

### SANDWELL COLLEGE

#### Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Monday 9 October 2023 at 4.00pm Cadbury College

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

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
B23.54	<b><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></b>	
23.54.1	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Shokat Lal, Sheridan Powell, Paul Stanaway and Alan Taylor.  Apologies were also received from Roland Barrett-Price and Nargis Bostan.  Alex Aitken did not arrive.	
23.54.2	RESOLVED THAT: apologies were approved by Governors.	
B23.55	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b>	
	There were no declarations of interest beyond the standing register of interests.	
B23.56	<b><u>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 July 2023</u></b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 July 2023 which were signed by the Chair.	

B23.57	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b>	
57.1	Minute No. B28.1 - LQCC would look at High Needs at the next meeting – deferred to the next meeting.	
B23.58	<b><u>Principal's Report</u></b>	
58.1	The presentation set out the background and context of the College, its current position and the priorities for longer term focus.	
58.2	The presentation highlighted: the College background relating to areas served, number of students 6-18 and adult learners; the demography of the area; areas of focus being employability and employment skills; the current stage of the College with regard to student numbers, financial health, staff recognition in pay and terms and conditions, infrastructure investment, and exam results; growth in student numbers over the past 10 years; the context of improved performance in courses and apprenticeships; capital investment across the campuses; the current position with 16-18 and an outline of the challenges ahead; the potential impact of T levels on courses and take up by students; the Government's direction regarding adult education; a reminder of the discussion points and outcomes from the Annual Governors Strategy Day and Governors' support for the College approach; how the strategy would be delivered in the short and longer term; and feedback from the FE Commissioner.	
58.3	The College was very successful thanks to the efforts of staff and students. The College educated more young people than any other college in the region (an increase of 168% in 10 years) and was almost a national player and had the potential to be the main tertiary College in Birmingham.	
58.4	Student numbers currently stood at 8070 which should lead to 7100-7200 funded students. The College recruited all year round and had programmes to integrate them throughout the year.	
58.5	The College was financially Outstanding as more students equated to more income.	
58.6	16-18 year olds was a government priority and was the bed rock of the College because of its focus on this student group and its desire to meet community need.  The College had invested £20-30 million in infrastructure over the past 4 years.  Results were strong at over 90% at A level, an increase on last year in contrast to national trends. This was testament to the work done with students. Full set of exam results to be reported at the December Board meeting.	
58.7	Student retention had been crucial to the upward growth over the last 10 years. Managers were passionate about retaining students and ensuring they achieved their opportunities and potential.	
58.8	Capital investment was highlighted: 4 capital projects were ongoing.	
58.9	Problems facing the sector included: the changing curriculum, and qualifications review; T levels being removed by the Government and replaced with the new Advanced British Standard; T levels were not popular with students who described them as unpaid apprenticeships.	

	Business Studies was a significant risk area as replacement qualifications were not aligned.	
58.10	This meant the College's areas of strength would become its weakness and it would need to adapt, change, focus on other opportunities for young people in the form of T levels, A levels, mixed programmes, apprenticeships. The College would need to be agile and act quickly, but act with caution rather than haste and follow a focused, measured plan, changing what it had to when it had to. Example given of college which had already removed all BTECs.	
58.11	Governors were concerned to note the impact of T levels and the number of students who would not be able to be offered a new pathway - 1239. This equated to a significant loss of income lost and no clear pathway or alternative for students meaning they could potentially become NEET: the College's aim was to avoid that happening.	
58.12	Adult education was a concern as the WMCA had a view of combined education at odds reality. The College ran high levels of provision for ESOL to provide them with skills for life and seizing opportunities in society. This was not a popular narrative with the WMCA which was more focused on higher level qualifications. However, members of local communities were disenfranchised by this approach so there was a balance to be struck to ensure the College was supporting companies to generate wealth and increase job opportunities.	
58.13	Possibilities for the future were highlighted: increase A level provision; offer mixed programmes with an element of vocational and A level project to help students to progress to their preferred destination of university. The skills narrative did not include students' aspirations for their own life choices and improvement. Resit programmes were also important and could be creative and offer a different form of access. An alternative approach to HE - not just offering degrees and competing with universities but including professional qualifications. High needs was a potential area of specialism – the College invested in this already and Central Campus could be set up to strongly support that.	
58.14	Governors were reminded of the outcomes from discussions at the Annual Governor Strategy Day which reflected support for A levels and combined study programmes; HE franchising given Birmingham City University was focusing on overseas students rather than working with local partners; continued high needs focus with the potential to become a regional recognised centre for this specialism; the potential growth area of apprenticeships both for young people and adults.	
58.15	The short-term approach to delivering the College strategy was discussed. The key consideration this year was to grow and it had been the best ever enrolment at 8100 students, which should settle at 71-7200. Construction had enrolled 450+ students compared to 300 last year, a 50% increase in a year.	
58.16	There had been significant investment in the sales team to 9 for apprenticeships to address this Ofsted area for improvement, led by Julia Stevens and Rachel Aston. This had led to bigger companies, e.g. Homebase, National Express, the Civil Service, coming on stream to work with the College.	
58.17	Areas of non-organic growth included the acquisition of Nova training which was still under consideration: they had good staff and their leadership would bring something to the College to help the apprenticeship offer but the College needed to ensure it had the capacity to manage this so caution was advised.	

