

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS STRATEGY BOARD MEETING HELD ON
2 MAY 2024**

Present:

Mr W Abbott (External Board Member/Board Chair)
Mr M Burgess (Principal)
Mr P Carr (External Board Member)
Ms L Dance (External Board Member) (to item 42/24)
Mr M Fabian (External Board Member)
Mr S Harvey (External Board Member)
Ms M James (External Board Member/Board Vice-Chair)
Mr P Lachecki (External Board Member)
Dr H Moyes (External Board Member)
Ms A Nutbrown (Staff Governor)
Ms G Read (External Board Meeting)

Apologies:

Ms J Buckland (Staff Governor)
Mr A Dover (External Board Member)
Ms L Hargreaves (Student Governor)
Ms C Simpson (Student Governor)

In Attendance:

Mr A Bates - Chief Financial Officer
Mr D Kettley - Director of Student Employment and Experience, Curriculum Innovation and Students
Dr K Morris – Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality
Ms H Snelling - Director of People and Culture
Ms J Cosson - Governance Professional/Clerk to the Board of Governors
Ms M Drayson - External Governance Reviewer, Rockborn (to item 40/24)
Ms H Hall – PA to the Governance Professional/Clerk to the Governors (to item 39/24 only)

Attendance: 73.3%

35/24 Private Business

None.

36/24 Apologies

Were noted as above.

37/24 Declarations of Interest

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

38/24 Confidentiality of Items (C)

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

39/24 External Governance Review Feedback

MD attended from the College's external governance reviewer, Rockborn, to present a summary of the findings from the review.

MD outlined the background to and scope of the review and the process Rockborn had gone through with the College. She thanked Board Members and Executive Team Members for their hospitality and time in participating with the review.

Members were invited to ask questions and comment on the findings.

The following points were discussed:

- Term of office of Board Members – whilst Members understood the reasoning behind the recommendation in the Code of Governance limiting the term of office to two periods of four years, they commented that losing Members automatically after eight years is not always a good thing. MD and JC advised that it is not a hard and fast rule. The term of office is a decision for the Board but should only be extended in exceptional circumstances and the Board would need to justify the decision.
- The remit of the Audit Committee – Members discussed the possibility of the Committee carrying out deep dives into particular areas of risk. This often takes place at other committees.

MD explained the next steps in the process. A draft report will be submitted to the Chair, Principal and Governance Professional for factual accuracy after which the final report will be issued and a copy or an agreed summary published on the College's website.

The Chair thanked Members for their involvement in the review and for their dedication and commitment to the College. He recognised that it is the collaboration of all Members that makes the Board successful. He thanked JC and HH for their robust leadership of the governance function at the College.

RESOLVED: The External Governance Review Feedback was noted.

40/24 Gloucestershire Economic Strategy

In his role as Head of Employment and Skills at GCC, PC gave a presentation on the draft Gloucestershire Economic Strategy and its employment and skills priorities, ahead of the Board's review of its duty to meet skills needs and approval of the College's Accountability Statement.

PC believes the College is in a strong position in relation to many of the county's objectives and that there continues to be value in members of the Executive Team being involved in skills representation across the county. He thanked the College for its ongoing work to tackle Gloucestershire's employment and skills challenges.

RESOLVED: The Gloucestershire Economic Strategy was noted.

41/24 Review of Meeting Skills Needs (Local Needs Duty) and Approval of Accountability Statement

MB reported that the Local Needs Duty and the annual Accountability Agreement form part of the wider set of reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper to transform the skills system, so it better supports young people and adults to develop the skills they need to get a good job and ensuring a clearer focus on the delivery of outcomes.

The Local Needs Duty is the statutory duty (for all governing bodies in scope) set out in Section 52B Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022 which came into force 28 June 2022.

Governing bodies are required to periodically review how well the education and training they provide meets local needs and consider what actions they might take to meet those needs better (whether alone or in conjunction with one or more other educational institutions). This is a strategic review that looks further ahead than just the next academic year, with an expectation that individual institutions will consider their role in the wider context of other local providers.

Accountability Agreements were introduced for the first time in the 2023 to 2024.

