

The Henley College Board

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Board held on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 18.00 via remote participation

BOARD: Trevor Watkins Emma Barklem Rebecca Chandler-Wilde Satwant Deol Brian Fennelly Lizzie Firth James Lingard Dr Tim Lincoln Vince Maltese Chris Murray Justin Sutherland Andrew Unsworth Robyn Vitty Charles Wiggin	Independent Member/Chair Parent governor Independent Member Principal Independent Member Independent Member Independent Member Independent Member Independent Member Parent governor Staff governor Staff governor Independent Member	STUDENT GOVERNORS: CLERK: Jacky Gearey SLT BY INVITATION: Eric Burrow Eamonn Egan Kathryn Mogford Ashok Patel Head of HR Vice Principal (VP) Head of Student Services (HSS) Director of Finance (FD)
Agenda Item	Minutes	Action by
4.1	Opening of Meeting and Welcome The Chair opened the meeting at 18.04.	
4.2	Apologies for Absence Apologies had been received from: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alistair Wildman – work 2. Andrea Wood – work 3. Abigail Kennedy 	
4.3	Declaration of Interests There were no declarations of interests.	
4.4	Minutes of Previous Meeting (i) Minutes of meeting of 1 February 2021 The Board approved the minutes of 1 February 2021 as an accurate record of the meeting to be signed by the Chair. (i) Minutes of Remote Decision Request issued 13 March 2021 The Board approved the minutes of the Remote Decision Request issued 13 March 2021 as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair. Resolved that: (ii) the Board agreed that the minutes of the 1 February 2021 were an accurate record of the meeting to be signed by the Chair. (ii) the Board agreed that the minutes of the Remote Decision Request issued 13 March 2021 as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair	
4.5	Matters Arising from the Minutes (unless covered by the agenda) Item 3.11 - provide a prioritised list of objectives for the Board meeting 24 March - covered under item 4.9	

The Henley College Board

	<p>Item 3.12 – FEC Action Plan to be amended with an additional actions' output column – covered under item 4.10 There were no other matters arising</p>	
4.6	<p>Principal's Presentation Lizzie Firth joined at 18.10</p> <p>The Principal introduced Claire Bovill, Chief of Staff and Director Customer Experience (CX) EMEAR at Cisco which had partnered with Softcat to provide students at the College with six monthly 60 minute webinars. The webinar team is responsible for session content, preparation and delivery and covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an introduction to Cisco and a career in tech • the apprentice program and how that works, CVs and interview techniques • help to develop a career pathway • practice of speed interviews • design thinking and innovation workshops • cybersecurity <p>The Board felt that this was really good and a successful initiative appreciating that there was a genuine thirst for engagement from the students. Further clarification was sought on the differences of the two programs technical and non-technical (business) which was defined as the technical program looking at systems engineering, building new products and exploring new ways to innovate or for the business side covering sales strategy, project management and operations. The apprenticeship three month rotation schedule allows students exposure to different areas of the business then enabling them to decide where they want to specialise. The end goal is to have a degree and the ability to apply their work experience in the IT sector. The Chair thanked Claire for a very informative talk.</p> <p>Claire Bovill left the meeting at 18.27</p> <p>The Principal gave a presentation to the Board covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid update regarding testing. The Principal thanked Head of HR, H&S Manager and SLT for all their work on this. • A virtual college event had been held with 10000 parents attending. • Applications and acceptance were up from last year. • Additional courses have proved very popular especially in IT, Engineering and Sports • Aspire Programme introduced for next year to attract gifted and talented students. The Board asked what the Oxbridge input was and Principal advised that it was to do with launching the event and helping with student interviews. • Employer Engagement partnerships have been developed with companies e.g. Cisco and Softcat. • Centre Assessed Grading. The VP outlined the timeline for completing the CAG process. • Performance 2020-21. Retention figures had increased. • New developments. These were identified as the new student record system, partnership with Wycombe Wanderers, virtual parents evening using School Cloud, refurbishment of R2 – sports building and public services; T Level in health and social care. • Thank a Teacher Award part of the Pearson National Teaching Awards used to raise the profile of the teaching profession highlighting the positive impact teachers have in society and to show how much they are valued. The staff governor Andrew Unsworth had recently received one such award. • The Principal had recently attended several external meetings including being a speaker at the Black Further Education Group Conference on System Leadership for the Future. 	

