

**SANDWELL COLLEGE**

**Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting  
held on Monday 3 July 2023 at 4.00pm  
Central St Michael's**

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

Also in attendance:

R Pickup	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
B23.25	<b><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></b>	
23.25.1	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Adrian Khodavardar, Shokat Lal and Jalal Uddin.  Apologies were also received from Roland Barrett-Price and Nargis Bostan.  Alex Aitken and Ahmed Mohammed did not arrive.	
23.25.2	RESOLVED THAT: apologies were approved by Governors.	
B23.26	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b>	
	There were no declarations of interest beyond the standing register of interests.	
B23.27	<b><u>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 March 2023</u></b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 March 2023 which were signed by the Chair.	

B23.28	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b>	
28.1	Minute No. 23.10.8 - LQCC would look at High Needs at the next meeting – deferred to the next meeting as superseded by Link Governor visit to the area on the Strategy Day.	
28.1	Minute No. B23.15 - Terry Duffy House (TDH) update – see Minute No. 23.39.8.	
B23.29	<b><u>Governing Body membership</u></b>	
29.1	<b>Chair's reappointment</b>	
29.1.1	The Clerk advised that Ken Ellis's current term as Chair was due to expire on 31 July 2023, with his term as Governor expiring on 31 July 2024. Due to the important tasks facing the Board in the coming months, Mr Ellis was prepared to extend his term as Chair for another 6 months to 31 January 2023.	
29.1.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the 6 month extension to Mr Ellis's term as Chair and thanked Mr Ellis for all his hard work and support as Chair at this time.	
29.2	<b>Co Vice Chair</b>	
29.2.1	Governors were reminded that nominations/expressions of interest for Vice Chair had been sought for a period of time. The role had been covered as an interim measure for a time by John Tew (a former Chair of the Board) who was then made substantive Vice Chair because of the impending Ofsted inspection last year. Alan Taylor had now expressed an interest and it was proposed that he be appointed Co Vice Chair alongside Mr Tew. A Co Vice Chair arrangement, with the continuing support of Mr Tew, was proposed in view of the upcoming commitments facing the Board and Mr Taylor not coming from an education background, after which the position would be reviewed further.	
29.2.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the introduction of a Co Vice Chair arrangement with the appointment of Alan Taylor to serve for a period of 6 months alongside John Tew.	
29.2.3	The Chair reminded Governors that succession plan for leadership roles was a constant focus for the Search & Governance Committee so would continue to invite Governors to consider those roles. Acknowledging there were a number of new Governors, the Chair stressed that they had valuable skills and experience so should not be deterred by their length of service so far.	
29.2.4	Governors were concerned that this meant there would potentially be 2 new people in key posts at the same time, i.e. Principal and Chair.  The Chair reassured Governors that it was his intention to continue to support the Board and particularly the incoming new Chair for a period to ensure there would be consistency and continuity of support at this time. Mr Tew was also an experienced Governor and Vice Chair and, indeed, had previously been Chair of the Board for a number of years so this would further strengthen the support in place for the Board as a whole and individual Governors as necessary.	
29.3	<b>Governor appointments:</b> <b>Alex Aitken</b> <b>Richard Bearman</b> <b>Shokat Lal</b>	

	RESOLVED THAT: Governors ratified the appointments of new Independent Governors: Alex Aitken, Richard Bearman and Shokat Lal, with effect from 19 April 2023 for 4-year terms of office.	
29.4	<b>Committee Membership Allocation</b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the allocation of new Governors to the following committees:  Alex Aitken – Finance & Strategy Committee Richard Bearman – Audit Committee	
B23.30	<b><u>Principal's Report</u></b>	
30.1	Application numbers were strong and there were no major issues. The focus would be on ensuring applicant numbers converted. Targeted work was underway at Cadbury and Central St Michael's (CSM) to maximise applicant numbers. It was difficult to make direct comparison with previous years application numbers at this stage because of Covid legacy issues. The College did not default to telephone and online interview as during Covid times. This tested the strength of applications as potential students had to make more effort.	
30.2	The current year had exceeded last year's numbers, but, due to the funding mechanism, the College would not get financial recognition until year after next. The Engineering Centre would provide more scope to offer a broader range of engineering and apprenticeship courses.	
30.3	Quality forecasting has been carried out, with estimates of achievement rates reflecting a strong picture. TAGs were now at an end. The College had bucked the trend and its results were significantly above other local institutions.	
30.4	Compared to other colleges, the College had successful outcomes on apprenticeships. Ian Smith, former lead Ofsted inspector (and highly experienced practitioner), was working with the College on apprenticeships. (The College also had reliable intelligence from elsewhere to make improvements to its provision. JS also carried out inspections on apprenticeships so provided intelligence to make improvements).	
30.5	Brief HR update given. Further detail was provided at agenda item 20. Management had a very amicable meeting with unions on 3 July 2023. Unions had recognised the College's investment in staff. Pay negotiations were being finalised at the moment and it was hoped the offer could be increased.  Governors asked for a copy of the new Working Together code of conduct.	BB
30.6	A new Three Colleges Consortium had been set up providing links with Solihull and Halesowen. The purpose of the Consortium was outlined. Its terms of reference had been agreed and college staff would be put forward would benefit from being on the groups.	
30.7	Verbal update given on capital project initiatives. Further detail provided at agenda items 14 and 15. The Cadbury building was progressing well.  The Cradley Heath Education Hub had been discussed in detail by the Finance & Strategy Committee. Planning permission had been received so the project was at the point of decision.	

