

**Venue:** Runshaw College

**Present:** Warren Middleton (Chair), Alison Watson- Bird, Jo Venn, Portia Bailey Barrow, Clare Russell (Principal), Alex Magowan, Joshi Jariwala, Simon Drew, Michael Lowe, Dominic Martinez, Graham Murphy, Gary Hall, Robert Cobourne, Martina Jay

**In Attendance** Martin Rigby (Deputy Principal), Zoe Smallman (Deputy Principal), Catherine Duro (Interim Head of Governance)

Meeting began 5.30pm

Meeting closed 7.02pm

Attendance 88%

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Ade Oladapo, Ali Kamel and Janet Ivill.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

Governors were invited to declare any direct, indirect, pecuniary, personal, or prejudicial interest relating to any item on the agenda for the meeting.

## **3. Minutes of The Meeting Held on 1 December 2022**

### **3.1 Approval of the Minutes Part 1**

Agreed that: the minutes be signed as a correct record and authorised for publication (Part 1)

### **3.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

The Action Progress Log was reviewed. It was noted that one action had been postponed from March to May. This was agreeable to governors. All other actions were on track or complete.

## **4. Corporation Committee Meeting Minutes**

The Board received reports from the Committee meetings and the following key points were noted and questions were invited:

### **4.1 Standards and Curriculum Committee Minutes 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- The Committee had received an informative and comprehensive update from the Deputy Principal regarding the review of quality (ROQ).
- All other matters were as reported in the minutes.

### **4.2 Audit Committee Minutes 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- There would be follow up sessions briefing on the changes to the ESFA rules.
- Lower number of risks reported, with more graded critical than high.

- High risk of being compromised on phishing, new actions on physical securities in progress.
- Retender of audit services to be covered later, on this meeting's agenda.

#### **4.3 People & Organisational Development Committee Minutes 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- The priority to focus on a review of culture was detailed.
- Pay award detailed in this meeting's papers and Principal's update.
- No concerns to highlight.

#### **4.4 Finance Committee Minutes 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- Following the recommended legal review of the transport tender several adjustments were being made by procurement. A slight delay to the initial time frame but still time for recipients to respond with no impact on the go live date.
- The Buttermere work and need for comprehensive snagging list was shared. It was understood that the Construction subsidiary of Collinsons was no longer operating but snagging was undertaken by subcontractors.
- Chorley uninvited visitors was untimely, impact on the sale timings not yet known
- A breakeven budget was forecast

### **5. Principal's Report**

The Principal's report to the Board covered the following topics: College External & political developments, Stakeholders and Partnerships, Teaching, Learning & Assessment, Estates strategy

Taken as read, the report provided lots of detail about the excellent work happening across all areas of the college.

#### **Highlights and Key Points:**

##### **Estates**

- Opening of the Buttermere building, showcased this evening.
- Silverdale student area a welcome improvement
- Sale of Chorley a major milestone to enable investment once funds are secured. Delayed by untimely visitors and significant damage. Loss adjustors instructed, sent out a specialist team. Awaiting a full report, from loss adjustors and electrical contractors. Will have a figure to discuss with the purchaser, to agree who completes work, before or after sale completion. Visitors have left the area. Round the clock security patrolling with dogs until sale is complete. Should have been a security team on site night damage was done. Security guard on duty was threatened and left. Should have phoned the police. This derogation of duty is being taken further with the security firm and the police. Police are taking the damage extremely seriously.

##### **Teaching and learning**

ROQ is working well to give senior management full visibility of things they did not know existed. Much clearer insight on problems, some have been surprising. Good that we now know what we are dealing with, but a delay is recognised in the process of returning to outstanding. The ROQ process has served its purpose well.

##### **Governor Questions**

**Q1.** How are we categorising ROQ findings?

**A1.** Not generating additional reports. Head of Quality is meeting with each Head of Studies to detail all of the RQO findings which are being fed into mid-year QIP's. Each manager's QIP

includes ROQ findings. There are different levels of risk between departments. Some are significant. Some pockets of significant underperformance and non-compliance. All issues are now visible and solvable.

**Q2.** Can we have a summary paper, not for blame but useful to see the issues. Not about asking management team to produce things that won't be useful for them. Needs to be a useful management tool, not a glossy governor paper as an ongoing piece of work as to how ROQ is reported to standards committee.

**A2.** Yes. All recognised that a change to the QA process was essential. The Board was assured that the ROQ had enabled deep diving, digging and change in mindset and culture. Managers were looking for issues to solve rather than evidence of outstanding.

**Q3.** How are managers taking that?

**A3.** Mixed. Some with great surprise and worry. Others enthusiastic to dive in and start fixing. Others might need coaching and training. But to a person they are positive about the opportunity to get stuck in and make a difference.