The Henley College Board

	<p>The Chair thanked the Principal for her presentation and asked for any questions.</p> <p>Resolved that: (i) the Principal's Presentation was received by the Board</p>	
4.7	<p>Student Governors' Report – this had not been provided as the students had only just returned to college</p>	
4.8	<p>Safeguarding and Prevent</p> <p>The HSS confirmed that the department continues to be incredibly busy and the number of students with in particular, significant mental health problems is higher this year. Recent issues on BLM and women's issues were being actively talked about with students in the tutorial programmes. Additionally the HSS advised that the Student Union members have all had safeguarding and prevent training and were an invaluable additional resource, and they were currently working very hard on EDI.</p> <p>The Chair explained to the board that this subject had been discussed at length at the QS meeting the previous day and thanked the HSS and her staff for all their work and asked for any questions – there were none.</p> <p>Resolved that the Safeguarding and Prevent Report was received by the Board</p>	
4.9	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>The Principal provide an update on: Strategic Level KPIs 2020/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance KPIs for income, pay cost and financial health - on track to deliver above the target income • Overall effectiveness KPIs for student recruitment, retention, pass rates, progression and satisfaction were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the 16-19 student recruitment target was exceeded by 62 from ESFA target ○ student retention improved to 94% and is 5% above recent national average ○ student progression to positive destinations was 6% above the regional and national average ○ student satisfaction rate from December survey was up by 5.6% to 89.8% ○ student engagement showed 78% fully engaged, 16% somewhat engaged and 6% not engaged but being supported through Student Services. There are no students disengaged from learning. The Chair said that this had been fully discussed at the recent QS meeting ○ value-added rating to remain amber until the publication of national performance data resumes for the 2021/22 academic year. Improvement was recorded in 2019/20 with an ALPS score of ALPS 3. <p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>Strategy Plan – the Principal advised that looking at the mission and vision, marketing was going out to all interest stakeholders i.e. staff, students, employers and the town council and that looking at the five pillars for success described in the report the College needed to ensure growth and outstanding health.</p> <p>The five pillars discussed were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students – delivering an exceptional student experience and outcomes 2. Staff – becoming the first choice employer 3. Stakeholders – building Partnerships and the College's place in the Community 	

The Henley College Board

4. **Skills** – getting the offer right for students and employers by growing the student numbers, diversify into new and innovative curriculum areas and create an enterprise culture environment
5. **Sustainability** – growing the business, buildings, systems & technology work to sustain financial performance and to facilitate investment in delivering the College's vision and strategic plans

The VP advised that the new curriculum plan presented to the QS meeting was linked to these strategic provisions and that the College intended to develop students through the Aspire and enrichment programmes. The Principal went through the plan in further detail. The Board asked if a SWOT analysis had been used to identify the weaknesses and although such analysis per se had not been done, the Principal referred to the current the performance management system and quality assurance development needs which were pivotal. Discussion then centred on key elements to make the College outstanding and what would be the specific USP that would warrant investment. FD identified the positives of a strong balance sheet, the improved structural changes and the use of resources to effectively plan, both OxLEP and ESFA as funding agencies were also key to growth. The VP also added that a drive towards outstanding would encompass culture and through performance management and culture assurance and exemplified how Ofsted inspectors immediately know when they arrive at a college whether it is outstanding by the culture, attitude of staff and students and the way that this drives performance. Whilst the Board agreed with these positives it felt that the plan was very safe, there remained the issue of maintaining the level of students, the execution of the strategic plan and what therefore needed to be added were the actions to get to outstanding and the stretch. These actions needed to be more ambitious and the Board wanted to see these in an iterative draft of the plan in mid-May before a final sign off of the plan could be made at the June meeting. The staff governor advised the Board that the stretched ambition would be for the staffing skills required to deal with the increasing technical courses and with internal and external training thereof.

