

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS BUSINESS BOARD MEETING HELD ON
10 OCTOBER 2024**

Present:

Mr W Abbott (External Board Member/Board Chair)
Mr M Burgess (Principal)
Mr MJ Davies (Student Member)
Mr A Dover (External Board Member)
Mr M Fabian (External Board Member)
Mr N Greenway (Student Member)
Ms M James (External Board Member/Board Vice-Chair)
Mr P Lachecki (External Board Member)
Ms S McKinlay (External Board Member)
Dr H Moyes (External Board Member)
Ms A Nutbrown (Staff Member)
Ms G Read (External Board Member)
Ms S Robertson (External Board Member)
Mr M Williams (External Board Member)

Apologies:

Ms A Berry (External Board Member)
Ms J Stackman (Staff Member)

In Attendance:

Mr A Bates - Chief Financial Officer
Ms J Cosson - Governance Professional/Clerk to the Board of Governors
Mr D Kettlety - Director of Student Employment and Experience
Dr K Morris – Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality
Ms H Snelling - Director of People and Culture

Attendance: 87.5%

72/24 Membership Proposals

Members had been provided with a Membership Proposals paper.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the following recommendations of GRS:

- The appointment of Lyn Dance as a Co-opted Member of the C&Q Committee to continue as SEND Link Governor with effect from 10 October 2024.
- The appointment of Alison Berry as External Governor and member of the Audit Committee for a term of four years from 10 October 2024 to 9 October 2028.
- The appointment of Sally McKinlay as External Governor and member of the Audit Committee for a term of four years from 10 October 2024 to 9 October 2028.

- The appointment of Sarah Robertson as External Governor and member of the C&Q Committee for a term of four years from 10 October 2024 to 9 October 2028.
- The appointment of Matthew Williams as External Governor and member of the C&Q Committee for a term of four years from 10 October 2024 to 9 October 2028.
- The appointment of MJ Davies as Student Governor and member of the C&Q Committee from 10 October 2024 to 31 July 2025.
- The appointment of Nathan Greenway as Student Governor and member of the C&Q Committee from 10 October 2024 to 31 July 2025.
- Noted the vacancy on the Board left by Lyn Dance stepping down.
- Confirmed the designated Board size as 17 at present.

WA welcomed the new governors to the Board and introductions followed.

73/24 External Members' Only Item (C)

In the absence of Staff and Student Members and members of the Executive Team, except the Principal.

74/24 Apologies

Were noted as above.

75/24 Declarations of Interest

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

76/24 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.

77/24 Minutes of the Meeting of 11 July 2024

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

78/24 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix

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

79/24 Principal's Update (C)

MB provided an update on key issues at the College since the last meeting.

It is a year that starts with a lot of economic and political uncertainty as the new government gets underway, and that will have ramifications for the College. But it is

also a year that has begun with the familiar and welcome optimism that comes when learners arrive at the College for a new year.

There have been major changes to the external context since the election. There are various sector developments which will impact the College such as Skills England, curriculum reviews, potential changes to the Apprenticeship Levy and devolution. The very challenging economic context casts a long shadow over everything, presents a risk to future 16-18 funding rates and threatens to impact the College's financial plans in 2025/26, when it is expected that there will be a standstill budget for DfE, and savings will be needed. There is unlikely to be much clarity before the Spring when the three-year spending review is completed, such reviews typically being tied to significant reform programmes. The paper set out some of the emerging context.

Notwithstanding this uncertainty, the College is in a good place to make a strong start to the year having achieved its financial objectives for 2023/24 and with a 'Good' Self-Assessment Report.

The start to the year has been positive, learner recruitment is strong with more than 700 additional full-time learners (150 up in Construction and 230 up in PS1 including First Steps), and the new Sustainable Construction Centre has opened.

AB had provided a detailed paper on recruitment of learners. He commented that the RAG rating is green across all five learner recruitment pillars. The College has increased its market share as well as gaining as a result of the increase in demographic. The scale of the increase has implications for everything.

