

GOVERNING BODY

DRAFT - Minutes of the meeting of the Full Governing Body held at 17.00 on Tuesday 9 July 2024 in Cotie Boardroom

Members – Full Governing Board **Present**

Lindy Stacey	Chair of Governors
Iain Springate	External Governor
Dawn Stabb	External Governor
Richard Bevan	External Governor
Gaynor Castle	External Governor
Jon Price	Academic Staff Governor
Pat Denham	External Governor
Neil Sherman	External Governor
James Wright	External Governor
Martin McNeill	External Governor
Julie McLeod	External Governor

In Attendance

Bill Blythe	VP Finance, Resources and Regional Affairs (VPFRR)
Jason Jones	Deputy Principal Education & Learners (DP)
Joanna Boardman	Director of Governance and Director of Executive Operations (DoG)
Alex Farmery	Executive Officer (EO)
Pete Gammon	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Clark Denby	HE Faculty Manager
Jon Walton	Student Governor (from September 2024)
Fiona Chalk	External Board Reviewer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Katerina Kolyva, Hermione Williams-Copp, Andy Champion, Stephen Wells, Keira Keen and Lewis Willcocks.

It was noted that Jon Walton, new Student Governor from September 2024 and Fiona Chalk, External Board Reviewer would be observing the meeting.

2. Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were received.

3. Confidential Items

No confidential items were declared.

4. Matters arising

It was agreed that there were no matters arising from the minutes that were not already on the agenda.

5. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting on 17 April 2024 were approved.

23FGB61

6. Items brought forward by the Chair.

There were no items brought forward by the Chair.

7. Board membership 2024/25

7.1 It was reported that no other Governors had stepped forward for Chair and/or Vice Chair and the Chair had agreed to carry on for one more term as Co-Chair with the current Vice Chair as Co-Chair. The Board agreed and approved. Both would be sharing Chair duties during the next year such as chairing meetings, signature duties, reviews etc.

7.2 It was proposed to the Board by the DoG that the Chair of Audit committee extend their term to the end of the academic year 2024/25 with another Audit Committee member (Neil Sherman) shadowing ready to take over as Chair in September 2025, and this was approved.

8. A year at Petroc in Safeguarding and Wellbeing

The Board received a presentation from the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) covering the latest safeguarding data, improvements in service provision, and assurance measures implemented by the college.

Link to the presentation: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Y-oE2WgwxwzNU3wiHdNQ12QJXjxz9XZj3/edit#slide=id.p1>

The Board was reminded of its remit on safeguarding matters meaning that the Board is responsible to ensure the college has the correct processes and procedures in place to ensure all safeguarding aspects can be managed and learners receive the appropriate support.

It was noted that the task of safeguarding is becoming increasingly difficult as number rise very year and more resources are required within the team. Recent developments have been that all learners get triaged, the college now has a college nurse and has installed an expansive CCTV system as well as running a daily Duty Manager rota. The team was also working closely with parents of disadvantaged children offering workshops.

The Board thanked the DDSL and their team for their hard work recognising the difficulties and challenges.

9. Link Governor report.

9.1 High Needs Activity (SEND)

23FGB62

The report as submitted to the Board was taken as read and it was reiterated to the Board to take any opportunity, if possible, to attend the student events at college such as the Petroc Go celebration events, Student Awards, creative events etc.

A formal thank you was noted from the SEND Link Governor to all involved in organising these events.

9.2 Safeguarding

It was noted that DS attended the Safeguarding committee meetings every term and an update had been provided to the Board by the DDSL.

One focus of the meeting was inclusivity, and the committee was planning to work with students and parents via a Survey.

9.3 Health and Safety

n/a

9.4 Curriculum and Quality

An update would be provided as part of the Curriculum and Quality Committee update.

