

GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Governing Body held at 17.00 on Wednesday 19 April 2023
in Cotie Boardroom and via Teams

Members – Full Governing Board

Present

Lindy Stacey	Chair of Governors
Pat Denham	Vice Chair
Iain Springate	External Governor
Jon Price	Academic Staff Governor
Andy Champion	External Governor
Dawn Stabb	External Governor
Stephen Wells	External Governor
Katerina Kolyva	External Governor
Richard Bevan	External Governor
Deborah Watson	External Governor
Neil Tanton	Support Staff Governor
Sean Mackney	Principal and CEO
Bella Dash	Student Governors
Rob Nicholls	External Governor

In Attendance

Joanna Boardman	Governance Advisor and Head of Executive Office
Bill Blythe	VP Finance, Resources and Regional Affairs
Jason Jones	Interim VP Education & Learners
Sheena Murphy-Collett	VP People, Organisational Development and Engagement
Alex Farmery	Executive Officer
Caroline Chipperfield	Director HE (for HE presentation)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from David Chalmers and Deborah Watson at the start and during the meeting, not in advance.

2. Declaration of Interests

No declarations were made

3. Confidential Items

There will be one item which will be covered under confidential items later in the meeting and had been emailed to the chair.

4. Minutes from previous meeting

22FGB26/27

The minutes from the meeting on 13 December 2023 and the extraordinary meeting on 29 March 2023 were approved.

5. Items brought forward by the Chair

There were no items brought forward by the Chair.

6. Higher education A-Z

The Board was thanked by the Deputy Principal for giving the curriculum team the opportunity to present an update and to showcase HE, including:

- Branding
- University centre
- Marine
- Flow
- HE development
- Events
- Governors' accountability for:
 - Access and Participation plan
 - Conditions of Registration
 - Student voice experience

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During the presentation the Governance Advisor reiterated the Governors responsibilities and accountability for various items such as the Access and participation plan, OFS conditions of registration and fees policies and funding sign off.

The presentation by the Faculty Director HE was an overall picture on everything that had changed within HE at Petroc and encouraged the Board to contribute toward the strategic direction of HE and to help develop a strategic vision. There were still lots of challenges noted within HE and the Board was asked to help keep supporting the college and its HE provision locally and nationally wherever they can including the use of social media.

The Chair and Vice Chair thanked the Faculty Director HE for the great and insightful presentation which was very informative and encouraged some discussion on the branding and the definition of a university centre. The Board made a few suggestions as to the logo, the collaboration with Plymouth university, the name of the University Centre and how to market the centre.

Some of the comments received from the Board following the presentation:

- Collaboration with other Universities (not just Plymouth)
- Offer more foundation courses
- Consider the logo (wind turbine?)
- Grow the access provision online

Feedback from the Student Governor was that potential students would look at employability, quality of lecturing, student reputation and the reputation with universities.

The Faculty Director HE concluded that colleges usually create a distinctive brand around their geographical location and area and the college has transformed in terms of branding from Plymouth to University Centre Plymouth to University Centre Northern Devon. Identity is an important factor and needs to speak for all the things Petroc offers.

The University Centre Northern Devon will need to be ready with a flexible offer for new occupations and with residential options which will allow for block teaching. Working together with Plymouth currently allows the centre to offer a progression route, great service, and a direct validation route. The centre also already has established links with the Open university, Exeter University and Bolton University to work together collaboratively.

The Board requested to use some time during the next Board Strategy Day to discuss branding and marketing for Petroc and the University Centre as there needs to be a clear

distinction between the two, the Petroc name was purposefully left out of the University Centre name.

7. Strategic Termly update

The Principal updated the Board on any ongoing projects for the spring term starting with a confirmation that finances were still tight and the college has been concentrating on this immediate concern by initiating tasks and programmes to generate income in the short term.

