

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE GROUP
CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2025
Pitching Room, SCIoT, Bletchley Campus
17:00 – 19:00

Board Members	Category of Governor	Attendance Record 2024/25	Present at this meeting
Sally Alexander	CEO	4 of 4	Sally Alexander
Abbas Bandali ²	Student	3 of 3	Abbas Bandali (in part)
Richard Bartlett-Rawlings	Independent	3 of 4	Richard Bartlett-Rawlings (Teams)
Ian Bickers	Independent	4 of 4	Ian Bickers
Ajira Bouchada ¹	Independent	3 of 4	Ajira Bouchada
Mat Gotkowski	Independent	4 of 4	Mat Gotkowski (in part)
Leroi Henry	Independent	2 of 4	Leroi Henry (in part)
Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo ²	Student	2 of 3	Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo (in part)
Rebecca Myrie	Staff	4 of 4	Rebecca Myrie
Amit Nayyar	Independent	4 of 4	Amit Nayyar (Teams) (in part)
Angie Novell	Independent	2 of 4	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Ruby Parmar	Independent	4 of 4	Ruby Parmar
Ian Revell	Independent	4 of 4	Ian Revell
Neil Sainsbury	Independent	4 of 4	Neil Sainsbury
Lindsey Styles	Independent	4 of 4	Lindsey Styles
Jay Timpany	Staff	4 of 4	Jay Timpany
Manish Verma	Independent	3 of 4	Manish Verma
Jeremy Wilsdon	Independent	4 of 4	Jeremy Wilsdon (Teams) (in part)
Tom Wraight	Independent	3 of 4	<i>Sent apologies</i>
¹ from 2/10/24 ² from 1/11/24			
Attendance % this meeting		89%	17 / 19
Attendance % year to date		87%	65 / 74

Attendees at this meeting: Mark Fell (Executive Principal), Jason Mansell (Chief Operating Officer), Karen Brown (Head of Governance), Sam Samuels (Governance Partner)

Attendees in part: Marc Hulbert (Head of A Levels), Nathan Flynn (Group Director: Quality), Laura Black (Group Director: IoT, Adult, HE), Maria Bowness (Group Director: Curriculum), A Level Students (x3)

1.0 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies had been received from Angie Novell and Tom Wraight.

1.2 Declaration of Interests
None previously declared

2.0 Strategic Priorities 2024/25

2.1 CEO's Report and Board Dashboard *(previously circulated as Paper 2.1)*

Sally Alexander drew attention to the following:

Annual Strategic Conversation with ESFA (4th February 2025)

The annual meeting with the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) took place yesterday attended by the Chair, ELT (Executive Leadership Team) and Group Director: Employer Engagement and Partnerships. The ELT described the College's progress in meeting the Accountability Agreement objectives / Board Strategic Priorities (which are the same). ESFA and FEC (Further Education Commissioner) colleagues were very interested in the Skills Academy.

As there is unlikely to be any government capital funding for growth, the ESFA supported the College's application to the council for tariff funding and suggested the College explore spare capacity with local schools which may be closing sixth forms (although we are aware that local schools are using surplus space to accommodate their own growth).

The ESFA endorsed the College's actions; it was a very positive meeting.

The Chair of Governors added that she was very assured by the meeting.

Amit Nayyar joined by Teams at 17:10

Leroi Henry and Mat Gotkowski arrived at 17:10

South Central Institute of Technology

Minuted as confidential

Prison Education Framework (PEF)

Visits by the ELT to prisons is ongoing. The transfer of the Digital Education Platform (DEP) to the MoJ (Ministry of Justice) is going well and will benefit learners and offer greater flexibility. Sally was able to confirm this at a recent visit to HMP Belmarsh. The remaining sites are due to transition by the end of May 2025.

Tariff Funding

As announced in the press, the College has secured £6.1m of tariff monies to fund student growth (approval of the contract is presented at item 4.2). CPMG will be monitoring this capital project.

Governors asked questions to which Jason responded:

Is the College planning for further expansion?

