

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE GROUP
CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2023
Room 3, Chaffron Centre, Chaffron Way
17:00 – 19:00

Board Members	Category of Governor	Attendance Record 2023/24	Present at this meeting
Sally Alexander	CEO	2 of 2	Yes
Richard Bartlett-Rawlings	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Alan Cook	Independent	1 of 2	Sent Apologies
Mat Gotkowski	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Sean Hainsworth	Staff	2 of 2	Yes
Leroi Henry	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Jacob Jempson	Student	2 of 2	Yes
David Meadowcroft (Chair)	Independent	1 of 2	Yes
Rebecca Myrie	Staff	2 of 2	Yes
Amit Nayyar	Independent	2 of 2	Yes (Teams)
Angie Novell	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Ruby Parmar	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Ian Revell	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Neil Sainsbury	Independent	0 of 0	No
Manish Verma	Independent	2 of 2	Yes (Teams)
Jeremy Wilsdon	Independent	1 of 2	Yes (Teams)
Tom Wraight	Independent	2 of 2	Yes
Shalom Lloyd (resigned 22.8.23)	Independent	0 of 0	
Attendance % this meeting		94%	15/16
Attendance % year to date		91%	29/32

Attendees at this meeting: Alex Warner (Principal: Curriculum Innovation and Pedagogy), Jason Mansell (Chief Operating Officer), Annie Allen (Chief People Officer), Sam Samuels (Governance Partner), Maxine Bennett (Lead Director, Prison Services), Susan Akhtar, Group Director (Finance) (in part). Clare Hood (Group Director: Quality and Teaching & Learning Improvement) (in part), Anna Clarke (Group Director: Employer Engagement & Partnerships) (in part).

1.0 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

- Alan Cook and Karen Brown had sent apologies. Neil Sainsbury will be absent until 31st January 2024 by agreement.
- Clare Hood was welcomed to the meeting and introduced herself.

1.2 Declaration of Interests

None

2.0 Strategic Priorities 2023/24

2.1 CEO's Report (previously circulated as Paper 2.1)

Sally Alexander highlighted the following:

LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund)

At the last meeting (5 October 2023) the Board was advised that MKCG (Milton Keynes College Group) had submitted a LSIF bid on behalf of five SEMLEP colleges (MKCG, Barnfield, Bedford, Northampton and Moulton) for overall funding of c£5.208m (no match funding required). The bid comprises four projects which will be scheduled over the next 18 months and will deliver the skills priorities set out in the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs).

Of the four projects, MKCG will be involved in three:

As a recipient of capital funding:

- Project 1 (Capital): To build a Green Skills Centre to the rear of the ITC (Innovation and Technology Centre) at Chaffron Way. The project will be led by Bedford College Group who will pass on £570k funding to MKCG.

As Project Lead:

- Project 2 (Revenue): To improve understanding and communication between employers and training providers. The DfE grant is c£665k.
- Project 3 (Revenue): To scope the digital requirements needs across SEMLEP. The DfE grant is c£1,040k, of which c£300k will be passed on to Moulton College.

As the DfE has now confirmed that the bid was successful, the Board is requested to approve the three contracts / funding agreements.

Governors asked questions to which Sally responded:

Is Bedford College Group responsible for the build at the ITC?

No. Bedford College Group is leading on project 1 which aims to equip a greater number of students with green skills and knowledge. The scope includes capital projects at MKCG and Northampton College plus the procurement of equipment across the five colleges. Bedford College Group will receive, and be accountable to the DfE for, a grant of £2,478k, of which they will pass on £570k to MKCG to fund the build at the rear of the ITC.

Is the depth of detail in the Dashboard too much information for the Board?

The Dashboard provides governors with an overview of progress made against the Board Strategic Priorities and Board approved KPIs which are aligned to the Operational Plan. By RAG rating and reporting movements since the last meeting, the Board can focus its attention on areas requiring a higher level of scrutiny. The Strategic Performance Monitoring Meeting (SPMM) monitors the Dashboard monthly, so it has more than one purpose. The Dashboard is a 'single source of the truth'.

Is there a recording of the Staff Wellbeing Conference which can be shared with governors?

Yes, the link will be circulated.

