

The Henley College Board

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Board held on Monday 6 December 2021 at 18.00 via remote participation

BOARD: Brian Fennelly James Lingard Emma Barklem Rebecca Chandler-Wilde Satwant Deol Lizzie Firth Tim Lincoln Vince Maltese Chris Murray Andrew Unsworth Robyn Vitty Charles Wiggin	Independent Member/Vice Chair Independent Member/Vice Chair & Safeguarding Lead Parent Governor Independent Member Principal Independent Member Independent Member Independent Member Independent Member Staff governor Staff governor Independent Member	CLERK: Jacky Gearey SLT BY INVITATION: Eamonn Egan - Vice Principal (VP) Rhian Mason - Joint Head of Marketing and Business Development for item 2.3
Item	Minutes	Action by
	Opening of Meeting and Welcome The Vice Chair Brian Fennelly advised the Board that in the Chair's absence due to Covid, that he would be taking the meeting. The meeting started at 18.02	
	Apologies for Absence Apologies had been received from: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mike Ashton – Covid 2. Student Governors who had just been elected (Christopher Wahlen and Lisa-Maire Deus Ngowi) 	
	Declaration of Interests Lizzie Firth declared her interests as a Director of Accreditation and Standards at Pearsons and a member of workstream 3 of the Foundation of Education Development. There were no other declarations of interest.	
2.1	Minutes of Previous Meeting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Minutes of meeting of 11 October 2021 (ii) Minutes of Remote Decision of 15 November 2021 (iii) Confidential minutes of 11 October 2021 <p>The Board approved the following as accurate records of the meetings held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of 11 October 2021; • Confidential minutes of 11 October 2021; and • Remote decision issued 15 November 2021 <p>Resolved that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the Board approved the minutes and confidential minutes of 11 October 2021 as accurate records of the meetings held. (ii) the Board approved the minutes of the remote decision 15 November 2021 	

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2.2	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes (unless covered by the agenda)</p> <p>Item 5.15 - Board self-assessment returns – those outstanding were to be sent to the Clerk by 15 December 2021. All other matters had been closed off and there were no further matters arising.</p>	
2.3	<p>Strategic Plan Update</p> <p>Rhian Mason and Robyn Vitty, the joint Heads of Marketing and Business Development provided a presentation covering the journey so far in line with the College strategic plan focusing on the College's brand, reputation and curriculum which was backed up with comprehensive market research.</p> <p>The marketing and communications strategies were outlined in particular looking at the competitive environment, response to the challenges faced including Covid and the utilisation of a multi-layered approach. The Board asked who the College's major competitors were with the explanation that this was a complicated scenario i.e. the College was the only sixth form college in the area, however there was now competition from grammar schools, local feeder schools and those schools with sixth forms.</p> <p>The SWOT analysis was fully discussed identifying the College's strengths in brand, location, and curriculum offer, weaknesses which included reliance on central government funding, opportunities in the Thames Valley corridor and threats as Ofsted, external agencies e.g. FEC and an increased demographic growth.</p> <p>One of the key areas for success has been staff collaboration contributing to the marketing function. There followed a very detailed discussion on the comprehensive market research which had identified a requirement for flexible working, an agile workforce and an increased demand for soft skills. All of which had been used in a decision making model and then imbedded into the curriculum.</p> <p>Board members asked about the messaging especially using remote methods in particular what support was given to teachers in providing this. RV said although some staff had found it challenging to work virtually, performance had been considerably reinforced with meetings and training. Parental feedback had endorsed the improved communication before enrolment to 92% an increase of 12% with positive external recognition. Both Heads of Marketing emphasised that there were many innovative new events both physical and virtual to target the student/parent audience and resulting in an increased year-on-year attendance. Furthermore enhanced school liaison using a blended approach has enabled access to a far wider target area.</p> <p>Measurement of the KPIs were discussed with awards gained in 5 key areas including a gold award for target recruitment with a substantial amount of evidence having to be provided.</p> <p>The parent governor commented that over recent years marketing and communications have been transformed and that there was now a different experience.</p> <p>The Vice Chair asked if there were any further comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the job specification for teachers, state that it was necessary to be familiar with digital technologies? The Principal confirmed that this was the case. • How was this going to be built into the strategy to get the teachers fully engaged? The Principal said that the marketing strategy was imbedded across the College and that modern teaching skills are now part of all job requirements. Moreover any comments raised from parents are addressed immediately. • How was this addressing the overall KPIs that feed into the strategic plan? The Principal explained the KPIs based on the strategy and the operational requirements 	