58.18	Other capital projects were well underway, the more challenging ones being the health centre in Smethwick and Cradley Heath. Changes and delays to the Smethwick project since its inception and proposed new outcomes were detailed. The Principal was now involved to ensure the College's best interests were maintained in the project.	
58.19	Update given on Terry Duffy House. The Labour Party had received a better offer for the property. The College had therefore withdrawn. It had 2 other viable options including the recently refurbished Town Hall and land behind the Engineering Centre.	
58.20	Negotiations with the unions would be a challenge this year following the AoC's proposed pay award of 6.5% which did not account for the College's generous pay awards over the past few years.	
58.21	Middle-senior management capacity was needed for the other centres coming on stream. The College hoped to recruit from the pool of graduates of the national management training programme.	
58.22	The finance position remained strong.	
58.23	Looking forwards: the College ran smoothly due to the quality of staff, systems and processes that work. Caution was advised if changes were proposed in future; there was an ageing leadership structure and the top level of management was lean – this would need addressing for the future; governance was becoming more complex and would need a lot of commitment from Governors.	
58.24	Governors noted the metrics were stunning, with an outstanding number of students, and excellent exam results against the context of a national dip given this was the first cohort sitting external exams since Covid and TAGs.	
58.25	Governors received a health update regarding the Director of Estates, Development and Capital Projects. Governors asked that their thanks and regards be passed on to Roland Barrett-Price for his excellent work on the capital projects which were all coming to fruition and had been achieved on budget.	
58.26	Governors acknowledged the success of the Cadbury merger and hoped that it had helped contribute to the success of the Sandwell family of colleges.	
58.27	Governors acknowledged the College was well placed to seize new opportunities. Investment had been successful and it could be a premier league college for Birmingham. The West Bromwich site had the potential to grow.  Governors recognised the positive impact of the College on students' lives which would not have been possible without their experience of the College.	
58.28	Governors suggested that the inclusion of more commentary and comparative data in reports would be useful, particular for risk areas, which would help to highlight trends and areas of focus.  The College pointed out that detailed reports and discussion took place through the committee structure.	
58.29	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the Principal's report.	

