

**Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on  
Wednesday 23 October 2024  
Bedford College, Cauldwell St, Room 506  
16:00**

Present: Alasdair Simmons (Chair)                      Noor Nasir  
Cathy Barr    Laura-Jane Rawlings MBE  
John Butcher    Sheila Selwood MBE  
Tracy Cowan    Kasar Singh  
Richard Dimpleby    Leona Tiribabi  
Tom Dove-Wallington                                      Shaun Wilson  
Lee Fellows    Cliff Wragg  
Luke Ferebee     Yiannis Koursis OBE  
Ann Harris  
Titus Logan

In attendance: Sarah Baxter (Executive Director of Marketing and  
Communications)  
Caroline Biddle (Executive Director of Human Resources)  
Karen Campbell (Principal Bedford)  
Gulam Fatima (Chief Financial Officer)  
Debbie Houghton (Executive Director of Apprenticeship)  
Sarah Mortimer (Principal CBC)  
Rachel Nicol (Group Director of Governance)  
Sara Gonzalez (Senior Governance Coordinator) (Minutes)  
Robin Webber-Jones (Principal Northamptonshire)  
Sheraz Amin (Executive Director of Digital Transformation)

**C/46/24                      Apologies for absence and declarations**

Apologies

Apologies were received from Varsha Mistry and David Moran

Em Lowe, Deputy CEO sent apologies.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the matters on the agenda.

**C/47/24                      Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.



## CEO's report

### **C/48/24                      CEO Update**

The Chair of the Corporation introduced the agenda item, and the CEO summarised his paper, which included highlighting the following items; the Ofsted update and the 2023-24 academic year closure position, the position in respect of Bedford College Academies Trust ("BCAT"), and the apprenticeship opportunity to be discussed under Part B. The CEO had included in the board pack a number of items for information including; Letter to the Chancellor from the Association of Colleges, letter from the DfE re the College's position on the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework ("AAF"), letter to the members from Bedford College Academies Trust ("BCAT") a Skills England presentation and the FE Commissioner's newsletter. The CEO also highlighted achievements including the Healthy Schools Award and Student of the Year Award.

The CEO highlighted three messages of assurance from the update:

- Ofsted update; members were reminded that the provisional grading is confidential but hopefully it will be published before Christmas.
- Closure: nothing has changed since the presentation at the Board Creative session at the end of September. It has been a very successful year.
- Pay: Resources Committee will be receiving a paper at their next meeting. The budget has provided for a pay award and the Resources Committee will review affordability before the actual award is finalised. The formal process and delegation of approval for the actual pay award will be picked up in the review of the standing orders.

### Questions and Discussions

The Chair of the Board formally recorded thanks to staff and students who supported the Ofsted visit.

Governors requested more detailed information about the pay award budget and on the sector context. Discussion centred on the relationship with the schools' sector and their recommended pay award. Colleges do not have a national pay review body and are more impacted by local bargaining power. The CEO confirmed colleges are not expected to see any bonuses coming from next week's budget announcement but that there are flexibilities in the current set up and differences between school and college set ups.

Governors asked for clarification on Ofsted's single word judgements and whether these still apply to colleges. The CEO confirmed that they do. Ofsted had carried out the 'Big Listen' review. A change to moving away from the single word judgements for colleges is expected but there is likely to be underlying grades in any event.

### **C/49/24                      Balanced scorecard**



As the Deputy CEO was unable to attend the Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”) presented the Balanced Scorecard. The report highlighted the relevant key performance indicators (“KPIs”) in two of the strategic pillars, educational leadership and student outcomes for 2023-24, (a full presentation was shared with the Board in September 2024) and sustainability measures linked to staff and finances. It confirms progress in KPIs relating to staff including an improvement in staff percentage who would recommend the Group from 69% in 2022-23 to 77% in 2023-24 with a target of 80% in 2024-25. In regards to financial output a full paper will go to the next Resources committee. Performance indicators will be allocated to relevant committees for monitoring.

Work is being done to develop the Balanced scorecard and 4 quadrants of KPIs and the CEO, Deputy CEO, Chair and Vice Chair will meet after half term to take this forward.

### Questions and Discussions

The Chair of the Board added to the discussion that there were no KPI targets for the 2023/24 year and therefore performance is compared to the 2022-2023 year actuals.

The CEO explained the plan for 3 year target setting and plans for reporting. Performance for quarter 1 of the current academic year will be presented in December.