Action 1: Annie Allen

Staff Pay Award

At the last meeting (5 October 2023) the Board approved a 6.5% staff pay increase for campus staff and an 8.5% increase for Prisons staff (with salaries up to £43k) and a 6.5% increase for Prisons staff (with salaries above £43k). The unions have now agreed the proposed pay award which was announced to staff at the Staff Development Together Day on 30th October. Feedback from staff has been very positive.

Prison Education Service (PES)

Minuted as confidential

The Board:

- **Noted the CEO Report**
- **Approved the contract / agreement with Bedford College for £570k (Project 1)**
- **Approved the contract / funding agreement with DfE for c£665k (Project 2)**
- **Approved the contract / funding agreement with DfE for c£1,404k (Project 3)**

2.2A Campus Achievement and SAR (2022/23), KPIs and QIP (2023/24) (previously circulated as Paper 2.2A)

The CQG has scrutinised the SAR and QIP and KPIs prior to them being presented at this meeting.

Alex Warner and Clare Hood referred to paper 2.A and picked out some headlines.

College Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

- Since the last meeting (5 October 2023), timely, achievement rates have been finalised. Overall achievement has dropped slightly against target but has improved since last year. Overall, there has been an improving trend of improvement over the past three years.
- The challenge in 2022/23 was capacity to support students to achieve.
- The SAR reflects the final, timely, achievement data. The Quality Team has led a robust process of self-evaluation, with input from a former Ofsted HMI, resulting in the following proposed judgements:
 - All key judgements are 'Good' (Overall Effectiveness, Quality of Education, Personal Development, Leadership and Management)
 - All Provision Types are Good (Education Programmes for Young People, Adults, Apprenticeships, High Needs and Higher Education programmes)
 - Schools Performance: eleven Schools are Good and one (Inclusive Learning & ESOL), is outstanding
 - Meeting skills needs' is 'Strong'
 - Safeguarding is 'Effective'
- Care and Health, and The Built Environment were assessed as 'Requiring improvement' last year but are now 'Good' having increased achievement by three percentage points.

Governors acknowledged the progress made in overall achievement and were pleased to note that all Schools are now good or better.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Eight emerging themes have been identified as priorities for 2023/24, several of which are national challenges, including Attendance, Maths, Apprenticeships Timely Achievement and Work Experience.

Priority targets, actions and expected outcomes are detailed in the QIP which is a dynamic document and will be regularly monitored for impact, The areas identified for improvement are:

1. Attendance across all provision (but especially lower levels and English and maths)
2. Maths outcomes (both GCSE and functional skills)
3. Apprenticeship timely achievement.
4. Uptake of work experience and access to work-related activity
5. Consistent (and increased) access to skills competitions and social action projects
6. Progress from starting points (more learners to achieve high grades)
7. Performance in externally set and moderated exams
8. Staff Turnover – onboarding processes and induction

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2023/24

- Annex 2 (and the Dashboard) includes the final 2022/23 KPIs and proposed KPIs for 2023/24.
- The KPIs were discussed by the CQG. The attendance target was reduced to 87% reflecting a national trend of lower attendance (however the aspiration is 100% attendance). All the KPIs are considered to be challenging but realistic.

Governors asked questions to which Alex and Clare responded:

What additional assurance and evidence have CQG members received?

Headline data was presented and challenged by CQG at the meeting on 9 October 2023. Angela Novell (Chair of CQG) and Jeremy Wilsdon attended an additional meeting on 20 October to review the SAR narrative and receive assurance supporting the judgements.

What are the reasons for a declining trend in Level 2 achievement?

There has been a shift over recent years to external assessments which has disproportionately affected Level 2 learners. Due to COVID, there were Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) in 2021, Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) in 2022 and then externally set and graded assessments in 2023.

Performance in externally set and moderated exams is a QIP theme and will be monitored.

Is the decline in Level 2 achievement a national or College issue?

National data will not be available for benchmarking until January 2024. Several colleges have raised motor vehicles and electrical as an issue with the Association of Colleges who are lobbying the awarding bodies.

Benchmarking against national data will be reported to governors when available.

What progress has been achieved with End Point Assessments (EPAs) since the last Board meeting? What can be done to improve the EPA process?