	Centre of Excellence in Health, Smethwick - there was a certain amount of pressure for the College to sign a partnership agreement so that the funds for the building could be released but this would also commit the College to the project. The College was not the lead but was the proposed anchor tenant. The change of professionals had held up the project, together with some unreliability from other key partners. The timescales would have to be pushed back so it was not realistic for it to be completed by this deadline. The Principal would follow up with them. The College's biggest curriculum area was Health so the project offered up new opportunities for T levels and progress in medical professions.	
30.8	Update given on Nova Training. There was merit to the purchase. From a business point of view, the purchase would expose the College to a different market and bring synergies with apprenticeships and skills but more work was needed before assessing what a realistic offer price would be. The Director of Estates Development and Capital Projects and the Director of Strategy and Projects had been asked to focus on this and come back with a final view as to whether to pursue or abandon this project which would hopefully be brought back to the next meeting.	
30.9 NFP		
30.10	<p>A list of defunded courses was highlighted. A change of government might stall this but the Civil Service do not understand the FE sector. There was increased bureaucracy as colleges were now back in the public sector, examples given.</p> <p>Governors stressed the need to challenge this decision so the College was seeking legal advice to check if this decision could be imposed on colleges without any discussion or approval. Example given that the situation was different to a school's academisation as it had a choice about whether it wanted to become an academy and which Trust to join whereas this decision had been imposed on colleges.</p>	
30.11	The draft Annual Accountability Statement had been approved last time. There were no changes so the version was considered the final one. It had to be on the College website. The deadline was now end July. The Local Skills Improvement Plan had still not been published. The College had submitted it but had received no feedback. This would be followed up at the meeting with the FE Commissioner next week.	
30.12	Governors were pleased that there was a large poster at Spon Lane about T levels. The College had the largest cohort of T level students in the region at the moment, with about 600 in total, 400+ applicants and 150 progressors. T levels were not popular with students as they were not paid.	
30.13	<p>Governors asked if the ONS reclassification affected any decisions around Nova.</p> <p>The College advised it did not as changes related to novel and contentious purchases. Explanation given on novel and contentious purchases.</p>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Principal's report.	
B23.31	<b><u>Outcomes from Governors' Annual Strategy Day</u></b>	
31.1	The Annual Strategy Day had been useful to fully interpret the Ofsted result and a chance to meet other staff and students across the College and build on the links from the previous Strategy Day. Next year more	

	time with students and the departments would be built into the programme.	
31.2	RESOLVED THAT: Governors noted the outcomes from the Annual Strategy Day.	
B23.32	<b><u>Teaching &amp; Learning report</u></b>	
32.1	Most of the report content had been reviewed, challenged and questioned at LQCC. The 2 substantive items in the report: forecast and target achievement rates should be taken with caution as grade boundaries were due to return to 2019 levels and this would impact upon A Level and GCSE results; also it was not known how they would be affected by the curriculum review.	
32.2	LQCC had asked to receive the new SLT organisation chart post Ofsted.	
32.3	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Teaching & Learning report.	
B23.33	<b><u>Safeguarding Annual Report</u></b>	
33.1	The report had been updated since presented to LQCC, so reflected the position to the end of June 2023.	
33.2	The biggest single issue remained mental health, as it had during and since Covid, mainly centred on exam anxiety.	
33.3	<p>Governors asked why mental health problems were higher than other than other categories and why figures were higher at Cadbury.</p> <p>The College explained that there was now a greater understanding of what constituted mental health problems, combined with an increased confidence in students to admit to having a mental health problem as there had been a stigma before. Also, some issues had not been classed as mental health issues before, e.g. exam stress.</p> <p>Cadbury's statistics looked higher as it had a different reporting structure with the same issue sometimes reported several times. The reporting structure would be reviewed. There was also a difference between the cohorts at the 3 campuses so there were a number of factors that made the percentages higher at Cadbury.</p> <p>Peer on peer abuse had not previously been a category but students were now encouraged to come forward so matters were followed up properly.</p>	
33.4	Governors recognised the importance in understanding and interrogating the data from every viewpoint as safeguarding matters were barriers to learning. Governors were pleased the College was able to offer support from internal and external agencies and approved the money spent on a range of specialist staff and staff training. Governors were reassured that students were confident in reporting concerns and were aware of the support that was available.	
33.5	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Safeguarding Annual report.	

B23.34	<b><u>Policies</u></b>	
34.1	<b>Consultation Policy– Obtaining the Views of Staff and Students</b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the policy as recommended by the Search & Governance Committee.	
34.2	<b>Fees Policy</b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the policy as recommended by the Search & Governance Committee.	
B23.35	<b><u>Committees' Terms of Reference</u></b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the Committees' terms of reference.	
B23.36	<b><u>Financial Regulations</u></b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the Financial Regulations as recommended by the Finance & Strategy Committee.	
B23.37	<b><u>ONS reclassification update</u></b>	
	There were no updates at this time.	
	Staff Governors left the meeting	
NFP	<b><u>**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**</u></b>	
B23.51	<b><u>Any Other Business</u></b>	
	There was no other business.	
B23.52	<b><u>Determination of Confidential Items</u></b>	
	<b>Minute Nos. B23.30.9, B23.38- B23.53</b>	
B23.53	<b><u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u></b> <b>Monday 9 October 2023, 4.00pm, CADBURY COLLEGE</b>	

Meeting ended at 6.30pm