MB expanded on some of the big developments since the last meeting, some of which present opportunities and some of which present risks.

- Curriculum and Assessment Review – The new Labour government has appointed Professor Becky Francis to lead a review of the existing national curriculum and statutory assessment system in England, to ensure they are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people. This will focus on the impact of the curriculum on disadvantaged learners. This could have a significant influence over changes to the curriculum over the next 5-10 years. The review has launched a consultation and call for evidence. This is the opportunity for anybody who has an interest in post 16 education and cares about opportunities from young people to have their say. The College will be making an official response. Members asked how they could help. MB encouraged governors to take the time to submit their views. An email has been sent to governors with the link.

ACTION: College to share its official response with Members.

- Rapid Review of Defunding – A short 'pause and review' is underway on the proposed defunding of qualifications from 2025. Whilst this is welcome, the outcome will not be announced until the new year which brings huge ambiguity to the guidance the College can give to learners about its 2025/26 offer at the upcoming open evenings.

- New Ofsted Education Inspection Framework in 2025 – SEND and disadvantaged learners may feature highly.
- Whilst recognising the ambition of many of the changes, within the Executive Team there are significant reservations about a number of them, and in particular how they impact on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is known that, locally, social mobility is amongst the poorest of all young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the country (less than half of level 3 learners join GC with 5 GCSEs including maths and English). The College is concerned about the impact of curriculum reform on opportunity, the existing maths and English resit policy and the changes to assessment which do not always suit learners and are logistically problematic.

The Chair concluded by saying that, in his view, the challenges have not changed, they have just become bigger and less certain (e.g., English and maths has been a problem for a long time but there are three times as many learners resitting this year), making it even more difficult to set future strategy.

RESOLVED: Members noted the Principal's Update, including the College's position, the developing environment, and the position regarding the pay award for 2024/25.

80/24 Student Progress Update (C)

KM provided a brief reflection on the start of the academic year.

The term has started well, overall, with new staff settling in well.

The College had a successful road to enrolment. Offers/enrolments so far have reached the target for 16-18 learners. The College will know final numbers at the census date. The academic teams worked their way efficiently through applications to 31 March and then to July, resulting in a smooth start to the year for the majority of learners. HoS are now in the 'learner lane' period where they review late applications and transfers.

The Chair noted that 'census point' was mentioned few times in the papers and asked KM to remind Members of its timing and significance for the benefit of new governors. KM explained that this is the point at which the learner counts for funding. The census date is 42 days from start date of the learner starting their full-time programme. Anyone who leaves before the 42 days does not count in funding or retention data.

Nationally, there have been fewer learners achieving grade 9-4 in GCSE English and maths this year. This means that the College has seen a significant increase in the number of learners requiring GCSE resits this September. Numbers will be finalised at the point of census, but there are more requiring GCSE maths than in the last few years. The numbers of learners, the number of maths staff and the poor quality/lack of agency staff resulted in a delay to the start of these classes by one week to finalise class lists and move learners around to balance groups. There will be increased class sizes and further rooms required for the summer exams series.

At enrolment, the College saw an increased number of learners with low or no GCSEs. The College had already expanded its First Steps provision, which is designed to support learners to improve/gain English and maths qualifications alongside supporting them back into an educational setting. The team demonstrated exceptional flexibility in enrolment and added in a further group. The College will need to review what this means for progression requirements in 2025/26. Many of the learners hoping for Construction and Motor Vehicle courses will aspire to move to these courses next year, adding to the demand for these courses.

Courses filled quickly in Construction and Technology. The College met the promise of those who had applied up to 31 March, but many had to be offered alternative courses, and some remain on waiting lists. Whilst the College has made some successful staff appointments in this School, there are still vacancies, and it is difficult to retain staff in certain areas due to industry salaries. This has limited the College's ability to grow and meet demand.

The Chair asked the Staff Member for their perception of how the term had started. AN said the College feels busy but calm. Staff morale appears to be good. Staff are used to change and expect it.

WA asked the Student Members for their view on the start of term. MJD remarked that morale is good with existing students noticeably helping new students to find their way around.

