



Mission Statement: *Inspiring learning, developing character, building futures*

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION OF BLACKPOOL SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Date: Tuesday 13th December 2022
Venue: Virtual meeting
Time: 5.00 pm

- Present:** Cllr Callum Baxter (Chair)
Ms Jill Gray (Principal)
Cllr Don Clapham
Ms Sukie Woodhouse
Ms Tabitha Davey
Ms Debbie Taaffe
Mr David Gascoigne
Mr Alistair Burr
Mr Nick Andrews
Mr Kellen Collumbine
- Together with:** Ms Nina Karunasekara (observer)
Ms Amanda Crumblehulme (Assistant Principal: Business Support)
Ms Gail Yeadon (Deputy Principal)
Mr Stuart Ormson (Assistant Principal: Student Support)
- Apologies:** Mr Jeremy Mannino, Mr Ray Baker and Mrs Sue Hawitt (who will create the minutes from a recording of the meeting)
Ms Caroline Coyne due to not receiving the meeting link

47.2022 Preliminaries

The Principal welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Nina Karunasekara who had joined the meeting as an observer. She asked the directors and SLT to introduce themselves and explain their role. Apologies were noted

48.2022 Focus-Academisation

Directors were given a verbal update on academisation from the Principal, she talked about the 'Schools Bill' which proposes all maintained schools will be expected to convert to a MAT by 2030 or have plans to join one. The Principal talked about the local landscape and the schools that work with the college, it was noted that all Blackpool schools have already joined a MAT but Lancashire schools have not.

She went on to say that it is likely that colleges will be tasked to academise in the future and felt that a good time for discussions is now.

Discussions are underway to explore the options for Blackpool Sixth. SLT and the wider leadership team had completed a task to look at four different options; the same task will be presented to directors at their annual conference on 5th January with a view to identifying next steps.

It was noted that there is still a lot of uncertainty around academisation, especially now the White Paper had been scrapped. However, the government remain committed to the objectives of the Schools Bill so things may emerge over the coming weeks. Any new information will be presented to directors at the conference.

The Principal gave directors a broad overview of the programme for the conference which included academisation and the recruitment process for the replacement of the Principal

Directors were invited to ask questions, there were no questions to answer.

49.2022 Declarations of Interest

The Principal noted the absence of Ray Baker and explained that there is a conflict of interest regarding academisation. It was noted the educational experience RB brings to the board is valued and therefore it is proposed he only attends the Standards Board meetings whilst the academisation discussions are taking place. This arrangement will be reviewed in the coming months.

50.2022 Consideration of any items of urgent business.

There was no consideration of urgent business to discuss

51.2022 Confirmation of Quoracy

It was noted the meeting was quorate

52.2022 Minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2022

The minutes of the meeting were approved

Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

- a) **Governance**-(item 31.2022 from the previous minutes) directors were asked to reach out to any contacts they have that may be suitable candidates to join the board, especially with skills in areas such as security, estates and HR. The Principal gave an update which included the recruitment of NK and a meeting confirmed to interview a potential director with HR experience.
- b) **Academisation**-(item 34.2022 from the previous minutes) confirmation a task group including a small number of directors and SLT will be set up to take strategic discussions of academisation forward. The Chair gave a verbal update on how two key areas of work (academisation and the principal's recruitment) are going to be delegated amongst the members of the board.

53.2022 College Action Plan

Directors received the first update of the 2022-23 College Action Plan (paper 7.1) presented by the Deputy Principal who invited directors to ask questions

Questions from Directors

It was noted by directors that there are no objectives in the plan regarding financial performance, with rising costs and wage increases directors asked how college are driving forward the economy and savings. The Principal informed directors that although there is no specific target in the plan it is implicit in all college activities and therefore college finances are always under the microscope.

Currently the Head of Finance is carrying out a re-forecast on the budget set in July which will be discussed in the new year with the Principal and the Chair of Administration and Finance committee. It was noted that a re-forecast would not usually be done at this point in the year, however there have been so many changes since the budget was set that it is necessary in order to establish a clear picture of the mid-year position.

The Principal explained the financial cycle and informed directors that the A&F committee are proposing to change their meeting schedule to allow financial reporting to better align with the A&F committee meetings.

Directors asked for a comment relating to the KPIs in the report for retention. It was noted that at the last Standards Board meeting retention was a focus to improve and these figures suggest otherwise. The DP explained that retention is significantly better than this point last year and that interventions put in place to tackle retention seem to be working.

The Principal informed directors that retention is not measured until a student has been on the study programme for 42 days, however some students do leave the college within this time period which is why work is carried out to try to retain them. The reason for flagging up retention in the Standards Board meeting is that when students leave the college it has an impact on funding and in the previous year a large number of students left college between Christmas and the summer so measures have been put in place to avoid the same happening again.