10. Deputy Principal update - presentation

Link to the presentation: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Y-oE2WgxwzNU3wiHdNQ12QJXjxz9XZj3/edit#slide=id.p1>

The Deputy Principal presented an update on what has been happening at the college over the past three months, including:

- Education and Learners
- Financial position
- Financial recovery plan
- Restructuring process
- People update.

Education and Learners

It was reported that there have been improvements for Professional Learning instigated by the Head of Quality Improvement using Monday afternoon slots that have not been timetabled for CPD.

The number of Lesson observations has also increased; however, quality improvement was a work in progress and is ongoing, but there were no longer any Red rated actions on the Quality Improvement Plan. (The plan tracks progress across twenty-two different curriculum areas)

On Learner Experience the DP focused on the recent trips to destinations like Fiji, Malawi, Sweden, Morocco, and Japan, noting that these experiences are not yet consistent, due to ongoing staffing issues.

Regarding the upcoming Ofsted inspection in the next academic year, it was mentioned that a senior HMI had reached out to the DP following the notification of the change in CEO. They expressed support and recognition for the college during this transition.

It was reported that the business planning process had been completed; however, an internal audit of the timetables was still necessary.

Concerns were raised about applications for the 2024/25 academic year, which currently appear flat. Efforts should be made to improve the conversion rate, with a target of achieving a 72% conversion through "keeping warm" activities over the summer.

Learner journey was also addressed, with enrolments set to begin on August 28th. It was clarified that this would not be an auto-enrolment process.

Financial Position/Financial Recovery Plan

It was reported that the final financial outturn will include provisions for pensions and other unspecified items. For the 2024/25 forecast, it was noted that the numbers are still subject to minor adjustments, and the CFFR (College Financial Forecasting Return) will be set at £802k.

As at the 9 July the recovery plan has made savings of £1.611m.

Restructure

The process will be completed over the next couple of weeks with staff leaving or having left at the end of August.

People update.

It was reported that survey trends on staff morale and wellbeing have been declining consistently over the last 4 years and lots of work was needed to improve. Though it was noted that the college had not lost any more staff than usual due to low staff morale and the uptake on voluntary redundancy was less than expected.

The two Assistant Principals had held a staff event on Monday afternoon at the Liberty Cafe where staff bought in cakes etc to say farewell to everyone before the summer holidays and to thank staff for their contribution and hard work.

The DP concluded that more work was needed with all the local feeder schools to improve the college reputation and with staff internally to improve the culture. Culture being what do we do, how do we do it and why do we do it.

It was agreed to:

- Ensure Executive team are visible at local schools, not only the marketing team.
- Start to draft the new 25-30 strategy for a much-needed reboot
- Concentrate initially on enrolments and financial scrutiny.
- Stop student decline and staff turnaround.
- Increase conversion rate.

11. Curriculum and Quality

11.1 To receive any minutes of the Curriculum and Quality committee held on 6 February 2024

23FGB63

The minutes were received by the Board.

11.2 To summarise and discuss any matters arising of strategic importance from the previous meeting held on 8 May 2024

The chair reported that most of the key issues for this year had been covered in the Deputy Principal's presentation. It was noted that attendance was still extremely high on the list of needed improvement and more work was needed in getting students engaged to complete student surveys. The college would need a different approach by preparing the students for these surveys and reiterating how important their voice is.

Retention, progression, and achievement were also key priorities. These aspects were well-managed, regularly discussed, and thoroughly reviewed through data shared at each committee meeting.

11.3 To seek input in the development of the Access and Participation plan

23FGB64

The Access and Participation Plan (APP) is a strategic document that outlines how a university or college plans to improve access to higher education for underrepresented groups, enhance student success, and ensure equality of opportunity. The APP sets specific targets and measures to address gaps in participation, continuation, attainment, and progression among different student demographics.

The college has a requirement by Office for Students to have an updated/rewritten APP for the 2025/26 academic year if the intention were to provide above the basic tuition fee limit of £6000. Petroc currently has fees set at £9250, and therefore will be required to submit an APP by the extended deadline of 2nd September 2024.