RESOLVED: The Student Progress Update was noted.

81/24 Safeguarding Annual Report

DK presented the College's Safeguarding Annual Report, covering the previous year's safeguarding activity and emerging themes.

Overall, safeguarding cases at the College increased by 3% in 2023-24, compared to 2022-23, but the figure remains slightly below the 2021-22 post-pandemic peak.

Whilst cases at the Gloucester campus continue to be highest, cases are reducing at Gloucester but increasing at Cheltenham, possibly due to the large SEND provision and an expansion of learners in Health and Social Care and Early Years requiring safeguarding interventions, particularly around mental health and wellbeing.

Whilst there has been no increase in the most severe cases, there has been an increase in mid-level severity cases relating to poor mental health, self-harm and suicidal ideation, with a near 250% increase since 2020-21.

In addition to mental health, the most significant threats to our learners currently are domestic/sexual abuse, extreme right-wing terror/ideology and urban street crime.

The report highlighted the huge amount of support learners at the College receive including financial support.

The report concluded with a summary of the College's 2024-25 Safeguarding Action Plan, highlighting the key areas of focus for this year, to be monitored by C&Q.

GR reported that she had met with DK and HS prior to the meeting in her capacity as Mental Health and Wellbeing Link Governor and was satisfied with the level of interventions offered.

The Designated Lead Safeguarding Governor asked, in the light of the increased focus on employability for SEND students, whether there is a greater vulnerability for them in the workplace and if the College needs to do anything more to safeguarding them in that environment. DK replied that there is a risk of losing an element of control the more learners go out, but the College has set its expectations of employers, is vigilant and does capture any concerns regarding employers, including one last year. KM noted that there is a separate team that works with employers on placements for discrete High Needs learners. It was confirmed that the College vets all new employers as part of the health and safety risk assessment, which includes safeguarding, and spends time building relationships with them. The College ensures Apprentices have a secure knowledge of safeguarding so they can identify and report any issues.

A Member noticed that responses to the Lasting Impressions and Student Support Survey were positive but wondered if the College was confident that there had been a good response rate. DK explained that the response rate was good although the proportion of responses across the different learner types varies. He agreed with the suggestion that it would be helpful to know how those students who had accessed safeguarding support would rate it.

The Chair commented that he had attended an event with Nick Gazzard where it had been suggested that safeguarding systems need to pick up more low-level issues before they become bigger issues. DK reported that Gloucestershire safeguarding services are improving with more stability in the team and low-level issues are being captured more than they were.

The HE Link Governor noted that there will be a new OfS condition of registration (E6) around sexual harassment from 1 August 2025. They asked how the College is preparing for it and if governors will receive assurances via the safeguarding report or another mechanism. DK advised that the College is reviewing the requirements of E6 and ensuring that the necessary policies and procedures will cover the College's position. Many of the recommendations are already in place so it will be a case of pulling them into a central single source of information. The safeguarding report will include an update on the subject for all learners and for HE learners specifically.

RESOLVED: The Safeguarding Update was noted.

82/24 HR Update (C)

HS introduced a report updating on developments in relation to the HR and Organisational Development (OD) Operational Plan.

Resourcing (recruitment, retention, workforce planning) remains the high risk/priority area. The paper outlined the short and long-term work that is underway to address this.

A Member remarked that the Construction industry is seeing several insolvencies and capital projects being cancelled and this may offer opportunities to attract staff with scarce skills.

A Student Member asked if there had been an increase in the number of Learning Support Assistants being recruited as there was a shortage of these last year. DK informed them that this has been a challenge but there are more LSAs this year. If the College knows learners are planning to come it can recruit in advance but when there are late applications the College needs to find LSAs at short notice so there is often a catch up at the beginning of the year. HS added that the College does not generally find it difficult to recruit LSAs. The Student Member suggested prioritising LSAs in maths and English because of the learner need there.

The Chair concluded that, overall, the staffing position is positive. Members were pleased to hear that the College is prepared to try new approaches but agreed that it must not lose sight of its educational objectives.