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	<p>There were no further questions, the Board as a whole congratulated the joint Heads of Marketing on the recent spate of awards received for marketing saying that this was a testament to their drive and amount of work undertaken.</p> <p>The Vice Chair thanked them for the presentation.</p> <p>Rhian Mason left the meeting at 18.49</p>	
2.4	<p>Principal's Report with KPIs The Principal provided the following update on the KPIs from the strategic plan 2021- 24:</p> <p>Students Student achievement from the previous year is rated green. Each category is at or above national average other than student attendance. Some student withdrawals for 2021-22 have yet to be removed from the student records system prior to the December R04 return to the ESFA. Absence due to Covid-19 has caused a 1.5% drop in student attendance and is now amber but is being rigorously addressed. The overall College Self-Assessment Report for 2020-21 has been rated Good by the Q&S Committee and will be referred to under item 2.6.</p> <p>Staff The staff survey was planned to take place in mid-October but following the departure of the Head of HR, this will now take place in January 2022.</p> <p>Stakeholder The College has strong partnerships with external stakeholders which feed into the KPIs, and this has been referred to a previous Board meetings</p> <p>Growth and Innovation The number of students funded for has been exceeded. The deficit in funding approx. £900k will be recovered in 2022/23 through the lagged funding system. The financial position is strong with the pay cost ratio at 65%, 8% within the 2021/22 target, despite the increased student recruitment. This did not include the cost of restructuring that has taken place since the start of the academic year. The new T-level developments and estates development funding for the first T-level have been secured.</p> <p>The Board was asked for any comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In future the attendance figures to be reported excluding Covid to enable visibility of any other issues e.g. anxiety. The Principal said that this would be done. 2. What other strategic concerns were there? The Principal said an Ofsted inspection, how the staff are developed to cope with not only their own mental health but that of the students. 3. Diversification of revenue and what options were there with the offer of group to be set up to help on this. The Principal and VP agreed that this would be very useful with the VP further explaining that if the College wanted to diversify then it needed to get back into the apprenticeships provision. He also advised that the College was looking at other sources of income e.g. sponsorship of sports team who are performing well. The VP to email Vince Maltese on this. <p>There were no further questions, and the Vice Chair thanked the Principal.</p> <p>Resolved that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the Principal's Report was received and noted by the Board (ii) attendance figures to be reported taking out Covid related absences. (iii) VP to email Vince Maltese on the set up of a sub-group to consider diversification of revenue 	

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2.5	<p>Student Governors' Introduction</p> <p>Unfortunately the two student governors had not been invited to attend as the Clerk had only just been advised of their election.</p>	
2.6	<p>Committee reports & documents for approval</p> <p>Audit – covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Committee Annual Report (Health & Safety Annual Report) for 2020-2021 • External Audit Post Audit Management Report (PAR) 2020/2021 • Letter of Representation 2020/2021 • Regularity Self-Assessment Assurance <p>The Audit Committee Annual Report confirmed that an adequate program of assurance was in place at the College with respect to financial controls and reporting.</p> <p>The Vice Chair who was also the Chair of Audit committee, advised that Buzzacott, the external auditors had confirmed that both the audit and regularity assurance were clean with nothing significant outstanding and no adjustments to be made. The financial assessment was outstanding, and the auditors concurred with this. A surplus of £110k was posted with a good level of reserves. There were no significant changes to the report, which was for information and noting. Buzzacott also advised that sector wide there would be an increase in employer NIC contributions plus further increased cost pressures going forward. The Post Audit Report (PAR) had been circulated in advance to the Board for their comments and all had been happy with the unqualified 'internal' and 'external' audit outcomes which demonstrated the good operational management of the College. Reference to the 'going concern' was made with the explanation that the auditors had included a positive assessment of the College's going concern position based on forecasts and budgets for at least 12 months from date of their approval. The Chair of Audit asked for any questions on this especially in light of the requirement under the Post-16 Code of Practice for the Board to be fully advised of the contents of the report. The Board made the comment that the report from Buzzacott was well constructed, concise and a good read. The Audit Committee Annual Report, PAR, Letter of Representation and Regularity Self-Assessment Assurance were approved by the Board.</p> <p>Health & Safety Policy & Health & Safety Statement were presented, the policy had only a minor textural change to title of post and the policy and statement were approved.</p> <p>The updated risk register presented had three new risks added: (i) the impact of the current Coronavirus, (ii) the estates strategy associated with the potential growth of student numbers and (iii) the cyber-attack on the College had been introduced. The Board noted these additions.</p> <p>Resolved that the following were received and approved by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Committee Annual Report for 2020-2021 • External Audit Post Audit Management Report 2020/2021 • Letter of Representation 2020/2021 for signing • Regularity Self-Assessment Assurance for signing • Health & Safety Policy • Health & Safety Statement for signing • Updated risk register for noting only <p>Finance & Resources – covering:</p>	