The college remained way ahead of the recruitment numbers compared to last year, the numbers were up in Tiverton and in North Devon by over 200 for the 16-18 learners. With this ongoing trend it could potentially earn the college some in year funding next academic year.

The college reported the making of efficiencies for its curriculum, working together with a consultant to host a couple of workshops for the College Leadership Team to follow up on a full curriculum review. These workshops will be about evidence informed decision making, benchmarking and creating a performance culture and to create an action plan for the delivery of any recommendations.

The Sustain and Grow programme has been delivering some of the expected results and lots of different activities were still underway to produce the financial benefit, however, some of those will not come until later in the year or next year.

There has been a small increase in the satisfaction rate in the latest staff survey and there was still a push on learning and developing a learning culture, driving for continuous improvements.

Looking at the Estates workstream, there has been ongoing progress as the college had its first offer for the lease of A Block in Tiverton and the Brannams relocation was also on track. Negotiations were noted as still under way with the Tarka Leisure Centre to move the sports provision from the college to the Leisure Centre.

Talking about the national and regional context, a reported lack of productivity from the government on a national level and a loss of overheads in relation to the skills agenda was discussed, such as fading out the LEPs. There will be a change within the adult education budget as a result.

A Level Maths applications were up by 80% this year compared to last year, which may result in the college considering to offer Level 3 applied Maths.

The VP Finance, Resources and Regional Affairs had spent more time at different events supporting the college to lobby the loan scheme and the plan for lifelong learning entitlement from 2025.

Recently the Executive team had initiated the ID badge/behaviour RESET involving all learners and staff. As part of the college's commitment to all learners, the College has an obligation to ensure a safe and secure learning environment. This reset was supported by all staff, curriculum and business support and had so far shown a mostly positive response from the learners.

At the same time the college was driving for consistency in learning and teaching, the main driver being the deputy principal which had shown to already having made a huge difference to the organisation.

Reporting on successes, the principal noted some of those as:

- Being awarded the Centre of professional and technical excellence for Marketing as a new contract (this will be led by the faculty for technical studies) as well as an extension to the Health & Science and Business contracts
- College awaiting to hear on a bid for £450k for bootcamps
- Multiply campaign which delivers maths training to increase numeracy skills via family interactive sessions with parents and children

The Principal also reported that he is part of the Southwest Social Mobility Commission whose main focus it is to give children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds the chance to be able to live decent lives in the future. The commission highlights the region's poor social mobility and unique challenges and puts forward some practical and impactful recommendations.

The Board noted that the college is continuing to form much stronger relationships with employers and stakeholders, in conversations with MATs, Skern Lodge in Appledore, Barnstaple Rugby Football Club to name a few.

A bid has been submitted for £500k for the Turing scheme which replaces the European Erasmus scheme after Brexit and enables students to travel and study abroad.

Cotie 2 and 3 buildings have been making progress with one of them being able to showcase an immersive learning room in the future.

The college has been working towards the sustainability goals with the Salix proposal hoping to lower the carbon footprint. Lots of different new developments in the area such as Retrofit, and FLOW will form part of the curriculum and tutorials.

The Principal notified the Board of a conversation with a DfE team that had been triggered by the apprenticeship data for last year falling below an acceptable level. The Retention and achievement rates were of a concern; however, the college has been working with the Faculty Manager for Apprenticeships and the Quality team to improve. An apprenticeship deep dive has taken place and performance issues were being dealt with at a management level. The DfE had identified three areas at risk and two at require improvement, the meeting will help to put an action plan together.

There was no risk to the revenue this year, but in total apprenticeships were only marginal below the bottom line.

Governors confirmed they are aware that this is an area of concern, and that the college is unable to grow in that area if there are ongoing issues.

The Student Governor and Board Vice Chair left the meeting at 19.00

8. Curriculum and Quality

22FGB28

The minutes from the Curriculum and Quality Committee meeting on 12 October 2022 were approved and it was noted that the one key item from the meeting on the 8 February 2023 to follow up on is the Quality of Apprenticeships. This will be included in the Deputy Principals report to Curriculum & Quality Committee on the 24 May 2023. The Board noted the papers in the non-discussion items.