Initially, the statutory duty under the Skills Act 2022 was for colleges to:

- Carry out a review of and publish findings into how well they meet local needs every three years.
- Agree an Accountability Statement with the DfE each year setting out a programme of actions to help meet skills needs. These would be used as the basis for an Annual Strategic Conversation (ASC) with the DfE.

It was intended that the requirements would be supported by the DfE developing a dashboard of effectiveness measures and the development of the Enhanced Inspection Framework to assess how well Colleges meet local skills needs.

The DfE updated its guidance on the process in December 2023.

The new guidance aligns and simplifies the requirements for annual Accountability Agreements and the statutory duty to review how well the education and training they provide meets local needs, and to consider what actions may be taken to better meet those needs. It removes the need for colleges to publish two separate documents and enables them to fulfil both requirements for annual Accountability Agreements and the Local Needs Duty in a single annual return. There is now no

requirement to report separately every three years on the outcomes of the Local Needs Duty. Colleges can demonstrate they are fulfilling their statutory duty by completing their annual Accountability Statement.

The College is required to submit its Accountability Statement by 30 June 2024 and the statement requires approval by the Board.

MB presented a paper summarising the work carried out by the College to meet its statutory duty to meet skills needs and report to Government and detailing the ambitions the College will share with the DfE for the year ahead as part of its funding agreement.

The paper also provided an update on the ASC with the DfE in March 2024.

Members reviewed the papers and commented that it was a useful summary of the ways in which the College meets skills needs.

Members debated the level of freedom the College has in providing education and training since it must teach to a curriculum designed to suit employer needs. KM explained that the College's job is to give learners the best opportunities. The College brings added value to the curriculum by adapting the fundamental technical skills required of the awarding body specification and incorporating elements that will make learners more employable and successful in their chosen sector/industry i.e., by teaching more than the fundamentals. It is also the expectation of Ofsted that the College will add value to the qualification within the wrap around curriculum.

MJ commented that she had observed a good example of this during her learning walk in Gaming when the course leader had adapted the 'Which 3 Skills' theme used by the College to the gaming sector.

A Member noted the objective in the Accountability Statement for 2024/25 of extending and deepening the involvement of employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum. Whilst this is an excellent aspiration, they wondered how achievable it is.

KM replied that it is an aspiration for every group within the College and being able to demonstrate the involvement of stakeholders in the curriculum is an Ofsted expectation. MB added that it is easier in some areas of the curriculum (e.g., Hospitality) than others (e.g., Construction and Functional Skills) and will take time to develop. However, good progress has been made in many areas this year through staff Industry Days when staff have brought specific objectives from industry back to the classroom.

KM explained that there are simple things that can be embedded into teaching such as inviting stakeholders in to give presentations, asking them to judge skills competitions and allowing them to set tasks for learning. Staff are also sharing intelligence received from employers in relation to changes in their industry and skills they would like to see at interview and using this knowledge to develop the curriculum. Employer involvement has become a prominent feature of staff performance reviews.

A Member asked how the College identifies emerging skills. MB responded that the LSIP has been helpful in identifying what the future will look like in these areas e.g., digital, engineering, construction. The College can then map where it is in terms of curriculum, and this will feed into the SAR for each area. However, there are some areas in which employers are not showing as much interest in moving the curriculum forward as the College would like e.g., motor vehicle and some areas of construction.

Members commended the Executive Team on the work done in this area and the outcome of the ASC.

MB paid tribute to the staff across the College and the work they do on a daily basis to ensure that meeting skills needs is integral to their teaching and learning.

RESOLVED: The Board reviewed how effectively the College meets skills needs and concluded that, generally, the College makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs, but this needs to be embedded consistently across all curriculum areas. Members assessed the College's effectiveness in meeting skills needs against the criteria as follows:

Criteria	How well the College meets the criteria
Engage our community to understand skills needs and how we have planned our curriculum accordingly.	Strong
Involve employers and other stakeholders very effectively in the design and implement of the curriculum to prepare students for future education, employment, or work.	Reasonable
Are very clear how we contribute to skills needs.	Strong

The Board approved the College's Accountability Statement for submission to the DfE by 30 June 2024.

42/24 Rescheduled C&Q Workshop

KM provided an update on Ofsted inspections, with a focus on the expectations in relation to:

- Effective teaching strategies
- Teacher expertise
- Foundation knowledge/content/sequencing
- Formative assessment

She confirmed that all colleges will have an enhanced inspection by the end of the academic year 2024/25.

