<p>Governors received and noted the draft Annual Accountability Statement, and supported its format. This was a new requirement that had to be approved by the Board by the end of July 2024 and published online.</p> <p>Discussion took place. Governors noted the importance of the strategic contribution the College made to the regional skills agenda, more references to which had been included in the SAR at their request which were included in the Statement.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Governors approved the draft Annual Accountability Statement, subject to any changes. The final version would be brought to the next meeting.</p>	GP/SG
B23.7	<u>College Projects Report</u>	
23.7.1	There were no immediate issues and all projects remained on track. Discussion had taken place with Andy Street, West Midlands Mayor, about WMCA priorities. Update on hospital project expected on 14 March 2023.	
23.7.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the College Projects Report.	
B23.8	<u>ONS reclassification</u>	
23.8.1	<p>Update given on the ONS reclassification. The 4 bite-size documents relating to: senior pay controls; write-offs and losses; special payments; and indemnities and letters of comfort; remained the only ones available from the DfE at present as final decisions were still being made on the implications for the sector. The publication of the FE handbook had been delayed until summer 2024.</p> <p>More detail was awaited about the level of scrutiny. It was important for Governors to be aware of various restrictions which might apply although the College was not likely to be as affected as some colleges.</p>	
23.8.	<p>Governors asked if the ONS reclassification would affect the purchase of Terry Duffy House or Nova Training.</p> <p>The College confirmed it would not.</p>	
23.8.3	Governors were disappointed there had been no engagement with the sector at all on this decision and the timing of its implementation.	
23.8.4	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted the ONS reclassification update.	
B23.9	<u>College SAR and QIP</u>	
23.9.1	The SAR had received robust scrutiny and challenge from the LQCC. Appendix tabled which would accompany the SAR, as requested by Governors, which covered how the College contributed to the local regional and national skills agenda. The SAR had been ratified by	

	Ofsted at inspection and would be uploaded to the Ofsted portal following Board approval.	
23.9.2	The LQCC was responsible for monitoring and scrutinising the QIP and would also regularly revisit the Ofsted report to monitor progress made. Apprenticeships was the main area of focus.	
23.9.3	Governors noted that Ofsted reported meeting of skills was satisfactory but the College had a good reputation for meeting local and wider skills need. The College had been one of the first inspected under the new inspection framework. The new inspection framework was very challenging for apprenticeships.	
23.9.4	Governors asked if departments were on track with the areas requiring progress in the QIP. The College confirmed that much work had taken place including a complete restructure of the apprenticeship team. Quality improvement was on track with an increased amount of apprenticeship provision.	
23.9.5	In response to a Governor's query, the College reminded that apprenticeships were now delivered against frameworks which replaced the previous standards.	
23.9.6	The College was working extensively with Ian Smith, former HMI, with a background in apprenticeships who would monitor progress and improvement on apprenticeships and report back to LQCC.	
23.9.7	Governors asked if the College was delivering any partnerships with external organisations. The College explained that it did not and had avoided the franchise route because of quality issues. It had rebased some of the apprenticeships, with less on offer than previously to enable it to focus. The College was keen to deliver its own apprenticeships to ensure they were of a good standard.	
23.9.8	The College's outcomes for apprenticeships were above National Average (NA) and still performing well but it was looking at improving quality as well as how they were perceived. Apprenticeships were challenging for the FE sector as it was so inclusive and wide-ranging. The Ofsted framework did not take into account context.	
23.9.9	In response to a Governor's question, the College confirmed it was delivering 8-9 standards and had developed a regional specialism in dental nursing.	
23.9.10	Governors noted that delivery plans had been amended to incorporate a more structured format for teaching and learning and asked that examples from different areas be reported to LQCC to enable monitoring.	
23.9.11	RESOLVED: Governors approved the College SAR and received the QIP.	
B23.10	<u>Teaching & Learning Report</u>	
23.10.1	The report format had been changed to mirror the Ofsted framework, i.e. 16-18, adults, high needs, enrichment, apprenticeships. A new approach to quality had been adopted after Ofsted.	