SW left the meeting at 19.15

9. Finance and General Purposes

22FGB29

The minutes from the meeting on the 29 November 2022 were approved and the following recommendations from the last committee meeting on 28 February 2023 were received and discussed:

9.1 To receive the College Surveys update

22FGB30

A paper on the college surveys was received by the Board and it was shared that a review of all surveys conducted was undertaken with the conclusion that there are too many survey requests every year.

The Vice Principal People, Organisational Development and Engagement reported that a fresh approach will be applied to look at feedback, survey owners and actual requirements. There were concerns about participation in surveys and so-called survey fatigue. A reduced and more targeted number of surveys will see an improvement. The college will need to work on the output/actions of the surveys to offset the negative perception.

The future report will be split into two, where the staff surveys report is presented to the Finance and General Purposes committee and the student surveys results are analysed in the Curriculum and Quality committee.

The summary of some of those surveys has shown that the perception in the community remains slightly negative, a number of recommendations had already been actioned however much greater engagement with the community and local employers is required.

For now, any actions were being collated, RAG rated and shared with the marketing department.

A recent stakeholder survey however had shown a more positive response including a confirmed investment of a major share of the community regeneration fund by the Mid Devon Council into our Tiverton Campus.

There were still issues within the community that lead back to a lack of contact with employers for Apprenticeships which has led to a reputational damage and will need more investment of time and effort. The Board suggested for the college to increase its community outreach by offering to host events at Tiverton campus and be more present at Tiverton centre at weekends/throughout events.

The VP People, Organisational Development and Engagement confirmed that the numbers for Tiverton are up compared to last year, a positive sign for all the work that was underway.

The Board approved the report and all recommendations within.

9.2 To approve the HR Autumn report

22FGB31

The VP People, Organisational Development and Engagement confirmed that the HR Autumn report was seen by the Finance and General purposes committee and recommended to the Board. No changes had been made to the report since and the Board were asked to note and approve the report. The report showed staff turnover, sickness absence levels, recruitment and staff development expenditure.

The Board noted the report and requested for CPD to support staff with the understanding about the education of children with special needs, disabilities and education and health care plans.

The Board also requested to see some more trends going forward.

Both were confirmed by the VP People, Organisational Development and Engagement and it was reported that SEND training will form part of the next CPD day in May being compulsory for all staff.

The report was approved by the Board.

9.3 To receive the 5-year financial forecast

22FGB32

This report was received by the Board at the last extraordinary meeting on 29 March 2023, giving the Board an update on the latest thinking on the Sustain and Grow Action Plan and other updated figures that were in the month seven management accounts. The paper highlighted that the forecast showed the Staff Savings net of mitigations rather than the Gross with the mitigations identified separately. The Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Regional Affairs agreed to produce a version for the board that showed the position spread across the various Income and Expenditure headings rather than all netted against staff costs.

The Board debated as to whether there is any need for a 3-5 year forecast as it will most likely not be accurate or indeed achievable. It was impossible to predict accurate figures so far ahead as things are constantly changing. The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Regional Affairs) agreed that the current forecast is very optimistic, but it reflected the Sustain and Grow progress made and if all applications were to turn into enrolments, learner numbers would be up by 300.

The Board was offered a refresher on how to use the Data Dashboard during the next Strategy Away day at the beginning of May by the Principal.

The Board noted the paper.

9.4 To approve the Pay and Grading Guidelines & Pay Policy and Procedure

22FGB33i+ii

The Board approved of the amendments proposed in the Guidelines, Policy and Procedure.

9.5 To approve the Course Fee policy

22FGB34

The VP People, Organisational Development and Engagement confirmed that this policy and all associated documents are subject to regular review and the Board discussed the policy and its changes accordingly.