Bearing in mind the topics covered in the presentation, KM asked Members to consider:

- The key things to look out for on a learning walk that might suggest there is impactful teaching and learning.
- The questions to ask learners to evidence impactful teaching and learning.
- 'Poor proxies for learning' - things that, on the surface, may look like a good session (easily observed) but do not necessarily mean impactful teaching and learning is taking place.

KM suggested some key questions to help governors elicit information from staff and learners during learning walks, reminding them that they should be looking for evidence of students learning rather than teachers teaching: students should reflect good teaching and learning.

Members discussed the College's approach to observations during Learning Walks, which is supportive and developmental rather than punitive. Observations are not graded. They appreciated that, whilst data gathered from performance reviews and SAR validation meetings is important, the real value comes from seeing what is happening in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. This shows the teaching and learning team what is working well.

The Chair asked how well the Ofsted teaching and learning expectations are embedded at the College. KM answered that the College was judged to be Good overall in terms of the Quality of Education at the last inspection. The annual SAR process tests the judgements in each area and more Schools are demonstrating that they are Outstanding or at the top end of Good.

AN, Staff Member, explained that staff carry out Learning Walks with a critical friend from another curriculum area. This week she had observed three ESOL classes and had seen the teaching strategies referred to above in action. She commented that it was a pleasure to observe them from a different perspective. KM added that an external reviewer had also observed the College's ESOL provision this week and concurred that it was one of the best 16-18 ESOL provisions they had seen.

A Member wondered how the College assesses the value it is adding in Apprenticeships where learners train on the job with an employer. How does the College know whether the employer or the College is adding the value, and what happens if the employer training does not meet the College's standards? KM replied that Apprentices are assessed on professional standards via an End Point Assessment. The College chooses which employers it works with to ensure work place practices are good and meet Ofsted expectations.

A Member commented that the discussion had given him assurance over how staff assess the quality of education at the College. However, he would like to explore further how to use this information in governor learning walks and the specific objectives behind governor learning walks, the purpose of which is different to staff learning walks (contact with staff; contact with learners; triangulation of information provided at meetings; visibility of governors; opportunity to hear student voice; testing of safeguarding etc. as well as observing the quality of teaching and learning.)

Another Member wondered how the Board Members could better bring together their individual observations from learning walks to build collective assurance over the strategic matters monitored by the Board. It was noted that several Members (SH, MF, MJ and PL) had carried out learning walks earlier today and would provide feedback to the next meeting.

WA concluded that it was useful for governors to understand the background to how the College assesses teaching and learning for when governors carry out learning walks and that it is clear that there is a difference between teaching and learning.

It was agreed to follow-up specifically on the purpose of governor learning walks.

LD left the meeting.

43/24 Principal's Update

Members had been provided with a paper from the Principal updating them on activities/issues affecting the College since the last meeting. MB provided Members with the slides from the last Manager's Briefing, which set out the focus for the year.

MF had submitted questions in advance which MB would cover at the next Board meeting.

RESOLVED: Members noted the Principal's Update and developments at the College.

44/24 Membership Proposals

Members had been provided with a Membership Proposals paper.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the recommendations of GRS as follows:

- The re-appointment of Will Abbott as Chair of the Board for a term of office of two years from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2026.
- The re-appointment of Mary James as Vice-Chair of the Board for a term of office of up to two years from 1 April 2024 in line with her term of office as a Board Member.

Members noted the successful referral to the DfE FE governor recruitment service for the recruitment of three new Board Members, and the timescale involved.

45/24 Approval of Revised Bank Mandate

AB presented a paper requesting the Board's approval of changes to the College's bank mandate.

RESOLVED: The revised bank mandate was approved.

46/24 Minutes of the meeting of 21 March 2024

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

47/24 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix

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

48/24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Business Board Meeting – 11 July 2024, Cheltenham campus.

WA noted that it was the last Board meeting for PC and SH who were stepping down at the end of their terms of office.

MB paid tribute to both Members.

WA thanked them both for their service over many years and the contribution they have each made to the success of the College.

Signed: 

Dated: 11/7/24