**Q4.** Is there a risk that people don't want to share problems because they haven't been asked?

**Q4.** It was agreed that this had definitely been a factor, and that people hadn't shared issues because they hadn't been asked to and didn't want to highlight negatives, when asked for examples of outstanding. Now the process is transparent and balanced, staff are finding they have got support to tackle issues. They did know they were there.

Management was openly celebrating those who are sharing problems for addressing. The need to develop a culture of listening and trust was recognised by all.

**ACTION:** The Board to receive a first 3-month view report from the Assistant Principal Quality, independent from the management team.

### **Areas for improvement or concern**

**Vacancies:** the Deputy Principal's resignation and subsequent restructure recruitment process was underway. An Assistant Principal had also announced she would be retiring in October. Notified early so that recruitment could be complete in this round.

50 assistant principal applications had been received, all strong. Shortlisted 8, who had been interviewed earlier in the day. All were very high quality so optimistic to secure AP's from the field.

The Head of Finance had left this week. Have a gap as she was in probation so only had 1 month notice. Have some temporary interim cover. Her reasons for leaving were discussed

**Q5.** Have notice periods been discussed, so we do not get caught again? We also need to mindful jobs are changing, people's preferences and expectations are changing

**A5.** This one is due to probation period, which is only 1 month. After probation is much longer, would have been 3 months, 6 Months for senior roles. Is it worth reviewing and removing the probation period, as employment law now allows for that conversation anyway? Would give the same rights.

### **ACTION:**

1. To review the probation period and notice for new appointments considering current law and
2. to look at a hybrid working policy and how flexible we can be.

## **New Management**

An introduction to the new Assistant Principal Quality, Andrew Gadsdon was received.

## **Safeguarding**

A large increase in mental health safeguarding referrals was reported. It was asked what actions were being taken and if the team were coping. This would be covered in the next item.

## **6. Safeguarding & Prevent Update**

The Board was informed there had been big increases year on year, which was not unique to this college. Leavers about the same. Mental ill health and worries at home main issues, Advanced voc. and A level 1<sup>st</sup> years most affected. Increased team, stretched, but not over stretched.

Exams anxiety was a key issue. The board was advised the team were coaching learners to work through what is anxiety and stress, and what is normal nervousness around exams. Language can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students were being advised these were largely normal feelings and given help to manage them. The increase was thought to be due to this cohort experiencing this for the first time, as due to lockdown they missed it at GCSE level. Higher and new stresses when the stakes were higher at level 3. Work was ongoing to give students the required self-management skills.

Governors encouraged the college to err upwards if needed, cannot have too much support, risks are too high.

### **Governor Questions**

**Q1.** Do we have enough capacity?

**A1.** They are an exceptional team. December Board report showed them to be exceptional. The manager has been told to come straight to the board if struggling.

**Q2.** A governor recognised it was becoming more acceptable to report issues which would drive an increase but asked if there was underreporting from males? Is a concern, suicide is highest cause of death in young men.

**A2.** We have recruited a male counsellor which we hope will encourage participation. Very active.

We also have plans in next year's induction to help students. Also, a push on metacognition, to help students learn but also to manage their own mental health.

## **7. Finance Monitoring Reports**

### **7.1 Finance Report to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

Management accounts positive. On track to meet budget targets. No concerns. There are prudent assumptions built in. Adult and Apprenticeships activity based on assumptions. Mindful of income because of the roll on roll off provision. Will be monitored and managed as recruitment comes in.

The variances were questioned, and the remedial activity detailed.

Governors were reassured by the bottom line, forecasting to be £8k within budget. Sufficient off set built in for pay rises, balancing activity. Will be budgeted for next year.

Capital expenditure forecast would still go ahead. The income line though was dependent on the Chorley Campus sale. It was hoped this would still be achieved this year. Any change to this would be reported to governors.

50k in budget for Wi-Fi improvement which is one factor students complain about. Governors were assured it would be spent on improvements this year.

## **7.2 Tyndale Building Works –Corporation Seal**

The Board noted the application of the corporation seal to a works contract for refurbishment, for health and science T level space, to include mock wards and mock health care settings. Partially funded from the T level capital fund. 50% grant funded. Tenders came in. Deakins were successful tender. Intricately linked building, so helpful the supplier is familiar with the estate. Will be ready for September.

Buttermere, snagging ongoing, Will get done. Collinsons Construction won't be doing the work, but all snagging is subcontracted which Janet and head of estates are chasing.

### **Governor Question**

**Q.** Who stands the guarantee? Will Collinsons still cover the guarantee if their construction arm is no longer operating.

**ACTION** - Janet Ivill to follow up.

## **8. Governance Dashboard**

The Board received a 1-page summary, prepared by new Assistant Principal Quality.

The board noted the great news on applications, enrolments expected to be above target from a typical conversion rate. Students applying were able to come on sampling taster days in year 10. Applications show the impact of that work.