The Estates Plan, discussed at the Board meeting on 6th November 2024, includes three phases:

- Phase 1 - Redevelopment of Chaffron Way and Bletchley campuses (internal capacity).
- Phase 2 – Potential expansion of the Chaffron Way and Bletchley campuses (builds/major refurbishments).

- Phase 3 – Potential development of an additional campus/delivery location

Phase 1, which will be funded by the tariff and S106 funds, will increase full-time student capacity by c.300 spaces, at a cost of c.£6.5m.

The next piece of work will be to look beyond phase one, and this will be included in the discussions at the Board's strategic event on 30th April.

Governors requested that the report from CPMG includes the increase in student spaces (numbers vs actual growth).

Action 1: Jason Mansell by 19th March

The Board received the CEO Report

Amit Nayyar left the meeting at 17:20

Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo joined the meeting by Teams at 17:20

Nathan Flynn, Maria Bowness, Marc Hulbert and three A-Level students joined the meeting

2.2A Student Experience: Student Voice (previously circulated as Paper 2.2A)

Mark Fell and Nathan Flynn welcomed the students to the meeting, and they were invited to share their personal experiences. Governors were reminded that this is the first year of A-Levels.

The students highlighted the quality of teaching, the high quality of accommodation in the IoT, the variety of courses and a supportive environment as key factors in their satisfaction. They emphasised that teachers were approachable, and treated them as adults, and there was no strict uniform policy. Students welcomed additional opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, the Scholars Programme, EPQ (Extended Project Qualification), Oxford Brookes University Mentoring Scheme, university visits, and trips which enhanced their learning experience and helped them to develop additional skills. They confirmed that their expectations had been met or exceeded, and the College was helping them to identify their next steps be that higher education or training or employment.

They also spoke about what could enhance their experience further including more personalised feedback, fewer pathways which limit choices, improved transport links, a dedicated sixth form building, and more trips (in some cases).

The students were thanked for attending and they left the meeting with Marc Hulbert

Nathan highlighted the headlines from Paper 2.2A including the autumn term satisfaction survey and student voice relating to maths interventions and gave examples of how the student voice had led to improvements in the student experience.

The Student Union (SU) and Student Council (SC) are key forums for student voice. Abbas Bandali, who is also the SU Finance Officer added that the SU is encouraging students to be involved in more leadership and teamworking initiatives (e.g. clubs and societies). Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo, who is also a class representative, added that the SC is working effectively e.g. the SC had raised issues concerning the refectory which had then been addressed.

Governors requested:

- 1) a more detailed breakdown of destinations (including named universities). (Mark added that there had been a 4-percentage point increase in the number of UCAS applications this year).

Action 2: Mark Fell by 19th March 2025

- 2) an analysis of maths feedback by protected characteristics

Action 3: Mark Fell by 19th March 2025

Governors asked questions to which Mark and Nathan responded:

Can the College give feedback from students to Schools to assist them to improve?

The College is a specialist in post-16 education so is well prepared in understanding students' needs and can differentiate the experience. Mark Fell meets with schools and will pass on the comments in the context of why the College is offering A-levels i.e. a school environment does not suit everyone.

A governor added that in his experience, students who have been treated like adults react more positively when progressing to higher education.

The Board noted the assurance on Student Voice

2.2B Student Experience: In-Year Progress (previously circulated as Paper 2.2B)

Mark Fell and Nathan Flynn gave an overview of CPR 2 (end of term 1) which had a focus on teaching, learning, and assessment:

- The aggregate score across all schools was 2.08 i.e. a solid 'Good' in line with the February 2024 Ofsted grade. There was an expected small drop from CPR 1 as new / inexperienced staff had been prioritised for observations.
- Predicted achievement was strong and student progress was at least 4 percentage points higher than the same period in 2023/24. The number of 'high risk' students was reduced by 8 percentage points.
- Maths remained in intervention but had demonstrated progress since CPR1 e.g., student support and monitoring have led to significant improvements in attendance (54% to 75%).
- Engineering entered intervention due to the high number of new staff. The intervention will focus on supporting new staff and raising their confidence to deliver high-quality lessons which should lead to improvements in the quality of teaching and student outcomes.
- Attendance in music and barbering was also identified as a focus for intervention and already there have been positive improvements with the latest attendance data showing music with a 21 percentage points improvement and barbering with a 24 percentage points improvement.
- The CPR process is a cultural change for the College and is having a positive impact.