College Structures

The report presented provided a very broad outline of the options for the College. The FEC indicated that they would prefer the College to make some sort of commitment on the structure i.e. remain independent, form part of a multi academy trust (academisation) or merger with another college. The College has relatively strong "outstanding" financial health and "good" Ofsted positions, so there is no immediate requirement for the College to consider going through a Strategic and Prospects Appraisal (SPA) to consider merger or other options. However, the College is relatively small in size and has been through some financial concerns in the past and therefore it was appropriate to give this some level of consideration. Fundamentally the key issue was how much control would the existing SLT/Board wish to retain in any future scenario, as a merger or academisation would inevitably lead to relinquishing an element of control.

The Board asked for more details about academisation with the Principal explaining that the main advantage was financial in allowing the College to rain its VAT. However the disadvantages would be the additional regulations that would constrain the College's work e.g. academies are in the public sector whereas the sixth form colleges are in the private sector and conversion would involve a greater degree of regulation of the College's activities in terms of spending, employment of staff, use of land and financial reporting and branding.

The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the benefits and disadvantages of mergers but felt that as the College was small in size that any merger consideration would mean that the College would be taken over and its assets used for the benefit of the acquirer. A board

The Henley College Board

	<p>member asked about the three year financial forecast and the issues around lagged funding where funding is based on the previous year's number of students. Therefore in a year with increased student numbers, this has to be funded in year and would be funded from reserves, however the FD reassured the Board that solvency would not be an issue as long as there is a breakeven.</p> <p>The Chair summarised the discussion stating that the Board wanted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remain independent, • grow student numbers, and • be advised of the issues with increased student numbers. <p>In particular relating to this last point the Board asked that the SLT provide a statement on the trigger points and this to be presented ahead of the next board meeting in June. Principal agreed and advised that the FEC use this process for colleges.</p> <p>The Board felt very positive about the developments discussed in aiming to make the College outstanding and felt that the initial draft strategic plan was promising.</p> <p>Rebeca Chandler Wilde left the meeting at 19.20</p> <p>Resolved that:</p> <p>(i) the Strategic Plan Update was received by the Board</p> <p>(ii) Principal to provide a second iteration of the draft strategic plan in May prior to the June meeting to include trigger points</p>	Principal
4.10	<p>FEC Recommendations Update</p> <p>Further to the previous board meeting concerning this, the main action plan presented has been updated. Following a request by the Board, a column has been added for 'completion' stage. It was stressed that some recommendations will continue to be relevant, but outstanding in terms of completion because they are linked to continual improvement. It was noted that progress and the action plan cannot be fully tested until the FEC make their next visit. Principal advised about the slowness of recruitment of a new FD.</p> <p>The Board stated that the FEC responses need to be justified using data wherever possible. The Head of HR agreed and advised how this data was communicated to ensure it was objective. Additionally, although staff engagement was more positive there was still a perceived issue with internal communications and this could be measured in the data.</p> <p>Board Effectiveness</p> <p>The Chair went through the updated action plan which had been generated from the recent Board Effectiveness namely:</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Board portal for governors - this was still being researched by the Clerk 2. Enhance the Governor appraisal process and link all reviews with the College's SAR process leading to continuous improvement of governance - The Chair discussed this and felt "appraisal" was not appropriate for a voluntary role however did confirm that there was a formalised appraisal/review process set up and that he was peaking to. Also the VP was working with the Clerk to incorporate the Board's SAR with the College's SAR 3. Develop a stronger strategic remit for the Board - two workshops from Sir Frank McLoughlin around strategy and Board Effectiveness had taken place in January 2021. 4. Recruitment of a new Chair - covered under item 4.11 <p>Resolved that the FEC Recommendations action plan was received by the Board</p>	

