



ST MARY'S COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE ON THURSDAY 9TH JULY 2020

Present:

Mrs S Beecroft (Resources Chair 19/20)
Mrs E. Best (Interim Principal)
Mr P. Case
Mr M Conboy (Chair 19/20)
Mrs A Francis (Quality Chair 19/20)
Mr A Kheratkar
Mrs P. Lightbown
Mr P. Moore
Rev Fr N Wynn SM (BMAC Chair 19/20)

Staff invited to be

In Attendance: Katrina Hollern
Kelly Sharp

External parties

invited by the Chair: Stephen Jones (ESFA),

Apologies:

Mr C. Beesley
Frank Dowling (Society of Mary)
Mr M. Vizzard
Mr M. Wright

Item 1 - Training

The Chair confirmed that this was a standing item with a decision taken to defer training under the present circumstances.

Item 1: Deferred

Item 2 – Opening Prayer and Welcome

The meeting was opened by the Chair with thanks to all but in particular Fthr N. Wynn, for being in attendance despite having had a difficult day, with acknowledgement and acceptance of apologies should he need to leave early.

Item 2: Resolved

Item 3 – Apologies for Absence

The apologies for those noted above were given and accepted.

Item 3: Resolved

Item 4 - Declaration of Interests

In addition to the standing declarations by EB and KH, SB declared an interest in relation to her role at LHu and all items relating to higher education.

Item 4: Resolved – declarations of interest were noted.

Item 5 - Approval of the minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Governors on 13th February and the Video Conference held on 21st May 2020

The Chair asked if the minutes circulated for the meeting of 13th February and the Videoconference meeting dated 21st May were considered an accurate reflection. With the exception of one typing error for the minutes of 21st May, they were accepted as a true record, to be signed upon resumption of face to face meetings.

Item 5 – Approved: The minutes were approved to be signed as a true record by Chair MC.

Item 6 – Matters arising of the meetings of the Board of Governors on 13th February and the Video Conference held on 21st May 2020

A summary of actions taken as detailed in the summary was provided. EB clarified that in relation to the matter raised in February regarding premises tours and the roof condition, three of the four prospective partners had undertaken successful visits and were complimentary of the staff they had met, the fourth was prevented due to the pandemic. KH confirmed that the tours had included all areas which required repairs, including the roof spaces, adding that the full CIF bid application with photos and detailed information regarding the roof were included in the data room that prospective partners had access to.

Under matters arising, the governors were asked to accept retrospective apologies for MW, who had been at work dealing with a safeguarding incident and CB who had connectivity issues. Governors accepted the apologies. No further questions or on-going items to be carried forward.

Item 6 – Approved: Responses to the matters arising were noted and the previous absences of CB and MW were approved to be amended to apologies.

Item 7 – Governance Matters

The clerk provided a summary of items for approval and reasons for deferral for some governance business, including the government guidance asking Boards to only consider essential business during the pandemic and the imminent amendment to the constitution which would necessitate the terms of reference and bye laws being re-reviewed. Unanimous approval was given for:

- 7.1 Meeting dates for 20/21
- 7.2 Committee structure and membership 20/21
- 7.4 The Governance Self-assessment form

It was highlighted that there would need to be flexibility in relation to meeting dates, in line with the SPA process and relating to the pandemic. It was agreed that meetings in the autumn term would be held by videoconference, with a hope that the December full Board meeting, for the signing of the

accounts would be held at College. It was also agreed that the continuing use of videoconference facilities to support quoracy and reduce the risks relating to Covid 19 would be reviewed in December. The clerk closed by asking that all SAR forms were returned with the annual returns as soon as possible to allow for the clerks report to be prepared ahead of the first meeting for 20/21.

Item 7.1, 7.2 and 7.4 – Approved: meeting dates, the committee structures and the self-assessment form were approved.

Item 7.3, 7.5 and 7.6 – Deferred: The Terms of reference of committees, Bye Laws and Code of Conduct were deferred.

Item 8 (a) – Update of the Audit Committee

MC confirmed that he had been in attendance at the Audit Committee meeting to hand over to the temporary Chair of the Committee, NW, with MC providing the update due to NW having not fully recovered from a general anaesthetic earlier in the day.

MC confirmed that at the meeting on 25th June, they had welcomed new member, CMC from LHU with MC commenting that she had already proved to be a valuable member of the committee having already made valuable contributions and demonstrating a good understanding of the Committee business.