Governors asked questions to which Mark and Nathan responded.

What has made the difference to attendance?

The interventions are tailored for each area and have included talks from Group Directors, senior staff visiting classrooms, understanding students' issues and responding, generally constantly talking to students about maths and vocational teachers contextualising maths.

How do staff feel about the interventions?

A staff governor said the interventions were supportive and did not cause staff to be stressed.

There has been a 50% increase in November GCSE passes (maths) but can this be attributed to the intervention work?

It is hard to take credit from the interventions when the exams take place early in the academic year. There was however a focus on teaching and learning in place in preparation for the exams.

Are students scared of maths?

Yes, there is a stigma about English and maths. Many students studying English and maths at colleges have 'failed' these subjects at school so we have to break down the barriers. The College wants to support students as early as possible and starts those discussions about the importance of English and maths before students enroll.

A student who is co-opted to the CQG is mentoring other students in lessons which is a model we are looking to develop.

Governors were reminded that all are invited to attend the CPR3 meetings on 12 February.

The Board noted the assurance on in-year student progress and CPR2

Laura Black was welcomed to the meeting

2.2C Student Experience: Early impressions from the new Group Director: IoT, Adult, HE

Laura has worked in FE for 20 years and has significant experience of managing Higher Education (HE) programmes, adult programmes and in her most recent role, leading an IoT and working with a devolved authority.

Laura spoke about the significant opportunities to develop and grow adult and HE (Higher Education) and moving the IoT to the next phase. The College has high ambition and strong partnerships.

There will be challenges as HE is not growing nationally, and many universities have been financially impacted by the drop in EU and overseas students and competition in the form of higher-level technical qualifications. Quality processes and systems will be critical to demonstrate high quality provision.

Short-term actions include cautious growth in student numbers, competitor analysis and aligning our provision with skills needs and student demand.

Governors asked about the relationship with Activate Learning (AL) and Jason confirmed that the IoT numbers reported through the Dashboard include Oxford and Reading (managed by AL). The College meets with AL regularly to review quality which is reported to the Anchor Partner Steering Group (APSG).

It was agreed that APSG meeting notes will be circulated to the Board via the portal.

Action 4: Laura Black by 19th March

The Board received the feedback from the new Group Director: IoT, Adult and HE

2.2D Curriculum & Quality Group (CQG) Meeting 13th January 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 2.2D)

Jez Wilsdon referred the Board to the report of the meeting, The CQG has been providing support and challenge to the CPR process and gaining assurance that there is an appropriate balance between monitoring and intervention. The CQG is also monitoring the Quality Improvement Plans to ensure that quality improvement processes which are having a positive impact are celebrated and shared.

The Board approved the report of the meeting

Nathan Flynn and Laura Black were thanked for attending and they left the meeting

Jez Wilsdon left at 18:25

Maria Bowness was welcomed to the meeting

2.3 Curriculum Planning Process (previously circulated as Paper 2.3)

- Maria Bowness outlined the curriculum planning process, emphasising the importance of employer partnerships, aligning the curriculum with local needs, preparing students for higher education, industry and employment and ensuring progression opportunities.
- Planning for September is well underway, informed by labour market intelligence and local opportunities such as East-West rail links. All schools have a three-year strategic plan which aligns with the College's overall strategy and industry needs. Employer partnerships are informing the qualifications and skills valued by employers (e.g. electric and hybrid vehicle qualifications in motor vehicle courses) and providing experiences which replicate the workplace (e.g. Silverstone).
- To ensure curriculum efficiency, schools have been set targets such as staff utilisation and class sizes. From September, there will be a new one-hour block timetabling system.

When presenting the Curriculum Plan at a future meeting, governors requested the current data (where available) as context for the KPIs

Action 5: Mark Fell by 30th April 2025

Jez Wilsdon left at 18:30

Governors asked questions to which Maria and Mark responded:

Do Schools collaborate when considering opportunities e.g. growth opportunities from the Oxford / Cambridge arc?