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Report and Financial Statements 2020/2021 – The Chair of Finance & Resources (F&R) in the absence of the Financial Director (FD) who was unable to attend, advised the Board that the accounts had been subject to external audit and the outcome was that the accounts were “unqualified” in terms of audit opinion. The current position was very stable, and the following points were highlighted:

- Currently strong ‘underlying’ operating surplus of £110k (2019-2020 it was £478k) due in part to staffing costs and curriculum efficiencies, both of which have improved considerably with no loss of quality, but this did exclude the pension adjustment, which the College has no control of. The Board expressed concern over the pensions’ deficit and wanted a definitive answer regarding liability. The FD was tasked to provide definitive information on the pensions’ deficit for the next F&R committee meeting.
- Improved cash/solvency and 183 cash days positions
- Improved working capital position
- Significant provisions made for pension fund liabilities in year (£401k) albeit that this is mitigated by an agreed deficit recovery plan with the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Scheme
- Investment in fixed assets (£660k+ buildings & equipment)
- Delivered small growth in student numbers
- Maintained “outstanding” financial health position
- EBITDA is 8% above the sector norm (5.5%) and reflects the prudent behaviour of the institution. The current ratio was high and the Board asked what this included, with the explanation of stock, debtors and cash which are all liquid assets.

The Board was delighted with the report and financial statements but wanted to know should the College be spending more in supporting new areas. As previously mentioned, a new sub-group is to be set up to look at investing in such areas including apprenticeships, additionally the Principal said that a spending plan was being devised to cover the welfare of the current students, investment in the curriculum and a recruitment programme to fill staff vacancies. The Board felt that it was essential to feed the successes a little more and the Principal agreed saying that a staff pay rise was being considered as the College was below the sector norm and would be brought to the F&R committee before going to the Board, however it was still necessary to be prudent and supporting quality.

The Chair of F&R wanted assurance that the financial implications were being considered especially in the provision of the curriculum. VP assured the Board that there was a well-articulated planning process in place and that this was discussed at the QS committee meetings citing recent money spent on additional courses, workshops and the recruitment of an academic writing teacher to boost quality.

The Principal wanted to take the opportunity to thank the various departments across the College for all their work, this was endorsed by the Board.

- Annual Report on the use of the College Seal – the Board noted that there had been no use of the Seal for 20-21.

Resolved that the following were received and approved by the Board:

- **Report and Financial Statements 2020/2021**
- **FD to provide definitive information on pensions deficit at the next F&R committee meeting**
- **Annual Report on the use of the College Seal for noting**

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	<p>Quality & Standards – covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College Self-Assessment Report had been extensively reviewed at the QS committee meeting 22 November 21. For reassurance the committee went through each of the sections, challenged the VP on the key strengths and key areas of improvement and concurred with the provisional grading provided of good. The Board approved the SAR. QS committee terms of reference - the proposed changes were more stringent and well defined and should help the SLT in preparing papers for the committee to achieve its objectives. The Board approved them. <p>Resolved that the following were received and approved by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College Self-Assessment Report 2020-2021 The QS committee terms of reference 	
2.7	<p>Financial Update</p> <p>The management accounts for September 2021 were received and noted. The Chair of F&R advised that there were no issues as this was only the second month of the academic year.</p> <p>Resolved that the Management Accounts for September 21 were received and noted by the Board.</p>	
2.8	<p>Safeguarding & Prevent</p> <p>In accordance with the decision from the previous Board meeting in October 2021, the revised safeguarding policy had been circulated amongst the Board members for comment and a remote decision sought for approval of the policy. The minutes of this were recorded under item 2.1 (ii). Implementation of the new policy was discussed in detail at the recent QS committee meeting and the Safeguarding Lead governor concurred saying that there had been an immense amount of work done on this. Additionally reference was made to a serious safeguarding incident that had now been resolved.</p> <p>The safeguarding report was present for information and had been reviewed and discussed at the recent QS committee meeting 22 November 21. There were no further comments.</p> <p>Resolved that the Safeguarding and Prevent Report was received and noted by the Board</p>	
2.9	<p>In the absence of the Head of HR, the Clerk advised the Board of the following four policies which had been reviewed and recommended for approval by the F&R committee:</p> <p>Code of Conduct for Staff - No changes had been made in 2019 and 2020. The changes now presented covered textual references and included the Keeping Children Safe in Education document in Section 6.</p> <p>Leave Policy - updated from 2015 – this brought together various elements of leave which are mentioned in other policies and provided greater detail and clarity.</p> <p>Working from Home Policy & Procedure – a new policy which had resulted from the necessity of working from home due to Covid.</p> <p>Capability Procedure for Senior Post Holders (SPH) – a new procedure part of the College's Performance Management Framework promoting the fair and consistent treatment of SPHs to help resolve situations in which the performance of a SPH may appear to be falling below the requirements of their job.</p> <p>Resolved that the above four policies were received and approved by the Board</p>	
2.10	<p>Committee feedback</p> <p>The Chair asked for the Chairs of the following committees for feedback from their respective committee meetings albeit much had previously been covered under item 2.6.</p>	