It was reported that a working group had been set up by Clark Denby to draft this document.

It was agreed to:

- Share the working document with the Executive Team and Julie McLeod
- Produce a final draft by 20 August 2024
- Request another extension past the 2 September 2024 deadline (Deputy Principal)
- Arrange a meeting for Julie McLeod and Clark Denby as well as the Head of MIS, Head of Learner Admissions, and the Strategic & Planning Coordinator (DoG)
- Julie McLeod to assist and coordinate between the college and Board.

11.4 To receive the Safeguarding Annual Report

23FGB65

The report was received.

11.5 Recommendations from the Curriculum and Quality committee

11.5.1 To accept the recommendations of the OfS (Office for Students) Conditions of Registration report

23FGB66

The report was reviewed by the Board, and it was agreed to bring all the committees together to ensure everyone is aware of the liabilities and responsibilities associated with the Conditions of registration and that those are met. It was decided to have a final presentation to the Board to ensure the college meets all its conditions set by the HE regulator.

The report was accepted.

12. Audit Committee

12.1 To receive any minutes of the Audit Committee held on 21 March 2024.

The minutes were received.

23FGB67

12.2 To discuss any matters arising of strategic importance from the previous meeting held on 18 June 2024

It was reported that one of the internal Audits this year only received a partial assurance, however the committee had seen evidence that this was being worked on by the college and improvements had already been implemented.

The Committee had started to hold pre-meetings with only the Auditors, and this will be recurring as and when needed going forward.

It was reported that there had been discussions around the Internal Audit plan for next year and the plan presented to the Board included a couple of changes based on finances, forecasting and financial planning.

The committee had agreed to have KPIs, and Risks linked to individual committees within the responsibilities of that committee and the board from next year, where Audit committee would only take an overall view of the design of risk management and KPIs. Each Committee would also be mapped against the code of good governance.

12.3 Recommendations from Audit Committee

12.3.1 To approve the Internal Audit Plan 24/25

23FGB68

The plan was approved as presented with the papers.

12.3.2 To discuss the Risk Management Update

23FGB69

The update was received by the Board.

12.3.3 To discuss the KPI update (appendices available upon request)

23FGB70

The update was received by the Board.

13. Finance and General Purposes

13.1 To receive any minutes of the Finance and General purposes committee held on 26 March 2024

23FGB71

The minutes were received.

13.2 To discuss any matters arising of strategic importance and approve any recommendations from the previous meeting held on 26 June 2024

It was reported that as of Month 9, a £48k non-compliance on a turnover of £20m, which is a small amount can be seen. By Month 10, we have assured ourselves that the risk of a covenant breach is limited. The team had met with Barclays, and if the situation changes, they will seek an urgent waiver, though this is becoming less likely.

It was reported that there were concerns over the positive forecasting and the committee had requested for the VPFRRA to prepare a new forecast for the Board.

It was recommended to consider reversing the student growth numbers for a more conservative outlook.

It was acknowledged that a poor Ofsted report in the coming autumn was still a potential risk, although it was considered unlikely.

The committee recommended the Draft Budget, the Financial Regulations, and the Bad Debt Write Offs to the Board.

13.3 Recommendations from Financial and General Purposes Committee

13.3.1 To discuss and approve Draft Budget 24/25 and financial forecasts 25/26 23FGB72

It was noted that both the Budget for 24/25 and the forecast for 25/26 needed to be approved by the Board before submitting to the Department for Education on the College Financial Forecast Return (CFFR).

There was a discussion as to why there was no pay award included in the budget and the management team were encouraged to find ways to include this. The Board requested the reports for October and November to include a paper asking for a pay award. As part of the discussion, it was noted that the AoC are strongly encouraging government to narrow the pay gap between FE and the school sector.

Both the draft budget 24/25 and the financial forecast 25/26 were approved by the Board.