MC provided a summary of areas of discussion including:

Internal audit: MC confirmed that KH had been managing the IA contract, which had necessitated continual review to prevent duplication and the completion of work unnecessary under the present circumstances while the college was already having increased external scrutiny and support from the ESFA and FEC teams. MC indicated that the SPA meant that priorities had altered and the number of days were potentially in excess of what is necessary therefore negotiations were on-going by KH with the Committee being kept informed throughout, with the first year sign off due to take place on 24th July. KH confirmed that with the enhanced scrutiny of the College, there were many areas scheduled to be reviewed that had been assessed by the ESFA and FEC team, therefore there would not be an opinion on the year as minimal new work had been carried out.

External auditors: MC advised the Board that due to the present situation and complex needs of the College, a decision had been taken to continue with Mazars. Whilst the price increase had been considerable, this reflected the national position for all auditors. MC advised that introducing a new firm would necessitate additional work to provide assurance on existing assumptions and the need to fully understand the present position, therefore it was felt that switching to another provider would not only involve a further increased cost, but an increased workload. MC confirmed that KH had built into the budget the increased costs.

MC updated the Board on the details of the new audit manager following GH's departure from the firm, confirming that he was on parental leave and would meet via videoconference on his return to discuss the terms of engagement, confirming that whilst the intention was to remain with Mazars, it would not be agreed until after this to ensure that the terms are as expected, and this would be brought to the Board for approval.

Risk register: MC recognised the risk register reflected the significant risks presented by the present pandemic with considerable work having gone into the updated register for both the College and the nurseries, expressing thanks to KH for the extensive work undertaken in preparing it for approval and updating the budget in line with the changes. MC confirmed that it would be approved under item 11 however, wanted to confirm that the Committee had thoroughly interrogated each line of the draft version ahead of the final version being distributed for approval, with NW confirming that only the register was presented, with the report having been delivered verbally and that the Committee only recommended the risk register for approval.

Item 8 (a) – Noted: The verbal update of the Audit Committee was noted with the risk register recommended for approval under item 11.

Item 8 (b) – Update of the Resources Committee

As Chair of the Committee, SB provided a brief summary of discussions with many items reviewed requiring further Board discussion. SB confirmed that the risk register had been reviewed and echoed the comments of MC, thanking staff for the extensive work and high quality of papers. SB advised the Board that the Committee had spent considerable time looking at the nurseries, FE and HE recruitment, alongside the financial situation and the budget, which had all been presented in detail and would be discussed further across the Board agenda. SB provided details of the outcomes of the nursery Ofsted inspections, with all 3 having undergone inspection in the preceding 6 months which had been expected, resulting in two being graded as good and one outstanding.

Item 8 (b) – Noted: The Board noted the details of the update from the Resources Committee.

Item 8 (c) – Update of the Board Membership Advisory Committee

The clerk confirmed that there had been no meetings of the BMAC and all actions following the last BMAC had been concluded as detailed under item 6, matters arising, including the appraisals of the Interim Principal and the Clerk. The clerk confirmed that a BMAC meeting would be scheduled for early in the new term.

Item 8 (c) – Noted: The Board noted that there had been no business of the BMAC since the last meeting.

Item 8 (d) - Update of the Quality and Standards Committee

As Chair of the Committee, AMF provided a summary of the business discussed at the meeting held earlier in the day. AMF confirmed that EB and her team had provided significant reassurance around CAG (centre assessed grades) process along with detailed insights into procedures for tracking student progress and information regarding the time table adopted for the next academic year. AMF added that there was significant information and guidance regarding plans for the next academic year which was reassuring and incorporated specific support for disadvantaged groups, and agreed with SB, that the detailed papers were of a high standard, providing positivity and depth of information despite the difficult situation. AMF added that it was disappointing that results would be based on CAG's when the quality assurance processes had been exemplary.

Item 8 (d) – Noted: The Board noted the details of the update from the Quality and Standards Committee.

Item 9 - Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Results (for information and discussion)

EB confirmed that the CAG's process had been reviewed in detail by the quality committee and presented it to the Board for questions and comments **with a governor asking** how the results compared with the previous year, indicating that to a non-academic professional it looked like an improvement across the board, but wanted to ensure that this was realistic. **EB admitted that** the College had a difficult couple of years and thanked AMF for her support throughout the entire process. EB stated she and her team felt confident in the CAG's as the process involved the analysis

across the 3 year trends, dialogue with teachers and HoF with all adjustments documented. EB advised that every single CAG for every student for every subject was scrutinised, with the whole process robust, but indicated that the statistical model may result in grades being brought down because of poor results the previous year, however maintained that the results reflected the expected results of students due to sit exams this year, with evidence for every decision made, including the recording of Microsoft Teams meetings held. **A governor asked** when the final results would be available, with EB advising that the College would have them on the 12th August, with the release to students available on the 13th August. EB confirmed that the full SLT team would be onsite to cross reference the actual results with the CAGs.

Item 9 – Resolved: The Board noted the details of the CAGs and supporting processes.

