

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held via Zoom at 17.00 on 31st March 2021

Present: Kevin Finan (Chair), Rob Nicholls, Chris Williams, David Chalmers, Sean Mackney, Lena Marvão, Deborah Watson, Neil Tanton, Mark Rogers, Iain Springate, Lindy Stacey, Bill Blythe, Sheena Murphy-Collett, Lee Thommen, Andy Champion, Holly Milton, Craig Litster, Jon Hardy

Governance Advisor: Joanna Boardman

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Maxine Padgham and Penny Adams

2. Declaration of Interests

No declaration of interests were declared.

3. Confidential Items

Confidential item is commercially sensitive

4. Items brought forward by the Chair

The Chair shared with the Board that Jenny Wallace had submitted her resignation as Governor and Vice-Chair of the Board. Both the Chair and CEO & Principal had been in contact with her and the Chair requested any interests in the Vice-Chair vacancy should be submitted to the Governance Advisor by Friday the 9th April 2021.

5. Governor Feedback

The board held a discussion following attendance at the Association of College's annual conference. It was noted that there was a strong theme around equality and diversity and it was agreed that as best practice the board composition and aims could be tested against the 9 protected characteristics. The Governance Advisor will undertake this and report the results into the next Search and Governance Committee.

Discussion was also held around the announcement of the closure of The Factory as it has been raised on County Radio and questions to some Governors had been received. The College confirmed that the closure was being undertaken in the best interests of Petroc and that the learner experience was critical and would be maintained through other means. The College has a responsibility to ensure that

the core purpose of teaching and learning are prioritised over commercial enterprises and community venues. However, it was noted that the College means to continue working with local authorities and venues to create a cultural heart of Barnstaple/North Devon.

Board recommended that the CEO Principal reach out to the Mayor to include the Town Council in the reasoning behind the decisions taken and to keep open line of communications.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

20GFB46

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Full Governing Body held on the 26th January 2021 were agreed and approved by the Board.

The Board noted that the Chair had approved the College making initial applications to the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund and the T-Level wave three Application through Chairs action between full Board meetings.

The CEO and Principal gave a brief verbal update to the Board on the progress of the Annual pay Award

Strategic

7. Strategic Breakout Session

The principal initiated a series of breakout rooms for all attendees to discuss and challenge the College approach to the “Skills for Jobs” White Paper

After the groups returned to the main room the following points were reported back from those breakouts.

- There may be an issue with Industry Placement opportunities decreasing in the current climate
- An overall commitment to engaging with T-Levels is a positive step for the College
- The College needs to recognise both vocational and academic learners
- As T-Levels grow what would be the impact on apprenticeships?
- There needs to be a parity across learners to manage the reputation
- Is there enough Industry recognition of T-levels and what can the College do to support that
- VESPA analytics are important to the College
- One of the key foundations should be in staff research and the release of time for that
- The prioritisation of resources and how to make smart use of them

Action: Any further notes not shared at the meeting are to be sent to the Governance Advisor

8. Principal and CEO’s Termly Report

20FGB47

The Principal presented the Termly Report to the Board update the Board on progress and challenges. The Board noted that it contained a broad range of updates and some very positive elements as well as updates on the current challenges.

Quality, Curriculum and Learners

9. Teacher assessed Grades and Appeals Quality Assurance Process

20FGB48

The Interim Vice-Principal presented a paper detailing the College methodology for Teacher Assessed Grades in 2021.

The boards raised questions to assure themselves that:

- effective moderation had been put in place
- multiple levels in Maths and English were accounted for to avoid double marking
- How parity is assured across subject levels and avoiding bias
- Consideration of programme deterioration across this year does not impact on the grading in a negative or positive fashion. Should marks be significantly different then benchmarking will be utilised

It was noted that the timelines are challenging for staff and that is a hard balance between staffing challenges and delivering quality output.

10. Early Leavers Report

20FGB49

The Interim Vice-Principal presented a paper containing the 16-18 withdrawal trends for the year and the past year 3 years. Petroc has a retention rate of 95.3% compared to a national average of 95.7%. The main reasons cited for withdrawal were shown as gaining employment, not enjoying their course and falling behind with their coursework.