	There had been over 300 additional passes at Grade 3 and above for those students who had achieved their GCSEs in English and Maths after a short revision programme from the College.	
23.10.2	More detail would be provided on adult apprenticeships in future.	
23.10.3	The adult ESOL curriculum was due to be extended. Ofsted recognised this met local skills need. This was being developed into ESOL Plus to provide a vocational qualification.	
23.10.4	Sector based work academies would be a priority and a challenge because of how the WMCA want them to be delivered and measured and the constraints on progress of ideas and plans by other parties. The premise for the academies was explained: to do intensive work with the long term unemployed. However, colleges are expected to find employers and activities for them. Ofsted would be interested in the knowledge they gained rather the jobs they secured at the end of the programme.	
23.10.5	Governors asked if there were plans for implementation of cross-college apprenticeship provision. The College advised that this would depend on how provision was established, e.g. specialist areas - dental nursing and construction, would form part of the curriculum and allow expansion of the curriculum offer.	
23.10.6	Governors noted the students' improvements and achievements were outstanding and offered their congratulations.	
23.10.7	Governors celebrated the achievement of the High Needs students and congratulated staff for their support of enrichment activities which provided opportunities some students had never experienced. There were many opportunities in addition to the curriculum related enrichment activities highlighted. The College received Outstanding for enrichment due to the excellent efforts and support of staff.	
23.10.8	There had been a huge increase in high needs. A brief outline of high needs support was included. BCC only referred its High Needs students to the College rather than other local colleges because of the quality of the student experience. High Needs would present to the next LQCC.	
23.10.9	Governors noted the update on behaviour and attitudes.	
23.10.10	Governors were welcomed to attend college events.	
23.10.11	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Vice Principals T&L report.	
B23.11	<u>Health & Safety update</u>	
23.11.1	Governors noted the Health & Safety policy and report had been scrutinised by the Audit Committee.	
23.11.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received a health and safety update.	

B23.12	<u>Policies/documents</u>	
	<i>RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the following policies/documents as recommended by the Audit Committee</i>	
B23.12.1	Health & Safety Policy	
	The only change was a reduction in reference to Covid as threat levels were much reduced.	
	Governors asked if the College had seen much evidence of long Covid. The College advised there was only a small number of cases and no commonality in symptoms	
B23.12.2	Risk Management, Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery document	
	Governors noted this was Version 1 of the Risk Management, Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery Plan and a fully developed plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Audit Committee for final approval by the Board.	
	<i>RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved/adopted the following policies/documents as recommended by the Search & Governance Committee</i>	
B23.12.3	AoC Code of Good Governance	
	The context of the Code was explained. Colleges were required to adopt a recognised Code of Governance as a condition of funding. A range of codes had been considered but the Search & Governance Committee recommended the AoC's version as it was sector specific. The Code was being reviewed at present so an updated version may be available in due course.	
	An internal audit on the Board and College's compliance with the Code would commence w/c 27 March 2023 and would be completed on a Comply or Explain basis. For example, environmental sustainability was an area of focus and development at present which would be explained to the auditors.	
	Governors pointed out the strength of governance was recognised by Ofsted and had been captured in the compliance checklist.	
	Search & Governance Committee would report back to Audit Committee on the results of the internal audit.	
B23.12.4	Board of Governors Expenses Policy	
	Governors were encouraged to claim for expenses.	
B23.12.5	Procedure for the Appointment of Members to the Board of Governors	
	In response to a Governor's comment, Governors were reminded that it fell within the Search & Governance Committee's remit to interview potential candidates on behalf of the Board and make recommendations on appointments. A mindfulness of skills needs and EDI was always paramount in recruitment to Board vacancies.	

B23.12.6	Procedure for Resolving Difficulties for use by the Clerk to the Corporation	
B23.12.7	Nomination, Election and Ballot Procedure for the Appointment of Staff Members to the Board of Governors	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the following policies as recommended by the Finance & Strategy Committee	
B23.12.8	E-safety	
B23.12.9	IT Acceptable Use	
B23.12.10	IT Security	
B23.12.11	Password	
	Governors asked why passwords were promoted as the method of security. The question would be addressed outside the meeting by TS, JB and the IT Manager.	TS/JB
B23.12.12	Penetration Testing	
B23.12.13	Social Media Use	
B23.12.14	Firewall	
B23.12.15	Access Management	
	Staff Governors and Student Governors left the meeting	
NFP	**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**	
B23.13 NFP		
B23.14 NFP		
B23.15 NFP		
	TS left the meeting	
B23.16 NFP		
B23.17 NFP		
B23.18 NFP		
B23.19 NFP		
B23.19.1		
B23.19.2		
B23.19.3		
B23.19.4		
B23.20 NFP		
	The Principal and staff left the meeting	
B23.21 NFP		
B23.22 NFP		
B23.23	<u>Determination of Confidential Items</u>	
	B23.13-B23.24	
B23.24	<u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u> Governors Annual Strategy Day Venue: Sandwell College, Friday 12 May 2023	

	NB START TIME BROUGHT FORWARD TO 9.30AM Board meeting – Monday 3 July 2023, 4.00pm	
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Meeting ended at 6.30pm