It was confirmed that the retention figures are for a two- year retention. The DP offered to deliver some information to directors at a later date to unpick the different strands of retention and what it means compared to the national average.

Deputy
Principal

Asked about priority 1 in the action plan being very T level focused, the Assistant Principal: Vocational gave directors an overview of the discussions thus far. She noted that a lot of the decisions to be made will be based on the government's decisions around applied generals. It was noted that these discussions have been rumbling on for years and makes the planning of the curriculum difficult, however a full review of the curriculum at B6 is currently being undertaken. Directors were provided with the reassurance that there is a plan in place which takes into account various options dependent on announcements from government.

The Principal noted that the curriculum is constantly being reviewed and updated and just recently A level Accountancy was introduced and is proving to be a very popular subject. A level Politics is being introduced for September 2023 and applications are high.

Directors asked about the Oxbridge interviews and were informed that offers were made to three students last year and all three students progressed to Oxford or Cambridge universities.

This year there are 26 applications for Oxbridge compared to 19 from the previous year, the student director gave some personal feedback about their admission test.

The Principal thanked all directors who had helped to prepare students for their Oxbridge interview and noted how valuable the process is. She also noted that it had been highlighted that some of the students are missing the opportunity to develop some of the wider skills they need when applying for these prestige universities. She had raised this issue with all the Headteachers in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre to ask if they can build into their enrichment programmes, debating clubs, Scrabble clubs, reading clubs, etc to ensure these opportunities are offered to students from Year 7 onward.

In response to a question about the future of T levels, it was noted that whilst T levels are suitable for some students they are not suitable for all and it was noted that they are not a replacement for applied general courses, it was noted that it is important to continue with these qualifications as these courses serve the wider population; college staff are also promoting T levels in two subjects – Digital and Health - and are working hard to put them in place.

Directors were informed that there is still a lot of things to consider with T Levels including the conversion rate and the cost effectiveness of running with small numbers; it was also noted that it is difficult to plan the curriculum when decisions from government are not sufficiently stable.

Asked about the new timetable and if there are any changes that need to be made, it was noted that any changes may be made in respect of the staff survey.

54.2023 Safeguarding

Directors received the safeguarding report (paper 8.1) presented by the Assistant Principal: Student Support. He highlighted that there had been a big increase in safeguarding referrals compared to last year, not just in number but also in complexity of cases. He also informed directors that the report outlines the work carried out by the safeguarding team and wider college teams and noted that links with outside agencies had been forged in order to respond to the increase in mental health and suicidal thoughts issues.

Questions from Directors

Asked what percentage of Blackpool Sixth's students come from Blackpool Local Authority, it was noted that 43% are from Blackpool. Asked whether the referrals better or worse than 2020-21, it was noted that the year started off with higher number of referrals but has declined since half term resulting in having less referrals compared to this point last year.

Asked if there had been an actual increase in cases or is it due to better recording and identifying cases, it was noted that there was a dip in safeguarding referrals in 2020-21 partly due to working on the Plan B timetable.

Directors noted that the report gave a very impressive account of the work carried out in supporting students at B6, however were surprised to see bullying and harassment on the increase. They were informed that the majority of these cases were very low level and for each allegation a swift investigation took place and appropriate action was taken to ensure that any bullying/harassment stopped immediately. In all bullying cases, directors were assured that there were no cases that escalated into serious consequences and in all cases the bullying stopped.

Directors congratulated the safeguarding team on the work carried out to encourage students to come forward with any concerns they may have which is evident in the report; it also shows that students have confidence in college staff and the reporting procedures.

Asked what support college are putting in place to assist those students who might be struggling with the cost of living crisis, it was noted that the bursary fund which has been increased quite substantially is available to support students through financial hardship with things like meals, transport costs and any materials they may need for their studies. The challenge is spotting those students who may be reluctant to come forward and apply for the fund.

Asked what percentage of students identified for the bursary fund had been referred by staff or self-referral, it was noted that this figure was not available, however work is being carried out to identify those students who may require additional support but don't fall into any categories, such as free school meals.

A greater focus in the New Year is trying to reach out to families in order to identify those students.

SLT, with the exception of Amanda Crumblehulme, left the meeting

55.2022 Recruitment Process

The Assistant Principal: Business Support gave directors a brief overview of the process for the recruitment of the current Principal 8 years ago. It was noted that a specialist recruitment agency was used which charged the college £30,000 for very little work, something which the college feel they can deliver in-house this time round using the recruitment agency the college currently work with who charge a lot less and offer targeted support. The Assistant Principal: Business Support proposed that the college manage the recruitment process internally with support from directors.

Questions from directors

In response to a question about the clarity of the responsibility for directors and the HR team in the recruitment process, it was noted that the role of directors will be to confirm the job description and salary before advertising the post, be involved in shortlisting through to assessments and discussions on the day of interviews. It was proposed a small committee (TBC) will act on behalf of the full board.