Item 10 – Recruitment and Marketing 20/21

10.1 – FE recruitment and marketing: EB confirmed that the paper distributed had been reviewed in detail by the Resources Committee, providing a summary of the content, which reflected an overall reduction in applications by 49 students. EB explained that this followed recent trends, which had seen less applications from Catholic partner schools and increased applications from local schools. EB asked the board to note that whilst applications had reduced overall, the non-Catholic applications maintained a higher conversion rate; therefore she expected enrolment to remain static. EB confirmed that recruitment campaigns were on-going and provided detail of the work being undertaken by the marketing team, including the additional online activities which included a successful online new student day which left EB confident that the team would meet the recruitment target.

EB provided a breakdown of the progression and application expectations based on prudent conversion figures and invited questions from the Board, **with a governor commenting** that they had expected a significant impact following the announcement of the SPA and had been pleased and impressed that this had not had any significant implications for recruitment, adding that the work by the by marketing team had been impressive.

Item 10.1 – Resolved: The Board noted the details of the marketing and recruitment report for 20/21.

10.2 – HE Recruitment and Marketing: PL advised the Board that applications were 20% lower than the same point in the previous year, however added that there were still enquiries coming in with the processing of the enquiries and applications significantly slower due to the need to do this on a one to one basis rather than in groups as would be the normal process. PL advised the Board that following a meeting with the Vice Chancellor at LHu, the foundation course which had been due to be introduced for 20/21 would now be deferred until the following academic year and a cap on recruitment meant that SMC can only recruit 52 for this year. **In response to a governor question** PL confirmed that there continued to be a minimum number for courses to run, however, there would not be the ability to over recruit. **A governor asked** if this was in line with the budget, to which PL confirmed that it was. PL advised the Board the outcomes paper had been postponed due to the high number of extensions granted for students due to the pandemic, adding that whilst the official results had not yet been released, she could confirm that the results were remarkable, both in terms of retention and outcomes with the cohort aggregate 10% above HC and LHu, with 2 students invited to publish their dissertations due to the high standard.

Item 10.2 – Resolved: The Board noted the details of the marketing and recruitment report for HE for 20/21.

Item 11 – Risk Register and Risk Management Report

KH confirmed that the register had been thoroughly interrogated by the Audit Committee, with a verbal presentation of the report. KH confirmed that risks associated with Covid 19 had been threaded throughout the register and provided a detailed summary of the 22 risks, highlighting the 3 new risks, giving details of the 6 downgraded risks and drawing attention to the 11 that remained the same, advising the Board that the risk register should be read in conjunction with the health and safety risk assessment (item 12.3).

A governor asked if the ESFA had been kept up to date with the finances and progress talks with the bank, with SJ confirming that they had copies of the budget and cash flow and were due to meet the following week.

MC confirmed that the bank needed to be updated with the new SPA timeframe which would be communicated once the Board had been updated.

A governor asked if staff were confident in the additional measures in place to prevent data breaches whilst staff were spending increased time online and home working including virus prevention, to which KH confirmed that working with the BwD local authority to complete the health and safety assessment had provided additional assurance that the measures in place to protect staff and systems were robust.

MC asked if the Board had any additional questions or comments ahead of approval, with unanimous agreement that the risk register and risk management report were comprehensive with approval given.

Item 11 – Approved: The Board approved the risk register and risk management report.

Item 12 – The Principal's Report

12.1 KPI Summary

EB provided an overview of the data within the report, confirming link governor CB had supported with the deep dive process and advised the Board of the learning walk progress made ahead of the college closure, which had meant that HoF had not yet had the opportunity to benefit from the process.

EB advised the Board that retention had been scrutinised in detail at the Quality Committee, confirming that retention rates were above the SFC rate in four out of six areas, however, confirmed it was below the aspirational College target set, suggesting that the large and challenging cohort of level 2 learners had contributed to the rates being lower than had been aspired to. EB summarised the attendance information, confirming rates were in line with the targets set and detailed the success of the work placement programme ahead of the College Closure. KH advised that the management accounts would be discussed in detail under item 16.

With no further questions, EB moved on to review the Curriculum Delivery Plan.

Item 12.1 – Noted: The Board noted the details of the KPI Summary.

12.2 Curriculum Delivery Plan

EB confirmed that all members had been able to access the presentation with supported audio and informed the Board that the time table models had been shared with staff and unions then reviewed by the Quality Committee who supported the decision to progress with model 2 which was in line with all current guidance and offered maximum flexibility whilst ensuring full high quality learning provision.