Yes, there are validation panels and the Schools' curriculum plans are all aligned to the College's overall strategy.

How are you addressing the challenge of offering a provision where employer demand is low?

We must consider offering courses which meet local needs as well as courses which have high demand and provide general employability skills but may not lead to direct employment, e.g., sports courses. We will not offer courses where there is low employer demand and low student demand.

How can we ensure the curriculum is responsive to the future needs of employers?

Our curriculum planning is based on intelligence. The Heads of Schools and the employer engagement team have strong relationships with stakeholders so we are well informed of future needs and are constantly looking for opportunities so we can respond quickly.

The Schools' curriculum plans look three years ahead, so we are already considering the impact of the East-West rail link and other opportunities.

To what extent are digital skills, including AI, embedded across the curriculum? Do you consider the skills that employers are not yet identifying and does the College influence?

Digital skills and AI are included in the Personal Development Curriculum. All students have a digital induction as well as a College induction and then digital skills are threaded throughout their programmes of study. There is a Digital Technologies Team whose role is to support students and staff.

There are discussions at the employer forums on future skills needs. Digital skills change rapidly so we review these annually.

Our stakeholder engagement includes small employers with whom we share our knowledge of future needs.

Is there flexibility in the curriculum plan?

Yes, until we know the numbers and profile of the cohort we cannot finalise groups, staffing etc.

The Curriculum Plan will come to the Board in April.

The Board noted the assurance on Curriculum Planning for 2025/26

2.4 Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Support (CEFSS) (previously circulated as Paper 2.4)

Jason Mansell highlighted some key points from Paper 2.4:

- The College had invited the FE Commissioner's team to undertake a CEFSS. The review took place on 16th January and the formal recommendations are awaited.
- The team did, however, provide some verbal recommendations which endorsed the College's approach.
- College Managers had confirmed to the team that they welcomed the ELT's approach to improve planning and efficiency.
- The College is waiting for the interim report and a request for further information
- The recommendations will be shared with the Board in March (assuming the report has been received).

The Board noted the verbal feedback from the CEFSS review

3.0 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Capital Projects Monitoring Group (CPMG) meeting of 14th January 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 3.1)

Manish Verma referred to the report of the meeting. As the IoT and CTF projects are coming to an end, the CPMG will be receiving the plans for the tariff and carbon offset projects.

The Board approved the report of the meeting

3.2 Equalities Strategic Review Group (ESRG)

Leroi Henry, who is Link Governor for EDI, explained that the purpose of the ESRG is to review risks and progress in embedding the College's inclusion strategy. ESRG has been in place many years but was refocused this year; sessions are now open to everyone to attend, and they involve guest speakers, discussions and sharing of opinions and practice. The College has achieved Leaders in Diversity accreditation.

All governors have been invited and the topic for the next meeting on 26th March is 'Trans, women and safe space'

The Board received the update on the ESRG

3.3 Items for the next meeting (5 February 2025)

- Student Experience: Safeguarding/ Careers / Strategic overview of QIP and impact, CPR3, Student Satisfaction / Mental Health Charter
- Financial Health – P6 Management Accounts / Principles for 25/26 budget / response to CEFSS

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved by consent / without discussion:

4.1 Whistleblowing Policy (previously circulated as Paper 4.1)

Following governor feedback, the Whistleblowing Policy was deferred to the next meeting.

4.2 Contract for Approval (previously circulated as Paper 4.2)

The Board approved the contract MK City Council relating to the Tariff Funding Agreement

4.3 Minutes of the last meeting (11th December 2024) (previously circulated as Paper 4.3)

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11th December 2024.

Matters arising

Date Raised	Actions arising from the last and previous meetings	Action Owner	Current position
11/12/24	1. Report student disciplinarys by type and ethnicity.	AL	Carry Forward - Diarised for 19 March
	2. Report on student destinations	MF	Complete - Agenda item 2.2B
	3. Review the RAG rating for apprenticeships following CPR2.	MF	Complete - Agenda item 2.2B

Next Meeting 19th March 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Parmar', with a stylized, cursive script.

Approved 19th March 2025
Ruby Parmar
Chair of Governors