

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF  
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS STRATEGY BOARD MEETING HELD ON  
6 FEBRUARY 2025**

**Present:**

Mr W Abbott (External Board Member/Board Chair) (Chair)  
Ms A Berry (External Board Member)  
Mr M Burgess (Principal)  
Ms S Dalby (Staff Member)  
Mr A Dover (External Board Member)  
Mr M Fabian (External Board Member)  
Ms M James (External Board Member/Board Vice-Chair)  
Mr P Lachecki (External Board Member)  
Dr H Moyes (External Board Member) (item 10/25 onwards)  
Ms S McKinlay (External Board Member)  
Ms G Read (External Board Member) via Teams  
Ms S Robertson (External Board Member) (item 9/25 onwards)  
Mr M Williams (External Board Member)

**Apologies:**

Mr N Greenway (Student Member)  
Ms A Nutbrown (Staff Member)  
Dr K Morris – Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality

**In Attendance:**

Mr K Agnew – Head of IT (up to and including item 8/25)  
Mr A Bates - Chief Financial Officer  
Mr J Billingham – Director of Estates and IT  
Ms J Cosson – Head of Governance  
Mr D Kettlety - Director of Student Employment and Experience  
Ms H Snelling - Director of People and Culture

**Attendance:** 87.5%

**1/25 Private Business**

None.

**2/25 Apologies**

Were noted as above.

**3/25 Declarations of Interest**

It was confirmed that the Register of Interests recorded all the current declarations of interests of those present.

**4/25 Membership Proposals**

Members had been provided with a Membership Proposals paper.

**RESOLVED: Members approved the recommendations of GRS as follows:**

- **Approved the appointment of Tim Burrell as an External Governor and member of the Audit Committee for a term of four years from 6 February 2025 to 5 February 2029.**
- **Confirmed the designated Board size as 17, noting the option to increase the Board size should further candidates be recommended for appointment.**

**5/25 Confidentiality of Items**

As marked (C) for a period of two years. All the marked items were declared confidential on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.

**6/25 Minutes of the Meeting of 12 December 2024**

The minutes of the meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**7/25 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix**

Members were provided with an Actions Matrix and noted the status update of each item.

**8/25 Cyber Awareness Fundamentals Presentation**

KA attended to give a presentation reinforcing the fundamentals of cyber security. The presentation covered several key points to enhance awareness and best practice among Members, emphasising the importance of strong, unique passwords, recognizing phishing attempts, safe browsing, and the significance of installing updates promptly. KA highlighted the significance of monitoring account activity to detect any unauthorised access and being cautious with social media sharing to prevent criminals from building a profile for cyber-attack.

KA advised of the risks associated with using public Wi-Fi and the importance of regular backups of important data using physical USB backups or cloud services, and of implementing multi-factor authentication.

Questions were raised about the protection of public Wi-Fi and the legitimacy of update notifications. KA provided detailed answers and reassured the Board on best practices for cyber security, providing tips on how to protect oneself, such as verifying public Wi-Fi networks, using VPNs, and ensuring devices are up to date with security patches and antivirus software to protect against vulnerabilities.

KA encouraged Members to complete the Boxphish cyber security training modules which are sent to them and emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong cyber security posture to protect both personal and organisational data.

*KA left the meeting.*



## 9/25 Strategic Context Update

The Chair introduced the strategic context by reporting on the recent AoC South Chairs' meeting, which had discussed the government's commitment to devolution and the impact on education and business budgets. He asked governors to consider the College's local issues against the backdrop of the government's national priorities.

### **Devolution:**

- The Adult Education Budget for ages 19+ - Devolved organisations are pushing for access to 16-18 funding.
- Budgets are being merged into a single budget with flexibility to move up to 10% between pots.
- Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and Local Growth Plans are part of a National Skills Strategy.
- Employment support plans for NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and Work & Health are being piloted in four devolved areas.
- Strategic Authorities are expected to gain more power over budgets.

### **Government Priorities:**

- Economic growth - building new homes, devolution, and a New Deal for Working People.
- Clean energy - aiming to create 650,000 new high-quality jobs.
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, with a focus on young futures hubs and removing knives from streets.
- Removing barriers to opportunity - recruiting 6,500 expert teachers and modernising the curriculum. High-quality apprenticeships and specialist technical colleges.
- Building an NHS fit for the future with 8,500 additional mental health staff. Addressing social care funding and workforce issues.

### **Funding:**

- Savings in schools due to a decline in pupils will be offset by increased costs for EHCP/SEND (Education, Health, and Care Plans/Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).
- Funding growth is likely to reflect an increase in 16-18 learner numbers, but the overall budget will not increase.
- Capital funding will be for condition improvements only, not expansion.

### **Local Priorities and Big Issues (are these the same as central government?):**

- Local priorities include growth, policing, infrastructure, net zero, social care workforce, housing, and transport.
- Query whether skills and education are in the top three priorities (bearing in mind the issues with SEND/NEET).

- There is only one other Further Education (FE) provider in the county, plus small private providers.
- The College must be seen as an anchor and strategic partner to the Devolved Authority in Gloucestershire.

WA emphasised the need for strategic engagement with devolved Stakeholders to achieve that position. He stressed the role of governors in managing the changing environment and being the eyes and ears of the College.

The Principal went on to set out the latest strategic developments.

### **Education Select Committee Inquiry**

The Board was informed about the Education Select Committee's inquiry into further education and the potential impact on the College. The inquiry will cover various aspects, including curriculum qualifications, funding, workforce pressures, and skills shortages.