A third have been completed, a third are in progress and a third still require attention.

The Service Level Agreements with the awarding bodies are being reviewed to ensure EPAs are not scheduled in June or July. The College can set the expected end date based on learners' start dates.

Clare Hood is attending the Apprenticeship Project Monitoring Meetings where learner progress is tracked so that any concerns can be identified to ensure swift action is taken.

Can the QIP include more intangible activities?

The QIP focuses on themes identified for improvement. It is a dynamic document and actions will be added if appropriate.

There are lots of opportunities at College for personal development and social activities (which are not included in the QIP).

English and maths is an ongoing challenge. What will you do differently this year to achieve better outcomes?

The maths summit identified attendance as a top priority. Statistically, for every five percentage points drop in attendance there is an equivalent drop of one GCSE grade; if a learner has 80% attendance, they are unlikely to achieve a Grade 4.

The College will be engaging with Chiltern Learning Trust (CLT) where Sufian Sadiq (co-opted member of CQG) is a Director. CLT has received DfE funding to explore root causes of low attendance and actions to mitigate.

The College attendance strategy includes exploring patterns of attendance, understanding reasons for non-attendance, correlation with tutor attendance and sending text messages to students and parents.

Attendance will be continually monitored, and actions changed if they are not making an impact.

Are students taking up work experience opportunities? Can you supply more information on the expectations of employers and where there are the biggest gaps so that governors can pass on the information to their networks.

Last year there was a reduction in students taking up work experience opportunities due to them having to prioritise part time work to help support their family. The College is engaging with local employers to increase work experience and learners are being supported to take up the opportunities. Employer testimonials are also being produced to show the benefits to employers in providing work experience.

The information will be circulated,

Do students understand the consequences of low attendance?

Tutors speak to students to help them understand why they need good qualifications in English and maths in every profession. The approach taken changes with each student cohort.

The Board approved:

- ***The whole College SAR 2022/23 and the judgements***
- ***The whole College QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) 2023/24***
- ***The academic KPIs for 2023/24***

2.2B Compliments and Complaints Analysis 2022/23 (previously circulated as Paper 2.2B)

Annie Allen led on this item highlighting:

Analysis

- Better quality reports are being produced which support comparison and trend analysis.
- 60 complaints were received in 2022/23, a reduction of 17 compared to 2021/22 which is in line with FE Colleges of the same size. However, there has been an increase this year (23) compared to the same period last year (7).
- The highest number of complaints relate to communication and treatment by staff which is consistent with the previous year.
- All staff are committed to satisfactory resolution of complaints with only two cases having a negative resolution.

Policy

- A Persistent, Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints policy is in place.

Governors asked questions to which Annie responded:

Is analysis in relation to protected characteristics carried out?

Yes, there are no trends.

How are complaints defined and what methods are there for raising complaints?

There are several methods available, such as SpeakOut which is whistle blowing, online, in person, grievance channel etc. There are some low-level complaints that are dealt with quickly which are not reported.

The Board noted the Compliments and Complaints Analysis

Clare Hood was thanked for attending and she left the meeting.

2.2C Curriculum & Quality Group (CQG) Meeting 9th October 2023 (previously circulated as Paper 2.2C)

Angie Novell, Chair of the CQG, referred to the report of the meeting. The focus had been on the whole College SAR (Self-Assessment Report) 2022/23, QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) 2023/24 and the academic KPIs for 2023/24.

The Board approved:

- ***the report of the meeting***

- **the Terms of Reference for 2023/24**

Susan Akhtar joined the meeting.

2.3 Finance (previously circulated as Confidential Paper 2.3)

Jason Mansell led on this item highlighting:

Student Enrolments 2023/24

- There has been an 18% growth in 16-19 student numbers which is 526 students above the ESFA allocation and 405 students above the College's growth target. This is the largest increase the College has ever experienced.
- The student growth has increased staff workloads, but this is being managed.
- Initial analysis suggests that growth is due to:
 - Successful open events and strong early applications
 - 20 percentage point increase in progression students (589 students in 2022 compared to 748 students in 2023). The Skills Academy (new offer at Level 1 for 2023) has recruited 167% of target
 - Higher retention of students
 - Large increase in students from Stantonbury school
 - Increase in students attaining lower Maths GCSE grades meaning more students did not meet the criteria for sixth form.