It was noted by the Governance Advisor that the Board has a responsibility on the overriding steer on what fees should be charged, but not on the actual fees that are finally agreed.

It was suggested by the Board that there is not enough certainty in the policy on what the costs for admin or any supplementary charges are. These were all mentioned in the college prospectus but not in the policy, which will need to be rectified before the policy is published. It was also agreed to add any hyperlinks to other documents that are being referred to in the policy.

The policy was approved with those changes to be made.

10. Audit Committee

22FGB48

The minutes from the meeting on the 29 November 2022 were approved and the following recommendations from the last committee meeting on 28 February 2023 were discussed and received:

- Strategic Risk monitoring and Board Assurance

- KPI update

The Governance Advisor with the Chair of the Committee adding comments, gave a brief update on the last Audit committee noting the responsibility of the executive team for the Audit monitoring report, the action to report back to the Board on the outstanding cyber security tasks (from the internal audit) and the agreement that action plans will be added to each committee from now on to be able to follow up on any outstanding actions.

It was reported that the performance by the college's internal auditors has been pretty poor throughout this academic year in terms of providing feedback and timely reports and has still not agreed the terms/financial structure for 23/24. It was recommended to schedule a partner meeting to discuss any issues and pricing structure.

The recommendation by the committee was for the Board to receive the strategic risk monitoring update and the KPI update.

10.1 To receive Strategic Risk monitoring and Board Assurance

22FGB35

The Board received the Strategic Risk monitoring report and noted that Risk SR9 (Staff resource and skills do not meet business requirements - Right people, right place, right time) has seen an increase in its residual score from 8 to 17, making it one of the highest scoring risks. It was confirmed by the executive team that recruitment is currently very difficult and does pose a high risk for the college.

10.2 To receive the KPI update

22FGB36

The Board received the KPI update and requested a predicted outcome. However, it was agreed that with the data provided by various sources the college can only make a judgement on how the results would look at target time.

It was noted that the Mides data sets are now available (provided by RCU) and the Board has requested to see those during the next meeting. The Deputy Principal will be writing the strategic operating plan together with the Principal which will look at the KPIs in comparison to the strategy.

The board noted KPI 2ii in relation to the Personal Development Awards and queried if this could be achieved by the end of the academic year? The Deputy Principal agreed to look at this.

The Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Regional Affairs confirmed that the college still has not heard back from the bank on the convenance issue.

11. Non discussion items

Curriculum and Quality

- To note the Introduction and deputy principal curriculum and quality report*
- To note the apprenticeship update and presentation*
- To note the Ofsted readiness update*
- To note the update on Quality of Teaching and Learning including HE*
- To note an update on the Quality Improvement Plan*
- To note Safeguarding and SEN update*

Finance and General Purposes

- To note the HR Leavers Report 21/22*
- To note the Annual Accounts of Petroc Student Union*
- To note the Project performance update*
- Strategy updates: (to note) *
 - Estates Strategy
 - Digital Strategy

The College financial statements review was shared with the Governors on 31 March via email confirming the college status as good financial health.

Any other business

The Governance advisor confirmed this was the last meeting for Neil Tanton, the Business Support Staff Governor and thanked him for his time and contributions over the last few years.

A new Staff Governor was due to be appointed shortly, there were three applications, and this will go to vote once all three have provided their manifesto. The new Business Support staff Governor will be introduced at the next Board meeting.

Before the meeting drew to an end, the Governance Advisor sought any recommendations and items for the agenda for the Board/Executive Strategy away day:

- Marketing and Branding
- Employer engagement – educational point of view
- Professional development (online training, CPD modules, Cyber Security)
- Dashboard refresher
- Meet some learners in Tiverton

It was suggested from now on to include updates from the link governors and outstanding training on the agenda for each board meeting.

The meeting concluded at 19.50

The next meeting is scheduled in person in Barnstaple at Cotie Boardroom on Tuesday 18 July 2023 at 17.00