MB took Members through each of the areas the enquiry will focus on:

Curriculum and qualifications in further education: post-16 curriculum; assessment system; driving standards; Post-16 numeracy and literacy, including GCSE resits; T Levels as the main qualification option; reform of Level 3 qualifications.

Delivering further education: funding, including whether the additional £300 million is sufficient and how it should be distributed; effectiveness of current funding arrangements in tackling the attainment gap; workforce pressures, including pay and the recruitment and retention of staff; quality of facilities and capital investment strategy.

Skills and apprenticeships: skills shortages; collaboration between FE, local government and employers re skills shortages; role of Skills England v industrial strategy/economic growth, apprenticeship challenges including employer engagement, funding issues, and apprentice pay; role of devolution; quality and availability of work placements within vocational courses.

Supporting young people, widening access, and narrowing the attainment gap: mental health issues and access to mental health support, and cost of living pressures; barriers for SEND learners, access to higher education, other qualification levels, and employment; career and course guidance; attainment gaps.

### **Funding and Demographics**

The Board discussed the impact of demographic changes on funding, particularly the increase in 16 to 18-year-olds and the challenges in primary schools.

The discussion also covered the government's priorities, including economic growth, building new homes, and reducing crime.



### **Devolution and Strategic Authority**

The Board discussed the importance of positioning the College as a strategic partner in the devolution process.

The potential impact of devolution on the College's funding and the need to engage with local stakeholders were considered.

### **Ofsted Framework Consultation**

The Board was briefed on the upcoming changes to the Ofsted framework consultation and the proposed changes, including the introduction of a five-point scale and the removal of deep dives. The consultation will run until 28 April, with pilots beginning in June.

MB highlighted the new focus on inclusion. Members asked what the definition of inclusion is and were informed it will be wider than SEND learners and will include disadvantaged learners and other marginalised groups. MB stressed the importance of understanding the new framework and preparing for its implementation, including staff and governor training and readiness planning.

The timing of inspections will remain the same including the notice period.

Members voiced concerns about a return to data heavy inspections.

### **Funding and Capital Investment**

The Board discussed the funding settlement for 2025-26 and the potential impact on the College's capital investment strategy. MB highlighted the expected formula allocation for 2025-26, which is likely to be based on the number of 16-18 learners, and the importance of maintaining good building condition to access future capital funding.

The importance of being prepared for capital funding opportunities was highlighted.

### **Skills and Apprenticeships**

The Board was updated on the progress of Skills England and the development of a National Industrial Strategy. It was noted that Apprenticeship numbers are falling with employers reluctant to take people on.

The importance of collaboration between FE, local government, and employers to address skills shortages was emphasised.

MB referred to the current consultation regarding strengthening oversight of HE partnership delivery. This may impact the College's HE strategy.

### **Devolution and Local Government Reorganization**

The Board discussed the government's plans for local government reorganisation and the potential impact on the College.

The importance of engaging with local stakeholders to understand and address local issues effectively and of positioning the College as a strategic partner was reiterated.

MB concluded that, by 2028/29, the College's position may be more difficult in terms of growth opportunities. The College therefore needs to continue to seek out opportunities.

**10/25 125 Business Park (C)**

**11/25 Proposed Changes to GFM Terms and Conditions (C)**

**12/25 Growth Opportunities in HNS/SEND (C)**

**13/25 Review of Internal Audit and Assurance (C)**

**14/25 Governance and Regulatory Developments**

JC introduced a paper updating Members on recent governance and regulatory developments. The following matters were highlighted:

**1. Financial Sustainability/Funding/Audit:**

- Further Education Commissioner's Annual Report.

**2. Legislation/Legal:**

- **Safeguarding:** Two government announcements include the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and mandatory reporting of abuse as part of the Crime and Policing Bill.
- **Employment:** Significant changes are expected in 2025/2026 with the Employment Rights Bill.
- **The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill:** Introduced to ensure premises and events are better prepared for terrorist attacks. Update on progress of Bill provided.
- **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023:** Introduced a duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment. Information given at last meeting. Further details provided.
- **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023:** Aims to protect free speech in universities and colleges. Government has committed to implementation.
- **Procurement Act 2023:** Now set to come into force on February 24, 2025.
- **Skills England Bill:** Aims to address skills gaps and support economic growth. Update on progress provided.
- **Data (Use and Access) Bill:** Re-examines data protection laws post-Brexit.

**3. Curriculum:**

- Outcomes of the rapid review of defunding some Level 3 qualifications announced.
- Post-16 GCSE English and maths results - AoC briefing available. Of interest to C&Q.
- Discussion document on future opportunities and challenges in SEND.

**4. Governance:**

- Details of Stone King research study into college governance in collaboration with the University of Sunderland.
- DfE Workforce survey - governor data analysis available.
- Effective Senior Postholder Appraisal and Chair Performance Review guidance provided. To be reviewed by SSEC and GRS.
- Various training and development opportunities for governors highlighted.

**5. AI:**

- The UK Government's commitment to becoming a global leader in AI innovation.
- A collaborative book on AI in the Further Education sector produced by Hull College is available for download.

The HE Link Governor noted that the DfE had issued a consultation about strengthening controls of higher education franchising (with a promise to exclude colleges). MB had spoken about this earlier.

The Chair thanked JC for the information and stressed the importance of Members staying informed and engaged with regulatory changes.

**RESOLVED: The Governance and Regulatory Developments Update was noted.**

**15/25 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Business Board Meeting – 27 March 2025, 4pm, Gloucester Campus.

Signed: *MP James*

Dated: *27th March 2025*