The board discussed the findings in the paper and challenged what the College was looking at around the issue of not enjoying the course and course changes. The Interim Vice-Principal described a project that the College is undertaking currently on the full Learner Journey to investigate these issues.

Board cautioned the College to ensure that no learner is disadvantaged

Finance and Resources

11. Month 7 Accounts

20FGB50

Key notes from the accounts presented by the Vice Principal of Finance and Resources were:

- Achieving the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and Apprenticeships targets remain key risk areas.
- The in-year Covid-19 Adult Skills Offer (ring fenced) is showing little prospect of being utilised
- The 16-19 Tuition – Level up Funding continues to be a challenge to facilitate.
- Fees Income and Commercial activities continue to be tracked and may require further adjustments in the coming months.
- Expenditure budget lines will continue to be monitored and reviewed again over the coming term but it is very likely that the College's overall cost base will reduce further in year and result in an improved operating and cash position.

Board challenged the College to identify best investments that are needed for the growth of the College, through Marketing and Recruitment or other areas. It was noted that work on perception and brand surveys were being undertaken and more on this would come to Board later in the year.

The Chair stated that whilst it was important to maintain budget it was equally important to understand the market and target the right programmes and right people

The issue of the Unique Selling Point of better locations eroding the market for Petroc being set against the need for the College to build its own competitive offer was discussed

12. Course Fees Policy for 2021/22 20FGB51

The VP Finance and Resources presented the course fee policy which serves as a framework for fee setting and asked Board for its endorsement.

The Board approved and endorsed the policy

13. Annual Accounts of Petroc Student Union 20FGB52

Board noted and approved the Student Union annual accounts

14. Emerging Funding Position 2021/22 20FGB53

The VP Finance and Resources presented the emerging funding position to the Board and acknowledged that at this stage of the year it is difficult to predict with any great degree of accuracy the detailed financial position that the college will face in the coming year as allocations from government, applications from students and detailed business plans are all beginning to be received and/or finalised in this part of the year.

Forecasting has been made even more complex with unknowns around Brexit and the Pandemic yet to be fully understood.

15. Audit Committee Draft Minutes 20FGB54

The audit committee minutes were presented by the committee Chair and accepted and approved by Board.

16. Risk Management/Board Assurance Termly Report 20FGB55

The VP Finance and Resources presented the update to Board along with the assurances from the examination by the Audit Committee.

The board challenged the high number of Strategic Risks (53) where 10/11 would normally be expected. The College explained that the process to update risk management within the College had been underway for some months and that next stages would divide the current register between Operational and Strategic and that on the next update there would be more clarity.

17. Key Performance Indicator (KPI) progress update 20FGB56

The Vice Principal and CEO updated Board on the progress within the College around the creation of register. The staff have just completed a KPI workshop which included best practice, external research and completion of some practical sessions. There is a drive to provide staff with data dashboards to support the activity.

Governance

18. Student Governors Report 20FGB57

The Student Governor presented the report to Board who commented that Student Union had done well set against a particularly challenging year and thank them for their support of the students.

19. Search and Governance Committee Minutes 20FGB58

The Chair of Board presented the committee minutes for Board approval and asked Board for comments and approval of the recommendations to adopt a new committee structure for 2021/22 and the recommendations for governor term extensions and recruitment.

All items were approved by Board

19a. Governance Matters 20FGB59

The Governance Advisor presented the proposed Annual Calendar of meetings for 2021/22 for Board approval and a draft of the Annual Cycle of Business 2021/22(which was to be completed once the committee structure had been approved)

All items were approved by Board and the Cycle of Business will be brought to a later meeting.

Our People

20 Human Resource (HR) Autumn Update 20FGB60

The Director of HR and Organisational Development presented the update and brought attention to the drafting of the People Strategy and the commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of staff.

Investments had been made into an app 'Unmind' to support staff

It was reported that there were over 30 staff members were trained in Adult Mental Health First Aid

The report and actions were supported by the Board.

The Student and Staff Governors left the meeting

Date of Next Meeting – Monday 17th May 5.00pm – via Zoom