The Board was satisfied with the results from the employee’s survey, as there is an improvement on the previous feedback, although it was considered the participation level remains a concern. The CEO explained that the feedback from future surveys is expected to change and fluctuate as the Group goes through any cultural and structural changes. The Board will be kept informed on the direction of travel.

Governors commented that the information was considered helpful but sought further clarification on what it will show in terms of achievement and ALP scores (A level performance measure). The Group’s goal is to achieve an ALPs score of 4 for 2026-27 with the current position being at an 8. The spread of KPIs to be reviewed by each committee was decided at the Governance Committee in June 2024 and the Curriculum & Quality Committee will monitor performance with regards to ALPS more closely.

The Principal of Northamptonshire, responsible for sixth forms, updated the Board on the current position and an update on the students’ scores for the first round of mock examinations will be provided to the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

### Conclusion:

The Governors noted the level of assurance provided.

## **Educational Leadership**



## C/50/24 Quality of Education

As the Deputy CEO was unable to attend the CEO introduced the item and explained the Position Statement and the Data on Quality of Education. This included feedback on the Ofsted inspection.

### Questions and Discussions

EPYP was explained as Education Programmes for Young People.

The Board requested information on plans for the presentation of the Quality Improvement Plan ("QIP"). The CEO reassured the Board that this will come through to the next Curriculum & Quality Committee with the opportunity for detailed scrutiny.

With regard to the Governance action log, the Chair of the Board confirmed that there will be a colour-coding rating to the 'in progress' status using the Blue Red Amber Green ("BRAG") system. Green will mean 'in progress and on target' where blue will mean 'complete'

The Board agreed that the new way of submitting the reports and the appendices is better and more effective. ***The Governance team requested any further feedback on the Board pack and papers to be passed on to the Group Director of Governance for further improvements to be considered.***

The Board requested more clarification on acronyms.

***ACTION: The Governance Team will update the comprehensive glossary of acronyms currently on the portal and will also seek to produce a concise guide of the most frequently used ones. This will be shared with the Board.***

The Governors had a special interest in both student and staff's wellbeing strategy progress. The CEO offered assurance to the Board that this workstream will resume its activities and will move in the right direction and confirmed he had met with the staff governor who has expertise in this area to share progress. It was confirmed that the Group has signed up to the Association of Colleges Wellbeing Charter.

The Board asked for further information on Project 'S', (simplification). The CEO explained that this project is looking at simplifying the processes in further education generally with most benefits of simplification being considered to be in adult education. Progress has slowed recently and it is expected to close shortly as it was an initiative of the previous Government.

The CEO explained the methods the Group uses to capture stakeholder feedback and governors who had attended SAR meetings confirmed that there was a lot of feedback in



the moderation meetings for the SAR (Self-Assessment Report) from all stakeholder communities including employers.

Conclusion:

The Governors noted that the report provided the required level of assurance.

**C/51/24                      Safeguarding report**

The Principal of CBC & Group Designated Safeguarding Lead (“DSL”) explained to the Governors that the changes in Safeguarding processes being made are ongoing and that they will ensure robust planning and management of events for the coming years, along with improved resilience and capacity to meet legislation, along with meeting the changing and growing needs of our communities.

All staff members and Governors are expected to complete the training in both Prevent and Safeguarding as part of the ‘onboarding process’. Great news was shared as at October 2024, 100% of new staff and governors had completed this. In addition, all staff and governors are required to read the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education (“KCSiE”) 2024 and the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy for 2024-25. As at October 2024, 100% of staff and governors had completed both.

The DSL outlined the position in respect of a review of arrangements for safeguarding of National College for Motorsports (“NC4M”) students. Remote learning was implemented for a short period but the DSL confirmed that onsite learning has resumed and learning had not been negatively impacted.

The Governors sought to understand the student survey position on Safeguarding. The DSL pointed the Board to more detailed information on this subject at appendix 4 of their report.

Finally, the Governance Team thanked the Governors for their active participation in completing training, accessing college emails and the Bedford LMS (Learning Management System) portal.

Questions and Discussions

The Board questioned the level of confidence on the current safeguarding technology and how systems are kept up to date. The DSL reassured the Board that triggers are set up now to allow the key staff members to see what has not been actioned within 24 hours of a report so that intervention can take place. On top of this, the DSL communicated to the Board that new Director of Student Services is starting on the 4<sup>th</sup> November. Feedback on the new process has started to be received. The DSL confirmed and reassured the Board that this new process is having the desired impact.