The Henley College Board

4.11	<p>Recruitment of Board Chair</p> <p>The Clerk updated the Board on the current recruitment process for the new Chair of the Board</p> <p>Internal</p> <p>As of 23 March 2021 there have been no expressions of interest from any members of the current Board.</p> <p>External</p> <p>Peridot Partners were contracted to start the recruitment process and the dedicated microsite advertising the role went live 8 March 2021. Link to the site was provided to the Board for information.</p> <p>Timeline and actions in brief:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closing date for applications - 12pm, Monday 19 April 2021 2. Candidates to be shortlisted for selection 23 April 2021 and interviewed in the first two weeks of May 3. The selection panel - to consist of the current GS members (excluding the Chair and Principal) together with an external advisor – Sir Frank McLoughlin 4. Chair of this panel - the acting Vice Chair who is a member of the GS committee <p>The Clerk was asked if any of the Board members could speak to the recruitment agency and the Clerk confirmed that any such interest is to be sent to her for onward direction.</p> <p>Resolved that the update on the Recruitment of Board Chair was received by the Board</p>	
4.12	<p>Reports for information:</p> <p>Management Accounts – January 2021</p> <p>The FD explained that the revised outturn position will be a small operating surplus in the region of £100k. The current financial position has the capacity to deal with any minor negative positions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic situation, but if something material was to originate i.e. funding adjustment, then the SLT would need to reassess this overall assessment.</p> <p>Risk Register</p> <p>The FD confirmed that the risk register was brought to the Audit committee last week for review. The key items of note were the impact of the current Coronavirus and the cyber-attack on the College. In terms of the other risks associated with the College the key categories of risk identified at the offset in 2019 are still in need of monitoring. The committee noted this.</p> <p>Resolved that the following reports were received and noted by the Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the Management Accounts for January 2021 (ii) the Risk Register 	
4.13	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair apologised for the lateness of this submission but this had been the result of a new requirement of the capital grant applications for 2022 for capital investments to facilitate the introduction of 'T' level in the College's curriculum from 2022/23, previously discussed concerning health and science.</p> <p>The FD had advised the Chair of F&R that the College had an opportunity to make a capital bid for 'T' level grant with DfE for 50% funding of £110k. This claim needs to go in by 26 March 2021 and one of the requirements was that a board minute is required to confirm that the Board is happy for the FD to make the grant claim and that the College will be happy to</p>	

The Henley College Board

	<p>'match' fund the grant claim i.e. THC will contribute £110k too. The Chair of F&R confirmed at the Board meeting was happy to support the project based on the information that the FD has provided and that the F&R will review the final proposal in detail prior to implementation whether this application is successful or not.</p> <p>The Board was asked to approve the application for £110k for capital grant funding, with a 'match' amount provided by the College. Total project cost is therefore £220k.</p> <p>Resolved that the Board supported the decision to make an application for £110k for capital grant funding, with a 'match' amount provided by the College</p> <p>The Board asked for the use of SharePoint to be investigated and for recordings of meetings to be made available.</p> <p>The Safeguarding governor commented on a recent visit to the College and how impressed he was with all the work that had been done to facilitate the testing of staff and students and asked for a special thank you to be recorded in the minutes to the Head of HR and H&S Manager for facilitating this.</p> <p>The Chair wanted to again say thank you on behalf of the Board to the Principal, SLT and staff who had all worked tirelessly over this very testing period and that they were all to be highly commended.</p>	
4.14	<p>Board Impact</p> <p>The Governors were asked to consider how they had impacted on the College since the last meeting.</p> <p>1. Contributed to the strategy plan and direction of the College</p>	
4.15	<p>Board Conduct of Meeting</p> <p>The Board was asked to confirm that the meeting has been conducted in an open manner, that all governors have been able to participate and contribute to discussions and that all members of the Governing Board will have access to non-confidential minutes. The Board so agreed.</p>	
4.16	<p>Items to be taken forward to next Board meeting:</p> <p>1. Final iteration of Strategic Plan</p>	
4.17	<p>Date and Time of Next Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 June 2021 at 18.00 	
	<p>Close of Meeting</p> <p>The meeting closed at 19.57</p>	
	<p>MINUTES of the meeting held on 24 March 2021 were agreed and accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair</p> <p>..... on</p>	