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Audit Meeting – 8 November 21

- **Post Audit Management Report 2020-21 and Letter of Representation** - both discussed under item 2.6.
- **Internal Annual Audit Report 2020-21** - Three assurance reviews had been carried out over the year: safeguarding, performance management and ICT-cyber security. The report confirmed that the internal auditors TIAA, was satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, the College had reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place.
- **Risk Management** – covered under item 2.6.
- **Annual Report of the Audit Committee** – covered under item 2.6.
- **GDPR** - There had been an increase in vexatious requests which were time consuming to address and had to be managed carefully and in accordance with the law. There were mitigations in place to address this and to be linked to the risk register.

Finance & Resources Meeting – 16 November 21

- **Statutory accounts for 2020-2021** discussed under item 2.6
- **Management Accounts for September 2021** discussed under item 2.7.
- **Student Union Accounts for 2020-21** – Student Union fund was at £7.1K with little movement for the year.
- **Estate & Infrastructure Projects Update:**
Several items associated to the Estates & Infrastructure Strategy plan had been progressed including:
 - Building R2 – completed on time and close to budget.
 - The Student Record System replacement (Civica REMs) now fully implemented, operational and generating excellent reporting. A dashboard project will be presented to the Board in the New Year showing live data.
 - The IT equipment identified had all been purchased and was operational.
 - Network security with continued enhancement/development around all College networks.
- **Annual Report on the use of the College Seal** covered under item 2,6.
- **HR Annual Report:**
 - **Covid** – the College continues to follow government guidance as a minimum
 - **Staff turnover** was running at 22.8% with the most common reasons for leaving being: the end of a fixed term contract, redundancy and retirement.
 - **Recruitment** was challenging with an increase in new staff to reflect the growth of student numbers.
- **HR Policies** new and updated covered under 2.9.

QS Meeting – 22 November 21

- **Safeguarding & Prevent** – November update provided and noted under item 2.8 as was the update of a safeguarding incident which was being managed.
- **College Draft Self-Assessment Report** covered under item 2.6.
- **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 202/22** – RAG rated areas for improvement covering intended outcomes, actions, owners, target dates, how the issue will be monitored, progress and impact.
- **Spotlight on Curriculum** - the report provided a progress update on some of the steps taken this year in meeting the strategic aims of the strategic plan under the headings of Students, Stakeholders, and Growth and Innovation. As a point to be noted the VP

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	<p>advised that the increase of over 200 students this year may have an impact on quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference covered under item 2.6. <p>Resolved that the committees' feedback were received and noted by the Board</p>	
2.11	<p>Any Other Business There was no other business.</p>	
2.12	<p>Board Impact Governor activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three governors supported the College in an appeals panel • Several governors who attended recent open evenings/events had all commented that teachers were enthusiastic and engaged • Safeguarding Lead governor had been very supportive working closely with the DSL <p>Principal wanted to thank all the governors for their involvement in the College especially in the safeguarding area.</p> <p>Governor impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completion of the Board self-assessment to be discussed at the next Board meeting. 	
2.13	<p>Board Conduct of Meeting</p> <p>The Vice Chair asked for the Board members comments regarding the meeting. The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations from the marketing department and the Principal were good • More trust was evident regarding the work done by sub-committee deep dives • Amount of information being provided to read, and digest was overwhelming • Principal welcomed the constructive supportive nature of the meeting 	
2.14	<p>Items to be taken forward to next board meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board self-assessment report 	
	<p>Date and Time of Next Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 January 2022 (Training - Ofsted at 17.00) • 28 March 2022 • 11 July 2022 	
	<p>Close of Meeting The meeting closed at 19.55</p>	
	<p>MINUTES of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 were agreed and accepted as a true and accurate record held</p>	