The Board requested clarification on how students who need safeguarding are identified. The DSL explained to the Board that there are various ways:

- Self-referral
- Agency referral
- Internal personnel

The DSL confirmed that now that there are more internal resources available with dedicated safeguarding personnel, it will be easier to identify students at risk and support them.

Regarding the new systems and processes, the Board requested more detail on the operation of CPOMS (Child Protection Online Management System). The DSL confirmed that this system is being explored and the team is looking to implement it. The DSL is carrying out additional deep dives to provide assurance. This new system will be centralised and all data will be collated. Staff will be able to easily accessed all of the relevant data.

The CEO commented that during the Ofsted visit, vulnerable students were asked about safeguarding and all of them confirmed they felt safe.

The Governors asked if the system is working as expected and whether staff are logging the information and following up. The DSL confirmed and reassured the Board that this is the case, and if it did not happen in a timely manner (24 hours have passed since something should have logged) the DSL will be informed by the system and a team member would be assigned to it immediately. The Executive reassured the Board that they are confident that after Christmas this system will be working to its 100% operational efficiency. Anecdotal evidence from staff and student governors supported the assurance provided.

**Action: A high level (milestone) plan for the migration of Safeguarding processes to CPOMS is to be shared with the Board at the next meeting in December.**

Conclusion:

The Governors noted that the report and discussions provided the required level of assurance.

**C/52/24                      Student surveys**

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications showed the data gathered from the Spring Survey. In conclusion, there are significant improvement trends across all themes compared to the previous year with part-time students appear more satisfied than the full-time ones.

Two points highlighted included;



- The survey responses are now benchmarked against other colleges (circa 82) across the country
- The onboarding and enrolment process for this year has improved since last year. Nonetheless, safeguarding scores were impacted by a need to improve awareness of fire evacuation procedures.

### Questions and Discussions

The Board enquired if there were any risks flagged and noted the lower than benchmarking score on the safeguarding question. The Board understood that this score was believed to relate to the students lack of understanding of fire evacuation procedures which has now been resolved. The CEO commented that he was very pleased with the survey results, as the direction of travel on both student and staff satisfaction is positive.

The Executive Director assured to the Board that a new matrix will be created. This will show the key proxies that will provide the data required by the Board, offering them reassurance.

The Governors agreed that this year's enrolment process was very smooth and hugely successful and this was supported by anecdotal feedback from staff and student governors based on their own experiences

The Principal Northants received feedback from the students, who are very happy and having a great experience this year. The Board asked if there was a narrative feedback question on the survey (in relation to enrolment). The Executive confirmed there was a space for feedback and improvement ideas and no negative comments were provided.

**ACTION: During the next curriculum review, the Principals will be asking for feedback in two areas from students:**

- **College experience**
- **Would they recommend this College group to others?**

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communication explained to the Board that for those students that are part time, surveys are normally sent via email. However, the full-time enrolment one was carried out in person as they had to come to the Campus. This was time consuming but provided a higher participation rate.

Further discussion took place on student involvement in designing the onboarding process and assurance given that this takes place. The Principals provided further assurance on student voice activities and the operation of student ambassadors.

**ACTION: Governors are invited to join the Student Council meetings and dates will be added to the Events Calendar. Governors LR and SS want to be invited to them.**



Student Governors agreed the experience has improved from last year.

It was suggested that although there is a lack of directly comparable historic data of more than one year, the College should look at patterns and longitudinal data presentation going forwards.

Conclusion:

The Governors noted the assurance provided and that survey results show that student satisfaction is improving, with a very positive start to the new academic year.

**Break [17:20 until 17:45]**

## **Community Leadership & Reputation**

### **C/53/24      Good news stories**

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communication presented the 'Good news' stories and events for 2024/25.

Questions and Discussions

The Governors agreed that it was great to see the press articles from the last few months. On top of that, the Governors suggested it could be good to think how to get good stories from the Group's top 5 employers and partners. The Executive confirmed that the Group is going to get case studies from the employers, to gather more 'Good stories' segments. Governors considered that when speaking with Government and other bodies to get funding or support, the social value charter added by The Bedford College Group ("TBCG") in its communities is very relevant, particularly with industry.

A governor asked if there is a gap in respect of reviewing the secondary schools and university views on TBCG. The Executive assured the Board the Group is engaging and collecting feedback from schools. These are both a supplier of students and potential competitors. To this point, the Executive mentioned that the College is working with schools on careers advice, study programmes, sports and coaching programmes, education skills and other engagement activities.