Careful use of language around Ofsted reports was encouraged. Care particularly important in current climate.

Attendance was noted as just below target, across all programmes. A range of activity underway to improve it was explained.

### **Governor Questions**

**Q.** Is it standard across other colleges.

**A.** Yes, across schools and colleges. Same reasons as mental health, anxiety and low resilience. Not just the students with safeguarding concerns who are absent. A broader issue of students who do not have enough resilience, if feeling slightly unwell or nervous was discussed. Metacognition strategies were hoped to address these attitudes. It was recognised that 91% attendance was good especially when benchmarked against others, but we strive to better.

## **9. Risk Register (*High Risks*)**

The updated risk register was presented to the board. All have been considered by relevant committees. Have been reviewed by audit and have been touched on in tonight's discussion.

## **10. Written Resolution Ratification**

Thanks were given for the rapid response to the two written resolutions circulated. Some good challenges and questions from governors had been received throughout the process.

The Board was advised Denise Williamson had been offered the role on the back of the written resolution. A great life fit for her, and a good fit for the Corporation.

The resignation of a SPH had presented an opportunity to consider the team structure. Recognition of where the college is, and the structure needed for right now. Need laser sharp focus on areas of responsibility, which is what the new Assistant Principals will provide, through curriculum focus. One will be responsible for student experience and support taking this cross-college pressure from the curriculum leads.

More detail was provided on the recruitment process underway. 8 had been shortlisted, 2 were internal, 6 external. In total there had been 7 internal candidates. Had a robust shortlisting process. Unsuccessful candidates have already been spoken to and understood the strength of the field of applicants.

### **Governor Question**

**Q.** What assurances are there that the team will be brought together, through significant change. 3 new members of the team.

**A.** Will be a senior team of 10. 7 are already well established. Some of whom even began as Runshaw students. Is a collaborative team, no sub-groups. Altogether, all aware and involved in decisions being made. All will be surrounded and supported by the team.

All will start at the same time, will be some overlap, with one retiring in October. Important to build the team from September. September will be the first time we have had a full senior team in the current Principal's tenure.

**Q.** What extra reassurance will be offered to disappointed internal people to retain them?

**A.** We have identified other opportunities to develop and are working with each of them. All have different motivations, so different approaches.

Congratulations were offered to Zoe on securing a fantastic opportunity. Thanks were given for all her hard work which began in lockdown!

### **RESOLVED:**

To **ACCEPT** the recommendation of the selection panel, to appoint Denise Williamson as Head of Governance.

To **REDUCE** the number of Senior Post-Holders at the college from five to four, following the resignation of one Deputy Principal.

## **11. Governor Appointments**

*Portia Bailey-Barrow and Martina Jay left the meeting*

*The Board received the recommendation for two governor appointments. Both have relevant background, experience, and interest. Willing, positive volunteers.*

### **RESOLVED:**

11.1 **to approve** the appointment of Portia Bailey-Barrow as Safeguarding Governor

11.2 **to approve** the appointment of Martina Jay to the Search and Governance Committee

*Portia Bailey-Barrow and Martina Jay re-joined the meeting.*

## 12 Auditor Appointments

The board received the Audit Committee recommendations to appoint ICCA for internal audit services and Beever and Struthers for external audit services.

Following the audit partner at RSM flagging she could no longer work with the college, having served 10 years as audit partner and RSM not having a suitable person to take over both internal and external were due to be tendered.

ICCA were the preferred tenderer for internal audit bringing a strong reputation and credentials in the sector. They would bring good stretch and challenge to the college.

Beever and Struthers were a Northwest based firm. Newer to the sector but ambitious to do it well. Similar hours and proposition to RSM. Had good knowledge of the sector. Strong at detailing what added value they would bring.

Costs were comparative across all firms, and not a deciding factor. RSM and Mazars didn't tender.

### **Governor Question**

**Q.** Were both firms local and prepared to be on site?

**A.** Yes. Both of those local and keen to be present on site. Some others had a strong leaning to working remotely, with one not even attending site for the meetings.

### **RESOLVED:**

**APPROVED** the appointment of ICCA for internal audit services and Beever and Struthers for external audit services.

## 13. Governance Impact Statement

- Checking Collinsons for insurance liability
- Reach out for HR/legal advice on probation contracts & notice periods
- Tyndale works sealed applied
- Transport tender, an important cost line updated
- Debate around audit firms and the support they will bring as well as challenge.
- Importance of appointing Portia as a safeguarding governor recognised
- ROQ process, openness improving - report to come to next meeting
- Need for the culture review and listening reiterated

Massive thanks given to Jo Venn after 12 years as a governor, and involvement with the college since 1994. Her challenge, support, and attendance at every college event supporting the students and college were very, very much appreciated.

## 14. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 5.15pm