RESOLVED: The HR Update was noted.

83/24 Year-End Initial Forecast for 2023-24 (C)

AB presented an initial view of the College's financial results for 2023-24 and reported on any material impact this has on the 2024-26 Financial Plan.

AB cautioned that the results are draft and may be adjusted based on final funding returns and additional year-end accounting work.

The Chair explained the concept of lagged funding, for the benefit of new governors. In simple terms, this means that, in 2023/24, the College earned more than it received due to higher 16-18 learner numbers, which it will receive in 2024/25. In addition, 16-18 learners continue to increase in 2024/25 and 2025/26. Funding for each year of these additional learners will not be received until the following year.

Members reviewed the financial performance dashboard included in the papers and were provided with supplementary financial information for the year ending 2023-24 in the Reading Room.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the College's 2023-24 draft financial results, which are subject to the final funding claims and further year-end completion work.

84/24 Audit and Compliance

Health and Safety Annual Report

There was confirmation from TD that the Health and Safety Annual Report had been considered in detail at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 25 September 2024, together with the Health and Safety Monthly Update and the Health and Safety Policy.

A question was posed about the increase in student accidents in 2023/24 and it was reported that this is attributable to improved reporting of minor incidents like cuts.

There were no further questions or issues raised by Members.

RESOLVED: The Health and Safety Annual Report was noted.

Risk Management Update

TD confirmed that the Risk Management Update had been considered in detail at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 25 September 2024. The paper had been updated since but the report from the Audit Committee covered the main points and these had not changed significantly.

A request was made to explain the reduced risk for HNS and whether this is because there has been no drop in numbers. AB replied that this is correct. There has been no impact on recruitment.

The Chair suggested creating a summary table for all risks, similar to the KPI table, to quickly show the number of Green vs. Amber/Red areas for each category and give an overall sense of the risks. MB believed that is what the heat map is intended to do but agreed that it might be useful.

ACTION: Executive Team to create risk summary table for next meeting.

There were no further questions or issues raised by Members.

RESOLVED: The Risk Management Update was noted.

Subcontracting Update

Members reviewed the latest Subcontracting Update.

- No new apprenticeship sub-contracting programmes for 2024-2025, other than the two existing partners, Global ATS and UWE.
- Both partners have signed their contracts for 2024/2025.
- 2024-2025 - annual due diligence complete for UWE; final pieces of evidence awaited from Global ATS.
- The first Air Traffic Controller apprentices have successfully achieved their EPA first time.

The College will submit the annual subcontracting return to the ESFA by the published deadline of 31 October 2024.

RESOLVED: Members noted the Subcontracting Update and approved the continued subcontracting arrangements with Global ATS and UWE.

85/24 Approval of Policies

- **Website Accessibility Statement**
- **Modern Slavery Statement**
- **Child Protection and Safeguarding**
- **Health and Safety**
- **Staff Code of Conduct**
- **Flexible Working**
- **Staff Sexual Harassment**

Members reviewed the above policies. It was pointed out that there was a small typographical error on the last page of the Staff Sexual Harassment Policy.

The HE Link Governor asked if the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be updated in year to take account of the new OfS condition of registration (E6) related to sexual harassment. DK replied that there will be a separate document linked to the Policy.

RESOLVED: The policies were approved.

86/24 Committee, Subsidiary Company, Link Governor and Governor Learning Walk Reports

- **EWG – 11 September 2024**
- **C&Q - 25 September 2024**
- **Audit – 26 September 2024**
- **Link Governor Reports**
- **Governor Learning Walk Reports**

Members received reports from the Chairs of EWG, Audit, and C&Q and reports of Link Governor meetings and Learning Walks.

TD commented that the reporting of incidents appears to have improved as well as better relationships with the different Schools. Data has also been separated out more for the Audit Committee.

WA and MB issued a reminder regarding completion of Boxphish training by governors and to beware of clicking on phishing emails.

GR reported on her meeting with DK and HS prior to the meeting in her capacity as Mental Health and Wellbeing Link Governor. She referred to the good work going on at the College.