Recruitment, Retention and Onboarding Group (ROG)

- Project September had a positive impact on student recruitment and the student experience in 2022/23. In 2023/24 Project September evolved into ROG with the aim of refining internal and external processes to maximise the capacity for growth and to further improve the student experience e.g., the scope was increased to include Adults and Higher Education (HE).
- Project ROG has been successful; fewer students have withdrawn this year indicating a positive experience (student satisfaction data will be available from November 2023).
- Daily scrutiny of student numbers has enabled ROG to make speedy strategic decisions e.g., capping numbers to ensure the student experience is not negatively impacted.

Governors had a confidential discussion

Financial Health Key Performance Indicators 2023/24

- Paper 2.3 includes Financial Health KPIs based on the budget approved by the Board on 12 July 2023 and CFFR submitted to the DfE in July 2023. Based on the CFFR, the ESFA has confirmed the College Financial Health to be Good for 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- The KPIs may need to be revisited when the budget reforecast has been completed. The reforecast will include changes since the budget was approved in July (additional ESFA funding, Staff Pay Award, impact of growth).
- The Finance Group is meeting on 13 November 2023 to scrutinise the P2 management accounts and the 2022/23 year end performance (subject to audit).

Governors asked questions to which Jason responded:

Has the growth in students had any impact on staff and the student experience and if so, what actions are being taken?

The impact has included larger / additional classes, pressure on the refectory during the lunchtime period and increase in workload for teaching staff.

Actions being to reduce the impact are:

- Support workers have been recruited to remove workload from teaching staff.
- In the refectories, catering staff have been increased and additional furniture has been purchased.
- Additional teaching staff have been recruited (English, maths and vocational) to support additional classes.
- The Safeguarding Team has been increased due to higher levels of safeguarding issues.
- The ROG project team is reviewing lessons learnt to inform 2024/25 curriculum planning and future strategic growth.

How are the increased costs being met?

Additional costs attributable to increased growth are being collated. The College will raise the impact of in-year growth with the DfE on 7 December 2023. The College will be able to evidence the financial impact of growth which could strengthen the likelihood of receiving in year funding.

What is the risk if in-year funding is not received?

The College is currently reforecasting the budget and will report back to the Board at the next meeting.

What are the College predictions for future growth?

The College is actively linked with MKSH (Milton Keynes Secondary Heads Group) and receives demographic growth data from the Local Authority and information on skills needs through the LSIP.

Further analysis is needed to inform the curriculum planning for 2024/25.

Are sufficient funds being allocated for vulnerable / disadvantaged students, e.g., bursaries as these students can be proportionally disadvantaged.

Yes, the College receives separate funding for bursaries which is ring-fenced.

Energy Prices

Discussion minuted as confidential

The Board:

- ***Noted the report on 2023 enrolments.***
- ***Delegated authority to the Finance Group to review and approve the Financial Health KPIs for 2023/24***
- ***Delegated authority to the ELT to fix energy costs for 30 months at the best price available.***

Susan Akhtar was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

Anna Clarke joined the meeting

2.4 IoT (Institute of Technology) Strategy and Action Plan *(previously circulated as Confidential Paper 2.4)*

Alex Warner and Anna Clarke led on this item and highlighted the following:

- We are in Year 3 of the 5-Year License Agreement with the DfE (Department for Education) and have made good progress with the core aims of inclusion, widening access and participation to higher education and establishing a curriculum and delivery model which is innovative and trailblazing. However, now that the capital build has been delivered, the focus has moved to growing the provision and meeting the DfE KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).
- External research (Chalkstream) has demonstrated:
 - Higher Education in Further Education is declining nationally
 - In the Digital Sector, HNCs and HNDs are not well recognised
 - Awareness of IoTs (Institute of Technology) is low (but there may be an opportunity to grow apprenticeships)
 - Employers want skills not qualifications (i.e., short, modular, bite-size learning rather than long formal qualifications).
- Revised and simplified KPIs have been agreed with the DfE relating to a broader STEM curriculum (such as engineering and construction) rather than a narrow digital focus.
- Figure 3 of Paper 2.4 sets out the student number targets. Student numbers are 34% of target meaning that MK College and Activate Learning each need to recruit an additional 250 learners in-year.