### **C/54/24      Events calendar 2024-2025**

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communication presented the events calendar. The Governors and Staff members will be invited to these.





Questions and Discussions

The Executive invited the Governors to participate and join any event if they have a key interest. The Governors can notify the Executive Director of Marketing and Communication or the Governance Team. There are a couple of Open Days coming up and governors were encouraged to go along to different campuses.

**ACTION: The Executive Director of Marketing and Communication will be adding the Open Days to the list of events, as well as some Student competitions.**

## Sustainability

### **C/55/24 Health and Safety report**

The CFO presented the Group's performance in the approach to the management of health and safety. There is a long journey ahead, but TBCG is considered to be in a strong position.

Questions and Discussions

The Board flagged that the lockdown process has been ongoing for longer than anticipated in previous reports. (the previous report mentioned it would be done by July). The H&S Team confirmed that the planned system will not be fully embedded before Easter and agreed to keep the Board informed of the progress in each meeting until completion.

The CFO informed the Board that they are in the process of hiring a new H&S manager. The Board requested information on the person specifications, if this individual would have previous experience or if they will grow within the position. The CFO confirmed the latter was more likely.

**ACTION: CW and SM will speak outside the meeting about the new Lockdown system.**

The Board had a lengthy discussion on the current systems and approach to lock down in place, the links between Health & Safety and Safeguarding functions, the associated perceptions of risk and the statutory and regulatory position.

The forthcoming Safeguarding Committee will receive an update.

The Board further discussed how the Board should be updated when timelines have been agreed, milestones and triggers set. The Board involvement initiated (particularly when milestones are missed).



The CEO confirmed there are pockets of strength in certain departments in respect of health and safety and the Group will progress to ensure a culture of health and safety is embedded.

**ACTION: Executive to provide a paper to the next Resources Committee with details of the plan, timeline and resource required (the CFO will consider engaging external resource)**

**ACTION: CFO to present an update on the delivery of lockdown system in 6 months in the context of a wider paper on business continuity and disaster recovery**

Conclusion:

The Governors sought further assurances to be provided through the actions agreed.

**C/56/24 Staff survey**

The Executive Director of Human Resources updated the Board on the outcomes of the staff survey carried out at the end of 2023-24.

Context was provided for newer governors with annual surveys in June and sense checks in December. Progress between December and June was considered positive with the work done in the past 6 months starting to show on the progress, as the satisfaction is getting better, although there is room for improvement. Inclusivity is the highest score having increased by 31%. There had also been significant improvement in the percentage of staff likely to recommend the College (from 45% to 77%) The Executive confirmed to the Board that the focus groups had just finished and the feedback will be available soon. The Executive flagged to the Board that there is still a perception amongst some staff that surveys are not completely confidential and that there can be consequences to negative / honest feedback. Assurance was provided that this is not the case and that individuals cannot be identified.

Questions and Discussions

The Board requested clarification if this survey counted BCPS. The Executive confirmed it did count the whole Group but not associates.

The Board asked how the Group can have a participation rate of 95%. Rates have improved and the Executive Team should keep encouraging staff to participate but it cannot become a mandatory requirement.

The Board requested clarification on wellbeing lines of enquiry. There is one question about Line Managers being considerate of one's wellbeing and workload and the other is about the wider team's consideration of the same. The Board also asked if there is a question on the survey where individuals can write feedback on it. The Executive confirmed that is the case.



The Executive explained to the Board that the questions from this survey were different from previous years for comparison purposes. On top of this, the CEO commented that it is his plan to start moving towards an OD (Organisational Development) model: listening to the staff, having appraisals, having 1:1s, having team meetings will all make the employees feel heard. He believes this will encourage them to fill out the survey.

Conclusion:

The Governors noted the assurance provided in the report and discussion.

## **Assurance, Governance, Regulatory & Compliance**

### **C/57/24                      Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the following meetings were approved as accurate records of the relevant meetings:

12 June 2024

17 June 2024

4 July 2024

### **C/58/24                      Any Other Business**

There was no other business not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Meeting ended at [18:45]

Shaun Wilson, Noor Nazir, Leona Tiribabi and Titus Logan (staff and student governors) left the meeting

### **C/59/24                      Part B Confidential minutes (removed)**

The minutes have been removed for commercial sensitivity.

Meeting end [ 19:10]