Members had received a report from MF of his attendance at individual School Self-Assessment Report meetings (SAR meetings) for Technology and Engineering, Commercial and ESOL on 25 September. MF had been reassured by the meetings which he felt had fairly assessed the performance of the teams. He found staff were modest about their achievements and that their interactions with the Executive Team were excellent.

MB thanked Members for taking part in the SAR validation meetings. It is good for staff to have governors present and get different insights, and good for governors to experience this aspect of the College's performance review framework.

The Chair wished to raise a topical issue regarding the use of mobile phones. MJ added that there is a movement among Gloucester schools for a place wide policy regarding the use of mobile phones. They wondered whether the College had considered restricting the use of mobile phones within the College. KM answered that the College takes a balanced approach and there are different policies in different areas. Early Years and Health and Social Care have pockets behind the door to deposit phones since they are not allowed to use phones in industry because of the safeguarding issues. On the other hand, there are courses where learners need to use their phones for research. However, learners are challenged if they use them in an inappropriate or disruptive way.

DK felt that it would be difficult to police a complete ban on the use of mobile phones, and the College would be creating an enormous industry for itself. It could involve a lot of energy to achieve very little. In addition, parents are not always supportive of banning mobile phones as they want to be able to contact students. He advised that the current approach is not causing any significant issues at present, and that the College has to pick its battles and focus on the big issues.

A Member commented that policy in the workplace differs too, and the College must prepare learners for the workplace.

A Student Member recalled that the policy at his school was no phones in school except during the lunchbreak and outside. The thing that frustrates him most at the College is students dawdling in corridors whilst on their phones.

MB agreed that it was a good question, but the critical thing is that it is managed in lessons and that it forms part of the expectations of students set out in the Code of Conduct. He suggested that the College wait and see what happens with the movement in secondary schools. DK will ask those in his team who go into schools frequently to monitor the position.

RESOLVED: The Committee and Link Governor reports were noted.

87/24 Items for Notification

- **SAR & QIP (from C&Q)**
- **APP (from C&Q)**
- **Annual Internal Audit Report (from Audit)**

Members reviewed the above items referred to in the committee reports and presented for notification by the committees.

RESOLVED: The Items for Notification were received and noted.

88/24 Use of College Seal

RESOLVED: The Board noted and endorsed the use of the Seal as set out in the paper.

89/24 Governance Matters

Governance and Regulatory Developments

JC presented a paper which included, amongst other items, details of the following matters and the actions to be taken in relation to each of them:

- Updated KCSIE guidance
- Sexual harassment law changes
- Regional Prevent Education Coordinators
- College Financial Handbook in force
- FE Governance Guide updated
- ESFA closure
- Judicial review case emphasising the importance of maintaining confidentiality in schools.
- Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act not in force
- Procurement Act delay
- IT security requirements
- Governor training and development update

A Member noted that, with the delay to the implementation of the Procurement Act, there may need to be a change to the Internal Audit Plan for the year.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Governance and Regulatory Developments since the last meeting and the actions taken as a result.

Governor Learning and Development Activity Record and Governor Learning and Development Reports

Members had been provided with the record of Governor Learning and Development activities. They were encouraged to review and update their learning and development activities and to take advantage of the opportunities available through the rolling programme of training available on Gloscolgov. They were reminded to let the Clerk have details of any external training activities they have undertaken which may be relevant to their role.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Governor Learning and Development activities, which enrich governors' understanding and oversight of the College.

90/24 Any Other Business

The Chair reminded Members that the next meeting will be the November Strategy Board Meeting. He asked them to think, ahead of the strategy meeting, of two or three key issues they are facing in their own businesses/lives that may be relevant to the College and to be prepared to speak about them at the meeting.

ACTION: JC to ask Members to think, ahead of the strategy meeting, of two or three key issues they are facing in their own businesses/lives that may be



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relevant to the College and to be prepared to speak about them at the meeting.

91/24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Strategy Board Meeting – 14 November 2024, Gloucester campus.

Signed: W 

Dated: 14/11/24