In response to a question Directors were given a brief idea of timescales for the recruitment process, it was noted that preferably the advert should be available before February half term to give potential candidates enough time to give notice on other roles which quite often can be six months. This would also give the opportunity for a second round should the first round not be successful.

Asked if any psychometric testing will take place prior to interview, it was noted that this is something that will form part of the process. Directors noted the importance of recruiting the right person and agreed the Principal should be part of developing the person specification to ensure it fits with college culture.

Directors noted that the college is very different to the last time the Principal was recruited, in terms of its successes particularly the recent Outstanding Ofsted grading, it was also noted it would be a very attractive post for the right person.

Directors asked if using an external agency, no matter the cost would give a better outcome in terms of candidates, since this is one of the biggest decisions the board will make, it was noted that despite using the external agency in the past it was felt that it didn't bring anything extra to the process. The Assistant Principal: Business Support was confident that the HR department at the college can provide a successful recruitment process.

Asked if the college can approach candidates directly, it was noted that the recruitment agency would offer a targeted approach, however there is no reason why the college cannot approach people direct, this can be achieved through the Sixth Form College Association (SFCA) network

Amanda Crumblehulme left the meeting

56.2022 Professional Support

There was nothing to report to directors

57.2022 Principal's Report

The Principal presented her report (paper 10.1) to directors and noted the following, **staffing**- it had been a really busy and challenging term due to a number of pastoral mentors securing new posts with universities with better pay and conditions, as a result the college are working on further developing their USP working with Blackpool Education Improvement Board and local schools to attract people to come to work at the college and the town.

Directors were informed that the Fylde Coast SCITT after appeal had not been successful and therefore next year (2023-24) will be the final year for the SCITT. There are some considerations for the SCITT directors relating to its future including forming a partnership with an accredited provider.

Questions from Directors

Asked if there was any update on union negotiations with the teachers' pay award, it was noted there was nothing to report

Asked why the SCITT appears on this agenda, the Principal gave a brief overview of the history of the SCITT noting it is entirely risk free to the college.

Directors asked if the 'cause for concern' process happens too early in the term (September) and should it be repeated later in the term. It was noted that the cause of concern process happens early in the year to ensure students are on the right course and identify who needs targeted support. There is always an increase in safeguarding concerns during this period due to transitions from schools and information being shared. It was also noted that cause for concern relating to safeguarding happens throughout the year.

58.2022 Membership Matters

58.2022 D1 resolved: approve the appointment of Nick Andrews support staff director and Kellen Collumbine lower 6 student director

58.2022 D2 resolved: approve directors' annual attendance record 2021-22

Directors asked if consideration could be made on a later start time for meetings. The Chair noted that committee meetings had been moved to online to try to help with good attendance. Action

Directors were invited to attend a working party meeting to be held on 24th January 2023 to discuss the Directors' Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

59.2022 Report on Chairs' Actions

The Chair informed directors that he had numerous meetings with the Principal to discuss two current key areas, academisation and the replacement for the Principal, and noted a plan is in place to manage these.

He also acknowledged and thanked the chairs of the committees and the directors for their untiring work on the board.

Committee meetings

60.2022 Remuneration

The Chair of the board gave a verbal update on the Remuneration committee meeting held on 13th September 2022

61.2022 Standards board

Directors received and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2022

61.2022 D1 resolved: approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2022

62.2022 Search and Governance

Directors received and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14th

November 2022

62.2022 D1 resolved: approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 2022

62.2022 D2 resolved; to approve the appointment of Non-Executive Director Nina Karunasekara to the board

63.2022 Audit

The Principal gave a brief overview of the meeting and noted that the completion report was received from Mazars with no recommendations

63.2022 D1 resolved: to approve the Audit completion report 2022

63.2022 D2 resolved: to approve the Annual Audit report 2021-22

64.2022 Administration & Finance

The Chair gave a brief update on the meeting and noted that the Audit and A&F committees had a good discussion with the auditors at the annual joint meeting regarding the annual accounts and recommended them for approval to the board.

He noted that the Audit Partner from Mazars informed directors that the report was a clean report that should not be taken for granted and that the college finance team do an exceptional job.

64.2022 D1 resolved: to approve the annual accounts and financial statements period ending 31st July 2022

65.2022 AOB

Directors noted that during discussions about replacing the Principal, she will be a hard act to follow and noted their thanks and praise for all her hard work. The Principal reminded directors of some social events taking place before Christmas.

66.2022 Identification of any new or amended risks

No new or amended risks were identified

Directors were reminded to up-date their DPR with attendance for this meeting

Date and Time of next meeting

Directors' Annual Conference: Thursday 5th January 2023

Full Board Meeting: Tuesday 21st March 2023 time to be confirmed

Signed _____

Date _____