Discussion minuted as confidential.

The Board approved the IoT Strategy and Action Plan

Anna was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

3.0 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Capital Projects Monitoring Group (CPMG) meetings 18th October 2023 *(previously circulated as Paper 3.1)*

Manish Verma, Chair of the CPMG referred to the report of the meeting. The IoT capital project is complete apart from snagging and BREEAM, the CTF (Capital Transformation Fund) project (Chaffron Way refurbishment) is on schedule and the LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund) projects were reported in the CEO's report (Item 2.1). Tenders for the Estates Review will be issued shortly to deliver research and feasibility studies to support the College's estate plan (to support a bid for further funding) which will be an item for the Board's Awayday,

The Board approved the report from the CPMG meeting of 18th October 2023

3.2 Search & Governance (S&G (SEARCH & GOVERNANCE)) Committee meeting 31st October 2023 *(previously circulated as Paper 3.2)*

Ian Revell, Chair of the S&G Committee referred to the report of the meeting. Governors noted the current Board composition, revisions to the Link Governor Scheme, the themes for the External Governance Review which will commence in January 2024, the Board's Training Plan for 2023/24 and the Training Policy. The Committee had approved its Annual Report which will be presented to the Board in December.

The External Governance Review will include assurance on compliance with the AoC (Association of Colleges) 2023 Code of Governance.

The Board

- **Ratified the re-appointment of Ruby Parmar to serve a third term of office (1st January 2024 to 31st December 2026) which had been previously approved by email**
- **Approved:**
 - **The report from the S&G meeting of 31st October 2023**
 - **Adoption of the AoC 2023 Code of Governance from 1st August 2024**
 - **The Board Development Plan for 2023/24 (Consent Paper 4.3A)**
 - **Revisions to the Instrument & Articles of Government (Consent Paper 4.3B)**
 - **Revisions to the Board Standing Orders (Consent Paper 4.3)**
 - **Revisions to the Scheme of Delegation (Consent Paper 4.3D)**
 - **The revised Code of Conduct for Corporation Members (18th edition) (Consent Paper 4.3E)**

3.3 Remuneration Committee 24th October 2023 (previously circulated as Paper 3.3)

David Meadowcroft, on behalf of the Remuneration Committee, referred to the report of the meeting. The Committee had reviewed the remuneration of Senior Post-Holders (SPH), discussed succession planning for the senior team, approved the SPH annual statement, changes to the Committee's Terms of reference and the Committee's Annual Report which will be presented to the Board in December.

The Board approved:

- **The report from the Remuneration Committee meeting of 24th October 2023**
- **The Terms of Reference for 2023/24**

3.4 Audit & Risk (A&R (Audit & Risk)) Committee meeting 18th October 2023 (previously circulated as Paper 3.4)

Mat Gotkowski, on behalf of the A&R Committee referred to the report of the meeting when the process and timeline for retendering the external audit service had been approved.

Suppliers were expected to pitch their proposals on 13th November however only one firm has submitted a bid. There is a meeting tomorrow (9th November) to agree the way forward.

The Board approved the report from the A&R meeting of 29th September 2023

3.5 Items for the next meeting (13th December 2023)

- Financial Health 2023/24 (P3) / Financial Statements 2022/23
- Staff Recruitment and Development / Strategy & Action Plan / KPIs
- Environmental Sustainability
- Safeguarding

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved by consent / without discussion:

- 4.1 Minutes of the last meeting (4th October 2023) (previously circulated as Papers 4.1A and Confidential 4.1B).**

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 4th October 2023

Matters arising:

All complete or reported at item 2.2A

- 4.2 Contracts (previously circulated as Paper 4.2)**

The Board approved the following contracts:

- ***Konica Minolta (printing services)***
- ***Edison Media (marketing)***
- ***Lease Agreements:***
 - ***CHG-Meridian (XMA)***
 - ***CHG-Meridian (Stone Computers)***

- 4.3 Search & Governance Approval Items (previously circulated as Papers 4.3)
*Minuted at 3.2 above***



Approved 13 December 2023
Chair of Governors – David Meadowcroft