13.3.2 To approve Financial Regulations 23FGB73

The Financial Regulations were approved by the Board.

13.3.3 To approve Bad Debts Write off 23/24 23FGB74

The Bad Debts Write-off was approved by the Board.

14. Search and Governance

14.1 To receive any minutes of the Search and Governance committee held on 12 March 2024 23FGB75

The minutes were received.

14.2 To discuss any matters arising of strategic importance from the previous meeting held on 12 June 2024

It was reported that the items of strategic importance from the previous meeting were:

- Adapt the new AoC code of good governance.
- Succession planning for all Governors

- Improve student Governor and student engagement.

14.3 To note Staff Governor update.

The Staff Governor reiterated the importance of prioritizing education, with the mantra "Education, education, education" underscoring the central role that learning and teaching should play in all strategic decisions moving forward.

They shared feedback from staff, with an acknowledgment that last week's staff briefing was well attended. Staff members expressed appreciation for the transparency and communication provided during the briefing. However, there was confusion over how a 19 FTE reduction initially ended up with a lot less and staff expressed bafflement at how this change in the staffing plan had occurred.

Concerns were raised about the college's reputation within the community. It was noted that there is a growing perception that the community no longer believes in the college's ability to succeed.

The staff Governor urged the Executive Team and the Board to ensure the new strategy focused on quality, value-added, student outcomes and inclusion, rebuilding trust and improving engagement with the community, as well as emphasizing winning and success, with a commitment to boosting morale and driving the college forward and fostering pride within the college.

14.4 Recommendations from the Search and Governance Committee

14.4.1 Director of Governance Report

23FGB76

14.4.1.1 To approve the Cycle of Business

23FGB76i

It was noted that the cycle of business is a guide only that could be adapted as and when necessary. It was suggested that ownership for the meeting schedules will lie with the committee chairs and pre-meetings to determine the meeting agenda will be scheduled this year.

The Cycle of Business for 2024/25 was approved.

14.4.1.2 To approve the Meeting schedule

23FGB76ii

It was noted that a key change to this schedule was the 2-day strategy event planned for October 2024, with 1 day focusing on the college strategy and the second day on governance.

It was noted that the Remuneration dates may have to be adjusted.

The meeting schedule for 2024/25 was approved.

14.4.1.3 To approve the Committee membership and Link Governors

23FGB76iii

It was reported that the submitted document would need to be adjusted accordingly after the votes from earlier in the meeting to show the changes for the Chair, Co-Chair and Vice Chair

As per the paper it was noted that all chairs had agreed to stand as Chairs for their committees.

It was encouraged for all members to serve on different committees to optimise the effectiveness and development of the Board and consider the evolving needs of the college, the individual skill sets of each Governor, and the potential for skill enhancement and professional growth.

It was noted that Link Governor roles had been assigned as an opportunity to gain deeper insights into the college's operations, engage with staff and connect with students.

The committee membership and Link Governors for 2024/25 were approved.

Julie McLeod left the meeting at 19.25.

15. Policy Approval required:

15.1 Careers Policy

23FGB77

The Careers Policy was approved.

15.2 Health and Safety Policy

23FGB78

The Health and Safety Policy was approved.

15.3 Child Protection and safeguarding policy

23FGB79

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy was approved pending another check of the document by DS without any tracked changes etc.

16. Non-Discussion Items

16.1 To note the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality Report*

23FGB80

The Report was noted.

16.2 To note the Termly (Spring) HR report*

23FGB81

The Report was noted.

Confidential Items

17. To receive any confidential minutes of the Finance and General purposes committee held on 26 March 2024*

23FGB82

The minutes were received.

18. AoB

It was reported that the subsidiary company Petroc Energy Services Limited was looking for another Governor on its Board. If there was anyone interested in taking on this role to please contact Bill Blythe. This would be independent of their role as Governor on the college Board.

The meeting concluded at 20.05.