EB provided the Board with detailed insight of how the time table plan would work to ensure risks of transmission and inter-year group interaction were minimised and enabled contacts to be easily reviewed for the track and trace process. EB advised that colleges had freedom to decide their mix of blended learning, informing the Board that the model provided more contact than other local colleges and was supplemented by high quality live online lessons providing consistent interaction for students. **A governor asked how** this had been received by staff and how well prepared they were for this new delivery style, with EB advising that training had been completed, with more planned over the summer to be delivered at the inset days ahead of the college opening for students, with specific induction planned for new staff and students.

EB highlighted areas where risks remained high, including during transport to and from College on the dedicated transport service, which under present guidance meant that social distancing and other public transport measures would not apply, however, the College continued to work closely with the operator to ensure that safety measures would be in place to minimise risks.

A governor asked if this would affect the capacity of the transport services, with EB advising that a meeting to review the measures was scheduled for the following week, with a hope that they would commit to enhanced measures not prescribed within the guidance, including year groups being separated on different decks or sides of the bus, utilising window seats and leaving aisle seats empty where capacity allows this.

In response to a governor question, KH advised that the longest student journey was around an hour to which EB added that efforts had been made to ascertain the process being implemented by schools, with this being the final aspect of the health and safety measures to be confirmed. EB concluded that were outstanding concerns over the measures in place to safeguard students if the transport is used elsewhere throughout the day, seeking reassurance regarding the methods and measures for sanitising the vehicles between uses, adding that the 12.30 finish was also intended to ensure St Mary's students would be the first to use the bus for return journeys but this did not reassure the college that it would not be used prior to this.

A governor asked if bus champions could be used to monitor and support the College in implementing safety measures to give enhanced ownership for their own safety. EB agreed that had would be effective and agreed to look into implementing this.

A governor recognised the additional work of staff under difficult circumstances, acknowledging that additional work and continuing flexibility was still required and asked if there was a way to recognise and thank staff for this. EB advised that staff had been consulted throughout the pandemic and SPA process, and staff were in support of the time table model, which ensured maximum flexibility in the event of an increase in local cases ensuring that this was planned for, reducing any unnecessary or unexpected additional workloads. **A governor commented that** they felt that this still reflected a considerable increase in pressure and again pressed for support and recognition for staff reflecting the appreciation for what they had done.

Further questions were asked about catering facilities and the provision of free school meals for those eligible, with EB advising that the 12.30pm finish ensured that the canteen would not be needed, reducing the chances of students congregating with those eligible for free meals continuing to receive direct payments.

No further questions or comments were received.

Item 12.2 – Resolved: The Board noted the details of the chosen curriculum delivery plan.

Item 12.3 – Draft Covid 19 Risk Assessment

EB confirmed that following the previous recommendation of the Board, the College subscribed to the health and safety services at Blackburn with Darwen Council.

EB advised the Board that the risk assessment had received the 1st sign off on 3rd June to support the June reopening, which was followed up by a further sign off following a further review on 24th June

which included the September preparations and time table models, confirming that this version had been reviewed by the Resources Committee, but following further DfE guidance the local authority was revising their advice and the SMC version would further align to this. EB confirmed that the BwD risk assessment process had the buy in of the unions, was comprehensive and provided strong assurance of staff and student safety. EB stated that the executive team would review and incorporate the newest guidance into the risk assessment and present this to the council the following week and once agreed would ask MC as Chair of the Board to sign this off if the Board are happy with the detail included within the draft.

Governors commented on the level of detail with borough wide complements for both the local authority and SMC's input into the processes and procedures that were being put in place to safeguard students and staff.

MC confirmed that approval was not necessary, but asked for the support of the Board ahead of signing the risk assessment once the updates are incorporated. This was offered unanimously.

Item 12.3 – Resolved: The Board noted and offered support of the Draft Covid 19 Risk Assessment.

Item 13 – Policy Reviews

The clerk confirmed that these had been deferred to September.

Item 13 – Deferred.

Item 14 – Any Other Business

No items were raised under item 14 and Part A concluded with thanks given to PL for her attendance and contributions. PL left after item 14.

Part A closed at 7.15

Actions, Matters Arising and Deferred Items to be Carried Forward

Deferred items:

- Item 7.3, 7.5 and 7.6 – Deferred: The Terms of reference of committees, Bye Laws and Code of Conduct were deferred.
- Item 15 – Annual Safeguarding Report and Board training
- Item 16.3 – Staff Pay Award
- Item 17 - Costed Curriculum Plan

Approval of Audit memorandum

EB to look at implementing student monitors for the buses (EB)

EB to inform the Board of the outcome of the collage collaboration fund application

KH to send budget in excel format to SJ at the ESFA

Extraordinary Board meeting to review the recommendation of the FEC scheduled for 4.30 21st August

Summary of constitution and lease to go to the board in September