B23.59	<b><u>Vice Principals' Report</u></b>	
59.1	The report headings were now structured around the Ofsted framework.	
59.2	<p>LQCC had discussed in detail the College Quality Strategy and recommended it for approval.</p> <p>A firm, robust and uncompromising quality process was in place. The difference in approach now that the Ofsted inspection was over was explained.</p> <p>The first term had focused on induction, student perception after first few weeks in college. Detailed feedback to be given to the next LQCC meeting.</p>	
59.3	Update given on outcomes, vocational results awaited. A2 and GCSE exam results did not dip in line with the national trend. AS dipped but this related to a very small pool across the country which skewed the results. A2 results were good at both campuses. GCSE results improved on national average (NA), being 10% up for English and 4-5% for Maths.	
59.4	1,000 students had gone on to university this year.	
59.5	Work continued on behaviour and attitudes and personal development which were graded Outstanding by Ofsted. To support positive student behaviour in college from the start, the College had appointed 13 Engagement Officers plus 26 Learning Coaches. This continued to ensure that the College's pastoral systems surpassed those of other colleges. The good work of the Programme Achievement Managers (PAMs) continued with hundreds of home visits conducted.	
59.6	Ian Smith, an experienced HMI, was supporting the College in its apprenticeships work. The restructure of the apprenticeships team and its achievements were detailed. There were 90 new apprenticeships so far this year.	
59.7	Support for high needs had developed over recent years. All local LAs used the College as first point of referral. The College had set up a high needs dependency unit with 10 students, each of them required significant resources of around £35k. This demonstrated the support levels required.	
59.8	<p>RESOLVED THAT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors received the Vice Principal's report.</li> <li>• Governors approved the Quality Strategy.</li> </ul>	
B23.60	<b><u>5-Year College Review</u></b> <b>Presented by the Vice Principal, Quality</b>	
60.1	There had been a consistent growth in 16-18 students. All campuses have grown in 5 years, particularly CSM which had doubled its number of students.	
60.2	The heat map detailing where the students came from was explained. This showed the College's increased spread across the local areas.	
60.3	Quality had improved since 2018, particularly at Cadbury with more student progress and teachers now more demanding of students.	
60.4	Outcomes had improved, particularly at Cadbury which had seen a 17% increase. The gap was being narrowed each year.	

60.5	Capital investment was highlighted, with the Cadbury estate receiving over £10 million in investment.	
60.6	Improvements to staff salaries and terms and conditions, both teaching and support staff, were detailed.	
60.7	<p>Governors noted the Government's announcement about improved salaries to attract and retain staff and asked how that would impact the College, acknowledging that a change of government may affect this approach.</p> <p>The College advised it would provide an opportunity but its base was already high. £44k was its top of our scale compared to other colleges £39k. This would be considered carefully in the next round of pay negotiations.</p>	
60.8	<p>Governors mentioned the tax-free payments to be offered to attract new staff.</p> <p>The Company pointed out that it was already popular with staff from other colleges keen to join as the College was recognised as having the most competitive salaries and terms and conditions.</p>	
60.9	<p>Governors asked how many Engagement Officers there were in total.</p> <p>The College explained they were a large team. This was a new role employed with a very specific purpose, to combat early drop out and demonstrated the lengths to which the College went to retain students. Their role would change as the years progressed but was to support learners. The College's achievement rates were best in the region because it did not let students drop out thanks to its pastoral resources. All systems, processes and staff approach were embedded with this aim.</p>	
60.10	<p>Governors acknowledged the capital investment and asked how the capacity this created on the campuses would be utilised.</p> <p>The College advised that the capacity of all buildings and resources could be maximised by careful timetabling and capacity could be increased. The College was looking to increase capacity at the other sites. The LA's suggestion to take on the newly refurbished Town Hall would provide additional opportunities but was linked to town improvement. Central campus with 4100 students was reaching its limit. The College could also look at specialising some curriculum on different sites. The Cadbury site also had building stock that could be improved as well as land, e.g. the football pitch. Central St Michael's with 800 students had also now reached its limit. There was land behind the Engineering Centre. The new estates at Cradley Heath and the Smethwick Health Centre would help relieve some of the pressure.</p>	
60.11	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the 5-year College Review.	
B23.61	<b><u>Policies/Procedures</u></b>	
61.1	<b>Standing Orders</b>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors reviewed and approved the Standing Orders.	

B23.62	<b><u>Any Other Business</u></b>	
	Governors were reminded that Ken Ellis's term of office as Chair would expire at the end of January 2024 and due process would be followed to appoint his successor.	
	<b><u>CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</u></b>	
B23.63 NFP		
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B23.67 NFP		
	Principal and SLT left the meeting	
	<b><u>**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**</u></b>	
B23.70	<b><u>Determination of Confidential Items</u></b>	
	<b>Minute Nos. B23.63-B23.69</b>	
B23.71	<b><u>Date and time of next meeting</u></b> <b>Monday 4 December 2023, 4.00pm, Sandwell College</b>	

Meeting ended at 6.30pm